



ADDITIONAL SUBMISSION OF THE SLOVAK NATIONAL CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS TO THE COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Review of Slovakia's sixth periodic report
during the 98th session in January 2025

December 2024



INTRODUCTION

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

The Centre hereby submits to the Committee on the Rights of the Child the following additional information in advance of the review of Slovakia's sixth periodic report during the 98th session in January 2025:

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1. Collection and analysis of disaggregated data

The Slovak Republic has long-standing deficiencies in the collection of disaggregated data, including those pertaining to children,¹ which has also been raised by the List of issues, paragraph 2(b), addressed to the Slovak Republic this year. There are numerous areas related to children where data collection could be enhanced. We have chosen to focus on three key areas, specifically related to vulnerable groups. Gathering data in these areas would provide insight into their needs, support effective policymaking, and may help break cycles of discrimination.

There is a fundamental lack of data on children living in the marginalized Roma communities. The Slovak government has repeatedly argued that the collection of ethnically disaggregated data would violate data protection legislation, which however does allow collection of anonymized data. Disaggregated data are necessary for the identification and tackling of discrimination, especially of children from vulnerable groups.² While Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities collects data about these communities every few years in the Atlas of Roma Communities, the Atlas does not reflect on children.³ In addition, public censuses, which are based on self-identification, generally underestimate the number of Roma people due to complex reasons, including the Roma respondents' fear of discrimination.⁴

Available state data on the refugee children only report on the country of origin and number of unaccompanied children detained due to unauthorized stay or unauthorized border crossing.⁵ Regarding the data on children with temporary protection, the Ministry of Interior collects data on the granted temporary protection by age.⁶ The Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic updates the number of Ukrainian pupils in the Slovak school system every month according to the type of educational institution.⁷ However, individuals with temporary protection status, including children, have not yet been re-registered. Accurate data on the current number of individuals with temporary

¹ Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture et al. 2018. "Civil Society Monitoring Report on Implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy in Slovakia: Focusing on structural and horizontal preconditions for successful implementation of the strategy." *Directorate-General for Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers*. Available at: https://cvek.sk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/RCM_2017_Slovakia_EC_approved.pdf.

² Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture et al. 2018. "Civil Society Monitoring Report on Implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy in Slovakia: Focusing on structural and horizontal preconditions for successful implementation of the strategy." *Directorate-General for Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers*. Available at: https://cvek.sk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/RCM_2017_Slovakia_EC_approved.pdf.

³ Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities. 2019. "Atlas rómskych komunit." Available in Slovak at: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/atlas-romskych-komunit/atlas-romskych-komunit-2019/>.

⁴ Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture et al. 2018. "Civil Society Monitoring Report on Implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy in Slovakia: Focusing on structural and horizontal preconditions for successful implementation of the strategy." *Directorate-General for Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers*. Available at: https://cvek.sk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/RCM_2017_Slovakia_EC_approved.pdf.

⁵ The Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic. 2024. "Statistical overview of legal and illegal migration in the Slovak Republic in 2023." Available in Slovak at: <https://www.minv.sk/?rok-2023-2>.

⁶ The Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic. 2024. "Temporary protection: Statistical overview." Available in Slovak at: <https://www.minv.sk/?docasne-utocisko>.

⁷ The Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic. 2024. "Situation in Ukraine: General information." Available in Slovak at: <https://ukrajina.minedu.sk/vseobecne-informacie/>.



stay would reveal how many children have been out of school over the past two and a half years and how many need to enroll once mandatory education is implemented. This re-registration would also clarify the needs of those with temporary protection status in Slovakia, guiding the government on where to focus support mechanisms.

The Slovak Republic does not collect any public data regarding LGBTQI+ children and their lives in Slovakia. All the information on this community is mainly through different non-governmental organizations' research. Hence, the information on LGBTQI+ children is very scarce impacting the (in-)action on the policy-making level and perpetuating the cycle of discrimination against these people.⁸

Recommendations:

- **The Centre recommends strengthening the collection of disaggregated data, including collection of ethnically disaggregated data.**
- **The Centre recommends re-registering individuals with temporary protection in Slovakia, including children.**
- **Furthermore, we call for all the data projects planned for the coming years, such as the study on children's mental health in Slovakia, should include a section on children from minority groups, including LGBTQI+ children.**
- **We call for monitoring and reporting on the situation of LGBTQI+ children, for example collecting statistical data and official data on their needs, issues and discrimination they face.**

2. Children's participation on the decision-making

This chapter has been made with collaboration with the Youth Council of Slovakia (*Rada mládeže Slovenska*), a non-governmental umbrella organization connecting children's and youth organizations in Slovakia.

Children in Slovakia cannot fully participate in the decision-making process, which may make them feel that they are not listened to. Opportunities for participation in co-decision are created by pupil and student parliaments in primary and secondary schools. If well managed, they allow pupils and students to be involved in the decision-making processes of the school and to create their own activities in the school environment. Other times, we see the phenomenon of establishing these parliaments only on the formal level, not fulfilling their objectives. Another developing pillar of child and youth participation are youth parliaments at the city and municipal level or at the regional council level. These are set up as advisory bodies to municipalities on issues affecting children and

⁸ Kuruc Andre, and Jana Jablonická Zezulová. 2017. "National LGBT survey: report on the results." *Iniciatíva Inakosť*. <https://inakost.sk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Celoslovensky-LGBT-prieskum-2017-sprava.pdf>



young people. The number of such parliaments is, however, very low and for example, from 3,000 municipalities only 30 of them organize youth parliaments. At national level, children and young people are involved in working groups and advisory bodies by public authorities and state institutions.

Accompanying negative phenomena of child and youth participation in Slovakia are youthwashing and tokenism. Youthwashing consists of inviting young people to meetings and round tables to express their opinion and present their vision, but when it comes to actual planning and implementation of different projects, they remain behind closed doors. Later, they lose the impact on the follow-up agenda from the meetings and their voice gradually fades away. Tokenism occurs whenever adults put youth in formal and informal positions without any substance, purpose, or power.

Recommendations:

- **To create support mechanisms for the development of youth participation in Slovakia combining financial support for the youth parliaments and mentoring programs for young people involved in participatory structures.**
- **To create methodological support for youth participation coordinators in local government or state institutions describing the principles of meaningful participation and the negative phenomena of participation such as youthwashing and tokenism.**
- **To link participatory structures on different levels and create a voluntary nationwide platform that would facilitate training of young people in participation.**
- **Supporting children's and youth organizations with a focus on youth activation and volunteering.**

3. Access to administrative complaint mechanisms

In this submission, the Centre aims to also address the list of issues request paragraph 2 (c), specifically children's ability to access justice, including the right to submit complaints, which is a crucial aspect of protecting their rights. In Slovakia, children have several options for filing complaints regarding violations of their rights.⁹ For instance, they can address their concerns to the Children's Commissioner or the Authority for Social Protection of Children and Social Guardianship. A child has the right to turn to the Commissioner even without their parents' knowledge. Additionally, there are several helplines available for children experiencing violence or abuse. These helplines offer a safe way for children to seek help and receive the support they need in difficult situations.

⁹ Act No. 176/2024 Coll. amending and supplementing the Act No. 305/2005 Coll. on social-legal protection of children and social guardianship and on amendment and supplementation of certain acts. Available in Slovak at: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/ezbierky/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2005/305/20150720.html>.



Although children have access to institutions designed to protect their rights, these child protection services are not always provided in a child-friendly manner. In theory, children should have access to information on how to file complaints, but this information is not always easy to find. Access to justice for children in Slovakia remains challenging, particularly for those in disadvantaged communities. While around 96% of pupils have internet access at home and 93% have a mobile phone with internet, many children in poorer areas still do not have this access.¹⁰

In addition to the lack of internet access, these children also face difficulties when trying to reach services where they can file complaints in person. In many disadvantaged communities, accessing authorities and organizations that can help with their problems and protect their rights is difficult. There are not enough social and legal services available, and in many areas, limited transportation makes it even harder for these children to get the help they need.

Lastly, websites of public institutions play an essential role in providing information that supports children's access to justice. However, many of these websites are only available in Slovak, with some offering content in English. For children from minorities, such as Ukrainian, Hungarian, and Roma communities, the lack of information in their native languages can be a significant barrier.

Recommendations:

- **To improve children's access to justice, it is essential to ensure that information about their rights and complaint procedures is easy to understand and widely available. The Centre recommends the Slovak Republic to address barriers like limited internet access and language differences expanding outreach and making services more accessible in underserved areas.**

4. Environmental policies

The paragraph 10 (a) of the list of issues in relation to the sixth periodic report of Slovakia calls for information on the climate bill that was proposed by the previous Government of the Slovak Republic. The public consultation procedure has ended in February 2023. However, the bill was introduced in period when an early election was called. The previous Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic did not have enough time to pass the bill through government and parliament. The new government that was formed in October 2024 included passing of the climate bill into their program.¹¹ However, since then, the Ministry has not done so. Contrarily, the new leadership of the Ministry has passed many laws undermining Slovakia's environmental protection, limiting the participation of the civil society in projects' development and environmental legal proceedings, delaying crucial strategies and actions (e.g., the clean air strategy), and dismissing numerous experts from the Ministry.¹² Reacting to these developments, the Centre has invited Michel Forst, UN Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders, to an informal meeting with the environmental

¹⁰ The Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic. 2020. "Distance learning opportunities for schools." Available in Slovak at: <https://www.minedu.sk/moznosti-distancneho-vzdelavania-pre-skoly/>.

¹¹ The Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic. 2023. "Government Programme Statement of the Slovak Republic 2023 – 2027: "Better. More peaceful and safer living." Available in Slovak at: <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Dynamic/DocumentPreview.aspx?DocID=535376>

¹² Greenpeace. 2024. "The petition for the resignation of the leadership of the Ministry of the Environment has already been signed by 25 thousand people." Available in Slovak at: <https://sdu.sk/KGJCH>.



human rights defenders in Slovakia.¹³ During these discussions, many professionals in this sector have highlighted challenges posed by public institutions obstructing the implementation of different projects.

Overall, Slovakia's current actions in achieving its ambition to be carbon neutral by 2050 are very slow undermining efforts to combat climate change effectively.¹⁴ For instance, the Updated Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030 proposed by the current administration is unclear in its allocation of financial resources and it includes only general targets without a roadmap and responsible actors to achieve them. Furthermore, the plan tackles energy poverty only in a general and declarative manner without clearly identifying policy tools, legal definitions, and funding allocation.

These developments are concerning, especially with regards to different environmental challenges the country faces. Slovakia has one of the worst air pollutions in the EU¹⁵, which disproportionately affects children's health.¹⁶ The southern regions in Slovakia may face droughts and extreme heat waves due to climate change and the country needs to allocate more than 1 billion EUR to clean up many contaminated sites.¹⁷ Furthermore, marginalized Roma communities are and will be disproportionately more affected by environmental risks and climate change-related disasters, including extreme heats, droughts, and rainfalls.¹⁸ The absence of adequate infrastructure and access to essential services, such as public water supplies, will worsen the impacts of climate change on these communities. This will widen the socioeconomic divide, making it even harder for children to break free from generational poverty.¹⁹ Effective environmental policies should, hence, also include support based on these vulnerabilities, such as socio-economic status, age, and ethnicity.

Another major issue the Centre sees is the decision issued by the Ministry this summer that funding from the Green Education Fund and the Environment Fund in the field of education and training will not be allocated to non-government organizations. The Ministry has stated that the financing will be given to state's educational institutions instead.²⁰ Even though the scheme will still support environmental education, it may threaten many projects conducted by non-governmental organizations, which possess expert knowledge in this area and are an important part of children's environmental education.

¹³ Beňová, Martina. 2024. "When you call young people eco-terrorists, all you hear is the word terrorists, says special rapporteur in their defence." Aktuality.sk. Available in Slovak at: <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/8MVqPrA/ked-nazvete-mladych-ekoteroristami-pocut-iba-slovo-teroristi-hovori-osobitny-spravodaica-na-ich-obranu/>.

¹⁴ OECD. 2024. "OECD Environmental Performance Review: Slovak Republic." Available at: <https://www.minzp.sk/files/iep/analyzy/epr-slovakia-2024-highlights-final-english-web.pdf>

¹⁵ Institute for Strategy and Analysis. 2024. "In Slovakia, we breathe more polluted air than most EU citizens." Available in Slovak at: <https://isa.gov.sk/2024/04/16/na-slovensku-dychame-viac-znecisteny-vzduch-ako-vacsina-obyvateľov-eu/>

¹⁶ European Environment Agency. 2023. "Air pollution and children's health." Available at: <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/air-pollution-and-childrens-health>

¹⁷ OECD. 2024. "OECD Environmental Performance Review: Slovak Republic." Available at: <https://www.minzp.sk/files/iep/analyzy/epr-slovakia-2024-highlights-final-english-web.pdf>.

¹⁸ Environmental Policy Institute. 2023. "Leader! The villages are burning! Identifying climate change vulnerability levels at the level of municipalities in the Slovak Republic." Available in Slovak at: https://www.minzp.sk/files/iep/veduci_horia_obce.pdf.

¹⁹ Environmental Policy Institute. 2023. "Leader! The villages are burning! Identifying climate change vulnerability levels at the level of municipalities in the Slovak Republic." Available in Slovak at: https://www.minzp.sk/files/iep/veduci_horia_obce.pdf.

²⁰ TASR. 2024. "NGOs criticize changes in the functioning of funds, Taraba talks about support for schools." Available in Slovak at: <https://klimatickakoalicia.sk/mimovladky-kritizuju-zmeny-fungovania-fondovtaraba-hovori-o-podpore-skol/>.



Recommendations:

- **The Centre recommends adopting the climate bill in the version approved through the public consultation procedure in 2023. If any revisions are made, the Centre and civil society organizations should be involved in the process.**
- **The Centre recommends implementing policies designed to address vulnerabilities associated with factors such as ethnicity, age, gender, et cetera.**
- **Criteria of applicability for the Green Education Fund and the Environment Fund in the field of education and training should allow non-governmental organization to apply for funding.**

5. Child poverty in Slovakia

According to data from 2023, approximately 25 % of children are at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Slovakia, placing the country among the lowest ranking in the European Union.²¹ Nearly one in six children lives in a household with income below the poverty line, and the situation has worsened due to the pandemic.²² Poverty is particularly prevalent in families with three or more children, where around 37 % experience poverty or social exclusion.²³ These children tend to encounter greater challenges in education, are more likely to end up in low-paid, low-skilled employment, and face significant difficulties in breaking the cycle of generational poverty.

Low-threshold and community-based services are crucial for children living in these conditions, as they provide support, informal education, and assistance in overcoming daily challenges. These services are designed to be accessible to every child, regardless of their social or economic background. Currently, Slovak legislation does not mandate municipalities to finance these social services, and due to budget consolidation, such services are often not accounted for in budgets.

These services are often provided by non-governmental organizations, such as People in Peril, which collaborated with the Centre on this additional information. Many of these projects are financed through EU funds. With the approaching January 2029, when these funds may be reduced or entirely discontinued, there is a significant risk that the availability of these services will be jeopardized. If EU funding were to be reduced or discontinued in the future, it could severely affect the availability of these essential services. This would deprive children from disadvantaged families of the necessary support to address their social and economic difficulties. In the absence of stable and long-term funding, the situation could worsen, further deepening the problem of child poverty and social exclusion.

Recommendations:

²¹ Eurostat. 2024. "Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2023." Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20240719-1>.

²² Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic. 2022. "EU SILC 2021: The pandemic has increased the number of people living below the income poverty line, but not dramatically." Available in Slovak at: <https://sdu.sk/ggO>.

²³ Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic. 2022. "EU SILC 2021: The pandemic has increased the number of people living below the income poverty line, but not dramatically." Available in Slovak at: <https://sdu.sk/ggO>.



- **To ensure the continuity and sustainability of these services, it is essential that low-threshold and community-based services become an integral part of the social system and are guaranteed at the local government level, specifically within self-governing regions. These services should become a permanent part of social assistance, even after the depletion of EU funds, ensuring their stable and long-term financing.**
- **Furthermore, it is essential to implement legislative measures that guarantee the accessibility of these services not only in the present but also in the future.**

6. LGBTQI+ children

The Centre has collaborated on this chapter with non-governmental organizations helping LGBTQI+ people, Sapliq and Prizma Košice and is reacting to the Committees' 2016 Concluding Observations to the Slovak Republic, which expressed concerns over hate speech towards vulnerable groups, among them LGBTQI+ people, including children. According to the study from 2022 86 % of respondents have heard statements in schools that were targeting the LGBTQI+ community, and 37 % had an experience with hate comments and behaviour from their classmates.²⁴ Hatred toward the LGBTQI+ community is omnipresent, including in political discourse. For example, many anti-trans statements use children and scare tactics as a tool to create opposition to trans minors' access to health care. This widespread hostility negatively affects the mental health of young LGBTQI+ individuals. Furthermore, the current government has terminated several grant programs supporting LGBTQI+ organizations, threatening their activities, including protection of LGBTQI+ children.²⁵ Additionally, a failed proposed amendment in the National Council aimed to ban the dissemination of information about different sexual orientations and gender identities in schools this year.²⁶

Regarding intersex children, there is also a lack of systematic data collection on genital reconstruction surgeries in Slovakia. The Slovak legislation does not regulate the attribution of gender to intersex people, and therefore the law does not prohibit normalizing surgical procedures on children. Postponement of registering the child's gender in the registry office is possible for a maximum of one week after birth, which may motivate parents or legal guardians to have early surgical procedures for their child. Parents' fear of bullying also contributes to the preference for normalizing procedures.

Recommendations:

²⁴ Žureková, Michaela. 2024 "Slovakia is changing for the worse. What has a new survey on LGBTI people shown?" SME. Available in Slovak at: <https://domov.sme.sk/c/23123846/slovensko-sa-meni-k-horsiemu-co-ukazal-novy-prieskum-o-lgbti-ludoch.html>.

²⁵ Zdút, Matúš. 2024. "SNS brags about stopping subsidies for LGBTI+ projects. This could lead to further hate speech, warns lawyer." *Denník N*. Available in Slovak at: <https://dennikn.sk/4345163/sns-sa-chvali-zastavenim-dotacii-pre-lgbti-projekty-moze-to-vyustit-do-dalsich-neverstnych-prejavov-varuje-pravnik/>

²⁶ Proposal of the Members of the National Council of the Slovak Republic Rudolf Huliak, Dagmar Kramplova, Andrej Danko and Adam Lučanský for the issuance of an Act supplementing Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Education and Training (School Act) and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts as amended. Available in Slovak at: <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Default.aspx?sid=zakony/zakon&MasterID=9918>.



- **Taking systematic measures to effectively monitor and eliminate bullying (including cyberbullying) and violence against LGBTIQ+ children in all its forms.**
- **Conducting awareness-raising campaigns targeting academics, education authorities, students, and the public to combat stigma and prejudice against LGBTIQ+ children.**
- **To adopt legislation to regulate the procedure of gender assignment at the birth of an intersex child and to provide medical staff with training that includes non-stigmatizing information on healthcare for intersex and transgender children.**

7. Children with temporary protection status

Single adults with dependents constitute the most common type of household among those with temporary protection status who fled the full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine. Among them are more than 40,000 children, who applied for the temporary protection in Slovakia.²⁷ People of working age occupy mostly lower-skilled and lower-paid professions that do not ally with their education and prior experience.²⁸ Moreover, many of these adults in the single households are taking care of children or other vulnerable persons, such as older persons or persons with disabilities.²⁹

As a result of these conditions, persons with temporary protection status require additional support from the state or international organizations. However, tailored assistance is gradually diminishing, such as housing allowances for refugees. At the same time, individuals under temporary protection are ineligible for many of the benefits provided by Slovakia's social welfare system, such as child benefits, funeral allowances, and others. Shrinking support and exclusion from some of these allowances may deepen their socio-economic vulnerabilities, and hence impact the wellbeing of children. Significantly when the latest studies showed that the socio-economic situation of the households impacts Ukrainian children's attendance in schools.³⁰

Recommendations:

- **To ensure continuing social support of persons with temporary protection status that accounts for their vulnerabilities.**
- **To integrate Ukrainian refugees into the national social support system, such as the child benefit scheme, particularly for those working in Slovakia and contributing to the system. This would provide additional income for households in vulnerable situations and promote their inclusion in the hosting society.**

²⁷ The Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic. 2024. "Temporary protection: Statistical overview." Available in Slovak at: <https://www.minv.sk/?docasne-utocisko>.

²⁸ British Red Cross, IFRC, Slovak Red Cross. 2023. "Labour market and employability assessment for displaced people and refugees in Slovakia." Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/slovakia/labour-market-and-employability-assessment-displaced-people-and-refugees-slovakia>.

²⁹ UNHCR. 2024. "Slovakia Protection Profiling & Monitoring - Protection Risks and Needs of Refugees from Ukraine." Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/slovakia/slovakia-protection-profiling-monitoring-protection-risks-and-needs-refugees-ukraine-data-09-oct-2024>

³⁰ Rehuš, Michal and Alexandra Ostertágová. 2023. "The state of education of pupils with temporary protection status from Ukraine: interim report." *State School Inspection*. Available in Slovak at: https://www.ssi.sk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/vzdelavanie_ziakov_odidencov_z_Ukrajiny.pdf



8. Online attacks of politicians against children

In November 2024, the Minister of Interior in a video posted on Facebook criticized high school students who dressed up as older persons for Halloween, with one of them holding a sign saying, “I love Fico” (meaning Prime Minister Rober Fico), parodying older supporters of the ruling party SMER.³¹ Minister of Interior in his post called the students “children fighters” which we don’t need” and claimed opposition parties use children for propaganda. He accused these children of increasing tension in society and mocking the older persons. The school's headmaster spoke in support of the students, who later had to issue a public apology, after facing enormous backlash, including attacks on social media.

In the view of the Centre, students were disproportionately publicly attacked for exercising their freedom of expression with harmless political satire, protected by Art. 13 and 14 of the Convention, by the Minister of Interior, with a potentially negative deterring effect on all children. We further note potential risks to the safety of the children concerned as a photo of them from the school carnival circulated on social media.

In October 2024 high school students from Trencin and their school were targeted by a social media post of Slovak member of the European Parliament Milan Mazurek. Students were planning a commemoration of the deaths of two young queer victims of the terrorist attack that happened in Bratislava two years ago. The school planned to organize a poster exhibition, and students could dress in rainbow colours as a sign of solidarity with the LGBTI community. Participation was voluntary. The MEP verbally attacked the school, one of the teachers and the students for spreading „LGBT ideology” and for raising „rainbow fanatics.” The school cancelled the event following threats and backlash online. Prime Minister supported the school’s decision to cancel the event and criticized that it was even planned.³²

In this case, we commend the response of the Ministry of Education which supported the school. However, these events culminated in various last-minute changes in the School Act approved by the Parliament at the end of October 2024³³, including tightening of the rules for any extra-curricular activity in schools, which now have to be either approved by the school board or by the parents, who may exclude their children from these activities in which case the school must provide an alternative program.

³¹ Jochecová, Ketrin. 2024. “Slovak minister blasts teens dressing up as Fico voters for Halloween.” Politico. Available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/robert-fico-slovakia-halloween-students-voting-bratislava/>

³² Kiššová, Katarína. 2024. “The school wanted to honor the victims of the attack on Zamočka Street. After Mazurek's pressure, the event was cancelled, the ministry is defending it.” Tvnoviny.sk. Available in Slovak at: <https://tvnoviny.sk/domace/clanok/928694-skola-si-chcela-uctit-obete-utoku-na-zamockej-po-mazurekovom-tlaku-akciu-zrusila-ministerstvo-ju-brani>

³³ Act No. 290/2024 Coll. amending and supplementing the Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on education and training (Education Act) and on amendments and additions to certain acts. Available in Slovak at: https://www.slov-lex.sk/ezbierky/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2008/245/vyhlasene_znenie.html.



These recent attacks were not the only cases of politicians singling out individuals in their social media posts and are part of a pattern of public lynch mobs initiated by politicians. The first major case involving a child was in 2021 when former MP and current Minister of the Environment, Tomas Taraba, posted pictures of the 17-year-old daughter of the President from a fashion show in which she appeared on the runway and prompted his followers to make fun of her looks, which led to thousands of degrading comments on social media.³⁴

Recommendations:

- **We call on the Slovak Republic to adopt concrete measures in order to prevent and sanction cases of online harassment of children by public officials.**
- **In order to set clear boundaries on the use of private social media by public officials we suggest adopting a Code of Conduct for parliamentarians as well as members of the cabinet, which would explicitly include ethical guidelines for social media use, as well as a system of oversight.**

9. Installation of monitoring systems in schools

The Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, as a reaction to numerous bomb threats targeting schools and disrupting schools all over the country in fall of 2024 and other security incidents, suggested installing camera systems (CCTV) in schools to increase school safety by monitoring ineligible persons on the school's property. Nonetheless, the application of CCTV would include active monitoring of all the persons, including children to identify and alert the school staff or police department on potential threats and unusual activities. The system would collect biometric data, detect, and identify the faces of every person entering the school's property. The data would be archived, accessible from internet devices and analysed through an artificial intelligence system. According to the Ministry, it could also be used in the advanced search for specific criteria and incidents.³⁵

The installation of CCTV on school property has several issues, including a possible negative consequence on the children's privacy, AI's discriminatory biases and little actual impact on children's safety. Slovak Association for the Protection of Personal Data warns that CCTV and AI technologies may be attacked, and the personal data of children breached and misused.³⁶ AI and its learning system have biases and could discriminate against some groups of persons; hence it is important to discuss the potential threat the CCTV could have on the protection of Roma children

³⁴ Gáliková, Zuzana. 2021. "MP Taraba's sophisticated attack on President's daughter had a clear target, says expert." *Tvnoviny.sk* Available in Slovak at: <https://tvnoviny.sk/domace/clanok/139662-rafinovany-utok-poslanca-tarabu-na-dceru-prezidentky-mal-jasny-ciel-tvrdi-odbornicka>

³⁵ The Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic. "System solution for the safety of people in buildings primary and secondary schools and in other at-risk schools objects with public access." Available in Slovak at: <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/29939/1>.

³⁶ Association for the Protection of Personal Data. 2024. "Cameras on all schools with the usage of AI." Available in Slovak at: https://soou.sk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/TS_SOOU_Kamery-na-skolach_WEB.pdf.



and other minority groups. Thirdly, the security threat incidents described as a justification for the project are mostly false bomb threats sent by e-mail or executed by pupils, whom CCTV's system would not identify as suspicious persons on the school's property.³⁷ The security threats the schools in Slovakia have faced recently would not be solved by installing the CCTV.

Recommendations:

- **The Centre recommends not to execute the plan for CCTV installation in schools.**
- **Security incidents as described in the documents by the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic in several instances have roots in bullying and worsening of the mental health of the pupils. Instead of implementing this invasive plan that could harm children's privacy, we recommend that the Government pursue programs that would target the sources of security threats and enhance mental health care for pupils.**

³⁷ Association for the Protection of Personal Data. 2024. "Cameras on all schools with the usage of AI." Available in Slovak at: https://soou.sk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/TS_SOOU_Kamery-na-skolach_WEB.pdf.