



Bratislava, 27 October 2022

## Let's support the right to housing for all

Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic  
Eduard Heger

### **Open call to action for the protection of the right to housing, the acceptance of Article 31 of the European Social Charter (revised) and its system of collective complaints**

Dear Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic,

The COVID-19 pandemic has once again brought attention to the importance of having a safe and stable home for everyone. We can also expect negative impacts of the climate and energy crisis and inadequately resolved energy poverty. Housing is not just a commodity, but a fundamental human need and a fundamental human right. In Slovakia, however, this human right is practically unavailable for many people.

Lack of affordable and available housing, dysfunctional rental housing system, inadequate housing in terms of quality or legal certainty, as well as discrimination and social exclusion, are reasons for the lack of access to housing for many population groups, including many Roma families, migrants or persons with disabilities. For many people, lack of access to housing and social services is a question of security and dignity, including for families in financial or social crisis, single-parent families, victims of domestic and partner violence, low-income families and unemployed people, people living in dwellings without settled legal relationships, young adults or persons in situation of homelessness.<sup>1</sup>

Affordable housing is also a prerequisite for tackling other crisis situations and for the realization of other human rights, including right to education and right to health. For children and young people, accessible housing also represents a secure place for a happy and successful life.

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<sup>1</sup> See also Slovak National Centre for Human Rights: *Right to housing. Research probes in the field of applying the right to housing in Slovakia*, 2019, available in Slovak at <https://bit.ly/3SiMCVK>; Slovak National Centre for Human Rights: *Young adults from centers for children and families and the application of the right to housing*, 2021, available in Slovak at <https://bit.ly/3TvzUnW>; Beňová, N., and Matiaško, M.: *Right to housing*, 2018, SOČIA – Nadácia na podporu sociálnych zmien, Proti prúdu, NOTA BENE, available in Slovak at <https://bit.ly/3Ty3nxx>; and Fico, M., Ondrušová, D., and Škobla, D.: *Survey of rental housing and city hostels in the district cities of the Slovak Republic*, 2019, Institute for Labour and Family Research, available in Slovak at <https://bit.ly/3yXdzYo>.

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By ratifying international human rights instruments, the state undertakes to improve the conditions for protection of human rights and declares its intention to systematically and proactively improve the conditions for a dignified life for all people. The Slovak Republic undertook to protect and fulfill the right to housing already by ratifying the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It also ratified the European Social Charter (hereinafter referred to as the "Charter") in 1998 and its revised version in 2009, accepting 87 of its 98 provisions. However, the selective acceptance of the provisions of the Charter should only be a temporary phenomenon, and the Slovak Republic should gradually accept all of the provisions of the revised Charter.

The Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, as the national human rights institution and equality body (hereinafter referred to as the "Center"), calls on the government of the Slovak Republic to start the process of acceptance of the Article 31 of the Charter (revised), which guarantees the right to housing. During the regular review of the non-accepted provisions of the Charter, the European Committee for Social Rights recommended that the Government considers the acceptance of at least Article 31 paragraph 2 (measures designed to prevent and reduce homelessness with a view to its gradual elimination). With adoption of some necessary measures to remove any remaining obstacles, it also encouraged the Government of the Slovak Republic to proceed to accepting Article 31 paragraph 1 (measures designed to promote access to housing of an adequate standard) and Article 31 paragraph 3 (measures designed to make the price of housing accessible to those without adequate resources) .

Emphasizing the importance of examining individual cases and bringing the voice and experience of victims for improving the level of protection of social rights and increasing the speed of the implementation of the Charter, the Center also recommends the Government of the Slovak Republic to ratify the Additional Protocol providing for a system of collective complaints.

The Center notes and appreciates the efforts of state authorities at the national, regional and local level to address issues related to right to housing. Many initiatives introduced as part of tackling the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic also helped to establish a more intensive cooperation between municipalities and organizations supporting persons in situation of homelessness or persons at risk of losing their housing. Some municipalities have begun to think strategically about improving access to housing and are developing rental housing based on the *housing first* approach. State's interest in systematically addressing this area was also manifested in the work leading to the drafting of the National Concept on the Prevention and Eliminating of Homelessness. At the same time, the Center, together with the civil society organizations that supplement the role of state institutions in many areas with regards to the protection of the right to housing, call on the Government to implement clear and visible measures to strengthen the

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protection and realization of the right to housing, so that many families and persons who are at risk of loss or unavailability of housing could feel safer and more dignified.

**Call to action initiated by:** [Slovak National Centre for Human Rights](#)

**Call to action supported by:**

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**Call to action additionally joined by:**

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### **European Social Charter (revised)**

#### **Article 31 – The right to housing**

With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right to housing, the Parties undertake to take measures designed:

- 1 to promote access to housing of an adequate standard;
- 2 to prevent and reduce homelessness with a view to its gradual elimination;
- 3 to make the price of housing accessible to those without adequate resources.