SLOVAKIA AND THE ANALYSIS OF ITS DISPARITIES

Radoslav KLAMÁR[1]

Abstract: *The article deals with the issue of disparities in the Slovak Republic as a whole and also Slovak regional disparities. On the national basis, the Slovak Republic was compared with other EU member countries. On the regional basis, the differences between individual counties, respectively between the regions on the NUTS II level were evaluated. Taking into account the extent of the comparison, a set of indicators were chosen. These were divided into the following areas: economic structure, labour market, technical infrastructure and social infrastructure.*
Key words: *disparities, labour market, gross domestic product, foreign direct investment*

INTRODUCTION

The overall transformation of the Slovak society since 1989 in the field of politics, economy, culture and social issues, is reflected in the development of Slovak regions with different intensity and in a different way. The reforms passed on the national level should both help activate developmental activities in the regions, as well as reinforce and establish the position of Slovakia in united Europe. Close analysis of basic indicators of development is necessary to evaluate whether the undertaken trend is also the way leading to development. There are many such indicators but we chose the most representative and the most frequently followed indicators were chosen for a comparison, so that they showed the most important socio-economical disparities as close to reality as possible.

SLOVAKIA AND ITS POSITION WITHIN THE EU

Before we evaluate regional disparities in Slovakia, it is necessary to consider the overall position and importance of the Slovak Republic (SR) in the European Union.

Among the *key disparities* in terms of convergence of the SR with the countries of former EU-15 can be ranked: insufficient utilisation and productivity of the existing factors of economic growth, as well as of the potential of economic growth based on utilizing of information. The consequences of the first problem can be seen in several levels. It is mainly the low effectiveness (in terms of GDP per inhabitant in purchase power party), which is the fourth lowest from the countries of EU-25 (only 57,1% of average), low added value, low labour productivity and high energy consumption of the economy – 410% of the average for countries of the EU-15. The other important measure is the low employment rate in Slovakia – 57,7% (the fifth lowest in the EU-25), which is 6,1% less than the overall average (highest level is in Denmark – 75,9% and the Netherlands – 73,2%); and high unemployment level (16,3%), which is the second highest in the EU, after Poland (see. tab. 24). Moreover, the unemployment rate in Slovakia is marked by the highest rate of long-term unemployment in the EU (11,7%, the EU average rate being only

1 ***RNDr. Radoslav Klamár, PhD.,***
Department of Geography and Regional Development, Faculty of Humanities and Natural Sciences, University of Prešov, ul. 17. novembra 1, 081 16 Prešov,
e-mail: klamar@unipo.sk

3,9%); with the finances devoted to the labour market policies in SR represent mere 0,39% of GDP annually. Consequences of the latter problem can lead to loss of competitiveness of those industrial and service areas that underestimate the importance of knowledge for a sustainable development of its economic activities.

On the other hand, one of the *development factors* in Slovakia is high dynamics of economic growth. Economic policy is oriented towards better utilisation of traditional economic growth factors, which are built mainly on labour and capital usage through lower fixed costs, excess of labour force, disponibility and low prices of industrial areas, non-market advantages (investment incentives), etc. Foreign investors find particularly interesting low monthly costs of labour, as they represent only 701 € (22,3% of average in the EU-25), which makes them 5,5 times lower than in the most advanced European countries.

In general, it can be said that, together with Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Estonia, Slovakia belongs to the least developed EU countries and that it will be one of the main receivers of structural help, together with newly accessed countries Romania and Bulgaria.

SLOVAKIA AND ITS REGIONAL DISPARITIES

The abovementioned development factors and disparities on the national level are reflected differently in the situation and development of the individual regions. In the Slovak republic, there are four regions defined on the NUTS II (NUTS III) level: Bratislava county; Western Slovakia (county of Trnava, county of Trenčín and Nitra county); Central Slovakia (county of Žilina and county of Banská Bystrica); and Eastern Slovakia (Prešov county and Košice county). Their status and importance is different, but it is necessary to take into account that there are two completely different structures, which are hard to compare, that enter this comparison – the Bratislava region and other regions of Slovakia. The specific status of the Bratislava region is caused by fact that 84,1% of its inhabitants reside in towns, and 71,5% in the capital – Bratislava. Individual evaluation indicators are divided into the following areas: economic structure, labour market, technical infrastructure and social infrastructure.

ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

Several indicators can be used while evaluating the efficiency of economy. The most representative of them is the gross domestic product (GDP), which is used for evaluating the economy growth rate, standard of living, as well as the intensity of development. Regional GDP is calculated as a sum of added values in regional industries and taxes for products minus subventions for the products. For comparative reasons GDP is calculated per inhabitant in purchasing power standards (PPS). The least developed region in terms of GDP per inhabitant is Eastern Slovakia (Prešov county and Košice county), which is also one of the 10 least developed regions in the EU-25 (tab. 1). It only reaches 39% of the EU countries average. Moreover, important regional disparities throughout the EU, as well as the west-east gradation of backwardness and poverty, are evident, as the poorest regions in the EU are mainly Polish, Hungarian and Slovak regions situated close to eastern borders of these countries.

Tab. 1: *Regional GDP (PPS per inhabitant in % of the EU-25 average) 2003*

GDP per inhabitant vs. EU-25 (2003)					
	Region (highest GDP)	**GDP vs EU 25**		**Region (lowest GDP)**	**GDP vs EU-25**
1.	Inner London (UK)	278	1.	Lubelskie (PL)	33
2.	Capitale/ Brussels (BE)	238	2.	Podkarpackie (PL)	33
3.	Luxembourg (LX)	234	3.	Podlaskie (PL)	36
4.	Hamburg (DE)	184	7.	Észak Magyaroszág (HU)	38
6.	Wien (AT)	171	8.	**Východné Slovensko (SR)**	**39**
10.	Stockholm (SE)	158	16.	**Stredné Slovensko (SR)**	**43**
53.	**Bratislavský kraj (SR)**	**116**	23.	**Západné Slovensko (SR)**	**49**

Source: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu

When we look at the development of GDP (tab. 2), it is clear that there are major differences between Slovak regions both in its level and its development. Bratislava region has (and enforces) a dominant position – its regional GDP per inhabitant was 380,1% of GDP in Prešov county (the lowest value); and 229,2% of national average GDP per inhabitant in the Slovak republic. West-east gradient in this indicator will increase in the near future because of strategic foreign investments taking place in Trnava and Žilina counties.

Tab. 2: *GDP (PPS per inhabitant in EUR) 1995-2003 and a proportion of economic sectors in 2003*

Analysed indicator	**BA**	**TT**	**TN**	**NT**	**ZA**	**BB**	**PO**	**KE**
GDP (PPS per inhabitant) 1995	14371	7523	6363	5830	5516	5627	4375	5896
GDP (PPS per inhabitant) 2000	20824	10032	8757	8314	7681	7834	5705	8418
GDP (PPS per inhabitant) 2003	25664	11628	10118	9657	8915	9554	6753	9913
GDP growth index (PPS per inhabitant) 2003/1995	178,6	154,6	159,0	165,6	161,6	169,8	154,4	168,1
GDP (PPS per inhabitant in % of the SR average) 2003	222,7	100,9	87,8	83,8	77,4	82,9	58,6	86,0
GDP (PPS per inhabitant in % of the EU-25 average) 2003	119,7	54,2	47,2	45,0	41,6	44,5	31,5	46,2
Proportion of agriculture (%) per reg. GDP	0,9	5,6	3,7	8,1	4,1	7,1	6,9	4,3
Proportion of industry and construction (%) per reg. GDP	22,5	47,8	45,6	42,4	39,8	30,0	30,7	31,4
Proportion of services (%) per regional GDP	76,6	46,6	50,7	49,5	56,0	62,9	62,5	64,3

Source: http://www.statistics.sk

Visible differences are present also in terms of gross added value in individual economic sectors: in the field of industry, construction and, mainly, services, Bratislava region reached 3, and sometimes 4, times the level of the most developed counties (134,5% and 255,3% of the SR average).

Tab. 3: *Value added (mil. Sk at current prices) 2003*

Analysed indicator	BA	TT	TN	NT	ZA	BB	PO	KE
Value added in Agriculture	2539	6555	4142	10215	4700	8195	6760	6016
Value added in Industry and Construction	63636	56238	51085	53319	45191	34687	30204	43917
Value added in Services	216381	54852	56767	62265	63571	72802	61528	89844
Value added - total	277225	115498	109844	123544	111320	113486	96569	137178

Source: http://www.ueos.sk/mvrr.sr/isvov

Thus, in terms of the earnings structure of the Slovak republic, as well as its regions, earnings for operations and goods in the field of industry represent the biggest part (more than 50% on average). Industrial production and services are concentrated in the western part of Slovakia, while the lowest values by far are seen in Prešov county (only 12,1% of Bratislava county and 36,9% of the national average). Earnings in Košice county are markedly ‚positively' influenced by earnings of the U.S. Steel, Košice (91 milliard SKK – 2005).

Tab. 4: *Receipts and turnover (mil. Sk at current prices) 2005*

Analysed indicator	BA	TT	TN	NT	ZA	BB	PO	KE
Receipts from sales of agricultures products	2132	9193	4036	12932	2260	4081	2680	3384
Receipts from sales of industry	611170	181943	159763	99723	152560	117633	73647	201211
Construction production	31672	11408	11936	10355	21276	7006	12315	15335
Turnover in wholesale	257966	61769	55074	56467	86122	42225	54907	63741
Turnover in retail trade	138400	34750	26134	36194	55025	39257	30015	26007

Source: http://www.statistics.sk

The structure of production activities is influenced by historical development and implementation of industrial policies; and it changes very slowly, in spite of the problems with implementation of production programs, which are based mainly on the system of labour with low added value salary. New projects aimed at production development and at structural changes face problems with lack of investments. Privatisation has not brought along desired creation of entrepreneurial environment which would enable the development of production; and the inflow of investments (especially inflow of foreign funding FDI) is highly differentiated within the Slovak Republic, with influential part of the FDI is realised through non-market advantages that the state offers to an investor. While in 2001 was the FDI in Eastern Slovakia (without bank sector) more than 24% of all FDI, in 2005 it was only half – 12,1%. ‚The poorest' counties, in terms of FDI, are Prešov county (7,1 milliard SKK – 1,7%) and Banská Bystrica county (10,8 milliard SKK – 2,6%). In Banská Bystrica county the increase of FDI in the period 2000-2004 only 4 milliard SKK and in Prešov county only 0,8 milliard SKK. Thus, in years 1996-2000 there was considerably more FDI allocated in the Prešov county than in the period 2000-2004.

On the contrary, the biggest investment incentives go, apart from Bratislava, to Žilina and Trnava counties.

Tab. 5: *Foreign direct investments (FDI) into the SR (mld. Sk) in 2004-2005*

Analysed indicator	BA	TT	TN	NT	ZA	BB	PO	KE
FDI entrepreneurial sector 2005	214,11	24,46	20,29	13,26	24,91	10,75	7,09	35,51
FDI total (entrepreneurial sector + banking sector) 2005	279,80	24,46	20,29	13,26	25,86	10,75	7,09	35,51
FDI total (%) 2005	67,1	5,9	4,9	3,2	6,2	2,6	1,7	8,5
Inflow of FDI 2004	16,34	4,12	2,29	0,93	2,32	0,85	0,99	1,02
Inflow of FDI 2005	7,80	0,28	2,86	0,93	6,97	0,85	0,12	0,82

Source: http://www.sario.sk/?inflow-and-outflow-of-fdi

Deciding factors for the inflow of FDI are: transport accessibility, service distribution, quality of the workforce, local identity, readiness and quality of self-government, and recently also absence of the rules for investments support. Another frequently mentioned important funding localisation factor is level of labour costs (see attached table), i.e. also the average salary level. In this field, together with labour productivity, the Prešov county, as the most undersized county in terms of investments, is also the least developed county. While the average salary in Prešov county represents only 56,8% of the average salary in Bratislava county, there is also a major difference in the labour productivity, as the difference between these two counties is almost 5-fold. This shows, that each investor will chose an investment in the Bratislava region, as, apart from other factors, here it will reach much higher earnings per employee even despite higher wage costs.

Tab. 6: *Average monthly wage and labour productivity 2005*

Analysed indicator	BA	TT	TN	NT	ZA	BB	PO	KE
Average monthly wage - total 2005 (Sk)	23212	16086	15121	14257	15172	14541	13185	17274
Index of average monthly wage 2005/1998	178,3	169,3	165,3	160,4	168,4	155,7	158,1	165,1
Average monthly wage in Industry 2005 (Sk)	22693	16160	14281	13960	14700	14296	12539	18853
Labour productivity in Industry 2005 (tis. Sk)	6477	2113	1392	1518	1784	1396	1238	2430
Labour productivity in Industry in % of the SR average	247,2	94,4	55,9	57,5	77,8	60,9	51,8	102,7

Source: http://www.statistics.sk

The abovementioned wage expenses (see attached table) were in the Slovak Republic in 2005 only 22,3% of the EU-25 level, which makes Slovakia to be still an attractive location in terms of cheap workforce. In this area Slovakia ‚lags' not only behind the developed EU countries, but also behind the neighbouring countries like the Czech

Republic, Hungary and Slovenia, even though its growth index compared to 1996, was one of the highest (220,6). This advantage will disappear continually, due to both planned convergence of the EU regions and accession of Bulgaria and Romania into the EU space, as the wage expenses in these countries represent only 32,7%, respectively 51,1% of the SR level.

Development of small and mid-sized enterprises/entrepreneurialship (SME) is another important indicator of economic growth. During the 1996-2004 period the proportion of people employed in SME increased from 35,4% to 39,4%, with the majority of job opportunities were created by tradesmen, the proportion of which rose from 18,7% to 30,0% for the same period. The SME sector, as the creator of majority of job opportunities, managed to absorb major part of the workforce released by big factories and firms.

Tab. 7: *Small and middle enterprise 2004*

Analysed indicator	BA	TT	TN	NT	ZA	BB	PO	KE
No. of organisations focused on making profit /1000 inhab.	37,2	11,9	12,9	9,4	10,8	10,9	9,2	11,5
No. of tradesmen /1000 inhab.	94,4	66,0	63,6	57,8	69,6	53,7	56,2	46,3
No. of entrepreneurs in region per SR (%) – proportion	16,3	10,9	11,0	12,6	14,4	10,9	13,2	10,7
Average profit in enterprises – legal entities (thousands SKK)	978,2	333,4	347,0	-32,4	43,1	-189,6	-106,2	10,6
Average economic results before taxation – small enterprises	84,0	68,9	58,3	54,7	54,5	59,1	47,9	51,8

Source: http://www.ueos.sk/mvrr.sr/isvov

In terms of regions, the most SME, calculated per 1000 EAP (economically active population) are in the Bratislava county (160,0), the least in Košice (102,3) and Banská Bystrica counties (108,4). Similarly, most tradesmen are located in Bratislava county (59,2), least in Nitra county (16,6) and Prešov county (17,3). It is clear that the least developed regions are not yet able to create enough entrepreneurial activities and that the role of state interventions towards the SME sector and support of the entrepreneurial spirit can bring important results, for example even in solving of the high unemployment rate problem.

Another complex indicator, which evaluates the area of SME, is the business environment index (IPP), which has a form of a compound number, and which talks about the quality of the business environment in the regions of Slovakia. It combines the values of selected statistic indicators in the fields of economic activity, infrastructure, human resources and public authorities, with results of questionnaire surveys. According to the IPP results, the best entrepreneurial conditions can be found in Bratislava county, which has the index of 147,6 points. Opposite to this is the Prešov county, with the index value of 71,2. Even in the case of business environment, the difference between Bratislava county and the rest of Slovakia gets deeper. Notable differences are also visible when comparing Western Slovakia (82,5 points) with Central (74,3) and Eastern Slovakia (73,0).

Tab. 8: *Business environment index (IPP) 2004*

Hodnotený ukazovateľ	BA	TT	TN	NT	ZA	BB	PO	KE
subindex - economic activity	300,2	111,6	88,6	72,7	72,6	57,6	50,5	70,2
subindex - infrastructure	172,8	101,6	88,0	87,1	88,0	80,0	84,8	82,1
subindex – human resources	111,1	90,0	81,1	102,3	94,4	96,3	89,3	92,9
subindex – public statement	78,2	90,5	89,6	83,4	85,0	81,9	87,7	78,3
Business Environment Index – total	147,6	90,7	77,8	78,9	77,3	71,2	72,2	73,8

Source: The Business Alliance of Slovakia (2005)

LABOUR MARKET

In spite of the continuing decline, the unemployment rate remains very high and the employment rate too low, which is a consequence of the reduction of overemployment in industry and inadequate ability of economy to create new job opportunities. Even though in the period of 1999 and 2005 the number of people employed in Slovak economy increased, the unemployment rate still lags by 6,1% behind the EU-25 average and by 8,9 behind the average rate of the EU-15.

Tab. 9: *Employed by economic activity 2005*

Analysed indicator	BA	TT	TN	NT	ZA	BB	PO	KE
Number of employed - total (in thousand persons)	313,5	258,5	271,1	284,4	281,1	248,8	292,8	266,1
Proportion of the region per SR - employment in industry (%)	10,9	11,2	17,5	12,8	13,3	10,5	11,6	12,2
Proportion of the region per SR - empl. in agriculture (%)	4,5	14,7	10,4	19,0	10,5	15,1	14,2	11,7
Proportion of the region per SR - empl. in construction (%)	14,7	12,9	12,4	9,6	17,0	7,7	16,0	9,8
Proportion of the region per SR - employment in trade (%)	22,2	8,9	11,3	12,6	10,9	9,7	11,3	13,1

Source: http://www.statistics.sk

In terms of unemployment, Central Slovakia and (Banská Bystrica county and Žilina county) and Eastern Slovakia belong to 8 regions with the highest unemployment rate. It results mainly from the fact that young people (15-24 years old) represent a major proportion of overall unemployment, which indicates the problems of bad links between the labour market and a school system in the Slovak Republic.

Tab. 10: *Regional unemployment rate (%) in EÚ-25 (2004)*

Unemployment rate in EU-25 (2004)					
	Region (lowest)	**v %**		**Region (highest)**	**v %**
1.	Dorset a Somerset (UK)	2,4	1.	Dolnoslaskie (PL)	24,9
2.	North Yorkshire (UK)	2,6	2.	**Východné Slovensko (SR)**	**24,2**
3.	Province Autonoma Bolzano/Bozen (IT)	2,7	3.	Zachodniopomorskie (PL)	23,8
4.	Valle d'Aosta/Vallée d'Aoste (IT)	3,0	4.	Halle (DE)	23,4
5.	Cheshire (UK)	3,1	5.	Lubuskie (PL)	23,2
8.	Tirol (AT)	3,3	6.	Dessau (DE)	22,9
	Average of EÚ 25	**9,2**	8.	**Stredné Slovensko (SK)**	**22,1**

Source: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu

In spite of progressive decrease of the rate of registered unemployment, its rate in the least developed regions (Prešov, Košice and Banská Bystrica counties) remains in limits of 14,7-16,8% (2006). It is not only the level of unemployment, but also its structure which is unfavourable for these regions. The risk group of inhabitants with basic education only, or even uneducated people, still represents a big problem. It is mainly Roma population that, apart from social exclusion, is markedly disadvantaged on the labour market. The other significant problem in these regions is a category of long-term unemployed people (without employment for 12 months and more), which represents more than 55% of total unemployment. This category is risky, which is a result not only of the economic view (i.e. sinking under the poverty line), but also of social marginalisation and loss of labour skills and habits, which has a long-term consequences reflected in a difficult re-adaptation to the labour market.

Tab. 11: *Unemployment rate in SR 1997-2006 and it structure 6/2006*

Analysed indicator	**BA**	**TT**	**TN**	**NT**	**ZA**	**BB**	**PO**	**KE**
Unemployment rate (%) 1997	4,6	11,5	9,1	15,0	11,7	15,9	18,9	18,3
Unemployment rate (%) 2000	6,4	14,9	12,7	21,7	16,8	21,8	22,1	24,4
Unemployment rate (%) 2003	4,0	11,1	9,9	19,1	13,2	21,3	19,6	22,2
Unemployment rate (%) 2006 (jún)	2,5	6,4	6,0	10,4	7,9	16,8	14,7	16,6
Index of unemployment rate 2006/1997	54,3	55,6	65,9	69,3	67,5	105,7	77,8	90,7
Risk groups (%) (2006):								
Proportion of long-term unemployed	20,6	40,8	39,0	52,0	45,1	59,4	56,5	59,3
Proportion of unemployed with elementary education and apprentice training	44,7	68,5	63,6	69,1	63,2	74,2	73,4	73,9
No. of job opportunities /100 inhab. in the counties of SR (2006)								
Agriculture	1,0	3,5	1,8	3,7	2,0	3,1	2,6	2,3
Industry and Construction	10,0	11,0	18,3	10,7	12,2	12,0	8,6	10,2
Trade and Services	45,7	18,7	17,1	20,3	22,1	25,3	18,6	24,0

Source: Úrad práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny SR (2006)

According to Eurostat data, 16% of all population face poverty. The group most endangered by social exclusion and poverty are children (the poverty risk level of children

in the Slovak Republic is 30%), long-term unemployed (mainly young people less than 25-years-old), incomplete families, elderly people above 50 years of age, disabled people, persons on parental leave and the Roma minority living in marginalised communities.

TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Even though infrastructure has mainly a support role, it represents an important impulse for development of any region. Hirschman (1958 In Blažek, Uhlíř, 2002) argues that while sufficient infrastructure will not cause the development of production, the opposite causality exists – production development causes a pressure on the infrastructure development.

Transport Infrastructure

Developed and satisfactory transport infrastructure is a vital predisposition for a functional transport system and well functioning economy. Speed, regularity and the amount of transported materials and goods are an important competitiveness factor of many entrepreneurial subjects, which has a direct influence on the development of economic activities in the region. However, the role of transport infrastructure is only the supporting one, i.e. it does not necessarily have to be a development catalyst itself.

Tab. 12: *Road network in SR 2004*

Analysed indicator	BA	TT	TN	NT	ZA	BB	PO	KE
Lenght of motorways (km/1000 km²)	50,2	16,3	15,4	0,0	6,8	0,0	3,4	0,8
Percentage of motorways in the length of roads in the county	12,9	3,5	3,7	0,0	2,4	0,0	1,0	0,2
Percentage of 1st class roads in the length of roads in the county	16,4	13,9	16,2	19,5	25,6	18,1	20,2	15,4
Percentage of 2nd class roads in the length of roads in the county	26,4	27,6	18,8	19,7	15,6	22,9	16,9	24,6
Percentage of 3rd class roads in the length of roads in the county	44,3	55,0	61,2	60,7	56,4	59,0	61,9	59,7
Automobilisation degree (No. of inhabitants per 1 vehicle)	2,5	3,6	4,4	4,1	4,8	4,6	5,3	4,7

Source: Regionálne porovnania v SR 2004. Štatistický úrad SR

The highest quality road network can be found in the western part of Slovakia (most highways in this region), which is reflected in a good accessibility of the area and, consequently, in the foreign investments influx. Central and Eastern Slovakia have a relatively high amount of the 1st class roads, yet also of the 3rd class roads that are in a considerably bad state due to low funding of their maintenance and repairs. In terms of automobilisation, which from a major part corresponds with the level of purchasing power of population, the dominating region is Western Slovakia, mainly Bratislava county (2,5 persons/1car).

Characteristic for the railway infrastructure in the Slovak Republic is its relatively high density network (75 km/km², EÚ-15 only 47). However, due to the lack of renewal and low technical level and quality of equipment, the effectiveness of railroads is low. In terms

of railroads accessibility the least accessible are the largest counties – Prešov and Banská Bystrica counties, in which two-rail tracks are missing and where a higher proportion of regional lines can be found. These lines, in terms of speed and low transport operating efficiency marginalise the area and, sometimes, they are also cancelled due to their low economic effectiveness.

Tab. 13: *Railways in SR 2004*

Analysed indicator	BA	TT	TN	NT	ZA	BB	PO	KE
Lenght of railways (km/1000 km²)	121,3	74,3	70,3	89,1	57,6	72,9	48,2	104,6
Percentage in length of railway tracks in SR (%)	6,8	8,4	8,7	15,5	10,7	18,9	11,8	19,3
Percentage in length of double-track railway lines in SR (%)	10,1	15,4	11,4	9,2	23,3	4,1	3,6	22,9
Percentage in length of regional railway lines in SR (%)	9,5	2,4	6,1	10,5	16,6	21,3	19,8	13,8

Source: http://www.telecom.gov.sk

Environmental Infrastructure

Out of the total population of the SR, only 56,1% of inhabitants (only 24,0% of municipalities) reside in the houses with access to public sewage system, which is a number too low when compared to the developed EU countries (84,4%). Sewage water transport and purification lags behind drinking water supplied through water-supply system, as 85,1% of population (79,9% of Slovak municipalities) has access to this system. This shows the need of considerable funding of further building of sewerage system and of wastewater treatment equipment and plants. It is not only a duty for the Slovak Republic, as stated by the EU accession treaty, but also an important element of the living standard and environment protection.

Tab. 14: *Municipalities and inhabitants with Access to public water-supply and sewage system in 2004*

Analysed indicator	BA	TT	TN	NT	ZA	BB	PO	KE
Percentage of inhabitants with water-supply system access	98,6	95,2	72,5	89,3	85,6	90,0	73,4	76,1
Percentage of municipalities with water-supply system access	94,5	80,9	83,0	85,0	95,2	72,1	58,9	69,8
Percentage of inhabitants with sewage system access	85,1	52,6	47,2	45,1	51,7	59,4	51,4	56,6
Percentage of municipalities with sewage system access	47,9	33,5	16,3	20,9	24,8	17,4	15,8	15,2
Urbanisation level (%)	83,4	49,6	57,4	47,5	50,8	54,0	49,3	56,3

Source: Regionálna porovnania v SR 2004. Štatistický úrad SR

The issue of waste disposal is a separate problem, as the increase in its production requires a support in the field of prevention and minimising of the waste production; of its processing and separated waste collection. When compared to the EU-15, the issue

of communal waste is characterised by the level of production lower almost by 300kg/ person/year (42%), yet the level of waste processing in Slovakia is only 12,7%, with the highest proportion o fit happening in Bratislava county – 51,0% of the communal waste is being processed, mainly by incinerating.

Tab. 15: *Structure of waste economy in the SR counties in 2005*

Analysed indicator	BA	TT	TN	NT	ZA	BB	PO	KE
Dangerous waste in thousands of tons	2082,3	1485,1	1087,9	1999,0	1061,6	1820,6	747,4	4001,9
Communal waste (CW) thousands of tons	233,5	200,3	161,7	211,5	198,9	146,2	162,4	161,0
Amount of CW in kg/inhan./year	374,5	310,7	259,8	288,2	269,3	213,8	199,6	205,1
Proportion of processed CW (%)	51,0	6,8	6,9	7,5	8,6	5,8	11,5	3,9
Proportion of foiled CW (%)	49,0	93,2	93,1	92,5	91,4	96,1	93,0	97,0
Dumps of dangerous waste/not dangerous waste/inert	2/6/2	2/19/2	1/15/3	2/21/2	1/16/3	1/21/2	1/21/1	3/12/3

Source: Program odpadového hospodárstva SR do roku 2005. http://www.enviro.gov.sk

Information Infrastructure

As for the telecommunication infrastructure, Bratislava county dominates in all analysed areas (63,9%, 50,5% respectively 193,7% more than the SR average). Ratio of other counties is on a comparable level, with Žilina and Prešov counties lagging the most behind the average.

Tab. 16: *Telecommunication infrastructure 2004*

Analysed indicator	BA	TT	TN	NT	ZA	BB	PO	KE
No. of telephone connection per 1000 inhab.	382,4	219,7	237,6	216,3	201,9	222,8	196,5	214,5
- of which: housing per 1000 inhab.	266,6	168,6	189,1	168,2	153,2	169,1	148,4	170,0
Telephone connection ISDN per 1000 inhab.	52,0	18,6	12,1	14,1	14,3	13,1	10,7	12,4

Source: Regionálna porovnania v SR 2004. Štatistický úrad SR

Number of customers attached to the Internet in the Slovak Republic grows constantly. While in 1997 there was only 20995 of them, in 2005 it was 521341. It is almost a 40-fold increase when calculated per 1000 inhabitants. This positive trend can be a result of both, the possibility of gaining and presenting a wide variety of information by means of the Internet, as well as of the increase of possibilities and decrease of the prices for connection to the Internet. In spite of this, though, Slovakia remains at the last place in the EU in the sphere of proportion of households connected to the web (see the attached Table). As for the regions and counties, dominant is, again, the Bratislava county (244,0), and partly a Trnava and Košice counties. The lowest number of customers can be found in the Prešov county.

Tab. 17: *Enlargement of internet in SR 1996-2005*

Analysed indicator	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
No. of internet users per 1000 inhab.	11,7	26,8	54,2	93,8	125,3	160,4	255,8	422,7	463,9
No. of internet clients per 1000 inhab.	3,9	6,5	8,7	12,5	18,6	24,9	33,9	73,9	96,8
- of which: housing (%)	-	-	29,6	39,3	40,7	47,4	53,2	34,2	34,6
- of which: nonhousing (%)	-	-	70,4	60,7	59,3	52,6	46,8	23,8	21,9
- of which: via mobile networks (%)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	42,0	43,6

Source: http://www.telecom.gov.sk/externe/telekom/statistika/search.htm?ZOBRAZ&0&1991&24

In terms of the structure of Internet connection, the xDSL connection is the most common (30,9%), dial-up access (24,9%) and connection through ISDN (8,5%).

Tab. 18: *Number and structure of internet clients 2005*

Analysed indicator	BA	TT	TN	NT	ZA	BB	PO	KE
No. of internet clients per 1000 inhab.	244,0	103,4	77,1	70,6	76,2	64,9	48,8	103,2
Permanent access	2390 (*4,9*)	175 (*0,3*)	110 (*0,2*)	819 (*1,2*)	75 (*0,1*)	88 (*0,1*)	492 (*0,6*)	16407 (*3,5*)
Through cable modem	19483 (*32,4*)	676 (*1,2*)	8 (*0,0*)	87 (*0,1*)	914 (*1,3*)	0 (*0,0*)	3 (*0,0*)	323 (*0,4*)
XDSL connection	28723 (*47,8*)	13613 (*24,6*)	11548 (*19,2*)	9746 (*13,7*)	9820 (*14,1*)	10391 (*15,8*)	9653 (12,1)	10993 (14,3)
With permanent radio access	1939 (*3,2*)	4538 (*8,2*)	1472 (*2,4*)	1478 (*2,1*)	7131 (*10,3*)	1260 (*1,9*)	892 (*1,1*)	3163 (*4,1*)
Commute circuits – dial-up access	14829 (*24,7*)	10507 (*19,0*)	9137 (*15,2*)	9639 (*13,6*)	9118 (*13,1*)	10110 (*15,4*)	8101 (*10,2*)	8203 (*10,6*)
Commute circuits – ISDN connection	8346 (*13,9*)	3269 (*5,9*)	4142 (*6,9*)	3404 (*4,8*)	4133 (*6,0*)	3817 (*5,8*)	3132 (*3,9*)	2683 (*3,5*)

Source: http://www.telecom.gov.sk/externe/telekom/statistika/search.htm?ZOBRAZ&0&1991&24¸
(in brackets) – counted on 1000 inhab.

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Residential Buildings

The differences in the field of housing still remain both in the quantitative (number of inhabitants and number of flats) and quality (flat size and area indicators) level of housing. Both of these lag behind the EU average. High quality and accessible housing is an important factor that can influence the workforce mobility (one of the serious problems of the Slovak economy). The housing situation and solutions of the problems in this field vary considerably from one region to another. While in the regions with high inflow of foreign investments (Bratislava, Trnava and Žilina counties) the building and finishing of flats is significant (in total more than 58% SR), in Prešov, Košice and Banská Bystrica counties it is not more than 25%, even though 42,1% of Slovak population lives in these counties and they also have the 2nd, 3rd and 5th largest town in Slovakia as their centres.

Tab. 19: *Structure of housing stock in SR 2005*

Analysed indicator	BA	TT	TN	NT	ZA	BB	PO	KE
Begined dwellings	7079	3681	1634	1388	2208	909	1672	1225
Percentage per SR (%)	35,4	18,4	8,2	6,9	11,1	4,6	8,4	6,1
Completed dwellings	4673	2055	1575	1087	1997	772	1343	944
Percentage per SR (%)	32,3	14,2	10,9	7,5	13,8	5,3	9,3	6,5
Builded partially dwellings	12033	7616	3903	4486	6871	3193	5821	4951
Percentage per SR (%)	24,6	15,6	8,0	9,2	14,1	6,5	11,9	10,1
Average living space (m^2)	72,9	71,9	64,9	80,4	71,7	74,1	74,0	86,4
Permanently lived-in flats/1000 inhab.	364,9	306,4	315,5	324,0	292,3	329,0	263,7	296,8

Source: http://www.ueos.sk/mvrr.sr/isvov

Construction and building of flats also has a significant influence on the number of flats per 1000 inhabitants. In this area are again the dominant counties situated in the western part of the country, especially Bratislava county (367,9). On the other hand, the leeway is most remarkable in the Prešov (263,7) and Žilina (292,3) counties. Yet in Žilina county, due to fast flat building, which is a consequence of an important foreign investment KIA, the state progressively improves. In Eastern Slovakia, the most common is building of municipal social flats, as prices of newly built flats on a commercial basis (with the prices on the level of e.g. Bratislava) are too high compared to the low income level of people here. As for the flat prices in general, there is a visible decrease in west-east direction, which can be connected with the attractiveness of the regions in terms of investments, purchasing power of people, new flats construction and a migration to Western Slovakia and Bratislava.

Tab. 20: *Comparison of prices for 3-bedroom flats (v millions SKK) in regional centres in 2006*

Analysed indicator	BA	TT	TN	NT	ZA	BB	PO	KE
Standard dwelling	2,3 - 3,4	1,6 - 2,5	1,5 - 2,3	1,5 - 2,0	1,6 - 2,7	1,2 - 3,1	0,9 - 1,8	0,9 - 3,6
New building / luxury dw.	6,5 - 8,0	2,9 - 3,9	2,6	2,6	3,2	4,9	2,2	4,2

Source: www.reality.sk

Education, science and research

Public expenses in the field of education have decreased significantly since 1989. In 2000 they were 4,2% of GDP, while the average in the EU-15 countries was 5,0% of GDP. Many of the educational institutions are in bad technical state and this results in high running costs. Education quality and accessibility is influenced by the long-term lack of funding from the state, municipalities and self-government authorities, which results in an unsatisfactory technical state of buildings and equipment, as well as high running costs.

The number of pupils/students calculated per 1000 inhabitants of a county is one of the partial indicators evaluating high/secondary schools and universities. The highest proportion is in Bratislava county, with the exception of apprentice vocational schools. The number of university students in Bratislava county is biased due to a significant number of

students commuting from other counties, as Bratislava is a university centre of Slovakia. Universities in other counties have mainly a regional importance and status.

Tab. 21: *Numbers of pupils and students of high schools and universities in 2004*

Analysed indicator	BA	TT	TN	NT	ZA	BB	PO	KE
No. of students at Comprehensive secondary schools/1000 inhab.	30,7	15,5	15,2	16,2	18,9	17,4	18,1	19,1
No. of students at Specialised high schools /1000 inhab.	20,7	17,2	11,8	16,1	19,0	15,8	17,7	20,7
No. of students at Secondary vocational schools /1000 inhab.	13,1	16,5	14,5	11,6	15,1	9,7	17,3	16,6
No. of students at universities (full-time) /1000 inhab.	69,8	10,4	5,4	17,9	15,5	15,3	7,9	21,1
No. of students at universities (total) /1000 inhab.	95,9	20,3	8,2	29,2	23,4	29,5	12,0	26,3

Source: Regionálna porovnania v SR 2004. Štatistický úrad SR

The funding (from public funds) for public universities in 2006 was 11,6 milliard SKK. This amount was progressively growing in the last few years: 8,3 milliard SKK (2003), 9,4 milliard SKK (2004) and 10,4 milliard SKK (2005), even though the real amount of total expenses for universities in years 1989-2000 decreased by 37,5%. Quality and success rate of individual universities varies a lot. Academic Rating and Ranking Agency (ARRA) used the following criteria in universities evaluation process in 2005: teachers and students, interest in studying at the particular university, publications and citations, PhD. Studies and grants.

Tab. 22: *Evaluation (in points) of universities by the ARRA* agency in 2005*

County	University	Evaluation of university (county)	
BA	Slovenská technická univerzita / Univerzita Komenského / Vysoká škola výtvarných umení Vysoká škola muzických umení / Ekonomická univerzita	55 / 52 / 51 / 43 / 32	**(47)**
TT	Trnavská univerzita / Univerzita sv. Cyrila a Metoda	42 / 24	**(33)**
TN	Trenčianska univerzita A. Dubčeka	32	**(32)**
NT	Slovenská poľnohospodárska univerzita / Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa	46 / 30	**(38)**
ZA	Žilinská univerzita / Katolícka univerzita v Ružomberku	39 / 27	**(33)**
BB	Akadémia umení / Univerzita Mateja Bela / Technická univerzita vo Zvolene	37 / 30 / 55	**(41)**
PO	Prešovská univerzita	35	**(35)**
KE	Univerzita veterinárneho lekárstva / Univerzita P.J. Šafárika / Technická univerzita v KE	80 / 49 / 43	**(57)**
SR	**Priemer za všetky slovenské vysoké školy**		**(42)**

Source: Hodnotenie vysokých škôl a ich fakúlt v roku 2005. MŠ SR (2006). ARRA - občianske združenie Akademická rankingová a ratingová agentúra*

The main university centres in Slovakia are Bratislava (47 pts) and Košice (57 pts), with a minor centre in Banská Bystrica (41 pts). Other counties lag behind both in the variety of study fields offered as well as in their quality, even though the quality of some universities reaches that of Bratislava and Košice universities – e.g. Technical University in Zvolen (55 pts) and Slovak Agricultural University in Nitra (46 pts).

Almost half of all the staff in science, research and development field Works in Bratislava county at present. The consequence of this uneven distribution of scientific and research institutions in Slovakia is also the uneven distribution of funding for science and research – Bratislava county gets 49% of this funding, while Prešov county receives less than 3%. Science and research funding had a falling trend in the years 1993-2004. While in 1993 they represented 1,53% of GDP, in 2004 it was 0,53% and in 2005 only 0,51%, which is the least in the EU-25 (together with Cyprus – 0,40%). Average expenses per 1 employee in the field of research and development in 2004 reached the amount of 401,4 thousand SKK. The highest level was seen in Trenčín county (1386,4 thousand SKK), the lowest in Košice county (241,1 thousand SKK).

Tab. 23: *Science & research in 2004*

Analysed indicator	BA	TT	TN	NT	ZA	BB	PO	KE
No. of organisations in Science & research in 2004	105	22	33	20	27	21	19	25
No. of employees (researchers) in Science & research in 2004	8357	829	560	1548	1624	1291	583	2562
Science & research - Expenses (millions of SKK) in 2004	3432,5	657,8	776,4	425,5	493,5	356,2	205,8	617,7

Source: Regionálne porovnania v SR 2004. Štatistický úrad SR

CONCLUSION

Taking into account the length of this article, it is impossible to evaluate in it the regional disparities in Slovakia in all their depth. Therefore, only the basic evaluation socio-economic indicators were chosen, as they show that the Slovak Republic belongs to the group of less developed EU countries, such as Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland. According to some indicators (unemployment rate, long-term unemployment rate, public expenditure on labour market policy measures, GDP on research and development) Slovakia belongs to the least developed countries in the EU framework. In terms of regional disparities Bratislava county dominates in almost all indicators. Out of remaining regions Western Slovakia has the leading position. On the other end of the scale is Eastern Slovakia and mainly Prešov Region, which lags behind most and this disparity deepens progressively. This trend is unfavourable for the balanced development of Slovakia, not even the regional politics is efficient in that area. From the point of view of the near future it is possible to presume that also henceforward the strongest economic regions will develop, and the regional disparities will even deepen.

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Tab. 24: *Development indicators comparison in the EU countries in 2004-2005*

	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]	[8]	[9]	[10]	[11]	[12]
EU 25	*100,0*	*63,8*	*11,9*	*21,2*	*3140*	-	*3,9*	-	*1,85*	*18*	*10,2*	*51*
Belgium	118,1	61,1	8,4	30,7	3938	8,4	4,4	3,33	1,82	7	8,3	54
Denmark	121,9	75,9	-	*30,7	*4186	4,8	1,1	4,19	2,44	13	27,4	79
Germany	110,0	65,4	5,6	26,4	3787	11,2	5,0	3,17	2,51	15	7,7	67
Greece	84,1	60,1	4,3	*13,4	*1984	9,8	5,1	0,61	0,61	7	1,9	23
Spain	98,0	63,3	8,3	15,2	2135	9,2	2,2	2,05	1,12	6	10,5	39
France	108,2	63,1	7,3	29,3	4296	9,5	4,0	2,44	2,13	20	7,1	41
Ireland	138,9	67,6	-	-	-	4,3	1,5	0,68	1,25	29	7,4	50
Italy	100,4	57,6	16,0	*21,4	*2904	7,7	3,9	1,31	1,10	7	5,8	40
Luxemburg	251,1	63,6	-	*28,3	-	4,5	1,2	0,69	1,56	30	8,5	70
Netherlands	125,6	73,2	2,0	27,4	3974	4,7	1,9	3,36	1,78	19	15,9	80
Austria	123,1	68,6	4,1	*25,3	-	5,2	1,3	1,83	2,36	15	12,9	52
Portugal	71,1	67,5	3,3	10,6	1557	7,6	3,7	1,87	0,81	8	4,1	35
Finland	110,7	68,4	5,5	26,4	3573	8,4	2,2	2,85	3,48	18	22,5	65
Sweden	114,8	72,5	3,0	*30,4	*4313	7,5	1,2	2,32	3,86	14	32,1	77
United Kingdom	117,6	71,7	5,7	24,5	4071	4,7	1,0	0,45	1,73	23	27,5	63
Slovakia	57,1	***57,7***	***9,8***	***4,8***	***701***	***16,3***	***11,7***	***0,39***	***0,51***	***5***	***4,6***	***27***
Czech Republic	73,7	64,8	5,5	6,6	954	7,9	4,2	0,39	1,42	14	5,6	29
Poland	49,7	52,8	5,6	5,6	818	17,7	10,2	-	0,57	3	4,9	36
Hungary	62,5	56,9	9,9	6,1	944	7,2	3,2	0,59	0,94	22	3,9	32
Slovenia	81,9	66,0	-	10,8	1605	6,5	3,1	-	1,22	5	15,3	54
Estonia	59,8	64,4	-	4,7	713	7,9	4,2	-	0,94	10	5,9	46
Latvia	48,0	63,3	-	2,8	433	8,9	4,1	-	0,57	3	7,9	42
Lithuania	52,1	62,6	-	3,6	556	8,3	4,3	0,26	0,76	3	6,0	35
Cyprus	88,9	68,5	-	*11,1	*1903	5,3	1,2	-	0,40	16	5,9	37
Malta	70,4	53,9	-	8,4	1386	7,0	3,4	-	0,61	56	5,3	53

Source: www.eurostat.com

lowest values

highest values

[1] - Gross domestic produkt (GDP) per capita in Purchasing Power Standards (PPS) 2005 (EU 25 = 100%)

[2] - Employment rate (%) 2005

[3] - Dispersion of regional employment rates 2005 (zero - the smallest dispersion)

[4] - Hourly labour costs (EUR) 2005 - * 2004

[5] - Monthly labour costs (EUR) 2005 - * 2004

[6] - Unemployment rate (%) 2005

[7] - Long-term unemployment rate (12 months +) (%) 2005

[8] - Public expenditure on labour market police measures (%) 2005 - as % of GDP

[9] - Gross domestic expenditure on Research and Development (%) 2005 - as % of GDP

[10] - High-tech export (%) 2004 - exports of high technology products as a share of total exports

[11] - Life-long learning (%) 2005 - % of the adult population (25-64) participating in education and training

[12] - Level of internet access - households (%) 2006 - % of households who have internet access at home

SLOVENSKO A ANALÝZA JEHO DISPARÍT

Zhrnutie

Medzi najdôležitejšie disparity v rámci konvergencie SR ku krajinám bývalej EÚ-15 je možné zaradiť najmä nízku výkonnosť (v zmysle HDP na obyv. v PKS), ktorá predstavuje iba 57,1% priemeru krajín EÚ-25, nízku pridanú hodnotu, nízku produktivitu práce a vysokú energetickú náročnosť ekonomiky (410% priemeru krajín EÚ-15). Druhou významnou skutočnosťou je nízka miera zamestnanosti v SR - 57,7% (piata najnižšia v EÚ-25, najviac Dánsko 75,9% a Holandsko 73,2%) a vysoká miera nezamestnanosti (16,3%). Naviac je nezamestnanosť výrazne poznačená vôbec najvyššou mierou dlhodobej nezamestnanosti v EÚ-25 až 11,7%.

Naopak medzi faktory rozvoja SR patrí vysoká dynamika hospodárskeho rastu. Hospodárska politika sa orientuje na podporu lepšieho využitia tradičných faktorov ekonomického rastu postavených najmä na využívaní práce a kapitálu prostredníctvom nižších fixných nákladov, prebytku pracovnej sily, disponibilite a nízkej cene priemyselných plôch, netrhových výhodách (investičné stimuly) a pod.

Z hľadiska regionálnych disparít v rámci SR sa nachádza na jednej strane rozvinutý a ekonomicky napredujúci „západ“ s dominantným centrom Bratislava resp. Bratislavský kraj a na strane druhej zaostávajúci a hospodársky stagnujúci „východ“. Bratislavský kraj, ktorý v podstate predstavuje hlavné mesto Bratislava, patrí z hľadiska viacerých ukazovateľov (napr. HDP na obyv., miera nezamestnanosti a pod.) k priemeru regiónov EÚ, avšak ostatné Slovensko a najmä región Východné Slovensko sa zaradzuje medzi najmenej rozvinuté regióny EÚ (HDP na obyv. iba 39% priemeru EÚ, miera nezamestnanosti je až 24,1%).

Na celkovú ekonomickú výkonnosť jednotlivých regiónov pôsobí viacero faktorov, pričom niektoré je možné priamo ovplyvňovať resp. riadiť ako napr. prílev priamych zahraničných investícií (PZI), ktoré pre slovenské regióny často predstavujú prvotný impulz rozvoja. Zatiaľ čo pre Prešovský kraj ako kraj najviac investične poddimenzovaný je ich výška iba 1,7% z PZI v SR, do Bratislavského kraja smeruje až 67,1% všetkých PZI. S prílevom investícií dochádza zákonite i k rozvoju iných faktorov ako napr. výstavba infraštruktúry, ktorá je spájaná najmä s výstavbou diaľničnej siete v západnej a čiastočne i severnej časti územia Slovenska. Tieto rozvojové činitele sa prejavujú pozitívne resp. negatívne (ak absentujú v požadovanej miere) aj v iných oblastiach ako napr. miera nezamestnanosti, tržby a pridaná hodnota, ale i celková kvalita života miestneho obyvateľstva a jeho kúpyschopnosť. Celkovo možno povedať, že uvedené faktory (vysoká miera nezamestnanosti a veľký podiel dlhodobo nezamestnaných, nízky prílev PZI, nízka pridaná hodnota, absencia „veľkej“ dopravnej infraštruktúry) patria medzi rozhodujúce činitele ovplyvňujúce narastanie regionálnych disparít na Slovensku. Problémy s ich zvládnutím narastajú a ani samotná regionálna politika štátu zatiaľ nenapomáha k ich riešeniu. Z hľadiska blízkej budúcnosti je možné vysloviť predpoklad, že aj naďalej bude dochádzať k rozvoju najmä v ekonomicky najsilnejších regiónoch a regionálne rozdiely sa budú ďalej prehlbovať.

Recenzovali: Prof. RNDr. Viliam Lauko, CSc.
Prof. RNDr. Robert Ištok, PhD.