

**HUMAN
RIGHTS
REPORT**

2025

This publication presents an analysis of the state of human rights in Slovakia in the year 2025 and recommendations for its improvement elaborated by member organization of the Human Right Coalition.

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The Human Rights Coalition was established in the year 2025 with aim to defend universal human rights and civil society in Slovakia. The Coalition approaches human rights from a complex and holistic perspective. It organizes educational events, mobilizes the public and supports civil society organizations including their advocacy activities, in order to react to human rights threats swiftly, strategically and in the spirit of solidarity.

Organizations and collectives associated in the Human Rights Coalition are: Amnesty International Slovensko, Diera do sveta, eduRoma, Inokraj, in-TYMYta, kolektív neon, Komunitná nadácia Zdravé mesto, Literárna bašta, Možnosť voľby, Rómske advokačné a výskumné stredisko, Sapling a Záhrada – Centrum nezávislej kultúry.

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CONTENT

Preface	1
Framework And Limits Of The Report	3
1. Civil And Political Rights	4
1.1. Interferences With Obligations Within The International Human Rights Protection	5
1.2. Right To Assemble	8
1.3. Right To Associate	10
1.4. Right To Access Information	12
1.5. Freedom Of Speech And Media Freedom	14
2. Discrimination Of Roma People	16
2.1. Segregation An Unequal Access To Education	17
2.2. Discrimination And Violation Of The Right To Housing	21
2.3. Inappropriate Use Of Police Force And Policy Impunity	24
2.4. Right To Social Security	27
2.5. Anti-Roma Racism	29
3. Rights Of Children And Youth To Information And Education About Health, Relationships And Body Integrity	31
4. Rights Of Lgbti+ People	35
5. Women’S Rights And Gender Equality	43
5.1. Menstrual Exclusion	44
5.2. Right To Sexual And Reproductive Health	47
6. Climate Justice	52
6.1. Fossil Fuels	53
6.2. Missing Climate Change Law	55
7. Foreign Policy And Slovakia’S International Human Rights Obligations	57
7.1. Insufficient System For Granting Visas To Human Rights Defenders	58
7.2. Irresponsible Arms Trade	60
7.3. International Obligations Towards Victims Of Torture	62
Human Rights Coalition	64

PREFACE

December 10, International Human Rights Day, is not a holiday of guarantees. It is also a reminder of a struggle: a fight for human rights and dignity for all without distinction. Year after year, we commemorate this day in Slovakia without being able to say with certainty that we have moved forward in this most important struggle. What we can celebrate, however, is the fact that the struggle has not stopped.

12 organizations that have been part of this struggle for many years created the Human Rights Coalition this year. The cooperation of these organizations also produced the Human Rights Report for 2025, which you are reading now. It reports on a wide range of human rights problems that we have recorded in Slovakia.

Human rights were the target of attacks in 2025. Parliamentary votes, government statements, legislative changes are gradually pushing the boundaries of what is considered possible in Slovakia. What was once unthinkable is now becoming the norm.

The state, which is supposed to protect people from injustice, has itself become a source of injustice.

Its representatives have spent the whole year trying to convince us that human rights do not matter. They have tried to discourage us from defending human rights in various ways, whether by protesting, organizing or demanding the right to information. They have sent clear messages to those who are most vulnerable: Roma women, queer people, journalists, children, young people and others. For some of us, rights are still just a theory that has little to do with real life. When fear is the tool of power, courage is the answer of the society.

But 2025 is also proof that although politicians have tried their best to discourage us, they have not succeeded. They have failed thanks to the daily, visible and invisible, work in human rights for all.

This report can be read as an open indictment of those who see equality as a threat. It is a rejection of the normalization of hatred and discrimination that they pass off as „values“. It is a denial of the cynical notion that human

rights are a footnote that can be ignored when political or power interests are at stake. Human rights are not tokens in a political game, they represent a boundary that power must not cross.

This report is a description of the state Slovakia is in today, but it is also a plan for the future, for Slovakia for all. We do not just monitor laws, numbers and paragraphs. We monitor their consequences on people's lives: children who do not get equal opportunities at school; families whose existence is questioned by the state; communities that are denied safe housing; journalism that is attacked every day; people whose voices are silenced before anyone can even hear them; women whose bodies have become the subject of political battles.

Human rights are not statistics either. They are life or its loss. This report does not ask for attention, it asks for change.

The report is based on monitoring public policies and presence in communities. From the perspective of those who see what the state does not want to see. And they act where the state does not act. It is the result of the expertise, practice and responsibility of the organizations of the Human Rights Coalition towards people whose rights are violated.

Our goal is not just to name the problems. Our goal is to change the reality of those affected by these problems. That is why in this report we also bring clear recommendations to the government, the parliament, state institutions and the public. We expect them to be heard. Because if the state fails to protect rights, it is the duty of civil society to remind this responsibility and to promote its fulfillment. Inequality is not an accident. It is the result of decisions. And decisions can be changed.

This document is therefore also a commitment. A commitment that where power tries to push rights to the margins, we will bring them back to the center of attention. That wherever discrimination is presented as the „norm“, we will emphasize equality. And where people feel alone and without voice, we will stand by them. If someone does not have the same rights as others, then the rights are not equal for anyone.

Solidarity is not a gesture – it is power. We are not afraid to name injustice out loud – and we will not be afraid of solutions that require courage. Human rights are not some decoration of democracy. They are its foundation.

FRAMEWORK AND LIMITS OF THE REPORT

This report provides a human rights analysis of the situation in Slovakia in 2025 in relation to Slovakia's international commitments. Its aim is not to provide an exhaustive list of all events or human rights violations in 2025.¹ The content of the report is aligned with the strategic framework and priorities of the Human Rights Coalition.

The report focuses on areas in which the Human Rights Coalition is active, conducts research, works with communities and people whose rights are being violated, and monitors and analyses public policies. The report is therefore the result of research, monitoring, and expert analysis by member organizations and groups of the Human Rights Coalition. It is based on practical field experience, documentation of public decisions' impact on the people, as well as publicly available data and documents.

This report is also based on intersectional approach. It takes into account the fact that coalition members work with communities whose identity and experience intersect with multiple forms of inequality and discrimination – from Roma communities to feminist, queer, and cultural initiatives, and from local community collectives to the international movement of which they are a part.

This report is not only a retrospective look at the state of human rights, but also a document aimed at change. Based on its findings, it formulates recommendations for the government and public institutions to take concrete steps to fulfil their obligations under the international law and ensure the consistent protection of the rights of all people without distinction.

¹ Report closing date was November 28, 2025. Therefore, it does not reflect events that occurred after the closing date.

1.

CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

1.1. INTERFERENCES WITH OBLIGATIONS WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION

There was no positive development in the area of the rule of law in 2025. On the contrary, the parliament approved fundamental changes to the constitution² that weakened the human rights protection and undermined the position of EU law in Slovak legal system.

On Sep 26th the National Council of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the „NR SR“) adopted an amendment to the Constitution. The changes into effect on Nov 1st. The parliament introduced provisions that declared the supremacy of Slovak legislation on issues designated as „national identity“. This term is not legally defined or justified, which creates room for arbitrary interpretation and circumvention of Slovakia's obligations under the EU and international law.

The amendment also introduced several provisions that have a direct negative impact on the rights of women, children and LGBTI+ community. It established that the Slovak Republic „recognizes only the biologically determined sex of man and woman“. It limited the possibility of being a legal parent almost exclusively to heterosexual couples. It restricted access to adoptions only to opposite-sex marriages. It made participation in sex education

2 Government of the Slovak Republic, Government draft of the Constitutional Act amending and supplementing the Constitution of the Slovak Republic No. 460/1992 Coll., as amended, 2025, available at: <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Default.aspx?sid=zakony/zakon & MasterID=10218>

conditional on parental consent. These provisions opened the way for the denial of legal recognition of transgender and non-binary persons. They violated the principle of equality and the prohibition of discrimination and may lead to further restrictions on access to reproductive healthcare and sex education.

International institutions have warned the government and parliament against adopting these amendments. Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights³, Venice Commission⁴, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights⁵, European Commission⁶ and several UN Special Rapporteurs on education, health and privacy have expressed concerns⁷ about these amendments and have called for the withdrawal or rejection of the proposed amendments before they are approved by parliament. The authorities have warned that the amendment violates Slovakia's obligations under the international human rights conventions, including the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. The European Parliament (hereinafter referred to as the „EP“) also expressed its concerns in an open letter⁸, sent by more than 50 MEPs to the National Council of the Slovak Republic on Sep 16th. In this letter, the EP stated that the amendments are not in line with Article 2 of the Treaty on EU or the Charter of Fundamental Rights.⁹

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- 3 Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Slovak Republic: Parliament should not adopt Constitutional amendments that undermine human rights, 13.6.2025, available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/slovak-republic-parliament-should-not-adopt-constitutional-amendments-that-undermine-human-rights>
 - 4 Venice commission, Urgent opinion on the draft amendments to the constitution of Slovak Republic, 2025, Dokument CDL-PI, 2025, 011, available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/slovak-republic-venice-commission-issues-urgent-opinion-on-the-draft-amendments-to-the-constitution>
 - 5 Venice commission, Urgent opinion on the draft amendments to the constitution of Slovak Republic, 2025, Dokument CDL-PI, 2025, 011, available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/slovak-republic-venice-commission-issues-urgent-opinion-on-the-draft-amendments-to-the-constitution>
 - 6 Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Slovak Republic: Parliament should not adopt Constitutional amendments that undermine human rights, 13.6.2025, available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/slovak-republic-parliament-should-not-adopt-constitutional-amendments-that-undermine-human-rights>
 - 7 European Commission, 2025 Rule of Law Report on Slovakia, 8.7.2025, dostupné na: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/44d5d5ba-27d1-4797-b412-83ad2cc4cb57_en?filename=29_1_63964_coun_chap_slovakia_en.pdf
 - 8 Open letter from the EP membership, 16.9.2025, available at: <https://maria-noichl.eu/workspace/media/static/mep-letter-constitutional-amen-68c9604f91298.pdf>
 - 9 European Commission, 2025 Rule of Law Report on Slovakia, 8.7.2025, available at: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/44d5d5ba-27d1-4797-b412-83ad2cc4cb57_en?filename=29_1_63964_coun_chap_slovakia_en.pdf

On Oct 16th, the Human Rights Coalition organizations¹⁰, together with other Slovak and European organizations, called on the European Commission to take immediate legal and political action in response to the recently adopted constitutional changes in Slovakia.

On Nov 21st, the European Commission (hereinafter referred to as the „EC“) sent Slovak Republic a letter of formal notice (INFR(2025)2208), initiating infringement proceedings.¹¹ In the letter the EC states a possible breach of fundamental principles of EU law, in particular the principles of primacy, autonomy, effectiveness and uniform application of EU law. The Commission also stressed that it had expressed its concerns to the Slovak authorities before the amendment adoption, but that they had not taken its warnings into account. Slovakia has two months to respond.

Recommendations to the Government of the Slovak Republic and NR SR to:

- immediately repeal the provisions of the constitutional amendment that violate the principle of the supremacy of EU law and threaten the human rights protection;
- adopt effective legislation that ensures equal treatment and the prohibition of discrimination of all persons, including transgender and non-binary persons;
- amend the amendments regarding adoptions, parenthood and sex education to be in line with the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

10 Joint open letter on the new constitutional amendments adopted in Slovakia on 16 October 2025, available at: <https://www.amnesty.sk/otvoreny-list-k-ustavnym-zmenam/>

11 EC, press corner about infringement package, 21.11.2025, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/inf_25_2481

1.2. RIGHT TO ASSEMBLE

In January, Slovakia entered its first full year under a significantly more restrictive regime on the right to assemble. In June 2024, the parliament adopted the so-called *lex atentát*¹² (lex assassination attempt), which also changed the law on the right to assemble. The amendment introduced extensive new restrictions, for example, expanding the zones where assemblies can be banned, and very broadly formulating the reasons why a municipality „must“ ban an assembly, such as if there is a „reasonable concern“ of multiple assemblies clashing or if the assembly would disrupt the privacy and peace of the homes of multiple people.

Universal bans on assemblies around the parliament, government, presidential residence and courts, and the expansion of the discretionary power of municipalities to prohibit peaceful assemblies, are in conflict with international standards for the protection of the right to assemble, as these are not individually assessed, but general bans that prevent participants from being „within sight and hearing“ of the addressees of their protest.

At the beginning of the year, mass protests took place across Slovakia. The Prime Minister, the Minister of the Interior, and the head of the Slovak Information Service repeatedly depicted them as a security risk and spoke of an alleged „coup attempt“ by the opposition, the media, and NGOs, based on a classified report of the Slovak Information Service. Such statements created stigmatizing environment and could have a deterrent effect on the organization and participation of the assemblies, which is in direct contradiction to the state’s positive obligation to facilitate the right to peaceful assembly.

12 166/2024 Coll. on certain measures to improve the security situation in the Slovak Republic, available at: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/ezbierky/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2024/166/20240715.html>

In February, the Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic accepted a motion¹³ to review the constitutionality of the amendment to the law, filed by a group of members of the parliament. At the time of writing this report, the final decision of the Constitutional Court was not known.

The UN Special Rapporteurs on Human Rights in Slovakia¹⁴ called to end the stigmatization and persecution of civil society, journalists and peaceful protesters. They also warned that the adoption of the lex atentát is incompatible with international law, as it fundamentally interferes with the space for freedom of assembly and creates a chilling effect on exercising this right.

Recommendations for the Government of the Slovak Republic to:

- immediately amend the law on the right to assembly to remove universal bans on assemblies;
- remove legal uncertainty in the law on the right to assembly by removing vague grounds for banning assembly, thus preventing the arbitrary banning of peaceful protests;
- stop using stigmatizing rhetoric that labels organizing a peaceful protest as a security risk or an „attempted coup“ and refrained from questioning the legitimacy of civic initiatives.

13 Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic, The Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic decided at a closed plenary session on 12 February 2025 (press release No. 8/2025), available at: <https://www.ustavnysud.sk/informacie-pre-verejnost-a-media/media/tlacove-spravy?articleId=44827307>

14 Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Experts alarmed by deterioration of fundamental freedoms and civic space in Slovak Republic, 10 March 2025, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/03/experts-alarmed-deterioration-fundamental-freedoms-and-civic-space-slovak>

1.3. RIGHT TO ASSOCIATE

In April, the National Council of the Slovak Republic adopted an amendment to Act No. 109/2025 Coll.¹⁵, which significantly tightened the obligations of non-governmental organizations (hereinafter referred to as „NGOs“) and introduced new administrative obligations, sanctions and control mechanisms. One of its declared goals was to „increase transparency“, but in practice the legislation created an unduly repressive regime that may have a deterrent effect on association, freedom of expression and the activities of NGOs as „public watchdogs“.

In addition to existing control mechanisms, the amendment introduced an obligation to prepare special reports¹⁶, publish data on donations over 5,000 euros, provide personal data of members of boards, and imposes strict sanctions for failure to comply with these obligations. NGOs also became obligated entities under the Freedom of Information Act if they were provided with certain public funds¹⁷, which represents a fundamental change in their legal status.

In September, the Constitutional Court joined¹⁸ a motion by a group of members of the parliament and the Public Defender of Rights and initiated proceedings on the constitutionality of the law. Both motions pointed out that the law introduces disproportionate restrictions on freedom of association,

15 109/2025 Coll. amending and supplementing Act No. 213/1997 Coll. on non-profit organizations providing generally beneficial services, as amended, and amending and supplementing certain laws, available at: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/ezbierky/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2025/109/>

16 Civic associations and organizations with an international element will be required to prepare a statement if their income exceeds 35,000 euros per year.

17 If the request only partially concerns the handling of public resources or concerns other facts, the NGO is obliged to prepare a qualified complaint within 8 working days and send it to the competent state or local government authority (which provided the NGO with funds) to issue a decision not to disclose the information. The information request itself and the file material must also be sent with the qualified complaint.

18 Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic, PRESS RELEASE No. 36/2025, 10.9.2025, available at: https://www.ustavnysud.sk/documents/20121/41393238/TS_36_2025.pdf/5aebf5ae-d94b-9af0-97d6-78ed7cd91370?t=1758804697825

freedom of expression, the right to privacy, and creates an unequal position for NGOs compared to other recipients of public funds.

In an urgent opinion¹⁹, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) stated that the law contains unjustified interferences with the freedom of association and the right to donation privacy and is not in line with Slovakia's international obligations. ODIHR warned that extensive administrative obligations and sanctions may have a deterrent effect on the activities of NGOs and recommended that the government refrain from measures that weaken civil society. The Venice Commission emphasized in its statement²⁰ that the law introduces unreasonable and disproportionate obligations. It pointed out that transparency of NGO activities is not among the legitimate objectives listed in international human rights documents as grounds for restricting the right to associate and that the measures taken are not necessary.

Recommendations for the Government of the Slovak Republic to:

- ensure that human rights defenders and civil society actors in Slovakia can carry out their activities in a supportive and safe environment without fear of persecution, repression or any intimidation;
- revised Act No. 109/2025 Coll. so that it is in line with the Constitution of the Slovak Republic and international human rights obligations;
- ensure effective and efficient participation of the professional community and NGOs in the regular legislative process and take their comments into account.

19 OBSE, Slovak Republic: Urgent Opinion on the Law Amending Act No. 213/1997 Coll. on Non-Profit Organizations Providing Public Benefit Services and Amending Other Acts, 16. 4. 2025, available at: <https://www.osce.org/odihhr/593495>

20 Venice commission, Slovak Republic – Opinion on the amendments to the Law „On non-profit organisations providing services of general interest“, 13.10.2025, available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/venice-commission/-/opinion-1256>

1.4. RIGHT TO ACCESS INFORMATION

In 2025, there were major interventions in the right to access information. On Dec 10, 2024, the Parliament adopted an amendment to Act No. 211/2000 Coll. The amendment extended the deadline for processing a request from 8 to 12 working days. It also introduced a new fee system for „extraordinarily extensive information searches.“

The adoption of the law was also preceded by a presidential veto, when the President pointed out²¹ the risk of unclear concepts and their possible arbitrary interpretation. Regarding the right to information he stated that fees may disproportionately affect obligated persons.

At the beginning of the year, members of the Parliament and the Public Defender of Rights filed motions to initiate proceedings before the Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic. The Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic joined the proceedings. In March the Court decided²² to suspend the effectiveness of the disputed part of the law. The suspension concerned provisions allowing the provision of information to be made conditional on the payment of a fee for an „extraordinarily extensive information searches“.

21 President of the Slovak Republic, The President returned the amendment to the Act on Free Access to Information to the Parliament, 26.11.2024, available at: <https://www.prezident.sk/article/prezident-vratil-parlamentu-novelu-zakona-o-slobodnom-pristupe-k-informaciam/>

22 Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic, The Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic decided at a closed plenary session on March 12, 2025 (press release No. 14/2025), available at: <https://www.ustavnysud.sk/informacie-pre-verejnost-a-media/media/tlacove-spravy?articleId=47571127>

In November, the Constitutional Court ruled²³ that the provisions on fees for an extraordinarily extensive information searches were unconstitutional. It stated that the law insufficiently defines when an extensive search is involved and allows obliged persons to arbitrarily condition access to information on payment. The court emphasized that the right to information is a fundamental means of control over public authorities and that unclear norms with financial consequences may unduly restrict the exercise of this right.

Recommendations for the Government and the Parliament of the Slovak Republic to:

- ensure that any restrictions on the right to information are only to the extent necessary, proportionate and in accordance with Slovakia's human rights obligations.

23 Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic, The Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic decided at a closed plenary session on November 5, 2025 (press release No. 44/2025), available at: <https://www.ustavnysud.sk/informacie-pre-verejnost-a-media/media/tlacove-spravy?articleId=64749458>

1.5. FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA FREEDOM

Freedom of expression and media independence continued to weaken in 2025. Political interference in public broadcasting, stigmatizing rhetoric against journalists and limited access to information created an environment that weakened public scrutiny of the exercise of power.

The consequences of the legislative changes of 2024, which abolished the original public institution, became fully apparent during the year. The new model of functioning of the public institution did not create sufficient guarantees to protect independence and could allow political influence on editorial decision-making.

The UN Special Rapporteurs on human rights have warned²⁴ that increasing interference in public broadcasting, limited media access to information and stigmatization of journalists are incompatible with Slovakia's legal obligations. They have also recalled that the state has a positive obligation to create an environment that allows journalists to operate freely and safely.

Government officials have been creating a hostile atmosphere towards the media²⁵ that may have had a deterrent effect on the performance of journalistic work.

According to Reporters Without Borders Slovakia fell to 38th place in the 2025 media freedom rankings – the worst in 15 years. This decline is linked to political pressure on the media, attempts to control public media and the weakening of legal guarantees of editorial independence.

24 Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Experts alarmed by deterioration of fundamental freedoms and civic space in Slovak Republic, 10 March 2025, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/03/experts-alarmed-deterioration-fundamental-freedoms-and-civic-space-slovak>

25 SME, Fico to journalists after returning from Croatia: Be quiet, 15.8.2025, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eiT6gOh_pE4

Changes in the right to access information have extended deadlines for providing information and created new barriers that have complicated the collection of data in the public interest. These obstacles have made it difficult for investigative journalism, which requires rapid and unrestricted access to public documents and decisions.

At the same time, there have been cases of selective provision of information, in which state officials have favoured certain media outlets based on their editorial orientation.²⁶ This practice contradicts the principles of non-discrimination and equal access to information, which are part of Slovakia's international obligations.

Recommendations for the Government and the Parliament of the Slovak Republic to:

- ensure independent and transparent management of public service media in accordance with Slovakia's international obligations;
- refrain from using stigmatizing or intimidating rhetoric against the media and journalists;
- ensure effective protection of journalists from attacks, including prompt and thorough investigations of incidents threatening the safety or independence of the media;
- ensure that the media have full, non-discriminatory and fair access to public officials and to information of public interest, including by removing administrative obstacles and shortening deadlines for providing data.

26 The Slovak Spectator, The disinformation scene has become a tool of media capture, May 21, 2025, available at: <https://spectator.sme.sk/politics-and-society/c/the-disinformation-scene-has-become-a-tool-of-media-capture>

2.

DISCRIMINATION
OF ROMA
PEOPLE

2.1. SEGREGATION AN UNEQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Slovakia continued to systematically violate the right of Roma children to equal access to quality education without segregation. Despite several reforms and new measures of the Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as „MERD“), segregated schools and classes, double-shift teaching and excessive placement of children in special classes and schools remained a reality that affected tens of thousands of Roma children.

Schools were also required to implement the Standards for Compliance with the Prohibition of Segregation into their internal regulations, which the MERD presented as a key tool for preventing segregation. In practice, however, this mainly involved formal adjustments to school rules without the state ensuring effective supervision of their implementation and real desegregation measures.

In February, the European Court of Human Rights confirmed in the case of *Salay v. Slovakia*²⁷ that the excessive placement of Roma children in special classes in the Slovak Republic constituted discrimination. The court ruled that a Roma pupil had been discriminated against by being placed in a special class for „children with mild mental disabilities“ on the basis of culturally biased tests. Enrolment in special classes was permanent in practice.

27 ECtHR, *SALAY v. Slovakia* (29359/22), 27 February 2025, available at <https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/?i=004-68557>

In April, Amnesty International and the European Roma Rights Centre published a report²⁸ analysing the government's actions after the European Commission referred Slovakia to the Court of Justice of the EU in 2023. The report found that segregation remained widespread and deepening, legislative changes to the Education Act were insufficient and ineffective, and that in practice a de facto dual education system was being created – a separate, lower-quality system for Roma children, often in schools without gyms or canteens.

In August, the Advocate General of the Court of Justice of the EU, Tamara Čápetá, confirmed in her opinion²⁹ in the infringement proceedings against the Slovak Republic that there was a systematic and persistent breach of the Racial Equality Directive. She pointed out that Slovakia had not only failed to take sufficiently effective measures, but had also failed to demonstrate any results in terms of a decrease in segregation. She also rejected the government's arguments that segregation was a „side effect“ of the territorial separation of communities or individual decisions of parents, and stressed that the state had a positive obligation to achieve a result, not just to adopt formal measures on paper.

In August, the State School Inspectorate published the results of a thematic inspection³⁰, according to which many children were placed in special classes on the basis of unreliable diagnostics. Even in 2025, the state had not eliminated inappropriate and unreliable diagnostics and had not ensured effective corrective mechanisms, as a result of which children were excluded from the mainstream education for a long time and stigmatized as „children with mild mental disabilities“.

In September, a formal ban on two-shift teaching in primary schools came into force. In practice, however, the ministry was simultaneously granting „legislative exceptions“ and concluding memoranda on the elimination of two-shift operation, which maintained the two-shift operation for the

28 Amnesty International and ERRC, Separate and unequal: Report on the (failure to) address the segregation of Roma children in Slovakia, 16 April 2025, available at: <https://www.amnesty.sk/romske-deti-na-slovensku-nadalej-celia-hlboko-zakorenenej-diskriminacii/>

29 Court of Justice of the EU, OPINION OF ADVOCATE GENERAL TAMARA ČÁPETA, 1 August 2025, available at: <https://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=303045 & pageIndex=0 & doclang=SK & mode=req & dir=&occ=first & part=1 & cid=9399706>

30 State School Inspectorate, Thematic Report: STATUS OF ADMISSION OF STUDENTS TO SPECIAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND THEIR EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOL YEAR 2024/2025, 6. 8. 2025, available at: <https://www.ssi.sk/2025/08/06/mnohe-deti-boli-zaradene-do-specialnych-tried-na-zaklade-nespolahlivej-psychodiagnostiky/>

following years. According to available data³¹, at least 30 schools continue to operate in two-shift operation³².

Two-shift operation was prohibited by law but was maintained in practice through a system of exceptions and memoranda. Moreover, publicly available information suggests that most schools that signed the memorandum on the elimination of double shifts primarily plan to increase already segregated capacities, not to desegregate them. These measures thus reinforce and expand the segregated environment rather than eliminate it.

In October, the National Council of the Slovak Republic approved a package of so-called „Drucker reforms“, which introduced a more transparent system of „public school districts“. However, the amendment lacks clear desegregation criteria for the creation of districts and a direct link to the results of monitoring the risk of segregation.

In August, state authorities decided that children from Malý Slivník should be educated at ten primary schools in Prešov³³. Almost 40 children were educated only remotely „from home“ for approximately two months, without full participation in school and with significantly limited access to the right to education.

Despite the ruling of the Supreme Court of the Slovak Republic, which ruled that Roma children at the primary school in the Stará Ľubovňa-Podsadek district are segregated in education, the school in Podsadek continued to operate as a de facto segregated „Roma school“ in two-shift operation and without a real desegregation plan in the 2025/26 school year.³⁴ Second-grade children attended a building that was distant from the excluded community, but again attended mainly by Roma children. More than 20 % of children attending the school in Podsadek were placed in special classes. First-grade children received only dry food.

MERD adopted new documents, methodologies and legislative changes, it also maintained existing forms of segregation – through exceptions to the ban

31 Speech by Minister Drucker during Question Time in the National Assembly of the Slovak Republic on October 23, 2025, available at: <https://tv.nrsr.sk/archiv/schodza/9/40?id=353960>

32 Richnava, Podsadek (Stará Ľubovňa), Lomnička, Boliarov, Bystrany, Cigellka, Čakanovce, Drienovec, Herľany, Hranovnica, Hrčel', Chminianske Jakubany, Jánovce, Jarovnice, Kamenná Poruba, Kapušianske Kláčany, Kecerovce, Kolačkov, Laškovce, Lenartov, Markušovce, Podhorany, Rakúsy, Rudňany, Sady nad Torysou, Spišský Štiavnik, Trebišov, Veľká Lomnica, Vrbnica and Žehňa

33 In 2024, the Prešov Regional Court confirmed that decisions on a joint school district between the municipalities of Malý Slivník and Terňa led to discrimination against Romani children, as some Romani children from Malý Slivník were educated in afternoon classes and in ethnically homogeneous classes. This ruling should have led to desegregation measures within two years.

34 Meeting of the Stará Ľubovňa City Council, Report on the organizational arrangements for the 2025/2026 school year, 18.9.2025

on double shifts, the formal validity of desegregation standards, the insufficient efficiency of the catchment area register and the insufficient solution to unreliable diagnostics. Key judgments of national courts have not led to a decrease in segregation even in the localities they directly concern.

MERD committed to publishing a comprehensive monitoring report by the end of 2025 based on administrative data evaluation at all levels of education, including kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools and special schools. However, such a document had not been published as of the closing date of this report.

Recommendations for the Government of the SR and MERD to:

- implement extensive and comprehensive desegregation measures;
- implement binding and reliable desegregation regulations and plans with enforceable deadlines for all schools identified as at risk of segregation;
- adopt a holistic approach to addressing segregation in education by jointly addressing residential segregation and inadequate living conditions in excluded Roma communities;
- linked the central register of catchment areas with the results of the monitoring of the risk of segregation;
- started without unnecessary delay the process of actual desegregation in schools that the courts have recognized as segregated;
- allocated targeted financial resources for desegregation measures in strict accordance with the 3D principles (desegregation, deghettoization, destigmatization);
- collect anonymized ethnic data in the area of education in accordance with human rights law and standards;
- issue a comprehensive monitoring report on the risk of segregation;
- eliminate double-shift operation in schools by other means than expanding schools built in or near Roma communities, which would further deepen segregation.

2.2. DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLATION OF THE RIGHT TO HOUSING

The Slovak Republic continued to systematically violate the right of Roma men and women to adequate housing without segregation. Segregated Roma communities and localities, inadequate and health and life-threatening conditions, a chain of short-term rental contracts, and unclear housing policies of local governments exacerbated inequality and led to widespread human rights violations. The government did not adopt any effective desegregation and systemic measures in the area of housing.

Segregated Roma communities remained physically and functionally separated from municipalities. Some of the dwellings in excluded Roma communities were built of flammable materials, without safe access to electricity, drinking water, or basic fire-fighting infrastructure.

2025 brought a series of tragic fires³⁵ that revealed life-threatening conditions in segregated Roma communities. In March, five people, including four children, died in a fire in a unimo cells in Veľký Šariš. In July, 150 people lost their homes in Spišský Štiavnik, who then lived in makeshift tents without water or

35 Roma Television, There will be volunteer Roma firefighters in the settlements. They are to help with fires, 27.5.2025, available at: <https://romatv.sk/slovensko/v-osad%C3%A1ch-bud%C3%BA-dobrovo%C4%BEn%C3%AD-r%C3%B3mski-hasi%C4%8Di-maj%C3%BA-pom%C3%B4c%C5%A5-pri-po%C5%BEiaroch/1400179>

electricity for months. Fires in November killed two children in Mašličkovo³⁶ and a mother and her three daughters in Kozárovce³⁷.

These fires were a direct consequence of segregated housing in life-threatening conditions. Despite the known risks and repeated tragedies, the government did not adopt any comprehensive preventive measures or legislative changes to improve the safety and quality of housing. The institutional response was largely ad hoc, limited to short-term humanitarian interventions without long-term solutions. Responsible institutions failed to ensure safe housing for affected households. Survivors of the fires were left in inadequate conditions, often in emergency shelters without access to basic services. According to available information, these included tents, gyms and community centers.

Part of the systematic violation of the right to housing was the practice of chaining of the short-term rental contracts. Several cities and municipalities concluded one to three months contracts with households in public municipal housing, which were subsequently repeatedly extended at the discretion of the officials. This practice caused permanent insecurity and threatened households with imminent loss of housing. The government did not take any measures to end this practice. There was also no strategic framework that would ensure the desegregation of housing.

In September, the Prešov District Court decided³⁸ to order an emergency measure in the case of a family from the Roma community in the municipality of Torysa. In spring, the municipality called on residents of the informal community to remove the so-called „black buildings“ within nine months. One of the affected residents went to court and pointed out the threat of losing her home, which she and her children faced. The court ordered the municipality to refrain from removing the dwelling and, in making its decision, also took into account the international obligations of the Slovak Republic in the area of protecting the right to housing. The municipality appealed the decision.

36 Amnesty International Slovakia, Response to the tragedy in Mašličkovo near Košice, 11 November 2025, available at: <https://www.amnesty.sk/tragedia-v-maslickove-poziar-umrtie-segregacia/>

37 TASR, TRAGEDY IN KOZÁROVCE: A woman and three children died in a fire, 26.11.2025, available at: <https://www.teraz.sk/regiony/tragedia-v-kozarovciach-pri-poziaroch/923273-clanok.html>

38 Counseling Center for Civil and Human Rights, Resolution of the District Court in Prešov in the case of a ban on demolishing the home of a family from the marginalized Roma community of Torysa, 25.9.2025, available at: <https://poradna-prava.sk/sudne-rozhodnutia/uznesenie-okresneho-sudu-v-presove-v-pripade-odstranenia-pribytku-rodiny-z-marginalizovanej-romskej-komunity-torysa/>

Recommendations for the Government of the SR to:

- significantly expand the capacity of public rental housing in line with the human rights obligations of the Slovak Republic;
- introduce binding rules for the allocation of public rental housing with the aim of removing discriminatory barriers;
- adopt a binding national plan for housing desegregation;
- end the practice of chaining of the short-term rental contracts and ensure the stability of public rental housing;
- created a community fire prevention program and provided safe housing for families affected by the fire;
- provided stable funding for municipalities to build infrastructure, public rental housing, and desegregation projects in accordance with the 3D principles (desegregation, deghettoization, destigmatization).

2.3. INAPPROPRIATE USE OF POLICE FORCE AND POLICY IMPUNITY

Slovakia continued to face serious and long-standing problems with police violence and impunity. In September 2025, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe reclassified³⁹ a group of cases before the ECHR⁴⁰ as a „complex problem“. The ECHR judgments in these cases confirmed the disproportionate use of force, inhuman and degrading treatment, failures to protect the physical integrity of persons in police custody and long-term ineffectiveness of investigations, including ignoring a possible racial motive.

Statistics from the Inspection Service Office of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the „Inspectorate“) submitted to the Committee of Ministers showed that the vast majority of complaints about police violence continue to be dismissed. In 2019 – 2024, 84 – 92 % of complaints were dismissed, with only a minimum of cases leading to charges⁴¹. Moreover, the Inspectorate does not have data on the results of disciplinary proceedings, which remain the responsibility of superior police officers. The problems with the investigation were highlighted in June by Amnesty International in an analytical report⁴². The report concluded that the system

39 ECtHR, R.R. AND R.D. v. Slovakia: Case description, The Committee of Ministers during its 1537th DH meeting (15-17 September 2025), available at: <https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng?i=004-56501>

40 R.R. and R.D., M.B. and Others, M.B. and Others (No. 2), P. H. and Bystry

41 ESLP, R.R. AND R.D. v. Slovakia: Case description, The Committee of Ministers during its 1537th DH meeting (15-17 September 2025), available at: <https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng?i=004-56501>

42 TASR, Regional Court overturns verdict in case of police harassment of Roma boys, 26.11.2025, available at: <https://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/krajnsky-sud-zrusil-rozsudok-v-kauze-p/923393-clanok.html>

for handling complaints about police violence is non-transparent, formal and ineffective, and contradicts Slovakia's human rights obligations.

In November, there was a breakthrough⁴³ in the 16-year-old case of six Roma boys from Luník IX neighbourhood who were humiliated and beaten at the Košice-Juh police station in 2009. The Košice Regional Court overturned the acquittal of ten accused police officers. The case highlights fundamental failures in the investigation of police violence against Romani children and the continued impunity for cases of suspected ill-treatment.

Slovak authorities also claimed that they had „not identified“ cases of racially motivated police violence in the past. This position is in direct contradiction with the case law of the ECHR in the aforementioned cases, where the court found violations of Article 14 in conjunction with Article 3 of the European Convention. As evidence of the „investigation“ of racially motivated police violence, the Committee of Ministers' Inspection cited information that in July, 12 years after the police raid in Moldava nad Bodvou, it re-opened the investigation into the case for possible racially motivated abuse of force and bodily harm on the instructions of the supervisory prosecutor⁴⁴. The continued denial of a racial motive points to a systemic failure to identify and investigate anti-Roma racism in police practice.

In April, the Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (hereinafter referred to as the „CPT“) published⁴⁵ a report on its visit to Slovakia. The report identified ongoing problems, including allegations of physical violence during arrest, the use of substandard procedures such as tying people to fixed objects, limited access to legal aid, and the violation of medical confidentiality by the presence of police officers during examinations. The CPT also expressed doubts about the independence of the inspection.

In March, according to survivors, police officers entered a primary school in Stráňy pod Tatrami and one of them allegedly physically attacked several

43 TASR, Regional Court overturns verdict in case of police harassment of Roma boys, 26.11.2025, available at: <https://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/krajsky-sud-zrusil-rozsudok-v-kauze-p/923393-clanok.html>

44 The Slovak Spectator, News digest: In surprising twist, case into infamous raid in Roma settlement reopened, 30.7.2025, available at: <https://spectator.sme.sk/politics-and-society/c/news-digest-in-surprising-twist-case-into-infamous-raid-in-roma-settlement-reopened>

45 Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), Report to the Government of the Slovak Republic on the visit to Slovakia carried out from 28 November to 9 December 2023, 10. 4. 2025, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680b52d45>

minors, causing them injuries and psychological harm⁴⁶. In June, police intervened in the Roma community in the village of Veľká Ida. According to publicly available information and video footage, the police used warning shots and physical violence against local residents. Amnesty International Slovakia and the European Roma Rights Centre have filed a formal complaint with the inspection to thoroughly verify and investigate whether racial motivation played a role in the police intervention. Police interventions in Roma communities, including the intervention in Stráňy pod Tatrami and Veľká Ida, confirmed the ongoing risk of disproportionate use of force against Roma.

Recommendations for the Government of the SR to:

- establish a truly independent investigative mechanism independent of the police and the Ministry of the Interior;
- adopt a definition of the crime of torture in the Criminal Code in line with Article 1 of the Convention against Torture;
- adopt measures to make it mandatory to record all police interventions using audiovisual equipment;
- created a system to collect and publish anonymized and disaggregated data on all submissions according to:
 - the subject of the complaint (ill-treatment, discrimination, etc.),
 - the vulnerable group (by age, gender, ethnicity, etc.),
 - indicating the outcome of the proceedings (criminal prosecution, disciplinary measures, rejection, etc.);
- provided legal aid and access to documentation for survivors;
- publicly declared the existence of a systemic problem in the investigation of complaints related to police violence.

46 Amnesty International Slovakia, Police violence against children in Stráňy pod Tatrami raises questions about institutional discrimination, 5. 3. 2025, available at: <https://www.amnesty.sk/policajne-nasilie-voci-detom-v-stranach-pod-tatrami-vyvolavaotazky-o-institucionalnej-diskriminacii/>

2.4. RIGHT TO SOCIAL SECURITY

In 2025, the National Council of the Slovak Republic adopted an amendment to the Employment Services Act and the Act on Assistance in Material Need, which fundamentally changed the approach to the right to social security. As a result of the amendment, a new sanctioning regime in the assistance in material need system, enforced by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the „MLSAF“), came into effect on 1 September under the name „work instead of benefits“. It was now possible to reduce or withdraw the benefit in material need for one month after the first rejection of a suitable job offer and for three months in the event of a repeated rejection. The sanction could also be applied in the event of a „serious breach of work discipline“. The MLSAF also tightened the control of incapacity for work (sick leave).

The measure concerned over 120,000 persons, of whom approximately 62,000 were designated by the MLSAF as „suitable for job placement“. Such a universal designation did not take into account age, health status, real conditions on the labour market, or obstacles associated with discrimination.

The system of assistance in material need before the amendment already allowed for a reduction or withdrawal of the benefit if a person did not perform community work in the amount of 32 hours per month. The amendment from September extended this principle: the benefit can also be withdrawn or reduced if a „suitable job offer“ is rejected or if a job is lost.

According to the law, the material need benefit is supposed to provide at least one hot meal a day, clothing and shelter. Its amount (approximately 86.50 euros for an individual) remains significantly below the poverty line. Moreover, access to this minimum amount is conditional on work or community work, and people in material need do not have a real choice – they must accept work, even if it is unsuitable or undignified, in order not to lose their means of survival.

The amendment introduced sanctions for refusing a „suitable job offer“ without „serious reasons“, while the criteria for suitability of work or serious reasons are not clearly defined. The decision-making rests with civil servants, which creates room for subjective and unequal treatment. People who lose their jobs regardless of the reasons may also be sanctioned.

The threat of losing the benefit can push people to accept any working conditions. Employers can lower standards, knowing that applicants have minimal opportunity to refuse the offer. The system of community work does not meet the standards of regular work – people are not entitled to wages, vacation or meal allowances and are not protected by the Labor Code. The amendment thus strengthened the parallel labour market, which replaced regular jobs with cheap and legally unprotected work.

The amendment allowed community work to be organized not only by municipalities but also by higher territorial units, organizations established by them, and other legal entities operating in the public interest. These entities could use people in material need for maintenance of public spaces, social services, or administration without proper wages and labour protection. A system set up in this way could demotivate authorized institutions from creating regular jobs and strengthen the dependence of people in need on community work that does not lead to stable employment.

In November, the first consequences of the amendment were felt⁴⁷ in Roma communities. Employment offices organized the collection of questionnaires and inspections in municipalities with a high proportion of Roma population. Administrative proceedings for the reduction of benefits due to the rejection of a „suitable job offer“ were initiated in 77 cases as of December 1.

Recommendations for the pre MLSAF to:

- abolish the repressive elements of the amendment that condition access to the material need benefit on taking up work or community work;
- abandon the system of community work that do not fall under the protection of the Labor Code, replacing them with properly paid jobs;
- prepare a social reform based on data, human rights standards and the dignity of all people, especially those living in poverty.

47 Roma Television, Work instead of benefits: Officials in settlements are already writing out questionnaires, 19.11.2025, available at: <https://romatv.sk/slovensko/pr%C3%A1ca-namiesto-d%C3%A1vok-%C3%BAradn%C3%ADci-v-osad%C3%A1ch-u%C5%BE-vypisuj%C3%BA-dotazn%C3%ADky/1400537>

2.5. ANTI-ROMA RACISM

Anti-Roma racism was a significant problem in 2025, which was insufficiently addressed by state authorities. Anti-Roma racism⁴⁸ is defined as a type of racist categorization of Roma men and women, who are stigmatized as „Gypsies“ through this racist classification in order to create a false justification and legitimization of their dehumanization, discrimination, exploitation and the possibility of violence against them. Anti-Roma racism contradicts Slovakia’s commitments in the field of equality and the prohibition of racial discrimination.

The Slovak government does not consider the fight against anti-Roma racism a priority. Existing commitments are only partially fulfilled, with minimal effect. The main problems include persistent prejudice, hate speech, insufficient protection against discrimination, segregation and discriminatory behaviour by the police. Most of the tasks from the Action Plan Combating Anti-Roma Racism for 2022 – 2024 from the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 were not fulfilled. Only educational activities of the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights were implemented, but without an assessment of their real impact.

48 Hund, D. W. (1999). *Rassismus*. Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, s. 91-92 ▪ Winckel, Ä. (2002): *Antiziganismus. Rassismus gegen Roma und Sinti im vereinigten Deutschland*. Münster: Unrast, s. 10, 11, 16, 148 ▪ Arad, J. (2006): *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka*. Prague: BB/art ▪ COUNCIL OF EUROPE INFORMATION OFFICE. (2007): *Enough! Enough! Overcome prejudices – get to know the Roma!* Bratislava: Ševt, a.s. for the Government Office of the Slovak Republic (translation by Elena Gallová Kriglerová) ▪ Haupt G. (2008): *Peacemakers in an environment hostile to the Roma*. Lecture at the annual meeting of the International Catholic Committee for the Roma (CCIT) 28 – 30 March 2008, Trogir / Croatia ▪ Hrabovský, M. (2015): *Anti-Gypsyism as a barrier to Roma inclusion*. In: Podolinská, T. – Hruslč, T. (eds.): *„Čiernobiele polilky“*. Discourses, attitudes and possibilities of participation. Bratislava: VEDA, pp. 40-58 ▪ European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), *General Policy Recommendation No. 13 on combating anti-Gypsyism and discrimination against Roma*, 24 June 2011 ▪ Alliance against Anti-gypsyism, *Anti-gypsyism – A Reference Paper*, June 2017, available at <https://antigypsyism.eu/reference-paper/>, A non-legally binding working definition of anti-gypsyism/anti-Roma discrimination adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) on 08 October 2020.)

On the contrary, activities aimed at combating stereotypes effectively supported stereotypes. The Anti-Discrimination Section of the Office of the Government Representative for Roma Communities presented Roma men and women mainly as musicians or dancers, thereby reinforcing existing stereotypes. At the same time, it was not possible to implement activities against hate speech, including online hate speech.⁴⁹

The Roma Advocacy and Research Center monitored the online space for the occurrence of anti-Roma racism between September 2024 and August 2025. It recorded 555 cases of anti-Roma racism in the online space. The monitoring found that personal/private accounts (348 cases), online media (42 cases), institutional public accounts (17 cases), public figures (9 cases), and influencers (3 cases) were behind the hate speech.

Anti-Roma racism appeared in all horizontal priorities (education, housing, healthcare, employment). For example, in the area of housing, offers of premises for rent were published on social networks, but the text directly stated „Gypsies do not call“. Similar exclusionary sentences also appeared in the case of advertising job offers. In the area of health, posts were recorded that spoke about the experiences of patients from hospital environments with Roma women. They talked about negative experiences, calling separate rooms for Roma women a „special zoo pavilion.“ In the area of education, mostly negative comments appeared under posts that announced inclusive approaches in education. The posts promoted the view that it was necessary for Roma children to be educated separately, because then they would not hinder non-Roma children and would be better off among „their own.“

Recommendations for the Government and the Parliament of the SR to:

- amend anti-discrimination legislation to include clear and effective rules to protect against anti-Roma racism and to make it enforceable in practice;
- adopt legislative and policy measures to strengthen the investigation of racially motivated acts, including online;
- ensure the collection of data on racially motivated acts.

49 Roma Civil Monitor, Civil Society Report on the Implementation of the National Strategic Framework – Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 in Slovakia, September 2025, available at: <https://romadata.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/rcm²-2024-c1-slovakia-final-slovak.pdf>

3.

**RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH
TO INFORMATION
AND EDUCATION ABOUT HEALTH,
RELATIONSHIPS
AND BODY INTEGRITY**

According to the World Health Organization and UNESCO, relationships and sex education is a form of primary prevention that is essential for the health of children and young people.⁵⁰ The goals of this education are part of the new National Education Program approved on March 31, 2023. The program replaced the previously optional cross-curricular Marriage and Parenthood Education. By 2025, approximately half of schools had participated in the program, and it will be mandatory for all schools from the 2026/2027 school year.⁵¹ This framework allows students to be provided with verified information about the body, consent, healthy relationships, sexual and reproductive health, and a safe online environment.

On September 26, the parliament approved an amendment to the constitution that introduced (among others, see chapter 1.1) a requirement for parental informed consent for education „in the area of shaping intimate life and sexual behaviour.“ Although the amendment also states that „education for the protection of health, physical integrity and the prevention of abuse shall form part of the general education of children,“ the vague wording created scope for limiting the provision of education on topics related to sexuality, relationships and physical integrity. This created the risk that schools would not be able to provide education in accordance with the right of children and young people to information and education as protected by international conventions.

According to the European Convention on Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, education should empower children, protect them, develop their abilities and enable them to lead a safe and fulfilling life. These obligations go beyond the transmission of facts. The state should ensure that students also acquire life skills, critical thinking and an understanding of their own bodies and relationships. Comprehensive relationship and sex education is one of the tools that fulfils these goals, as it protects against violence, risky behaviour and manipulation and supports the ability of children and youth to make informed decisions.⁵²

50 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International technical guidance on sexuality education: An evidence-informed approach (Revised edition), 2018, available at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/international-technical-guidance-sexuality-education-evidence-informed-approach>

51 Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic (MŠVVM), State Educational Program for Primary Education (2023), 2023, available at: <https://www.minedu.sk/statny-vzdelavaci-program-pre-zakladne-vzdelavanie-2023/>

52 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International technical guidance on sexuality education: An evidence-informed approach (Revised edition), 2018, available at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/international-technical-guidance-sexuality-education-evidence-informed-approach>

The amendment created a framework in which children's access to basic information can depend on the decision of a parent. This leads to inequality between children and young people and increases the vulnerability of those who need support the most, for example those who do not have a safe space at home to ask questions about their bodies, sexuality or relationships or are threatened at home directly.

The Venice Commission warned⁵³ that the requirement of parental consent may conflict with the state's obligation to ensure the education necessary to protect health, physical integrity and prevent violence. The Commission stressed that the right of parents is not absolute and must be balanced by the rights of the child and the state's obligation to provide objective, pluralistic and non-discriminatory education. It recalled that sex education should also be provided in a way that is not indoctrinating, respects the diversity of religious beliefs and sexual identities and supports the right of children to age-appropriate information as an essential part of their protection and development.

Recommendations for the Government of the SR to:

- amend the constitutional amendments on sex education to be in line with the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- ensure the independence and objectivity of educational content on health and violence prevention;
- take corrective measures in the event of an identified risk of violation of the rights of children and young people;
- respect the principle that parental rights must not jeopardise the rights of the child.

Recommendations for MERD to:

- ensure that the curriculum for relationships and sex education includes objective, timely and relevant information, including on gender identity and sexuality, and provide schools with professionally developed educational materials, resources and learning opportunities that are in line with human rights and respect human diversity;
- establish procedures so that parental consent does not prevent students from accessing information necessary to protect their health and safety;

53 Venice Commission, Urgent opinion on the draft amendments to the constitution of Slovak Republic, 2025, Document CDL-PI, 2025, 011, available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/slovak-republic-venice-commission-issues-urgent-opinion-on-the-draft-amendments-to-the-constitution>

- clarify that parental informed consent does not apply to content that is necessary to fulfil the rights of the child under the Convention on the Rights of the Child: knowing boundaries, consent, safety, protection from abuse, digital safety, physical changes and health;
- ensure that no child is excluded from education in a topic related to health protection or violence prevention;
- ensure transparent communication with parents that the aim of relationships and sex education is not „shaping intimate life“, but health protection and violence prevention, which is also explicitly stated in international standards;
- cooperate with professional organisations that are guided by clear and demonstrable educational standards and that assist schools in implementing continuous inclusive and age-appropriate relationship and sex education.

4.

RIGHTS OF LGBTI+ PEOPLE

2025 appears to be one of the most problematic since 1989 in terms of protecting the rights of LGBTI+ people in Slovakia. This is not just a continuation of long-term negative trends, but a qualitative shift – the political rhetoric about „gender ideology“ and „protection of national identity“ was for the first time reflected in a comprehensive constitutional amendment that has a direct impact on the lives of LGBTI+ people.

Against the backdrop of constitutional changes, an increased level of hate-motivated violence and harassment persisted, confirmed by European surveys and analyses, according to which LGBTI+ people in Slovakia experience above-average levels of violence and discrimination, with transgender and non-binary people being particularly at risk.⁵⁴ Year 2025 also followed the trauma of the terrorist attack on the Tepláreň bar in 2022 and political attacks on schools and cultural institutions that tried to work with the topic of queer life.⁵⁵

At the same time, elements bringing a certain measure of hope have emerged – especially at the level of European institutions and coordinated civil society. Their effect will be seen more in the long term and cannot compensate for the extent of the regression at the constitutional and legislative level.

Even in a year marked by constitutional regression, it is important to name moments that move the protection of LGBTI+ rights in the right direction or at least hold up a mirror to national policy.

At the end of November, the Court of Justice of the European Union ruled that all Member States must recognise same-sex marriages concluded in another Member State for the purposes of applying EU law.⁵⁶ The ruling also applies to Slovakia and strengthens the protection of family life for mixed families – in particular in the area of the rights to free movement, residence and access to services. In the context of Slovak law, which does not recognise any form of legal recognition of same-sex couples, this is a significant corrective to national restrictions.

In November, the European Commission launched infringement proceedings against Slovakia in connection with a constitutional amendment that attempts to place „national identity“ and the constitutional regulation of family

54 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA): LGBTIQ equality at a crossroads: progress and challenges. EU LGBTIQ Survey III. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2024. Available online: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2024/lgbtiq-equality-crossroads-progress-and-challenges>

55 ILGA-Europe: Annual Review 2025 of the Human Rights Situation of LGBTI People in Europe and Central Asia – Slovakia. Brussels: ILGA-Europe, 2025. Available online (PDF): <https://www.ilga-europe.org/files/uploads/2025/02/Annual-Review-2025-Slovakia.pdf>

56 Ríos, B. – Klimentov, M.: Top E.U. court rules same-sex marriages must be recognized throughout bloc. The Washington Post, 25.11.2025. Available online: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2025/11/25/eu-court-same-sex-marriage/>

and gender above EU law.⁵⁷ The Commission is thus signalling that the constitutional redefinition of gender and family, as well as interference with the status of minorities, is not merely an „internal matter“ of a state, but a matter of compliance with fundamental EU principles, including the protection of human rights and the principle of non-discrimination.

Domestic and international human rights organizations have responded to the legislative changes with a series of joint statements, open letters, and legal analyses that draw attention to the threat to the rights of LGBTI+ people, women, and other minorities, as well as the broader consequences for the rule of law.⁵⁸ An important shift in particular is coordination – these are not individual isolated voices, but a network of domestic and international entities that together increase pressure for respect for human rights in Slovakia. These positive impulses do not in themselves ensure the daily safety of LGBTI+ people, but they represent an important counterweight to domestic legislative regression.

The key event of the year was the adoption of a constitutional amendment, the form of which had been taking shape since the spring. The first proposals drew attention to the intention to limit the constitutionally recognized genders to „man“ and „woman“ and to tighten the rules on adoptions so that they would be effectively reserved only for married heterosexual couples.⁵⁹

For transgender and intersex persons, the newly adopted constitutional definition of gender meant another, general obstacle to the legal recognition of gender identity. What was previously extremely difficult to achieve in practice is now moving to the level of almost impossible.⁶⁰ At the same time, statements by state representatives appeared in the media, according to which transgender persons, after legal interventions, „must end their existing

57 Lopatka, J.: Slovakia amends constitution to promote „national identity“. Reuters, 26.9.2025. Available online: <https://www.reuters.com/world/slovakia-amends-constitution-promote-national-identity-2025-09-26/>

58 Reuters: EU opens case against Slovakia over constitutional change. Reuters, 21.11.2025. Available online: <https://www.reuters.com/world/eu-opens-case-against-slovakia-over-constitutional-change-2025-11-21/>

59 ILGA-Europe and other organizations: Joint open letter on new Constitutional amendments adopted in Slovakia. Joint open letter of 56 organizations addressed to the European Commission, 2025. Available online: <https://www.ilga-europe.org/news/joint-open-letter-on-new-constitutional-amendments-adopted-in-slovakia/>

60 ILGA-Europe a ďalšie organizácie: Joint open letter on new Constitutional amendments adopted in Slovakia. Spoločný otvorený list 56 organizácií adresovaný Európskej komisii, 2025. Dostupné online: <https://www.ilga-europe.org/news/joint-open-letter-on-new-constitutional-amendments-adopted-in-slovakia/>

marriages through divorce” and their previous legal status is de facto denied, which deepens the legal and personal uncertainty of the people concerned.⁶¹

For same-sex couples, the constitutional amendment confirms and strengthens their exclusion from the family law system. Adoption or foster care remains available practically only to heterosexual married couples, which also weakens the legal certainty of children growing up in rainbow families.^{62,63}

The constitution, which is supposed to protect the weak from the arbitrariness of power, thus becomes a tool for explicitly excluding certain groups of the population from full legal protection.

The constitutional change did not come about in a vacuum. International reports have long warned that LGBTI+ people in Slovakia face high levels of verbal attacks, threats and physical violence. Surveys repeatedly identify transgender and non-binary people as a particularly vulnerable group.⁶⁴ ILGA-Europe monitoring also points out that the attack on Tepláreň and subsequent political reactions, including school intimidation, have contributed to a further deterioration of the atmosphere.⁶⁵

Data on hate crimes collected within the OSCE system confirm that Slovakia not only underestimates these incidents, but has long failed to systematically investigate them and record their motivation, including homophobic and transphobic motives.⁶⁶ In practice, this leads to many injured parties not reporting incidents because they do not expect a fair response from law enforcement agencies or fear that this could further endanger their safety.

61 European Equality Law Network: Slovakia – Country report non-discrimination 2024. Brussels, 2024. Available online: <https://www.equalitylaw.eu/downloads/6109-slovakia-country-report-non-discrimination-2024>

62 ILGA-Europe and other organizations: Joint open letter on new Constitutional amendments adopted in Slovakia. Joint open letter of 56 organizations addressed to the European Commission, 2025. Available online: <https://www.ilga-europe.org/news/joint-open-letter-on-new-constitutional-amendments-adopted-in-slovakia/>

63 ILGA World: LGBTI Rights in Slovakia. ILGA World Database. Available online: <https://database.ilga.org/slovakia-lgbti>

64 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA): LGBTIQ equality at a crossroads: progress and challenges. EU LGBTIQ Survey III. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2024. Available online: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2024/lgbtiq-equality-crossroads-progress-and-challenges>

65 ILGA-Europe: Annual Review 2025 of the Human Rights Situation of LGBTI People in Europe and Central Asia – Slovakia. Brussels: ILGA-Europe, 2025. Available online (PDF): <https://www.ilga-europe.org/files/uploads/2025/02/Annual-Review-2025-Slovakia.pdf>

66 OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR): Hate crime reporting – Slovakia (data 2024). Available online: <https://hatecrime.osce.org/reporting/slovakia/2024>

The constitutional amendment did not create this fear, but rather reinforced it, as part of society perceives the legislative step as a confirmation of its own prejudices and an implicit „permission“ to exclude LGBTI+ people or attack them without fear of consequences.

Slovakia has formally established legal protection against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and, to some extent, gender identity. However, analyses show that this protection is limited in practice and effectively unavailable to a large part of those affected.^{67, 68}

Recurring problems include low awareness of rights and possibilities to seek protection, financial and psychological barriers to litigation, slow court proceedings and uncertain outcome, as well as a difficult burden of proof on the part of the claimant.

A particularly serious problem is the absence of a comprehensive and clear legal framework for the legal recognition of the gender identity of transgender and intersex persons, the legal recognition of same-sex relationships (registered partnerships, marriages), and access to adoption and foster care for LGBTI+ individuals and couples.^{69, 70}

In the field of education, there is a lack of systemic measures to support a safe and inclusive environment for LGBTI+ students. International mapping of the inclusiveness of education systems shows that Slovakia practically does not provide specific support mechanisms for LGBTI+ students and teachers do not have systematic training in this area.⁷¹

In the health sector, the procedures for providing care to transgender and intersex people remain unclear, and experiences with their rejection or

67 European Equality Law Network / Migration Policy Group: Slovakia – Country report non-discrimination 2025. Transposition and implementation at national level of Council Directives 2000/43 and 2000/78. Brusel, 2025. Available online (PDF): <https://www.migpolgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/2025-SK-Country-report-ND-final-for-web.pdf>

68 Amnesty International: Slovakia: Parliament’s Approval of Draconian Constitutional Amendments Is a Step Towards Erosion of Human Rights. Press release, 26.9.2025. Available online na: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/09/slovakia-parliaments-approval-of-draconian-constitutional-amendments-is-a-step-towards-erosion-of-human-rights/>

69 ILGA-Europe and other organizations: Joint open letter on new Constitutional amendments adopted in Slovakia. Joint open letter of 56 organizations addressed to the European Commission, 2025. Available online: <https://www.ilga-europe.org/news/joint-open-letter-on-new-constitutional-amendments-adopted-in-slovakia/>

70 ILGA World: LGBTI Rights in Slovakia. ILGA World Database. Available online: <https://database.ilga.org/slovakia-lgbti>

71 IGLYO – The International LGBTQI Youth & Student Organisation: LGBTQI Inclusive Education Index 2025 – Slovakia (country profile). Available online: <https://www.education.iglyo.org/2025/slovakia>

pathologizing are common. In family law, same-sex couples are dependent on improvised solutions through the granting of power of attorney and informal agreements when it comes to parental rights, inheritance or access to health information.^{72, 73}

International assessments have long ranked Slovakia among countries that are stagnating or deteriorating in the area of protecting the rights of LGBTI+ people.⁷⁴ Even before 2025, political campaigns against the so-called „gender ideology“, attacks on the independence of civil society, intimidation of schools and cultural institutions cooperating with the LGBTI+ community, or systematic ignoring of recommendations of international bodies.

However, year 2025 marks a turning point. Fragmented steps are becoming a comprehensive constitutional strategy – the adopted amendment changes the framework within which laws, political decisions and court judgments will be assessed in the future. At the same time, it moves the conflict with the EU legal system to a new level, as evidenced by the initiation of proceedings by the European Commission.⁷⁵

From the perspective of LGBTI+ people, this is not „another year with the same problems“, but a transition to a state in which the state actively and systematically restricts the possibilities of fully exercising their rights.

The experience of organizations working with LGBTI+ people confirms several trends that manifest themselves in parallel:

1. Increased psychological burden – anxiety, depression, burnout and long-term stress from the fact that personal identity is the subject of political attacks and constitutional interventions are more common.
2. Thoughts about leaving Slovakia – especially among young transgender and non-binary people, thoughts about leaving for countries where the legal and social reality is less hostile to LGBTI+ people are increasingly common.

72 ILGA-Europe a ďalšie organizácie: Joint open letter on new Constitutional amendments adopted in Slovakia. Spoločný otvorený list 56 organizácií adresovaný Európskej komisii, 2025. Dostupné online: <https://www.ilga-europe.org/news/joint-open-letter-on-new-constitutional-amendments-adopted-in-slovakia/>

73 ILGA World: LGBTI Rights in Slovakia. ILGA World Database. Available online: <https://database.ilga.org/slovakia-lgbti>

74 ILGA-Europe: Annual Review 2025 of the Human Rights Situation of LGBTI People in Europe and Central Asia – Slovakia. Brussels: ILGA-Europe, 2025. Available online (PDF): <https://www.ilga-europe.org/files/uploads/2025/02/Annual-Review-2025-Slovakia.pdf>

75 Lopatka, J.: Slovakia amends constitution to promote „national identity“. Reuters, 26.9.2025. Available online: <https://www.reuters.com/world/slovakia-amends-constitution-promote-national-identity-2025-09-26/>

3. High level of internal solidarity – despite the regression, there is a strong willingness to support community centers, counselling services, psychological assistance and educational activities that provide LGBTI+ people with at least a partial sense of security and acceptance.

It is not the role of the community to replace the duties of the state. However, the fact that LGBTI+ people and their allies organize and support each other despite adverse conditions represents one of the few stable sources of resilience in an environment where the state neglects its protective function towards this population group.

Recommendations for the Government and the Parliament of the SR to:

- repeal or substantially revise the constitutional amendments adopted in 2025 so that they do not deny the existence of transgender and intersex persons and do not exclude same-sex couples from adoption;
- adopt a law on the legal recognition of gender identity in line with international human rights standards;
- establish a legal framework for same-sex couples (registered partnerships or marriages).

Recommendations for the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Interior to:

- strengthen investigations into hate crimes and introduce mandatory training on motivations based on sexual orientation and gender identity for the police, prosecutors and courts;
- improve the collection, statistical processing and availability of data on hate crimes.

Recommendations for the MERD to:

- develop and implement methodologies for inclusive education on human rights, sexuality and gender diversity, which will be in line with international standards and recommendations of professional institutions;
- introduce a support system for LGBTI+ students (school psychological support, confidants, safe reporting channels for bullying).

Recommendations for the Ministry of Health of the SR to:

- set clear, professional and respectful standards of healthcare for transgender and intersex people in line with the recommendations of the WHO and relevant professional societies.

Recommendations local governments, schools and media to:

- openly reject stigmatizing rhetoric and policies directed against LGBTI+ people;
- support specific programs and spaces that provide LGBTI+ people with safety, support, and the opportunity to fully participate in social life.

5.

**WOMEN'S RIGHTS
AND GENDER
EQUALITY**

5.1 MENSTRUAL EXCLUSION

In 2025, experts from the Dignified Menstruation initiative in the inTYMYta organization installed 49 Menstrual Boxes, bringing the number of Menstrual Boxes in Slovakia to 63. In four locations another eight Menstrual Boxes were made according to the freely available online manual provided by Dignified Menstruation. 360,157 pieces of menstrual supplies were distributed, mainly to schools, community centers and organizations that support people in need.⁷⁶

Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region has been providing freely available menstrual supplies in women's and girls' toilets in all county secondary schools since 2022. In its communication it claims that the cost of menstrual supplies for 59 county schools is around EUR 12,000.⁷⁷

Trnava Self-Governing Region joined in 2025. The supplies are equally available at all county secondary schools, in women's toilets. The school founder also communicated the importance of focusing on people who cannot attend secondary schools due to health or social disadvantages.⁷⁸

Menstrual exclusion threatens several fundamental rights guaranteed by international conventions ratified by Slovakia. In Slovakia, every sixth person is at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This is approximately 980,000 people, which represents 18.3 % of the population, 37,000 more than in 2023 (17.6 %).

76 Menstruation Dignity Initiative, 2025, available at:<https://www.menstruacnachudoba.sk/>

77 Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region, Banská Bystrica County will provide free menstrual supplies in eighty institutions, 2024, available at:<https://www.bbsk.sk/aktuality/bezplatne-menstruacne-potreby-poskytne-banskobystricka-zupa-uz-v-osemdesiatich-instituciach>

78 Trnava Self-Governing Region, Trnava Region joins the Initiative for Dignified Menstruation and installs the „Starterpack for Your Days“ in its secondary schools, May 2025, available at:<https://trnava-vuc.sk/trnavsky-kraj-vstupuje-do-inicativy-za-dostojnu-menstruaciu-a-na-svojich-strednych-skolach-instaluje-starterpack-pre-tvoje-dni/>

⁷⁹ From Jan 1, 2025, an increased basic VAT rate of 23 % applies, compared to previous years, when it was 20 %. The increase also affected menstrual needs, which remained included in the non-reduced rate. The proposal to include them among goods with a reduced rate of 5 % did not pass. ⁸⁰ This change reduced the financial availability of menstrual needs for people in greatest material need, thereby creating additional barriers for the state in exercising the right to health and the right to an adequate standard of living. ⁸¹

The most serious situation persists in excluded Roma communities. Up to 87 % of Roma men and women are at risk of poverty, while 91 % of Roma children live in households with an income below the poverty line. ⁸² Research conducted in 2025 confirmed that menstrual exclusion among Slovak Roma women is a deeply structural problem shaped by racism, patriarchy and socio-economic inequality. Research findings show that limited access to menstrual needs, inadequate WASH⁸³ conditions, stigma and systemic neglect reinforce everyday marginalization. ⁸⁴ This situation points to the risk of discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity and social status, which is contrary to the principles of the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 14) as well as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

79 Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, Poverty and its Dimensions in Slovakia in 2024 (EU-SILC 2024), available at: https://slovak.statistics.sk/wps/portal/ext/products/informationmessages/inf_sprava_detail/1b9668e5-6a36-4050-9a8c-5a4f8d0d4451!/ut/p/z1/jZBLC8lwEIR_Uci2eZge04JpNAqxptZcJD6qBa0i4sFfbxE82rq3hW9mdgd7XGHfhmdzDI_m2oZzt68939iRFmkaSYDUENCTaTHPs3GsHMOOrD5ApmORARBGMdAyd4vEEgKSYP-PHn6MhP_0PYDvt58MBXQNxPdZNjtifwuPE2ra-oqraJtwLg4M8UA4osAAJUHS EAu0FvnYU8qi7jb_cZfW2sKUJagy-HoMmkYK5c10WHwCWX6Cv36EPbxfnqpepC93IN7_hEk4!/dz/d5/L2dBISvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/

80 Zmušková, B., Slovakia has the fourth highest VAT on pads and tampons in the EU, 2025, available at: <https://euractiv.sk/section/danova-politika/news/slovensko-ma-stvrtu-najvyssiu-dph-na-vlozky-a-tampony-v-eu/>

81 Zmušková, B., Slovensko má štvrtú najvyššiu DPH na vložky a tampóny v EÚ, 2025, dostupné na: <https://euractiv.sk/section/danova-politika/news/slovensko-ma-stvrtu-najvyssiu-dph-na-vlozky-a-tampony-v-eu/>

82 Markovič, F., & Plachá, L., Income and living conditions in marginalized Roma communities: Selected indicators from the EU SILC_MRK 2020 survey, available at: https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1561/analyticka_sprava_eu_silc_mrk_2020_elektronicka_final.pdf

83 Access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene (World Health Organization)

84 Blahová, N., Menstrual exclusion as a lens for understanding systemic oppression: Gender, ethnic, and socio-economic inequality of Slovak Roma menstruators (Master's thesis, University of Amsterdam), 2025

Recommendations for MERD to:

- create a subsidy mechanism that would allow local governments to finance the provision of menstrual hygiene supplies to such an extent that local governments can ensure freely available menstrual hygiene supplies in all toilets in public buildings, schools and institutions under their founding jurisdiction;
- integrate menstrual hygiene supplies into social assistance programs, including assistance in material need;
- develop a national menstrual justice strategy in Slovakia, which will be part of broader policies on gender equality, the fight against poverty, health and education;
- commit to ensuring access to clean running water for all municipalities and to building hygiene centers within walking distance for informal settlements;
- introduce a standard educational module on menstruation into the curricula of primary and secondary schools, organize regular training for teachers and health workers so that they can respond professionally and promptly to the needs of (young) menstruating people and support destigmatization in their communities;
- institutionalize regular data collection on access to menstrual needs, healthcare and information about menstruation in Slovakia so that this data reflects intersectional needs, especially excluded Roma communities and overlooked population groups;
- integrate the topic of menstruation, menstrual poverty and exclusion, including implemented activities for menstrual justice, into their reports on poverty, health and education.

5.2.

RIGHT TO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

The right to sexual and reproductive health is a human right. It requires that people of childbearing potential⁸⁵ have timely access to safe, affordable and quality abortion care. Any barriers to access to abortion reinforce inequality and discrimination, deepen poverty and violate the full range of human rights. According to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), violations of women's sexual and reproductive health rights, such as denying or delaying access to safe abortion, or abusing or mistreating women seeking sexual and reproductive health information,

85 Most of the Choices research findings we draw on in this text are based largely on the experiences of cisgender women. It is important to emphasize that, like cisgender women, transgender men, nonbinary, gender fluid, and intersex people with female reproductive systems who can become pregnant need the same quality abortion care, without discrimination. For brevity and readability, we most often use the words „women,“ „people who can become pregnant,“ but also „human,“ „person,“ or „person seeking an abortion“ to refer to all people who may need abortion care.

products and services, constitute gender-based violence. This gender-based violence^{86,87} adopted in this area.

The Slovak Republic has long been one of the countries with the worst abortion care and the highest number of restrictions in Europe. Even in 2025, there was no positive development in the area of reproductive rights and abortion care or the removal of at least some of the barriers to access to safe abortions. On the contrary, Slovakia continued to regulate abortions in a way that makes access to them significantly more difficult. According to the current assessment of the European Abortion Policies Atlas 2025⁸⁸, Slovakia ranked unflatteringly 42nd out of 49 European countries in the European ranking of abortion availability.

According to the Freedom of Choice surveys⁸⁹, as well as based on the findings from the operation of its support line, the main obstacles include lack of information, refusal to provide abortion care due to religious beliefs (so-called conscientious objection) or a harmful attitude of medical personnel. Other obstacles include medically unjustified waiting periods, biased counselling, as well as the inability to undergo a modern, non-invasive pill form of abortion. A major barrier is the high price, which averages 414 euros per abortion. The situation is illustrated by the fact that in some regions abortion is not performed

86 UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: CEDAW/C/GC/35 (2017): General Recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19 (2008), para. 18, translation Choice (2018), available at: https://moznostvolby.sk/wp-content/uploads/cedaw/CEDAW_Vseobecne_odporucanie35_final.pdf

87 By human rights standards, we mean the standards set by key international human rights treaties relevant to the area of reproductive rights, including in particular the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, European Convention on Human Rights, European Social Charter. Medical standards are standards of the World Health Organization, which are repeatedly updated. The current guideline is from 2022, original: World Health Organization (WHO), Abortion Care Guideline (2022), translated Choices, World Health Organization (WHO), Abortion Care Guideline (2022), available at: https://moznostvolby.sk/usmernenie_k_interrupcnej_starostlivosti/

88 European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (EPF), 2025, available at: <https://www.epfweb.org/node/1156>

89 Barbora Holubová (ed.), Adriana Mesochoritsová, Paula Jójárt, Availability of reproductive health services in Slovakia – Report on healthcare providers, 2021, Choice, Bratislava, available at : <http://moznostvolby.sk/dostupnost-sluzieb-reprodukneho-zdravia-na-slovensku-2/>; (2022); Paula Jójárt, Adriana Mesochoritsová, Jarmila Filadelfiová, Zdenka Faragulová, Barbora Holubová, Women's experiences with access to abortion and contraception in Slovakia – Running through obstacles to respectful and safe reproductive health services, Choice, Bratislava (2021), pp. 120 – 121, <http://moznostvolby.sk/skusenosti-zien-s-pristupom-k-interrupciam-a-antikoncepcii-na-slovensku/>

at all, while in others women have to repeatedly travel hundreds of kilometres to even access this healthcare service.⁹⁰ Such violations of rights affect people living in poverty, single mothers or women experiencing violence the most. These obstacles force them to seek abortions abroad, go into debt or resort to dangerous solutions that threaten their health or life. Freedom of Choice's experience in supporting people in need of abortion has confirmed that people from marginalized groups face a very difficult situation, facing multiple and intersectional discrimination in fulfilling their reproductive rights.

Efforts to restrict reproductive rights have been intensifying in Slovakia for a decade as part of an organized campaign against gender equality. Since 2018, more than 30 parliamentary proposals have been submitted to the parliament, the aim of which was to limit or prohibit access to abortion. Constant attempts to restrict reproductive rights continued in 2025, when several proposals aimed at further weakening were submitted to the National Council of the Slovak Republic. The most threatening was the proposal to shorten the statutory period for performing an abortion on request under Section 4 of Act No. 73/1986 Coll. from the current 12 weeks to 8 weeks (parliamentary press 593).⁹¹ The proposed amendment to the law would cause an unjustifiable step towards restricting women's human rights and denying the principle of non-discrimination. As we pointed out in our statement, it would be in conflict with the Constitutional Court's finding, which confirmed the compliance of the provisions of Section 4 of Act No. 73/1986 Coll., permitting abortion on request without the need to state a reason up to the 12th week of pregnancy, with the Constitution.⁹²

Another draft of a constitutional amendment⁹³ aimed to enshrine the so-called conscientious objection, which would open the way for the adoption of the so-called Vatican Treaty on Conscientious Objection, which has been rejected so far. The incorporation of a new constitutional right to the so-called conscientious objection in accordance with the parliamentary proposal would extend its application to other professions that people have freely chosen,

90 For more information on the obstacles, see also: Choice, InTYMYta, Center for Reproductive Rights (2023): Submission to the 85th session of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women – Periodic Review of the Slovak Republic, April 2023, available at: <https://moznostvolby.sk/tienova-sprava-pre-cedaw-vybor-slovensky-preklad/>

91 Proposal of the deputies of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, Anna Záborská and Richard Vašeček, for the issuance of an act amending Act No. 73/1986 Coll. on artificial termination of pregnancy, as amended <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Default.aspx?sid=zakony/cpt & ZakZborID=13 & CisObdobia=9 & ID=593>

92 Proposal of the deputies of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, Anna Záborská and Richard Vašeček, for the issuance of an act amending Act No. 73/1986 Coll. on artificial termination of pregnancy, as amended <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Default.aspx?sid=zakony/cpt & ZakZborID=13 & CisObdobia=9 & ID=593>

93 Proposal of a group of deputies of the National Council of the Slovak Republic for the issuance of a constitutional act amending and supplementing the Constitution of the Slovak Republic No. 460/1992 Coll., as amended, parliamentary press 712 available at: <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Default.aspx?sid=zakony/cpt & ZakZborID=13 & CisObdobia=9 & ID=712>

which would bring an even greater threat to the human rights of many people, especially women and children. It is no coincidence that the explanatory report in connection with the so-called conscientious objection specifically referred to the areas of healthcare and education. Refusal to provide healthcare services (so-called conscientious objection) occurs most often in cases related to reproductive health and abortion care services, which are used mainly by women and girls. Refusal to provide these services on grounds of personal conviction has long been a serious obstacle to access to abortion care in practice, and the adoption of this proposal would further worsen the already critical situation. The proposal was discussed at the 33rd session of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, which decided that the parliament would not continue discussing this bill.

Other worrying activities included two parliamentary motions for resolutions rejecting the important European initiative to protect women's reproductive health „My Voice, My Choice: For Safe And Accessible Abortion“ (parl. print 843 and parl. print 845). The aim of the initiative was for the European Commission to submit a proposal to create a financial support mechanism for Member States so that they could provide abortion care free of charge to all persons living in the EU and not having access to safe abortions. Freedom of Choice pointed out that if the mechanism were to be created, it would be irresponsible for Slovakia not to become part of it and thus not allow citizens to use all the possibilities that the EU provides them, and to deprive them of their rights, opportunities and support.

Freedom of Choice, as well as the entire Human Rights Coalition, actively opposed all the proposals. Through direct letters, consultations in parliament, the development of argumentative positions, and targeted communication with politicians, these organizations contributed to the non-adoption of all the above-mentioned proposals, which would significantly worsen the situation in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights in Slovakia. However, these proposals, even if not approved, contribute to the radicalization of the social discourse on reproductive health and the suppression of its human rights frameworks, increase the acceptance of violations of reproductive rights, and contribute to the stigmatization of women and providers of reproductive services. They also incite and intensify attacks on organizations dealing with gender equality, human rights of women and girls, and especially the topic of sexual and reproductive health. Organizations and political parties that want to restrict reproductive rights have flooded the public debate with false information and contributed to the dishonour of people seeking abortions.

Recommendations for the Government and the Parliament of the SR to:

- immediately adopt comprehensive measures to ensure timely access to quality abortion care throughout Slovakia, in line with international human rights and medical standards in this area;

- the measures adopted included: abolishing mandatory waiting periods, mandatory biased education and mandatory third-party consent; allowing medical abortion; ensuring that all costs of abortion and modern contraceptives intended to prevent unwanted pregnancy are covered by public health insurance;
- ensure access to relevant, accurate and evidence-based information on abortion and contraception;
- take effective measures to ensure that refusal of care on the basis of conscientious objection by health-care personnel does not result in delay or restriction of access to reproductive health-care services;
- introduce measures to raise public awareness of sexual and reproductive rights and abortion as an essential form of health-care in order to reduce stigmatization related to sexual and reproductive health and rights;
- refrain from restricting any pre-existing sexual and reproductive rights.

6.

CLIMATE JUSTICE

6.1

FOSSIL FUELS

Slovakia is not acting in accordance with the recommendations of the European Commission or the requirements of the Paris Agreement in the area of gradually limiting the use of fossil fuels. It confirmed this in the Updated Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan⁹⁴ (hereinafter referred to as the „NECP“). The NECP did not contain any time targets for the phase-out of oil and natural gas, did not increase the share of renewable energy sources and did not present a plan for the elimination of fossil fuel subsidies.

Slovakia continued its coal phase-out process, with heating plant operators confirming their commitment to end coal combustion by 2028. The European Commission recommended that Slovakia increase its renewable energy target to at least 35 % by 2030, present a timetable for phasing out fossil fuel subsidies, limit natural gas consumption, end dependence on Russian fossil fuels and halt new investments in fossil infrastructure. The updated NECP did not take any of these recommendations into account. The share of renewable energy sources by 2030 was 25 % and the state retained a long-term contract to import Russian oil until 2029.

Slovakia continued to prepare projects to strengthen its fossil fuel infrastructure, including the construction of new oil storage facilities and the expansion of gas network capacity. The Ministry of Economy did not present a date for the phase-out of natural gas.

The NECP does not provide a strategy for the gradual elimination of fossil fuel subsidies. Various forms of support related to gas and oil continued without a timeframe for their termination.

The continued focus on fossil fuels and the absence of a legally binding framework for the phase-out of their use hampered the preparation of a just

94 Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, Update of the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan for 2021–2030, 2025, available at: <https://www.mhsr.sk/energetika/integrovaný-narodný-energetický-a-klimatický-plan-na-roky-2021-2030/navrh-aktualizácie-integrovaného-narodného-energetického-a-klimatického-planu-na-roky-2021-2030>

transition, increased the risk of energy poverty and weakened the country's ability to meet European and international climate commitments.

Recommendations for the Government and the Parliament of the SR to:

- adopt a binding fossil fuel phase-out plan, including clear dates for gas and oil;
- end fossil fuel subsidies and prepare a transparent strategy for their phasing out;
- increase the renewable energy target to at least 35 % by 2030, in line with the European Commission's recommendation;
- halt new investments in fossil fuel infrastructure and redirect public resources to renewable energy sources;
- ensure that climate and energy policies are in line with Slovakia's commitments under EU law and the Paris Agreement.

6.2. MISSING CLIMATE CHANGE LAW

In 2025, Slovakia still did not have a framework law on climate change, although the preparation of the legislation had been underway for several years.⁹⁵ The law was supposed to create a binding system for climate policy governance, including sectoral targets for emission reductions, financial commitments and adaptation obligations. The absence of a legal framework caused persistent legal uncertainty and prevented the state's climate ambitions from being binding and enforceable.

Without the law, there were no tools that would allow for effective coordination of measures across sectors. It was not possible to sanction non-compliance with climate targets or ensure a unified approach to adaptation at the regional and local levels. The law was supposed to contain mechanisms for climate risk management, monitoring and evaluation of targets, as well as measures necessary to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

In June, the government postponed the deadline for preparing the Social and Climate Plan to the end of December.⁹⁶ The government also postponed the deadline for preparing the legislative proposal for the implementation framework of the Social and Climate Fund to March 31, 2026 and cancelled the original task of preparing a separate law on the Social and Climate Fund.⁹⁷

95 Act on Climate Change and Low-Carbon Transformation of the Slovak Republic and on Amendments to Act No. 162/2015 Coll. Administrative Court Procedure Code, as amended (Climate Act), available at: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/legislativa/legislativne-procesy/SK/LP/2023/29>

96 94th meeting of the Government of the Slovak Republic, Proposal for the abolition and change of certain tasks from the resolutions of the Government of the Slovak Republic, 18.6.2025, available at: <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/30891/1>

97 94th meeting of the Government of the Slovak Republic, Proposal for the abolition and change of certain tasks from the resolutions of the Government of the Slovak Republic, 18.6.2025, available at: <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/30891/1>

Recommendations for the Government and the Parliament of the SR to:

- resume the legislative process of the Climate Change Act and submit its draft in line with Slovakia's commitments under EU law and the Paris Agreement;
- ensure the timely preparation of the Social and Climate Plan and the legislative framework of the Social and Climate Fund;
- establish legally binding and measurable sectoral targets and monitor their implementation.

7.

**FOREIGN POLICY
AND SLOVAKIA'S
INTERNATIONAL
HUMAN RIGHTS
OBLIGATIONS**

7.1 INSUFFICIENT SYSTEM FOR GRANTING VISAS TO HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In 2025, serious obstacles faced by human rights defenders (HRDs) from countries subject to visa requirements in obtaining short-term Schengen visas persisted.

The information provided by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic (MFEA) indicated⁹⁸, that it was not aware of any data relating to HRDs, as such a category is not part of the visa application and there is no legal basis for its collection. It also does not keep data on the racial or ethnic origin of applicants. MFEA also stated that it had not registered any complaints from HRDs regarding the course of the visa procedure, and stressed that consular staff must not discriminate on the basis of racial, ethnic or other characteristics.

These findings indicate that Slovakia is not making use of the flexibility provided by the revised EU Visa Code Handbook, which recommends applying more favourable procedures for HRD, including exemptions from some standard requirements.

Recommendations for the Government of the SR and MFEA to:

- ensure the application of flexible procedures in visa procedures in line with the revised EU Visa Code Handbook;

98 Amnesty International's response from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Slovak Republic No. 049242/2025-VIZA-2 dated 28 October 2025

- establish clear internal mechanisms for identifying HRD requests while maintaining the protection of personal data and in line with human rights standards;
- strengthen training for people working at consulates on HRD needs, Slovakia's international obligations and how to apply exemptions from the Visa Code.

7.2. IRRESPONSIBLE ARMS TRADE

The Slovak Republic failed to ensure transparency and accountability in the export of defense industry products to Israel in 2025. The Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the „MoE“) did not provide any information on the licenses granted or used. It also did not provide an explanation as to why Slovakia kept data on arms exports secret, although several EU countries published similar information. In its annual report on trade in defense industry products, the MoE does not disclose the use of licenses that have different years of granting and use.

In September, at a meeting of the Government Council for Human Rights and Gender Equality, the MoE confirmed⁹⁹ that it had kept exports to Israel secret „for foreign policy and security reasons“. The ministry stated that „it is impossible to say whether we are keeping zero or some non-zero number secret“. Such a procedure was in violation of obligations under the Arms Trade Treaty (hereinafter referred to as the „ATT“).

According to the ATT, it is prohibited to export arms to a country if there is a serious suspicion that the arms could be used to commit genocide, war crimes or other serious human rights violations. MoE stated during the aforementioned meeting that it had no knowledge of any intention to introduce restrictions or embargo on trade with Israel at the Slovak or EU level.

Recommendations for the Government of the SR to:

- immediately halt exports of arms, components and surveillance equipment, including the suspension of all existing licenses and the blocking of the approval of new ones to Israel, given the documented risk that they

99 98th meeting of the Government of the Slovak Republic, Information on the 52nd session of the Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Human Rights and Gender Equality, 20. 8. 2025, available at: <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/31018/1>

could be used to commit serious violations of international law, including genocide and war crimes;

- end imports of Israeli weapons and purchases of military technology;
- publish full data on all past and current transactions with Israel;
- methodologically adjust reporting so that the annual report on trade in defense products responsibly and truthfully reports on actual deals.

7.3. INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS TOWARDS VICTIMS OF TORTURE

In 2025, serious shortcomings were revealed in the way the Slovak Republic fulfilled its obligations towards victims of torture and other ill-treatment, in particular in relation to a citizen who had suffered harm abroad.

In October, a Slovak citizen, a volunteer participating in the Global Sumud Flotilla, a civilian humanitarian initiative, was detained by Israeli armed forces in international waters while sailing with humanitarian aid towards the Gaza Strip. After an armed intervention at sea, he was forcibly transported to an Israeli port and subsequently placed in a detention facility. He repeatedly testified that during his detention he was forced to kneel for long periods with his hands tied, faced degrading treatment, and was held in an overcrowded cell without adequate access to food and drinking water. These allegations are consistent with the testimonies of other flotilla participants from other countries who described similar forms of ill-treatment.

However, after his transfer to Slovakia, no procedure was activated that would reflect the State's obligations under the United Nations Convention against Torture (hereinafter referred to as „UNCAT“) and the Istanbul Protocol. The person concerned was not offered an independent medical and psychological examination aimed at documenting the consequences of the ill-treatment, nor information about the possibilities of redress or compensation.

MFEA provided consular assistance aimed at repatriation, but there were no steps to ensure that allegations of torture and other ill-treatment were investigated, to obtain official documentation from Israeli authorities, or to examine the legal basis for the intervention in international waters. There is no information available that Slovakia initiated an independent review of the case, submitted a diplomatic note, or coordinated action with other states whose citizens were detained during the humanitarian action.

These facts point to the absence of a systemic mechanism that would ensure that victims of torture – including those who were harmed outside Slovakia - have access to documentation, support, and effective redress in accordance with international standards upon return. In practice, Slovakia's obligations have been reduced to providing basic consular assistance, without ensuring further steps required by international law.

Recommendations for the MFEA to:

- ensure that all persons who claim to have been victims of torture or ill-treatment abroad are offered an independent medical and psychological examination, in accordance with the Istanbul Protocol, as a standard procedure upon return to Slovakia;
- request documentation from the competent authorities of the State where the detention took place regarding the legal basis for the detention and make this information available to the person concerned and the competent Slovak authorities;
- ensure regular training of diplomatic staff on Slovakia's obligations towards victims of torture and on the practical application of the Istanbul Protocol.

HUMAN RIGHTS COALITION

The human rights coalition consists mainly of civic associations, but it also includes one foundation and one informal group.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL SLOVENSKO

Amnesty International is the world's largest human rights non-governmental organization – a global movement of more than 10 million people from more than 150 countries and territories striving for respect for human rights worldwide. The basis of Amnesty's work is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Amnesty International's goal is to achieve an improvement in the state of human rights worldwide. Amnesty International Slovakia has been operating as a structure of the global Amnesty movement in Slovakia since 1994.

DIERA DO SVETA

Diera do Sveta is a cultural center and specialized bookstore in Liptovský Mikuláš, established in 2014. The goal of the space is to create a background for independent, alternative and minority culture and to enable public gatherings, collective informal education and social cultivation. The organization and dramaturgical focus of Diera do Sveta is built on several key ideological principles. These include feminism, gender equality, ecology, non-hierarchy and socio-cultural engagement.

EDUROMA

eduRoma is an educational non-governmental organization founded in 2012. Its vision is an inclusive society. It considers quality education and fair access to it to be the basic tool for creating an inclusive society.

INTYMYTA

The organization's mission is to provide inclusive, age-appropriate, and research-based relationship and sexuality education. InTYMYta wants to ensure that people of all ages have the chance to make informed decisions

about their relationships and sexuality, and to prevent negative phenomena in the area of relationships and sexuality (e.g., prevention of sexual violence and harassment, including prevention of sexual cyberviolence).

KOLEKTÍV NEON (NEON COLLECTIVE)

The organization creates a safe space for people involved in activism, supports community building, and provides professional counselling and therapeutic support to prevent burnout.

KOMUNITNÁ NADÁCIA ZDRAVÉ MESTO (COMMUNITY FOUNDATION HEALTHY CITY)

The Healthy City Community Foundation was founded in 1994 as the first community-based foundation in Central and Eastern Europe. The mission of the Healthy City Community Foundation is to support the improvement of the quality of life in the communities of the Banská Bystrica and Zvolen districts.

LAPUTA / LITERÁRNA BAŠTA

Literárna bašta is a project of the civic association Laputa. A small publishing house of living literature, which has been active in Banská Bystrica since 2018. When creating the editorial plan, it takes into account not only the artistic qualities of the books, but also their thematic overlap, which is why it also publishes queer literature, books about human rights and mental health.

MOŽNOSŤ VOĽBY (FREEDOM OF CHOICE)

The organization has been one of the most active advocacy organizations in the field of women's human rights protection since 2001. Since the beginning, it has been systematically dedicated to improving the protection of reproductive rights and health in Slovakia. Since 2023, it has been operating a support line to facilitate access to safe abortions. In addition to reproductive health, it is also dedicated to the prevention of gender-based violence and the implementation of a gender perspective in public policies.

ROMA ADVOCACY AND RESEARCH CENTER

The organization was founded by young Roma men and women of various professions who have worked abroad and in Slovakia for many years. Together they decided to use their professional knowledge in one organization and influence the public discourse about the Roma minority. The main activity is focused on influencing the community development of the Roma minority through an inclusive approach. This approach is based on mutual active cooperation between the minority and majority population. The most important area is the education of the new generation and improving the

social status of disadvantaged groups. In its work, it uses research methods, primarily qualitative, through which it obtains relevant data as supporting tools in shaping public discourse.

SAPLINQ

Saplinq is a civic association dedicated to the development of the LGBTI+ community and the empowerment of queer people not only in eastern Slovakia. It is also dedicated to advocating for the rights of LGBTI+ people and fair policies, and through education and awareness, it builds a society where queer people can live a dignified life. The organization was founded in 2012 and its most important projects include PRIDE Košice and the PRIZMA community and counselling center.

ZÁHRADA – CENTRUM NEZÁVISLEJ KULTÚRY (GARDEN – CENTER OF INDEPENDENT CULTURE)

The long-term mission of the the Garden center is to create professional conditions for contemporary artistic creation by both emerging and established artists and groups, to create space for dialogue on current social and human rights issues, and to provide opportunities for informal education of young people and audience development. Its main activities are the organization of cultural events in the field of artistic presentation and creation, their preparation and implementation (theatre/dance/performance, music, visual arts, discussions, lectures, workshops, residencies, festivals), thus connecting contemporary art, informal education and community life with the use of the creative potential of young people. Its goal is to develop and maintain a diverse programmatic of the cultural center, improve communication with the public and target groups, as well as cultivate public discourse on various local, social and environmental topics.

INOKRAJ

An informal collective that organizes PRIDE Banská Bystrica and other activities to support LGBTI+ people in Slovakia.