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Fourth periodic report submitted by Slovakia under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant, due in 2024*, **

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** The annexes to the present document may be accessed from the web page of the Committee.



I. General Issues

Introduction

1. The Slovak Republic (hereinafter as “SR”), as a State party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (hereinafter as the “Covenant”), submits reports on the implementation of the Covenant to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (hereinafter as the “Committee”) in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant.
2. The SR hereby presents the Fourth Periodic Report for the Covenant (hereinafter as the “Report”), which contains information on measures and progress achieved in respecting the rights recognised in the Covenant for the period from 2019 to 2024.
3. The Report was prepared by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR in cooperation with the relevant ministries on the basis of the Committee’s guidelines and in accordance with the Committee’s recommendations adopted on 14 November 2019¹ following the assessment of the Third Periodic Report of the SR of 2019.²
4. The Slovak Republic fulfils its obligations under international human rights treaties.

Article 2

Guarantee of rights without discrimination

5. During the period under review, Slovakia submitted the Thirteenth Periodic Report to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination³ and the Seventh Periodic Report to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.⁴
6. In April 2021, the Government of the SR (hereinafter as the “Government”) approved the Strategy for Equality between Women and Men and Equal Opportunities for 2021–2027 and the Action Plan for Equality between Women and Men and Equal Opportunities for 2021–2027 (hereinafter as the “Action Plan for Equality”). In January 2022, the Government approved the National Action Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women for 2022–2027. The most recent strategic document in this area is the National Action Plan for Women’s Employment for 2022–2030 (hereinafter as the “Women’s Employment Action Plan”).
7. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR (hereinafter as “MoLSAF SR”) cooperates with the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (hereinafter as “SNCHR”) in the implementation of the tasks arising from these strategic documents, especially in relation to educational, awareness-raising and monitoring tasks.
8. In order to eliminate structural discrimination against persons with disabilities, the National Strategy for the Deinstitutionalisation of the Social Services and Foster Care System was approved by the Government in April 2021 (the following information is also relevant to Replies to the issues raised in paragraph 4 and 5 of the Concluding observations 16/17).
9. As part of the legislative tasks, a new Act No. 376/2022 Coll. on professional foster parents was adopted, which contributes significantly to the process of deinstitutionalisation of centres for children and families.
10. In the framework of non-legislative measures, the project Implementing the European Guarantee for Children – Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in the Context of Deinstitutionalisation of Foster Care, implemented through the European Commission (DG REFORM), is being implemented in cooperation with UNICEF for Europe and Central Asia.

¹ E/C.12/SVK/CO/3.

² E/C.12/SVK/3.

³ CERD/C/SVK/13.

⁴ CEDAW/C/SVK/7.

The national project “Development of the Implementation of Child Protection and Social Guardianship Measures” supports the process of deinstitutionalisation of foster care.

11. The objectives of the National Strategy for the Deinstitutionalisation of the Social Services System and Foster Care are elaborated in the National Action Plan for the Transition from Institutional to Community Care in the Social Services System for 2022–2026. The deinstitutionalisation of social services is also addressed in other strategic materials, namely the National Priorities for the Development of Social Services for 2021–2030 and the National Programme for the Development of the Living Conditions of Persons with Disabilities for 2021–2030.

12. In 2018–2023, the project “Deinstitutionalisation of Social Services – Support for Transformation Teams” was implemented to support the development of transformation plans and to start the process of deinstitutionalisation in communities. The project was completed by 90 social service institutions. The assessment of the readiness of the facilities was an input document that will form the basis for the preparation of the transformation plans of specific facilities in the field of social services, activation and employment of clients in social service facilities and changes in the physical environment of the facilities, in the context of UN CRPD.

13. Follow-up national project (2024–2028) will ensure the continuation of support for the transformation for those social service facilities that have a transformation plan, but also for those that want to enter the process. The project will also include information activities in the field of human rights and human-centred social services, activities supporting providers in using innovative methods of working with beneficiaries with intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorder, as well as support for providers in meeting quality standards for social services.

14. The MoLSAF SR promotes the development of community social services also through home care services. The fourth national project “Support for Care Services” brings a change for care service providers in the form of payment of an allowance per hour of service directly to the recipient in the amount of EUR 7.93. The funds can be used for all expenses related to the provision of care services. This is the first step towards the forthcoming reform of the financing of social services. This project is intended to test a new way of providing a new state benefit, the care allowance. The aim is for the person in need to decide for themselves which social service they need.

15. The support of social services at the community level is part of the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the SR (planned investment of EUR 175 million excluding VAT). The aim is to increase the capacity of outpatient social services facilities and community-type residential social facilities by April 2026. Currently, 28 out of 90 facilities that have a facility transformation plan within the Project “Deinstitutionalisation of Social Services – Support to Transformation Teams” have been involved in the investment activities.

16. In order to support the independent life of individuals with severe disabilities, the Act No. 447/2008 Coll. on monetary contributions for the compensation of severe disabilities plays an important role. A number of cash allowances financed from the state budget can be granted to individuals (e.g. personal assistance allowance, care allowance, allowance to compensate for increased expenses, allowance for the purchase of aids, allowance for the adaptation of an apartment or family home).

Article 3

Equal rights for women and men

17. The SR implements the recommendations,⁵ which were adopted in 2023 by CEDAW in its concluding opinion on the Seventh Periodic Report of the SR.

18. In the Action Plan for Equality between Women and Men and Equal Opportunities 2021–2027, Slovakia adopted measures in eight strategic areas, namely dignity and physical

⁵ CEDAW/C/SVK/CO/7.

integrity; reconciliation of family and working life; education, science and research; equal opportunities and access to the labour market, economic dependence and poverty of women; political and economic participation and participation in decision-making; provision of participatory mechanisms to promote gender equality and institutional arrangements for gender equality; inclusion of vulnerable groups and multiple discrimination against women and minor children/girls; international development cooperation and humanitarian assistance.

19. The Equality Action Plan was followed up by the Women's Employment Action Plan, which set out further measures, in particular to improve women's access to the labour market and reconciliation of family and working life, and to improve women's opportunities in education and skills. The tasks set out in these documents range from legislative, educational, methodological, monitoring and systemic.

20. The strategic tasks aimed at strengthening equality between women and men include, for example, improving the conditions for reconciling work and family life, increasing the employment of people with parental responsibilities, especially women, and promoting measures to facilitate their return from parental leave to the labour market, clarifying the system for eliminating the negative effects of maternity/parental leave on the determination of the amount of social insurance benefits; educating young people about gender equality and equal opportunities; proposing measures to address the pay gap between men and women; creating equal conditions for women and men in detention and serving prison sentences.

21. A significant legislative act in terms of ensuring equality between women and men was the introduction of the institution of paid paternity leave of 2 weeks within a period of six weeks from the birth of the child, regardless of whether the mother of the child receives maternity or parental allowance. This legislative change is also aimed at encouraging fathers to become involved in child/household care.

22. The aim of the project "Gender Equality in the Workplace" was to contribute to the development of systemic measures for the implementation of a policy of reconciliation of family and working life. Number of documents were developed to help achieve gender equality in the field of employment, such as the Methodology for conducting gender audits in the SR, the Methodology for implementing gender equality and reconciliation of family and working life in the labour market, the System for verifying external methodologies, the System of standards for conducting gender audits, the Analytical study of the costs and benefits of implementing gender equality in the labour market, and the Concept for reconciling private, family and working life.

23. The Equality Action Plan sets out a number of educational tasks, such as promoting and improving the quality of judicial decision-making in cases concerning discrimination and women's human rights (including violence against women). The Judicial Academy, which carries out training for judges, prosecutors and court officials, has implemented a number of events focusing, for example, on the recent case law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) relating to domestic violence, victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse, selected issues of anti-discrimination law.

Article 6

Right to work

24. The information contained in this article also complements the responses provided to the Committee on Replies to the issues raised in paragraph 4 and 5 of the Concluding observations 20/21 (addressing unemployment, regional labour market disparities and labour market barriers for migrants and asylum seekers).

25. The Equality Action Plan specifies that increased attention is to be paid to disadvantaged female job seekers. Employers may apply for a contribution to support the employment of disadvantaged job seekers. As of 2023, a group of disadvantaged job seekers includes a citizen who has ceased receiving maternity or parental allowance less than two years before being included in the register of job seekers and who did not have income from gainful employment and self-employment while receiving maternity or parental allowance. The measure is aimed particularly at encouraging an increase in the employment of women.

26. In the context of the situation in Ukraine, the Action Plan for Women's Employment set out a measure related to the provision of targeted assistance to women with temporary shelter, which is aimed at providing individualised counselling, including e.g. information on the Slovak labour market, communication with employers or provision of training.

Unemployment

27. In 2013, the long-term unemployment rate in Slovakia was 11.6%, according to Eurostat data. Slovakia has set the target of reducing the long-term unemployment rate (lasting more than 12 months) to below 3% by 2020. While in 2016 it was still at 6.8% (EU 4.3%), by 2020 it had gradually fallen to 3.7% (EU 2.4%), representing a 46% decrease. The positive trend was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the long-term unemployment rate increased to 4.1% (EU 2.4%) in 2022. As a result of the measures taken to tackle long-term unemployment, it fell again to 3.8% in 2023. The long-term unemployment rate in Slovakia has remained above the EU level throughout the period (2.1% in 2023).

28. At the end of 2023 there were 69.953 long-term unemployed job seekers, which represents a share of 41.17% of the total number of job seekers. The Action Plan to further strengthen the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market with a view to 2030 should also contribute to improving the situation. The measures in the Action Plan are intended for all long-term unemployed job seekers without distinction.

29. Slovakia experienced high youth unemployment as a result of the economic crisis, which reached almost 35% in 2013. The gradual improvement of the economic situation and measures to support youth employment have reversed this negative trend, and in 2018 the youth unemployment rate fell to 15.8%. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant negative impact on this target group, whose unemployment rate reached 20.6% in 2021.

30. The situation has also worsened in the target group of NEET (not in employment, education or training). The share of young NEETs aged under 29 increased to 15.2% in 2020. Following the measures taken, the labour market situation has stabilised and the youth unemployment trend is returning to pre-pandemic levels. In 2022, the share of NEETs under 29 in Slovakia was 12.3% (EU 11.7%). According to Eurostat, youth unemployment among young people up to 24 years of age was 19.9% (EU 14.5%). Slovakia is committed to reducing the number of young people in NEET situations to the EU average (9%) by 2030.

Measures to reduce unemployment

31. Slovakia has addressed all forms of unemployment in order to reduce regional disparities in the labour market. Active labour market measures have been provided to all job seekers, with an emphasis on disadvantaged job seekers without distinction (including without distinction of race, colour, national or social origin) if they fulfil the conditions for eligibility. The reduction of regional disparities is implemented through Act No. 336/2015 Coll. on support for the least developed districts, which allows for the concentration of instruments, measures and resources to boost economic and social development and employment.

32. In order to reduce the rate of long-term unemployment, a contribution to support the employment of a disadvantaged job seeker; a contribution to support the development of local and regional employment and a contribution to activation activities in the form of small-scale services for the municipality or for the self-governing region are used. A number of national projects have been implemented, such as 'Opportunity for Employment', 'We Want to Be Active in the Labour Market' (50+), 'The Way out of the Unemployment Cycle', 'Together We Are Looking for Work', 'Involving the Unemployed in the Restoration of Cultural Heritage' and 'Increased Activity to Employment'.

33. The Action Plan for strengthening the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market in the SR by 2020 was prepared in 2016 in accordance with the EU Council Recommendation of 15 February 2016 on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market. The introduction of Work Integration Agreements, as well as the development of closer relations with employers, established an important tool to achieve better integration of the long-term unemployed.

34. In 2021, a second Action Plan for strengthening the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market in the SR by 2030 was adopted, which defines legislation and activities of all institutions involved in order to ensure a comprehensive approach.

35. In 2023, the Action Plan for the Support of the Social Economy and Social Enterprises in the SR with a view to 2030 (APSE 2030) was developed. APSE 2030 is a follow-up to Act No. 112/2018 Coll. on social economy and social enterprises, which allows social enterprises to fulfil several types of socially beneficial objectives and promotes the employment of disadvantaged and vulnerable persons.

36. EU has responded to the negative developments in youth unemployment by adopting a Council Recommendation of 30 October 2020 on a bridge to jobs – strengthening the Youth Guarantee. Slovakia adopted a National Plan to strengthen the Youth Guarantee in the SR with a view to 2030. It aims to promote youth work, counselling, development of personalised action plans, skills assessments (especially digital, green and entrepreneurial skills), support for job creation through the provision of financial grants, graduate traineeships and self-employment. The plan is targeted at students at risk of early school leaving and young people at risk of social exclusion.

37. In order to mitigate the negative trend of unemployment of young people under 30, Slovakia has introduced measures within the framework of national projects and calls for demand-oriented projects. Emphasis is placed on the development of green, digital and entrepreneurial skills, including the promotion of sustainable and green jobs. In 2024, the Right to First Job project was launched, under which employers can apply for reimbursement of 90% of the total cost of a new employee's work for a period of 6 months.

38. The Strategy of Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 includes an Action Plan for the priority area of employment for 2022–2024, which aims to improve employability and increase employment of Roma by creating opportunities leading to their integration into the labour market. One of the objectives of this priority is to increase the share of employed people from marginalised Roma communities (hereinafter as the “MRC’s”) aged 20–64, from 20% to 45%.

39. In the Programme Statement of the Government of the SR for 2023–2027, the Government committed to support policies aimed at reducing social and regional disparities and creating new jobs in the regions. At the same time, the Government will support all forms of the social economy and social entrepreneurship in particular, so that no disadvantaged person is deprived of the opportunity to work.

Legislation to promote the employment of third-country nationals, with a focus on third-country nationals under international protection (details in Annex)

40. Act No. 92/2022 Coll. on certain other measures in connection with the situation in Ukraine introduced with effect from 30 March 2022.

41. Act No. 488/2022 Coll., amending Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on employment services, which entered into force on 1 January 2023, regulated additional conditions in the field of employment of third-country nationals in order to facilitate their entry into the labour market.

42. Act No. 160/2024 Coll, amending Act No. 404/2011 Coll. on the residence of aliens with effect from 15 July 2024, in the field of employment of third-country nationals under international protection.

43. A third-country national who is an asylum-seeker and whose entry into the labour market is permitted by a special regulation, who has been granted asylum, who has been granted subsidiary protection or who has been granted temporary refuge may be employed under the Employment Services Act without a certificate of the possibility of filling a vacancy corresponding to a highly skilled job, a certificate of the possibility of filling a vacancy and an employment permit.

Article 7

The right to pay and fair pay

44. The right of an employee to remuneration for work performed sufficient to enable him or her to enjoy a decent standard of living is guaranteed in the Constitution of the SR (hereinafter as the “Constitution”). The application of this right in practice is regulated by specific labour legislation, in particular Act No. 311/2001 Coll., the Labour Code and Act No. 663/2007 Coll., the Minimum Wage Act. The Minimum Wage Act is a general law which applies to all employees in both the so-called private and the so-called public sphere.

45. The minimum wage is guaranteed both for employees in employment and for employees working under one of the agreements on work performed outside employment. The entitlements guaranteed by the Minimum Wage Act apply equally to employees whose remuneration is governed by the provisions of the Labour Code, as well as to employees in the public or civil service whose remuneration is governed by special regulations.

46. The Minimum Wage Act also applies to low-skilled employees and employees who are third-country nationals, and it also applies to men and women without distinction.

47. The minimum wage has increased annually, from EUR 520 in 2012 to EUR 750 in 2024 (an increase of 44.23%). The Minimum Wage Act requires an agreement between employee representatives and employers when determining the amount of the minimum wage, and in the absence of such an agreement, the minimum wage will be determined as a proportion of the average nominal wage of an employee in the national economy two years ago, as set by law. This system ensures a realistic calculation of the minimum wage and predictable increases. This system is fully respected by all social partners. This information is also relevant for Replies to the issues raised in paragraph 4 and 5 of the Concluding observations 24/25 (d).

Wages and working conditions for women

48. Equal pay for equal work and work of equal value is one of the essential rights explicitly regulated by the Labour Code. This right is aimed at fulfilling the constitutional principle of equality and the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex. Non-compliance with this right constitutes structural discrimination, the negative consequence of which is the overall systemic failure to achieve gender equality and to reduce women’s poverty.

49. The importance of this right was reflected in the measures taken, which consisted of the reform of the remuneration of teachers and other professions with an above-average representation of women, the adoption of draft measures to the pay gap between men and women, legal analysis of the institute of equal pay, monitoring compliance with the principle of equal pay, or reducing the pay gap through the application of best practices from other countries, but also measures such as promoting motherhood and its real appreciation in the form of various measures, from financial support to social recognition.

50. The SR is in the process of transposing Directive (EU) 2023/970, which strengthens the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women for equal work or work of equal value through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms.

Equal employment opportunities

51. Ensuring equal opportunities in employment is heavily conditioned by persistent gender stereotypes that severely limit equal opportunities. Education is therefore of primary importance. The Equality Action Plan includes tasks aimed at implementing preventive activities – lectures and training of teaching and professional staff in schools on gender equality and equal opportunities.

52. On the basis of the Women’s Employment Action Plan, training activities are carried out to eliminate stereotypes and prejudices against women and disadvantaged groups. The Action Plan also set out measures to increase the employment of women from MRC’s, e.g. through social enterprises.

53. The policy documents (referred to in paragraph 6) also reflect the issue of women's unpaid work. The aim is to make visible the economic benefits of the value of unpaid work carried out predominantly by women (e.g. caring for close relatives) and to promote a more balanced division of labour between men and women and the promotion of motherhood.

54. Labour inspectorates play an important role in the practical enforcement of non-discrimination in employment and similar legal relations. The findings of labour inspectorates in the field of discrimination and gender equality in employment relations are presented annually and made publicly available.

Safe and healthy working conditions

55. Occupational safety and health issues are also addressed through non-legislative measures, such as the Strategy for Occupational Safety and Health in the SR and the programme for its implementation for 2024–2027. The aim is the adoption and enforcement of effective preventive measures at the level of both the state and employers in order to create decent working conditions to maintain a low number of occupational accidents, as well as minimising the causes of occupational diseases, promoting prevention, strengthening the importance of a culture of occupational safety and spreading awareness.

Article 8

The right to form trade unions

56. The Constitution guarantees the right of everyone to freely associate with others for the protection of their economic, social and cultural rights. The conditions for the formation and legal status of trade union organisations and employers' organisations are regulated by Act No. 83/1990 Coll. on the association of citizens. The legal regulation of trade union association has remained unchanged compared to the Second Report of the SR (paragraphs 121–123, 125–126⁶).

57. Slovakia is a party to ILO Convention No. 87 concerning Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, and ILO Convention No. 98 concerning the Implementation of the Principles of the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining.

58. Trade unions and employers' organisations may be formed and affiliated by citizens (employees) and employers. These organisations are legal persons. They become a legal person on the day following the day on which the Ministry of the Interior of the SR (hereinafter as the "MoI SR") receives a proposal for its registration.

59. The proposal for registration shall be accompanied by the statutes. If the amendment to the statutes is approved, the trade union or employers' organisation shall send a notice of the amendment to the statutes within 15 days and shall attach the text of the amendment to the statutes to the notice.

60. The data of the trade union or employers' organisation (including changes) shall be entered into the register of non-governmental non-profit organisations maintained by the MoI SR pursuant to Act No. 346/2018 Coll. on the register of non-governmental non-profit organisations. An overview for the years 2019 to 2024 is in the Annex.

61. A trade union or employers' organisation shall be dissolved by voluntary dissolution or merger with another organisation, by a final decision of the MoI SR on its dissolution, by a final decision of a court in criminal proceedings or by the declaration of bankruptcy. It formally ceases to exist on the date of deletion from the register of non-governmental non-profit organisations.

62. If the MoI SR finds that a trade union or employers' organisation is carrying out an activity which is contrary to the law, it shall without delay draw its attention to it and call upon it to desist from such activity. If the organisation continues such activity, the MoI shall issue a decision on its dissolution, which shall be reviewable by a court of the SR.

⁶ E/C.12/SVK/2.

Collective bargaining, right to strike

63. The Constitution and the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms (Constitutional Act No. 23/1991 Coll.) regulate the right to strike as one of the social rights of citizens. Act No. 2/1991 Coll. on Collective Bargaining, regulates the basic issues relating to the right to strike and the right to collective bargaining. The promotion of parity consultation between employees and employers is regulated in the Labour Code. The right to strike for persons in occupations that are immediately necessary for the protection of life and health is limited by the provisions of § 20 of the Collective Bargaining Act. The legal regulation of strikes has not changed compared to the Second Report of the SR (paragraphs 127–129⁷).

Article 9

64. All information concerning social insurance, accident insurance, guarantee insurance and unemployment insurance are valid and up-to-date as presented in the Third Periodic Report of the SR.⁸ The following paragraphs contain only new facts and information for the period under review.

Social insurance in the COVID-19 crisis situation (described in details in the Annex)

65. Several measures were taken to mitigate the economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis on employers and the self-employed, e.g. the postponement of the due date of social insurance premiums and compulsory contributions to old-age pension savings for employers and self-employed persons whose revenues fell by 40% or more as a result of the crisis situation.

66. The entitlement of an employee to sickness benefits has been established as from the first day of temporary incapacity for work, thus relieving employers from paying income compensation. The amount of sickness benefit was increased during certain periods of quarantine or isolation.

67. The conditions for the payment of care allowances (in cases of the child's quarantine or in cases where the institution attended by the child is closed) and accident allowance have been modified.

Sickness insurance

68. The Social Insurance Act defines sickness insurance as insurance against loss or reduction of income due to temporary incapacity for work, pregnancy and maternity. Sickness insurance provides: sickness benefit, nursing benefit (April 2021), compensatory benefit, pregnancy benefit (April 2021) and maternity benefit. Long-term nursing benefit is intended to help families with a seriously ill person to bridge the period until a carer's allowance is awarded. The pregnancy benefit should help cover the increased costs of pregnancy (food, clothing, etc.). From November 2022, the sickness benefit includes the so-called paternity benefit provided to fathers for two weeks within 6 weeks of the birth of the child.

Unemployment insurance in the COVID-19 crisis situation

69. A number of specific measures in the area of unemployment benefits were adopted to mitigate the economic impact on citizens during the so-called COVID-19 crisis. As job seekers had a significantly more complicated path to employment, the period during which job seekers received unemployment benefits was repeatedly extended, i.e. the so-called extension of the support period. The support period was extended a total of five times.

⁷ E/C.12/SVK/2.

⁸ E/C.12/SVK/3.

Pension insurance

70. The pension system is based on a three-pillar model. Pillar I is mandatory and continuously funded. It involves all citizens of working age and their employers, who pay compulsory contributions to the Social Insurance Institution.

71. Retirement insurance includes old-age insurance as income security in old age and in the event of death, and disability insurance as insurance against loss of earning capacity due to long-term ill-health and death.

72. The system of pension insurance benefits consists of insurance against the long-term consequences of social events by means of cash benefits at the time of long-term loss of income. The old-age insurance scheme provides: an old-age pension, an early retirement pension, a widow's pension, a widower's pension, an orphan's pension, a parental pension (from 1 January 2023) and a 13th pension (from 1 July 2024).

73. The disability insurance scheme provides: disability pension, widow's pension, widower's pension, orphan's pension and 13th pension.

74. Since the inception of social insurance, the possibility of early or late retirement has been introduced. The insured person can decide when to retire. It is possible for pensioners to work without restriction and to continue to receive a pension (except for early retirement pensions). By working alongside their pension, pensioners can also gradually increase the amount of their pension. The reduction of the retirement age of a parent according to the number of children brought up is applied again. The possibility of early retirement after a minimum of 40 years of service, i.e. irrespective of age of the insured person, was introduced as of January 2023. As of 15 May 2024, the minimum amount of required service that the insured person must have completed is set according to the year of birth of the insured person.

75. The scope of pension insurance has been extended to include the parental pension. The payment of a parental pension gives effect to the insured person's constitutional right to decide that part of the payment made by him/her in connection with participation in a system of adequate material security in old age shall be provided to the person who brought him/her up and to whom material security in old age is provided (the so-called 'levy assignment'). The amount to 1,5% of one-twelfth of the child's assessment base.

76. The scope of pension insurance has been extended in 2024. The right to the 13th pension and the entitlement to its payment shall be vested in a recipient of a pension benefit who, in December of the relevant calendar year, is entitled to the payment of an old-age pension, an early retirement pension, an invalidity pension, a widow's pension, a widower's pension, an orphan's pension or a social pension. The amount of the 13th pension shall be at least EUR 300.

77. Act No. 43/2004 Coll. on old-age pension savings regulates the mandatory capitalization of the so-called Pillar II under the administration of pension management companies. It was introduced in 2005, is contributory defined and financed through contributions to savers' personal pension accounts. Of the total 18% rate for old-age insurance, 4% is redirected to Pillar II and the remainder 14% remains in the Social Insurance Institution.

78. The state also supports voluntary retirement savings through tax incentives, which include supplementary pension savings and the Pan-European Personal Pension Product (PEPP). Individuals can reduce their tax base by the contributions paid for voluntary savings up to EUR 180 per year. Supplementary pension savings (Pillar III) are compulsory for employees in high-risk workplaces. The scheme is funded by employer and employee contributions. Contributions to supplementary pension savings paid by employers on behalf of their participating employees can be tax deductible for employers up to 6% of the employees' salaries.

79. The PEPP, transferable across EU countries, is another form of voluntary saving for an individual's retirement through the use of long-term savings and investment products provided by various financial institutions. It is financed exclusively by contributions from savers, which are not linked to employment.

Article 10

80. The legislation on family protection, maternal protection and employment of children and adolescents has not changed compared to the Third Report of the SR.

81. In relation to the employment of adolescents, especially women, an Action Plan for Women's Employment has been adopted, which sets out tasks for the creation of flexible training programmes for young people and second-chance training programmes. The Action Plan also reflects the provision of targeted career guidance in schools and various graduate traineeship programmes for young women, particularly from MRC's.

82. In order to support families with young dependent children (also relevant to the Replies to the issues raised in paragraph 4 and 5 of the Concluding observations 48/49 on pre-school education), the scope of entitlement to parental allowance has been extended from 30 May 2023. An eligible person who provides proper care for a child aged between 3 and 6 years who has not been admitted to a state nursery school according to the child's place of residence is also eligible. The allowance helps to cover the costs of financing private facilities and ceases upon the child's admission to a state kindergarten.

83. State support for families is primarily provided through the system of state social benefits, which consists of the following one-off and recurrent benefits: child benefit, child benefit supplement, parental allowance, child care allowance, childbirth allowance, allowance for several children born at the same time, allowances to support foster care, funeral allowance, and child maintenance allowance.

84. The provision of individual benefits is regulated by separate laws, which lay down the conditions for entitlement to individual benefits, their amount, and the method and procedure for their payment. The conditions of entitlement are determined in the same way for each claimant, with no possibility of any exception. Since 2019, a number of positive substantive changes have been made to state social benefits (beyond increases in the amount of allowances), which are detailed in the Annex.

85. The use of parental leave in Slovakia is allowed up to 3 years of age of the child (or up to 6 years and if it is a long-term adverse health condition of the child requiring special care) and is perceived by most families as a social benefit, which also allows active involvement of parents on parental leave in the working environment.

86. The amendment to the Labour Code (Act No. 380/2019 Coll.) with effect from 1 January 2020 increased the length of the basic leave to five weeks also for employees who have not yet reached the age of 33 but are permanently caring for a child. This amendment has a positive impact on marriage, parenthood and the family, and on child rearing, if only by increasing the amount of time for parents and children to pursue family life.

87. The amendment to the Labour Code (Act No. 350/2022 Coll.) with effect from November 2022 also transposed Directive (EU) 2019/1158 on work-life balance for parents and persons with caring responsibilities. This amendment established the so-called paternity leave institute, provided protection for fathers on paternity leave and provided for the possibility to request flexible forms of work when caring for children. A new paragraph in the Labour Code enables a woman and a man permanently caring for a child under the age of eight to apply for domestic work, telework or work from home for the purposes of childcare. The employer must deal with the request.

88. During the period under review, a great deal of attention was paid to strengthening the position of foster care in the sense of deinstitutionalisation of persons placed in the original children's homes.

89. On January 2019, an amendment to Act No.627/2005 Coll. on child foster care allowances came into force, the aim of which was to improve financial support for children in foster care. The amount of the child's recurrent allowance was adjusted to the level of reimbursement of expenses for a child in a professional family. The range of eligible persons was extended. From 2019, the allowances for the support of foster care are increased together with the valorisation of the minimum subsistence amount.

90. As of 1 August 2021, the amount of the one-off allowance for a child when he or she is placed in foster care has been adjusted to the amount of the child's birth grant (EUR 829.86).

91. Two new allowances have been introduced to support foster care with effect from 1 July 2022: the “Allowance for the child to cover increased expenses” (up to EUR 500 per year) and the “Allowance for the education of the foster parent” (up to EUR 100 per year). At the same time, the amount of the special recurrent allowance for a surrogate parent was adjusted (from 0.8 to 2.4 times the amount of the minimum subsistence allowance for a dependent child) as well as the recurrent allowance for a surrogate parent caring for a sibling group was increased and graduated (from 1.39 times to 0.975–5.8 times, depending on the number of siblings).

Article 11

Right to an adequate standard of living

92. The information contained in this article is also relevant for the responses to Replies to the issues raised in paragraph 4 and 5 of the Concluding observations 26/27 (combating poverty) and C 30/31 (e) (right to adequate housing and addressing homelessness).

93. In the area of poverty and social exclusion, the National Framework Strategy for Promoting Social Inclusion and Combating Poverty, was approved by the Government in 2015. This strategy is regularly evaluated and updated as necessary. The last update was approved by the Government in November 2020, and an evaluation and update will be discussed in 2024.

94. Policies aimed at promoting social inclusion and combating poverty take into account the current and long-term socio-economic challenges, in particular the priorities set out in the Programme Statement of the Government, the National Reform Programme of the SR, as well as specific recommendations of the Council of the EU in the field of social inclusion and combating poverty and in the European Pillar of Social Rights. The development of poverty in Slovakia is regularly monitored in the annual Report on the Social Situation of the Population.

95. Minimum income scheme is legally regulated by Act No. 417/2013 Coll. on assistance in material need. In 2023, a number of amendments to the Act were adopted, which positively affected the management of households in material need. A number of inflationary measures were adopted during 2022/2023 to help low-income households. A number of measures have also been taken to support the most vulnerable groups in the context of eliminating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

96. The state provides households in need not only with financial assistance, but also with help through free forms of professional services, such as free family or debt counselling, which have been set up to help those in difficult financial situations.

97. In April 2023, the Government, by Resolution No. 158, adopted the National Concept for Preventing and Ending Homelessness, which addresses various areas (housing, health, employment, social services, social security) present in the fall into extreme poverty in the form of homelessness.

98. The National Concept for Preventing and Ending Homelessness also includes an area of Data and Statistics, which expresses the importance of conducting a census of homelessness, as well as the extent and associated factors related to homelessness itself, in order to effectively set up interventions towards ending homelessness. This measure is intended to become part of the forthcoming Action Plan to the above-mentioned Concept.

Article 12

Right to physical and mental health

99. As part of the policies towards mental health, a reform is under way aimed at developing the hitherto non-existent community psychiatric care. The Ministry of Health of the SR (hereinafter as "MoH SR") has developed and approved the Concept of Health Care in Psychiatry, the Concept of Health Care in Child Psychiatry and the Concept of Humanisation of Inpatient Health Care in Psychiatry. Two more comprehensive reforms are planned: health care reform and mental health care reform. The reasons for the reform are the inaccessibility and inefficiency of the health care provided, the lack of links with social services and the shortage of professionals.

100. Areas of reform of psychiatric care in Slovakia include mainly destigmatisation of mental disorders and psychiatric care, addition of new services and increased accessibility of psychiatric care, linking health and social care and defining the patient's pathway in outpatient and inpatient psychiatric care, introduction of new approaches in diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders, and modernisation and humanisation of psychiatric care.

101. The humanisation of inpatient psychiatric care is currently being implemented. This means creating as natural environment as possible, where the provision of health care is based on mutual trust, respect, dignity and cooperation between the patient and the medical staff. The humanisation of inpatient psychiatric care involves changing the health care delivery system and environment to meet patients' needs while respecting their rights. This process changes the conditions of the patient's hospitalisation and aims to reduce hospital admissions and to deinstitutionalise them.

102. In March 2023, Act No. 495/2022 Coll. entered into force, which amends the Act No. 576/2004 Coll. on health care, services related to the provision of health care (hereinafter as "Health Care Act"), amending Act No. 578/2004 Coll. on health care providers, health care workers, professional organisations in health care (hereinafter as "Act No. 495/2022 Coll."). It regulates the definition, kinds and types of restraints and framework rules for their use in institutional health care facilities, which reflect the recommendations addressed to the SR by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) in the area in question.

103. Act No.495/2022 Coll. also introduced a uniform regulation of patient's rights in inpatient health care facilities in the field of psychiatry and child psychiatry and introduced the obligation to have the so-called 'internal regulations' drawn up in inpatient health care facilities in the field of psychiatry and child psychiatry. The details of the content of the internal rules are laid down in a generally binding legal regulation (Decree of the MoH SR No. 143/2023 Coll.).

104. Under the Recovery and Resilience Plan, community psychiatric care will be established by 2025 through an increase in the number of psychiatric inpatient units (15 new units will be built), the construction of eleven psycho-social centres and three centres for autism spectrum disorder. An expert working group has been set up at the MoH SR, which is working on the development of a separate standard operating procedure governing community psychiatric care.

Article 13

Developing the school system

105. In 2023, a new national education programme was approved, which fulfils all the objectives of the Covenant as set out in Article 13(1). At the same time, these objectives are set out in Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Education and Training (hereinafter as the "Education Act").

106. In secondary education, key competences have been included in the content of education at all levels of education (lower secondary vocational education, secondary vocational education, full secondary vocational education, higher vocational education) in

accordance with the EU Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning.

107. For primary school pupils who have completed primary school in less than year nine or have not successfully completed year nine of primary school, the possibility has been created to obtain lower secondary education. After successfully completing an apprenticeship course providing lower secondary vocational education, a pupil can continue in the second year of an apprenticeship course providing upper secondary vocational education and thus obtain better qualifications and find employment.

108. The 2021 amendment to the Education Act allowed these persons to supplement their education in various ways.

109. With effect from 1 September 2021, compulsory pre-primary education was introduced for all children who will reach the age of five by 31 August of the calendar year. Currently, more than 96% of children are in compulsory pre-primary education.

110. A new principle of upbringing and education has been introduced in the Education Act – the principle of the right to be admitted to pre-primary education in kindergarten from the school year following the school year in which the child reaches the age of three. For the 2024/2025 school year, only a child who reaches the age of four by 31 August 2024 will be eligible for admission to pre-primary education under the regulations in force from 1 September 2023.

111. With effect from 1 January 2025, a new method of financing kindergartens as institutions providing pre-primary education will be introduced. Its essence will be that kindergartens will be financed according to the actual costs needed to deliver high-quality pre-primary education, both in terms of staffing and operations.

112. The Equality Action Plan also sets strategic objectives in the field of education. The tasks relate to the reflection of the themes of fundamental human rights and freedoms (constitutional principle of equality and non-discrimination, prevention and elimination of violence) further into the curriculum and educational materials. These topics are already part of curriculum at the secondary vocational schools of the Police Force and the Police Force Academy in Bratislava. In order to eliminate stereotypes in the education system, a number of educational activities are set out in the Equality Action Plan.

Article 15

The right to cultural life and scientific progress

113. The Ministry of Culture of the SR (hereinafter as the “MoC SR”) creates space for increasing access to culture by introducing free admission to 33 museums and galleries. As of October 2022 it is every first Wednesday of the month (instead of Sunday). The change to free entry days was initiated by the museums and galleries themselves to encourage attendance by students and school children as part of their education.

114. The amendment to Act No. 189/2015 Coll. on Cultural and Educational Activities has ensured stable financing of the entire system of progressive shows and competitions under the professional responsibility of the National Education Centre and the Slovak Central Observatory – from regional to national rounds.

Area of culture of disadvantaged groups

115. One of the main objectives in the Strategy for Culture and Creative Industries in the SR 2030 (approved in June 2023) is inclusive culture. The intention is to ensure the accessibility of culture and the development of its specificities for all.

116. The subsidy programme ‘Culture of Disadvantaged Groups’ allocates EUR 980,000 annually to support cultural projects in the fields of live culture, editorial and publishing, periodicals, non-formal education, physical debarring and information debarring. Physical debarring is aimed at promoting the removal of physical barriers and promoting the accessibility of culture for people with disabilities.

117. On 23 September 2020, the signing ceremony of the Declaration on the Codification of the Slovak Sign Language, which has been included in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Slovakia since 2018, took place.

118. The MoC SR created the Slovak Braille Authority by supplementing the founding charter of the Matej Hrebenda Slovak Library for the Blind in Levoča with effect from 15 December 2020. By creating the Braille Authority, the MoC SR contributed to the implementation of the UN CRPD and fulfilled the recommendation of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

119. In 2024, the MoC SR provided the Matej Hrebenda Slovak Library for the Blind in Levoča with funds to complete the establishment of a workplace of the Slovak Braille Authority for the transcription of textbooks and teaching materials into accessible formats for people with visual impairments and reading disabilities.

120. Act No. 264/2022 Coll. on media services (Media Services Act) introduced several changes aimed at improving accessibility of programmes for persons with hearing or visual impairment, by gradually increasing the volume of programmes provided with multimedia access and by increasing the qualitative requirements of such access. The Media Services Act provides for a gradual increase in the minimum proportion of programmes with multimodal access from January 2023, so that the minimum percentage of programmes with multimodal access is ensured in broadcasting from January 2027 at the latest. Detailed information on the changes brought about by the Media Services Act is provided in the Annex.

121. In 2023, the unified labelling system came into force, which introduces a system of seven content descriptors (violence, discrimination, fear, addiction, sex, vulgarisms and nudity) and establishes criteria of inappropriateness in relation to each descriptor, on the basis of which the age appropriateness of the labelled communications is determined. The main objective is to increase the protection of minors and to better inform them about the content of the communication in terms of its inappropriateness.

122. In the context of the war in Ukraine, the ‘cultural integration of migrants’ has been identified as one of the priorities for 2022 and 2023 of the Culture of Disadvantaged Groups grant programme.

123. In 2022–2023, the MoC SR was involved in a UNESCO research project on the preservation of living heritage among communities, groups and individuals who left Ukraine in connection with the war conflict and found refuge in neighbouring countries: Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. The results of the research served as a basis for the preparation of an application under the rules of the International Assistance Request aimed at supporting the preservation and development of Ukrainian heritage in a host country setting in line with the Ukraine Recovery Plan adopted in July 2022.

Area of churches and religious societies

124. In 2021, a census of population, houses and dwellings was carried out in which 68.6% of the population declared their affiliation to churches and religious communities registered in Slovakia.

125. Slovakia has implemented a broad concept of legal regulations that comprehensively regulate the relation between the state and the church. A new law on financial support for the activities of churches has been in force since 2020. It is the result of several years of discussion between the state and the churches. The law ensured the continuity of the partnership between the state and the churches and brought clear and transparent rules for the support of their activities, while maintaining mutual solidarity with smaller churches.

Media

126. The Media Services Act constitutes a comprehensive regulation in the field of audiovisual media services. The most significant change is the inclusion of video sharing platforms in the regulatory framework for audiovisual media services. In addition to broadcasters, providers of on-demand audiovisual media services, retransmission operators, multiplex providers, the Media Services Act also regulates the rights and obligations of video sharing platform providers as well as content service providers.

127. From June 2025, the law in question will also regulate the rights and obligations of multimodal access service providers, which include the obligation to provide a reliable electronic programme guide that provides information for the deaf and blind, and the obligation to provide full multimodal access in adequate quality. Multimodal access is currently guaranteed both in television broadcasting and in the provision of on-demand audiovisual media services.

128. The obligation to comply with the legal requirements of protection in relation to minors, in particular with regard to incitement to hatred, violence or terrorism, also applies to video sharing platform providers.

129. The new legislation continues to preserve public access to information in the broadcasting of the programme service, supplemented by guaranteeing access to pluralistic, objective and impartial information, including information for national minorities and ethnic groups living in the territory of Slovakia.

130. In the area of plurality of information and transparency of property and personnel relations, the obligation for all media, whether or not they do business with the state, to register as public sector partners has been introduced. Making information on the ultimate owners of the media available through a public register should bring greater transparency of media ownership.

131. The Audiovisual Fund provides funding in the form of grants, scholarships and loans to support and develop audiovisual culture and industry. Since 2016, it has also been possible to apply for financial support for the distribution of Slovak audiovisual works, including the provision of multimodal access to Slovak audiovisual works.

Copyright Protection

132. The EU copyright law tried to adapt to technological advances and the development of digital technologies, which has also influenced Copyright Act No. 185/2015 Coll. which has been amended several times since 2019. The Copyright Act thus represents a comprehensive legal framework for the regulation of copyright and copyright-related rights in Slovakia. The level of protection corresponds to current international, European and regional standards. Detailed information on copyright legislation is provided in the Annex.

II. Follow-up information on the concluding observations (E/C.12/SVK/CO/3)

Information relating to paragraphs 4 and 5

133. The Judicial Academy of the SR, which annually offers a number of educational activities focused on various aspects of human rights, organized several educational events, for example on the current case law of the ECHR, on the protection of victims of crime, compensation for victims of human trafficking, or domestic violence and sexual abuse. A list of training activities for the period under review is attached.

Information relating to paragraphs 6 and 7

134. The preparation of a comprehensive reform of the SNCHR as a national human rights institution and equality body will be linked to the process of transposition of EU legislation on standards for equality bodies and in line with the Paris Principles. Concurrent proposals for EU Directives in this area are expected to be approved in 2024. A small change concerning the issuance of independent reports and recommendations was approved in March 2023 in relation to EU Pilot No. 4446/13/JUST.

135. The Rules of Procedure of the Board of Directors of the SNCHR were amended to provide for the public election of the Executive Director of the SNCHR as of 1 May 2022.

136. The funding of the SNCHR, as well as the number of employees, has been gradually increased since 2018 (in 2018 the budget was EUR 565,000 with 16 employees, while in 2023 the budget was EUR 967,000 with a staff of 26 employees). The exact figures are in the Annex.

Information relating to paragraphs 8 and 9

137. The MoJ SR has developed an anti-corruption programme with the aim to improve anti-corruption prevention and fight against corruption, i.e. to prevent the emergence of new opportunities for corrupt behaviour in the Ministry based on the identification of corruption risks and causes of corruption. The Anti-Corruption Policy of the SR for 2019–2023 shows that anti-corruption prevention is simpler and less costly than the detection, investigation and prosecution of corruption. A table with data on the number of persons in legally concluded cases is in the Annex.

138. The MoI SR, while adopting internal measures aimed at preventing corruption, intensively creates and supports an anti-corruption environment for both civil servants and civilian employees, which has a positive impact on the public. In accordance with the Anti-Corruption Policy of the SR for 2019–2023 the position of anti-corruption coordinator in the MoI SR and corruption risk management has been put in place. More details in the Annex.

139. In the anti-corruption programme of the MoI SR, the identified risks are elaborated on the conditions of the MoI SR with the following objectives: to reduce the space for the existence and emergence of corruption risks, to raise the awareness of employees and strengthen their integrity, and to strengthen the integrity of the organisation.

140. In order to prevent and fight corruption, the MoI SR carries out educational activities on the topics of corruption reporting and protection of whistleblowers. Members of the Police Force are regularly retrained on the prevention of corruption.

Information relating to paragraphs 10 and 11

141. Slovakia has repeatedly pledged to devote 0.33% of its gross national income (GNI) to official development assistance by 2030. Despite the declared commitments, no binding plan has yet been developed to meet this target, taking into account GNI trends. However, there has been a gradual increase in spending, almost doubling since 2014 from 0.08% of GNI in 2014 to 0.15% of GNI in 2022. Despite this fact, achieving the commitment requires an intensification of the pace of increase, which will be the subject of internal discussions and planning for the new Medium-Term ODA Strategy for the period 2025–2030.

Information relating to paragraphs 12 and 13

142. In 2023, the MoJ SR prepared a working version of a draft amendment to the Anti-Discrimination Act, which modifies the definition of reasonable accommodation (including the refusal to make reasonable accommodation as discrimination based on disability) in the areas defined by the Anti-Discrimination Act, but this amendment will be subject to further discussion.

143. It is not possible to amend the Anti-Discrimination Act in all areas of life of persons with disabilities, as the Anti-Discrimination Act regulates only five specifically identified areas (employment and similar legal relations, social security, health care, provision of goods and services and education). The UN CRPD links the implementation of reasonable accommodation to ensuring the enjoyment or exercise of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with others, which means that the implementation of reasonable accommodation would fall within the scope of Constitution. Under the provision of the Constitution, the Convention itself is part of the legal order of the SR and its provisions are directly applicable.

144. Within the framework of the development of communication and cooperation with the Roma community, the MoI SR successfully implemented a project to establish senior Police officers for work in communities. The aim was to bring about a change in the situation in Roma settlements, so that every resident has equal access to all the benefits and activities normally offered in the community. The Police officer for work in the communities should be acceptable to the Roma community and will participate in solving the problems of the Roma along the lines of the Police activity.

145. In relation to asylum seekers, pursuant to Act No. 480/2002 Coll. on asylum (hereinafter as the “Asylum Act”), every asylum seeker shall be informed, within 15 days of the commencement of the proceedings, about the asylum procedure, in particular about his/her rights and obligations, the time limits, the possibility of representation in the proceedings and access to legal aid. The MoI SR shall also provide the applicant with information on NGOs dealing with asylum seekers.

146. The Asylum Act requires the applicant to be provided with psychological, social or other counselling and a course of cultural orientation based on his/her individual needs; in the case of a minor child, also if this is necessary for his/her favourable development.

147. An applicant who has been granted asylum (asylum seeker) and an alien who has been granted subsidiary protection shall also be provided with social, psychological or other counselling and a cultural orientation course based on his/her individual needs, for a period of 12 months from the granting of asylum or subsidiary protection.

148. The Migration Office of the MoI SR provides applicants with information about their rights and obligations, including the possibility of representation and legal assistance. Within the framework of the counselling sessions, the migrants are informed about their rights, about the forms of discrimination they may encounter, as well as about the options available to address possible discrimination.

149. With regard to recommendation (c), the training of judges is organised by the Judicial Academy, which offers a number of training activities each year focusing on various aspects of human rights, including training on the case law of the ECHR. In 2023, it organised training on Selected Issues of Anti-Discrimination Law, which focused particularly on the principle of equal treatment, areas, forms of discrimination and an explanation of the so-called temporary compensatory measures. In the same year, the topic of discrimination in employment relations was also the subject of a special training course.

150. With regard to recommendation (d), the Action Plan for the Prevention of All Forms of Discrimination for the next period has not been adopted, as the action plans in individual areas, e.g. on gender equality, combating anti-Roma racism, combating extremism and radicalisation, contain thematically focused tasks.

151. In the area of Roma inclusion, number of legal amendments were adopted that remove disadvantages for Roma. The amendment of the Education Act by Act No. 182/2023 Coll. defined the concept of special educational needs, the concept of segregation in education and training and the obligation to comply with the prohibition of segregation in education and training.

Information relating to paragraphs 14 and 15

152. During the period under review, the MoJ SR presented solutions that would enable the improvement of regulation of legal relations of persons living in a common household or close persons, including same-sex couples.

153. The draft Act on fiduciary declaration was intended to simplify the functioning of cohabitants in the area of their property rights, while respecting the institution of marriage as a unique union between a man and a woman. The improvement of the position of cohabitants concerned in particular the representation of each other in ordinary matters, the administration of inheritance, the appointment of a guardian in the event of a restriction of legal capacity, as well as obtaining information on health status, including information on health status after death.

154. Another draft law aimed to improve the status of people close to each other, as well as to ensure the continuity of the management of property, its control, the use of its proceeds for the support of the family. The intention of the proposal was to reinstate in the legal system proven European instruments, such as the trusts, which would enable citizens to effectively manage assets. However, these proposals did not gain the support of the LGBTI community and were therefore withdrawn.

Information relating to paragraphs 16 and 17

155. In order to improve the elimination of structural discrimination against persons with disabilities, the National Strategy for the Deinstitutionalisation of the Social Services and Foster Care was approved by the Government in April 2021. As part of the legislative tasks, a new Act No. 376/2022 Coll. on professional foster parents was adopted, which contributes significantly to the process of deinstitutionalisation of centres for children and families.

156. The objectives of the National Strategy for the Deinstitutionalisation of the Social Services and Foster Care are elaborated into concrete measures in the follow-up document National Action Plan for the Transition from Institutional to Community Care in the Social Services System for 2022–2026. The tasks that oblige us to move forward in removing institutionalisation from the social services environment are also contained in other strategic materials, such as the National Priorities for the Development of Social Services for 2021–2030, the National Programme for the Development of Living Conditions of Persons with Disabilities for 2021–2030. For more information on the subject, see the information in Article 2 of the Covenant.

Information relating to paragraphs 18 and 19

157. Slovakia implements the recommendations adopted by CEDAW in its Seventh Periodic Report of the SR in May 2023 in its concluding opinion.⁹

158. During the period under review, the Government approved several strategic documents with the aim of achieving equality between women and men. In April 2021, the Government approved the new National Strategy for Equality between Women and Men and Equal Opportunities in the SR for 2021–2027, followed by the Action Plan. In January 2022, the Government approved the National Action Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women for the period 2022–2027. The National Equality Strategy and Action Plan is followed by the Action Plan for Women's Employment. The tasks arising from these documents are described in Articles 2 and 3 of the Covenant.

Information relating to paragraphs 20 and 21

159. Slovakia has addressed all forms of unemployment in order to gradually reduce regional disparities in the labour market. Employment support measures adopted during the period under review are detailed in Article 6 of the Covenant.

160. People granted international protection have the right to work as soon as they are granted one of the forms of international protection (asylum or subsidiary protection). They are not required to have a work permit and can be employed in the same way as nationals of the SR. This is provided for in the Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on employment services.

161. The right to enter into employment relationships of applicants for international protection is regulated by the Asylum Act. Under that provision, the applicant is entitled to enter into an employment relationship after six months from the commencement of the proceedings.

162. The time limit was shortened from 9 to 6 months by Amendment No. 124/2022 Coll., amending the Asylum Act. The amendment entered into force on 1 June 2022.

⁹ CEDAW/C/SVK/CO/7.

163. This national legislation is in full compliance with the current EU legislation as well as with its forthcoming reform (Common European Asylum System).

Information relating to paragraphs 22 and 23

164. Information on the steps taken to promote equality between men and women as well as to eliminate gender discrimination in employment in Slovakia is contained in the information on the implementation of article 2 (paragraphs 5–7), article 3 and article 7 of the Covenant (paragraphs 48–50 on women's wages and working conditions and paragraphs 51–54 on equal opportunities in employment).

Information relating to paragraphs 24 and 25

165. The Constitution guarantees the right of an employee to remuneration for work performed sufficient to enable him/her to enjoy a decent standard of living. The minimum wage is guaranteed for all the employees. The Minimum Wage Act also applies to low-skilled employees and employees who are third-country nationals. The minimum wage increases every year. From EUR 520 in 2012, it rose to EUR 750 in 2024, an increase of 44.23%. For more information on the minimum wage in Slovakia, see Article 7 of the Covenant (paragraphs 44–47).

166. Regarding recommendation 25 (c), we state that in order to obtain information on the activities of employment agencies or temporary employment agencies, the Employment Services Act provides for the obligation of all such entities to submit annual reports on their activities and to create conditions for controlling the compliance with legislation in the field of employment services.

167. With regard to recommendation 25 (e), the trade unions are formed independently of the state. Limiting the number of such trade union organisations or favouring any of them in an enterprise or a given industry is not permitted. The right to organise in trade unions is enshrined in the Constitution. According to the Labour Code, the employees' representatives are the competent trade union body representing all employees of the employer, not only employees affiliated to a trade union organisation. The employer is obliged to allow a trade union organisation to operate in the workplace. For more information, see Article 8 of the Covenant.

Information relating to paragraphs 26 and 27

168. Since 2015, the Government has continuously updated the strategic document National Framework Strategy for Promoting Social Inclusion and Combating Poverty. The National Concept for Preventing and Ending Homelessness, adopted in 2023, is also up-to-date in the fight against poverty.

169. Another measure is the minimum income scheme, which is legally regulated in Act No. 417/2013 Coll. on assistance in material need. The state also provides free professional services, such as family or debt counselling, to households in need. More detailed information on both documents and on material hardship assistance is provided in Article 11 of the Covenant.

170. The problem of poverty in MRC's is primarily addressed by the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities (hereinafter as "OPGRC") which has the status of the central state administration body for the coordination of the inclusion of MRC's.

171. Within the framework of the Strategy of Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 and its Action Plans, several project calls have been launched to improve the situation of the Roma population, some of which are mentioned in the following paragraphs. Details and first results of some these projects (paragraphs 172, 177–182) are described in the Annex.

172. Call National project Development teams I. (year 2023) with allocated resources in the amount of EUR 69.6 million is aimed at promoting socio-economic integration and improving the living conditions of marginalised communities, such as the Roma. The call is open to individual municipalities as well as to Roma communities residing in a municipality. Project is set to target 60 municipalities listed in the Atlas of Roma Communities, for which sectoral calls will be prepared in the areas of housing, public health, education and employment.

173. The project will be followed by a call Assisting local governments in project management, which aims to help local governments with the preparation, management and evaluation of EU projects. Subsequently, it is planned to announce a call for proposals (EUR 5 million) aimed at preparing the long-term unemployed for the working environment and assisting enterprises in employing Roma.

174. Since the last review (2014–2020), resources from the Human Resources Operational Programme have been spent on overcoming poverty in settlements of MRC's, focusing on the integration of MRC's and technical equipment in settlements. The total allocation was more than EUR 190 million for a total of 446 projects (231 are still under implementation).

175. More than EUR 195 million were allocated for national projects under the competence of the OPGRC and projects under the competence of the MoH SR (Healthy Communities).

176. Almost EUR 63 million were allocated for demand-oriented projects. Support was given to projects to set up local Citizens' Policing Patrols, Catching up Regions, an initiative to promote growth and innovation in regions, to remove barriers to better use of EU funds and to increase the benefits of these investments, and to mentoring and tutoring projects.

177. Implementation of the national project for the inclusion of children from MRC's in kindergartens (PRIM) continued. One of the concrete outcomes of the project is that 9048 children from MRC's have completed at least one year in kindergarten and the number of Roma children in mainstream education has increased. Further concrete results of the PRIM project in Phase II (from 2020 to 2023) are in the Annex.

178. The national project Field Social Work and Field Work in Municipalities with the Presence of MRC's (2020–2023) focused on supporting sustainable development, reintegration into society and improving living conditions. As of July 2023, 168 municipalities were involved, 274 field social workers and 278 field workers were employed. The interventions covered areas such as employment, housing, finance and management, socio-pathological phenomena and education. The project has been extended to 44 additional municipalities.

179. The mirror national project Support and Quality Improvement of Field Social Work (2019–2023) under the responsibility of the Implementing Agency of the MoLSAF SR was implemented through 200 entities from MRC's and 4 NGOs for the homeless people. The project provided field workers with relevant training to improve the quality of their work with clients, as well as support in obtaining a university degree or completing a full secondary education. The evaluation of the project was issued in 2023.

180. The national project Building professional capacities at community level (2019–2023) under the responsibility of the Implementing Agency of the MoLSAF SR was aimed at building professional capacities of providers of social services of crisis intervention at community level. As of July 2023, 94 providers were supported, employing a total of 581 staff (professional manager, professional worker, community worker and community centre worker).

181. The combination of the mirror projects of field social work and community work under the responsibility of the OPGRC and the Implementing Agency of the MoLSAF SR was reflected in the national project Field Social and Community Work under the responsibility of the MoLSAF SR (2023–2029). The aim of the project was to support persons dealing with difficult life situations and to improve their social inclusion. Community centres aim to support the development of whole communities through the targeted use of community resources especially in MRC's.

182. The national project Community services in towns and villages with the presence of MRC's (2021–2023) focused on crisis intervention services provided in community centres. Activities focused on specialised social counselling, assistance in the exercise of rights and legally protected interests, preventive activities, leisure activities, assistance in preparing for schooling and support for non-formal education. The work of community centres with adults in MRC's was reflected in the increase of employment.

183. Projects from the Human Resources Operational Programme were also focused on investments in the settlement infrastructure of the inhabitants of MRC's, especially in the area of housing, access to utilities, access to drinking water sources, construction of roads and building of a municipal waste management system; support for the construction or reconstruction of kindergartens, primary schools and community centres.

Information relating to paragraphs 28 and 29

184. With regard to recommendation (b), in 2019 the National Council of the SR requested the Government not to proceed with the process of ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. SR is implementing activities in the field of women's protection despite non-ratification. The EU Directive on combating violence against women, which pursues similar objectives to the Istanbul Convention, will be transposed into Slovak law by 2027.

185. The issue of prevention and elimination of gender-based violence against women is addressed by the National Action Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women for the years 2022–2027, approved by the Government in 2022. It set out measures in four strategic areas: protection of women experiencing violence and their children; prevention of violence against women; integrated policies and data collection; and effective sanctioning of violence against women.

186. A number of measures to prevent and eliminate violence are also included in the Action Plan for Equality, which is a follow-up to the Strategy for Equality between Women and Men and Equal Opportunities in the SR for 2021–2027. These are primarily tasks related to monitoring the situation in the field and improving targeted intervention in cases of expulsion. Other tasks relate to more adequate prosecution and punishment of perpetrators through training of law enforcement professions and identifying ways to improve Slovak legislation and practice in the field of protection of women against violence.

187. A project Prevention and Elimination of Gender Discrimination aimed at establishing a system of integrated protection and support for victims of gender-based violence and harmonizing efforts to reduce and prevent it. The project linked various procedures and measures, both legislative and non-legislative, with the common goal of ensuring coordinated efforts in preventing or reducing gender-based violence, followed by effective support and protection of persons who have experienced such violence.

188. The police pay due attention to every reported case of violence against women, including ensuring the protection of persons at risk of violence. An important measure is the authorisation of a police officer to evict a violent person from a dwelling jointly inhabited with the person threatened and from its immediate surroundings pursuant to the Act No. 171/1993 Coll. on the Police Force. In 2021, the time limit for eviction from a shared dwelling was extended from 10 to 14 days and the territorial effect of the prohibition of approaching a person at risk was extended from 10 to 50 metres.

189. The protection of victims of violence against women and domestic violence is also linked to projects to build special interrogation rooms for child victims and other particularly vulnerable victims of crime, and to train police officers to work with particularly vulnerable victims. The purpose of building special interrogation rooms is to prevent direct victim-offender contact during interrogation and to eliminate the victim's negative experiences associated with the standard police environment.

190. In 2023, the project "Special Interrogation Rooms for Child Victims and Other Particularly Vulnerable Victims of Crime" was completed. Within the project, 15 special

interrogation rooms were built, of which one located at the Police Force Academy in Bratislava is also used for teaching.

191. Under the project “Improving the Protection of Victims’ Rights – Strengthening Capacities and Procedures to Combat Violence against Women and Domestic Violence”, completed in April 2024, the network of special interrogation rooms was expanded by an additional eight rooms.

192. Under a separate project, two special interrogation rooms were set up for the interrogation of victims of trafficking in human beings.

193. Accreditation of victim support organisations is issued by the MoJ SR, which also ensures the registration of the designation “Intervention Centre” for accredited organisations. Since January 2022, Intervention Centres for victims of domestic violence have been established, with one intervention centre in each region (with the exception of the Košice Region with three intervention centres).

194. Intervention centres for victims of domestic violence are organisations that have obtained accreditation after proving that they have fulfilled the condition of 5 years of experience in providing assistance to victims of domestic violence. They act as the first point of contact after the violent person has been evicted from the shared dwelling and are able to ensure the provision of necessary and acute assistance for all victims of domestic violence. A victim of domestic violence can contact the Intervention Centre even without eviction of the violent person and the Intervention Centre will provide the necessary professional assistance (filling of a criminal complaint or criminal proceedings is not necessary).

195. The main task of the Intervention Centre is to proactively provide professional assistance to victims of domestic violence by contacting the victim within 72 hours of receiving a copy of the record of the eviction. The Intervention Centre shall also provide crisis intervention, ensure the assessment of the threat of danger to life or health (risk assessment), provide legal and psychological assistance, mediate the provision of social services in emergency housing and specialised social counselling, and ensure a coordinated approach for the provision of assistance.

196. Intervention Centres provide assistance to victims of domestic violence free of charge. The MoJ SR provides financial support for at least one Intervention Centre in each region. The estimated amount of the grant for all Intervention Centres is EUR 1.6 million per year.

197. Intervention Centres collect data on the number of women, children and men as victims of domestic violence who receive professional assistance. In 2022 they provided help and support to 1,375 women and in 2023 to 1,930 women.

Information relating to paragraphs 30 and 31

198. The Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030, under the responsibility of the OPGRC, is a crucial document for improving the housing situation of Roma, which sets out the tasks in the area of housing. The Housing Action Plan adopted for the Strategy contains more than 50 concrete measures.

199. Primary responsibility for the acquisition of own housing rests with the citizen. The objectives and priorities of the state housing policy are defined in the framework document “Housing Policy of the SR until 2030”, which was approved by the Government in 2021. The long-term objective is to gradually increase the overall level of housing so that it is affordable and so that every household can secure adequate housing. However, the state housing policy does not address the housing of Roma (as stated above).

200. Regarding recommendations (b) and (c), the state creates instruments and legislative conditions for municipalities to develop inclusive local housing policies. However, the use of existing instruments is entirely up to individual municipalities. Areas that depend exclusively on municipal decision-making include, among others, addressing housing needs or accommodation, as well as deciding on the spatial plan and development of their own territory, this includes the location of new construction, including social rental housing.

201. Regarding recommendation (d), Slovakia has created a system of economic support instruments for housing development, in accordance with the objectives of the state housing policy. Through a combination of subsidies under Act No. 443/2010 Coll. on Subsidies for Housing Development and Social Housing, and a soft loan from the State Housing Development Fund, a system of support for the acquisition of rental housing for social housing owned by the local government has been secured for a long time. Since the beginning of the programme in 1998 to date, the acquisition of more than 48,000 public rental flats has been supported in this way. It is up to the local government to decide whether it is interested in building such housing.

202. Act No. 200/2021 Coll. on spatial planning introduced an obligation for municipal and urban spatial plans to protect healthy living conditions, including sufficient spatial conditions for housing with regard to disadvantaged or vulnerable persons, which include persons living in segregated locations with the presence of concentrated and generational poverty. This is a specific measure targeting MRC's.

203. Act No. 201/2022 Coll. on Construction introduced the institute of building certification for Roma buildings constructed from 1 January 1990 to 31 March 2024 without a building permit or notification, located in a segregated locality that creates concentrated and generationally reproduced poverty, only on the basis of proof of ownership, proof of use of the building for housing and proof that the building doesn't endanger life and is not located in an unsuitable location (e.g. under a power line). At the same time, the Act introduced a legal fiction of permissibility for structures built before 1989, which are deemed to be permissible if they are continuously used for their intended purpose and the owner of the structure is the owner of the land on which such structure is built or is in the process of regularising the relationship to the land. These two procedures apply to buildings of all citizens.

204. Part of the responses to the Roma-related recommendations are set out under Recommendations C 26/27 (paragraphs 171–174, 183). The above practices, including the additional certification of constructions in MRC's and the legal fiction of permissibility of constructions, create obstacles to forced evictions. In cases of forced evictions, the OPGRC undertakes legal interventions against law enforcement authorities in cases where the conduct bears the hallmarks of non-compliance with the law or is carried out in contravention of the standards of international conventions and recommendations arising from them. In these cases, it refers to the Office of the Attorney General of the SR and also links Roma to the offices of the Legal Aid Centre.

205. The OPGRC provides subsidies to support the social and cultural needs and solutions to particularly unfavourable situations of the Roma community, as well as to support the acquisition of municipal housing on a community-based participatory system. This system has proven to be effective, merit-based and sustainable, and saves on the cost of public resources. Act No. 201/2022 Coll. on Construction regulates self-help construction so that it is also feasible in a subsidy system.

206. An example of the procedures according to recommendations (a), (b) and (d) is the provision of a subsidy of EUR 380,000 for the construction of alternative housing for the MRC in the municipality of Telgárt (2023). Similarly, the subsidy was used to provide replacement housing for Roma families whose dwellings were located on land with the construction of a motorway in the Zelený Most – Svrčinovec section (2022–2023), despite the fact that only one of the original buildings was constructed under a building permit. The Government approved this solution, including the provision of a subsidy, taking into account the case law of the ECHR on forced evictions.

207. Since 2024, the OPGRC has been implementing a new national project to assist municipalities with the presence of MRC's in arranging legal relations to land under settlements. In this project, 800 municipalities have already been approached, and the OPGRC, in cooperation with the MoI SR, is also supporting the technical capacity of district offices to quickly implement simple land adjustments under Roma settlements.

208. As of April 2023, new provisions in the Enforcement Code came into force for evictions and evictions from property, with an emphasis on alternative housing or alternative accommodation. In 2017 and 2022–2023, Act No. 7/2005 Coll. on bankruptcy and

restructuring was amended, where, in order to protect the debtor, the non-damageable value of the debtor's dwelling, the institute of real estate of greater and lesser value, or a special regulation containing conditions when the debtor's dwelling cannot be monetised were established.

209. With regard to recommendation (e), more information on Government-approved National Concept for Preventing and Ending Homelessness is provided in article 11 of the Covenant (paragraphs 97–98).

Information relating to paragraph 33 and 34

210. Under the Slovakia 2021–2027 Programme (specific objective ‘Supporting Access to Water and Sustainable Water Management’), EU funds are allocated under the competence of the Ministry of the Environment of the SR to ensure the supply of safe drinking water to the population and to rehabilitate the infrastructure for the supply of drinking water in the amount of more than EUR 139 million. A specific allocation of EUR 7 million is allocated under the responsibility of the Office of the Government for ensuring access to safe drinking water for MRC's.

211. In 2023, 8 projects were supported from the subsidies under the competence of the Office of the Government, the aim of which was to provide access to water for human consumption (in some cases with connection to sewerage and water supply) in the amount of EUR 100,500.

212. Within the framework of the Human Resources Operational Programme, two calls were launched in the period under review: Call for Support to Access to Drinking Water and Call for Support to the Completion of Utilities in MRC's, which was announced in 2020. 59 projects were approved under this call for proposals for more than EUR 8 million. Some of these projects are currently being finalised.

Information relating to paragraphs 35 and 36

213. In 2023, the MoH SR updated and simplified the call for support for opening new general practices in underserved regions. The proposed changes were communicated with the self-governing regions. At the same time, the list of shortage districts with an allocation was updated. The call is updated annually to respond dynamically to the real need for new doctors in each region.

214. The objective of the measure (grant) funded by the Recovery and Resilience Plan is to increase the required capacity of the public minimum network of general outpatient care providers in shortage districts by supporting the establishment of new outpatient clinics. The main purpose of the contribution is to financially offset the costs of setting up and running new outpatient clinics.

215. In order to stabilise paediatric outpatient care in Slovakia and to maintain the functioning of emergency services for children, the MoH SR has adjusted the fixed points of outpatient emergency services for children and adolescents. The aim of the modification was to concentrate physicians into functional teams and bring them closer to hospitals to provide laboratory tests, imaging methods and follow-up hospital care.

216. The MoH SR published on its website all implemented investment projects in two calls for funding investment projects to support the construction and reconstruction of hospitals in order to improve the quality and efficiency of inpatient health care (7 large and 15 small projects implemented).

217. For each project, a delivery plan was identified and a performance check in the form of a traffic light. The traffic light was created as a transparent communication to the public who can monitor and verify the status of each project's activities – whether they are completed, not completed, not delayed, delayed, or even in jeopardy of the project.

218. In August 2023, the MoH SR announced the call New Hospital Network – Improving the Quality and Efficiency of Inpatient Health Care – Replenishment of Hospital

Instrumentation from the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the SR (100% financing for the procurement of modern devices and equipment).

219. From the academic year 2024/2025, medical faculties in Slovakia will admit 150 additional medical students. This is the first step in fulfilling the Government's commitment to increase the number of students from Slovakia in selected study programmes and fields of higher education.

Information relating to paragraphs 37 and 38

220. In January 2022, the Government approved the update of the National Health Promotion Programme for 2021–2030, which is based on the policy of the World Health Organization (WHO). The main objective of the update is to improve the health status of the population by raising the health awareness (focusing on nutrition and diet, physical activity, tobacco, alcohol and drugs, mental health promotion, working and living conditions). Another objective is to improve the healthy lifestyle of the Slovak population and to maintain the implementation of preventive measures in terms of the incidence of infectious diseases at least to the same extent as they are currently implemented.

221. In January 2022, the Government approved the National Action Plan on Alcohol Problems 2021–2030, based on the Global Strategy to Reduce the Harmful Effects of Alcohol. The Action Plan aims to increase health awareness about the extent and nature of the health, social and economic effects of harmful alcohol use, as well as to reduce the negative impacts of drinking on different target groups.

222. In June 2024, the Government approved the National Action Plan for the Promotion of Physical Activity for 2024–2030. It is based on the Updated National Health Promotion Programme for 2021–2030 and the WHO Global Recommendations for Physical Activity. The objective is to improve the level of public health through the promotion of physical activity and to contribute to the prevention of chronic non-communicable diseases. One of the main objectives is to reduce the prevalence of physical inactivity by 5% in adults and adolescents by 2030.

223. The public health sector is responding promptly to the Committee's recommendations to adopt legislative measures in relation to the marketing and sale of beverages and foods whose composition (sugar, fat and stimulants) may harm the health of children and young people. One specific measure is the adoption of the new Decree No. 75/2023 Coll. of the MoH SR on details of requirements for establishments for children and young people.

Information relating to paragraphs 39 and 40

224. In March 2023, Act No. 495/2022 Coll. came into force, which regulates the definition, kinds and types of restraints and framework rules for their use in institutional health care facilities, reflecting the recommendations addressed to Slovakia by the CPT. The placement of a patient in a protective bed (bed net) may be used as a restrictive measure until 31 December 2024. The MoH SR has developed a 'Strategy for the Abolition of Net Beds', which shows that out of a total of 205 protection beds, 39 have been abolished as of March 2024 and the remaining 166 will be abolished until 31 December 2024.

225. On 15 September 2023, Decree of the MoH SR No. 358/2023 Coll., establishing details on the use of restraints and the maintenance of a register of restraints, entered into force.

226. In December 2022, a working group of the Minister of Health on restraints and their alternatives in the specialty of psychiatry and child psychiatry was established within the MoH SR, which is currently working on the elaboration of a document describing the so-called "alternative restraints" to protective beds.

227. Continuing education programme "Minimum Standards for a Continuing Education Programme in the Management of Aggression and Behavioural Disorders in Psychiatry for Doctors, Nurses, Health Care Assistants – Practical Nurses, Psychologists and Ambulance

Workers and Paramedics" has +been developed, which will provide training for relevant mental health professionals from September 2024.

228. The MoH, in collaboration with the SNCHR, has been training mental health professionals in patient human rights and the use of restraints in accordance with CPT standards and recommendations since 2024.

Information relating to paragraphs 41, 42 and 43

229. During the reporting period, no legislation was enacted to universally cover all costs associated with legal abortion, including abortion on demand and modern contraceptives to prevent unwanted pregnancies, under public health insurance.

230. EU countries have the right to decide on the price and reimbursement of medicines covered by public health insurance, within national competences. The SR will continue to use these competences, which are part of the national health system. The SR legislation gives priority to the right to health protection and equal access to affordable and quality healthcare for all citizens, while respecting all human rights aspects set out in international treaties.

231. Public health insurance fully reimburses medical procedures for abortion carried out for medical reasons specified in a special regulation. Abortion not performed for medical reasons is not covered by public health insurance.

232. Contraceptives to prevent unwanted pregnancies are not covered by public health insurance. Slovakia has a problem to label a product whose main effect is an abortion as a contraceptive. Contraception is essentially the prevention of conception.

233. Contraception is not considered to be health care provision. There has been no change in the law in this respect. Despite the fact that a consensus has been reached in the professional associations (doctors) on the changes requested by the UN committees (CESCR or CEDAW), no political consensus has been reached.

234. A comprehensive national programme for the protection of sexual and reproductive health and related rights in the SR has not yet been adopted due to a lack of social consensus on the issue. However, the area of protection, preservation and restoration of women's and mothers' health is a priority for the MoH SR, that is continuously drafting proposals for the development of health care aimed at women's reproductive health and safe motherhood.

235. To advance sexual and reproductive health, the MoH SR is involved in a project with the WHO Regional Office for Europe entitled Promoting Sexual and Reproductive Health using NaProTechnology/Restorative Reproductive Medicine (RRM) diagnostics and methods, with a focus on introducing new approaches to infertility treatment.

236. The MoH SR has created an effective tool for setting a friendly and equal approach to mothers and newborns with the active cooperation of all maternity hospitals in accordance with the WHO recommendations – *Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative* (BFHI).

237. The MoH SR is currently working on a pilot project aimed at creating a new multidisciplinary system for providing crisis intervention and assistance to the mother/parent, for example, if the child was stillborn, or if the child was identified as a developmental risk or a medical diagnosis related to a health disadvantage.

238. The main tasks, programmes and activities for the protection and promotion of sexual and reproductive health are elaborated in various documents, in particular in the Concept of Health Care in Gynaecology and Obstetrics, professional guidelines and non-legislative documents such as strategies and action plans, e.g. Gender Equality Plan for 2020–2024, the National Strategy for Equality of Women and Men and Equal Opportunities in the SR for 2021–2027 and the Action Plan for Equality, the Strategy of Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030, the European Guarantee for Children, the National Strategy for Family Support and Demography, the National Programme for the Development of Living Conditions of Persons with Disabilities for 2021–2030.

239. The development of health care focused on women's reproductive health and safe motherhood is also reflected in the internal regulations of the MoH SR (list in the Annex).

240. Regarding the implementation of the recommendation in part (c), under the provisions of the Education Act, the MoH SR issues national curricula for health studies that prepare pupils for the health professions in secondary health schools in Slovakia. The State vocational education and training include sexual education, reproductive and sexual health and education for marriage and parenthood.

241. Throughout their studies, pupils are also introduced to the use of contraception, the risks of pregnancy at a young age and sexually transmitted diseases in a number of vocational subjects. The curricula and syllabuses of undergraduate health courses at universities and colleges also include reproductive and sexual health topics and issues.

242. Within the framework of continuing education of health professionals, the MoH SR establishes minimum standards for specialisation study programmes, for certification study programmes and for continuing education study programmes. The scope of theoretical knowledge in the minimum standards includes specific knowledge relating to sexual issues in the healthcare worker-patient relationship in the context of healthcare provision. In 2019, a new minimum standard for the specialisation study programme in sexology for the medical profession was issued.

243. Healthy Regions, a subsidiary organization of the MoH SR, in cooperation with InTYMYta, prepared and implemented training in reproductive and sexual health in MRC's starting in 2021. The aim was to prepare 246 assistants for interventions and educational activities in the MRC's. Feedback confirms that health promotion assistants are contributing to change in the field, especially in the 246 localities where Healthy Regions operates.

244. Recommendation (f) is fulfilled by the new national curriculum approved in 2023. It places greater emphasis on the pupil being able to elaborate on knowledge and be able to apply it in practice. Within the educational area of Man and Nature, pupils learn about 'Organism' and 'Heredity and variability' focusing on the human body, life processes, heredity and human variability.

Information relating to paragraphs 44 and 45

245. The Programme Slovakia also addresses improving equitable and timely access to quality, sustainable and affordable services, including health care; modernising social protection systems with a particular focus on children and disadvantaged groups; improving accessibility, including for people with disabilities. Related to this is the support for further training of health staff, e.g. gynaecology-obstetrics and neonatology units, in adherence to the BFHI principles, including support for the conduct of clinical audits.

246. The MoH SR has prepared the project "Support for Education of Health Workers in Breastfeeding Support and Relational Bonding and Conducting Clinical Audits in the Field of BFHI" (2024–2029). The objectives include the verification of non-discriminatory approach to the parent, whether to a Roma, refugee or a parent with a disability and the performance of clinical audits on the application of BFHI principles.

247. With regard to recommendation (b), in 2003 the MoH SR established a working group composed of experts in the relevant field, whose aim was to establish the facts about illegal sterilizations in the territory of Slovakia. The working group found procedural shortcomings. Therefore, the Government initiated a revision of the relevant Slovak health legislation in order to bring it into line with EU legislation and international obligations.

248. The "informed consent" is enshrined in the Health Care Act since 2004. It states that the health care professional is obliged to provide information about the purpose, nature, consequences and risks associated with the provision of health care in a clear and non-pressured manner. The patient must be able to make an informed consent decision independently, must have sufficient time to make this decision with adequate maturity of mind and will and must be medically fit to do so.

249. The healthcare workers receive training on appropriate methods of obtaining free and informed consent from women undergoing sterilization in accordance with the Health Care Act.

250. Education of health personnel in reproductive health and sexuality education, including sterilization and other contraceptive methods, as well as focusing on the legal aspects of health care provision, taking into account the need to obtain informed consent and guidance, is included in the relevant curricula for the health professions of doctor, nurse, midwife and nurse practitioner.

251. In addition, every health care worker is obliged to comply with the Code of Ethics established by Act No. 578/2004 Coll. on health care providers, health care professionals, and professional organizations in health care.

252. Unlawful sterilization is punishable under § 159 of the Criminal Code with a sentence of up to 15 years if serious bodily harm or death has been caused to the person. The Criminal Code also criminalizes falsification and making false medical records. A health professional who performs sterilisation without free, full and informed consent will therefore be criminally liable. There were no recorded cases of the criminal offence of forced sterilisation in Slovakia during the monitoring period.

253. All past cases of forced sterilizations of Roma women have been properly investigated by law enforcement authorities. We have no information on the occurrence of new cases. In the event of new cases of forced sterilization, anyone has the opportunity to contact law enforcement authorities and file a complaint of a criminal offence with the police or the prosecutor's office.

254. In November 2021, the Government apologized to women who had undergone sterilization in violation of the law. The Government apologized for the cases of sterilizations and human rights violations of (especially) Roma women in 1966–1989 and 1990–2004, where the Government described the then practices as unacceptable and a violation of human rights.

255. Regarding recommendation (c), in March 2023, the MoJ SR submitted a legislative proposal for a law on financial compensation for women sterilized in violation of the law. In April 2023, a member of the National Council of the SR submitted a draft law on the financial compensation of women sterilized in violation of the law¹⁰ (details in Annex).

256. Due to the early parliamentary elections in Slovakia in 2023, this proposal was not discussed. A similar proposal, introduced for discussion later in 2023, was not approved.

Information relating to paragraphs 46 and 47

257. A foreigner who is not publicly insured, who is not insured in another Member State and a foreigner who has been granted temporary shelter in Slovakia are also entitled to reimbursement of emergency care.

258. The MoH SR may determine the scope of medical procedures reimbursed beyond the scope of urgent medical care, by publishing the scope on its website. The amount of reimbursement for medicines, medical devices and dietetic foods shall be governed by the currently valid List of Categorised Medicines, Medical Devices and Dietetic Foods. Where a supplementary payment is set for a medicinal product, medical device or dietetic food, it shall be borne by the person for whom it is indicated.

259. Based on the above-mentioned facts, the MoH SR publishes on its website the scope of medical procedures reimbursed beyond the scope of emergency medical care.

260. The MoH SR publishes on its website the scope of health care beyond emergency health care within the meaning of Act No. 577/2004 Coll. on the scope of health care reimbursed under public health insurance and on reimbursement for services related to the provision of health care, as follows: as of January 2023, the MoH SR regulates the scope of health care for children and adolescents from birth to 18 years + 364 days, who have been granted temporary shelter in connection with the armed conflict in Ukraine (and as of 1 September 2023, the scope of health care for adults).

¹⁰ Also reported in CAT/C/SVK/FCO/4.

Information relating to paragraphs 48 and 49

261. In accordance with the Strategy of Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 and its action plan for education, the Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the SR (hereinafter as “MoERDY SR”) announced in 2023 the call “Support for the provision of early care and early intervention to children aged 0–6 years from MRC’s and from the background of generational poverty”. Emphasis is placed on the involvement of persons directly from the community who know the language and local conditions and become early childhood assistants. Developing mothers’ reading literacy and parenting skills will also increase their self-confidence and determination to enter the labour market after parental leave (see the Annex for specific figures).

262. The amendment to the Education Act of 9 May 2023, which introduced a new principle of education and upbringing: the right to be admitted to pre-primary education in kindergarten from the age of three will also contribute to the inclusion of Roma children. It will also ensure a sufficient number of places in kindergartens through the amendment to the law, as well as through the call for the expansion of kindergarten capacity by 9,107 places by 2026.

263. Compulsory pre-primary education has been introduced for all 5-year-old children, regardless of their socio-economic family background. The capacity of kindergartens was significantly increased and it was made possible for compulsory pre-primary education to be provided by pre-primary education establishments in addition to kindergartens. The overall enrolment rate of children aged 5 years has exceeded 96%.

264. Another measure is the introduction of the right of a child to be admitted to kindergarten from the age of 4 and subsequently from the age of 3 as a principle of education and training (applies from September 2024 for all children who have reached the age of 4 by 31 August 2024). It is up to the parents to decide whether to apply for their child to be admitted to a state kindergarten from the age of four or to exercise this right at their own discretion in a private or religious kindergarten.

265. In order to ensure that this right can be exercised for as many children as possible, existing kindergarten capacities are being expanded so that the participation of children aged 3–4 in high-quality pre-primary education in kindergartens gradually reaches 90%, and the enrolment rate for children aged 5 and above is at least 95%.

266. With regard to recommendation 49 (b), the parental leave up to 3 years of age is perceived by the vast majority of families in Slovakia as a great social benefit, which also allows parents on parental leave to be actively involved in the working environment at least on a part-time basis. There are approximately 3,300 children under the age of 3 enrolled in nurseries and almost 8,800 children under the age of 2 enrolled in kindergartens.

267. Recommendation 49 (c) is fulfilled in several approved documents that affect the educational process in primary schools. For example, the Education Act states that “the aim of education is to enable the child or pupil to acquire and strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the principles set out in the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms”.

268. In the Criteria for Evaluation of Educational Publications under the State Educational Programme for Primary Education (2023), one of the criteria is the ethical criterion “The educational publication does not support stereotypes, prejudices and is not discriminatory”.

269. In the 2023 National Curriculum, in the section on civic and intercultural literacy, the attitudinal framework is to “consciously work with one’s own stereotypes and prejudices” and the procedural framework is to “contribute to the creation of an inclusive environment and apply the principle of equality, respecting social and economic background, health status, ethnic, cultural, religious affiliation, origin, world-view, gender, self-perception, identity or other characteristics”. This topic is also dealt with in the educational area of Man and Society in the framework of civic science as part of the topic of Equality and Justice.

Information relating to paragraphs 50 and 51

270. The Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology of the SR (organization of the MoERDY SR) has developed professional and diagnostic procedures oriented to Roma children and youth and also implements educational activities in the field of innovative psycho-diagnosis and implementation of a system of support measures in the context of diagnosis of children from MRC's. Activities are intended to contribute to reducing the misdiagnosis and their inclusion in special schools.

271. In order to promote inclusion for all pupils, the MoERDY SR has introduced a system of support measures in the legislation effective from the school year 2023/2024. Many support measures are available to prevent and eliminate unwanted segregation, e.g. activities aimed at promoting the attainment of school competence, improving conditions for education and training of pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, promoting social inclusion, preventing pupils from leaving school, language courses, or ensuring the pedagogical assistant.

272. In May 2023, the definition of segregation was established in the Education Act. The MoERDY SR developed the Methodological Guide on Desegregation in Education and Training, which offers guidelines for schools on how to deal with situations at risk of segregation according to the different types of localities with a concentration of Roma population in Slovakia. Monitoring the risk of segregation is aimed at assessing the symptoms and risks of segregation in education.

273. The 2030 Strategy of Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma and its Action Plan for Education also includes the task of ensuring objective and culturally sensitive assessment of the individual educational needs of children from MRC's. Pre-primary education, in which children from Roma communities have the opportunity to acquire Slovak as a second language, also contributes to the elimination of the over-inclusion of Roma children in special education.

274. The OPGRC has coordinated a number of project calls also aimed at supporting the education of children from MRC's (some of the projects are described under Replies to the issues raised in paragraph 4 and 5 of the Concluding observations 26/27 in paragraphs 172, 177–183).

275. Regarding recommendation 51 (b), the calls within the National Project Development Teams I, which is aimed at supporting the socio-economic integration of marginalised communities, can involve individual municipalities, while the project provides cooperation and support to municipalities and Roma communities residing in the municipality. Projects should support the comprehensive development of communities, including the education (more in paragraph 172 and in the Annex).

276. Cooperation with local authorities (Recommendation 51 (b)) was also implemented through the National Project for the Inclusion of Children from MRC's in Kindergartens (PRIM I and II), and the positive results confirm that it was the implementation of projects under these programmes that created the conditions for the elimination of the inclusion of Roma children outside the mainstream of education in the so-called special education system (more about the project in paragraph 177 and in the Annex).

277. In relation to recommendation (d), the MoI SR performs the role of a coordinator in the field of crime prevention, with a focus also on extremism, while also coordinating the provision of assistance to victims of crime. It ensures the awareness-raising through preventive and educational activities. Based on Act No. 583/2008 Coll. on the prevention of crime and other antisocial activities, Information Offices have been established to improve protection, support and assistance to victims of crime. The Information Offices also carry out educational prevention activities aimed at young people and first contact persons from schools.

278. Within the framework of awareness-raising activities, the MoI SR has produced several brochures in the field of countering extremism e.g. "Radicalisation and Violent Extremism – A Handbook for Frontline Workers", as well as brochures related to the

radicalisation, e.g. “Cyberbullying”, “Hate Speech” and “Failure to Report and Prevent a Crime”.

Information relating to paragraphs 52 and 53

279. A crucial measure to ensure access to inclusive education has been the introduction of support measures in legislation and their implementation in practice. Support measures are a system of comprehensive assistance and support for children (from nursery to secondary school) based on merit. By applying individual support measures to a child, not excluding those with disabilities, the educational opportunities for these children in mainstream education are improved.

280. Within the framework of the Long-Term Plan for Educational, Research, Development, Artistic and Other Creative Activities for the Higher Education Sector for the years 2023–2028 approved by the Government in 2023, several measures were proposed (detailed description in the Annex):

281. Change of the concept of students with specific needs from a horizontal categorisation of students according to disadvantage to students experiencing barriers to learning and access to education who need the provision and application of support measures to fulfil their learning potential, including the identification of such students.

282. Creation of a catalogue of support measures (2024–2026) that are needed to overcome barriers to academic and non-academic life for students in higher education.

283. The Strategy for Expanding of Professional Capacities for the Provision of Support Measures (2024–2025) for university students.

Information relating to paragraphs 54 and 55

284. Following the Programme Statement of the Government of the SR for 2023–2027, the MoERDY SR is dealing with a project of career counselling. After analysing the level of provision of career guidance, support measures will be set for the next period and efforts will be made to ensure accessible guidance for all students. At the same time, the introduction of micro-certificates is being prepared, aiming at more flexible learning and focusing on skills.

285. Since 2018, a reform of the accreditation of higher education institutions has been under-way. Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education has taken over the tasks as of January 2020. This also entails the transition to new accreditation criteria – Standards for the Internal System, for the Study Programmes and Standards for Habilitation Proceedings and Inauguration Proceedings. Universities were obliged to align their internal system with these standards. Alignment took place in 2022 and the evaluation of universities was ongoing during 2023.

286. The new accreditation system brings greater involvement of stakeholders (including employers) in the process of developing, approving and assessing study programmes. Qualifications will need to meet sector-specific professional expectations for the profession. The curriculum will indicate the occupations for which the qualification is required. These will need to be confirmed by relevant external stakeholders, including employers.

Information relating to paragraphs 56 and 57

287. In 2021, the Government adopted the Conceptual Framework for Combating Radicalisation and Extremism until 2024 and on its basis the Monitoring Report on the State of Extremism in the SR for the Period 2020 and 2021” and the update of the Tasks of the Conceptual Framework was drawn up.

288. The aim of the Conceptual Framework for Combating Radicalisation and Extremism is to promote respect for universal values and to prevent the emergence of prejudices, stereotypes and hate speech conditioned by national, racial, ethnic, religious or other intolerance, as well as to prevent the emergence and dissemination of attitudes and activities

aimed at supporting and promoting racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance in a democratic society.

289. The document defines tasks such as annual survey on the state and development of radicalisation, extremism, hate speech and the public's subjective sense of security; informing the public about the negative influences that can radicalise young people on the Internet and social networks; training of civil servants in the field of assistance to victims of extremism and spectator violence.

290. In 2023, two methodologies addressing radicalisation and extremism were developed, containing general principles for strengthening the resilience of schools: "Radicalisation of children and young people" and "Armed attack in schools and school settings".

291. With regard to recommendation (b), the Fund for the Promotion of National Minority Culture provides financial resources to support activities aimed at ensuring intercultural dialogue and understanding, as well as the preservation, protection and development of the identity and cultural values of national minorities. The Fund's grants and scholarships support the implementation of multicultural and inter-ethnic projects targeting at least two national minorities.

292. The MoJ SR announces an annual call for promotion of human rights, and during 2019–2024 several projects have been supported with a focus on strengthening respect, combating hate speech and extremism, preventing radicalisation and extremism, promoting dialogue between minorities and the majority, raising awareness about the Holocaust and specifically about the Roma Holocaust. Applicants may apply for a grant of EUR 5,000 – 50,000. The standard total allocation for this grant scheme is EUR 769,500. An illustrative list of supported projects is in the Annex.

293. As part of the implementation of recommendation (c), Slovakia participates in the joint EU and Council of Europe project "INSCHOOL: Inclusive Schools for Roma Children" (2017–2027), which aims to promote the social inclusion of Roma by supporting inclusive education policies and practices in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and the United Kingdom. The MoERDY SR participated in the study meeting of inclusive education experts entitled "European Standards and Tools for Quality and Inclusive Education". Within the framework of the "Training Programme" project (2023–2024), a series of events were held where Slovak experts had the opportunity to discuss issues related to the development of educational policy to support learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.

294. The MoI SR, in cooperation with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), conducted training on "Hate crimes with a focus on a sensitive and respectful approach to victims" for the staff of Information Offices in 2023. The aim was to strengthen knowledge and skills of the staff so that they are able to identify victims of hate crime, provide adequate assistance and support to victims.

295. The MoI SR, through its Information Offices, has been organising a biannual meeting of the Regional platforms for assistance to victims of crime since 2020. In the period under review, the meetings also focused on "Hate speeches with regard to Anti-Semitism", "Prevention of disinformation", "Radicalisation" (with the participation of SNCHR), "Radicalisation with regard to the target group of youth", "Cyberbullying".

296. The MoI SR has incorporated the issue of anti-Roma, anti-minority and other discriminatory, xenophobic and extremist rhetoric into the Strategy for the Prevention of Crime and Other Anti-Social Activities in the SR until 2028 under the strategic objectives 'Creating a suitable environment for education, training and leisure time for children and youth' and 'Increasing the protection of public spaces and the sense of security'.

297. Regarding Replies to the issues raised in paragraph 4 and 5 of the Concluding observations 57 (d), in 2021 the Government adopted the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma by 2030. It defines the direction of public policies in the field of equality and inclusion of Roma. Particular emphasis is placed on non-discrimination, intensifying the fight against anti-Roma racism and increasing protection for the most vulnerable groups and individuals.

298. Under the Media Services Act (2022) any content service provided by a broadcaster or an on-demand audiovisual media service provider must respect human dignity, in particular it must not promote violence and not incite violence or hatred, disparage or denigrate on the basis of gender, whether overtly or covertly, race, colour, language, religion or belief, political or other opinion, property, disability, age, sexual orientation, birth, national or social origin, genetic features, nationality, or membership of a national or ethnic group. Likewise, video sharing platform providers are required to take appropriate measures to protect the public from programmes, user-generated videos and media commercial communications containing the above harmful content. Also, no commercial media communication may contain or promote discrimination on any basis. A sanction may be imposed for an infringement.

299. An important role in the field of active strengthening of respect and appreciation of the diversity of national minorities and ethnic groups in the media was played by the public broadcaster – Radio and Television of Slovakia (“RTVS”) in the period under review. The RTVS programme service consisted of programmes that developed the national awareness and cultural identity of all the inhabitants of the SR. RTVS was obliged to provide content and regionally balanced programmes for national minorities and ethnic groups.

Information relating to paragraphs 58 and 59

300. Upon the request of the founder, the MoERDY SR may classify a school as a national minority school (with the language of instruction of a national minority) or a national minority class (with the language of instruction of a national minority). Hungarian, Ruthenian, Ukrainian, German, Russian, Roma and Bulgarian national minorities have exercised their right to education in the mother tongue. In Slovakia, there are four primary schools where the Roma language is taught and five secondary schools where students can take the matriculation examination in Roma language. They can continue their studies at the University of Prešov in the pedagogical programme – Roma Language, Literature and Realities. A pilot Roma ethnic school in the municipality of Rakúsy has been created. This project represents a significant step towards supporting the improvement of the quality of Roma nationality education in Slovakia.

301. The MoERDY SR has approved the consolidated version of the state educational programmes for primary schools with effect from 1 September 2022. It includes framework curricula for primary schools with the Slovak language of instruction, primary schools with the language of instruction of a national minority and primary schools with the instruction of a language in national minority. Their detailed breakdown is in annex.

302. In accordance with the obligations arising from the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the MoERDY SR has approved educational standards for the teaching of Bulgarian, Czech, Croatian and Polish language and literature (in 2022 for primary and in 2023 for lower secondary education). There are schools where the Roma language is taught.

303. In order to promote inclusion for all pupils, the system of support measures was introduced from the school year 2023/2024. One of the objectives is to support the acquisition of the school’s language of instruction for children/pupils whose mother tongue is different from the school’s language of instruction and for children/pupils whose knowledge of the school’s language of instruction is below the age-appropriate knowledge of the school’s language of instruction.

304. The MoERDY SR is implementing a number of measures for teachers already working in schools in the field of intercultural education with a focus on the Roma language, a more detailed breakdown of which is in Annex.

305. The MoERDY SR is involved in the implementation of the Council of Europe pilot project ROMANI/PLURILINGUAL POLICY EXPERIMENTATION – Inclusion of Roma children in education – a plurilingual approach (2022–2025). The project involves schools from Slovenia, Greece and three primary schools from Slovakia.

Information relating to paragraphs 60 and 61

306. The MoH SR considers the area focused on the protection and support of women's and mothers' reproductive health as a priority and continuously develops proposals for the fundamental directions of the state health policy and develops them in the light of the current legislation, non-legislative documents approved by the Government and proposals of the advisory bodies of the MoH SR.

307. In the area of reproductive health support, the MoH SR cooperates with experts in the given medical field. According to the WHO, up to 25% of infertility in women is caused by delaying pregnancy. For this reason, positive education for the benefit of the woman, the child and minimising treatment failure is appreciated. In the context of the recommendation made by the attending physician to a woman to carry out in vitro fertilisation, it is essential, in order to protect the woman's health and to exclude health risks, to proceed on the basis of an individual assessment of her state of health.

308. On the basis of a two-year cooperation agreement between the MoH SR and the WHO Regional Office for Europe, a reproductive health promotion project is being implemented to develop the basic foundations for the creation of a professional medical tool – an evidence-based policy document for the treatment of patients and their partners with infertility with standard diagnostic and therapeutic procedures in the treatment of infertility using the method of restorative reproductive medicine and to increase access to health care in the treatment of infertility in couples.

Information relating to paragraph 62

309. On 3 May 2023, the National Council of the SR consented to the CAT Optional Protocol and decided that it is an international treaty under Article 7(5) of the Constitution of the SR, which takes precedence over laws. The Optional Protocol entered into force for the SR on 19 October 2023.

310. National preventive mechanism has been established, the activities of which are carried out by three human rights protection institutions – Public Defender of Rights, Commissioner for Children and Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities. The legislation extended the competence of all three institutions to include the power to carry out systematic visits to places where persons deprived of their liberty *de jure* or *de facto* are located, during which they will ascertain how persons are treated in these places. Budgets of the three institutions have been increased in connection to the newly introduced competences.

Information relating to paragraph 63

311. On 20 January 2021, the Government adopted the document "Vision and Strategy for the Development of Slovakia until 2030 – Long-term Strategy for Sustainable Development of the SR – Slovakia 2030" ("Vision 2030"). It was developed through a participatory process involving all stakeholders of the quadruple helix, i.e. representatives of the public administration, non-governmental organisations, the private sector and academia. This ensured respect for the principle: '*leave no one behind*'.

312. Vision 2030 consists of three integrated development programmes: Protection and development of human and natural resources, Sustainable use of resources and Community development (details in Annex).

313. The monitoring and evaluation is entrusted to the Government Council for Agenda 2030, which consists of representatives of the regions, socio-economic partners and NGOs, in addition to government representatives.

314. The OECD implemented the project "Monitoring Framework of Sustainable Development in Slovakia", which ended in January 2024. Further strengthening of sustainable development will take place through the project "Building Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development at Central and Regional Level in the SR". The project has been

approved by the European Commission and its implementation is entrusted to the OECD (2024–2026).

Information relating to paragraph 64

315. All central government bodies responsible for the implementation of Slovakia's human rights obligations, as well as specific recommendations of the UN Committees, continuously evaluate the implementation of these obligations. For example, the MoLSAF SR annually prepares a Report on the Social Situation of the Population of the SR, which contributes to the implementation of the Recommendation. The Report is based on socio-economic indicators in areas such as employment, unemployment, poverty and social exclusion, gender equality and equal opportunities.

316. This recommendation will be addressed by the SR in the preparation of further implementation reports and responses to the recommendations of the UN Committees.

Information relating to paragraph 65

317. The concluding recommendations of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights addressed to the SR have been translated into Slovak and have been published on the websites of the central government bodies responsible for the issues addressed by the Covenant. On the website of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR, all implementation reports of the SR on international human rights conventions to which the SR is a party, as well as the recommendations of the relevant UN committees on these reports, are publicly available.

318. The Committee's recommendations were submitted to the Government and are publicly available on the Slov-Lex legislation portal as well as on the website of the Office of the Government. On 11 November 2020, the Government discussed the material with the Committee's recommendations and adopted Resolution No. 712/2020, by which it instructed relevant ministries to assess the possibilities and extent of implementation of the Committee's recommendations, and at the same time instructed the OPGRC, the Association of Towns and Municipalities of Slovakia and the Union of Towns of Slovakia to cooperate in the implementation of these recommendations.

319. Prior to the meeting of the Government, the report was discussed in the Council of the Government of the SR for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality, which is a permanent expert, advisory, coordinating and consultative body of the Government in the field of protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms. The Council adopts opinions on the national implementation of Slovakia's international obligations in the field of human rights protection. The Council is chaired by the Minister of Justice and is composed of key public administration bodies and institutions as well as representatives of civil society involved in human rights issues.
