**Report on the rights of the child and inclusive social protection**

**Human Rights Council Resolution 49/20**

**Inputs SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

*1. What social protection systems are in place for children in your country? Please provide examples of specific laws and regulations, measures, policies, and programmes directed at ensuring children’s access to inclusive social protection.*

Part of social protection is, among other aspects, the social security system, which consists of social insurance, pension savings, state social support (in principle, it is state social benefits) and social assistance - it mainly concerns benefits in material need, compensation for the social consequences of severe disability, social services and also social protection of children and social guardian (hereinafter referred to as "SPOD and SK").

The Slovak Republic consistently pays attention to the observance of the rights of the child and ensuring the protection of the child necessary for his well-being and respecting his best interest according to the international convention.

The protection of the rights and legally protected interests of the child by SPOD and SK measures is part of the protection of the rights and legally protected interests of the child according to the international convention. According to Art. 3 par. 3 of the Act No. 305/2005 Coll. on the social and legal protection of children and on social guardianship and on the amendment and supplementation of certain laws as amended (hereinafter referred to as "Act No. 305/2005 Coll."), i.e. of the Act that regulates SPOD and SK, the primary consideration in the choice and application of SPOD and SK measures is the best interest of the child, for the determination and assessment of which the principle of the best interest of the child is applied according to Act no. 36/2005 Coll. on the family (fundamental principle No. 5 of the Family Act).

The SPOD and SK authority is obliged to accept and evaluate every initiative concerning the child (submitted even by the child himself, while the initiative for evaluating the child's situation does not have to be only a notification about a threat to the child's life, health or favourable development, or about the use of rude or humiliating forms of treatment of the child, and forms of child punishment, but every information, submission, request, notice delivered in any way to the SPOD and SK authority. The SPOD and SK authority evaluates the situation of the child and his family, assesses the possibilities of the parents, other relatives and other close persons of the child to solve the situation of the child and the family for the purpose of determining the degree of endangerment of the child and taking other measures to help the child and his family.

Assessing the situation of the child and the family is a complex activity that includes the systematic and targeted acquisition and ongoing evaluation of information from various sources. The evaluation of the child's situation is carried out for each child in the family separately, taking into account the individual needs of the given child.

Depending on the established facts, the SPOD and SK authority takes the necessary SPOD and SK measures in cooperation with the child, the child's family and other entities, e.g. SPOD facility and SK - Centre for Children and Family (CDR), accredited entity, school, municipality, etc.

CDR implements measures in a residential form (on the basis of a court decision or on the basis of an agreement with the child's parents/other persons responsible for the child), ambulatory or in the field. CDR, in cooperation with SPOD and SK authorities, implements measures to evaluate the situation of the child and the family, assess the options of the parents, other relatives and other close persons of the child, if it was not possible to clearly determine the degree of endangerment of the child by means of the measures carried out within its scope.

Removing a child from the care of his family is a last resort in the event that the SPOD and SK measures adopted and implemented so far for the child and family have not fulfilled their purpose and the child's upbringing is seriously threatened or disturbed. Only a court can decide on the removal of a child from the natural family environment.

The court can order institutional care only if it is not possible to entrust the child to substitute personal care or foster care and if the previous residential educational measure imposed by the court did not lead to correction.

If the child is cared for in a facility for the execution of a court decision on the basis of court-ordered institutional care, the SPOD and SK authority submits a report to the court at least once every 6 months on the effects of the measures taken to eliminate the reasons for which institutional care was ordered. At the same time, it informs the court about the possibilities of cancelling institutional care and returning the child to the family environment, or entrusting the child to substitute personal care, foster care, or the possibilities of adoption, and at the same time one of the legal reasons is fulfilled (the child is adoptable and it is not possible to entrust him to the care of future adopters or to the care of a natural person, the child's parents are not living or there is a serious obstacle preventing them from caring for the child, the court-imposed residential educational measure did not lead to correction or the child's parents are deprived of the exercise of parental rights).

If the child is provided with care in a facility for the execution of a court decision on the basis of an educational measure, the SPOD and SK authority monitors its purpose and informs the court about its effects and the further proposed procedure and measures taken in cooperation with the involved entities in order to help the child and his family and eliminate the reasons. for which the child was taken out of parental care.

*2. What are the main gaps and challenges to children’s enjoyment of social protection in law, policy, and practice in your country and the impacts on children’s rights? Please provide any relevant statistical or disaggregated data based on age, gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity, migration status, or other categories. Please consider the specific situation of marginalized children and those in vulnerable situations in your response.*

All children have the right to participate in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of political priorities through the use and application of their rights. Active participation of children can and should be supported at the level of public and social life, as well as community, family or personal life.

Within the framework of the above, we primarily identify several categories of children in vulnerable situations that are not directly related to poverty and social exclusion, but may be closely related to them, or situations in which children in need in the Slovak Republic may find themselves, while the purpose of this categorization is to approximate their diverse life situations, not to limit them to selected groups of children.

**Children facing severe housing deprivation**

Severe deprivation in the field of housing threatens especially children under the age of 18 coming from poor conditions. According to the indicator of severe housing deprivation, up to 16.1% of boys and 10.6% of girls under the age of 18 live in very inadequate housing. Statistics show that households with children are most at risk of inadequate housing. In total, up to 3.9% of all households with children are at risk of serious housing deprivation compared to only 2.3% of households without children. According to EU SILC 2020 data, the most vulnerable households with three or more children are 7.3%, single-parent households with one or more children make up 1.4%.

Families with children from marginalized communities are also exposed to a higher risk of serious deprivation in the area of housing, overcrowding of dwellings and energy poverty, and currently also families with children of migrant origin. According to the EU SILC\_MRK 2020 survey, the rate of severe material deprivation of children from the MRK (0-17 years) was 56% in 2020, while it was 6% of the total population of children in the year in question.

**Children from marginalized Roma communities**

The average number of people belonging to one household in marginalized Roma communities (hereinafter referred to as "MRK") is 4.3, while in the general population it is 2.9 persons. The share of people from MRK living below the poverty line is 87%. Children from MRK are a particularly vulnerable group. While in the total Slovak population in 2020 the poverty risk rate for children was at the level of 17%, it was up to 91% for children from MRK. This fact speaks of the reproduction of the intergenerational transfer of social exclusion in MRK and the considerably limited possibilities of getting out of it. According to the obtained data, 50% of households from the MRK environment are in material need compared to 3% of households within the majority population). Households from MRK more often experience extreme deprivation in the form of lack of food for children, or significantly inadequate housing and living conditions. In households from the MRK as well as in integrated households, a significantly higher rate of unemployment prevails, the causes of which can be sought, apart from the generally lower educational level, especially in a combination of several structural aspects - the concentration of job opportunities in the western part of Slovakia (i.e. outside the regions with a higher representation of the MRK ), discrimination on the labour market due to ethnicity or social exclusion and material deprivation.

**Children in foster care, especially in institutional care**

In 2021, 14,020 children (1.3% of the total number of children) lived outside their own families in the Slovak Republic. Of the mentioned number of children living outside their own family, 1,118 children are in foster care, 665 are in the personal care of a guardian, and 7,042 are in substitute personal care (data excluding adopted children). There are 5,195 children (37.1%) in institutional care, i.e. in centres for children and families (hereinafter referred to as "CDR"), re-education centres and the like, including protective education, diagnostic centres and medical-educational sanatoriums. Placement of a child in institutional care is implemented only if it is in the best interest of the child, taking into account the overall situation as well as the individual needs of the child.

At the same time, this is a group of children who require increased support when leaving institutional care, the goal of which is independent living and social integration, i.e. measures aimed at preventing an increased risk of possible homelessness. There are 17 CDRs throughout Slovakia that provide a resocialization program. Of these, 1 state CDR is under the establishment authority of the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and 16 non-state CDRs are based on the accreditation of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic. A total of 4,928 persons were placed in the CDR in 2021, of which 74% were children under 15 years of age and 20% were children aged 15-18. Particularly vulnerable groups of children include bilaterally orphaned children, who made up 1.4% of the total number of children in the CDR, unilaterally orphaned children, who made up 11.46%, and underage mothers with children (0.5%).

A total of 668 professional surrogate families operated in 2021 as part of child care. In total, there were 1,404 children in professional surrogate families, of which 97% were under 18 years of age. Within this, children with disabilities made up 6.4%, children with mental disorders - 3.5%, children with behavioural disorders - 5.9% and children abused, sexually and otherwise abused - 3.1%.

In addition to professional surrogate families, in 2021 CDR operated 450 independently organized groups with a total of 3,527 children, of which 92.7% were children under 18 years of age. In total, there were 7 to 8 children per group. Among children under the age of 18, 17.2% were children with behavioural disorders, 15.0% were children with SEN, 8.6% were children with mental disorders, 1.4% were abused, sexually and otherwise abused children, 1.0% were minors unaccompanied children and 0.4% of children with behavioural disorders due to drug use. Multi-member sibling groups can also be included among endangered groups.

**Children in precarious family situations**

Children in precarious family situations are exposed to various risk factors that can lead to poverty or social exclusion. Included in this category are children living in a household with one income-earning person, children living with a parent with a disability, disadvantage or impaired health, children living in a household in which one of the members suffers from mental disorders or a long-term illness, children living in a household, where there is substance abuse or domestic violence, children of an EU citizen who moved to another Member State, while the children remained in their Member State of origin, children who have a minor mother or are a minor mother and children who have a parent in custody prison sentence. In 2021, 201,829 children under the age of 18 were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the Slovak Republic, which represents 19.7% of the total number of children under the age of 18. Single-parent families with children (35.1%) and large families with more than three children (37.8%) were most at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Households with persons with disabilities make up 27.0% of households with dependent children. Based on administrative data from the total number of recipients of aid in material need in 2021 (58,808), couples with children make up 21.3% and one person with children 12.4%. During 2021, SPOD and SK measures were implemented for 12,914 new families and 19,650 new children.

**Children at risk of income poverty**

In the Slovak Republic, in 2021, every eighth resident (12.3%) was at risk of income poverty, which represented almost 661,856 persons. Children make up more than a quarter of the total number of people at risk of income poverty. In terms of age groups, children under the age of 18 are most at risk, with almost every sixth child living in a household with an income below the poverty line. The COVID-19 pandemic increased the share of children at risk of poverty year-on-year, from 17% to 17.6%. For the first time, the level of the risk of poverty increased year-on-year in all regions of the Slovak Republic. However, there are significant regional differences, from 4.0% in the Bratislava Region to 19.2% in the Prešov Region. The situation improved slightly year-on-year in multi-child single-parent families with 3 or more dependent children (36.3% in 2021, compared to 37.1% in 2020), as well as in single-parent households with one or more children (33 .6% in 2021, compared to 33.9% in 2020). However, more than a third of people are still at risk of income poverty in both types of households. The amount determining the poverty line decreased year-on-year, which confirms that the total income of the population decreased for the entire year 2021. In the household of one adult, it was about 11 euros to 424 euros per month. For a complete family with two children under the age of 14, the threshold was at the level of 890 euros per month, which is 24 euros less. Children in families where the obligee does not fulfil his maintenance obligation are also at particular risk of poverty. In 2020, an average of 4,320 recipients of replacement child support were registered per month, while replacement unpaid child support was paid to 6,683 children on average per month.

**Children at risk of violence**

Children who have been or are exposed to violence and neglect by adults, can be at risk of violence in all areas of life - at home, at school, during free time in facilities, on the street in the community and in the media. 9.4% of children were exposed to neglect, approximately 20.6% of children experienced direct exposure to emotional violence, 23% of children were exposed to physical violence, 7.1% of children were exposed to sexual abuse. Exposure to all four forms of violence was reported more often by girls, children from households with a very bad or bad financial situation, children from divorced families, from single-parent households and those children who reported some type of health complications. In the area of violence perpetrated in families, abused, neglected and abused children, in 2021 Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family carried out SPOD and SK measures for a total of 1,252 children, including 574 new children. In 75 cases, the SPOD and SK submitted an initiative to the law enforcement authorities.

**Children at risk of addiction and criminal activity**

In 2021, social guardianship measures for children were implemented for 14,007 children, including 781 children who committed other criminal activities. In 2021, assistance and protection in criminal proceedings was provided to 3,101 children. A total of 5,646 children were under the care of social curators due to neglect of school attendance. In 2021, social guardians carried out social guardianship measures for 160 children due to experimentation and drug addiction, 25 of them were under the age of 14. Measures were taken for 13 children due to other addictions. In 2020, 80 places were designated for all regions of the Slovak Republic for residential resocialization of addictions, to ensure the implementation of measures ordered by the court in the CDR with a resocialization program for minor clients. In 2021, there were 450 independently organized groups within the CDR, in which there were a total of 3,269 children, of which 17.2% were children with behavioural disorders. According to data from the National Centre for Health Information (hereinafter referred to as "NCZI"), in the long term, the number of treated drug users in the age group 0 to 19 years is slightly decreasing from 500 in 2004 to 253 in 2020. Drug-dependent men under 19 entered treatment primarily in connection with the use of cannabis - hemp (54.8%; in the number of 96 of all 175 treated men under the age of 19) and a smaller proportion was users of stimulation (26.9%, in the number of 47). Among young women under the age of 19, the predominant treatment was the use of stimulants (50.0%; in the number of 39 of all 78 treated women under the age of 19), another 39.7% of them (in the number of 31) used cannabis (hemp).

**Children with migrant origins**

Children with migrant origins also include children who are nationals of third countries, i.e. countries that are not EU member states, regardless of their migration status - type of stay in the Slovak Republic, and children with the nationality of at least one member state from parents who were born abroad. Of course, children arriving on the territory of the Slovak Republic as part of illegal migration are at risk, especially unaccompanied minors. The number of granted tolerated stays for nationals of third countries was 75 for 2021, of which the vast majority were unaccompanied minors (67 for 2021). In 2021, there were 169 children under the age of 17 with illegal residence in the Slovak Republic (mostly from Afghanistan). There were 175 unaccompanied minors detained while illegally crossing state borders and with unauthorized stay in 2021.

Since February 2022, in the context of the situation in Ukraine, there has been an increase in the number of children who have been granted the status of sojourners, when 94,699 persons applied for temporary refuge in the Slovak Republic as of 22 September 2022, of which 35,610 (37.6%) were children from 0 to 17 years.

**Children with a health disability (ZP) and a health disadvantage (ZZ)**

The term person with disabilities (including children with disabilities) is defined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which entered into force for the Slovak Republic on June 25, 2010. According to Art. 1 of the aforementioned convention, persons with disabilities include persons with long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory disabilities, which, in conjunction with various obstacles, may prevent their full and effective participation in the life of society on an equal basis with others.

The current enrolment of pre-schoolers in the total population is 95%. In basic education in the school year of 2020/2021, pupils with ZZ achieved worse educational results than the general population, and in the 2021/2022 school year they represented a larger part of pupils repeating the year (3.45% of repeating pupils with ZZ compared to 2.35% of pupils without ZZ).

In the 2021/2022 school year, 13% of students with ZP from the total number of elementary school students attended zero, preparatory, introductory and first year. Of the total number of pupils in the zero, preparatory, introductory and first years, 5.8% were pupils with ZP. If the development of a child up to the age of seven is at risk due to a deteriorating health condition or a medical handicap, it is possible to provide the child and his family with an early intervention service in the social services system. In 2021, 15 public and 25 non-public early intervention service providers were registered in the Slovak Republic, who together provided social services to 2,477 children.

**Children with special educational needs (SEN)**

In the 2021/2022 school year, 17.4% of elementary school and special elementary school students had special educational needs (hereinafter referred to as "SEN”), while 6.5% of students with SEN in regular elementary school classes were individually integrated.

In the entire segment of regional education (in kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools), the share of children and pupils with SEN reached 12.16% of all pupils. The largest group is made up of children and pupils with special needs, i.e. j. 8.33% of the total number of children and pupils, the next group consists of children and pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, 4.15%.

Of the total number of pupils, 5% were individually integrated children and pupils in regular school classes.

**Children with mental health problems**

Up to 50% of mental disorders arise in childhood, which are fully manifested only in adulthood. More than half of all mental disorders begin in adolescence, and most cases remain undiagnosed and untreated. A big problem for a child's healthy development is the lack of relationships, especially in the family. In the last decade, there has been a significant increase in hospitalizations in the age group of 15-19 years in psychiatric departments of institutional health facilities, where the number of hospitalizations has increased by 40.5%. Already since 2009, there has been an increase in the number of new patients in outpatient care among 15-19 year olds, which increased by 42.8%. Although suicide is a rare cause of death in the general population, it is second only to car accidents among adolescents. In Slovakia in 2016, suicide was the cause of up to 18% of all deaths of teenagers aged 15-19. According to experts, the situation has significantly worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Addictions, both substance and non-substance, are increasing rapidly, the number of suicide attempts, severe depression, and self-harm is increasing. In general, an increase in anxiety states and depression is observed, and not only in children who were under the care of psychologists before the pandemic. The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic presented a 33% increase in the incidence of depressive symptoms in children under the age of 18, and a fourfold increase in psychological problems was detected in children under the age of 9.

**Children outside the system of education, training and employment**

According to Eurostat's statistical survey, in 2021 there were 2.7% of NEETs aged 15-17 in the Slovak Republic (EU27 – 4.1%). In the 15-19 age group, the share of NEET was 5.6% (EU27 - 6.8%). Key measures to overcome poverty and social exclusion (services, allowances) are aimed at children who are provided with some kind of service or are in institutional care or in the education and training system, as well as in relation to measures aimed at helping migrants from Ukraine and children located on the territory of the Slovak Republic from third countries of origin (e.g. asylum seekers, administratively detained children due to illegal stay on the territory of the Slovak Republic, etc.).

From the National Strategy for Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities in the Slovak Republic for the years 2021-2027, which was approved on April 28, 2021, by resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic no. 223/2021, it follows that the ongoing problems in the Slovak Republic include:

• segregation of Roma male and female students in the education system;

• insufficient provision of access to help for women experiencing violence and their children, e.g. insufficient number and personnel capacity of safe women's homes, counselling centres, their low regional availability;

• absence of comprehensive and disaggregated data on sexual exploitation, including forced prostitution;

• greater vulnerability of women and girls coming from an environment of concentrated, generational or situational poverty and from an environment of institutional care in relation to human trafficking, especially for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced marriage, including trafficking within the country.

As an example, it is possible to mention other problems resulting from application practice (based on the independent investigation of the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights), among which it is possible to include e.g. legal regulation of meals in kindergartens:

"The current legal regulation regarding catering in the school canteen of the kindergarten regulates the only exception to catering according to § 140 par. 4 of the Education Act, an exception for health reasons. The school canteen can prepare diet meals for children whose health condition, according to the assessment of the child's attending physician, requires special nutrition in accordance with the material consumption standards and recipes for diet nutrition issued by the Ministry of Education. However, the School Act does not deal further with the question of how to feed children who need a diet other than that according to the material consumption standards and recipes for dietary nutrition issued by the Ministry of Education, nor with the question of how to provide food for children in the event that the school canteen itself cannot prepare diet meals for children. In the Centre’s opinion, the aim of the legal regulation of meals in the school canteen of a kindergarten cannot be considered legitimate. Due to the lack of legitimacy and the related impossibility of objectively justifying the disadvantage of one group of persons compared to another group, the legal regulation of children's meals in the school canteen of a kindergarten fulfils the defining characteristics of indirect discrimination according to the anti-discrimination law."

Another example of a disadvantage is the process of admitting children to pre-primary education, in the event that the municipality, in a generally binding regulation (VZN) issued pursuant to the Act on Municipal Establishment, determines the scoring criteria for admitting children to kindergarten, which is linked to the permanent residence of both parents and de facto also of the child. The conditions of different treatment of children in this way for admission to pre-primary education in kindergartens within the jurisdiction of the municipality according to the permanent residence of the child and his parents are discriminatory and violate the constitutional and legal imperatives of non-discrimination in education.

Menstrual poverty is a persistent problem of marginalized groups of the population - girls.

Last but not least, it should be mentioned that both waves of the pandemic caused an increase in cases of violence against women and their children and deepened poverty.

In the NAP for the prevention and elimination of violence against women for the years 2022-2027, we claim that during the pandemic, women with children under the age of 11 were affected by a loss of income, due to the closure of kindergartens and the first grade of elementary schools. For such families, but especially for single mothers, there was a significant reduction in income during the pandemic.

*3. What are the good practices initiated by the Government to ensure that social protection benefits the rights of children in your country?*

The Slovak Republic has set goals that are closely related to the implementation of the European Guarantee for Children, based on the three target values of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSP), which are to be achieved by 2030 in the area of employment, skills and social protection, in accordance with the UN goals in areas of sustainable development:

For the field of employment:

• within the sub-goal "to increase the provision of formal education and care in early childhood (hereinafter referred to as "ECEC"), which will contribute to a better reconciliation of work and private life and support greater participation of women in the labour market; increase the availability of services for children from 0 up to 5 years

• within the sub-goal "to reduce the rate of young people aged 15-29 who are neither employed nor in the process of education or training (hereinafter referred to as "NEET"), the set goal is to approach the EU average, i.e. from 12.6% in 2019 to 9% by 2030.

For skills and equality:

• as part of the sub-goal "to reduce early school leaving and increase participation in secondary education" a goal of 5% by 2030 is set.

For the area of social protection and inclusion:

• reducing the number of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion by 21,000 by 2030, while the starting value in 2019 was 210,000, in 2020 their number was 183,000.

The key factors for achieving the objectives of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSP) are: inclusive growth, upward social convergence and prevention of intergenerational transmission of poverty. Important preconditions for eliminating the main causes of poverty and social exclusion include: ensuring the participation of underrepresented groups such as persons with disabilities, persons living in rural and remote areas, Roma and other ethnic or racial minorities who are particularly at risk of exclusion or discrimination, or persons of migrant origin on the labour market, developing minimum income schemes, ensuring sufficient benefit systems for families and persons in identified adverse situations, investing in the care and education of children and breaking intergenerational cycles of disadvantage in order to prevent children from poor families from being at risk of poverty as adults, the availability of quality housing and access to basic childcare services.

In connection with the recommendation, the Slovak Republic developed a National Action Plan for the implementation of the European Guarantee for Children for the period 2022-2030 (hereinafter referred to as "NAP"). NAP describes the initial situation of children in need in the Slovak Republic, specifies groups for this purpose explicitly, but not exclusively, defines the vulnerable situations of children who belong to the category of children in need within the Slovak Republic, identifies the basic problems of this group of children and describes the proposed measures aimed at improving the access of children in need and their families, including to key services, programs and care. These measures include:

• ensuring effective and free access to early childhood care);

• ensuring effective and free access to education at all levels and to school activities;

• ensuring free access to at least one healthy meal a day;

• ensuring effective and free access to quality health care;

• ensuring effective access to healthy nutrition;

• ensuring effective access to adequate housing.

In addition, as an example of good practice, the principle when searching for systemic solutions in the social and legal protection of children and social guardianship is to invite experts of different levels and different entities depending on the nature of the topic being addressed, the so-called participatory model. For example, the very creation of CDR as a point of help for children and families is the result of the cooperation of experts working in the area (representatives of state and non-state institutions, SPOD and SK bodies, local governments, NGOs operating in the area, the Slovak Chamber of Social Workers and social work assistants...). From various types of facilities (children's homes, crisis centres and resocialization centres), Centres for children of families were created, and the conditions of performance were newly adjusted according to the purpose of help they specialize in and the forms of help they provide (residential, outpatient, field), including the specification of professional, personnel, spatial standards and changes to the financing system.

*4. Are there examples of how measures and responses to alleviate poverty through social protection systems in emergency situations or, for example, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, have positively affected children’s rights, particularly to social security?*

 With effect from April 30, 2020, **Regulation** of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. **102/2020** Coll. on some measures in the field of social affairs, family and employment services during a state of emergency declared in connection with the COVID-19 disease, as amended, entered into force. The subject of the Regulation of the Government of the Slovak Republic was the adjustment of procedures, activities, claims, time limits in proceedings in the sections of state social benefits, assistance in material need, replacement alimony and compensation for social severe disability in such a way as to ensure proceedings on claims, obtained claims are preserved in cases, in which it is objectively impossible to assess the duration of the claim during the pandemic. In the case of parental allowance (pandemic parental allowance), the duration of the entitlement has been extended, which would have lapsed during an emergency due to the fact that the child reaches the age required by law, or that three years have passed since the validity of the first decision on entrusting the child to the care of an authorized person. These are all beneficiaries who are not entitled to nursing allowance or whose nursing allowance is lower than the amount of the parental allowance. The pandemic parental allowance was cancelled from 1 January 2022.

On September 10, 2021, **Regulation** of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. **336/2021** Coll., amending Regulation of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 102/2020 Coll. on certain measures in the field of social affairs and employment services during a state of emergency in connection with the COVID-19 disease, as amended, entered into force.

The amendment in question established for the month of September 2021 the provision of one-time financial assistance for dependent children under the age of 18 or who turned 18 in September 2021 and who are entitled to child allowance. The increase in the amount of the child allowance did not apply to dependent children who were already provided with a one-time allowance in the amount of 333 Euros (for children in material need). A one-time allowance increase was also granted to families who received child allowance, but whose dependent child died between March 2020 and September 2021 and who would have been under 18 years of age by the end of September 2021 or would have turned 18 in September 2021. The amount of the allowance (paid in the amount of EUR 25.50 per month) was increased once for the month of September 2021 by the amount of EUR 74.50, i.e. in the month of October 2021 a child allowance was paid in the total amount of EUR 100.

On October 29, 2022, the Government **Regulation** No. **353/2022** Coll., which amends the Government Regulation No. 103/2020 Coll. on certain measures in the field of subsidies within the purview of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic during a state of emergency declared in connection with the COVID-19 disease, as amended (hereinafter referred to as the "Regulation") entered into force.

The aim of the regulation in question was to contribute financially to the most vulnerable groups of people through a subsidy to support humanitarian aid to cover increased expenses for housing, energy, food, etc. The increased rate of inflation was caused by the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and also the war conflict in Ukraine. For the aforementioned reason, the regulation in question, among other aspects, established the provision of a subsidy to support humanitarian aid in the amount of 100 euros for each dependent child with a maintenance obligation determined by the court in the amount of no more than 150 euros.

The state already took into account the effects of increased inflation in the first wave of inflation aid within the framework of Regulation no. 166/2022 Coll., supplementing Regulation of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 102/2020 Coll. on some measures in the field of social affairs, family and employment services during a state of emergency, state of emergency or state of emergency declared in connection with the COVID-19 disease, as amended. With this regulation, the amount of the child allowance, which was provided in the amount of 25.88 euros per month until 30.06.2022, was increased once by 74.12 euros for the month of May 2022, i.e. in the month of June 2022, the child allowance was paid in the amount of EUR 100 for each dependent child.

*5. How can States deliver more effectively to ensure the effective implementation of universal social protection for children, including through international cooperation?*

The task of international cooperation and the activities of international communities should be to make joint efforts to emphasize that the rights of children are the highest value, and thus contribute to their protection under all conditions. Likewise, in addition to the exchange of experience and practical skills, the primary priority should be the support of national initiatives in the protection of children's rights and, in particular, the provision of stability and continuity, regardless of the political situation in the countries.