

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based upon the findings of this report. They do not exhaustively list the actions required of the Slovak government and parliament to comply with its international legal obligations, but instead target some of the key rights violations that we encountered during our investigation. The government must ensure a comprehensive and coordinated approach to the legislative, policy, and budgetary changes needed to ensure women's and adolescent girls' access to a full range of affordable and acceptable contraceptive services and information. In addition, these recommendations should be implemented in close consultation with civil society.

To the Government of the Slovak Republic and its Ministries

- Ensure effective implementation of international obligations in the field of sexual and reproductive health, including the CEDAW Committee's 2008 concluding observations on Slovakia.
- Incorporate gender analysis and gender budgeting into all governmental policies and programs, including those on health and reproductive health, to ensure equality in practice.
- Adopt a comprehensive program on sexual and reproductive health based on international human rights and WHO standards. In addition, ensure that action plans on gender equality include measures related to the enhancement of reproductive health and rights, including the promotion of contraceptive services and accurate information. Ensure sufficient financial support for these policies and measures, as well as effective monitoring mechanisms for their implementation.
- Ensure access to all modern contraceptive methods for women of all socioeconomic classes and age groups by fully covering them through public health insurance.
- Organize and support awareness-raising campaigns on contraception that provide accurate and non-judgmental information on use and effectiveness.

- Organize systematic training of health professionals on new contraceptive services and information, in particular, and on sexual and reproductive rights and other human rights, in general.
- Collect, on a systematic basis, comprehensive data related to sexual and reproductive health and rights, including data on contraceptive use and unmet need for contraceptives. Ensure that all collected data are disaggregated by sex, age and other characteristics as necessary.
- Undertake comprehensive research on access to contraception in Slovakia, which should result in the design and adoption of measures that would lead to the elimination of existing barriers. Such research should be undertaken on a regular basis to ensure that individuals' contraceptive needs, especially those of women and adolescents, are fully met.
- Establish sexuality education as a mandatory subject in primary and secondary schools and revise textbooks and other teaching materials to ensure comprehensive, evidence-based sexuality education free of stereotypes. Sexuality education must be taught by teachers properly trained in this area.
- Ensure that access to contraceptive and other reproductive health services is not limited by health professionals' exercise of conscientious objection. Amend existing regulations in order to appropriately balance the exercise of conscientious objection with professional responsibility and the patient's right to access lawful healthcare services in a timely manner.

To the National Council of the Slovak Republic (Parliament)

- Explicitly include the right of every person to access sexual and reproductive health services in the Constitution of the Slovak Republic and in legislation.
- Incorporate gender analyses and gender budgeting into all relevant stages of the legislative processes.

To the Council of Europe

- Support Slovakia's implementation of PACE Resolution 1607 on access to safe and legal abortion in Europe (2008), particularly to adopt sexual and reproductive health and rights strategies and policies; ensure that women and men have access to contraception and advice on contraception at a reasonable cost, of a suitable nature, and chosen by them; and introduce compulsory sexuality education in schools to avoid unintended pregnancies.
- Monitor and support the implementation of the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on the inclusion of gender differences in health policy to Member States (2008). In particular, take the following actions:
 - Prioritize gender in the area of health through policies and strategies that address the specific health needs of men and women and that incorporate gender mainstreaming.
 - Systemically collect sex-disaggregated data.
 - Establish monitoring and evaluation frameworks on gender mainstreaming in health policies.
 - Implement measures presented in the appendix of the Recommendation.
- Support Slovakia's development of guidelines for gender budgeting in accordance with PACE Recommendation 1739 on gender budgeting (2006), particularly in ensuring the presence of gender analysis in the preparation, implementation, audit, and evaluation of government budgets.

To the European Union

- Recognize that sexual and reproductive rights are fundamental to the achievement of gender equality in EU Member States, without which the EU objectives of growth, employment, and social cohesion will not be achieved.
- Support Slovakia's implementation of European Parliament Resolution of 17 June 2010 on gender aspects of the economic downturn and financial crisis (2009/2204 [INI]).
- The European Commission should, under its authority in the Lisbon Treaty (article 168), organize the "exchange of best practices" or undertake initiatives aiming at the "establishment of guidelines and indicators" in the fields of sexual and reproductive health, particularly access to contraceptive services and sexuality education.

To U.N. Treaty Monitoring Bodies

- Monitor Slovakia's compliance with the treaty monitoring bodies' concluding observations on access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services.
- Use Slovakia's periodic reporting to issue strong concluding observations and recommendations to reinforce Slovakia's obligation to ensure access to quality contraceptive services and information. In particular, urge Slovakia to include contraceptives in public health insurance schemes; eliminate structural barriers that undermine access; ensure mandatory, comprehensive, evidence-based sexuality education in schools; and gather sex-disaggregated data.