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Slovakia

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I. Preparation of the report

1. The report was prepared by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic in close cooperation with and on the basis of documents from relevant ministries and institutions in accordance with the guidelines contained in the UN Human Rights Council Decision No. 17/119.

2. When preparing this report, information on the status of implementation of the recommendations addressed to the Slovak Republic in the 3rd cycle of Universal Periodic Review of the UN Human Rights Council submitted by the Slovak Republic in the mid-term of the review cycle in November 2021, was also taken into account.

II. Developments in the field of protection and promotion of human rights in the Slovak Republic following the 3rd Universal Periodic Review cycle

3. In the period from 2019, following the 3rd cycle of the Universal Periodic Review, there have been many positive changes in the field of human rights protection in the Slovak Republic.

4. On 4 July 2023, the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment was ratified (implementation of recommendations No. 1–3, 87–89). The proposal for legislative measures was modified by an amendment to the Act on Public Defender of Rights, creating a national prevention mechanism under the provisions of the Convention, where the competence is shared by three already existing bodies – the Public Defender of Rights, the Commissioner for Children and the Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities.

5. On 13 January 2021, the Government of the Slovak Republic (hereafter as "Government") approved the Conceptual Framework for Countering Radicalisation and Extremism by 2024 mainly aimed at promoting the democratic rule of law, appealing for the creation of a strong democratic and political environment rejecting any manifestations of extremism and hate speech based on nationality, race, ethnicity, religion or other intolerance.

6. By the Resolution No. 674 of 24 November 2021, the Government apologized for sterilizing women in violation of the law and condemned the violation of human rights of the women concerned.

7. By the Resolution No. 367 of 23 June 2021, the Government apologized for the way the national armed forces intervened in Moldava nad Bodvou in 2013.

8. Amendment to Act No. 274/2017 Coll. on Victims of Crimes, effective from 1 July 2021, introduced the possibility for victims of violent crimes, including sexual violence, to receive compensation from the state already at the start of the criminal prosecution, not only after its valid conclusion.

9. On 12 January 2022, the Government approved the National Action Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women 2022-2027 with measures aimed at preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

10. In November 2023, the Government approved the National Strategy for the Protection of Children from Violence – Violence-Free Childhood for all Children (2023-2029) and the relevant Action Plan (2023-2026) based on the Strategy.

11. Measures aimed at reducing inequalities between men and women and eliminating discrimination against women are contained in the Strategy for Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities 2021-2027 and in the relevant Action Plan. In 2022, the first National Action Plan for Women's Employment 2022-2030 was adopted, representing a new impulse in the field of equality between women and men (implementation of recommendations No. 9, 29-36 and 136–140).

12. The new Act No. 264/2022 Coll. on Media Services was adopted and effective from 1 August 2022.

13. On 19 April 2023, the Government approved the Strategy of prevention of criminal and other anti-social activities in the Slovak Republic until 2028, which also includes the creation of a mechanism for monitoring threats against journalists.

14. In September 2023, the Government approved the Action Plan of the Open Government Initiative 2024-2026. In accordance with its implementation, the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic (hereafter as "Ministry of Culture") established the Platform for Press Freedom and Protection of Journalists.

15. The new judicial map has been effective since June 2023, being one of the biggest judicial reforms in Slovakia in recent years. In the long term, the new judicial map can be expected to speed up court proceedings and improve the quality of court decisions.

16. By the Government Resolution No. 181 of 7 April 2021, the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 was approved. Relevant Action Plans for 2022-2024 were approved by the Government in April 2022.

17. On 27 September 2022, the National Council of the Slovak Republic adopted Resolution No. 1635 on the working definition of antigypsyism developed by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and adopted by its member states (including Slovakia) on 8 October 2020.

18. In December 2021, the Government approved the Strategy of Inclusive Approach in Education and Training, resulting in action plans drawn up in three-year cycles.

19. Act No. 370/2019 Coll. on Financial Support of Church Activities, effective from 1 January 2020, expanded the possibility of using state support, for example, to finance expenses related to religious, educational, charitable and cultural activities of the church, including salary and operating costs.

20. On 7 June 2023, the Government Resolution No. 287 recognized the Vietnamese minority, which thus became the 14th official national minority in Slovakia.

21. The Action Plan for the Protection of Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities and Ethnic Groups 2021-2025 was approved by the Government Resolution No. 461 of 25 August 2021.

22. In accordance with the Amendment to Act No. 138/2017 Coll. on the Fund for the Support of the Culture of National Minorities, which entered into force on 15 April 2022, the contribution to the Fund provided by the Ministry of Culture from the state budget was increased to the amount of EUR 8,300,000. In 2024, the Ministry of Culture provided the Fund with a contribution from the state budget in the amount of EUR 8,800,000.

23. In 2020, the Government adopted an update of the National Framework Strategy for the Support of Social Inclusion and the Fight against Poverty. It is a strategic document based on the Europe 2020 Strategy, as well as the European Pillar of Social Rights and other national conceptual and strategic documents.

24. By the Government Resolution No. 109 of 24 February 2021, the National Programme for the Development of the Living Conditions of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 was approved.

III. Implementation of recommendations addressed to the Slovak Republic in the 3rd Universal Periodic Review cycle

25. In the 3rd Universal Periodic Review cycle, Slovakia received 195 recommendations, of which 10 were not accepted and 9 partially accepted.

26. The recommendations that were not accepted (4, 5) related to the ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, as the provisions of this Convention do not distinguish between persons with legal or illegal residence in the territory of the given country.

27. Recommendations regarding the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, the so-called

Istanbul Convention (6, 7, 8, 10) were rejected, as by the Resolution No. 1697 of 29 March 2019, the National Council of the Slovak Republic requested the Government not to continue the process leading to the ratification of the Convention and to notify to the Council of Europe that the Slovak Republic does not intend to become a party to the Convention.

28. The recommendation to adopt legislation approving the marriage of same-sex couples (71) was rejected with reference to Art. 41(1) of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, according to which marriage is a unique union between a man and a woman.

29. The recommendation to establish an independent police supervisory body (96) was rejected, as several legal and effective measures were taken in the matter of an independent and impartial police supervisory body, and the Bureau of the Inspection Service was established in 2019.

30. Slovakia did not implement the recommendation regarding the comprehensive programme of sexual and reproductive health and rights (142), as there was no consensus reached in professional circles. It partially fulfilled the recommendation to "continue to address reproductive health issues through the National Programme for Children and Adolescents" (143), given that sexual and reproductive health programmes are comprehensively addressed through the Concept of the Specialist Fields of Paediatrics, Paediatric Gynaecology and Gynaecology and Obstetrics, as well as the current national legislation.

31. The recommendation to establish an independent anti-corruption body was partially accepted (79), as it has been fulfilled since 2011 by the establishment of a National Crime Agency with the National Anti-Corruption Unit and criminal prosecution is conducted before the Specialised Criminal Court, which took over jurisdiction in 2009 after the revoked Special Court.

32. The request to renew the National Programme for Combating Human Trafficking and the Action Plan (109) was partially accepted, pointing to the fact that national programmes for combating human trafficking have been regularly adopted since 2003 (National Programme for Combating Human Trafficking 2024-2028 and the corresponding Action Plan are currently valid).

33. Slovakia partially accepted the recommendation regarding the coverage of costs associated with sexual and reproductive health (144). Under the current legislation, the costs associated with the provision of healthcare in the field of reproductive health are either fully covered, partially covered, or in some cases not covered by public health insurance.

34. The recommendations regarding artificial termination of pregnancy were partially accepted (145–147), as the national legislation establishes that the condition for performing an artificial termination of pregnancy is written informed consent after prior instruction.

35. The recommendation regarding discrimination of Roma women in access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (181) was partially accepted, pointing to the fact that issues of health care and access to sexual and reproductive health are given special attention by the competent authorities of the Slovak Republic, including creation of special mechanisms to improve the staff approach.

36. Slovakia implements the remaining recommendations addressed to the Slovak Republic in the 3rd UPR Cycle, as evidenced by the Interim report on the status of implementation of the recommendations submitted by the Slovak Republic in 2021. Actual information on the implementation of these recommendations is grouped into summary chapters according to the thematic fields covered.

A. Combating hate speech, discrimination, racism, extremism, the rise of intolerance and radicalism (recommendations No. 37–69, 90, 165)

37. A significant shift in combating racism and xenophobia and partially also hate speech based on race, nationality, ethnic or religious affiliation occurred with the adoption of the Conceptual Framework for Countering Radicalisation and Extremism by 2024, which was approved by the Government Resolution No. 22 of 13 January 2021, addressing all forms of

extremism and the strengthening of human rights awareness with the aim of eliminating prejudice, negative stereotyping and many forms of hatred. The Conceptual Framework also includes the education of civil servants and teaching staff in the area of human rights, raising awareness of the negatives of extremist and intolerant behaviour.

38. In 2022, the Monitoring Report on the State of Extremism in the Slovak Republic for 2020 and 2021 was prepared, following up on the analysis and development trends of radicalisation and extremism in the Slovak Republic and the European Union for 2015-2019.

39. The Counter Terrorism Unit of the National Crime Agency of the Presidium of the Police Force participated in the creation of guidelines for front-line workers thematically focused on identifying risk factors that may have an impact on the process of radicalisation entitled *"Radicalisation and Violent Extremism"*. Information campaigns for the public are intended to eliminate negative stereotyping of members of minorities and fight against hate speech.

40. In order to prevent any hate speech towards people fleeing the war in Ukraine, the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic (hereafter as "Ministry of Interior"), in cooperation with the civil association DigiQ, created a prevention document *"Hate Speech"*, which explains the basics of hate speech, how to prevent it and what to do if someone becomes a victim. The document was distributed to the non-governmental sector, state administration employees and municipalities working with Ukrainian refugees.

41. Prevention activities are regularly carried out at the Police Force, the main part of which is carried out by police officers assigned to the prevention divisions of the Police Force district directorates and regional directorates (hereinafter referred to as "prevention officers"). Preventists inform about what is illegal and what is criminal, what are the conditions, causes and consequences of committing unlawful acts and crimes, what are the specifics of the Criminal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and Act No. 372/1990 Coll. on offenses to the category of minors and juveniles.

42. Prevention officers hold lectures and discussions for pupils and teachers of primary and secondary schools, where they familiarize them with concepts such as discrimination, racism, prejudice, criminal acts related to extremism, as well as the possible consequences of illegal actions. The purpose of the meetings is to highlight the equality of all people, respect for diversity and promote tolerance.

43. Prevention officers also deal with the issue of discrimination, racism and extremism through nationwide projects, such as the *"Children's Police Academy"*. The aim of the project chapter *"Everyone is different!"* is to inform about prejudice, discrimination, racism and humiliation, to strive to change attitudes to this issue, to promote and spread tolerance, and to point out the equality of all people before the law. The above project has been implemented since 2017.

44. The Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic (hereafter as "Ministry of Justice") provides annual grants for projects aimed at promoting, supporting and protecting human rights and freedoms, and preventing all forms of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and other intolerance. In 2023, EUR 769,500 was allocated to projects aimed at preventing extremism and discrimination, and at education and multi-institutional cooperation in the field of helping victims. The supported projects every year include information campaigns aimed at combating discrimination, intolerance and extremism.

45. The Ministry of Interior also implemented specialized education aimed at helping victims of extremism and spectator violence.

46. Since 2018, the programme *"Training Against Hate Crimes for Law Enforcement"* (TAHCLE) has been implemented annually through the Police Force regional directorates, where members of the Police Force are retrained.

47. As part of the Effective Public Administration operational programme, 41 prevention officers were trained in 2022 and included in the training *"Improving Communication with Victims of Crime"* as part of the Recovery and Resilience Plan. In June 2023, the Police Force Presidium provided instructional-methodical employment for prevention officers with the participation of experts from the field of extremism, racism and radicalisation.

48. The Conceptual Framework for Countering Radicalisation and Extremism by 2024 also partially addresses the issue of antigypsyism and specifies its working definition. The establishment of the position of Senior Police Officer for Work in Communities is an example of good practice. The project was expanded from the regional to the nationwide level and passed from the pilot phase to the routine activity. The activity of such police officers is aimed at preventive action in the assigned communities, and their task is primarily to develop relations with the Roma, as well as with all institutions engaged in solving various problems in the assigned communities.

49. In September 2022, the National Council adopted Resolution No. 1635 on the working definition of antigypsyism. In the Resolution, the Slovak National Council recommends the Government to analyse the legal order of the Slovak Republic and, if necessary, prepare legislative proposals for relevant legislation so that the working definition of antigypsyism is respected in the activities and decision-making of public authorities; that it actively contributes to ensuring the safety of Roma citizens through thorough and structured consultation and dialogue with civil society organizations and relevant public institutions combating all forms of discrimination; that it participates in efforts of the Slovak National Council in cultivating debate in the public space, condemning anti-Roma and hateful statements and speeches under all circumstances and providing rational counter-arguments.

50. The Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for National Minorities, in cooperation with the relevant ministries and the Committee for National Minorities and Ethnic Groups, developed the Action Plan for the Protection of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities and Ethnic Groups 2021-2025, which was approved by the Government. It builds on the previous action plan for 2016-2020 and includes activities aimed at combating discrimination, racism and xenophobia faced by ethnic minorities, especially the Roma, and emphasizes strengthening education in media and strengthening general education towards building an inclusive awareness.

51. The Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for National Minorities cooperates through its representative, as well as the representative of the Committee for National Minorities and Ethnic Groups, in the Committee for the Prevention and Elimination of Racism, Xenophobia, Anti-Semitism and Other Forms of Intolerance, and actively participated in the fulfilment of tasks of the existing and the preparation of new conceptual materials.

52. Under the new legislation in the field of media services effective from 1 August 2022 (Act No. 264/2022 Coll.), any content service provided by a broadcaster or on-demand audiovisual media service provider must respect human dignity, in particular it must not promote violence and openly or covertly incite violence or hatred, disparage or defame on the basis of gender, race, colour, language, belief and religion, political or other opinion, property, disability, age, sexual orientation, birth, national or social origin, genetic characteristics, citizenship, nationality or ethnic group affiliation. Likewise, video sharing platform providers are required to take appropriate measures to protect the public from programmes, user-generated videos and media commercial communications containing the above harmful content. Also, no media commercial communication may contain or promote discrimination based on sex, race, colour, language, belief and religion, political or other opinion, property, disability, age, sexual orientation, birth, national or social origin, genetic characteristics, citizenship, nationality or ethnic group affiliation. A sanction may be imposed for the violation of the above obligations.

53. In 2022, the Ministry of Culture, in cooperation with the National Coordination Centre for addressing the issue of violence against children, published an information leaflet *"Suspicious Communities"* with the aim of preventing and informing target groups and to teach the difference between safe (religious or ideological) communities and those who can manipulatively influence easily influenced social groups and thus, albeit indirectly, incite hatred towards other groups (whether religious, ethnic, national or racial). Since the majority of such groups, also as a result of the pandemic, have transferred their activities online, the cooperation continues by creating the methodological and informational manual *"Prevention in Practice – How to Recognize a Safe Community Offline and Online"*.

54. With effect from 1 January 2017 (and subsequently also from 1 January 2018), the Criminal Code defined the so-called "special motive" based on which a crime may be committed. A special motive thus also includes the commission of hate crime against a group of persons or an individual because of their real or perceived gender or sexual orientation. Committing a crime based on this motive is a crime of extremism pursuant to the provisions of the Criminal Code.

55. Following the terrorist act on Zámocká Street in Bratislava, which was directed against the LGBTI[1] minority, the Ministry of Justice organized a round table, which was attended by experts from the field of justice, prosecution, police, non-governmental organizations, the academy and also education. The meeting concluded that the legislation is sufficient, but problems arise with its application in practice. Subsequently, working groups were created and the conclusions were used in drafting the amendment to the Criminal Code.

56. The main priorities of the upcoming amendment to the Criminal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code include the modernization and humanization of criminal law institutions with a focus on introducing elements of restorative justice, harmonization with European criminal law standards, as well as the preservation of human rights and freedoms.

B. Elimination of domestic violence (recommendations No. 9, 36, 67, 91, 141)

57. In 2022, the National Action Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women 2022-2027 was adopted, defining the direction of public policies in order to achieve visible change in this area. The Action Plan is a binding strategic framework document, elaborating specific tasks in four priority areas: Protection of women experiencing violence and their children; Prevention of violence against women; Integrated policies and data collection and Effective punishment of violence against women.

58. The Amendment to the Victims of Crime Act of May 2021 strengthened the rights of victims of violent crimes, including victims of domestic violence. The Amendment also included the establishment of a network of intervention centres. This model is based on linking police intervention with crisis intervention and professional assistance provided to a victim or a person at risk of domestic violence immediately after the occurrence of domestic violence. The police shall inform the intervention centre within 24 hours of expelling a violent person from the shared residence and the centre shall then proactively contact the victim of domestic violence within 72 hours and offer him/her professional help.

59. The tasks of the intervention centre include evaluating the threat of danger to life or health and preparing a safety plan. The evaluation shall address the effectiveness of the expulsion and enables the determination of the next procedure, e.g. transfer of the victim from the shared residence, submission of a proposal for the issuance of an urgent measure. Qualified professionals (in the fields of psychology, social work and law) working in the intervention centre shall provide assistance, accompaniment of victims in criminal proceedings, as well as their legal representation. The intervention centre shall also help the victim contact other institutions and solve the personal situation by providing psycho-social support and counselling. Victims can decide whether they want to use these services or not.

60. Victims of domestic violence can also receive assistance through accredited crime victim assistance entities.

61. The period for expelling a violent person from a shared residence was extended to 14 days and also the territorial scope of the restraining order on the expelled person towards the threatened person was extended to 50 meters. The Police Force ensured the retraining of police officers on the procedures when expelling a person from a shared residence and the training aimed at improving the communication skills of first contact police officers. The trainings were attended by 248 representatives of Police Force departments in 2019, and 330 first-contact police officers were retrained on communication with victims of domestic violence in 2022.

62. In addition, the methodological guideline *"Methodology of the Police Procedure in Cases of Domestic Violence"* was updated for Police Force officers, and special training for

Police Force investigators specializing in the investigation of these cases is also being implemented.

C. Protection of victims of crime, protection of the rights of women and children (recommendations No. 28, 48)

63. Amendment to Act No. 274/2017 Coll. on Victims of Crimes, effective from 1 July 2021, regulates the possibility for victims of violent crimes, including sexual violence, to receive compensation from the state. The victim shall have the right to compensation already at the beginning of the criminal prosecution, not after its valid conclusion. This legislative amendment allows victims to obtain compensation in a much shorter time frame and without having to try to obtain it first from the perpetrator, which also reduces the risk of further victimization of victims during criminal proceedings. The range of victims of violent crimes was expanded to include surviving close persons who lived with the deceased in the same household at the time of death, if the death was caused by a violent crime, and victims of the crime of abuse of a close and trusted person, the crime of involuntary disappearance with non-property damage.

64. In order to improve the protection, support and assistance of victims of crime and other anti-social acts, including victims of human trafficking, information offices for victims of crimes have become part of the organisational structure of the Ministry of Interior with effect from 1 February 2023.

65. In May 2023, as part of the cooperation between the Presidium of the Police Force and the Ministry of Justice, the distribution of leaflets and brochures *"I have been a victim of a crime"* was ensured in places accessible to the public.

66. In cooperation with the Academy of the Police Force, the project *"Special interrogation rooms for child victims and other particularly vulnerable victims of crimes"* is implemented. The purpose of developing such rooms is not only to eliminate secondary victimization of the victim, but also to eliminate repeated victimization of the victim by preventing direct contact between the victim and the perpetrator.

67. As part of another project, the partnership project *"Improving the protection of victims' interests – strengthening capacities and procedures to combat violence against women and domestic violence"* of the Ministry of Interior with the Institute for Labour and Family Research (implementation of the project until 2021), more special interrogation rooms for particularly vulnerable victims of crimes are being developed.

68. As part of communication with the general public, prevention officers intensively implement prevention activities and projects all year round aimed at raising awareness and eliminating anti-social activity, concerning, inter alia, the issue of violence against women and children and domestic violence.

69. In connection with the mass influx of Ukrainian citizens to Slovakia caused by the escalation of the armed conflict in Ukraine, the Government adopted the Contingency Plan of the Slovak Republic for solving the emergency situation for the period October 2022–March 2023, which was subsequently updated for the period July – December 2023. One of the strategic objectives of the Contingency Plan is to pay increased attention to and protect persons with specific needs, especially unaccompanied minors, persons with disabilities and women victims of human trafficking and/or sexual and gender-based violence.

70. The Ministry of Interior, in cooperation with the Coordination-Methodological Centre for the Prevention of Violence against Women, prepared the information brochure *"Responsibility for not reporting and preventing a crime".* The aim of the brochure is to inform general public about their obligations arising from criminal law, in case they become aware of criminal activity, including the crime of human trafficking. The brochure also contains recommendations on how to proceed after becoming aware of criminal activity, information on the consequences of not fulfilling the obligation to report criminal activity to the responsible authority or not preventing it, and contact information of institutions and entities providing assistance and professional services to victims.

71. National Strategy for the Protection of Children from Violence – Violence-Free Childhood 2023-2029 and the corresponding Action Plan 2023-2026 were prepared and approved by the Government Resolution No. 594/2023 of 13 November 2023. The Strategy and the Action Plan were developed as a follow-up to the previous Strategy (approved by the Government in 2014) and based on the need to maintain continuity and improve the functioning of established processes as well as the creation and development of tasks in the field of protecting children from violence at the national and regional level.

72. Based on research data, statistical data, the implementation of the previous Strategy, the participation of children in the preparation of this document, information from practice and cooperation at transnational level, strategic goals were identified for the new national strategy and action plan. The basic pillars of the Strategy are: support for the protection of children from violence, the child as part of society, prevention of all forms of institutional violence, the rights of children at risk and their strengthening, and support for education and scientific research activities in the field of protection of children from violence; these are included in the Action Plan as strategic goals.

D. Human trafficking (recommendations No. 106-119)

73. In order to enforce policies in the field of human trafficking in the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of Interior implements the National Programme for Combating Human Trafficking 2019-2023 adopted by the Government, as well as the Programme for the Support and Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking. On 18 October 2023, the Government approved the National Programme for Combating Human Trafficking 2024-2028, the sixth one in a row. The National Programme also includes the Action Plan for 2024-2028 containing specific tasks to be fulfilled by various entities in Slovakia active in the fight against and prevention of human trafficking.

74. A specialized department - National unit for the fight against illegal migration within the organisational structure of the Police Force is responsible for detection and investigation of human trafficking in the entire territory of Slovakia. The detection and investigation itself is carried out by specially trained investigators and operatives within three departments of the national unit located in the Western, Central and Eastern Slovakia.

75. In order to prevent exploitation and human trafficking, the Ministry of Interior organizes annual educational lectures and information campaigns for the general public, especially for children from schools, re-education facilities, centres for children and families. At the same time, regular trainings were held for hotel staff, employees of Legal Aid Centres, for members of the local civil order service organized by the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government for Roma Communities and authorized officers of the Police Force and investigators of the Police Force to identify human trafficking as part of the project *"Special interrogation rooms for child victims and other particularly vulnerable victims of crime"*.

76. In cooperation with the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government for Roma Communities, the Ministry of Interior organized training activities on the issue of human trafficking for the marginalized Roma community and members of the local civil order service and training for field social workers. A brochure on the topic of human trafficking, focusing on forced marriages in both Slovak and Roma languages was also prepared.

77. The Ministry of Interior also participated in a campaign aimed at combating human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation developed by the General Directorate for the Fight against Organized Crime of the Ministry of Interior of Bulgaria with the support of the EMPACT platform under EUROPOL. The aim of the campaign was to draw attention of the public and vulnerable groups to the ways of engaging in human trafficking, identifying and supporting victims, as well as the client support.

78. In response to the outbreak of war in Ukraine and in order to prevent human trafficking, the Ministry of Interior participated in the creation and distribution of an information leaflet and a brochure in 6 language versions, which was distributed to relevant places by a wide range of state and non-state entities. In order to achieve timely identification of victims of human trafficking among migrants, employees conduct interviews in the asylum

procedure on an ongoing basis, using sets of questions aimed at identifying victims of human trafficking. Information related to human trafficking was added to the instruction for asylum applicants, including questions for self-identification of a person, whether he/she is a victim or a potential victim of human trafficking. Each asylum applicant receives this instruction in a language they understand. All employees of the Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior assessing individual asylum applications, as well as employees of the first contact with asylum applicants, completed retraining to identify potential victims of human trafficking, which was organized in cooperation with the Information Centre for Combating Human Trafficking. Members of the Bureau of Border and Foreign Police and employees of the Police Detention Centres for foreigners are also trained.

79. In order to ensure the continuous provision of services from the programme of support and protection of victims of human trafficking, new contracts for the provision of services were concluded with a non-governmental organization in 2022 following the public procurement, the subject of which is the provision of assistance and support to victims of human trafficking, assisted voluntary returns and operation of the National Helpline for Victims of Human Trafficking 0800 800 818 for a period of five years.

80. A working group consisting of representatives of several ministries and offices prepared the analysis *"Human Trafficking for Labour Exploitation"*, which is publicly accessible on the Ministry of Interior website. In addition to the analysis, a two-day workshop was held with the participation of representatives of the working group and a representative of the Specialised Criminal Court, as well as service providers under the Programme for the Support and Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking (Slovak Catholic Charity) and the International Organization for Migration, which built the capacities of experts in combating human trafficking, as well as looking for possible boundaries between human trafficking for forced labour and poor working conditions.

81. Under the Act on Victims, a victim of human trafficking is also considered a particularly vulnerable victim. All victims shall be entitled to professional assistance. Specialized professional assistance to a particularly vulnerable victim includes the provision of general professional assistance, provision of crisis psychological intervention, evaluation of the threat of danger to life or health, mediation of the provision of social services in an emergency housing facility and specialized social counselling if life or health of a particularly vulnerable victim is immediately threatened.

82. The Ministry of Justice, as part of its subsidy scheme for the support of human rights, supported the project *"STOP Human Trafficking"* in 2023, which was aimed at educating and raising awareness among workers in aid organizations on the issue of human trafficking.

83. The Judicial Academy of the Slovak Republic, which is an independent educational institution, provides, organizes and carries out training for judges, prosecutors and court officials, also in the field of human trafficking. It has organized events mainly focused on legislation; the National Reference Mechanism aimed at providing an overview of procedures in identifying a victim of human trafficking; on the Programme for the Support and Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking of the Ministry of Interior; exclusive jurisdiction of the National Unit for Fight against Irregular Migration of the Bureau of Border and Foreign Police in connection with the crime of human trafficking, usual modus operandi in the crime of human trafficking, knowledge from application practice, international cooperation through joint investigative teams and legal assistance, application knowledge from criminal prosecution for crimes of human trafficking, introduction of a compensation system for victims of violent crimes in accordance with Act No. 274/2017 Coll. with an emphasis on victims of human trafficking, the impact of the systematic change in the compensation for victims of violent crimes from 1 July 2021 in relation to victims of human trafficking, possibilities of assistance to victims of human trafficking, protective measures for victims of human trafficking.

E. Protection of journalists (recommendations No. 80, 98–105)

84. Slovak legislation in the field of media ensures, in accordance with European standards, the independence and freedom of the media, including the independence of the

public broadcaster, media pluralism. The performance of the journalistic profession is not conditional on official recognition by state authorities, it allows the restriction of press freedom only in cases established by law and also guarantees the protection of the source and information content. The Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic keeps making an effort to follow the basic democratic principles related to freedom of expression and the free expression of opinions, and it consistently takes into account the guarantee of media freedom and the unrestricted exercise of the right to access to information as well as respect for editorial independence in its legislative activities.

85. Slovakia supports the adoption of the European Media Freedom Act, advocates for the protection of journalists through the Council of Europe Campaign for the Safety of Journalists, the Media Freedom Coalition platform, or through the Summit for Democracy, and cooperates with the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic in the field of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP). Ministry of Culture committed to the task of developing a strategic plan for the implementation of the Council of Europe's recommendation on SLAPPs and appointed a National Coordinator for the Council of Europe Campaign for the Safety of Journalists.

86. he Slovak Culture and Creative Industry Strategy 2030, which was approved by the Slovak Government in June 2023, also includes a commitment to increase the protection and safety of journalists. The cooperation between the relevant ministries will also continue in the preparation of guidelines regarding the police procedure in attacks on journalists and the determination of the mechanism for monitoring attacks on journalists. These tasks are included in the Strategy of prevention of criminal and other anti-social activities in the Slovak Republic until 2028. The Platform for Press Freedom and Protection of Journalists is directly involved in the process of the preparation of these documents.

87. On 16 October 2023, the Ministry of Culture established the Platform for Press Freedom and Protection of Journalists. The Platform was established in accordance with the Government Resolution No. 483/2023 of 27 September 2023 on the Open Government Initiative Action Plan for 2024-2026. The aim of the Platform is to coordinate the implementation of obligations resulting from international and national initiatives to support press freedom and protection of journalists. The Platform is also a national coordinating committee within the Council of Europe's Campaign for the Safety of Journalists.

88. In relation to the protection of journalists, an internal legal act of the Presidium of the Police Force was issued and is effective from 1 September 2023, to ensure a uniform procedure of the Police Force when fulfilling tasks in connection with the proceedings on criminal reports filed by journalists for the performance of their profession. Based on this legal act, the Police Force keeps a record of notices from the Ján Kuciak Investigative Centre on deficiencies in the proceedings on criminal reports filed by journalists for the performance of their profession. This record will be a tool for evaluating and taking measures under applicable legislation to ensure effective action in the matters indicated in the notices, and to eliminate identified deficiencies.

89. One of the goals of the Strategy for the Prevention of Crime and Other Antisocial Activities in the Slovak Republic by 2028 (currently under preparation) is to draft a police methodology for the purpose of protecting journalists at risky mass events.

90. The police perform tasks not only in the area of repression and suppression of criminal activity, but also prevention of and active search for illegal activity online. In this context, it monitors social networks and the Internet, focusing also on threats and actions aimed at possible danger to journalists (not only) for performing their jobs.

91. In the case of identified illegal attacks aimed at journalists, adequate forces and resources of the Police Force are used in order to solve the act and identify the perpetrator, including the cooperative coordination of the procedures of various departments of the Police Force, especially with the Computer Crime Department of the National Centre of Special Types of Crime of the Presidium of the Police Force, the Criminalistics and Expertise Institute of the Police Force, Regional Directorates of the Police Force, etc.; depending on the nature of the case, the international organisations Europol and Interpol are involved, and in the case of the most serious criminal cases, working groups and specialised teams are established.

F. Judiciary, access to justice (recommendations No. 81, 92–95)

92. Since June 2023, the so-called new judicial map has been valid. The reform improved access to the court, hearings will also be possible at the workplace of another public authority, online hearings will also be possible in civil matters. Other significant changes include the specialisation of regional courts, and the establishment of municipal and administrative courts.

93. In connection with the fight against corruption, the Office for the Management of Seized Assets started to operate in August 2021,being established under the Act No. 312/2020 Coll. on Asset Seizure. The Office manages property that has been seized in criminal proceedings, in tax proceedings or when proving the origin of assets under a special regulation, as well as in the enforcement of international sanctions.

G. Fight against corruption (recommendations No. 79–81, 95)

94. In cooperation with other units of the Police Force, the National Crime Agency of the Presidium of the Police Force, as the corruption prevention administration in 2020, identified risk areas from the point of view of corruption for the Presidium of the Police Force and Regional Directorates of the Police Force and elaborated the goals and measures of the departmental anti-corruption programme within the Police Force units (except the Bureau of the Inspection Service) in the Police Force Action Plan for the Fight against Corruption.

95. To increase transparency and supervision with the aim of fighting corruption, the Police Force carries out several prevention activities in the Police Force structures.

96. The National Crime Agency of the Presidium of the Police Force in cooperation with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) organised the seminar "*Strengthening the Integrity of Members of the Police Force*" for the lecturers of the Police Force. The output of the project is the training of members of the Police Force to implement the approved anti-corruption policy, to observe the principles of integrity, standards of conduct, ethical and moral values with the aim of prioritizing the public interest and service to citizens over personal interests in accordance with the OECD Recommendation on Public Integrity. Specialised training is provided under the Anti-Corruption Policy Action Plan of the Police Force, and as a follow-up of evaluations of the prevention of and fight against corruption by UN, OECD, GRECO, the European Commission and the Coordinating Committee for the activities of the Slovak Republic in the OECD.

97. Based on the recommendation of the fifth cycle of the GRECO evaluation report on Slovakia in connection with the evaluation of the prevention of corruption and the promotion of integrity in state administration bodies (in high positions) and law enforcement authorities, measures were taken to increase the representation of women in the Police Force, including higher positions, for example in the form of training for police officers, as there are indisputable links between corruption and gender-based discrimination or disadvantage. Strengthening the position of women can lead to a reduction in corruption (information source "UNODC – UN Office on Drugs and Crime").

H. Strategy for equality, inclusion and participation of Roma (recommendations No. 43, 166–180)

98. In April 2021, the Government approved the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030, reflecting also on recommendations addressed to Slovakia within the 3rd Universal Periodic Review cycle of the UN Human Rights Council and the 6th monitoring cycle of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance of the Slovak Republic (ECRI Report of 8 December 2020). The Strategy is divided into 5 priority areas – Education, Housing, Employment, Health and Combating Antigypsyism and Promoting participation. By the Government Resolution No. 256 of 6 April 2022, Action Plans for 2022-2024 were approved. They are developed in three-year cycles with the

involvement of stakeholders through a participatory process, taking into account the needs of the communities concerned.

99. Under the Health Action Plan, the contribution organisation Healthy Regions of the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic participates in measuring the differences in health status between marginalized Roma communities and the general public, which will be used in establishing health policies. Regular data collection and evaluation reports will include data on the use of health services as well as differences in disease incidence between marginalized Roma communities and the general public. The data will provide information on inequalities in health status, which may also be the result of difficult access to health care, which may be related to discriminatory practices.

100. On 13 July 2022, the Government approved the strategic document Vision of the Development of Roma Culture, Language and Identity Support of the Ministry of Culture, which aims at achieving greater progress in the field of Roma equality and inclusion. Action Plan should contribute to strengthening identity as an important factor contributing to positive development in social inclusion, helping to stop the segregation of communities and generally contributing to better inclusion or change in the attitudes of the majority population.

101. The cultural rights of Roma are systematically supported by the Minority Culture Fund, through which 268 projects of the Roma national minority were financially supported in 2021, 260 projects in 2022 and 280 projects in 2023.

I. Inclusive education, the issue of segregation in education and training, Roma access to education (recommendations No. 124–133, 167–169, 172–175, 177–180, 182–188)

102. The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (hereafter as "Ministry of Education") developed the Strategy of Inclusive Approach in Education and Training, which was approved by the Government Resolution No. 732 of 8 December 2021. The Strategy outputs include action plans prepared in three-year cycles. The first action plan, created for the period 2022–2024, consists of six areas: Inclusive education and support measures; Counselling system in education; Desegregation in education and training; Debarrierization of the school environment; Training and Education of pedagogical and professional supporting staff; Destigmatization.

103. The expected result of the implementation of the Strategy is an inclusive education system that provides education to all children, pupils and students with no exceptions, with respect for individual characteristics and diverse educational needs, and enabling maximum fulfilment of their potential and improvement of the current state in the field of education of all children, pupils and students without ethnic differences.

104. With effect from 30 May 2023, the Amendment to the Education Act (Act No. 182/2023 on Education and Training) adopted a model of claimable support measures, including their financing and linking the provision of support measures with diagnostics in the transformed counselling and prevention system. It results in the unified diagnostic system (regardless of the centre of examination, the child shall receive the same help and care), the involvement of multidisciplinary system (collaboration of experts from different fields), but also claimable measures (what the child with special educational needs is entitled to in the education system).

105. The Amendment to the Education Act enacts, with effect from 1 September 2023, the activity of a social worker in schools, who carries out social diagnostics of children, social counselling for families and children, consultations with representatives of facilities, teaching and professional staff, performs professional activities, including activities to prevent segregation.

106. On 1 September 2023, the Amendment to Act No. 447/2008 Coll. on Financial Contributions for Compensation of Severe Disability, entered into force. This Amendment enabled the provision of personal assistance in schools and school facilities for certain activities. Legislative conditions were created for the work of personal assistants in schools and school facilities during the educational process and leisure activities.

107. The integration of pupils from marginalised Roma communities and pupils with special educational needs is a cross-cutting theme in the National Programme for the Development of Education and Training and Action Plan No. 1. The elimination of discrimination and segregation in primary education is part of the interventions of the National Programme; the elimination of discrimination and segregation in pre-primary education is part of the national projects of the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government for Roma Communities under the 2020 Strategy and the 2030 Strategy including informational and desegregation activities.

108. Under the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of Education addresses the issue of segregation in education and the issue of school desegregation. The definition of segregation was adopted in the approved Amendment to the Education Act (No. 182/2023) as follows: Segregation in education and training is an act or failure to act that is contrary to the principle of equal treatment according to a special regulation and leads or may lead to spatial, organizational, physical or social exclusion or separation of a group of children, pupils, students or participants in education without a reason arising from this Act.

109. In 2023, the activity of the Expert Working Group of the Ministry of Education was renewed to support the school desegregation and the implementation of the tasks arising from the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic. All relevant division and organisations of the Ministry of Education, the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government for Roma Communities and experts from non-governmental organisations are represented in the working group.

110. In 2022, the Ministry of Education published the Methodological Document on School Desegregation for school founders and principals entitled *"Together at one (school) desk".* The document represents the basic framework of measures and recommendations to be implemented in classes, schools, cities or regions. Currently, the second methodology is being prepared. The *Methodological Guidelines on the Interpretation of the Definition of Segregation in Education and Training and its Application in Practice* provides the most detailed interpretation of the definition of segregation in education and training. The Guidelines also contain types of situations in which segregation can manifest itself in the specific conditions of Slovakia and its possible solutions. Entities active in the field of education should thus be able to develop and adopt ethical, organisational and managerial rules to prevent discrimination and segregation.

111. The Ministry of Education is preparing monitoring of desegregation, which will consist of the collection and analysis of available data indicating the risk of segregation collected within the Ministry of Education, the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government for Roma Communities and the State School Inspection. Under the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic, the National Project on Desegregation is being prepared, where desegregation plans will be drawn up in selected localities. Desegregation plans will serve as model projects for sustainable solutions to situations in other locations of the same or similar type.

112. Under the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of Education created a grant scheme to support the provision of early childhood care for children under the age of six from marginalized Roma communities and generational poverty. The aim of the grant scheme is to work with families in the home environment to develop children's social, cognitive and motor skills, to prepare them for formal pre-primary education and to educate parents about its benefits. People directly from the community who speak the language and know local conditions receive quality training and mentoring. Supporting early care services will strengthen gender equality in marginalized Roma communities. Developing skills will increase mothers' self-confidence and determination to enter the labour market after parental leave. More than EUR 6.2 million has been allocated to the grant scheme for the period 2023–2026.

113. Following the implementation of the Strategy for Roma Integration until 2020, there was an increase in the number of qualified teaching assistants and professional staff (esp. special pedagogues) in kindergardens attended by children from marginalized Roma communities/socially disadvantaged environment. A programme of early childhood care and

pre-school education, a pilot model of diagnosis and re-diagnosis of children and pupils with special educational needs of the least developed districts was created (Act No. 336/2015 Coll.). Funds for improving the conditions of education and training of pupils with special educational needs in primary schools were increased and the increase in the number of teaching assistants, educators and professional staff in schools with pupils from marginalized Roma communities/from a socially disadvantaged environment was financially supported in the amount of EUR 11.85 million (summary for 2019 and 2020).

114. In the period 2017–2023, the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government for Roma Communities implemented the national projects Support for Pre-Primary Education of Children from Marginalized Roma Communities I and II. As of 31 August 2023, around 11,000 children completed at least one school year in pre-primary education in 133 kindergartens. In addition to research in the field of a stimulation programme for three- to four-year-old children to eliminate cognitive deficits and the development of a methodology for working with families in their natural environment, the projects mainly contributed in the employment of members of inclusive teams in kindergartens – special pedagogues, parental assistants and coordinators of inclusive education.

115. The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government for Roma Communities implements the National Project Development Teams I. (Programme Slovakia 2021-2027, Active integration of Roma communities, specific objective ESO4.10 Support of socio-economic integration of marginalized communities, such as Roma, the European Social Funds Plus (ESF+) in 56 selected municipalities. [2] Mandatory members of the development teams and employees of the municipality include workers supporting the healthy development of children at an early age and parenting skills (Nene) and mentors of these workers (Nenementors). Optional members of the development teams include an education assistant. The total financial coverage of the project is almost EUR 69.6 million from EU funds.

J. Supporting economic and social development to help the poor to raise their living standards and protect the rights of women, children, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups (recommendations No. 28, 43, 121, 122, 148–158)

116. The main strategic document for social inclusion policies and the fight against poverty is the National Framework Strategy for the Support of Social Inclusion and the Fight against Poverty of the Slovak Republic. The policies contained in the Strategy are based on the existing set of policies and measures resulting from the strategic, conceptual and legislative tasks of individual ministries. The Strategy is regularly evaluated and updated, the last update was in 2020, the next one will be implemented in 2024.

117. In the context of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Slovak Republic has defined national goals until 2030, namely to reduce the number of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion by 70,000 by 2023 and to reduce the number of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion by 21,000 by 2030.

118. Individual measures of social policy, including legislation, aimed at reducing the social disadvantage of vulnerable and marginalized groups are based on the civil principle for all groups of the population equally.

119. A household with no or very low income can apply for assistance in material need (its provision is legally regulated by Act No. 417/2013 Coll. on Material Need Assistance). The purpose of the aid is to provide protection to households that cannot or are not able to secure or increase their income through their own work, legal claims or property, based on the constitutional guarantee of basic living conditions.

120. In connection with the elimination of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, Slovakia adopted several measures to support the most vulnerable groups of the population. Inflation assistance was also provided to households receiving material need assistance due to increased housing, energy, and food expenses.

121. The state also provides assistance to households in need through a number of free professional services, for example employment support services or free family or debt counselling services, which were created to help those in a difficult financial situation.

122. Under the Employment Services Act, active measures are implemented in the labour market with a special focus on the employment of disadvantaged applicants in order to support their employability and employment. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (hereafter as "Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family") adopted the following national strategic documents:

- Strategic Priorities for the Development of Employment in the Slovak Republic with a view to 2030;
- Action plan to Further Strengthen the Integration of the Long-Term Unemployed in the Labour Market in the Slovak Republic with a view to 2030;
- National Plan to Strengthen the Guarantee for Young People in the Slovak Republic with a view to 2030.

123. At the same time, measures aimed at the development of regional partnerships, individualized counselling, acquisition and development of skills, further education, support of sustainable jobs (including mentored training) and support of self-employment will be implemented in the new programme period, through the Programme Slovakia 2021-2027. The target groups will include disadvantaged people on the labour market, especially long-term unemployed, low-skilled, NEET (young people not in employment, education or training) and people with disabilities.

124. Pursuant to Act No. 112/2018 Coll. on Social Economy and Social Enterprises, tools for the labour integration of disadvantaged and vulnerable people, as well as tools for promoting goods and services to vulnerable people are implemented. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family adopted the Action Plan for Social Economy (APSE) 2030, which is a strategic document in accordance with the recommendations of the European Commission. The Action Plan is a set of tools to support job creation for disadvantaged and vulnerable people, as well as contribute to fair and inclusive recovery and green and digital transition.

125. In April 2023, the Government approved the National Action Plan of the European Child Guarantee in accordance with the obligation specified in the Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 of 14 June 2021. The main objective of the recommendation is to guarantee children effective and free access to high-quality early childhood education and care, education and school activities, health care, effective access to healthy nutrition and adequate housing. [3]

126. The National Programme for the Development of Living Conditions of Persons with Disabilities 2014-2020 was updated in 2021, when the Government approved the National Programme for 2021-2030. It was developed as an open document to be updated and evaluated every year. The report on the implementation of the measures resulting from the programme for the year 2022 and the proposal for its update was approved by the Government Resolution No. 595 of 13 November 2023.

127. For the benefit of persons with severe disabilities, the Government has increased the basic amount of cash allowance for caregivers of working age (from EUR 369.36 to the current EUR 569), as well as for caregivers of retirement age (from EUR 184.71 to the current EUR 426.75) every year since 2019. The Government also increased the hourly rate for personal assistance from EUR 3.82 to EUR 5.52. At the same time, Act No. 447/2008 Coll. was amended, increasing the amount of the cash allowance for the purchase of a motor vehicle from EUR 6,638.79 to a maximum of EUR 13,277.58 and the amount of the cash allowance for the purchase of a motor vehicle with an automatic transmission from EUR 8,298.48 to a maximum EUR 16,596.96.

128. The National Council of the Slovak Republic approved the Amendment to Act No. 576/2004 Coll. on Health Care, Services Related to the Provision of Health Care, regulating several rights of patients. A person with severe disability is entitled to have a close person present during the provision of health care in an institutional care facility, if the presence of

such a person does not interfere with the provision of health care. When providing health care in connection with childbirth, a woman is entitled to have an accompanying person (or several persons, if the conditions of the health care facility allow so) designated by her.

K. Migration and integration policy of foreigners (recommendations No. 189–195)

129. As part of the implementation of the Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic in connection with the integration of foreigners, several measures are continuously implemented. The integration of persons granted international protection in the Slovak society is currently implemented through the integration project financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).

130. As part of the integration project, persons granted international protection are provided with social, psychological, labour and legal counselling, free teaching of the Slovak language, additional medical and material assistance.

131. According to Act No. 480/2022 Coll. on Asylum, the Ministry of Interior provides one-time and integration allowance as part of the initial integration. The integration allowance is paid after the grant of asylum or the provision of supplementary protection for six months and serves to ensure housing and basic human needs.

132. For vulnerable people, e.g. with disability or at retirement age, financial assistance is provided through a project financed by AMIF, as these persons do not meet the necessary conditions for granting an old-age or disability pension and are dependent only on material need benefits.

133. In connection with the refugees an accommodation allowance is provided, the amount of which depends on the age of persons, while half amount of the allowance is paid for minors under 15 years of age.

134. Refugees from Ukraine who have applied for or been granted temporary protection can be provided with assistance in material need under the same conditions as citizens of the Slovak Republic.

135. The conditions for the provision of subsidies from the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, which are provided for the purpose of supporting children's school attendance, have been adjusted so that it can also be provided to children from Ukraine integrated in Slovak schools (subsidy to support the child's eating habits and subsidy to support the fulfilment of child's educational obligations).

136. The Ministry of Education provided a specific contribution to school founders for school supplies for pupils fleeing the war in Ukraine, who were enrolled in schools in the Slovak Republic between March and June, in the amount of EUR 200 per pupil. Since March 2022, the state has also been providing “monthly funds per pupil” to school founders to support the integration of children and pupils from Ukraine who have applied for or been granted temporary protection on the territory of the Slovak Republic.

137. The Ministry of Education reimburses schools for providing language courses for children who do not speak the language of instruction. In the period from March 2022 to January 2023, EUR 721,391 were provided to founders of primary and secondary schools for language courses for pupils from Ukraine.

L. The rights of persons belonging to national minorities and the use of minority languages in public life (recommendations No. 159–164)

138. In accordance with the Action Plan for the Protection of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities and Ethnic Groups 2016-2020, the legislative intent of the Act on National Minorities was established in a participatory manner.

139. The Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for National Minorities regularly prepares the Report on the Use of National Minority Languages in the Territory of the Slovak

Republic at two-year intervals (most recently for the period 2021–2022). The report provides a comprehensive analysis of the use of national minority languages in official communication in the Slovak Republic. Reports identify the current state and gradual progress in this area, but also persistent shortcomings and ways to eliminate them.

140. Based on the 2021 Population and Housing Census, the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for National Minorities prepared a proposal for a Government regulation, issuing the list of municipalities where citizens belonging to a national minority make up at least 15% of the population and that are obliged to comply with Act No. 184/1999 Coll. on the Use of National Minority Languages. The Government approved the Regulation under number 35/2023 and it is effective from 1 March 2023. The number of municipalities with national minorities increased, mainly by Ruthenian and Roma minority municipalities. The Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for National Minorities methodically guides public authorities, local self-government authorities, as well as large businesses, business chains and other legal entities in the use of national minority languages. It supports the use of national minority languages, including visual bilingualism, in territories inhabited by members of national minorities.

141. On 7 June 2023, the Government recognized the Vietnamese minority, which thus became the 14th officially recognized national minority in Slovakia. The Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for National Minorities immediately began preparing for the inclusion of the Vietnamese minority in decision-making processes. Following the elections to the Committee for National Minorities and Ethnic Groups, a representative of the Vietnamese national minority was appointed to the Committee.

Notes

[1] More detailed information on measures to support and protect the rights of the LGBTI community can be found in the interim evaluation report prepared by the Slovak Republic in 2021.

[2] Current data as of 7 November 2023.

[3] More detailed information on measures to support and protect the child rights can be found in the interim evaluation report prepared by the Slovak Republic in 2021.