



INDIVIDUAL SUBMISSION OF THE SLOVAK NATIONAL CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

For consideration when compiling the List
of Issues Prior to the Reporting for the
79th Session of the Committee on
Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

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INTRODUCTION

The Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (Centre) is a national human rights institution (NHRI) established in the Slovak Republic, accredited with status B by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI). As an NHRI, the Centre is a member of the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI). The Centre was established by the Act of Slovak National Council No. 308/1993 Coll. on the Establishment of Slovak National Centre for Human Rights. Pursuant to the Act No. 365/2004 Coll. on Equal Treatment in Certain Areas and on Protection from Discrimination, as amended (Anti-Discrimination Act), the Centre also acts as the only Slovak equality body. As an NHRI and equality body, the Centre performs a wide range of tasks in the field of protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the principle of equal treatment. The Centre monitors and evaluates the observance of human rights and the equal treatment principle, including by monitoring compliance with international human rights treaties and recommendations of international human rights mechanisms.

The Centre hereby submits to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights these comments for consideration when compiling the List of Issues Prior to the Reporting:

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1. Access to Social Security and Social Benefits

Restrictions on Access to Unemployment Benefits

As reported by the Centre in the individual submission to the European Social Charter in 2025¹, the Government amended the law on assistance in material need to impose sanctions on unemployed individuals who refuse a job offered by labour offices by reducing or entirely withdrawing their benefits. This may be further complicated due to regional disparities in job availability and unemployment rates across Slovakia. Although it highlights certain conditions under which applicants may reject the so-called “adequate job offers,” the law leaves room for subjective interpretation of the labour offices. As a result, this change risks disproportionately affecting marginalized communities and may deepen the social inequalities.

Access of Temporary Protection Holders to Social Protection

Since the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, more than 137,000 people with temporary protection have been registered in Slovakia². This influx of refugees has been unprecedented in Slovak context and required a swift response from the social system, along with support from international organizations and local NGOs. Special attention has been directed towards women and children, who make up the majority of the people fleeing the war, as well as older people, and people with disabilities.

People with temporary protection status have access to material need benefits and various tailored assistance schemes, like housing allowance for vulnerable groups and subsidies for persons with severe disabilities. However, certain social benefit schemes (such as the child allowances and parental allowance) are available only to individuals with temporary or permanent residence excluding people with temporary protection³. Hence, ensuring equal access to social protection for Ukrainian refugees remains a challenge.

For example, Slovakia’s funeral subsidy amounted to EUR 200 does not apply to refugees from Ukraine, even though, it is crucial benefit in supporting the arrangement of funerals for their relatives. This limitation may be a particular issue for the older persons from Ukraine who do not have the socio-economic means to cover the high costs of funerals of their relatives in the country. Expanding eligibility for people with temporary protection status may not pose high expenses for the municipalities while supporting the most vulnerable refugees.

¹ Slovak National Centre for Human rights. (2025). *Comments submitted by the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights concerning the 14th National Report on the implementation of the European Social Charter*. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/comments-snchr-slovakia-14-nr-2025/1680b6befc>.

² Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic. *Temporary protection*. Available in Slovak at: <https://www.minv.sk/?docasne-utocisko>.

³ UNHCR. (2023). Slovakia: Protection Brief III - July 2023 - March 2024. UNHCR. Available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/110255>.



In 2025, around 70,000 people from Ukraine were employed in Slovakia; about 80% of them are refugees with a temporary protection status. This group of refugees face challenges accessing unemployment benefits under the same conditions as individuals with temporary or permanent residency. Even though they are obliged to pay full social security contributions, they cannot access the unemployment benefits, which are only entitled to those registered in the database of job applicants provided by the Office of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family. The condition for registration in the database is a temporary or permanent residency which is discriminatory towards refugees⁴. These concerns also arise with requalification measure, which are an effective tool for integration of refugees into the labour market⁵. Although the Ministry of Labour introduced a national project that focused on various vocational trainings, this project ended in 2023 without any follow up activates. Other national measures concerning the requalification courses and vocational trainings are not available for temporary protection holders hindering refugees' integration into the labour market.

Even though, refugees with disabilities are entitled to subsidy of up to EUR 508 and to a housing allowance as temporary protection holders, they still face issues in accessing the same rights as other persons with disabilities in Slovakia. The Centre reported on this issue in its 2023 Report on the Observance of the Human Rights⁶. It pointed out that based on the he Act on Compensation for Severe Disabilities, persons with disabilities who hold temporary protections status are not eligible for a disability and parking cards in Slovakia. Moreover, Slovakia does not recognize disability cards outside of the European Union. Furthermore, parents of children with disabilities with temporary protection are excluded from receiving the relief allowance which aims to support additional services for those parents. This creates challenges for people with disabilities, particularly because the disability card grant access to various benefits and discounts under special regulation, such as reduced transportation fees, and exemptions or reduction in local taxes and fees, et cetera.

Lately, concerns were raised related to problems with obtaining the temporary protection status because of the lack of registration capacities and long waiting periods at the Border and Alien Police. Refugees are waiting several months to receive an appointment. During this time, they cannot access any social support such as the allowance in material need or accommodation subsidies.

Suggested questions:

- Please provide information on the concrete steps the State Party plans to take in order to ensure equal access to social security and benefits for persons with temporary protection status. In particular, when does the State Party plan to grant access to unemployed benefits

⁴ UNHCR. (2023) Slovakia: Protection Brief III - July 2023 - March 2024. UNHCR. Available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/110255>.

⁵ UNHCR. (2024). Slovakia: Socio-Economic Insights Survey - SEIS – 2024. UNHCR. Available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/113198>.

⁶ Slovak National Centre for Human Rights. (2024). Report on the Observance of Human Rights: Including the Principle of Equal Treatment in the Slovak Republic in 2023. Available at: <https://www.snslp.sk/wp-content/uploads/Human-rights-report-for-2023.pdf>.



for individuals with temporary protection status who have been employed in Slovakia and have therefore paid social insurance contributions?

- How does the State Party plan to address the issues with lack of registration capacities and long waiting periods at the Border and Alien Police?
- Please provide information about how the State Party plans to support the integration of persons with temporary protection into the labour market. Does the State Party intend to open the requalification and vocational training to persons with temporary protection?
- Please provide information regarding the amendment to the law on assistance in material need, which imposes sanctions on unemployed individuals who refuse a job offer. How will the State Party ensure that labour offices make objective decisions in these cases? Additionally, how does the government plan to address regional disparities in job opportunities?

2. Balancing Work and Caregiving Responsibilities

According to the research conducted by the Centre and reported to the European Social Charter⁷, the general experience with protection, particularly as regards pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period is perceived positively by women. However, the Centre concluded that concerning these protections, the rights are more often violated for women in socially and economically disadvantaged situations. These are women who earn an income through various forms of temporary agreements, part-time jobs, or fixed-term contracts. As a consequence of the excessive use of precarious types of employment, especially in regions with higher unemployment, there is a weaker protection for employees when leaving for or returning from paternal leave. They are more often exposed to financial penalties, a lack of adjustments for health-related changes, loss of employment, and they also face much more frequent discrimination in employment relationships after maternity and parental leave.

In general, the employees have a little knowledge about their rights and referral systems in case of violations of the legislation. In some cases, parents resign on the application of their rights due to various reasons, including fear from losing the job, lack of resources to fight for their rights at courts or internally at employers. Unequal status in the employment relationship leads to a situation where parents, despite their initial interest in standing up for their rights, resign themselves to the situation because they become exhausted⁸.

The experiences of the respondents also reveal additional challenges they faced when returning to the labour market, which were more related to the issue of suitability due to the insufficient quality of work-life balance tools. Women after parental leave may face difficulties in accessing work due to various factors, such as inability to adjust the working hours or condition for the

⁷ Slovak National Centre for Human rights. (2025). *Comments submitted by the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights concerning the 14th National Report on the implementation of the European Social Charter*. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/comments-snchr-slovakia-14-nr-2025/1680b6befc>.

⁸ Slovak National Centre for Human Rights. (2022). *Work-life balance as a human rights issue*. Slovak National Centre for Human Rights. Available in Slovak at: <https://www.snslp.sk/wp-content/uploads/Zosuladovanie-pracovneho-a-osobneho-zivota.pdf>.



caregiving responsibilities, lack of caretaking services and administrative hardship when applying for various social benefits.

Women who fled the war in Ukraine are also facing large challenges balancing work with childcare responsibilities. Most of the positions available for refugees, even those not requiring Slovak language, are challenging because of their limited flexibility and long shifts. Even though, most of the refugees are highly educated individuals, combination of these demanding work conditions and caregiving responsibilities may limit their ability to search for job adequate to their qualifications and experience.

Suggested questions:

- Provide information on specific groups affected by violations of rights during pregnancy, maternity, parental leave, specifically concerning people in socially and economically disadvantaged situation.
- How does the State Party plan to protect pregnant individuals and those on maternity or parental leave when they are employed under alternative work arrangements, such as temporary or part-time contracts?
- What measures have been taken to support childcare facilities ensuring their regional availability and financial affordability?

3. Provision of Social Services to Vulnerable Population

Access to Social Crisis Intervention Services

Crisis intervention represents a key tool for helping people in acute life, social, or psychological crises, including victims of domestic violence, children without parental care, or individuals in existential distress. In Slovakia, however, access to these services remains uneven and regionally unbalanced. In smaller towns and rural areas, crisis intervention facilities are either missing or are severely understaffed and underfunded. They often operate only thanks to non-governmental organizations and project-based EU funding, which is short-term and unstable, especially given that this form of financing is set to end in 2028, with no proposal yet in place for its continuation. This situation means that many people, especially children, do not have real access to help, resulting in a violation of their right to protection from violence, neglect, and social exclusion.

School Reform and Its Impact on Children's Rights

The school reform currently being implemented in Slovakia aims to modernize the education system and improve children's access to inclusive and quality education. However, the connection between the school system and social services remains weak. Functional coordination between schools, counselling and prevention centres, labour offices, and social service facilities is lacking. Again, the question arises of how this coordination will function after



2028, when EU funding for crisis intervention services, such as community centres or low-threshold social services for children and families, will end.

These services are often the first point of contact for socially excluded individuals and play a key role in ensuring the protection of rights. They are also essential in fulfilling school attendance requirements and addressing the difficult life situations of affected children and families. This is evidenced by the current planning and implementation of the national project Early School Leaving Prevention, which relies on these social services as a key element. However, these services remain unsystematically funded.

Guardianship of Unaccompanied Minors

The guardianship of unaccompanied minors (e.g., migrant children) remains a long-standing unresolved issue. Although Slovakia is bound by international conventions, practice shows that the system of guardianship for these children is inconsistent and often merely formal. There is a lack of (1) sufficiently trained guardians, (2) clear legislative rules for the performance of guardianship duties, and (3) adequate conditions for the care and integration of children into society. It is also important to note the current wording of the Act on Social and Legal Protection of Children and the legislative powers of municipalities, which stipulate that guardianship should be a temporary measure and should gradually transition into custodianship, which is to be carried out by the municipality.

Lack of Systemic Financing of Social Services

The biggest problem in the field of social services in Slovakia is the absence of long-term, systemic, and transparent financing. Most crisis intervention facilities, shelters, low-threshold centres, and services for children at risk of poverty, social exclusion, or other socio-pathological phenomena depend on project calls or temporary grants. This model does not allow for long-term planning, stable employment of professionals, or maintenance of service quality. This brings a lot of consequences like (1) increased risk of service collapse in case of funding failure, (2) lack of professional staff (psychologists, social workers, therapists), (3) reduced availability of assistance in regions with low service density, (4) violation of the right of children and families to accessible social protection and support.

Suggested questions:

- What are the plans for the future financing of the social services in Slovakia to ensure continuity and stability of the services? What measures are being taken to guarantee regional availability of the social services, including support for mobile teams that are essential for social services in marginalized communities? How does the State Party support and improve professional training and continuous education of social workers, legal guardians, and educators? Additionally, how does the State Party plan to monitor and assess social services to ensure quality and compliance with human rights obligations?



- Please provide information on the situation of unaccompanied minors in Slovakia, particularly the unaccompanied minors from Ukraine, and on the steps the State Party intends to take in order to protect these children. What procedures are followed when an unaccompanied minor from Ukraine arrives in Slovakia?

4. Adequate Standard of Living and Poverty in Slovakia

Risk of poverty in Slovakia has increased over the past five year. In 2024, 18,3 % of the population was living at the risk of poverty and social exclusion, which represents an increase of about 37,000 people comparison to 2023⁹. This represents the highest number of people at the risk of poverty since 2015. The most at risk of poverty are single parent households with one and more children. These single parent households make up mostly women with children. Moreover, female households over 65 are at higher risk of poverty than male households in this age. This is due to various factors, including lower pensions and longer living age. Hence poverty in Slovakia has a significant gendered dimension.

One of key dimensions of poverty in Slovakia is the deepening regional disparity. These inequalities have been widening and are further worsening due to recent crisis, including COVID-19 pandemic and high inflation. Inhabitants of Bratislava, the most economically developed part of the country, generally enjoy higher wages, better employment opportunities, and greater access to services and infrastructure. In contrast, people living in the eastern and southern regions of Slovakia face more limited opportunities and are at higher risk of poverty, including transport and energy poverty. In spite of these disparities, the living expenses in these regions do not reflect the lower wages available in these regions¹⁰.

Even though, households with unemployed members are more at risk of poverty, recent years have seen an increase in the number of working individuals at risk of poverty. The number has more than doubled since 2020 and is now the highest since 2005. Low wages, slow growth of real wages, and the cost-of-living crisis have contributed to this situation. On average, households spend almost 30 % of their income on housing and every, which is one of the highest share in the EU. For low-income households and older persons living on pension, this can reach 50 %. Expenses on food and non-alcoholic beverages has also risen sharply since 2020. In 2024, they amounted to around 19% of household income, and up to 30% for low-income households.

There is a lack of support for the working individuals at risk of poverty. This is due to various reasons, including the set living minimum, which determines eligibility for benefits in material need, and which does not reflect the actual poverty line in Slovakia. In 2025, the living minimum

⁹ Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic. (2025). *Poverty and its dimensions in Slovakia in 2024*. Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic. Available in Slovak at: https://slovak.statistics.sk/wps/portal/ext/products/informationmessages/inf_sprava_detail/1b9668e5-6a36-4050-9a8c-5a4f8d0d4451.

¹⁰ Košč, J. (2025). *Between payday and the bills: How people live in a country of low wages? – Poverty Report on Slovakia 2025*. Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic. Available in Slovak at: <https://www.kozsr.sk/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Sprava-Chudoba-04.pdf>.



is set at EUR 284.13 for a single-person household and EUR 612.09 for a couple with one child¹¹. Moreover, since 2005, the living minimum has increased by only little more than EUR 100, which does not reflect the inflation or the rise in the cost of living. As a result, the gap between the living minimum and the national poverty line has widened. In 2024, the poverty line for a single-person household stood at EUR 508. This creates a gap between the actual needs of the households and eligibility for the social assistance¹². As a result, many working households with low wages do not qualify for benefits in material need, which puts them at greater risk of poverty. These restrictions may also push individuals to informal or undeclared work without adequate labour and social protections.

Suggested questions:

- Please provide information on the measures taken to support people living in poverty and individuals at risk of poverty, particularly concerning single-parent households. Given the recent several crises, including energy and cost of living crisis, how does the State Party plan to make households more resilient to external shocks? How does the State Party intend to address regional socio-economic disparities?
- In light of the growing number of employed individuals at the risk of poverty, how does the State Party intend to address the issue? Will the State Party grant the access to some social benefit schemes, like housing allowance or allowance in material need, to these individuals?

5. Poverty and living conditions of Roma living in excluded communities

The living conditions of Roma families living in excluded/marginalized communities continue to remain largely inadequate. According to the latest EU SILC Survey on income and living conditions of Roma living in excluded communities, as of 2020, 87 % of Roma living in excluded communities lived below the risk of poverty line, which is 2 percentage points higher than in 2018 (85 %)¹³. The situation is even more critical for children living in excluded communities – 91% of them lived in households with incomes below the poverty risk line¹⁴. The survey indicates that one of the main factors affecting the level of exposure to the risk of poverty is an individual's economic status, however, as aforementioned, finding a job does not automatically constitute an escape from poverty¹⁵. While in the overall population in Slovakia, 5 % of employed persons lived below

¹¹ Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic. *The living minimum*. Available in Slovak at: <https://www.employment.gov.sk/sk/rodina-socialna-pomoc/hmotna-nudza/zivotne-minimum/>.

¹² Košč, J. (2025). *Between payday and the bills: How people live in a country of low wages? – Poverty Report on Slovakia 2025*. Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic. Available in Slovak at: <https://www.kozsr.sk/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Sprava-Chudoba-04.pdf>.

¹³ Markovič, F. and Plachá, L. (2020). *Income and living conditions in marginalised Roma communities: Selected indicators from the survey EU SILC_MRK 2020*. Available in Slovak at https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1276/analyticka_sprava_eu_silc_mrk_2020_elektronicka_final.pdf?csrt=4882968265749947127.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.



the poverty line in 2020, in the excluded Roma communities, it was 57 % of employed persons¹⁶. More than half of Roma living in excluded communities (52 %) lived in households with severe material deprivation compared to 6 % of the total population at the time. The most common type of housing in the excluded communities were brick houses (62 % of households), followed by apartment buildings (23 %) and non-standard types of dwellings, including shacks, wooden huts and other non-residential types of dwellings (15 % of households). According to the survey, 54 % of households in excluded communities had a legally settled relation to their dwelling. In addition, as of 2020, households of 88 % of Roma living in excluded communities were overcrowded, 6 % households had no electricity and in a further 15 % of households, electric connection was inadequate/faulty. Almost half of Roma living in excluded communities (47 %) lived in places that they consider polluted, dirty or with other environmental problems¹⁷.

Forced evictions

The issue of mass evictions of residents from social rental housing (often excluded/segregated) has long been voiced by civil society that concerns tens to hundreds of families a year with minor children¹⁸. Mass evictions may also result in the need to build unregulated settlements. In case of eviction of residents from unregulated dwellings, the Slovak legislation does not provide for the obligation to provide alternative accommodation. Unregulated dwellings can often be built on lands with unsettled ownership rights where obtaining a court order for eviction is difficult. In 2012 and 2013, some municipalities disposed of illegal Roma settlements under the Waste Act as illegal dumpsites¹⁹. In September 2023, the Regional Court in Košice upheld the verdict of the first instance court in favour of 9 Roma in a case of force eviction of 156 Roma (including 63 children) from a settlement in 2012. The city had removed the settlement, arguing that it was necessary to dispose of it because it was considered waste, not a household²⁰.

Access to safe drinking water and sanitation

According to data published in the Atlas of Roma Communities in Slovakia, as of 2019, 22% of the population from Roma communities (approximately 66.000 people) did not have access to drinking water directly in their homes - 8 % relied on non-standard sources, such as streams or wells (approximately 24.000 people), while 14% (approximately 42.000 people) used so-called public wells located in shared public spaces²¹.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Beňová, N. and Matiaško, M. (2018). *Right to housing, Bratislava*. Available in Slovak at: https://notabene.sk/app/uploads/2025/03/Pravo_na_byvanie_final_web.pdf.

¹⁹ Beňová, N. and Matiaško, M. (2018). *Right to housing, Bratislava*. Available in Slovak at: https://notabene.sk/app/uploads/2025/03/Pravo_na_byvanie_final_web.pdf.

²⁰ Dentons and European Roma Rights Centre. *Roma whose dwellings were removed as waste, after ten years, have received a final verdict*. Available in Slovak at https://www.errc.org/uploads/upload_en/file/5521_file1_romovia-ktorych-obydli-boli-odstranene-ako-odpad-sa-po-desiatich-rokoch-dockali-pravoplatneho-rozsudku-.pdf.

²¹ Ravasz, Á. et al. (2019). *Atlas of Roma Communities*. Available in Slovak at https://www.institutmatejabela.sk/_files/ugd/1a16af_0d81d887ecb3421bb8b19728c82c980f.pdf.



Suggested questions:

- Please provide information on the measures taken to ensure right to adequate housing for Roma families living in excluded/marginalized communities. What measures have been taken in order to address the poverty and standard of living of the Roma people living in excluded/marginalized communities. How does the State Party plan to address the long-standing issue of access to safe drinking water and sanitation for these communities?

6. Access to Healthcare Services

General practitioners in Slovakia are often unavailable to vulnerable groups such as homeless persons, individuals without documents, and migrants. Although practitioners frequently have the capacity to register additional patients, they often refuse to do so, citing “full capacity” or bureaucratic obstacles. As a result, vulnerable groups often receive treatment only when their health condition becomes urgent. There is a lack of preventive care, including low-threshold health services, and an absence of mobile healthcare providers for homeless individuals.

Furthermore, Slovakia lacks a legal framework for the provision of outreach healthcare, which directly affects the availability of healthcare for marginalised groups, particularly homeless persons. The previously mentioned urgent healthcare issue also affects persons without regular status in Slovakia, as the healthcare system is required to distinguish between urgent and non-urgent care, with non-urgent care being financially inaccessible for most individuals without such status, including migrants without medical insurance. Another aspect of this inaccessibility lies in administrative procedures; the lack of interpreters, cultural sensitivity, and language support further contributes to the problem. Moreover, the healthcare system in Slovakia lacks mechanisms to provide continuous care for chronically ill individuals without stable housing, such as homeless or undocumented persons.

There are significant regional disparities in access to healthcare, with economically advantaged regions having higher concentrations of doctors, while municipalities in the south and east of the country suffer from a critical shortage of general practitioners and paediatricians, often resulting in primary healthcare being practically unreachable. Additional inequality arises from the limited availability of specialist care and gynaecological services in rural or segregated communities, where such care is typically located in larger cities and is difficult to access.

Roma and other marginalised communities are particularly at risk of inadequate healthcare. These communities often lack systematic medical support due to their limited ability to reach healthcare facilities and the absence of outreach programmes integrated into the healthcare system, which also lack stable funding. This results in low vaccination rates and insufficient access to preventive healthcare programmes.

The issue of care for victims of gender-based violence is also extremely urgent, particularly with regard to specialised post-rape support services. Even where such services exist, inadequate training of medical personnel in recognising and responding to gender-based violence undermines their effectiveness and limits access to appropriate care.



Financial accessibility is another problem in the healthcare system, especially for low-income individuals and households. Increasing surcharges for medicines and fees for services place a disproportionate burden on these groups, further restricting their access to healthcare. Persons living in poverty who are not registered in the material need system face additional difficulties due to the absence of compensation mechanisms.

A multitude of systemic problems further limits access to healthcare. For example, there is no systematic data collection on the refusal of healthcare to vulnerable groups, such as patients without documentation or homeless individuals. The weak link between the health and social sectors leads to interruptions in care and repeated acute conditions. After hospitalization, homeless people are often discharged directly onto the streets, where follow-up care cannot be provided; their condition then deteriorates, perpetuating a cycle of acute care. Without registration with a general practitioner, they have nowhere to turn for routine bandage or dressing changes, check-ups, or management of chronic illnesses.

Suggested questions:

- The current national strategy to prevent and address homelessness does not reflect on the issue of healthcare access for homeless persons. Please provide information on how the State Party plans to tackle this issue and ensure the right to health for homeless individuals and people living in poverty.
- Please provide information on the measures taken to ensure access to healthcare for Roma people living in marginalised or excluded communities, including steps to overcome the geographical and financial barriers they face when accessing these services. Will the State Party continue to support outreach and mobile healthcare teams with predictable and sustainable funding?
- How does the State Party plan to support survivors of gender-based violence? Is there a plan to train medical staff to recognize and communicate sensitively about these issues with patients? Additionally, how will the State Party support preventive programmes addressing gender-based violence?

7. Barriers in Accessing Abortion Care

Based on the submission of NGOs Freedom of Choice, InTYMYta and Centre for Reproductive Rights for the CEDAW 85th session concerning periodic review of Slovakia, the Centre wants to highlight several key issues concerning the access to abortions care.

Slovakia permits abortion on request up to 12 weeks of pregnancy, after this period, abortions are allowed only in cases of fetal impairment and if a woman's life is in danger. Parliament continuously seeks to restrict and undermine access to abortion in Slovakia. Since 2018, more than 26 regressive bills and amendments were proposed to the parliament. All of them have been by 2025 rejected.

There is a general lack of information about abortion services, including no publicly available list of healthcare facilities that provide abortions. Establishing such list is crucial due to refusal of at



least 27 medical facilities to provide abortion care. As a result, this creates large regional disparities, for example, in Bratislava region (western Slovakia) 7 out of 10 facilities provide abortions in contrast to 3 out of 11 facilities that provide abortions in Prešov region (eastern Slovakia).

Abortions are also costly with estimated price amounted to EUR 414. Even though the Ministry of Health sets the price of abortion to EUR 248.95, medical facilities do not respect the regulation and ask for top up payments. Moreover, in 2021, the Ministry of Health reduced the list of medical indications for abortion covered under the health insurance. This poses a significant barrier for people in socially and economically disadvantaged situations.

Other barriers for accessing abortions include mandatory waiting periods prior to abortion on request and biased information requirement. There are also concerns about confidentiality, since the doctors are required to send a report to the National Health Information Centre and inform it that each woman seeking abortion has received mandated information about abortion. These reports may contain a person information of the patient and must be submitted before the abortion.

Suggested question:

Please provide information on steps taken to remove legislative and non-legislative barriers to access to abortion, including financial barriers and medically unjustified waiting periods. When is the State Party planning to enable access to medical abortion? Is the State Party planning to initiate a development of a national sexual and reproductive health strategy and comprehensive education programme on sexual and reproductive health and rights, in line with international human rights standards?

8. Constitutional changes

Slovak parliament approved sweeping constitutional changes on 26 September 2025, effective as of 1st of November 2025. Centre has urged parliamentarians not to adopt the amendment as it is, in the view of the NHRI, in breach of international law, European law and poses a serious risk to protection of human rights, including those enshrined by the Covenant. The proposal was widely criticized by the civil society and international institutions, including the Venice Commission which issued an urgent opinion on the draft.

National identity

Slovak Constitution provides for primacy of international human rights treaties, which are directly applicable and have precedence over laws (art. 7 para 5).

New paragraphs 6 and 7 of Article 7 of the Constitution state the following:

“6) The Slovak Republic retains its sovereignty, in particular in matters of national identity, consisting in particular of fundamental cultural and ethical issues relating to the protection of life and human dignity, private and family life, marriage, parenthood and family, public morality,



personal status, culture and language, as well as decision-making on related matters in the fields of health, science, education, personal status and inheritance."

"7) Nothing in this Constitution and the Constitutional Laws shall be interpreted as an approval of the Slovak Republic for the transfer of the exercise of part of its rights in matters constituting national identity."

These provisions create new constitutional concepts of "national identity" and "cultural and ethical issues". We draw the Committee's attention to the use of the wording "in particular" in these provisions as well. The explanatory memorandum to the proposal explicitly states that these provisions are to address „potential or existing activism of international courts and institutions encroaching on the exclusive powers of nation-states or rights the exercise of which has not been delegated to international institutions “.

In essence these changes aim to restrict the dynamic interpretation of international human rights standards as provided by the UN Treaty Bodies and ECHR and create space for the Government and its agencies to establish the interpretation of human rights instruments themselves in areas mentioned but not limited to them. Several of these areas are directly affecting rights provided by the Covenant. Further, by virtue of their ambiguity, these provisions pose a serious risk to the protection of human rights provided by the Covenant in other areas as well.

Para 7) clearly has retroactive effect and is in breach of international law principle pacta sunt servanda.

Adoption

New paragraphs 2 and 5 of Article 41 state that:

"(2) The parents of a child shall be the mother and the father; the mother of the child shall be a woman, and the father of the child shall be a man.

(5) A minor child may be adopted by the spouses or by a spouse who is married to either of the parents of the child or by the surviving spouse of the parent or adoptive parent of the minor child. Exceptionally, a single person may also adopt a minor child if the adoption is in the best interests of the child. The adoption shall be decided by the Court".

Para 2 is explicitly barring same-sex couples from the possibility of adoption. While same-sex couples have no legal recognition in Slovakia, these changes aim to legally cement this status pro futuro, together with changes made already in 2015 when marriage was enshrined as only between man and woman.

Para 5 is taken directly from the Family Act, ensuring that these provisions gain constitutional weight.

Education

New para 7) in Art. 41 of the Constitution states that:

"7) The upbringing and education of children in the area of shaping intimate life and sexual behaviour may be provided only with the consent of the legal guardian. Education aimed at the



protection of health, physical integrity and the prevention of abuse forms part of the general education of children in a form appropriate to their age.”

New constitutional right of parents to consent to their children’s education in sensitive areas is in the view of the Center in breach of the positive obligation of the state to guarantee children’s right to education, which includes the right to comprehensive education in the area of sexuality and reproductive rights, provided that such education is adapted to children’s age and development, relevant and based on current scientific knowledge and human rights standards.

Last sentence of this paragraph was added during parliamentary discussions, to alleviate some concerns, including those expressed by the Center regarding the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse which Slovakia ratified. The adopted text, however, still fails to ensure that children’s right to comprehensive education is fully protected.

Sex/Gender

New Article 52a states that: The Slovak Republic recognizes only the biologically determined sex of man and woman.”

This provision is to be viewed in the context of the original government draft in which this provision was followed up by another which stated that changing of sex can only be done in exceptional circumstances and details shall be provided by law. This addition was later removed. However, the remaining article stills puts the availability of gender affirming services and legal gender recognition in Slovakia in jeopardy. The Center further noted that this provision fails to recognize intersex children.

It should also be noted that in 2024 the minister of health abolished the medical standards for treatment of transgender people which aimed to ensure that sterilization would not be a requirement for legal gender recognition and have been in effect only for a year. It was the first and only instance in which medical standards for treatment have been abolished for political reasons, as the reasoning provided by the minister was that they were not explained to the public properly and then made no effort to do so.

Suggested Questions:

- Please provide information on guarantees and measures taken, if any, to ensure full enjoyment of rights provided by the Covenant in light of the recent Constitutional changes.
- Please provide information on how “national identity” and “cultural and ethical issues” are interpreted in the current Slovak legal order. Has the State Party conducted any human rights impact assessment of the recent constitutional changes?
- Please provide information on the impact of the new article 52a of the Slovak Constitution on the accessibility of legal gender recognition and gender-affirming healthcare. What forms of redress are available if these are denied?
- What measures have been taken to ensure that children’s right to comprehensive education is respected also in the area of sexuality and reproductive rights (provided that



such education is adapted to children's age and development, relevant and based on current scientific knowledge and human rights standards)?

