



SLOVAK NATIONAL
CENTRE FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS

Report on the Observance of Human Rights

Including the Principle of Equal Treatment
in the Slovak Republic for the year 2025



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List of abbreviations

anti-discrimination law - Act No. 365/2004 Coll. on equal treatment in certain areas and on protection against discrimination and on amendments and supplements to certain acts (anti-discrimination law)

Convention - Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

ECHR - European Court of Human Rights

EU - European Union

European Charter - European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

Ministry of Investments - Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic

Ministry of Labour - Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic

Ministry of Education - Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic

Ministry of the Interior - Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic

draft act on non-governmental organisations - Act No. 213/1997 Coll. on non-profit organizations providing services of general benefit, as amended by later regulations and amending certain laws

National Council - National Council of the Slovak Republic

OECD - Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

President - President of the Slovak Republic

Council - UN Human Rights Council

SR - Slovak Republic

STVR - Slovak Television and Radio

Centre - Slovak National Centre for Human Rights

Court of Justice of the EU - Court of Justice of the European Union

School Act - Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Education (School Act) and on Amendments to Certain Acts

Constitution - Constitution of the Slovak Republic

Constitutional Court - Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic

Government - Government of the Slovak Republic

Committee - European Committee of Social Rights

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UN Committee - UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Act No. 577/2004 Coll. - Act No. 577/2004 Coll. on the scope of health care paid for under public health insurance and on payments for services related to the provision of health care and implementing regulations

Act on STVR - Act No. 157/2024 Coll. on Slovak Television and Radio and on Amendments to Certain Acts

Introduction

The Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (hereinafter referred to as the “Centre”) annually, by 30 April of the relevant calendar year, prepares and publishes on its website the Report on the observance of human rights, including the principle of equal treatment in the Slovak Republic for the previous calendar year (hereinafter referred to as the “Report for 2025”), the authorship of which belongs to the collective of experts of the Centre.

The Centre is a national authority established for the promotion and protection of human rights and at the same time a national equality body. The National Council of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the “National Council”) established it

by adopting Act No. 308/1993 Coll. on the Establishment of the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (hereinafter referred to as the “Act on the Centre”), which entered into force on 1 January 1994. The founding act of the Centre was the result of the Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the United Nations on the Establishment of the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights published by the Announcement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic No. 29/1995 Coll.

The Centre fulfils tasks in two important areas of social

and legal relations. The first mandate of the Centre is to protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms. The second mandate of the Centre is defined by the provisions of the Anti-Discrimination Act. In accordance with its mandate, the Centre monitors and evaluates compliance with human rights, fundamental freedoms and the principle of equal treatment.

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The aim of the Report for 2025 is to provide the public with a comprehensive assessment of the state of selected human rights and fundamental freedoms in Slovakia. At the same time, the intention is to address recommendations to make the protection and implementation of human rights and fundamental freedoms more effective.

The submitted Report for 2025 is divided into four chapters. The first chapter presents an evaluation of the recommendations for 2024, specifically in the subchapters Hate speech (not only) in the online space, Rule of law and Segregation in education. The second chapter - Rule of law - is devoted to the amendment to the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, which brought fundamental

changes to the constitutional regulation of the protection and guarantee of fundamental rights and freedoms. We answer the question: what has changed in the Constitution? The third chapter focuses on Discrimination against hearing-impaired people in Slovakia as a complex social and legal problem, which is manifested not only in individual cases of unequal treatment, but also in persistent systemic barriers, including communication, information and institutional barriers. The fourth chapter Poverty through the lens of human rights: social rights in times of crisis is a human and legal reflection of a serious problem of our social reality.

Human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as the principle of equal treatment, are not only and primarily theoretical constructs or an academic agenda. It seems that it has never been more important to protect and promote human rights than in our current presence. It seems that it has never been more necessary to stand behind the values of equality and non-discrimination, whether in view of our individual differences, or the degree of social polarization, radicalization

and extremism. Never has the sustained defence of human dignity been more important than at a time when it is globally threatened by the brazen

militant interests of the most powerful. And finally, never has the need to defend the essence of what it means to be human been so acute.



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1. Evaluation of the recommendations for 2024

Evaluation of recommendations is a tool for monitoring progress in improving the protection and enforcement of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

1.1 Hate speech (not only) online and the potential risks of its impact on the normative guarantees of protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms

In the 2024 Report, the Centre addressed the issue of hate speech and potential risks to guarantees of the protection of human rights and freedoms. It focused on identifying possible interpretative and normative definitions of hate speech in the online space based on international legal documents and rec-

ommendations, as well as on monitoring hate speech against specific groups of persons. It further emphasized the need for education and awareness-raising aimed at preventing extremism and racism, with an emphasis on establishing legal responsibility and legally approved limits on freedom of expression.

The Centre recommended:

1. to members of the National Council, members of the Government of the Slovak Republic, not to attack in any way (even indirectly) vulnerable groups of the population living in the territory of the Slovak Republic, especially LGBTI+ people, Roma people or refugees;
2. members of the Slovak government to refrain from intentions and actions aimed at limiting the financing of activities related to the support and protection of the rights of minorities living in the territory of the Slovak Republic, especially LGBTI+ people, and thus not to arouse in their members a feeling of threat from the restriction of their freedoms;
3. officials of local governments to publicly engage in the support and protection of the rights of minorities living in the territories they administer;
4. the media and publicly known persons to refrain from providing irrelevant information about their origin, nationality, ethnicity, or sexual orientation when reporting on negative actions by members of minorities, and thus contribute to reducing the incidence of stereotypes and prejudices against minorities;
5. to the media and publicly known persons, when reporting on positive actions of members of minorities, to also report on their origin, nationality, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, thereby contributing to improving their perception by society as a whole and increasing the level of tolerance and mutual respect between the majority population and minorities.

In its first recommendation, the Centre appealed to members of the parliament and government not to attack vulnerable groups living in Slovakia. However, given several statements made in media, as well as the proposal for an amendment to the Constitution¹, it is necessary to state that this recommendation was not fulfilled. As part of the discussion in the National Council and subsequent reactions to the draft amendment to the Constitution of the Slovak Republic (more in Chapter 2 of this report), which regulated sovereignty „in matters of national identity“, introduced the recognition of two genders and the adoption of minors by spouses, derogatory statements regarding LGBTI+ people, especially transgender people², repeatedly appeared. Statements linking

migration with criminal activity³, the amendment regarding benefits in material need and the risks it brings⁴, or stigmatizing statements regarding the fire in Mašličkovo⁵ also appeared in the media discourse.

The Centre also assesses the implementation of the second recommendation negatively. In 2025, within the framework of the subsidy scheme for supporting victims of crimes, the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic did not support two accredited entities providing assistance to victims of hate crimes⁶, with one of the entities focusing on assisting LGBTI+ people and the other on assisting refugees. Both entities are the only ones with such specialization among accredited entities⁷. In the sub-

1 Legislative proposal amending the constitution and restricting the rights of LGBTI+ persons available at <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Default.aspx?sid=zakony/zakon&MasterID=10218>

2 For more details, see e.g. <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DFvCRFEh0YN/>, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2176862912837290>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJK39VMmrhY>,

<https://www.vlada.gov.sk/tlacove-spravy/navrhy-podnety-a-pripomienky-k-navrhu-zmeny-ustavy-slovenskej-republiky/>

Debate on the amendment to the Constitution of the Slovak Republic on 16.6.2025 <https://tv.nrsr.sk/archiv/schodza/9/35?page=114>, https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=3829501647347977&set=a.1386695164961983&type=3&ref=embed_post

3 For more details, see e.g. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7fumlmdis> <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1192545296161087>, <https://www.facebook.com/reel/1354381376428603>

4 For more details, see e.g. <https://www.sme.sk/index/c/praca-namiesto-davok-za-tri-mesiace-umiestnila-na-trhu-prace-860-ludi-hovori-minister-prace>, <https://www.sme.sk/index/c/odobra-tie-davky-v-hmotnej-nudzi-sa-podla-ps-ukazuje-ako-nefunkcne-a-zbytocne-opatrenie>, <https://www.amnesty.sk/neludskopravne-a-neefektivne-kratenie-davky-v-hmotnej-nudzi/>

5 For more details, see e.g. <https://www.sme.sk/domov/c/premier-zamietol-odškodnenie-po-tragic-kych-poziaroch-maslickove-a-kozarovciach>

6 List of supported entities available at <https://www.justice.gov.sk/dokumenty/2025/03/Zoznam-pridelenych-dotacii-DOTC2025.pdf>. Information about the non-approval of the grant is available at <https://www.facebook.com/Ligazaludskeprava/posts/iniaci%C3%ADva-inakos%C5%A5-a-liga-za-%C4%BEuds%C3%A9-pr%C3%A1va-sa-uch%C3%A1dzali-o-dot%C3%A1cie-pre-obete-trest/1060059792814780/>

7 List of accredited entities available at <https://www.justice.gov.sk/sluzby/pomoc-obetiam/subjekty-poskytujuce-pomoc-obetiam/>

sidy calls under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture, projects focusing on LGBTI+ people were also not supported in 2025, i.e. Rainbow PRIDE Bratislava and Drama Queer 2025⁸. On March 5, 2025, the Government of the Slovak Republic approved a resolution obliging members of the Government and chairmen of other central state administration bodies to submit information for discussion on the intention to conclude contracts on the provision of financial resources to non-governmental non-profit organizations⁹, which created a new element in the process of providing financial resources and potentially extended it. In 2025, the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic conducted an audit of subsidies and grants provided by central state administration bodies for the years 2020-2025. According to published information, approximately 5% of the total allocated financial resources were provided to non-governmental non-profit organizations. As part of

the audit, the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic conducted an in-depth audit of 26 beneficiaries, of which non-governmental non-profit organizations dedicated to human rights or vulnerable groups accounted for more than half¹⁰.

In its third recommendation, the Centre called on officials to publicly engage in the support and protection of the rights of minorities living in the territories they administer. Representatives of the Bratislava Self-Governing Region and the City of Bratislava joined in 2025 in a joint statement on the occasion of the Bratislava 2025 Rainbow Pride¹¹. In December 2025, the Regional Council of the Košice Self-Governing Region approved the "Program for the Development of the Culture of National Minorities in the Košice Region 2025 – 2030"¹². In Nitra, in 2025, a project was underway in cooperation with the STORM association aimed at protecting public health¹³. In other regions, the

⁸ List of applications and supported projects available at <https://ds.culture.gov.sk/Default.aspx#1747f414-926e-464c-adf3-95f076d28278;141fd9b-144a-d281-6605-1bf485444468>, <https://www.sme.sk/kultura/c/bude-aj-bez-podpory-fpu-a-ministerstva-kultury-vlna-solidarity-nas-vzpruzila-hovori-riaditel-drama-queer#:~:text=Tipy%20z%20Drama%20Queer%202025>. The Drama Queer 2025 project achieved 78 points in the evaluation, while the supported project with the lowest number of points achieved 42 points in the evaluation.

⁹ Resolution available at <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Resolution/22314/1>

¹⁰ Available at <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/31526/1>

¹¹ <https://www.snslp.sk/aktuality/spolocne-stanovisko-diplomatickej-komunity-a%E2%80%AFinstitucii-pri-prilezitosti-duhovoho-pride-bratislava-2025/>

¹² <https://www.kosickazupa.sk/smart-region/aktuality/kosicka-zupa-ma-novy-program-rozvoja-kultury-narodnostnych-mensin-a22-15660>

¹³ <https://nitra.sk/zdruzenie-storm-v-roku-2025-vo-svojom-programe-zlikvidovalo-az-31-665-kusov-injekcneho-materialu/>

topics of affordable rental housing¹⁴, creating support for homeless people¹⁵, debarring schools¹⁶, supporting people with HIV¹⁷, protecting children from violence within the framework of Bubnovačka 2025¹⁸, commemorating the Velvet Revolution and victims of communism¹⁹, or creating safe spots for refugees and foreigners²⁰ were dominant.

Regarding the fourth recommendation, in 2025, the media reported on negative actions by members of minorities, often with an emphasis on information about their affiliation. Examples include information about the discovery of a dead newborn,

in which the nationality of the parents was repeatedly emphasized²¹, the incident in Zlaté Moravce²² and reporting on a foreign incident²³ with an emphasis on the ethnicity of the suspects, reporting on incidents where the victims were homeless people with an emphasis on addiction or suspicion that they had committed an offense²⁴, a crime, or reporting on incidents abroad with an emphasis on the status of an asylum seeker or migrant²⁵.

On the other hand, positive actions and inspiring stories are regularly reported by, for example, the Romano forum²⁶, which focuses on reports, stories, interviews

14 See e.g. <https://www.kosice.sk/clanok/zavadzanie-housing-led-pristupov-so-sprievodnymi-opatreniami-na-zabezpecenie-dostupneho-byvania-v-kosiciach>, <https://bratislava.sk/spravy/dalsi-krok-k-zvysheniu-dostupnosti-byvania-v-hlavnom-meste>

15 See e.g. <https://www.bystricoviny.sk/spravy/mesto-banska-bystrica-je-pripraveno-pomoc-lu-dom-bez-domova-pocas-mrazivych-mesiakov-pridava-aj-novu-sluzbu/>

16 <https://psk.sk/vyse-30-zupnych-strednych-skol-je-pristupnejsich-a-bez-barier/>

17 Banská Bystrica, Bratislava, Košice, Nitra, Prešov, and Trnava participated in the event on World AIDS Day. <https://nitra.sk/most-nacerveno-vyjadri-solidaritu-ludom-s-hiv/>

18 Map available at <https://www.bubnovacka.eu/>

19 See f.i. <https://trencin.sk/aktuality/neznu-revoluciu-si-pripomenieme-hudbou-filmom-vystavou-spomienkami/>, <https://nezna.sk/program/2025-11-17/>

20 <https://bratislava.sk/spravy/vznikla-siet-centier-pre-utecencov-a-cudzincov-v-siedmich-slovenskych-mestach-bezpecny-bod>

21 See <https://zivot.pluska.sk/reportaze/mrtveho-novorodenca-nasli-v-pracke-matku-obvinili-z-vrady-desive-detaily-pripadu>, <https://tnoviny.sk/domace/clanok/993403-prehovril-otec-novorodenca-ktoreho-nasli-v-pracke-policia-ho-prepusila-na-slobodu>

22 See <https://www.noviny.sk/krimi/1108460-martin-zomrel-po-bitke-v-zlatych-moravciach>

23 See <https://www.topky.sk/cl/11/9236843/Muza-napadol-Rom-a-zomrel--V-Slovinsku-tak-podali-demisiu-2-ministri>

24 See f.i. <https://www.postoj.sk/165788/policajne-obete-a-vsemocne-kamery-november-2024>, <https://www.noviny.sk/krimi/1020021-umrtie-bezdomovca-v-bratislave-policia-skuma-aj-mozny-zasah-sbs-a-policie>, <https://www.cas.sk/tip-od-vas/slovensko/dalsi-na-smrt-dobity-bezdomovec-na-slovensku-podozreniu-z-utoku-celia-bratislavski-policajti-a-sbskari>, <https://www.l.pluska.sk/premium/krimi/dominik-a-samuel-brutalne-dobili-bezdomovca-skoncili-za-mrezami-na-videu-jeden-z-nich>, <https://www.ta3.com/clanok/978633/bratislavski-policajti-a-sbs-ka-mali-pre-kradez-na-smrt-dobit-muza-bez-domova-reaguju-neziskovky-policajna-prezidentka-aj-inspekcia>

25 See f.i. <https://www.ta3.com/clanok/1022177/brutalny-utok-v-rime-mlade-dievca-znasilnili-pred-ocami-snubenca-policia-zatkla-troch-podozrivych-migrantov>, <https://www.topky.sk/cl/11/9272215/Zversky-cin-migrantov--Dvaja-znasilnili-tinedzkeru--Detaily-su-priserne--suddkynabola-neoblomna>

26 Available at <https://romanoforum.dennikn.sk/>

or comments related to the Roma community and other minorities. In addition, several positive examples of members of minorities²⁷ or of projects aimed at improving their situation²⁸ appeared in the media.

The Centre continued its media monitoring of the portrayal of human rights in the Slovak media in 2025. The period from December

2024 to May 2025 is evaluated in the publication *Human Rights in the Media III*²⁹. The follow-up report *Human Rights in the Media IV*³⁰, mapping June to November 2025, also summarizes the findings over the past two years. They relate mainly to vulnerable population groups, the correctness of human rights argumentation, and topics that are missing from the human rights discourse.

1.2 Rule of Law

In the section dedicated to the rule of law, the Centre focused on the topics of the quality of the legislative process and the reduction in the level of protection of civil and political rights in the 2024 Report. In the quality of the legislative process, we analysed the use of the institute of fast-track legislative procedure, the risks associated with the overuse of this institute, and the involvement of the public and civil society in the legislative process. In the second main topic, the

legislative proposal regarding the Act on Non-Governmental Organizations resonated in particular, which created pressure on NGOs and space for labeling them as “organizations with foreign support”³¹. The Centre also pointed to the limitation of funding for the civil sector by several ministries through the non-allocation of funds or the exclusion of NGOs operating in the field of human rights protection from subsidy schemes.

27 See <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/FyR82yx/bitkou-mi-hrozili-romovia-aj-skinheadi-v-osa-de-by-ma-za-romku-nepovazovali-hovori-modna-navrharka/>, <https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/737391-o-10-rokov-moze-byt-rom-prezident-v-pracovni-wasco-nasli-svoje-miesto-ludia-ktorych-spolocnost-odsudila-reportaz-z-miesta-kde-sa/>, <https://korzar.sme.sk/vychod/c/svet-vnima-me-inak-ale-tuzbit-vitazit-mame-rovnaku-vravi-autista-samko-aj-on-spoval-celebrit>

28 See f.i. https://www.teraz.sk/regiony/diverzita-inkluzia-a-praca-ako-cesta/913996-clanok.html?utm_source=teraz&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=click&utm_content=%253Bsearch, <https://www.stvr.sk/novinky/tipy-z-programu/389133/omamy-pomahaju-detom-v-chudobnych-komunitach-mnohe-nikdy-nevideli-farbicky>

29 Available at <https://www.snslp.sk/wp-content/uploads/Ludske-prava-v-mediach-3.pdf>

30 Available at <https://www.snslp.sk/wp-content/uploads/Ludske-prava-v-mediach-4.pdf>

31 Draft and adopted text available at <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Default.aspx?sid=zakon/zakon&Mas-terID=9699>

The Centre recommended³²:

1. to members of the Government of the Slovak Republic to publicly recognize the important and legitimate role of human rights defenders in promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law as a fundamental element of ensuring their protection, including by respecting the independence of their organizations and preventing the stigmatization of their work;
2. to members of the National Council not to support the currently submitted amendment to the Act on Non-Profit Organizations (print 245) and to members of the Government of the Slovak Republic to initiate a proper legislative process for the necessary changes to the legislation regulating civil society and lobbying, with the participation of representatives of civil society and respecting international standards;
3. to members of the Government of the Slovak Republic to reconsider the blanket ban on gatherings regulated in the so-called “lex assassination attempt” and to leave the management of security risks in individual cases based on specific circumstances that are subject to judicial review and are in line with international human rights standards to the relevant law enforcement authorities.

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In relation to the first recommendation, the Centre notes that it was not implemented in 2025. Non-governmental organizations and civil society were subjected to repeated controls by the Slovak government and its members in relation to the funding provided, public statements of a derogatory nature, or the creation of new rules in relation to the provision of financial support. According to a survey by Amnesty International Slovakia³³,

non-governmental organizations (among other things) encounter hate speech addressed to the organization itself or its employees, including from politicians, as well as increased supervision or monitoring by state institutions. According to the Centre’s research on environmental rights defenders³⁴, published in 2025, defenders were subjected to systematic harassment and negative comments addressed to them. Legislative and institu-

³² In addition to recommendations issued in our Rule of Law Report 2025 available at <https://www.snsip.sk/sledovanie-pravneho-statuu/sprava-o-pravnom-state/>

³³ Results of a questionnaire survey available at <https://www.amnesty.sk/demonizacia-ociernovanie-a-vyhrazanie-comu-celia-mvo-na-slovensku-v-dosledku-autoritarskych-praktik/#ohrozeniefinan%C4%8Dnejpodpory>

³⁴ Available at <https://www.snsip.sk/wp-content/uploads/Ked-je-ochrana-zivotneho-prostredia-rizikom.pdf>

tional changes limited participation and dialogue with experts, and the political rhetoric of the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic contributed to a hostile atmosphere and increased the risk of harassment.

The second recommendation was also not implemented, and on April 16, 2025, deputies approved an amendment to the Act on Non-Profit Organizations (print 245). The approved text of the Act amended the obligation of non-profit organizations to prepare an annual statement of income by source and an overview of expenses, including information on financial contributions from individuals exceeding 5,000 euros per calendar year, setting the amount of fines in case of failure to comply with this obligation or detection of deficiencies in the submitted statements, as well as the obligation of non-governmental non-profit organizations to provide information under the regime of the Act on Free Access to Information³⁵. This amendment was subject to review by the Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic, which, by its finding, file no. PL. ÚS 11/2025-116 of 17 December 2025, decided that it

was not in compliance with several articles of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic and the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms³⁶. Following the finding of the Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic, the government adopted a resolution on 18 February 2026, which ordered members of the government and chairmen of relevant central state administration bodies to ensure the implementation of inspections of non-governmental non-profit organizations, including audits, inspections of compliance with labour regulations, public procurement regulations and the processing of personal data, to fully utilize the existing legal framework³⁷.

The last recommendation regarding the so-called lex assassination attempt³⁸ was not implemented. The aforementioned law limited the right to assemble within a radius of 50 meters from a variety of buildings. In 2025, there was no amendment to this provision, nor was a legislative proposal submitted for discussion by the National Council of the Slovak Republic to amend it.

³⁵ Act No. 106/2025 Coll. amending Act No. 213/1997 Coll. on non-profit organizations providing generally beneficial services, as amended, and amending certain acts.

³⁶ Judgement available at <https://www.slov-lex.sk/ezbierky/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2026/13/20260204>

³⁷ Available at <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/31575/1>

³⁸ Act No. 166/2024 Coll. on certain measures to improve the security situation in the Slovak Republic.

1.3 Segregation in Education

In its 2024 report, the Centre addressed the persistent systemic segregation of Roma children in the field of education. We analysed in particular legislative activities aimed at creating and introducing standards for compliance with the prohibition of segregation in education and training for schools and school facilities, eliminating the two-shift operation of primary schools, and the risks of deepening and institutionalizing the segregation of Roma children associated with the adjustment of na-

tional education. In the next section, the Centre emphasized the inconsistent practice of courts in matters of segregation regarding the issue of passive substantive legitimacy. The last subchapter was devoted to specific cases of segregation addressed by the Centre and mapping various manifestations of segregation in education (e.g. spatial segregation, creation of Roma classes, incorrect diagnosis of Roma children for the purpose of their placement in special classes).

The Centre recommended:

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1. The Ministry of Investments and the Ministry of Education to define non-compliance with the principles of desegregation, deghettoization and destigmatization as an exclusion criterion from the possibility of applying for funds for the purpose of construction and expansion of school premises and school facilities;
2. The Ministry of Education to adopt a control mechanism that would contribute to the supervision of the use of funds from the call for the elimination of two-shift operation of primary schools in accordance with the principles of desegregation, deghettoization and destigmatization;
3. The Ministry of Education to review the legal framework of ethnic education so that it is in line with the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, as well as with the European Charter;
4. The Ministry of Education to review the pilot project of an ethnic school in Rakúsy in terms of its compliance with Art. 2 letter b) of the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, as well as with Art. 8 paragraph 1 letter a) of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination in Education. b) of the European Charter.

In the context of the first recommendation in 2025, no new calls for proposals for these areas were published by the Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the “Ministry of Education”) or the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic. In the call of the Ministry of Education for the elimination of two-shift operation of primary schools dated 24 August 2022³⁹, for which registration was closed on 9 April 2025, as well as in the call for increasing the capacities of kindergartens dated 24 August 2022⁴⁰, for which registration was closed on 24 July 2024, one of the conditions was to fulfil the 3D principles – desegregation, destigmatization and deghettoization (hereinafter referred to as the “3D principles”). The application is also accompanied by a form in which the applicant states how the project will contribute to the fulfilment of the 3D principles. The calls were supplemented with the 3D principles by an update dated December 21, 2022. However, the draft grant agreement itself and the published annexes with the project descrip-

tion no longer contain a description of ensuring the fulfilment of the 3D principles, but only generally refer to the obligation to comply with the conditions set out in the call during the validity and effectiveness of the agreement. It is not clear from the published documents how the fulfilment of the 3D principles was assessed in the submitted applications and when assessing their support.

In relation to the second recommendation, there was no change in the mechanism for monitoring the implementation of supported projects compared to 2024. According to the published general contractual terms and conditions of the grant agreement⁴¹, project monitoring is based on the submission of an interim, final and follow-up monitoring report. The common measurable indicators of the implemented measures do not contain any indicator that would assess compliance with the 3D principles in the implementation of projects, the overall measurable indicator is the capacity of classes in new or modernized child-care facilities and educational facilities. The Centre therefore assesses this recommendation as not fulfilled.

39 <https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/c60/33404.04366f.pdf>

40 <https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/f4f/34133.113e76.pdf>

41 Available at <https://www.minedu.sk/vyzva-na-odstranenie-dvojzmennej-prevadzky-zakladnych-skol/>

In 2025, there were no legislative changes that would fulfil the Centre's recommendations regarding the legal framework of national minority education.

With the adoption of Act No. 323/2025 Coll., amending and supplementing Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on education (School Act) and on amendments and supplements to certain acts as amended and which amend and supplement certain acts (hereinafter referred to as the "School Act"), the legislator created a new category of bilingual education, namely national minority bilingual education. According to the explanatory report⁴², the aim is to enable the provision of bilingual education in the language of a national minority and a foreign language. According to the legislator, education in the mother tongue can lead to more effective acquisition of a foreign language and to better study results. The legislative process did not include data that would map the possibilities of implementing national bilingual education or for preventing segregation in its provision, and this amendment was incorporated into the material only after an interdepartmental comment

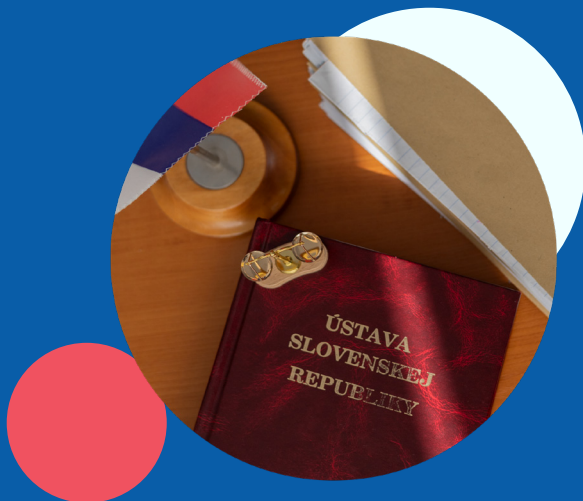
procedure⁴³. The analysis⁴⁴ of the Ministry of Education from September 2025 shows that not all recognized national minorities have schools and school facilities with the language of instruction of the national minority or teaching of the language of the national minority enabling the acquisition of complete secondary education or a level of education with access to higher levels of education. Given the existing situation, this regulation therefore creates a space where national bilingual education would be available only in selected (lower) levels and without guarantees enabling the completion of higher-level education. However, the above will also depend on the state educational programs for national bilingual education in individual levels and their compatibility with other educational programs.

In relation to the fourth recommendation, the Centre notes that for 2025, the Ministry of Education did not publish information on the reassessment of the pilot project of the national school in Rakúsy or on other guarantees or conditions for its implementation.

⁴² Available at <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Default.aspx?sid=zakony/zakon&MasterID=10422>

⁴³ Materials published for public consultation are available at <https://www.slov-lex.sk/elegislativa/legislative-procesy/SK/LP/2025/323>

⁴⁴ Analysis available at <https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/470/34711.290226.pdf>



2. Rule of Law

21

The amendment to the Constitution of the Slovak Republic adopted in 2025 represents one of the most significant changes to the constitutional framework for the protection of fundamental rights and the functioning of the rule of law since the accession of the Slovak Republic to the European Union. Although some provisions can be assessed positively, several other changes raise serious concerns in terms of legal certainty, protection of human rights and compliance of the Slovak legal order with international and European obligations.

Constitutional amendment

On September 26, 2025, the National Council of the Slovak Republic adopted Constitutional Act No. 255/2025 Coll.⁴⁵, which brought fundamental changes to the constitutional regulation of the protection and guarantees of fundamental rights and freedoms. In February 2025, the Centre participated in the interdepartmental comment procedure on the original government draft of the constitutional amendment⁴⁶. However, our comments were not incorporated into the draft, and during the legislative process, other problematic

amendments were added to the draft. After adoption by the government, the Centre issued a press release in July 2025 calling on the deputies of the National Council not to adopt the constitutional act⁴⁷. The shortcomings of the draft were also pointed out by civil society and international bodies and organizations, including the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe, which issued an urgent opinion⁴⁸ on the draft. Nevertheless, the National Council adopted the draft along with several problematic amendments⁴⁹.

What has changed in the constitution?

National identity and conflict with International and European law

Article 7 of the Constitution contains several provisions relating to international treaties, which were inserted into the basic provisions of the Constitution in 2001 as part of a major constitutional reform that, among other things, created the conditions for our accession to the EU and NATO. These provisions introduced the principle that the Slovak Republic may transfer the exercise of part of its

rights to the EU on the basis of a treaty, that legally binding acts of the Union take precedence over laws, and that ratified international human rights treaties take precedence over laws.

These provisions remained in force after the adoption of the constitutional amendment, but the following provisions were added to them:

⁴⁵ <https://www.slov-lex.sk/ezbierky/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2025/255/20251101.html>

⁴⁶ <https://www.slov-lex.sk/elegislativa/legislativne-procesy/SK/LP/2025/24>

⁴⁷ <https://www.snsip.sk/aktuality/vyzvyame-poslancov-a-poslankyne-nr-sr-aby-nepodporili-vladny-navrh-novely-ustavy/>

⁴⁸ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/slovak-republic-venice-commission-issues-urgent-opinion-on-the-draft-amendments-to-the-constitution>

⁴⁹ <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Default.aspx?sid=zakony/cpt&ZakZborID=13&CisObdobia=9&ID=733>

*“(6) The Slovak Republic retains sovereignty **in particular** in matters of national identity, consisting **mainly** 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 matters related thereto in the areas of healthcare, science, upbringing, education, personal status and inheritance.*

(7) Nothing in this Constitution and constitutional laws may be interpreted as consent of the Slovak Republic to the transfer of the exercise of part of its rights in matters constituting national identity.”

The new paragraph 7 states that nothing in the Constitution, including the provision that the Slovak Republic may transfer the exercise of certain rights to the EU and that legally binding EU acts and international human rights treaties take precedence over laws, cannot be interpreted as meaning that the Slovak Republic agrees to the transfer of the exercise of part of its rights in matters forming the national identity created by paragraph 6. This provision thus creates legal grounds for

government authorities and courts to potentially refuse to interpret the Slovak legal order in accordance with international human rights standards, to refuse to implement parts of international treaties, decisions of the Court of Justice of the EU or the European Court of Human Rights, as well as various legal norms of the European Union, which is unacceptable from the perspective of preserving existing guarantees of human rights protection.

Arbitrariness and unpredictability

From the point of view of the rule of law, a significant risk of this legal regulation is its ambiguity. The provision creating the concept of national identity uses the words “in particular”, which means that the Slovak Republic may reject international standards not only in matters of national identity, but potentially also

in others that are not listed in the new provision as part of national identity. The content of national identity is modified by the word “mainly”, which means that the list of areas that make up the content of national identity is not exhaustive. Moreover, only those that are defined as examples in the given provision

already cover a wide range of areas from the right to private and family life to science.

One of the basic principles of the rule of law and of law as such is legal certainty. The language of law must be unambiguous, and all who want to comply with the law in good faith must know or be able to reasonably assume what its content is.

If the Constitution stipulates that the Slovak Republic will not respect international treaties or international courts, such as the Court of Justice of the EU or the European Court of Human Rights, in certain situations, and at the same time limit these situations with the words “in particular” and “mainly” without a clear definition, then the problem, in addition to the principles we are talking about above, is that such a text creates space for arbitrary decision-making. This means that Slovak authorities, including courts, based on their views and at their discretion, can decide whether something is or is not part of the national identity, or whether we “retain sovereignty” in a given matter, or respect international agreements. This entails the risk of arbitrariness and unpredictability, which excludes trust.

Not only the trust of other states in us, but also the trust of citizens in the state.

People may have different opinions on what is a cultural-ethical issue of public morality, science or private life. The adopted text does not provide an opportunity to predict how these and similar questions will be answered by the courts, which have been fully entrusted with the interpretation of these new provisions.

The Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic in its reaction⁵⁰ to the Venice Commission's opinion stated that the Venice Commission seemed to assume arbitrariness, even malice, of the Slovak authorities in complying with obligations under the international law. The Centre recalls that the protection of citizens from arbitrariness or malice of state authorities is the essence of democratic constitutional systems. Even the independence of the judiciary, the presumption of innocence, the obligation of state authorities to act only as permitted by law, would not have to exist if we did not assume the risk of “arbitrariness, even malice” of state authorities.

⁵⁰ <https://www.justice.gov.sk/tlacovespravy/reakcia-ministerstva-spravodlivosti-sr-na-naliehave-stanovisko-benatskej-komisie-zo-dna-24-septembra-2025/>

Risk of conflict with International and European law

Pacta sunt servanda

The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, which is one of the pillars of international law, contains the well-known principle *pacta sunt servanda* (treaties must be observed) and also the provision that a state cannot invoke the provisions of its national law as a reason for non-performance of a treaty.

The amended provision of the Constitution contradicts this principle because it states that in cases concerning national identity, the Slovak Republic retains sovereignty and can therefore act in violation of international treaties by which it has transferred part of the exercise of its rights. This is primarily the case of the EU Treaties, but also of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in relation to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.

In the context of Union law, it is true that national identity contained in the political and constitutional systems of states enjoys protection and must be respected by the Union⁵¹. However in addition to it there is also the principle of primacy of Union law, which is not regulated by the found-

ing treaties, but is gradually created by the decision-making practice of the Court of Justice of the EU. Its content is the principle that Union law is an independent and autonomous legal system that exists alongside the law of the national states and binds the Member States. In the event of a conflict, the Member States are obliged to comply with Union law, or rather not to apply national law, even if it has a constitutional form, which is also related to the concept of the binding nature of the decisions of the Court of Justice of the EU. The concept of binding nature is also not regulated in the founding treaties. They only state that national courts are obliged, under certain circumstances, to refer preliminary questions to the Court of Justice of the EU to interpret European law for them, and that the national courts of a given country are subsequently bound by the interpretation of the Court of Justice. However, it follows from the case-law of the Court of Justice that the principle of the primacy of Union law requires, among other things, that Union law is implemented in the same way in every country, which is related to the broader obliga-

⁵¹ Art. 4 para 2 of the Treaty on European Union

tion of other states to respect such decisions of the Court of Justice, even if they concern another state.

The Court of Justice of the EU has previously ruled in cases against Hungary, Poland and Germany that the principle of primacy of EU law cannot be circumvented by the argument of national identity, even if it is created by a constitutional text. For example, in the comment procedure on the draft amendment to the constitution, the Centre drew attention to the Kreil case (C-285/98), when the German constitution prohibited women from serving in the

army outside the medical or musical branches. Due to the conflict with the Equal Treatment Directive, Germany lost the case before the Court of Justice and amended the constitution. As the amendment to the constitution created scope for the authorities of the Slovak Republic not to accept the primacy of EU law, the European Commission already in November 2025 initiated proceedings against Slovakia for a violation of the fundamental principles of EU law⁵² in particular the principles of primacy, autonomy, effectiveness and uniform application of EU law.

What was the declared goal of these changes?

The explanatory memorandum to the provision stating that nothing in the Constitution may be interpreted as consent to the transfer of the exercise of part of the rights in matters of national identity states the following:

“The interpretative significance of the proposed provision of paragraph 7 is also important in relation to the potential or existing activism of international courts and institutions interfering with the exclusive powers of nation states or rights whose exercise has not been transferred to inter-

national institutions. Such decisions, within the meaning of the proposed provision, could not be interpreted as binding on the Slovak Republic, if they interfered with fundamental cultural and ethical issues, for example regarding the definition of marriage, the protection of life or human dignity.”

The so-called “activism” of international courts is not a random text; it was the basic criticism of conservative circles after the adoption of the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the Fedotova case. In it, the

52 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/inf_25_2481

court ruled that Russia had violated the right to private and family life under Article 8 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms by denying same-sex couples the opportunity to enter into a legal union. The Grand Chamber upheld the decision, holding that Russia had a positive obligation to provide a legal framework for same-sex couples to have their relationships officially recognised and protected, including aspects such as inheritance, taxation and mutual assistance, while also saying that the protection of the traditional family could not justify the absence of a legal framework for same-sex couples.

In the EU compatibility clause part of the constitutional amendment material, the proponents cite four judgments of the Court of Justice of the EU. One of them states that the conditions for legal recognition of gender reassignment are set by the states; according to the other three, the rules regarding marriage and who can enter into it in the country are determined by the member states themselves.

From the context, it therefore appears that the new constitutional principles, which apply to a wide range of interpersonal relationships with

as yet unclear consequences, were adopted by the legislature with the aim of not recognizing same-sex couples and limiting the legal recognition of gender reassignment, which is supposed to be part of our national identity.

The Court of Justice of the EU subsequently issued a judgment in the *Trojan v. Poland* case in November 2025, in which, in the spirit of its previous case law on the implementation of the principle of free movement of persons in the EU, it decided that a state cannot, on the basis of national legislation, refuse to recognise a marriage legally concluded by a same-sex couple in another Member State, nor can it refuse to issue a copy of a marriage certificate if this is the only form of such recognition in a given country. The point of this and previous decisions concerning same-sex couples is that national legislation in one country cannot prevent Union citizens from exercising their rights, which include the free movement of persons and the rights arising therefrom.

The amendment to the Constitution therefore creates a framework for the courts to disregard Union law in the event of the same dispute in the Slovak Republic.

The Centre also notes that in the European Union, only Poland, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and Lithuania (where legislation is expected to be adopted in 2026) do not rec-

ognize any form of legal union between same-sex couples. The remaining countries allow some form of union, of which 17 countries also allow marriage.

Surrogacy

Art. 15 was supplemented with paragraph 5, which reads:

“(5) An agreement to give birth to a child for another person is prohibited.”

Surrogate motherhood has not been legal in Slovakia. The Family Act states that the mother is the woman who gave birth to the child and that agreements or contracts that contradict this are invalid. Such an agreement could also potentially be punishable as human trafficking. The amendment to the Constitution in this regard confirms this legal status.

At the same time, this position is not unique in Europe

either; in most countries, surrogacy is not available, or if it is regulated by law at all, it is subject to various strict conditions⁵³. In the Netherlands or Greece, for example, it is possible, but only in an altruistic form, i.e. without remuneration and must be followed by a standard adoption procedure. However, it must be said that Slovakia is currently the only country that prohibits its surrogacy by constitution.

Equal Pay

Article 36 is supplemented by paragraph 3, which reads:

“(3) Equality between men and women in remuneration for work performed is guaranteed.”

Equal pay was previously guaranteed by national legislation, international treaties and Union law, but it has now

been explicitly elevated to constitutional law, which we assess positively.

⁵³ Surrogacy: The legal situation in the EU, David de Groot, 2025, EP, available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2025/769508/EPRS_BRI\(2025\)769508_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2025/769508/EPRS_BRI(2025)769508_EN.pdf)

Parenthood

In Art. 41, a new paragraph 2 is inserted after paragraph 1 (marriage from 2015), which reads:

“(2) The parents of a child are the mother and the father; the mother of the child is a woman and the father of the child is a man.”

The previous paragraphs 2 to 6 are referred to as paragraphs 3 to 7.

This provision is again aimed at rainbow families. Although it was not possible to register two fathers or two mothers on a birth certificate under the current legal status, the case law of the Court of Justice of the EU, due to the free movement of persons, also required the recognition of pa-

rental relationships that legally arose in another Member State, while authorities do not have to issue birth certificates if they do not allow same-sex parenthood, they must allow the issuance of an identity card, and thus recognize the citizenship as a result of the citizenship of one of the parents (Pančarevo)⁵⁴. It therefore appears that this provision seeks, among other things, to disregard this judgment.

29

Adoption

In Art. 41, a new paragraph 5 is inserted after paragraph 4, which reads:

“(5) A minor may be adopted by spouses or one of the spouses who lives with one of the child’s parents in marriage, or by the surviving spouse of the parent or adopter of the minor. A minor may exceptionally be adopted by a single person if the adoption is in the child’s best interests. The court shall decide on the adoption.”

This provision, taken from the Family Act, elevates the exceptionality of adoption by a single person to a constitutional principle and at the same time excludes adoption by same-sex couples. The essence of its criticism, whether

in its constitutional form or in the text of the Family Act, is that, according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the child’s best interests should be paramount in matters of adoption. This means that the choice of whether a

⁵⁴ V.M.A. Proti Stolična občština, rajon „Pančarevo“, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SK/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:62020CJ0490>

married couple, a single person or another couple is best suited for adoption, if the legislation allows, should depend

on the best interests of the child in the individual case, and not on the constitution.

Sex education

In Art. 41, a new paragraph 7 is inserted after paragraph 6, which reads:

“(7) The upbringing and education of children in the area of shaping intimate life and sexual behavior may be provided only with the consent of the legal guardian. Education aimed at protecting health, physical integrity and preventing abuse forms part of the general education of children in a form appropriate to their age.”

In its comments on this text, the Centre pointed out that sex education has been, at least formally, part of the educational program in Slovakia for 40 years. In addition, children have the right to comprehensive education, including in the area of sexuality and reproductive rights, provided that such education is adapted to children according to their age and development, relevant and based on current scientific knowledge and human rights standards. This obligation of the state follows not only from the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but also from the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which regulates the right of girls to receive information regarding family planning options, and the Council of Europe Con-

vention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, which regulates the obligation to provide children with education at both primary and secondary levels about the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, while not excluding cooperation with parents.

We believe that the last sentence of this provision, which concerns the protection of health, was later added also because of our reservations, and it should, in our opinion, also cover reproductive health.

However, in practice, schools and individual teachers will have to evaluate whether they comply with the constitution, and parents will also be able to object that a spe-

cific lecture or education is in conflict with the constitution and claim the right not to allow such education for their child. Ultimately, schools may prefer to avoid any education that could be related to the topic of sexuality in order to avoid complications.

It is necessary to emphasize that although there is a right of parents to raise their children in accordance with their own beliefs, like any other right, it is not unlimited and

does not include the possibility of waiving the right to education in any area on behalf of the child, while respecting the frameworks that we mentioned at the beginning.

The role of the state is to create a delicate balance between the rights of parents and their children, while respecting the best interests of the child, but instead the Constitution resigns itself to the rights of children in favor of the parents.

Sex/gender

“Art. 52a

The Slovak Republic recognizes only the biologically determined sex of man and woman.”

The original government draft of the constitutional amendment did not mention the words “biologically determined”. The Centre objected to the original draft that it did not reflect the reality of intersex people and that it was not clear what the purpose of this text was, because from a biological or medical point of view it is a declaration of fact and has no reason to be the subject of recognition. On the contrary, self-identification based on gender, i.e. not biological sex, but social ideas about masculinity and femininity, is part of the right to private life and this provision should therefore not serve to

discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

The words “biologically determined” were added to the draft in parliament. The government and the Ministry of Justice, in the quoted response to the Venice Commission’s opinion, stated: “The draft amendment to the Constitution is not about anything new, but about preserving the current status. Likewise, the rights of transsexual persons in terms of transition remain preserved and nothing about their status changes.” Nevertheless, in the absence of answers to what exactly

this provision means (how and when is gender determined biologically and how does it apply to intersex people, people with chromosomal abnormalities or people in hormone therapy, etc.), the text of the Constitution is subject to various interpretations. The Conference of Bishops of Slovakia stated in its comments⁵⁵ on the draft reform of the Civil Code that the Constitution does not allow for gender change. This comes at a time when NGOs are warning⁵⁶ that several registry offices in Slovakia have refused to fulfill their legal obligation to change the name and personal identification number when changing gender, after the Minister of Health withdrew medical standards for the treatment of transgender people in April 2024.

The Court of Justice of the EU also entered into this debate in March 2026, when it issued a judgment in the case of *Shipova v. Bulgaria*⁵⁷, in which it said that the principle of free movement of persons within the EU „*must be interpreted as precluding legislation of a Member State which does not permit the amendment of gender data, such as the sex, family name, patronymic, first name and*

personal identification number, recorded in the civil status registers of that Member State, of a national of that Member State who has exercised his or her right to move and reside freely in another Member State.... EU law must be interpreted as precluding a court of a Member State from being bound by the interpretation of national legislation, given by the constitutional court of that Member State, capable of constituting a legal impediment to the recording of a change of gender data in the civil status registers of the Member State in question, in contradiction with the interpretation of EU law given by the Court of Justice.”

In Bulgaria, the Constitutional Court interpreted the Bulgarian Constitution as recognizing only biologically determined sex and not allowing self-identification, as a result of which a Bulgarian citizen who transitioned in Italy was not issued documents reflecting this change by the Bulgarian authorities.

In its judgment, the Court also stated that “*tolerating discrimination on the basis of the difference between biological sex and gender iden-*

⁵⁵ <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pripomienky/legislativne-procesy/SK/LP/2025/486/pripomienky/17cc3b52-ecb2-4d20-a516-9ba169f2e942/detail>

⁵⁶ <https://www.sapling.org/ministerstvo-zdravotnictva-rusi-medicinske-standardy.html>

⁵⁷ https://infocuria.curia.europa.eu/tabs/jurisprudence?sort=DOC_DATE-DESC&searchTerm=%22C-43%2F24%22&publishedId=C-43%2F24

tity would amount to a disregard for the dignity and freedom to which a transgender

person is entitled and which the Court is obliged to protect.”

Crisis of facts

In light of the debate before and after the adoption of the constitutional amendment, which in our opinion threatens the human rights of many Slovak citizens, the Centre draws attention to the threat to the rule of law and democracy in Slovakia, also in connection with the adoption of public policies with an obvious lack of data and facts, instead of which feelings and unfounded myths dominate the public debate.

The obligation of state bodies and public officials is to explain the meaning, content and benefits of international human rights standards, the basis of which is the civilizational shift towards acceptance of differences between individuals and respect for the human dignity of each person without distinction. Subsequently, their task is to fulfil these standards and, in good faith, try to approach them through public policies.

However, the amendment to the Constitution has resigned itself to this approach and, on the contrary, calls for disrespect for international agreements and standards if a part of society does not

agree with them, regardless of the reasons.

That reasons matter was also seen in the debate on the constitutional amendment. The MPs spoke about the myth of the so-called 72 genders, which no one promoted or requested. After the adoption of the constitutional amendment, which fundamentally changed the attitude towards the international community, the European Union, the relationship between parents and children and introduced constitutional principles of excluding same-sex couples, rainbow families, transgender and intersex people from society, the Deputy Speaker of Parliament held a press conference and said that he did not like the idea of two men kissing on the street in Slovakia. The Bishops' Conference of Slovakia, in the aforementioned comment, said that gender reassignment is a plastic surgery accompanied by hormonal treatment (while genital plastic surgeries are rare and are not and have not been performed at all in Slovakia).

Similarly, on the topic of sex education in schools, the Centre pointed out in a press release that it is the task of state authorities and their representatives to explain why it is necessary for children to receive information appropriate to their age, including in the area of sexual and reproductive health, and what the content of such ed-

ucation is in practice, in order to eliminate the concerns of part of the public and prevent the spread of myths and misinformation about the so-called sexualization of children. A variety of research, analyses and guidelines developed by Slovak and international institutions, especially UNESCO can be utilized.

Recommendations:

The Centre recommends:

1. **The Government of the Slovak Republic**, in view of the constitutional changes, to adopt guarantees and measures to ensure the full implementation of the rights provided for in the Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms as interpreted by the European Court of Human Rights.
2. **The Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic** to ensure the availability of legal recognition of gender reassignment and gender-affirming healthcare, as well as effective remedies in the event that these are refused.
3. **The Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic** to adopt measures to ensure respect for the right of children to comprehensive education, including in the area of sexuality and reproductive rights (provided that such education is adapted to the age and development of children, relevant and based on current scientific knowledge and human rights standards).



3. Discrimination against hearing impaired persons in Slovakia

35

The findings indicate that discrimination against persons with hearing impairments in Slovakia is not only the result of individual failures, but is largely related to inadequately set legislative, institutional and systemic mechanisms.

Discrimination against persons with hearing impairments is a complex social and legal problem that is not only manifested in individual cases of unequal treatment, but also in persistent systemic barriers limiting their access to information, services and full participation in social life. Discrimination against persons with hearing impairments in Slovakia is manifested mainly through persistent communication, information and institutional barriers that limit their full participation in social life. Organizations working in the field of protection of the rights of persons with hearing impairments declare that the current legislation is sufficient, but in application and practice there remains a significant difference between the declared rights and reality⁵⁸. Although the Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities records a gradual improvement in respect for human rights, persons with hearing impairments continue to encounter obstacles and discriminatory practices in various areas of life. Barriers persist in particular in accessibility to public services, employment and education. The right to information, the right to adequate commu-

nication, inclusion in school and the workplace, the right to independent living in the community, the right to participate in political and public life, to participate in cultural activities and to have access to justice are often restricted. The persistent lack of awareness of rights, specific needs and entitlements to reasonable accommodation can be considered the cause of the violation of these rights. Last but not least, the lack of people interpreting into Slovak Sign Language and the fact that interpreting services are not equally available regionally⁵⁹ also contribute to the creation of barriers and discriminatory attitudes. The above facts indicate that many of the barriers faced by people with hearing impairments are systemic in nature and are related to insufficient consideration of their communication needs in the creation of public policies and the provision of services.

Approximately 250,000 hearing impaired people live in Slovakia. This number includes deaf, hard of hearing and deafened people, i.e. people who have lost their hearing during their lives, which also includes hearing pen-

⁵⁸ From the response of the Association of the Deaf of Slovakia to the Center's questions dated February 23, 2026 and from the response of the Civic Association World of Silence to the Center's questions dated February 18, 2026.

⁵⁹ From the response of the Office of the Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities to the Center's questions dated March 5, 2026

sioners who are gradually losing their hearing⁶⁰. There are approximately 4,000⁶¹ people in Slovakia who rely on sign language as their primary form of communication. The Centre's practice shows that many of these people, despite their efforts to integrate into society, continue to face discriminatory treatment.

In the area of housing, for example, there is a refusal to conclude a lease contract solely on the grounds of hearing impairment, without a personal meeting or objective assessment of the applicant. People with health disabilities face specific challenges and human rights problems in themselves, and in combination with other forms of social threat, the situation of these people in the area of housing is even more sensitive⁶². In the labour market, they encounter rejection by employers due to the very fact that they are deaf, while stereotypes, stigmatization and generalization of individual negative experiences persist. The situation in the area of mental health is particularly serious, where systematic and acces-

sible psychological and psychiatric care in sign language is absent, which has serious consequences for prevention and early intervention. Deaf pensioners are often exposed to social isolation and psychological decline in social service facilities due to the inability to communicate and an unadapted environment. Deaf Roma represent a particularly vulnerable group, for whom several forms of disadvantage accumulate⁶³. Cultural barriers also persist, although there are initiatives aimed at improving the accessibility of public and cultural institutions⁶⁴. In healthcare, the lack of interpretation into Slovak Sign Language creates communication barriers between patients and healthcare personnel⁶⁵. In education, deaf students are mainly dependent on integration into a hearing environment, while systemic support, including sufficient provision of interpretation and bilingual access, is still insufficient⁶⁶. The issue of the preparedness of the population protection system and rescue services for the needs of persons with disabilities in crisis situations is also

⁶⁰ See <https://plus7dni.pluska.sk/domov/nekricte-nas-odkazuju-nepocujuci-cim-zapasias-take-to-problemy-ste-nechceli-mat>

⁶¹ See <https://tvnoviny.sk/domace/clanok/975174-na-slovensku-ziju-styri-tisicky-nepocujucich-no-mame-iba-25-tlmcnikov-na-obzore-je-vsak-nadej-na-zmenu>

⁶² https://www.snsip.sk/wp-content/uploads/Pravo_na_byvanie.pdf

⁶³ See https://www.silentworld.sk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/ROMOVIA-A-ICH-MIESTO_A5.pdf

⁶⁴ https://www.silentworld.sk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/brozura_svet_ticha.pdf

⁶⁵ See <https://pristupnost.spj.sk/porovnanie-udajov-z-rokov-2020-a-2024-o-bezbarierovom-pristupe-muzei-a-kulturnych-institucii-na-slovensku-z-hladiska-nepocujucich-osob/>

⁶⁶ See <https://www.nepocujuci.sk/sk/node/285>

⁶⁶ See <https://nepocujuci.sk/sk/node/291#>

extremely important and topical and was also addressed by the Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities in 2025. People with hearing impairments are particularly at risk in such situations due to inadequately accessible warning systems, the lack of information in understandable and alternative formats and barriers to communication with emergency services. The problems are often one-sided warnings (only audible or only visual), delayed responses and insufficient assistance. These shortcomings not only constitute discriminatory treatment, but also a failure of the State's duty to protect the life of every individual, while people with disabilities require special protection due to their increased vulnerability. The Commissioner for People with Disabilities considers it essential to ensure access to healthcare, compensatory aids, social services, information about threats and warning systems adapted to different types of disabilities⁶⁷. These examples indicate that the barriers faced by people with hearing impairments transcend individual sectors and are strongly cross-sectional in nature.

Another key factor is the nature of the hearing impair-

ment itself, especially if it is present from birth. In such cases, it significantly interferes with the ability to fully acquire the spoken language of the majority society, while the limits in communication with the hearing world often become a lifelong barrier. This is closely related to the phenomenon of language deprivation in early childhood, which can negatively affect cognitive development, social regulation and emotional processing of stimuli. The lack of visual and bilingual approaches in education, i.e. the systematic linking of spoken language with sign language, as well as the insufficient mediation of information, including mental health topics, in sign language, also plays a significant role. Marginalization and discrimination persist for a long time, which are mainly manifested in the limited availability of information, public services and professional support in sign language. Economic disadvantage also contributes to the vulnerability of this group, as people with hearing impairments face difficult access to the labour market. The situation can also be complicated by the cause of hearing impairment and the presence of comorbidities. The consequences of language depri-

⁶⁷ From the response of the Office of the Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities to the Centre's questions dated March 5, 2026

vation, together with persistent communication barriers, also limit the access of deaf people to psychological and psychiatric services, while the low frequency of contact between professionals and this group does not create sufficient pressure to systematically address this issue. Encountering a different form of communication, namely sign language, and with specific manifestations of deaf behaviour can cause distance or lead to incorrect interpretation of behaviour, which, however, corresponds to the

cultural patterns of the deaf community. Finally, deaf people are traditionally excluded from general research, partly because their main problem is reduced to hearing loss itself and related educational issues, and partly because of the difficulty of obtaining data on this specific population⁶⁸. The Centre's findings also show that discrimination against hearing-impaired people is often complex in nature and cannot be reduced to a single factor or area of social life.

⁶⁸ See <https://www.innosign.eu/2025/08/20/ciorny-den-pre-komunitu-nepocujucich-systemove-zlyhanie-a-okamzita-potreba-reformy-dusevneho-zdravia>

3.1 Legislative and systemic shortcomings

The provision of Section 2(1) of the Anti-Discrimination Act prohibits discrimination on the grounds of disability and para 3 specifies that compliance with the principle of equal treatment also consists of taking preventive measures to prevent discrimination. Everyone is called upon by the legislator to take such measures as to minimise the risk of violation of the principle of equal treatment. It is clear from the systematics of the Act that by measures the legislator does not mean those under Section 7(1) of the Anti-Discrimination Act, nor temporary compensatory measures within the meaning of Section 8 of the Anti-Discrimination Act. Appropriate measures can be characterised as adjustments to the workplace and include the reassignment of tasks, the acquisition or change of equipment, including building modifications, or flexible work organisation. In the explanatory memorandum, the legislator states that the obligation to take preventive measures is limited in specific situations, mainly by the financial and technical, but also by other possibilities of the obliged person. Neither legal theory nor judicial practice provides answers to ques-

tions about the content of the measures required by law. They do not address the interpretation of Section 2(3) of the Anti-Discrimination Act at all, which leaves entities obliged to comply with the principle of equal treatment a wide margin of discretion in the context of the form and content of such measures⁶⁹.

In practice, it should be an obligation for employers, suppliers of goods and service providers (not only entrepreneurs), schools, educational entities, healthcare providers and entities involved in the provision of benefits related to social security to adjust preventive anti-discrimination mechanisms in their internal regulations, not only declaratively, but in such a way that they can be realistically implemented, evaluated and reflect the requirement of judicial review of the fulfilment of the legal obligation to comply with the principle of equal treatment.

Slovak legislation addresses the obligation to comply with the principle of equal treatment in relation to health-disadvantaged persons relatively conservatively. From the wording of Section 7(1) of the Anti-Discrimination

Act the obligation to ensure equal treatment, including the adoption of special measures, is expressly regulated in relation to persons with disabilities only in the field of employment. The right to demand the adoption of reasonable measures in the workplace belongs exclusively to disabled employees. Reasonable measures may consist, for example, in the technical adaptation of the workplace premises, the adjustment of work equipment in the context of the job position or the adjustment of working hours, the distribution of work tasks among other employees or the provision of opportunities for training and integration. Reasonable measures should aim to remove various barriers that prevent the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in professional life on an equal basis with other employees.

In its landmark judgment in *HK Danmark*, the Court of Justice of the European Union stated that reasonable accommodation within the meaning of Article 2 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is broadly defined and should be understood as referring to “the removal of various barriers which hinder the full and

effective participation of persons with disabilities in professional life on an equal basis with other workers”. The concept of reasonable accommodation includes not only material but also organisational measures, which may include adjustments to the pace or intensity of work. A reduction in working time as such may constitute reasonable accommodation if that reduction enables the worker to maintain employment⁷⁰. In the *Ca Na Negreta* judgment, the Court of Justice of the European Union clarified that the Employment Equality Directive protects a worker from automatic dismissal when, in the course of the employment relationship, a health impairment has arisen such that he is permanently unable to perform the tasks specified in his employment contract. The employer is required to make or maintain reasonable accommodation to enable the worker to keep his job; the employer may dismiss the worker only if he can prove that such accommodation would constitute a disproportionate burden⁷¹.

The above definition of reasonable accommodation also points to the broader significance of measures aimed at removing barriers, which are

⁷⁰ Judgment of 11 April 2013, *HK Danmark*, joined cases C-335/11 and C-337/11, ECLI:EU:C:2013:222.

⁷¹ Judgment of 18 January 2024, *Ca Na Negreta*, Case C-631/22, ECLI:EU:C:2024:53.

not only applied in the field of employment, but also in other areas of social life, including education. A supportive measure is a measure provided by a school or school facility that is necessary for a child or pupil to fully participate in upbringing and education and develop their knowledge, skills and abilities⁷². The institute of reasonable measures under Section 7 of the Anti-Discrimination Act must be distinguished from the institute of supportive measures under Section 145a et seq. of the School Act, despite the fact that their common purpose is the integration of disabled persons and the guarantee of equality in the exercise of rights determined by the scope of the relevant provisions. The reason for this situation is the fact that in the case of the Anti-Discrimination Act, the legislator transposed the provisions of Directive 2000/78/EC, which establishes a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, exclusively in the context of minimum harmonisation standards, and thus did not extend reasonable accommodation to employees with disabilities to other areas of the substantive scope of the

Anti-Discrimination Act⁷³.

The Centre is of the opinion that the Slovak legal regulation of reasonable accommodation is insufficient, as it explicitly regulates it only in the area of employment. This approach is not fully in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which requires ensuring reasonable accommodation in all areas of social life. The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has also been drawing attention to this inconsistency for a long time.

The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (hereinafter referred to as the “UN Committee”), the body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities within Member States, has expressed its views on the subject in a similar vein. The UN Committee’s Concluding Recommendations to the Government of the Slovak Republic point to the need for changes in many areas of life for persons with disabilities⁷⁴. In its Concluding Recommendations on the Initial Report of the Slovak Republic of 18

⁷² Section 145a par. 1 of the Education Act, a support measure is a measure provided by a school or school facility necessary for a child or pupil to fully participate in education and develop their knowledge, skills and abilities.

⁷³ Cenken, M. Commentary to antidiscrimination act, Bratislava: C. H. Beck, 2025, 418 s.

⁷⁴ Available at https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/SessionDetails.aspx?SessionID=1050&Lang=en

April 2016, the UN Committee explicitly expressed concern that *“legislation prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability has not been extended beyond the field of employment.”*

At the same time, the UN Committee issued a recommendation *“that the State party adopt legislation prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability in all areas and provide training and guidance for the public and private sectors.”*

The Slovak Republic is among the countries that have adopted and ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and therefore has specific obligations under it. Article 4, paragraph 1 (a), of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities obliges States to *“take all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures to implement the rights recognized in the present Convention.”*

The individual obligations also include the obligation arising from Article 5, paragraph 3, which obliges States Parties to *“take all appropriate steps to ensure the provision of reasonable accommodation in the interests of equality and the elimination of discrimination.”*

Reasonable accommodation is defined in Article 2 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as *“necessary and appropriate modification and adjustment, not imposing a disproportionate or excessive burden, made where required in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with others.”*

The UN Committee also recommended that the Slovak Republic *“amend Section 2a(1) of the Anti-Discrimination Act to include the denial of reasonable accommodation as discrimination on the basis of disability and to introduce specific provisions on sanctions for failure to comply with this Act.”*

However, the Centre notes that the Slovak Republic has not sufficiently reflected on the UN Committee’s recommendations, as legislation in this area has not changed at all since the UN Committee issued its recommendations. The result of this inaction is a deepening of the problem and a significant negative impact on the lives of people with disabilities, including hearing impairment. The above finding points to a persistent discrepancy between

national legislation and the international obligations of the Slovak Republic in the

area of protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.

3.2 Examples of discrimination in practice

Legislative shortcomings are also reflected in everyday practice. Persons with disabilities may encounter barriers in exercising their rights in various areas of social life. The Centre's experience indicates that the absence of an explicit obligation to provide reasonable accommodation outside the field of employment may lead to situations in which service providers or other entities do not approach the individual assessment of the needs of persons with disabilities. One of the cases of discrimination against hearing-impaired people that the Centre dealt with in 2025 is the media-reported case of

Mr. Marek Kanaš (hereinafter referred to as the "client"), who was denied access to instruction by 8 out of 9 driving schools⁷⁵.

In the given legal case, the Centre issued an expert opinion⁷⁶ and informed the entities concerned of its conclusions.

In accordance with the initiative, the client, with the help of a personal assistant, contacted nine driving schools in various cities in Slovakia during May 2025, with the following common answers from the driving schools:

- *A deaf person cannot drive a transmission because he cannot hear the engine.*
- *Communication is not possible in the car, a deaf person cannot complete the training.*
- *There cannot be an interpreter during the exam.*
- *We do not have conditions for the deaf - period.*
- *If he cannot look, it is not possible.*

⁷⁵ <https://spravy.stvr.sk/2025/09/autoskoly-na-slovensku-odmietli-viacerych-nepocujucich-uchadzacov-pravnicka-upozornuje-na-diskriminaciu/>, navštívené dňa 11. februára 2026.

⁷⁶ <https://www.snsip.sk/wp-content/uploads/OS-Automaticke-vylucenie-ludi-so-sluchovim-postihnutim-z-moznosti-ziskat-vodicske-opravnenie-je-diskriminacne.pdf>

The driving schools did not show any interest in creating conditions for obtaining a driving license for the client as a hearing-impaired person and rejected him outright. Only one driving school was willing to adapt the instruction.

In the case under consideration, the Centre identified a protected area of provision of goods and services within which the prohibition of discrimination applies pursuant to Section 3(1) in conjunction with Section 5(2b) of the Anti-Discrimination Act. It is therefore undisputed that the provision of driving school services is subject to the obligation to comply with the principle of equal treatment within the meaning of the Anti-Discrimination Act.

Another essential part is determining the form of violation of the prohibition of discrimination. The forms of discrimination are set out in the Anti-Discrimination Act in Section 2a. According to this provision, *direct discrimination is an act or omission by which a person is treated less favourably than another person in a comparable situation is, was or could be treated*. In the context of the above, it was clearly possible to determine a direct form of discrimination, which is rep-

resented by a legal act that was intended to result in less favourable treatment, namely the refusal by several driving schools to allow a client, as a hearing-impaired person, to complete a driving course. In this case, the comparator is any other applicant for a driving course to whom the driving school provides the service without restrictions.

The defining feature of the legal presumption of discrimination (a condition for its actionability) is at least the identification of objective facts that indicate that the driving schools treated the client less favourably for a reason on the basis of which the legislator prohibits treating consumers in such a way. The Anti-Discrimination Act in Section 2(1) provides a demonstrative list of prohibited grounds for discrimination, including disability. The explicit statements made by the driving schools in telephone calls to the clients clearly demonstrated a causal connection between the disability and the driving schools' decision not to allow the client to take a driving course.

According to the legal opinion of the Centre, in the legal case under consideration, a causal connection (causal nexus) was sufficiently proven and, based on a legal assessment

of the factual circumstances of the case, it was stated that in the legal case under consideration, the so-called defining features of discrimination were cumulatively identified, and thus there was a violation of the prohibition of discrimination under the Anti-Discrimination Act.

The Court of Justice of the European Union (hereinafter referred to as the “Court of Justice”) has not yet addressed discrimination against hearing-impaired persons in the field of provision of goods and services in its decision-making practice, however, there is a relevant case of discrimination against hearing-impaired persons in the field of employment law. The Court of Justice expressed its legal opinion in case C-795/19 XX v. Tartu Vangla *Article 2(2)(a), Article 4(1) and Article 5 of Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000, establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, are to be interpreted as precluding national legislation which imposes an absolute bar to a prison officer remaining in employment when his or her auditory acuity does not meet the minimum standards of sound perception prescribed by that legislation, without allowing it to be ascertained*

whether that officer is capable of fulfilling those duties, where appropriate after the adoption of reasonable accommodation measures within the meaning of Article 5 of that directive. The case in question clearly illustrates the obligation of the responsible entities (in the case under consideration, driving schools) to make reasonable adjustments for persons with hearing impairments. The absolute exclusion of persons with hearing impairments from the possibility of obtaining a driving licence without the possibility of individual assessment or adaptation is disproportionate and contrary to anti-discrimination law⁷⁷. The above case illustrates the practical consequences of the absence of a legal obligation to provide reasonable accommodation outside the field of employment. If the Slovak Republic were to comply with the 2016 UN Committee recommendations, Slovak driving schools would be obliged to provide reasonable accommodation to hearing-impaired persons to facilitate their learning.

It is important to emphasise that while discrimination against applicants on the grounds of disability is still illegal today, a significant difference would be the positive

⁷⁷ C-795/19 XX v. Tartu Vangla, available at: <https://www.epi.sk/judikat-ESD/c-795-19-ecli-eu-c-2021-606.htm>

obligation of driving schools to make reasonable accommodation under threat of sanctions. Such a regulation would shift the focus of protection from the passive expectation of individual exercise of rights by the applicant to the active responsibility of driving schools. They would be obliged to systematically adapt the learning process to the needs of persons with hearing impairments. At the same time, the legislative change in question could contribute to raising awareness of the application of the principle of equal treatment in practice. Based on its activities, the Centre notes that a significant factor in persistent discrimination is also ignorance of legal obligations. The introduction of explicit positive obligations would therefore probably lead to greater attention paid to the relevant legislation by driving schools. In addition, the Centre notes that the Czech Ombudsman⁷⁸ has been working on this issue for a long time. This case also points to a broader problem that does not only concern individual service providers but also reflects the persistent systemic barriers that people with hearing impairments face in various areas of social life. The existence

of these barriers is also indicated by the findings of the Office of the Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities⁷⁹. The Office of the Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities plays an important role in the system of protection of the rights of people with disabilities, as it deals with complaints regarding violations of their rights, provides expert advice and at the same time draws attention to systemic shortcomings in the implementation of the rights of this population group. Based on its activities, it has knowledge of the practical problems that people with disabilities face in exercising their rights, including the barriers that affect people with hearing impairments.

According to information provided by the Office of the Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, one of the most significant problems that deaf people encounter is the persistent communication barriers when contacting public institutions. The lack of availability of interpretation into Slovak Sign Language significantly limits the possibility of effective communication between deaf people and public authorities. As a result, access to information, service-

⁷⁸ https://www.ochrance.cz/aktualne/autoskoly_musi_byt_pripravene_i_na_zaky_s_postizenim_-_komplikace_pri_ziskavani_ridicaku_zazivaji_predevsim_lide_s_postizenim_sluchu/; opinion available at <https://eso.ochrance.cz/Nalezene/Edit/10988>

⁷⁹ See <https://www.komisarprezdravotnepostihnutych.sk/>

es or the effective exercise of rights and legal protection may be limited⁸⁰.

The Office of the Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities also points out that interpretation into Slovak Sign Language is not systematically provided in many areas of public services. The shortcomings are particularly evident in contacts with public administration bodies, in the healthcare sector, but also in the processing of various administrative tasks. In practice, this means that people with hearing impairments are often dependent on the help of family members or informal communication intermediaries, which can negatively affect their autonomy, privacy and equality in access to services⁸¹.

The findings of the Office of the Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities also point to the need to raise awareness about the rights of people with disabilities and the specifics of communication with deaf people. Insufficient preparation of public institution workers who encounter people with hearing impairments can lead to incorrect interpretation of communication needs or an inadequate approach in providing services. Strengthening professional capacities and systematic education of public sector workers could therefore contribute to improving the quality of communication and removing some of the barriers that deaf people face⁸².

80 From the response of the Office of the Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities to the Center's questions dated March 5, 2026.

81 Ibidem.

82 Ibidem.

3.3 Final observations

In conclusion, the Centre notes that the Slovak Republic is currently insufficiently fulfilling its obligations in the area of protection of the rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities, including hearing impaired persons, which arise from international legal instruments, in particular from the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

Hearing impaired persons in Slovakia continue to face several systemic barriers, which point to insufficiently set legislative and institutional mechanisms for the protection of their rights. Although the Anti-Discrimination Act prohibits discrimination on the grounds of disability, the absence of a clear and general obligation to provide reasonable accommodation in all protected areas means that protection against discrimination often remains only formal. Without explicitly formulated positive obligations and effective mechanisms for their enforcement, communication, information and social barriers are not systematically removed.

The complaints registered by the Centre, including the case of refusal to participate in a

driving course, show that discrimination against persons with disabilities occurs in various areas of social life, such as education, employment, provision of services, health care or social services. The common denominator of these situations is the absence of an individual assessment of the needs of a particular person and the unwillingness to implement appropriate adjustments that would enable full participation in social life. Such an approach is in conflict not only with national legislation, but also with the international obligations of the Slovak Republic.

Ensuring real equality therefore requires a shift from declarative equality to substantive equality based on the active removal of barriers and respect for the linguistic and cultural identity of the deaf community. This presupposes the adoption of legislative changes reflecting the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, systematic education of the public and private sectors, as well as strengthening the availability of services in Slovak Sign Language.

The aim of the Centre is to highlight the need to harmonise national legislation

and practice with international standards for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. The findings presented in this chapter indicate that discrimination against persons with hearing impairments in Slovakia is not only the result of individual failures, but is largely conditioned by inadequately set legislative, institutional and systemic mechanisms. Persistent communication and information barriers, the lack of availability of services in Slovak Sign Language, as well as the absence of systematic provision of reasonable accommodation in vari-

ous areas of social life point to the need for comprehensive legislative, institutional and educational measures. Their adoption is a prerequisite for ensuring that persons with hearing impairments can exercise their rights on an equal basis with other members of society.

The Centre believes that only a systematic and coordinated approach based on respect for the rights of persons with disabilities can contribute to the removal of persistent barriers and the creation of an inclusive society.

Recommendations:

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The Centre recommends:

1. **The Government of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic** to initiate legislative changes aimed at harmonizing the Anti-Discrimination Act with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in particular by extending the obligation to provide reasonable accommodation beyond the area of employment.
2. **The Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic** to adopt measures to improve the accessibility of healthcare for hearing-impaired persons, in particular by supporting the availability of interpretation into Slovak Sign Language and increasing the competences of healthcare personnel in the area of communication with deaf patients.
3. **The Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic** to strengthen support measures in the education of children and students with hearing impairments, in particular by ensuring the availability of interpretation into Slovak

Sign Language and supporting a bilingual approach in education.

4. **The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic** to support measures aimed at improving access to the labour market for persons with hearing impairments, in particular by informing employers about obligations in the area of equal treatment and supporting reasonable accommodation in the workplace.
5. **The Ministry of Transport of the Slovak Republic** to adopt measures to prevent discrimination against persons with hearing impairments when providing training in driving schools, including the development of methodological guidelines for providers of these services.



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4. Poverty through a human rights lens: social rights in times of crisis

We point to systemic factors contributing to the deepening of social vulnerability, including gender inequalities, inadequate housing, weaker protection of workers from poverty, and financial barriers to access to healthcare, and emphasize the need for comprehensive public policies aimed at strengthening social protection and ensuring a decent standard of living.

As a result of several crises, including the pandemic, the energy crisis, the war in Ukraine and the associated high inflation and rising living costs, which have not received an adequate political response, the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion has increased significantly in recent years. In Slovakia, approximately 980,000 people, or 18.3% of the population, are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, which is the highest in the last 10 years⁸³. Since 2020, the risk of poverty and social exclusion has increased by almost 5 percentage points. Employment is often not enough to ensure a decent income and, in many cases, does not even guarantee the coverage of basic living needs. The most at-risk groups in the long term include single-parent households, children and families with multiple children, as

well as seniors living alone⁸⁴. In Slovakia, it has long been shown that households with children are significantly more vulnerable to the risk of poverty than households without children. In 2024, 20.4% of people living in households with dependent children and 15.4% of people living in households without children were at risk of poverty. Among households with dependent children, single-parent households were most at risk of poverty, and households of two adults with three or more dependent children were also significantly vulnerable. Among households without children, single-person households of women aged 65 and over were most at risk⁸⁵. Poverty also has a gender dimension, as the risk of poverty and social exclusion affects more women than men.

Poverty in international human rights standards

The issue of poverty is represented in several international human rights obligations of the Slovak Republic. Article 30 of the European Social Charter defines that everyone has the right to protection from poverty and social exclusion. In the context of this article,

the European Committee of Social Rights (hereinafter referred to as the “Committee”) establishes that poverty and social exclusion are phenomena that violate human dignity. States are therefore obliged to ensure sufficient resources to guarantee protection from

⁸³ Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic. Between the Paycheck and the Bills: How is Life in a Country of Low Wages? Poverty Report in Slovakia 2025. Available online at: <https://www.kozsr.sk/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Sprava-Chudoba-04.pdf>

⁸⁴ Ibidem

⁸⁵ <https://tinyurl.com/2jffxsb>

in the agreement⁸⁸. The aspect of progressive improvement of the state of social and economic administration is therefore also an integral part of international human rights obligations in this case.

The right to adequate living conditions is also included in international agreements targeting specific vulnerable groups, such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 28). It states that poverty prevention programmes, including public housing, social security and financial assistance, should

also target people with disabilities.⁸⁹

The European Pillar of Social Rights, a set of 20 principles aimed at strengthening social rights in the EU, addresses poverty in several articles and sets out the obligation for states to prevent in-work poverty, for example through fair wage policies. The Pillar also guarantees the right to protection from poverty to various vulnerable groups, including women, children and the elderly. It also stresses that everyone should have access to affordable healthcare⁹⁰.

The feminization of poverty

Poverty in Slovakia has a significant gender dimension and affects women more than men, which is the result of several interrelated factors. Economic differences between women and men⁹¹ lead to women often achieving lower social status and encountering less recognition. Discriminatory practices and gender stereotypes, which

limit women's access to better-paid and more advantageous employment opportunities,⁹² also contribute to the deepening of this inequality. The division of care for the household, children or other family members, e.g. aging parents, is uneven to the detriment of women. This affects their career opportunities, salary levels, as well as the length

88 UN, International covenant for economic, social and cultural rights: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>

89 UN, Convention on rights of people with disabilities: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-28-adequate-standard-of-living-and-social-protection.html>

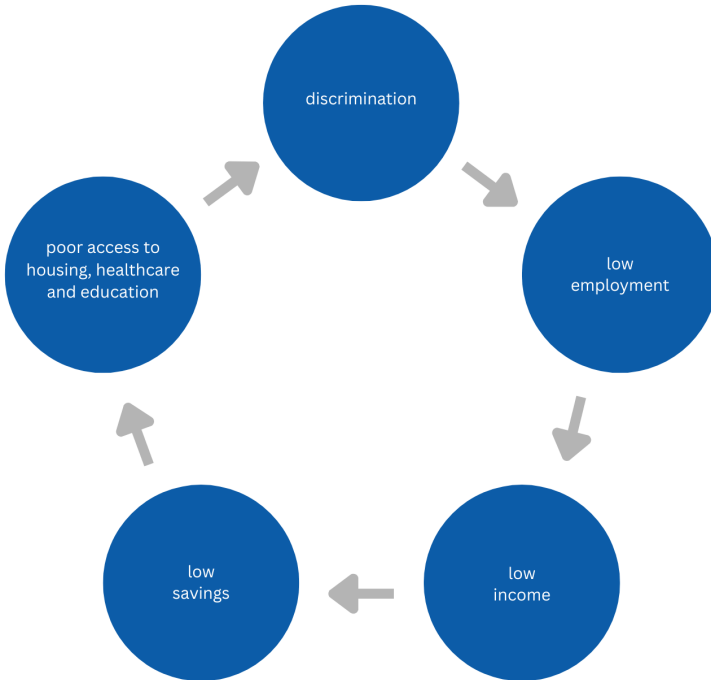
90 European Commission, European Pillar of Social Rights. Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2017-11/social-summit-european-pillar-social-rights-booklet_en.pdf

91 Women earn on average 22.5% less than men, while for example, with a full apprenticeship with a high school diploma, women earn up to 27.7% less than men. Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic. 2026. International Women's Day - March 8. Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic <https://lnk.sk/ignwi>.

92 Equinet: Women in poverty, Breaking the cycle. A Discussion Paper: <https://equineteurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Women-in-Poverty-digital.pdf>

of their years on the labour market. Moreover, the confluence of various forms and reasons for discrimination, which women living in pov-

erty in particular face, significantly complicates, or even makes it almost impossible for them to break out of the so-called cycle of poverty.⁹³



Source: Equinet⁹⁴

⁹³ Ibidem

⁹⁴ Ibidem

Single-parent households

Podľa dostupných údajov According to available data, the highest poverty risk rate is recorded in single-parent households, i.e. households consisting of one adult with dependent children. In 2024, up to 37.8% of people in such households were at risk of poverty, which represents almost 29,000 people⁹⁵. In single-parent households, the model of a single mother with one or more children prevails, with such households constituting up to 86% of single-parent households in 2021⁹⁶.

The poverty of single-parent households therefore has a very significant gender dimension. The social support system for people caring for children under three years of age is based on the model of a two-parent household and assumes that the family also has a second source of income. However, this system is not optimally set up, also due to the absence of special social assistance for single mothers, which would provide compensation for the second income. In addition, not every woman is enti-

tled to maternity benefit; The most vulnerable groups include students, unemployed women and women working under various forms of agreements. The Centre's 2022 research showed that maternity benefit and parental allowance are the only income for 6% of respondents⁹⁷ and up to 70% of respondents feel dependent on their partners' income. The current system setup practically does not reflect the situation of single mothers, whose situation is significantly different: more than 40% of them stated that maternity benefit and parental allowance are their only income and for more than half they represent one of the main sources of income. Therefore, if these benefits are insufficient, the risk of falling into poverty increases significantly.⁹⁸

In terms of reconciling work and personal life, single mothers face several obstacles. The process of finding a job during or after maternity and subsequent parental leave, as well as maintaining a job, is challenging for single moth-

95 Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic. Between Paycheck and Bills: How to Live in a Low-Wage Country? Poverty Report in Slovakia 2025. Available online at: <https://www.kozsr.sk/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Sprava-Chudoba-04.pdf>

96 See: <https://www.scitanie.sk/tlacove-spravy/statisticky-urad-sr-zverejnil-zakladne-udaje-o-domacnostiach?>

97 The respondents were 881 women who took parental leave between 2010 and 2019.

98 Slovak National Center for Human Rights. Work-life balance as a human rights issue. Available online here: <https://www.snslp.sk/wp-content/uploads/Zosuladovanie-pracovneho-a-osobneho-zivota.pdf>

ers who cannot rely on shared household care, especially in cases where the mother is caring for a sick or disabled child. The Centre's 2022 research also highlighted other obstacles to returning to the labour market, which were related to the issue of the suitability of working conditions due to the insufficient quality of work-life balance tools. Women after maternity/parental leave may have difficulties accessing work due to various factors, such as the inability to adapt working hours to childcare, the lack of care services and increased discrimination in employment relationships. In addition, single mothers may be perceived as "at-risk" employees when returning to the labour market due to the absence of support from the other parent. According to research, childcare in the event of divorce or separation is mainly provided by the mother⁹⁹.

Women may also find themselves in situations where they are not covered by the protection provided by law, often due to the nature of their contracts. These are women who earn their living through various forms of pre-

carious work, such as temporary work, contracts or agency work. As a result, they do not have secure job protection, which has an impact on their social status. This directly affects their ability to reconcile work and private life and negatively affects their sense of security, especially in terms of income stability¹⁰⁰.

Restrictions on the simultaneous receipt of social benefits also worsen the position of single mothers compared to other mothers. These women are further disadvantaged, as they do not have the same opportunities to receive support - unlike in two-parent households, where their partner can receive part of the benefits. Single-parent households, due to the absence of the other parent to care for the child, completely lose access to some forms of social benefits¹⁰¹. The multiple disadvantages that single mothers face significantly make it difficult to ensure an adequate standard of living and lead to an increased risk of financial difficulties and falling into poverty. The Centre therefore welcomes the project to support single parents launched in early 2026 by the Minis-

99 Institute for Work and Family Research. Needs of Families with Minors. Results of Empirical Research. Available online: https://ivpr.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Potreby-rodin-s-detmi-IVPR_2023.pdf

100 Slovak National Center for Human Rights. Work-life balance as a human rights issue. Available online here: <https://www.snslp.sk/wp-content/uploads/Zosuladovanie-pracovneho-a-osobneho-zivota.pdf>

101 Ibidem

try of Labor in cooperation with non-governmental organizations, which provides

assistance to single parents through comprehensive assistance counseling centers¹⁰².

Women over 65

Women face a higher risk of poverty in all age categories¹⁰³, but women over 65 are particularly at risk, especially if they live alone. They are even one of the most vulnerable groups in general in terms of material and social deprivation¹⁰⁴. Moreover, the gap between men and women in the risk of poverty rate has long been¹⁰⁵ highest in the age category over 65¹⁰⁶. In 2024, 30.3% of women over 65 faced the risk of poverty or social exclusion, which is 3.5 percentage points higher than men in the same age group¹⁰⁷.

The economic situation of women over 65 has deteriorated significantly in recent years, with their material and social deprivation rate increasing by almost 5 percentage points between 2022 and 2023. Together with men over 65, this is the highest increase

in material and social deprivation among the monitored age groups (up to 18 years, 18-64 years and over 65 years). In addition, between 2023 and 2024, the material and social deprivation of women over 65 years decreased less significantly than that of men in the same age category. According to data for 2024, the material and social deprivation of women over 65 years reaches 15.4%, while for men it is 12.5%. Women over 65 years of age thus represented the most vulnerable age group to material and social deprivation in 2024. Older people are particularly at risk of energy poverty, and the increase in the cost of living has also been reflected in the deterioration of food availability¹⁰⁸.

The issue of poverty among older women has several long-term causes, with the

102 See <https://www.employment.gov.sk/sk/uvodna-stranka/informacie-media/aktuality/projekt-pomoci-jednorodicom-ma-mimoriadny-uspech-prihlasilo-do-neho-niekolko-tisic-ludi.html>

103 Section 4(3)(b) of the Act on Assistance in Material Need. Data available online: https://datacube.statistics.sk/#!/view/sk/VBD_SK_WIN/ps1008rs/v_ps1008rs_00_00_00_sk

104 Available online at https://datacube.statistics.sk/#!/view/sk/VBD_SK_WIN/ps1019rs/v_ps1019rs_00_00_00_sk

105 With the exception of 2024, when this difference was 0.1 percentage point higher for the age category under 18.

106 Available online at https://datacube.statistics.sk/#!/view/sk/VBD_SLOVSTAT/ps2032rs/v_ps2032rs_00_00_00_sk

107 The latest available data on material and social deprivation are available for 2024 as of April 2, 2026 - https://datacube.statistics.sk/#!/view/sk/VBD_SK_WIN/ps1008rs/v_ps1008rs_00_00_00_sk

108 <https://dennikn.sk/blog/5014535/ked-si-predavacka-nemoze-dovolit-vlastny-nakup-pribeh-pa-ri-marty/>

key factor being the low level of pensions. In Slovakia, women receive pensions on average about a fifth lower than men. This difference is a result of the loss of income due to maternity and parental leave, unequal remuneration in the labour market, the concentration of women in lower-paid sectors with limited career opportunities or slow wage growth, and a higher risk of working in precarious jobs. Caring for family members also places a greater burden on women, which affects their position and the length of time spent on the labour market¹⁰⁹.

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In some cases, single older women only have around 400 euros per month available to cover living expenses, which is insufficient for a decent life and is below the poverty line, which was set at 509 euros per month in 2024¹¹⁰. Older women often face problems paying rent, utilities or regular shopping expenses, while in many cases only the ownership of the property in which they live¹¹¹ protects them from homelessness

Despite the risk of poverty and social or material depri-

vation, people with an income higher than the subsistence minimum are not entitled to financial benefits that could help them with current expenses and household material security. This mainly concerns the material need benefit and related benefits, such as housing allowance, protection allowance, or a one-off benefit. To receive these benefits, a person or household must be in a state of material need, i.e. the household income does not exceed the subsistence minimum (set at 284 euros per month in 2026). 25% of the old-age pension is not included in the household income without increasing it to the amount of the minimum pension¹¹². However, the amount of the subsistence minimum is so low that a person receiving the minimum pension (set at 412 euros per month in 2026) is not entitled to the material need benefit and related benefits. If the eligibility criteria for these benefits are changed, many of them could mitigate the risk of material and social deprivation for older women. This is particularly the housing allowance, which could mitigate the risk of homelessness in the context of rising

109 EIGE. Poverty and gender over the life cycle. https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/ti_pubpdf_mh0616074skn_pdfweb_20171204165149.pdf

110 According to EU SICL 2024: <https://lnk.sk/bfgi3>.

111 <https://dennikn.sk/blog/5014535/ked-si-predavacka-nemoze-dovolit-vlastny-nakup-pribeh-pa-ni-marty/>

112 Section 4, paragraph 3, letter b, of Act 417/2013 Coll. on assistance in material need and on amendments to certain acts

housing costs. The protection allowance, which aims to cover the personal expenses of a household member¹¹³, could

also cover increased living costs, for example due to inflation or the impact of consolidation measures.

Employed persons at risk of poverty

In terms of economic activity, the unemployed and those receiving old-age pensions are most at risk of poverty in the long term. However, since 2020, poverty has also increased dramatically among employed persons in Slovakia, from 4.4% in 2019 to 10.2% in 2024. The share of employed persons with income below the poverty line is the highest in the last 20 years¹¹⁴. This poverty is mainly determined by the quality of jobs and the value of work, but also by the form of employment relationship, with persons without a permanent employment relationship being at greater risk of poverty. At the same time, households with children, especially single-parent households, are at higher risk of in-work poverty¹¹⁵.

The problem for workers in Slovakia is not only low wages, and the quality of job offers and the value of work, but

also the availability of social security for workers. According to the OECD, social security in Slovakia cannot protect working people from poverty¹¹⁶. The reason is targeted assistance and the availability of various social security contributions, which are linked to the material need benefit, which is a set income poverty threshold (509 euros per month for an individual) as well as the amount of a decent life (around 1,000 euros per month). Moreover, the minimum wage, despite its growth, cannot ensure a decent life, including quality housing, food, self-development, education, culture, or relaxation.

Due to insufficient support, life in rented housing is particularly difficult for low-income workers¹¹⁷. In Slovakia, most people living in poverty are tenants¹¹⁸, but support for these people is minimal.

¹¹³ Section 11 of Act 417/2013 Coll. on assistance in material need and on amendments to certain acts.

¹¹⁴ https://datacube.statistics.sk/#/view/sk/VBD_SLOVSTAT/ps2031rs/v_ps2031rs_00_00_00_sk

¹¹⁵ European commission. Who are the working poor? An analysis of in-work poverty in the EU, dostupné v angličtine na: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/d09a6b3c-f676-11f0-b9bc-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

¹¹⁶ OECD. Society at a Glance 2024: OECD Social Indicators, dostupné v angličtine na: https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/society-at-a-glance-2024_918d8db3-en/full-report/unemployment-and-social-safety-net-benefits_dfdedfa8.html#indicator-d1e11338-0ee0a256aa

¹¹⁷ Ibidem

¹¹⁸ https://datacube.statistics.sk/#/view/sk/VBD_SLOVSTAT/ps2030rs/v_ps2030rs_00_00_00_sk

Programs aimed at increasing the energy efficiency of buildings are targeted more at people living in their own property and do not sufficiently motivate landlords. The setting of these programs should also take into account the situation of people living in rental housing and motivate landlords to adapt their properties. If the building is not renovated, energy crises, but also environmental policies for climate change adaptation, can have a negative impact on tenants and energy prices in dwellings. If people living in poverty or at risk of poverty are excluded from environmental policies, they can become even more vulnerable. Housing in Slovakia is becoming increasingly expensive and unaffordable. Real estate prices have increased by 81.7% in the last 10 years. The average household spends almost 19.4% of its income on housing, while for households with lower incomes it is around 36%¹¹⁹. Obtaining commercial rental housing is even more challenging for households living in poverty or at risk of poverty, and not only because of the level of income. Households with children, especially single-parent households, are rejected by landlords in the housing market due to the assumption that they will

have problems paying rent¹²⁰. Households at risk of poverty are faced with means-testing practices that go beyond the usual procedures, such as requests for proof of employment contracts stating the length of employment and income. This can be a problem for people who are not permanently employed, as proof of a temporary employment contract or a low overall income stipulated in the contract can lead to discrimination against these people in accessing commercial housing. Moreover, households often must agree to such a requirement, as disagreement could be interpreted as evidence of a problematic situation.

In cases where households do not have access to commercial housing, they can use the option of social housing, which is, however, very limited in Slovakia. Despite the fact that the income criterion for obtaining social rental housing is set at three times the subsistence minimum and, in the case of vulnerable groups such as single-parent households or people with disabilities, at five times the subsistence minimum, municipalities often do not reflect this statutory exception in their generally binding regulations and require vulnerable groups

¹¹⁹ Eurostat. Housing in Europe – 2025 edition, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/interactive-publications/housing-2025#evolution-of-house-prices-and-rents>.

¹²⁰ Slovak National Center for Human Rights. Availability of municipal rental housing: <https://www.snslp.sk/wp-content/uploads/Dostupnost-obecneho-najomneho-byvania.pdf>

to have an income of a maximum of three times the subsistence minimum¹²¹. This cre-

ates additional barriers to access to housing for employed people living in poverty.

Fees in clinics create obstacles to exercising the right to healthcare

In connection with poverty, which threatens an increasingly large part of the population in Slovakia, access to healthcare is also becoming a problem. According to available data, patients are paying more and more direct payments for outpatient healthcare in addition to contributions to the public health insurance system. This phenomenon occurs despite increasing contributions and the growth of the public health insurance budget¹²². Requiring additional pay-

ments, which in some cases are also conditional on the provision of healthcare, can represent a significant obstacle to access to healthcare. Economically vulnerable groups of the population are most at risk from healthcare fees. For such patients, fees can be a reason for them to postpone a visit to the doctor, which can subsequently lead to a threat to their health. Moreover, fees are often collected in direct violation of legal regulations or without a legal basis.

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Available data regarding fee collection

A representative survey conducted by the Advance Healthcare Management Institute in August 2025¹²³ shows that fee collection in Slovakia is becoming an increasingly widespread practice in both general and specialist clinics. According to the survey results, up to 50% of patients pay fees to specialists and 27% to gen-

eral practitioners, with an increase in the proportion of paying patients compared to the previous survey from 2023¹²⁴. Alarmingly, up to 30% of patients postponed a visit to the doctor due to concerns about fees. Of patients with a monthly income of up to 600 euros, up to 39% did so, up from 35% in 2023, which demonstrates the worsening

¹²¹ Ibidem

¹²² https://www.health.gov.sk/Zdroje?/Sources/dokumenty/IZA/Komentar_Viac-penazi-a-stabilitu-pre-zdravotnictvo-je-investiciou.pdf

¹²³ Results from a representative patient survey from August 2025 and proposed solutions. Available at: https://www.advanceinstitute.cz/uploads/1765297039_Pacienti%20platia%20v%20ambulan- ciach%20stale%20viac%20a%20chcu%20poplatky%20upratat_2025_12.pdf

¹²⁴ Výsledky z reprezentatívneho prieskumu pacientov z augusta 2023. Dostupné na: https://www.advanceinstitute.cz/uploads/1731518268_Kolko%20platia%20pacienti%20a%20ake%20riesenia%20 dofinancovania%20preferuju.pdf

impact of fee collection on low-income groups. For comparison, according to data from 2023, only 8% of patients

in the income category of 1,501-3,000 euros per month postponed a visit to the doctor¹²⁵.

- The fees most frequently paid by patients, according to a 2025 survey, included:
- appointment booking (29%),
- administrative procedures (24%),
- examinations not covered by health insurance (21%),
- inflation compensation fee (10%)¹²⁶

13% of patients refused treatment without payment and 16% of patients were treated on the condition that they would have to pay a fee the next time they saw a doctor¹²⁷. The negative impacts of collecting fees on economically vulnerable groups are also demonstrated by a survey commissioned by the Ministry of Health in 2024. According to its results, people over 60 years of age paid an average of 125 euros per year in outpatient clinics, which is significantly more than the average of 78 euros paid across other age groups¹²⁸.

The Public Defender of Rights¹²⁹ also draws attention to the deteriorating situation with patient payment of fees by outpatient healthcare providers (hereinafter referred to as “providers”). The economic inaccessibility of healthcare for a large part of the population is also confirmed by the World Health Organization’s 2023 report, which focused on the affordability of healthcare in the Slovak Republic. According to this report, 4.4% of households, i.e. approximately 230,000 people, were affected by catastrophic health expenses¹³⁰.

¹²⁵ Ibidem

¹²⁶ Results from a representative patient survey from August 2025 and proposed solutions. Available at: https://www.advanceinstitute.cz/uploads/1765297039_Pacienti%20platia%20v%20ambulancech%20stale%20viac%20a%20chcu%20poplatky%20upratat_2025_12.pdf

¹²⁷ Ibidem

¹²⁸ <https://medicina.trend.sk/analyzy/pacienti-nechavaju-v-ambulanciach-rocne-uz-takmer-pol-mi-liardy-eur-v-podobe-poplatkov/>

¹²⁹ Press release of the public defender of rights: <https://vop.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Tlacova-sprava-VOP-09-07-2025.pdf>

¹³⁰ Households with catastrophic levels of out-of-pocket health expenditures are defined in the aforementioned World Health Organization report as those that amount to more than 40% of a persons capacity to pay on health care. This includes households that fall into poverty after paying out-of-pocket expenditures (because they no longer have the ability to pay) as well as households that become even more impoverished (because they already had no ability to pay before paying out-of-pocket health care). The World Health Organization report is available at: <https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/9789289062329>

Collection of fees and surcharges according to current legislation

The right of citizens of the Slovak Republic to free health care and medical devices based on health insurance under the conditions established by law is guaranteed by the provisions of Article 40 of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic. The scope of health care that is covered by public health insurance is regulated by Act No. 577/2004 Coll. on the scope of health care covered by public health insurance and on payments for services related to the provision of health care and implementing regulations (hereinafter referred to as “Act No. 577/2004 Coll.”).

Act No. 577/2004 Coll. stipulates that public health insurance covers, for example, emergency health care, medical procedures leading to the detection of a disease or provided during the treatment of a disease listed in the list of priority diseases, preventive examinations or diagnostic procedures. Medical services provided in the treatment of diseases listed in the list of diseases for which medical services are fully or partially reimbursed or not reimbursed on the basis of public health insurance, issued by a

regulation of the Government of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the “list of diseases”).

The list of diseases determines whether the medical procedure is fully reimbursed by health insurance or whether a patient’s co-payment is required. The legal system therefore clearly defines which medical services and for which diseases are reimbursed by health insurance. In the case of services that are not reimbursed by the insurance company and are fully borne by patients, the legal regulations do not set maximum limits for the amount of co-payments.

According to Act No. 577/2004 Coll., a medical service also includes an appointment for an examination by the insured person, including an appointment for a specific time. The collection of this most frequently applied fee is therefore in violation of the legal order, which does not allow its collection¹³¹. According to the current legal regulation, patients themselves pay for the issuance of medical certificates or examinations for administrative purposes. There

¹³¹ This does not apply to medical procedures that are not covered by health insurance. This also includes medical procedures provided during additional office hours.

is no legal basis for fees such as the registration fee, annual fee, patient management fee or compensation fee, and therefore the practice of collecting them also appears to be problematic. It is clearly illegal for providers to condition the provision of health-care on payment above the specified co-payment of the insured person or other performance.

In order to transparently inform patients about the payments they are to pay, it is essential that providers comply with the obligation to publish a list of medical services and a price list in an accessible and visible place, which is also considered to be the provider's website, if it has one. Providers are obliged to comply with the list of medical services and a price list and send them, including any changes, to the relevant self-governing region. Self-governing regions supervise compli-

ance with legal obligations by providers as a delegated state administration and can impose sanctions on providers. The problem, however, is that self-governing regions only take note of the content of the announced price lists and do not check their compliance with the legal regulations. Self-governing regions supervise and check specific clinic operators only after patients contact them with a complaint regarding unlawfully collected fees¹³².

Another problem is that, according to representatives of self-governing regions, the state does not reimburse them for the costs of the delegated state administration, despite the fact that this obligation is stipulated in Art. 71, paragraph 1 of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, and the regions must ensure its financing from their own resources¹³³.

Recommendations:

The Centre recommends:

1. **The Government of the Slovak Republic** to adopt measures aimed at improving the financial situation of single-parent households through targeted assistance.

¹³² Available at: <https://mediweb.hnonline.sk/zdn/spravy/96227602-kontroly-vuc-v-ambulanciach-na-co-sa-zameriavaju-a-co-by-zupy-zmenili>

¹³³ Ibidem

2. **The Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic** to propose a change in the legal regulation with the aim of separating the provision of housing allowance from the provision of material need benefit, so that it is also available to persons at risk of poverty with an income higher than the established subsistence minimum, including working persons and persons receiving old-age pensions.
3. **The Government of the Slovak Republic** to adopt policies that would support the quality of job offers, the value of work, adequate wages and working conditions ensuring a dignified life, for example by adequately increasing the minimum wage and supporting collective bargaining, reducing the gender pay gap and the occupational segregation of women into sectors with lower wage conditions.
4. **The Government of the Slovak Republic** to ensure that people at risk of poverty and people living in poverty are systematically included in policies and programmes aimed at adapting to climate change as well as in addressing the consequences of these measures. When creating and setting up these programmes, it is essential to take into account various forms of vulnerability, in particular in terms of gender, ethnicity, age and health disadvantage. We also recommend expanding existing programmes to people living in rented accommodation, or creating a campaign to support the motivation of landlords in the reconstruction of rented properties.
5. **The Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic** to propose a change in legislation in order to set maximum limits for the amount of fees and co-payments for patients in the outpatient sector and to clearly define what types of fees and co-payments cannot be collected from patients.
6. **The Government of the Slovak Republic** to ensure the financing of the delegated state administration for self-governing regions so that they can more actively supervise the activities of outpatient health care providers.
7. **The Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic and patient organizations** should develop activities aimed at increasing awareness of the scope of payments that outpatient healthcare providers may not require from patients.



68 Conclusion

The presented Report for 2025 provides an objective and up-to-date picture of the state of observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Slovakia and contains specific and targeted recommendations aimed at improving their protection and support, including compliance with the principle of equal treatment.

In the first chapter, the Centre assessed the implementation of the recommendations addressed to individual entities in the Report for 2024. The assessment shows that most of the recommendations have not yet been implemented, therefore the Centre once again appeals to their addressees to take the necessary measures to implement them.

The second chapter focuses on the state of the rule of law. The amendment to the Constitution of the Slovak Republic adopted in 2025 represents one of the most significant changes to the constitutional framework for the protection of fundamental rights and the functioning of the rule of law since the accession of the Slovak Republic to the European Union. Although some provisions, such as the establishment of gender equality

in remuneration, can be assessed positively, several other changes raise serious concerns in terms of legal certainty, protection of human rights and compliance of the Slovak legal order with international and European obligations.

In the third chapter, the Centre points to the need to harmonise national legislation and practice with international standards for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. The findings indicate that discrimination against persons with hearing impairments in Slovakia is not only the result of individual failures, but is largely related to inadequately set legislative, institutional and systemic mechanisms. The Centre therefore emphasises that only a systematic and coordinated approach based on respect for the rights of persons with disabilities can contribute to the removal of persistent barriers and the creation of an inclusive society.

The fourth chapter addresses the growing extent of poverty and social exclusion in Slo-

vakia in the context of several recent crises and emphasizes the need to view poverty as a human rights issue. The chapter points to systemic factors contributing to the deepening of social vulnerability, including gender inequalities, inadequate

housing, weaker protection of workers from poverty, and financial barriers to access to healthcare, and emphasizes the need for comprehensive public policies aimed at strengthening social protection and ensuring a decent standard of living.

List of recommendations

1. **The Government of the Slovak Republic** to adopt guarantees and measures to ensure the full implementation of the rights provided for in the Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms as interpreted by the European Court of Human Rights, in light of the constitutional amendments.
2. **The Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic** to ensure the availability of legal recognition of gender re-assignment and gender-affirming healthcare, as well as effective remedies in the event of refusal.
3. **The Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic** to adopt measures to ensure respect for the right of children to comprehensive education, including in the area of sexuality and reproductive rights (provided that such education is adapted to the age and development of children, relevant and based on current scientific knowledge and human rights standards).
4. **The Government of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic** to initiate legislative changes aimed at harmonizing the Anti-Discrimination Act with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in particular by extending the obligation to provide reasonable accommodation beyond the area of employment.
5. **The Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic to adopt measures** to improve the availability of healthcare for hearing-impaired persons, in particular by supporting the availability of interpretation into Slovak Sign Language and increasing the competences of healthcare personnel in the area of communication with deaf patients.
6. **The Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic** to strengthen support measures in the education of children and students with hearing impairments, in particular by ensuring the availability of interpretation into Slovak Sign Language and supporting a bilingual approach in education.

7. **The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic** to support measures aimed at improving access to the labour market for persons with hearing impairments, in particular by informing employers about obligations in the area of equal treatment and supporting reasonable accommodation in the workplace.
8. **The Ministry of Transport of the Slovak Republic to adopt measures** to prevent discrimination against persons with hearing impairments when providing training in driving schools, including the development of methodological guidelines for providers of these services.
9. **The Government of the Slovak Republic** to adopt measures aimed at improving the financial situation of single-parent households through targeted assistance.
10. **The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic** to propose a change in the legal regulation with the aim of separating the provision of housing allowance from the provision of material need benefit, so that it is also available to persons at risk of poverty with an income higher than the established subsistence minimum, including working persons and persons receiving an old-age pension.
11. **The Government of the Slovak Republic** should adopt policies that would support higher quality of job offers, the value of work, adequate wages and working conditions ensuring a dignified life, for example by adequately increasing the minimum wage and supporting collective bargaining, reducing the gender pay gap and the occupational segregation of women into sectors with lower wage conditions.
12. **The Government of the Slovak Republic** should ensure that people at risk of poverty and people living in poverty are systematically included in policies and programmes aimed at adapting to climate change as well as addressing the consequences of these measures. When creating and setting up these programmes, it is essential to take into account various forms of vulnerability, in particular in terms of gender, ethnicity, age and health disadvantage. We also recommend extending

existing programmes to people living in rented housing, or creating a campaign to support the motivation of landlords in the reconstruction of rented properties.

13. **The Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic** should propose a change in the legal regulation in order to set maximum limits for the amount of fees and co-payments of patients in the outpatient sector and to clearly define what types of fees and co-payments cannot be collected from patients.
14. **The Government of the Slovak Republic** should ensure financing of the delegated state administration for self-governing regions so that they can more actively supervise the activities of outpatient health care providers.
15. **The Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic and patient organizations** should develop activities to increase awareness of the scope of payments that outpatient health care providers may not require from patients.