Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
Sixty-sixth session

Summary record of the 46th meeting
Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 9 October 2019, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Zerbini Ribeiro Leão

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

**Consideration of reports (continued)**

(a) Reports submitted by States parties in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant (continued)

*Third periodic report of Slovakia (E/C.12/SVK/3; E/C.12/SVK/Q/3 and E/C.12/SVK/Q/3/Add.1)*

1. At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Slovakia took places at the Committee table.

2. Mr. Ondruš (Slovakia) said that the preparation of the third periodic report (E/C.12/SVK/3) and of the replies to the list of issues (E/C.12/SVK/Q/3/Add.1) had involved broad consultations with relevant stakeholders, including representatives of national and ethnic minorities, civil society and academia.

3. Ensuring a decent living for workers was a key priority for the Slovak Government. With effect from 1 July 2019, the Constitution had been amended to require employers to pay the minimum wage, with increased pay for weekend and night work. Between 2012 and 2016, the minimum wage in Slovakia had risen by 23.78 per cent from €327.20 to €405 per month. Employers were prohibited from ordering employees to refrain from disclosing their salaries.

4. Strong economic growth during the reporting period had significantly improved the labour market situation. The number of job vacancies had gone up, and the unemployment rate had reached a historic low of 4.97 per cent in July 2019. Thanks to the implementation of an action plan launched in November 2016, the number of long-term unemployed persons had since fallen by one third.

5. In the area of gender equality, particular attention had been paid to creating better conditions for reconciling work and family life and to reducing the gender pay gap. In the current Government, one in three ministers was a woman – a higher proportion than ever before. The Government had adopted a gender equality strategy and associated action plan that covered six main areas: the economy, education, participation, dignity, institutional development and foreign policy.

6. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, with the support of the European Social Fund, was promoting women’s employment by improving the availability of flexible working arrangements and childcare facilities. A network of 90 nurseries with a capacity of 1,800 children would be built in the near future. The Ministry also encouraged fathers to participate more actively in childcare by allowing them to take up to 28 weeks of paternity leave and receive benefits equal to their net income. The number of men taking such leave had increased from fewer than 300 in 2014 to more than 5,300 in 2018.

7. Although Slovakia had not yet ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention), its legislation had already been aligned with it. The third National Action Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women provided for a comprehensive, systematic response to such violence. Significant milestones in efforts to enhance the level of protection afforded to victims of domestic violence included the adoption of the Act on Victims of Crime, which had entered into force on 1 January 2018, and the amendment of several other laws, as a result of which the duration of expulsion orders had been extended from 48 hours to 10 days, giving victims more time to secure their safety.

8. The principle of non-discrimination was promoted through anti-discrimination legislation and Action Plans for Preventing All Forms of Discrimination. In 2019, the budget of the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights had been increased by 40 per cent, and its human resources had been boosted through the recruitment of seven additional experts. The Ministry of Justice approved subsidies aimed at promoting and protecting human rights and freedoms, and preventing all forms of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other manifestations of intolerance.
9. One of the long-term objectives of the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities was to make preschool education compulsory for all children over 5 years of age. As of 1 September 2020, all 5-year-old children would be required to attend kindergarten from at least one year prior to the start of primary school. The Office of the Plenipotentiary continued to implement a project involving local civil patrols, who were tasked with cooperating with local and State police officers and acting as mediators between them and the Roma community. It was also working closely with the Zdravé regióny (Healthy Regions) organization under the Ministry of Health, which employed health-care assistants from marginalized communities.

10. The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for National Minorities had established a working group to ensure compliance with legislation on national minority languages. The language advisory group to the Office of the Plenipotentiary was composed of five subgroups, for German, Hungarian, Romani, Rusyn and Ukrainian. Up to the end of 2017, the Culture of National Minorities Subsidy Programme had been implemented to promote the preservation, expression, protection and development of the identity and cultural values of national minorities. A total of €4,500,000 had been allocated to the Programme in the State budget for 2017. Radio and Television Slovakia broadcast content in the languages of national minorities and ethnic groups, and, in February 2018, the News Agency of the Slovak Republic had begun to provide coverage in Hungarian.

11. The Chair said that, following the passing of Committee member Mr. Waleed Sadi, who had been expected to serve as the Country Rapporteur for Slovakia, the role would be assumed jointly by Mr. Uprimny and Mr. Windfuhr.

12. Mr. Uprimny (Country Rapporteur) said that he wished to welcome the high-level, gender-balanced delegation from Slovakia. The State party was to be congratulated on the great strides that it had made towards the fulfilment of economic, social and cultural rights, as evidenced by the fact that it had one of the lowest Gini coefficients in the world. Nevertheless, deep disparities and discrimination persisted.

13. He would be grateful to receive concrete information on cases in which provisions of the Covenant had been directly applied by judges. If there were no such cases, it would be useful to know why, and what measures were being taken to rectify the situation.

14. Noting that the State party’s national human rights institution had been accredited with category B status despite efforts to strengthen it, and that, according to reports, it had a limited mandate and lacked independence, transparency and funding, he asked what would be done to ensure that it was fully independent and sufficiently funded. Details of the cooperation between the institution and other national human rights figures and bodies, such as the commissioner for persons with disabilities and the Office of the Public Defender of Rights, would also be appreciated.

15. A long-standing United Nations target was that developed countries should devote at least 0.7 per cent of their gross national income (GNI) to official development assistance. With that in mind, he wished to know whether the Government intended to raise its contribution, which stood at just 0.2 per cent of GNI.

16. According to reports, Slovakia continued to face serious problems of corruption despite adopting measures to combat it. He would be interested to hear the delegation’s thoughts on why so little progress had been made, and to receive information on any major court cases involving corruption that had led to convictions.

17. Turning to the issue of discrimination, which seriously affected four minority groups in Slovakia, namely the Roma, persons with disabilities, migrants in an irregular situation and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, and one majority group, namely women, he noted that, according to the Gender Equality Index, Slovakia had made no significant progress in reducing gender inequality between 2005 and 2015. Indeed, despite the existence of legislation, not enough had been done to eliminate discrimination in general. The Committee had received reports that the main reasons for that were shortcomings in the law and its implementation. To give two examples, existing legislation did not establish that a failure to provide reasonable accommodation was a form of discrimination, nor did it recognize multiple discrimination. He wished to know whether
amendments were planned in that regard. The delegation should also indicate whether the State party would consider passing a law to recognize same-sex marriage and civil unions.

18. The Committee had received several reports of problems in the implementation of Act No. 365/2004 on Equal Treatment in Certain Areas and on Protection Against Discrimination, including judicial bias against the Roma community, lengthy delays in the processing of cases and apathy with regard to the issue of discrimination on the part of national human rights bodies. Accordingly, he would welcome information on any mechanisms that had been set up to reinforce anti-discrimination legislation and ensure that victims of discrimination had access to effective judicial remedies.

The meeting was suspended at 3.30 p.m. and resumed at 3.35 p.m.

19. Ms. Štangová (Slovakia) said that the Justice Academy, which was under the authority of the Ministry of Justice, provided training on various topics to judges and other judicial officers. Moreover, a national project had been launched with European Union funding to enhance the education and expertise of judges, including with regard to the principle of non-discrimination.

20. The Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, which currently had an annual budget of €700,000, was fully independent and, despite some administrative shortcomings, was doing a good job of organizing workshops and training courses to promote international standards and raise awareness of human rights.

21. The commissioner for persons with disabilities was responsible for monitoring respect for the rights of such persons and produced an annual report that was used by the Ministry of Justice, with which the commissioner worked closely. The Ministry, meanwhile, supported projects by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in the disability sector.

22. Mr. Ondruš (Slovakia) said that the commissioner for children and the commissioner for persons with disabilities were elected by, and answerable to, the National Council. State institutions were obliged to cooperate with the commissioners to the extent possible, including by responding to all requests for information. He personally had held meetings with both commissioners on a biannual basis for the purpose of assessing the level of cooperation provided by such institutions. The commissioners issued annual reports, which the National Council was required to consider in a plenary session, during which members could put questions to the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family regarding any issues raised in the reports.

23. He said that the Government Office of the Slovak Republic had the lead role in the fight against corruption the National Labour Inspectorate was charged with safeguarding the rights of whistle-blowers at their places of work in cases where their whistle-blowing was related to their employment. After a whistle-blower was identified, the employer was legally prohibited from firing him or her. Any changes to the whistle-blower’s working conditions, including to his or her pay or position, required the prior approval of the National Labour Inspectorate.

24. Ms. Štangová (Slovakia) said that the Anti-Discrimination Act set out the obligation of employers to provide reasonable accommodation for employees with disabilities. A refusal of reasonable accommodation constituted a breach of the principle of equal treatment.

25. Under the Slovak legal system, international human rights treaties were part of domestic law, were directly enforceable in Slovak courts, and were superior to domestic statutes. The Constitutional Court had held that even the Constitution had to be interpreted in a manner consistent with those treaties.

26. Mr. Ondruš (Slovakia) said that, given the clear consensus on the issue among the public and in Parliament, the Government was not planning to adopt legislation allowing same-sex marriages. He did not foresee any change in the situation after the next parliamentary elections.

27. Ms. Pietruchová (Slovakia) said that the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family was responsible for implementing gender equality on a practical level. Institutions
receiving European structural and investment funds, which were used to finance more than 80 per cent of public investment in Slovakia, were required to observe the principles of non-discrimination, accessibility and gender equality. Violations of those principles could result in termination of the funding agreement. That served, on a practical level, to reinforce the provisions of the Anti-Discrimination Act.

28. Under the European Social Fund, €10 million euros had been allocated to a Government-administered programme on counselling for the prevention and elimination of all forms of discrimination, including violence against women. The programme supported more than 50 projects run by non-governmental, public and private entities specializing in such counselling and helped build capacity in NGOs working on non-discrimination and accessibility issues.

29. The State party verified the accessibility of large Government-funded physical infrastructure and information technology projects from their inception and had hired accessibility experts to assist in that process.

30. Despite more positive results in the work, money, health and knowledge domains, the State party’s poor performance in the Gender Equality Index was attributable to low scores in the power and time domains. Time use was especially challenging, as a traditional gender-based division of labour persisted in many conservative regions. Positive developments had, however, occurred in both domains. One third of sitting ministers were women and the country’s first female president had been elected in March 2019. The Government was proud that the number of fathers taking paternity leave had been doubling annually. Both mothers and fathers could take parental leave lasting up to the first three years of the child’s life. Although such benefits were valued highly by Slovak parents, they were unfortunately not reflected in the Gender Equality Index.

31. Within the European Union, Slovakia had one of the lowest percentages of women killed by a partner. Although the Gender Equality Index painted a negative picture overall, it was important to note that the State party was performing well in some areas.

32. Mr. Šafár (Slovakia) said that the housing situation of the Roma population differed significantly from that of the majority. Roma communities were often marginalized and segregated. Homes were often built on land community members did not own or were not authorized to settle, which in turn affected the infrastructure of the settlements. The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities was involved in a major national project to legalize those homes by giving their residents the legal status of tenants.

33. The Office was also addressing transitional housing through a project that involved the construction of new rental apartments, included an extensive social work component, and helped individuals who had spent a significant amount of time living in unsuitable conditions to adapt their habits to those of the majority and thereby improve their housing standards. The Office had provided comments on the Construction Act and aimed to facilitate the post hoc legalization of existing buildings so that the buildings could then lawfully be connected to heating, water and other services.

34. Mr. Ondruš (Slovakia) said that, of the 37 social enterprises registered since the parliament had adopted the Act on Social Economy and Social Enterprises in May 2018, 4 worked with persons with disabilities and the remainder mainly provided employment to the Roma community. As most of those employed had never before held a job, the enterprises had become an important mechanism for integrating the Roma into the labour market.

35. Mr. Klenovský (Slovakia) said that the Government had adopted a strategy for overseas development assistance covering the period from 2019 to 2023. Although the State party’s contribution, as a share of GNI, was low compared to most other members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) members, it had risen considerably over the past year. The Government had committed to increasing its contribution to 0.33 per cent by 2030, which was expected to amount to a €25 million increase annually.
36. **Mr. De Schutter** said that the absence of any legal structure for the recognition of same-sex couples could lead to limitations on the partners’ enjoyment of their social rights. While he was aware that public opinion in Slovakia did not at that time favour same-sex marriage, he wished to know whether it would be possible to provide recognition in the form of same-sex unions or partnerships so that same-sex couples could fully enjoy their rights to housing and health.

37. **Ms. Liebenberg** said that she wished to know how reasonable accommodation was provided for persons with disabilities in sectors other than employment, such as education and public housing. She would also like to know how multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination were dealt with in the legal system. Lastly, she wondered whether domestic courts, in practice, relied on or referred to international treaties. If they did, could specific examples of such cases be provided?

38. **Mr. Windfuhr** (Country Rapporteur) said that, in cases involving discrimination and equal treatment, court proceedings were reportedly very lengthy. He would appreciate hearing the State party’s views on how those cases could be resolved more quickly. In addition, he wished to know whether the State party intended to develop a national action plan on business and human rights or regulations to ensure that companies met their due diligence obligations in their day-to-day work at home and abroad.

39. **Mr. Uprimny** said that he would welcome information on any measures taken to address the issues of women’s access to high-ranking positions and allocation of time in the household, such as quotas or a care economy system.

40. Courts were reportedly not receptive to claims of discrimination on the basis of race or against the Roma. Information should be provided on any cases where a court had provided protection and awarded compensation to a member of the Roma community who had been the victim of discrimination. He wished to know the number of cases of discrimination that had been brought to court.

41. Lastly, it would be interesting to learn whether there had been any prosecutions in high-profile corruption cases.

42. **Ms. Pietruchová** (Slovakia) said that, in a case where a child with Down syndrome had been refused admission to a school, the court had relied on the Covenant on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in deciding in favour of the child. Consequently, even though the provisions on reasonable accommodation were not fully reflected in the Anti-Discrimination Act, reasonable accommodation was guaranteed by law to all persons with disabilities.

43. Unlike the anti-discrimination legislation in certain other European countries, the Slovak Anti-Discrimination Act applied to private businesses. Furthermore, a diversity charter had been signed by a number of public and private employers in Slovakia. They had thereby taken on human rights obligations that sometimes went beyond what was required under the Anti-Discrimination Act. For example, some companies were already providing the same rights to same-sex couples as to heterosexual married couples.

44. Although same-sex unions were not recognized, certain rights, such as those relating to inheritance, were recognized under the concept of a “close person” that was applied by civil courts. A “close person” was defined as a person living in a close relationship, without regard to sex.

45. Women made up the majority of the judiciary. However, there were no quotas relating to the number of women in high-ranking positions generally speaking. Because of the country’s Communist past, there was resistance to the idea of a quota. However, soft measures were being developed to create opportunities for women. Building nurseries, kindergartens, and high-quality childcare facilities was a priority for the Government. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family itself specifically supported the employment of women and mothers of small children. A national project that provided subsidies to companies that employed mothers of small children and created flexible working arrangements for them had been introduced in September 2019.
46. **Mr. Šafár** (Slovakia) said that whistle-blowers who reported corruption received legal protection under the Labour Code. Moreover, in March 2019 a separate act on the protection of whistle-blowers, which provided for the establishment of an Office for the Protection of Whistle-blowers, had entered into force. The Office, which would assume some of the competencies of labour inspectorates, would become operational once its head had been appointed.

47. **Mr. Klenovský** (Slovakia) said that the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs would soon establish a working group composed of representatives of several ministries regarding the development of a national action plan on business and human rights.

48. **Ms. Štangová** (Slovakia) said that the Government Council for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality had a committee on the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons that was chaired by the Minister of Justice and had governmental and non-governmental members. Its aim was to discuss and highlight important issues, such as the marriage or cohabitation of persons of the same gender, and to serve as a platform for the drafting of new legislation. Meetings of the committee were held on a regular basis and its discussions were reported on the website of the Ministry of Justice.

49. Regarding how the law addressed multiple forms of discrimination, the Anti-Discrimination Act did not limit discrimination to a single ground, nor did it explicitly provide for multiple discrimination as a concept, which would create the need for further legislation to determine appropriate sanctions. The Act stipulated that every person was entitled to equal treatment and protection from discrimination and to claim their rights before the courts. Persons who considered themselves discriminated against might ask that the person who violated the principle of equal treatment be made to rectify the illegal situation or provide adequate satisfaction. Victims of discrimination might also seek non-pecuniary damages, the cash value of which would be determined by the court. The Ministry of Justice maintained up-to-date statistical data on convictions for different types of corruption and was willing to share those data with the Committee.

50. **Mr. Ondruš** (Slovakia) said that same-sex marriage could not be legalized through the enactment of ordinary legislation because the Constitution stated that “marriage is a unique bond between a man and a woman”. While the discussion around registered partnerships of persons of the same sex was ongoing, it was unlikely that related legislation would be passed before the parliamentary election scheduled for early 2020.

51. Slovakia applied European regulations on the rights of persons with disabilities and had national laws enshrining accessibility and universal design. Projects for the reconstruction of public or private buildings that relied on the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund had to comply with universal design standards, meaning no physical barriers for persons with disabilities. Although bringing all buildings into line with accessibility principles, as per Slovak law, would be a lengthy process, that effort was now under way.

52. Regarding corruption, in 2019 two former government ministers had been convicted and were now serving prison sentences. In the case of the murder of the journalist Ján Kuciak, prosecutor had recently formally charged three suspects; the trial was expected to open soon.

53. **Mr. Windfuhr** said that the Committee welcomed the progress that Slovakia had made in reducing overall and youth unemployment. Noting that success in that regard was attributed to the “system of assistance in material need”, he asked how many people benefited from that system; how much it cost; whether it helped long-term beneficiaries to enter the labour market; and what happened to beneficiaries once assistance was withdrawn. He was interested to know the composition of the long-term unemployed population, including the proportion of women and single mothers. What was the employment situation of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers? He would be grateful if the delegation could comment on the observation made by OECD in its Economic Survey on the Slovak Republic 2017 that the legal system regulating migrants’ access to employment was overcomplicated. Given the assertion in the same publication that one of the main challenges facing the country was the labour market integration of vulnerable
groups such as women, foreigners and Roma, the delegation might also provide details and statistics in English on the unemployment situation among Roma. The Committee would be interested to learn about any activities undertaken to address regional differences in unemployment. Recalling that the Government had indicated to the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations of the International Labour Organization that “the lack of connection between the education system and the needs of the labour market was one of the most acute problems of the Slovak labour market”, he asked how far the State party had progressed in developing that connection, and what further efforts it planned in that regard.

54. Noting that, according to the European Institute for Gender Equality, Slovakia ranked among the European Union countries that had made the least progress on gender equality between 2005 and 2015, he said that he would like information on the outcomes of the National Strategy for Gender Equality and on the current trend in respect of the gender pay gap. It would also be interesting to hear about the main challenges facing the Government in ensuring the labour market integration of persons with disabilities. Increases in the minimum wage were welcome, but he was concerned at reports that a large number of people, including low-skilled and migrant workers, were paid less than the minimum wage. Therefore, he wished to know how the Government monitored and enforced payment of the minimum wage, including by employment agencies. It would also be interesting to learn how the authorities addressed the huge regional disparities in living costs.

55. The Committee would appreciate more detailed information about the main deficiencies identified by labour inspectors and on whether employers and employees generally complied with the corrective actions that they proposed. Specifically, what was the prevalence of precarious working conditions and illegal forms of employment, and in which sectors did they most frequently occur? Data might also be provided on cases of human trafficking for labour exploitation, along with clarification of how the Government controlled temporary employment agencies, which reportedly employed foreign workers from outside the European Union without meeting the statutory requirements for doing so, and sometimes failed to pay wages or paid less than the minimum wage.

56. The Committee had not identified serious problems concerning trade union rights and the right to strike. Nevertheless, it would appreciate an indication of the rate of unionization and an explanation of how the Government viewed the role of trade unions in collective bargaining and the negotiation of salaries and labour conditions.

57. Although Slovakia had successfully reduced the number of people at risk of poverty, he was concerned that Roma in Slovakia had a poverty rate six times higher than that of the general population, and much higher than that of Roma populations in comparable European countries. Therefore, he wished to know more about strategies in place to reduce poverty among vulnerable groups, particularly Roma and migrants. He would also appreciate information on efforts to raise awareness of social inclusion and support programmes; and about the eligibility criteria, assessment mechanisms and outcomes of those programmes. The Committee would be interested to hear the delegation’s views on whether minimum income support and social security schemes were disadvantageous to larger families and single-parent households headed by women, older women and Roma; and whether the Government planned to establish a mechanism to review the level of minimum income support. The delegation might also comment on reports that discriminatory legislation in the area of social security had a disproportionate impact on Roma women and children. He would like information on non-contributory social security schemes available for disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups other than persons with disabilities, including low-income families, ethnic minorities, migrant workers and refugees and asylum seekers. He wondered what social inclusion and support programmes were available to those groups. Lastly, he would like to know whether the decrease in 2012 in the rate of compulsory contributions to the old-age pension saving system had been offset by voluntary contributions under other pillars of the system, and whether the change had improved old-age pension coverage or increased the risk that certain persons or groups would not be adequately covered.

The meeting was suspended at 5.05 p.m. and resumed at 5.10 p.m.
58. **Ms. Lehocká** (Slovakia) said that, as of August 2019, the overall unemployment rate stood at 4.97 per cent – a slight improvement on the figure previously provided to the Committee. Long-term unemployment and unemployment among vulnerable groups had also been decreasing, while the Action Plan for Strengthening the Labour Market Integration of the Long-Term Unemployed adopted in 2016 was already achieving good results. Act No. 336 on Supporting the Least Developed Districts had been adopted and sought to address regional differences in unemployment by creating jobs in districts with higher unemployment. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family had identified the 12 least developed districts, each of which now had its own action plan.

59. **Mr. Ondruš** (Slovakia) said that a government council for least developed districts, composed of representatives of ministries and local authorities, met every two months. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Investments and Informatization was responsible for managing the action plans designed by the least developed districts and a special budget was allocated for approved investment projects that were specifically tailored to the districts in question. The preparation of action plans and budget allocations took account of any marginalized Roma communities that might be living in the district. The Government had also adopted the general principle that projects in underdeveloped districts that were proposed in the context of European-funded operational programmes should be given priority over similar projects located in other areas. It had also agreed with the authorities of Norwegian and Swiss financial mechanisms that their contributions should focus on projects implemented in underdeveloped regions.

60. **Ms. Lehocká** (Slovakia) said that funds were allocated from the State budget specifically to address issues faced by vulnerable groups, such as the long-term unemployed, Roma communities and persons with disabilities, and persons affected by more than one vulnerability. A major challenge facing the Ministries of Education and of Labour was aligning education and training with the needs of the labour market.

61. **Mr. Ondruš** (Slovakia) said that, over the previous two years, the Government had undertaken a reform of educational priorities, which included promotion of the dual education system.

62. **Ms. Pietruchová** (Slovakia) said that the results of the National Strategy for Gender Equality for the years 2014–2019 would be evaluated in 2020; a decision would then be taken either to extend it or to develop a new strategy. The adoption of a strategy was one of the prerequisites for financial support from the European Social Fund in the forthcoming new programming period. While the female employment rate of 68.4 per cent was slightly lower than the European Union average, it should be remembered that, in contrast to the situation in many other countries, most employed women in Slovakia worked full-time. Becoming a parent had a major impact on women’s employment: women with children under the age of 6 years had a lower employment rate than the European Union average, but that rate was increasing more rapidly than elsewhere and currently stood at 42.6 per cent. Mothers of children aged 12 and over, on the other hand, had employment rates that, in 2018, had been over 10 percentage points higher than the European Union average.

63. The gender pay gap had decreased from 27 per cent, before the country’s accession to the European Union, to 18 per cent in 2018. Nevertheless, and despite the existence of legislation designed to address it, the pay gap remained a problem. Its primary causes were horizontal, vertical and sectoral segregation in the labour market; women were employed mainly in the public sector and men primarily in the private sector, where the gender pay gap was particularly marked. In 2018, women’s average earnings had crossed the threshold of €1,000 for the first time; men’s earnings had reached that level in 2014.

64. A methodology was being developed for labour inspections in relation to the gender pay gap; the assessment of work of equal value was particularly challenging, as was the case throughout the European Union. Equal Pay Day in 2019 would be observed in Slovakia on 28 October, as the symbolic date after which women were essentially working for free for the rest of the year, given the gender pay gap. The Day usually attracted good media coverage and was used to encourage women to take their complaints of gender-based discrimination to the labour inspectorate. Since the beginning of 2019, job advertisements
had been required to include a minimum salary; that information helped women – who tended to make more modest salary demands – to set their demands at the appropriate level.

65. **Mr. Šafár** (Slovakia) said that the Government’s strategy for the integration of the Roma community, which ran through to 2020 and which included action plans on education, employment, health care, housing and financial literacy, had produced positive results. A new edition of the Atlas of Roma Communities had just been published, showing slow but clear improvements in the situation of the various communities since the 2013 edition. The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities had recently issued its annual call for applications under the Ministry of the Interior subsidy schemes, which offered assistance to support needs in Roma communities. While the funding, generally allocated to municipalities and civil society organizations working with Roma communities, was limited, it was generally well targeted and thus likely to be effective.

66. **Mr. Ondruš** (Slovakia) said that the initial results of legislation adopted in 2017 to extend sectoral collective agreements were positive; such agreements were already being used by trade unions to improve labour conditions. At its upcoming session, the parliament would adopt amendments to the Minimum Wage Act to provide for a minimum wage of 60 per cent of the average wage in cases where the employers’ association and the trade union confederation were unable to reach an agreement in their annual negotiations.

67. **Ms. Ravenberg** said she would like to know how the amended Social Services Act, which had created a uniform framework for childcare providers, was implemented in practice, whether its effects had been assessed and whether childcare services were accessible to and used by all sectors of the population. She would welcome information on measures taken to ensure that families with children were not subject to immigration detention and on alternatives to detention used in such cases. It had been reported that detained persons had only restricted access to Internet and mobile phones, which prevented them from enjoying their rights to family and private life and access to information. She wished to know what was being done to remedy that issue and how the State was endeavouring to improve immigration detention conditions in general, particularly in respect of access to quality and timely health-care services and recreation facilities, which were reportedly run by NGOs.

68. The Committee had received information that domestic violence persisted and was underreported in the State party, and that the authorities failed to enforce the law. Information would be welcome on the outcomes in that regard of the National Action Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and on action taken to raise awareness among police officers on gender issues and domestic violence.

69. In view of reports of an acute lack of affordable housing and the absence of any policy or legislative framework on housing, she would like to hear what steps the Government was taking to ensure the availability of adequate affordable housing, particularly for low-income families, persons with disabilities and marginalized communities. The State party might consider adopting comprehensive legislation on affordable housing, including definitions of social housing, vulnerable groups and supportive measures. Housing segregation was reported to be a serious issue affecting the Roma community, with many housing developments sited far from population centres and lacking adequate infrastructure. Information, with supporting data, about any measures taken to prevent such segregation would be appreciated. It was further reported that Roma communities were particularly vulnerable to evictions, as had been demonstrated by the evictions of families from the Luník IX suburb of Košice. She would therefore be interested to learn how the State ensured that evictions from public lands were used only as a last resort; whether access to adequate alternative accommodation, due process and legal remedies, including compensation, was guaranteed in unavoidable cases of eviction; and whether the Government was considering a review of the rent control scheme.

70. Referring to reports of poor maintenance of the State party’s hospital infrastructure, she said that she would welcome information on the steps being taken to remedy the situation in order to ensure public access to quality health-care services. She would also like more information about the Government’s plans, policies and strategies to ensure
equity in access to health care, particularly in light of the differences in life expectancy between persons with different levels of education. The Committee would welcome information on what the State was doing to create and promote health-care facilities and services throughout the country, particularly in remote areas. Campaigns to reduce risk factors for asthma, diabetes, hypertension and other preventable diseases, as well as research into ways of reducing the life expectancy gap should also be reported on.

71. Lastly, she would appreciate information on sexual and reproductive health care, particularly in relation to reports of coerced sterilization of Roma women. She would like more information on Roma women’s access to legal remedies and on whether a mechanism had been established to recognize the systematic nature of the practice and to provide compensation to victims.

_The meeting rose at 6 p.m._