



*Permanent Mission of the Slovak Republic
to the Office of the United Nations
and other International Organizations at Geneva*

No.: 2000/2010-CHSM1

The Permanent Mission of the Slovak Republic to the Office of the United Nations and other International Organisations at Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and has the honour, further to the request received on 8 February 2010, to submit herewith the reply of Slovakia to the **questionnaire on good practices related to safe drinking water and sanitation.**

The Permanent Mission of the Slovak Republic to the Office of the United Nations and other International Organisations at Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, 28 June 2010



Enclosure: 4 pages

Independent Expert on the issue of human rights obligations related to access
to safe drinking water and sanitation
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OHCHR REGISTRY

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Recipients : *SPD*
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Drinking water and sanitation and human rights in Slovakia (June 2010)

Description of the practice:

Name of the organisation:

Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic

The Authority provides expert and methodological management, guidance and control of state administration in the area of public health implemented by 36 regional public health authorities in the Slovak Republic. A more detailed description of its competencies and scope of authority in the field of public health protection, support and development is laid down in Section 5 and 11 of Act No.355/2007 Coll. on the Protection, Support and Development of Public Health and on the amendment of certain acts as amended.

Public health bodies monitor the quality of consumers' drinking water and draw up evaluation reports on drinking water quality for the European Commission.

The Ministry of Health supervises the implementation of the international Protocol on Water and Health in the Slovak Republic.

Target group(s):

the general public;
the European Commission and the WHO.

Partners involved:

The Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic, regional public health authorities, the Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications of the Slovak Republic, the Slovak Information Service, the Slovak Environmental Agency, the Water Research Institute, the Slovak Hydrometeorology Institute, Slovenský vodohospodársky podnik, š. p. (the state-run Slovak Water Management Enterprise), the State Geological Institute of Dionýz Štúr, the Inspectorate of Spas and Springs (IKŽ) in the area of natural medicinal water sources and natural mineral water sources, the waterworks, the Slovak Association of Towns and Villages, etc.

Financing (short/medium/long term):

The Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic (along with its regional public health authorities) represents an organisation funded from the state budget, which has authority across the territory of the Slovak Republic, is seated in Bratislava, and financially linked to the budget of the Ministry of Health.

1. How does the practice meet the criterion of availability?

The Slovak Republic has no problems with the availability of high-quality drinking water. Drinking water in the Slovak Republic is primarily obtained from high-quality groundwater sources.

Pursuant to Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 369/1990 Coll. on Municipal Administration, the municipality is obliged to ensure water supply.

In 2009, water was supplied to 85.29% of the Slovak population from public water ducts. The quality of this water was regularly monitored by the water duct operators, as well as by public health bodies. 14.71% of the Slovak population had their own supply, i.e. using water from their own wells. There are regional differences in the rate of supply.

In recent years, citizens have been implementing saving measures due to financial reasons. They have been building their own sources of drinking water, with quality mostly below hygienic standards.

The **STN 75 5115: Water Management** technical standard governs the positioning and technical conditions of water wells. **Individual water supply wells** The standard exactly specifies the conditions for ensuring high-quality well drinking water already when selecting the location on the basis of a hydrogeological assessment in a non-polluted environment; it determines the minimum distance from potential sources of pollution (e.g. cesspits, septic tanks, sewage connections, pigsties, dung heaps), the establishment of water wells, water well accessories, modification of water well surroundings, water well inspection and disinfection.

2. How does the practice meet the criterion of accessibility?

Ensuring the supply of drinking water to the citizens is part of Slovakia's water management policy.

The **Water Management Policy Concept of the Slovak Republic until 2015**, which the Slovak Government acknowledged in February 2006, represents the fundamental document in its implementation. Pursuant to this Concept, the **Plan for the development of public water ducts and public sewage in the territory of the Slovak Republic until 2015** was drawn up with regard to drinking water supply through public water ducts and with regard to drainage and treatment of communal waste water until 2010 and 2015.

Pursuant to Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 369/1990 Coll. on Municipal Administration, the municipality is obliged to ensure water supply.

3. How does the practice meet the criterion of affordability?

Drinking water pricing falls within the competence of private waterworks.

4. How does the practice meet the criterion of quality/safety?

If sanitation facilities are meant to include WCs, showers..., public health bodies have no special regulation in place, which would stipulate general and universal requirements with regard to cleaning, safety, disposal of sanitary towels, etc.

Regulations only address the requirements placed on these facilities – e.g. the number of toilets, number of showers in certain types of facilities (for example swimming pools, accommodation facilities, etc.).

General information on sanitation facilities is provided in the following legislation:

Decree of the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic No. 259/2008 Coll. laying down the details of requirements for interior of buildings and the minimum requirements for apartments of lower standard and accommodation facilities

Table 10 – Requirements for the equipment of personal hygiene facilities by type of accommodation facility and number of guests

Government Regulation No. 391/2006 Coll. on the minimum safety and health requirements of workplaces

Annex 11 lists the requirements placed on personal hygiene facilities (dressing rooms, showers and washbasins, toilets)

Decree of the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic No. 554/2007 Coll. laying down the details of requirements for human body care facilities – requirements placed on washbasins, toilets, showers in human body care facilities, etc.

5. How does the practice meet the criterion of acceptability?

See No. 4 above.

6. How does the practice ensure non-discrimination?

Pursuant to the Constitution of the Slovak Republic:

- everyone has the right to protection of health;
- fundamental rights are guaranteed in the Slovak Republic to everyone regardless of sex, race, colour, language, belief and religion, political affiliation or other conviction, national or social origin, nationality or ethnic origin, property, descent or any other status. No one shall be aggrieved, discriminated against or favoured on any of these grounds.

7. How does the practice ensure active, free and meaningful participation?

Apart from the public health bodies' obligation to provide information pursuant to Act No. 211/2000 Coll. on Free Access to Information as amended, the implementation of European directives implied further new obligations for Slovakia in terms of informing the public (about drinking and bathing water, *inter alia*). Providing information of sufficient quality concerning the supply, the quality of water from public water ducts and its biological value to human health may effectively promote the use of drinking water, especially now that we are experiencing a drop in drinking water consumption. Through the provision of sufficient information about water quality and how its hygienic parameters are ensured, as well as through communication with the public, it is possible to facilitate and secure sufficient consumer trust for using drinking water from public water ducts.

The decreasing consumption of drinking water from public water ducts and the use of individual water sources of unverified quality may not only increase the risk of infectious and chronic diseases, but also affect the hygienic habits of certain population groups. Individual water sources are jeopardised especially in extreme situations – floods or long lasting droughts and extreme heat. Therefore, awareness-raising by public health bodies focuses in particular on such events. The water well owners ask about using individual water wells for drinking purposes, ensuring well protection and using water treatment equipment in households. Every year, public interest in drinking water and the examination of drinking water from own sources increases on the occasion of the World Water Day. In 2010, sixteen regional public health authorities and the Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic received a total of 1750 well water samples within the framework of free examinations; the examinations requested focused on the indicators of nitrates, nitrites, ammonium ions and pH.

Public health bodies inform the public mainly in writing (letter, fax, e-mail) and verbally (in person and by phone). The respective offices' websites include the annual reports of the regional public health offices and of the Public Health Office of the Slovak Republic on drinking water, evaluation reports on the results from the monitoring of the quality of drinking water supplied to the consumers from public water ducts in the Slovak Republic, information about drinking water exceptions, etc. Information is also provided via the media (TV, radio, press – opinions, comments, discussions and articles). Leaflets (e.g. "*What do we know about drinking water in the Slovak Republic*") and information brochures are also published.

The Information System on Swimming Pools and Bathing Water Quality is operational as of 2008 and the Drinking Water Information System as of 2010; both provide relevant up-to-date information to the general public and facilitate data processing at the national, as well as the European level.

7. How does the practice ensure accountability?

In their capacity of public water duct operators, waterworks are responsible for drinking water quality and are obliged to monitor it. The same applies to swimming pool operators.

For example as regards bathing water, the public may participate in the drawing up of a list of "waters suitable for bathing", which is submitted to the public for comment every year before the start of the season.

What is the impact of the practice?

Current problems in the area of drinking and bathing water are taken into account in the drawing up of new and the amending of existing legislation.

8. Is the practice sustainable?

Through the performance of its tasks, the Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic strives to ensure sustainable development in this area.