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**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR THE
PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES**

**COMMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC
ON THE FOURTH OPINION OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION
FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES
BY THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

(received on 2 June 2015)

**Comments of the Slovak Republic on the Fourth Opinion
on the Implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National
Minorities in the Slovak Republic**

General notes

In the fourth cycle of monitoring the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (hereinafter referred to as the "Framework Convention"), the Slovak Republic presented the Fourth Report on the implementation of the Framework Convention in the Slovak Republic (hereinafter the "implementation report"), approved by the Resolution No. 718/2013 of the Slovak Government of 18 December 2013. From 22 to 26 September 2013, the experts of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (hereinafter referred to as the "Advisory Committee") visited Košice, Prešov, Dunajská Streda and Bratislava. During the meetings with representatives of state administration bodies, local authorities and non-governmental entities, the experts obtained additional information about the protection of national minorities in Slovakia. Based on these findings, the Advisory Committee drew up the Fourth Opinion on the Slovak Republic, to which the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, in close cooperation with competent state authorities, processed the following comments of the Slovak Republic.

1. We commend the work done by the Advisory Committee in examining and evaluating the implementation of commitments of the Slovak Republic resulting from the Framework Convention. The result of this work is a comprehensive and detailed opinion. We acknowledge the recognition of ongoing efforts of the state to continually improve the status of national minorities and the appreciation of the progress made, and we also take note of some critical judgements concerning the persisting shortcomings and unresolved problems in this field.

2. Detailed findings of the Advisory Committee and the evaluation of the fulfilment of individual provisions of the Framework Convention shall be subject to examination and assessment. The outcome proposals and recommendations will be put into practice by the competent national authorities and, where appropriate, other entities involved in the next monitoring period. Specific substantive suggestions and comments should in our view be tested in long-term confrontation with the social practice and reflected in an ongoing dialogue with the relevant international institutions. In this document, we will focus broadly on the main findings and on concluding remarks, especially the first and the third part of the report.

3. The required transparency of the evaluation of the monitoring process will be ensured by simultaneous publishing of the Fourth opinion of the Advisory Committee and of the Comments of the Slovak Republic on the opinion, and later on, by publishing the Resolution on the Implementation of the Framework Convention in Slovakia, immediately after its adoption by the Committee of Ministers. These documents will not only complete the fourth monitoring cycle, but alongside with the publication of the Resolution, they will also mark the beginning of the fifth monitoring cycle, where all stakeholders and the public will be urged and encouraged to engage broadly in the monitoring cycle. The Government of the Slovak Republic will deliberate on the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers and on this basis, as well as on the basis of the Fourth Opinion of the Advisory Committee, will adopt a resolution defining the tasks for State administration bodies and formulate recommendations for self-

governing authorities aimed at further implementation of the Framework Convention and the elimination of persisting shortcomings.

4. We find the special focus of the Advisory Committee on the Roma national minority to be correct, because its problems are more urgent than those of other national minorities, for the Roma themselves as well as for the society as a whole. These problems, however, are of a more complex character, not strictly limited to a given minority, and often affect society at large. While the attention of the Advisory Committee is understandably focused on the aspect of national minority protection, the State approaches the definition and resolution of these problems in terms of respecting Roma as citizens of the Slovak Republic as well as persons belonging to a national minority. The comprehensive approach and consideration of all relevant aspects of this issue (economic, social, health and others) is not limited to the specific area of national minority protection. The Slovak Government is aware of the urgency of addressing the problems of the Roma and puts the agenda among its utmost priorities.

Comments on the most important findings and some specific points raised by the Advisory Committee

Comments related to the Roma minority

In summary to the points 4, 8, 24, 35, 83

5. The Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities acts in a capacity of an advisory body to the Government of the Slovak Republic. The Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities coordinates his activities with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior of the Slovak Republic, nevertheless for the performance of his duties and for the activities of the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities, the Plenipotentiary is accountable to the Government, which also appoints and recalls him. An argument that the placement of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities reflects and maintains the image of Roma as a security challenge is groundless, and we cannot identify with it. On the contrary, a close cooperation with the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic allows for much quicker and flexible involvement in dealing with protection of rights of the Roma as well as for carrying out the preventive measure in this regard. The Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic actively provides for organizational, material and participative cooperation in a broad range of activities of the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities, and these efforts are reflected in new processes and policies introduced in the system of Roma integration. The Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities perceives the support of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic as a key element in enforcing the actual pro-integration measures. Although the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic provides an operational platform for the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities, it does not interfere in his activities, nor presents a doctrine of the integration process as a security challenge. The Ministry, as well as the Plenipotentiary, does not introduce any governmental policy proposals that would create any reasons to identify the motivation elements in perceiving the tools applied in the Roma integration process as a security challenge. The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities is ready to verify these statements in a correct and evidentiary way.

6. The Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities has not proposed and presented the Roma reform as a tool for solutions to security challenges, and the Roma reform

measures are not based on negative stereotypes. This kind of perception of the Roma reform and Roma integration (security challenge, stereotypes) is peculiar to some range of different views in the political system. However, the crucial programme of the governmental policy is the Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Roma Integration by 2020, which is carried out comprehensively. This document was positively evaluated by the European Union for its complexity. The Roma reform does not replace and does not weaken the weight and obligatoriness of the main binding document, the Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Roma Integration by 2020. The Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Roma Integration by 2020, adopted by the Slovak Government Resolution No. 1 of 11 January 2012, is a binding document of governmental policy relevant for central state bodies. At the present time a revision and actualization of the document is underway and new action plans are being carried out. Aims of the Roma reform do not reflect a reaction of the majority population based on latent stereotypes (passive recipients of benefits, unemployment as a modus vivendi, etc.), but define specific tools and objectives that are based on the principle of active participation, awareness and shared responsibility of individual members of marginalised Roma communities. Individual involvement contributes to the enhancement of the social status and to the system of active involvement of political, academic and cultural representation of Roma in the process of the implementation of the strategy. Professionals, general public, as well as the members of the marginalized Roma communities themselves may have a wide range of views and opinions on some of the reform measures, however, from a long-term perspective, all the measures aim at improving the status of the members of the marginalized Roma communities, including the initiation of these processes at the individual level, promoting a change of approach in the schemes of passive elements to active.

Act No. 417/2013 Coll. on the Assistance in Material Need and to amend and supplement certain Acts, as a generally binding regulation, applies in its entirety equally to all citizens of the Slovak Republic and guarantees aid in material need, meaning benefits and allowances for benefits in material need, to every citizen under the same conditions and to the same extent. In this regard it is not relevant whether a citizen belongs or does not belong to any national minority.

7. In connection with the preparation of the implementation of EU Council Recommendation of 9 December 2013 on effective measures for Roma integration in Member States, the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities is preparing new Action Plans of the Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Roma Integration by 2020 for the years 2015 to 2020 for the areas: D.2.1 Area of education, D.2.2 Area of employment, D.2.3 Area of health, D.2.4 Area of housing, D.2.5 Area of financial inclusion, D.2.7 Area of access towards the majority society – Roma integration through communication.

To the points 31 and 37

8. During the monitored period the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities made great efforts to ensure a positive image of Roma identity and culture in the eyes of the public as well as the Roma themselves. It was not only the creation of programmes on the occasion of the Roma Day and in relation to the Roma victims of the Holocaust, which were broadcasted live on the nationwide television programme of RTVS, but also promotion of activities in the areas of culture, language development and positive perception of Roma from subsidy schemes of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, the Slovak Ministry of Culture and the Government Office of the Slovak Republic. The international Day of the Roma language on the initiative of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities is regularly mentioned on Slovak Radio.

9. Since 2014 the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities has published the magazine *Romane nevipena* (Roma newspapers). Newspapers provide information on social, economic, cultural and political life of the Roma and create a communication platform for public discussion on the pro-integration process. Newspapers simultaneously deliver information, instructions and procedures to address societal and individual problems of the Roma in order to improve their status. The newspapers also focus on children and youth, with the aim of forming positive personal development and building of ethnic awareness. Newspapers are designed for Roma, employees of state and local government, members of non-profit non-governmental organisations and all citizens concerned with improving the status of the living conditions of the Roma. The aim of the newspaper is also to shape positive perceptions of the Roma and to create a positive relationship with the majority society.

10. The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities drew up a list of best practices of towns and villages, where, thanks to active cooperation of the Mayors' Offices with the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma communities, non-governmental organisations and churches, living conditions of the population of Roma communities have been significantly improved, thus leading to elimination of social tensions between the majority population and those living in marginalised Roma communities. A list of Roma personalities active in the field of science and culture has been elaborated and proposed in the same manner. In order to enhance the positive reporting on Roma, the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities provides such information to the media. Simultaneously, in the years 2009-2014, the Plenipotentiaries of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities held several events and conferences in order to promote the positive results and good practices of the reform among the public.

11. Simultaneously with the aim to build a positive perception of the Roma by the majority part of society, the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities is preparing a new action plan of the strategy - D.2.7 Area of access towards the majority society – Roma integration through communication. Objective No. 1 of the Action Plan will be mitigating prejudices and stereotypes against the Roma population (among the majority society), as well as towards the majority population (among Roma communities), in order to deethnicize the public debate and open up the topic of shared values. One of the measures within this objective is the creation of a communication strategy. Objective No. 2 of the Action Plan will be to improve a fair imaging of Roma, Roma communities and the wider context of marginalisation of the Roma in the media, to improve the responsible coverage from the government, media education and education of journalists with the emphasis on public media, to support the establishment of correct media content and public presentations of policies and action plans. Objective No. 3 of the Action Plan will be to support the continuous sensitisation and education of occupational and professional groups with the aim of comprehensive development of competencies necessary for inclusive and culturally sensitive performance of selected professions while strictly respecting human rights.

12. To demonstrate the activities in supporting the Roma identity, culture and a positive perception of the Roma, the following activities have been supported by the targeted subsidies:

Year 2009:

- 6th Roma Festival - Romafest - 1,000 euros,

- Romano nevi ľil - Roma periodical /Rómsky nový list /2009/ 19th edition, Social-cultural newspaper for the Roma in Slovakia in Slovak and Roma language – issuance and distribution – reinforcement costs in 2009 – 15,000 euros,
- Kaj džas Decade of Roma Inclusion? – promoting awareness of the Roma population and the majority about the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005 - 2015 – 15,000 euros,
- Edition of publications of Roma craftsmen, artists and musicians of the Prešov region – 9,000 euros.

Year 2010:

- Days of Roma Culture in Giraltovce – 3,000 euros,
- Building of the Roma Documentation and Information Centre, Stage I. – 4,500 euros,
- Roma Media Centre (MECEM) – facilitation of public opinion and effective involvement of Roma communities in the process of integration through Roma media – 30,000 euros.

Year 2011:

- Revival of Roma literature for children – 5,000 euros,
- Getting to know our culture – 500 euros,
- Our Roma culture – 1,500 euros,
- Raising our hearts and minds by culture – 2,000 euros,
- Concerts of tolerance – NADARA 2011 (Don't be afraid to say you are Roma) – 1,500 euros,
- Support for education of talented Roma children and youth for preserving Roma culture and identity – 6,000 euros,
- LULUDI – KVIETOK (publishing of magazines for children) – 4,000 euros.

Year 2013:

- Technical support of Internet radio ROMA – 5,000 euros,
- Technological equipment of Roma Internet television – 13,000 euros,
- Material support of NGO Roma hearts – Romale Jile – 5,000 euros,
- Support for Roma secondary school students through tutoring and mentoring – 15,000 euros,
- Gypsy band Klas – purchase of musical instruments – 4,000 euros,
- Blacksmiths' equipment for the preservation of traditional Roma crafts – blacksmithing – 7,000 euros,
- Wild Poppies group – Extracurricular interest – artistic activities, emerging talent of Roma children and youth of Wild Poppies group – 30,000 euros,
- Sounding cultural events (Roma Centre Ternipen NGO) – 8,000 euros,
- Music to success (Amen Savore – we all NGO) – 15,000 euros,
- Technological equipment for print and film production (Association Jekhetane – Together NGO) 15,000 euros,
- A national strategy to promote the preservation of cultural heritage of the Roma national minority in the fields of culture, history and language until 2020 – 4,000 euros,
- Acquisition of technical equipment for the purpose of its use in cultural activities organised by RMORK – 4,000 euros,
- Support of technical security of activities aimed at developing and preserving culture, language and development of Roma organisations (Cultural educational NGO Láčho

- Drom) – 4,000 euros,
- Supporting of activities aimed at developing and maintaining a culture, language and history of Roma – 3,000 euros,
- Technical equipment of MC (MECEM) – 15,000 euros.

To point 36:

13. The Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities responded to the legal aspect of activity of the respective political party by delivering the pleadings to the law enforcement authorities, especially the General Prosecution of the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic, and the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic. Proceedings on this initiative are not yet completed. The Slovak Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities coordinated his actions with the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for the development of civil society as well as with the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights.

14. The position and the mission of the Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission (the "Council") is governed by Act No. 308/2000 Coll. on Broadcasting and Retransmission and on the amendment of Act No. 195/2000 Coll. on telecommunications, as amended (the "Act on Broadcasting and Retransmission"). According to Section 4 paragraph 2 of this Act, the Council is committed to the preservation of pluralism of information in the news programmes of the broadcasters, who are broadcasting under the law or under a license under this Act, oversees compliance with the legislation governing broadcasting, retransmission and provision of audiovisual media services on demand and carries out state administration in the area of broadcasting, retransmission and provision of audiovisual media services on demand within the limits specified by this Act. To ensure the protection of human dignity and humanity in broadcasting and in the provision of audiovisual media services on demand in Section 19, a) and b) of the Act on Broadcasting and Retransmission provides that audiovisual media service on demand, programme services and their components shall not by their processing and their content interfere with human dignity or with fundamental rights or with the freedoms of others, or promote violence or in open or hidden form encourage hatred, disparage or defame based on sex, race, colour, language, faith and religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, nationality or ethnic group. Anyone who believes that the Act on Broadcasting and Retransmission has been violated may file a complaint with the Council for violation of this law pursuant to Section 14a. The Council shall become familiar with the content of the complaint and discuss the complaint at its meeting no later than 90 days from receipt of the complaint. If the complaint contains evidence to show that there had been a violation of this Act, the Council will start administrative proceedings regarding the matter. The Council shall advise the complainant of the outcome of the administrative proceedings. For breach of the obligations imposed by the Act on Broadcasting and Retransmission, the Council imposes sanctions under Section 64 to 67a of this Act.

The Act on Broadcasting and Retransmission by regulating the status, role and competence of the board, creates conditions whereby everyone can address the complaints regarding alleged violations of the law to the Council. The Council then discusses the complaint and if the law is violated, the sanctions under the Act are imposed.

To the points 40 and 41

15. Extremism, acts of intolerance and hatred towards members of other races, peoples, national minorities and ethnic groups belong to the hot topics that resonate in our society. The

criminal offences of extremism are defined primarily in the Chapter twelve of Act No. 300/2005 Coll., the Criminal Code as amended. They include the following bodies of the offence: Production of extremist material (Section 422a), Dissemination of extremist material (Section 422b), Possessing of extremist material (Section 422c), Denial and justification of Holocaust and crimes of political regimes (Section 422d), Defamation of a nation, race and conviction (Section 423), Incitement to national, racial and ethnic hatred (Section 424) and Incitement, defamation and threatening of persons for reason of race, nation, nationality, colour of their skin, ethnic group or gender. For disciplining extremism and other forms of intolerance and hatred in the area of administrative law an amendment to Act of the National Council No. 372/1990 Coll. on Offences as amended, was adopted (introduced by article IV of the Act No. 1/2014 Coll. on organizing public sport events as amended, effective as of February 1, 2014), which supplemented the special part of Act on offences with the "Offences of Extremism (Section 47a). The Slovak Republic is a state party to the European Convention on spectator violence and misbehaviour at sport events and in particular at football matches (announcement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic No. 295/1993 Coll.). The Convention entered into force as of November 1, 1985 and it came into effect for the Slovak Republic as of July 1, 1993 based on article 13 paragraph 2. Implementing the commitments of the Convention, the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic elaborated and presented the amendment of the Act No. 300/2005 Coll., the Criminal Code as amended (introduced by article II of the Act No. 1/2014 Coll. on organizing public sport events as amended, effective as of February 1, 2014), which introduced a new form of sentence as of February 1, 2014: Section 62a "Sentence prohibiting the presence on public events" (in compliance with one of the elementary principles of the criminal law "nulla poena sine lege"), which can be imposed for ten years. The convicted person is then forbidden to participate in sport, cultural or other public events to the extent specified in the judgement of the court. Criminal offence is committed when participating in a public event (e.g. public gathering, cultural, sport or other event open to public), if it is committed by a participant of a public event in the time and area of performance of the public event or in its surrounding or at a different place during the transfer to the place of performance of the public event or from the place of performance of the public event, including the public transportation or service providers (Section 122 par 14 of the Criminal Code). In this respect the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak republic elaborated and presented the amendment to the Act No 301/2005 Coll. Code of Criminal Procedure as amended (introduced by article III of the Act No. 1/2014 Coll. on organizing public sport events as amended, effective as of February 1, 2014), which modified the specifics regarding the execution of punishment prohibiting the participation in public events (Section 444a). The presiding judge informs the respective police authority (according to the permanent residence of the convicted person). If the punishment applies to a sport event, the presiding judge informs an administrator of the information system on security during the sport events in the extent according to the individual law. If the court finds that the punishment has been infringed or obstructed, the presiding judge informs the district prosecutor about this matter without delay. Further, the Slovak Government approved the Resolution No. 379/2011 "Concept of combating extremism for the period 2011 - 2014", which, inter alia, contains the task of streamlining cooperation with entities involved in resolving partial issues of the fight against extremism, and to which the draft Concept for Combating Extremism for the period 2015 – 2019, presented on 1 December 2014, directly corresponds. Progress in the fight against manifestations of extremism and of the progress in the fight against spectator violence is regulated by Regulation of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic No. 115/2014 of 29 October 2014, which has been effective since 1 December 2014.

16. All crimes of extremism and racially motivated crimes are properly documented and investigated. For the purpose of consistent documentation and investigation, retraining of members of the Police Force is in place. The topics for training include new trends in committing criminal activities as well as modes of their investigation. In order to increase the level of knowledge and to provide the Police Forces of the Slovak Republic with new information and skills to combat hate crimes and extremism, the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic has implemented the project co-funded by the European Commission entitled "Effective monitoring, detection and prevention of violent extremism in cyberspace" since 2014. One of its outcomes is an accredited education programme on the issue of extremism and a set of tools for the Police Force in order to detect and investigate these crimes more effectively. The first training sessions will be implemented in late 2015. The department of extremism and spectator violence at the criminal police office of the Police Force Presidium organises accredited advanced courses for the members of the Police Force on the issues of extremism, racism, intolerance, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and aggressive nationalism. Recommendation concerning a comprehensive data collection system on cases of hate crime and their breakdown by themes and target groups has been addressed to the Slovak Republic in its report of the 5th Monitoring Cycle by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance. The Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic is planning to open and discuss this issue within the Committee for the prevention and elimination of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance.

17. The Department of control and inspection service is a specialised body within the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, established in order to clarify and investigate crimes committed by the members of the Police, regardless of sex, race or ethnic origin of the victims. The view on the activities of the Control and Inspection Service section of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic presented in the opinion of the Advisory Committee cannot be agreed with, either with regard to substance, terms of the context and the impression that this opinion presents.

Control and Inspection Service of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic carries out the criminal investigation of the police officers exclusively in accordance with the Slovak Constitution and applicable law. Activities of the section are not arbitrary, submissions are not handled in contradiction with the law and the department does not arbitrarily deny 80% of the complaints without taking criminal proceedings. The opinion of the Advisory Committee is using the term "complaint", which in the outlined context is not a correct designation, because in the Slovak Republic the term complaint stands for an initiative, which is not carried out by criminal proceedings. The report thus confuses the two concepts that are strictly separated, defined and regulated by two different laws in the national law of the Slovak Republic. To act on complaints, the Slovak Republic has a separate procedure modified and regulated by law, distinct from criminal proceedings, i.e. from the time of filing the initiative, which is a criminal complaint, amended by Act No. 301/2005 Coll., the Criminal Procedure Code, as amended.

The statement that the authorities of the Control and Inspection Service department of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic reject the complaints without initiating criminal proceedings is not true, as the procedure commences by itself, regardless of the view of the department, solely by filing a criminal notice. Consequently, any initiative is further a subject to preliminary procedure, probation, where evidence is gathered for subsequent decision-making process of the department. A large number of criminal notices received are declined, but always for a legal reason, under strictly legal conditions and decisions which may be challenged by the appeal. This is a regular process under the control of the prosecutor's office, which is legally authorised to cancel a decision of the Control and Inspection Service of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic without its prior judicial remedy.

It can partially be agreed upon the view regarding a long duration of the proceedings, but its length is influenced by the formal procedure, stated in the Code of Criminal Procedure. The procedure involves very formal, strictly prescribed courses of action as well as detailed steps to be performed, and its strict observance is often time consuming. The length of proceedings and the intention to investigate the issue thoroughly and promptly is not dependent on the will of the Control and Inspection Service department of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, but also depends on other factors and on the degree of cooperation of the authority with the parties or witnesses. A factor that affects the length of the procedure is also the expert examination, not least the form of plea of the accused, which is often a sign of obstructive application process, where the body of the Control and Inspection Service of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic has a few competences, especially while maintaining the right of the accused to defence.

The structure of the Slovak authorities shows that the Police Force is organised, managed and controlled by the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic as a governmental institution. The Control and Inspection Service of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic is not organisationally linked to the Police Force, it is not managed, controlled (personally and economically) or accountable to the Police Force in any way. Its management is accountable directly to the person of the Minister of Interior of the Slovak Republic. In addition, the activity of the Control and Inspection Service of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic is under the strict supervision of the prosecutor's office, which is a constitutional body of the Slovak Republic that protects the rights and legally protected interests of individuals, legal entities and the state.

The opinion of the Advisory Committee, without any evidence and argument, calls into question the ability of the Slovak authorities to ensure proper and impartial conduct of investigations and the investigation of a specific type of criminal activity, i.e. crimes committed by members of the Police Force. The opinion does not respect the form in which the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic performs its obligations, and without any arguments, it is trying to give the impression of the existence of a need to change the status quo. There is no court decision that would suggest that the current state of the organisation of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic does not secure proper criminal investigation of one specific group of offenders. In this regard, the opinion is based solely on personal views, not supported by any arguments and probably based on the traditions of the countries of origin of its processors, while it does not respect the right of the Slovak Republic to self-organize its internal affairs.

18. To the statement "...The Inspection Service of the Ministry of Interior considered lawful without any further investigation a police raid undertaken in June 2013 in the Roma settlement Moldava nad Bodvou...", we declare that the case is currently subject to criminal prosecution for six crimes. In this criminal case, as of the date of presenting this comment, 56 people affected had been interviewed in the procedural standing of witnesses. Because of the contradictions and the need to complement their evidence, following the development of the evidentiary situation, affected people have been interviewed repeatedly in some cases and the investigator conducted 68 hearings of witnesses and victims in total. Affected individuals had chosen the same victim's proxy (except for two people), whom the law allows to be present during questioning of each of the clients (affected), which the proxy uses in full. While carrying out criminal procedure, a supervising prosecutor was present and the witness statements are also recorded on video, in order to avoid any misinterpretation of content of the statements and the manner in which interrogations were conducted.

A total of 88 police officers were interviewed in the procedural standing of witnesses (officers of the District Police Directorate in Košice - surroundings, who planned and organisationally

guaranteed the progress and performance of police intervention, members of the Police Force in Moldava nad Bodvou, commander of the intervention for each unit and members of individual units of the Police Force who participated in the police operation). 28 witnesses were also interviewed in the procedural standing: the citizens of the town of Moldava nad Bodvou, residents of the settlements in Budulovská street, as well as 13 general practitioners working in Moldava nad Bodvou and in the hospital in Šaca.

A total of 39 recognition operations and 7 confrontation operations were executed. The following expert opinions were presented: a total of 13 opinions were carried out by the specialists in health and pharmacy, surgery and traumatology, 2 expert testimonies with regard to electrical engineering were presented by the Institute of Forensic Science of the Police Force, 3 expert testimonies in biology, one expert opinion in health, pharmacy, and stomatology, one expert opinion in transportation and one expert opinion was presented by the Institute of Forensic Medical Expertise. In ten cases experts on adult clinical psychology were asked to carry out their opinion and in one case two psychiatrists were asked to present their opinion on the mental state of one witness. In addition to that, the police investigator gathered a number of documents related to internal police procedures, official documents regarding the planning, conducting and assessment of the investigative actions, as well as all the outputs from the electronic and print media. The investigation file has, up to the date of this report, 3,735 pages. The fact that the investigation has not been completed to date is quite obviously caused by the need to perform a significant scale of operations, and it is the fundamental duty of the investigator to proceed in a way to insure the state of facts, of which there are no reasonable doubts.

To the statement that "A thorough investigation of the event was ordered only in December 2013, and only following the intervention of the Prosecutor General, and was ongoing at the time of the visit" it should be noted that the Control and Inspection Service of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic performed an examination on suspicion from criminal activity of the members of the Police Force on the bases of a crime report filed by a citizen, report from the remand and the remand imprisonment Košice and ex officio. All these allegations were decided on in the months of July to September 2013.

To the points 60 to 63:

19. Education of Roma children and youth is an utmost priority of the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities. The Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities managed to start up pilot projects that address the fundamental problems in education – lack of preparation of Roma children for entry into primary school, frequent placement of Roma children in special schools, language barriers, lack of capacity of kindergartens and primary schools, attendance and behaviour of Roma children.

20. The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities, in cooperation with the Institute for Good Governance, the Roma Education Fund and the World Bank, implemented a project "Investing in early childhood – support of social innovation and integration of Roma", which is financially supported by the European Commission, programme Progress (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) and by the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic – Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities. The project, carried out from January 2013 to the end of 2014, aimed to reduce language barriers between the pupils/parents and educational institutions, establish better cooperation of teachers and parents, strengthen parenting competencies, improve cognitive abilities of mothers as well as children, change the approach to raising children in segregated

communities, support the creation of a network of Roma mothers in communities and raise awareness of the importance of education in the Roma community. The project involves 7 facilitators, 315 Roma mothers and 525 children aged 0-6 in 21 locations in Slovakia. Activities in 21 localities will be evaluated under the auspices of J- PAL; overall evaluation of the project will be offered to the Slovak Government as a basis for better adjustment of measures of pre-primary students in the future.

21. The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities has held the position of a strategic partner in the national project "Inclusive model of education on pre-primary stage of school system (NP MRC2)" implemented by the Methodology and Pedagogy Centre. The project aims at increasing the attendance of children from settlements in kindergartens. In 2013, only 18% of children from marginalised Roma communities (hereinafter "MRC") attended kindergarten.

Implementation of the project was launched on 1 February 2013 with the scheduled conclusion on 30 November 2015. The total allocation to the project is 5,065,310.80 euros. (ESF 4,305,514.18 euros and SB 759,796.62 euros).

The main project activities include training of the teaching staff in order to acquire professional skills needed to work with children from MRC and the introduction of inclusive education in kindergartens. The project is designed for kindergartens in self-governing regions of Trnava, Trenčín, Nitra, Žilina, Banská Bystrica, Prešov and Košice, where many pupils from socially disadvantaged environments are educated. 110 kindergartens were selected and involved in the NP MRC 2 on the basis of a mutual contract. As the main criterion of kindergarten selection, the number and rate of proportion of children from MRC in various regions of Slovakia played a key role. These 110 kindergartens are attended by 6,415 children in total, of which the current number of children from MRC is 2,976, thus representing 46.39%.

As a part of this project, 163 positions of teacher assistant have been created. The role of teacher assistants in kindergartens is an essential tool in overcoming barriers associated with educating children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Of the total of 163 assistants, 80% come from the Roma community.

Both the work of Roma teacher assistants, as well as removing language barriers, support the full inclusion of Roma children in mainstream schools to a great extent. Roma assistants who have become a part of the teaching team, also help to eliminate stereotypes about the Roma and represent a positive role model for Roma children and adults.

Enhancing awareness of the benefits of preschool education for children, intensive cooperation with parents and teaching staff with the help of Roma teacher assistants and support of activities aimed at improving cooperation of parents and educational establishments, represent effective tools not only for raising the rate of educated Roma children, but also for increasing overall education of MRC at all levels of education.

22. "Inclusive Education Project PRINED" aims at promoting an inclusive environment in kindergartens and primary schools by creating inclusive teams trained to acquire professional competencies needed to meet and develop specific educational needs of pupils coming from MRC. The project is focused on preventing disproportionately frequent placement of pupils in special education system and through the acceleration programmes it aims at stimulating Roma children and improving educational process. The project builds on previous ongoing projects of the Methodology Centre "Education of teachers for inclusion of marginalised Roma communities (MRC1)" and the NP MRC2, with the target to create an inclusive school.

The inclusive model of education should create better opportunities for students from MRC for successful completion of elementary education and to continue further education at the next school levels. Inclusive education is an education in mainstream schools; the emphasis is put

on removing barriers that prevent equal access of children to education. The essence of inclusive education is to respect individual abilities and needs of children and to enable children who would otherwise be educated in special schools to be educated in mainstream primary schools.

An essential contribution to this project is the creation of inclusive teams made up of teaching staff and specialists (psychologist, special education teacher, remedial teacher, respectively the social educator) who do not work with children only in schools but also outside the school. All-day-long education, as a tool of inclusion, supports an effective development of MRC pupils outside the classroom, including leisure-time care and closer cooperation with the families and community of Roma pupils. The aim is, via an interesting and informative manner, to keep children in school as long as possible and enable them to prepare for the next day, much needed for improving their school performance and to offer them activities that are of interest to them.

The project PRINED focuses on positive experience from the previous two national projects MRC1 and MRC2, summarised in three key activities:

- to increase the participation of children from MRC in pre-school education in order to achieve successful education at primary schools,
- to introduce an all-day educational system in order to enhance school success in meeting the requirements of school educational programmes,
- to eliminate the placement of children from MRC in special schools, with the aim of creating an inclusive environment within a regular primary school.

The project is implemented in 100 primary schools and 50 kindergartens.

23. The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, in cooperation with the Slovak Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, allocated funds in the amount of 1,000,000 euros for the construction of modular elementary schools in 2013, in order to address the critical condition of overcrowding in schools with pupils of compulsory school attendance due to demographic population growth in areas with a high concentration of MRC. Five of the most critical municipalities were chosen – Jarovnice, Stráne pod Tatrami, Podhorany, Križová Ves and Kecerovce. Every municipality received 200,000 euros from the state budget for the construction of eight classes for nearly 200 children. The villages themselves have been engaged by providing property, construction of utilities, access roads, foundations, foundation stripes, and securing of project documentation. The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities has financially supported the basic equipment of these primary schools.

In 2014, these activities continued with launching an effective and successful construction of modular schools. The Slovak Ministry of Finance has allocated 3,000,000 euros to 11 locations – Chminianske Jakubovany, Podhorany, Jarovnice, Jurské, Stará Ľubovňa, Gemerská Ves, Muránska Dlhá Lúka, Stráne pod Tatrami, Dunajská Lužná, Miloslavov and Chorvátsky Grob. The programme of modular schools is also implemented by the municipalities without the presence of the MRC, in Dunajská Lužná, Miloslavov and Chorvátsky Grob, because of the lack of space needed for the education process.

24. The area of education will be included in the Operational Programme Human Resources for the period 2014-2020, and tackled through specific measures aimed at promoting equal access to quality inclusive education in the priority axis "Education" as well as through the measures defined in the priority axis "The integration of marginalised Roma communities". The spectrum of interventions leads to the "Increase the educational of MRC at all levels of education, with emphasis on pre-primary education".

To achieve this goal the following measures have been proposed:

- support for programmes targeted at improving cooperation between educational establishments and the parents of Roma children (e.g. through programmes aimed at activating parents from the MRC environment, through teacher training aimed at improving cooperation with parents of Roma children and so on);
- systematic support for the participation of children from MRC in pre-primary education (e.g. through the work of assistant teachers, through targeted programmes of community centres and through the field of social work, through programmes aimed at improving cooperation between preschools and parents of Roma children, by educating teachers, by supporting attendance of children by ensuring the availability of transport e.g. the operation of a school bus, providing didactic packages for pre-schools, etc.);
- systematic support of educational activities and free-time activities for children from MRC with the main emphasis on networking with the majorities (e.g. through support of individual integration and operation of assistant teachers, through the promotion of multicultural education programmes and programmes of community centres, etc.);
- systematic provision of tutoring and mentoring support for students from MRC with an emphasis on the successful completion of primary school and a smooth transition to secondary school;
- effective financial aid for students of secondary and higher education from the MRC environment (e.g. in the form of scholarships for students of secondary schools) for students from MRC.

To the points 7 and 60

- 25. The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic consistently pays attention to the improvement of the educational process at all levels of education for all pupils and has a strong commitment to developing a comprehensive integrated system of upbringing and education of disadvantaged children and pupils in the context of inclusive lifelong learning for all.
- The School Act (Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Education and Training as amended) prohibits any form of discrimination and especially segregation and no measures in the School Act lead to the exclusion of Roma children from the standard school system nor place them into special educational and training facilities, thus to a continuing segregation.
- Before the enrolment of children in the elementary school, all children of 6 years of age will undergo screening examinations (so-called Kern Test) based on which psychologists will conduct a diagnostic examination. If it is assumed that the postponement of school attendance will be beneficial for the child, they will recommend to the legal guardian to enrol the child in kindergarten. If it is assumed that the child will not attend kindergarten, they will recommend training in the zero grade of elementary school. At the end of completing the zero year, the reassessment of the child takes place. Based on the examination results, it will be determined what school the child will be attending (an elementary school or a special elementary school). Before the enrolment of the child in the special school, the child's mental level will be diagnosed again by the education establishment of educational counselling several times in a

row within the intervals of 6 - 12 months.

- In order to ensure that the repeated diagnostics of children after the first year of education in the school are as objective as possible, the diagnostics are conducted by a different person than the one who diagnosed the child before obligatory school attendance. Children and pupils with the diagnosed variant of the mental level A are mostly included in the elementary school or a special class in the elementary school. Special schools focus mainly on more serious levels of disability (B variant, C variant, combined disabilities). In the proposal for the acceptance of a student in special elementary school, parents are informed in writing about education of their child; the parent has the right to freedom of choice.
- The inclusion of the child in the special school or the special class in the elementary school is not a one-off event. On the contrary, it is a long-term process of monitoring of the child that includes several examinations in order to confirm the substantiality of the establishment. This long-term diagnostic process sufficiently eliminates the inclusion of Roma children in special schools due to the fact that they belong to the Roma national minority.
- Special schools only accept children with identifiable health disabilities who due to their disabilities cannot be successfully educated in mainstream schools, solely on the recommendation of a school, educational counselling and prevention, in order to optimise their educational, psychological, social and career development.
- According to the educational programme for pupils with mental disabilities, variant A pupils are educated pupils, who are by psychological examination diagnosed with a light degree of mental disability. This degree of mental disability does not mean that it is a "lightweight" learning problem, but in the medical understanding in terms of International Classification of Diseases (10th revision) is a diagnosis: "F70 Light mental deficiency" with an IQ range from 50 to 69 (in adults – mental age 9-12 years). The result will likely be learning problems at school. Many adults are able to work, to maintain good social relationships and be beneficial to society.
- It is not only necessary to educate pupils with mental disabilities with reduced content of education, since they are unable to meet education standards for individual subjects of relevant level of education of primary school, but in their education there also is a need to use teaching methods adapted to their perception. Thus customised education provides them with education by an educational programme for pupils with mental disabilities, which is part of the state education programme. This educational programme is applied in special schools or special classes for pupils with mental disabilities, or for the education of pupils with developmental disabilities in the form of school integration in regular classes in regular schools.
- This means that a pupil with mental disability is not, based on his diagnosis, excluded from education in regular primary school. For the education of a pupil in a special school or special class, on the basis of existing legislation, consent of the legal guardian of the pupil is necessary; therefore, in practice there is nothing to prevent these pupils from being educated in

mainstream education.

- Departments of education of individual district offices, within the methodical management of educational authorities within their territorial capacity and within the management of education and training in schools and education establishments within their founder capacity, pay relevant attention to the issue of unjustified enrolment of Roma children in schools for children with special needs.

- Within the scope of competence of district offices the following is being provided for:

- promoting the participation of Roma children in pre-primary education,
- support to kindergartens in implementing programmes targeted at improving cooperation with parents of Roma children,
- ensuring consistent control mechanisms in the process of educational and psychological diagnosis of 5- and 6-year-old children before they enter the compulsory education after completing a year of preparation,
- creating conditions in testing of school readiness of preschool children that are aimed at creating an environment which is the least stressful for tested children, i.e., common environment for child: kindergarten, school, community centre, etc., opportunity in testing to use their mother tongue (if schools have conditions and opportunities for this) using non-violent and playful forms, ensuring the presence of assistant teachers for students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, etc.
- monitoring of strict adherence to procedures for the acceptance of pupils in special schools and special classes in primary schools,
- coordination of tasks relating to the revised Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005 - 2015 for the years 2011 - 2015.

- The district authorities issued school educational counselling and prevention guidelines for investigation of scholastic competence and with an emphasis on children from socially disadvantaged environments. The diagnostic process of children/pupils is a long-term process and consists of several back-to-back steps.

- District Offices, Departments of Education, focus in their inspections and methodological visits on the unjustified placement of Roma children in special schools.

- Generally binding regulations do not permit the Director of the school to admit a pupil into special school or special class (i.e. schools or classes for pupils with health disabilities) without proof from student counselling facilities that the pupil has a health disability and also stating the diagnosis that resulted from professional examinations. The State School Inspection Office checks the legitimacy of education of pupils in special schools, special classes or by an educational programme for pupils with health disabilities in school integration. Counselling centres that perform diagnosis of children with stunted development, have since 2004

developed tests available for children from socially and linguistically disadvantaged environments to distinguish the causes of their problems, if the reason for their incapacity to learn when entering compulsory education according to the educational programme for pupils of primary school is not an intellectual disability. The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport issued a guideline that makes it impossible for children from socially disadvantaged environments without disability diagnosed by a general practitioner to be investigated in special pedagogical counselling with a focus on children with disabilities. Another practical measure is the reassessment after the first year of compulsory schooling.

To the points 83, 84, 88

26. To the recommendation to involve civil society organisations, the Ministry of Health and the Public Health in cooperation with the Roma plenipotentiary in the employment of health mediators, Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities from 2013 implemented targeted policies and support to improve public health of members of marginalised Roma communities.

In the implementation of that policy and in order to reassign the performance of activities of helping professions in health prevention, education and counselling for marginalised Roma communities, the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic in October 2013, from the funds of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, the Slovak Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic, supported the project "Healthy Communities", which was implemented by the Platform to promote the health of disadvantaged groups on the basis of requests for subsidies to support the social and cultural needs and resolving the extremely unfavourable situation of the Roma community in accordance with Section 2, letter h) of Act No. 526/2010 Coll. the provision of subsidies by the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic as amended.

The "Healthy Communities" project is a nationwide project focusing on prevention and health education in Roma communities. Implementation of the project is of particular benefit in improving the health status of the Roma communities, reducing the epidemiological risk for all population groups and creating prerequisites for improving school attendance by improving the health status of schoolchildren.

From the beginning, 120 people were active in the project, including 108 health education assistants in 108 locations and 12 coordinators. From 1 January 2014 the number of sites and the number of assistants of health education was increased in proportion to 144 and the number of coordinators was increased to 16. In 2014, the six-month continuation of the project was upon the request dated 19 December 2013 given a subsidy allocated in the full amount of the sources of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic. The overall financing of the project "Healthy Communities", with a duration until 30 June 2014 amounted to 1,086,909 euros.

Following the extension of the project until 30 September 2014 the budget was increased by 399,804 euros. Part of the programme, the performance of which is realised primarily in the natural environment of Roma communities, includes monitoring activities of public health at MRC settlements in relation to security of supply and the supply of sanitary water for human use as well as health promotion activities, increasing the level of hygiene of settlements and access to medical care.

From October 2014 until the end of 2015, the project "Healthy Communities" carries on. It is funded from European Union structural funds in the 2007-2013 programme period from the Operational Programme "Employment and Social Inclusion". The applicant for a grant is the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic non-profit organisation "Healthy Communities,

n.o.," whose founder is the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic and the Platform for promoting the health of disadvantaged groups. The project will ensure fieldwork of 288 cultural health workers (264 health education assistants and 24 regional field coordinators). The project will cover 25 areas with 259 segregated and separated Roma settlements and localities. From 2016 to 2022 the project will be financed from EU structural funds in the new programme period 2014-2020, from the Operational Programme "Human Resources".

27. At the priority axis "Integration of marginalised Roma communities" Operational Programme Human Resources for the programme period 2014-2020, part of the intervention measures are aimed at improving access to health care and public health, including preventive health care, health education and the improvement of living standards of hygiene.

Under this specific objective the following is foreseen:

- supporting systematic provision of services and assistance through the community workers in the field of health education in communities with the presence of separated and segregated MRC;
- support programmes for health education awareness of inhabitants of segregated and separated Roma settlements and localities focused on areas such as: personal hygiene and care of own health, parental education, protection of sexual and reproductive health, child care, prevention of infectious diseases, food handling, environmental protection, prevention of injuries and accidents, etc.;
- support for programmes aimed at ensuring minimum standards of hygiene in the municipalities with the presence of the MRC;
- support for programmes aimed at achieving higher standards of hygiene of marginalised Roma settlements and reduction in the number of illegal dwellings characteristic with an extremely low level of hygiene standards through the provision of technical assistance to municipalities with the presence of the MRC focused on help to tackle land.

From that framework of examples of activities the programmes a) and d) have a key position as they contain selected programmes that are part of the so-called "Take away package".

28. Selected programmes financed by the priority axis 5 (European Social Fund) will be standardised and to ensure a uniform coordinated approach they will be implemented by national projects. The programme of field social work, community centres, programme of the education of children in early childhood and programme of assistance in dealing and legalisation of land in villages with the presence of the MRC will be implemented by the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities.

29. The other national project, which as part of the Take away package focuses in its content on the programme of health education and prevention in municipalities with the presence of MRC, will be implemented by the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic. All programmes included in the Take away package must meet the agreed methodology and segregation index. Performance of these programmes in communities with the highest segregation index (150 municipalities) will be implemented automatically, based on eligibility, not competition. The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities in addition to running the project will guarantee the interconnection of the various interventions, and the quality of their performance in the field. Financing of programmes will be ensured for the whole programme period, which will facilitate the continuous implementation in the field and consequently the quality of their performance. Thanks to the long-term implementation, there will be an opportunity for the application of provisional countervailing measures for the

protection of people from MRC involved in the implementation of programmes.

30. The concept measures under priority axis "Technical equipment in the municipalities with the presence of marginalised Roma communities" financially supported by the European Fund for housing development represents a wide spectrum of investments that will enable the inhabitants of MRC to gain access to drinking and potable water.

To the point 85

31. The Act No. 576/2004 Coll. on healthcare, services related to health care and on amendments to certain laws as amended, states that everyone has the right to health care. The provisions of Act No. 577/2004 Coll. on the scope of health care covered by public health insurance and on payments for services related to health care, as amended, declare that preventive examinations of children and adults, as well as pregnant women are fully covered by public health insurance. Under the Act No. 355/2007 Coll. on protection, support and development of public health and on amendments to some regulations, the performance of public health is aimed at preservation, promotion and development of the health of all citizens. The measures are targeted to every citizen of the Slovak Republic indiscriminately, and the principles of equal treatment and gender equality are applied.

The Public Health Office of the Slovak Republic in the field of prevention of diseases and other health disorders, among other things, performs tasks in accordance with Act No. 355/2007 Coll. on protection, support and development of public health and amending certain laws, as amended, carries out education of public health, especially by consultancy. Counselling centres for the protection and promotion of health, operated by the Regional Public Health Offices, ensure in a clear form individual, group and collective counselling for every citizen of the Slovak Republic.

Pursuant to the Code of Ethics of healthcare professionals (Annexe No. 4 to the Act No. 578/2004 Coll. on healthcare providers, health workers and professional organisations in health and on amendments to certain laws), the general obligations of medical workers are also the obligation to preserve life, protect, promote and restore health, prevent disease, reduce suffering regardless of nationality, race, religion, sexual orientation, political affiliation, social status, moral or cognitive level and reputation of the patient.

31. Use of minority languages in the hospital is allowed for all patients and clients by verbal communication. For medical facilities it is sufficient, if someone from the medical staff knows the language of the minority, then the communication does not require a qualified interpreter.

The Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic did not have any complaint concerning failure to provide medical care due to lack of minority language by the staff of health facilities.

32. From 1 April 2014 Declaration of Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic No. 56/2014 Coll. entered into force, laying down details on instruction preceding the informed consent before performing sterilisation of person and patterns of informed consent for performing sterilisation of a person in the state language and minority languages. Instructions preceding informed consent shall take place immediately following the application to perform sterilisation. Instructions are carried out by medical staff of the medical institution in which the person is requesting the performance of sterilisation, as provided in the Act.

33. The issue of community centres is governed by Section 24d of Act No. 448/2008 Coll. on social services and amending Act No. 455/1991 Coll. on Trades (Trade Act), as amended. With effect from 1 January 2014, the community centre provides social counselling for individuals

in an unfavourable social situation, assistance with asserting rights and interests protected by law, assistance in preparing for school and school education and accompanying the child to and from school facilities. These professional activities can provide outpatient social services through community centres and outreach in the form of social services through a field programme. Also, the community centre carries out preventive activities, community work, community rehabilitation and provides interest activities. From 1 January 2014 the National Project of Community Centres through the Implementing Agency for the Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion is being implemented. In this national project it has signed a total of 229 applicants. Among these there are now 177 active community centres.

To the point 86

34. Within the framework of the Operational Programme Human Resources (for the programme period 2014-2020), priority axis "Integration of marginalised Roma communities", the specific objective of the area of employment "To reduce the unemployment rate of Roma men and women" will be met through the following activities:

- supporting systematic provision of social and assistance services in municipalities with MRC presence aimed at increasing the employability of people living in an MRC environment (i.e. social workers, community workers / workers in social services);
- supporting the existence and operation of community centres in municipalities with the presence of MRC;
- supporting programmes for financial literacy, debt management and saving as a tool to facilitate access to the open labour market, with an aim to raise awareness in the financial services, micro credit and savings programmes, including supporting activities, and supporting the development of microfinance programmes;
- promoting an individual approach in providing employment services with a strong focus on client needs and labour market and supporting instruments of the intermediate labour market for people from the MRC (realised e.g. through supported employment agencies or other organisations active in the field of employment);
- supporting career guidance for people from MRC customised in a client-oriented way.

35. The priority axis "Technical equipment in municipalities with MRC presence"; Specific goal 6.2.1. "Increasing the employment of MRC in the social economy entities in areas with the presence of MRC" it may be noted that the current labour market situation is characterised by a lack of jobs for MRC. Existing social enterprises have poor amenities in terms of technical equipment, technologies and licenses as well as limited space capacity. Implementation, respectively development of social innovation in the business sector is limited by human resources which reduces their level of competitiveness and expansion. To improve conditions, it is essential to provide support measures through counselling/mentoring and assistance.

Subjects of social economy appear to be a very suitable instrument for promoting employment in the MRC. The intention of the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities is to provide support in the most efficient and most addressable way, so we will ensure that intermediaries of the above instruments of support are of an organisation-public nature, selected based on publicly available challenges.

Support will mainly take the form of investment in tangible and intangible assets of the entities of the social economy, since creation of jobs depends on these investments. It will focus as a priority on the purchase of new technologies, equipment and licenses, through which the production programme of a particular social enterprise can be supported. However, given the

fact that it is impossible to create an exhaustive list of focus and business plans implemented by the potential of social enterprises, the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma communities also does not want to exclude promotion of investments in reconstruction of areas of social enterprises (e.g. the business plan for the provision of accommodation may just need investment in building repairs).

Specific goals and activities will be implemented by the activities:

- purchases of equipment, technologies and licenses necessary for the implementation of the approved business plan for a social enterprise with a focus on the use of microcredit;
- support micro-financial instruments;
- support for reconstruction and construction of facilities of social economy entities.

To the point 88

36. Increased rate of interventions in favour of socio-economic integration of MRC through investments by the European Structural Funds and investment programme period 2014-2020 takes into account the particular multi-funded Operational Programme Human Resources, within which the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities set a framework of measures and activities in two priority axes. At the priority axis "Integration of marginalised Roma communities", which will be financed from the European Social Fund, part of the intervention measures are aimed at improving access to health care and public health, including preventive health care, health education and the improvement of living standards of hygiene. Standards of living hygiene involves the deliberate provision of technical assistance to municipalities with the presence of separated and segregated MRC in the area of settlement and legalisation of land under dwellings occupied by MRC.

37. The framework for action in the programme period 2014- 2020 under the priority axis "Technical equipment in the municipalities with the presence of marginalised Roma communities" financially supported by the European Regional Development Fund, represents a wide spectrum of investments that will enable the inhabitants of MRC to gain access to drinking and potable water. The aim is to improve conditions for social integration of people from MRC through a functional system of bridging housing as well as introducing a financial mechanism (microloans) to support self-realisation, including the establishment of utilities, construction of access roads and municipal waste removal.

38. In line with strategy of the Slovak Republic for Roma integration by 2020 a priority of the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic for Roma communities is in the area of housing policy and helps tackle the legalisation of land under dwellings inhabitants of Roma communities.

In this respect, there is a continuing process of preparing the new Building Act, under which legal instruments are being prepared for the legalisation of the system by repairing the dwellings of ownership of the land on which the dwellings are built. Considering the objective needs for solution of collision of fundamental rights, namely the right to adequate housing and the right to inviolability of the home on the one hand and the right to inviolability of property rights on the other, the aim of the Slovak Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities in cooperation with the Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister of the Slovak Republic is to prepare and submit a legislative proposal for a generally binding legal regulation, allowing resolving of the collision of those rights, postulated on the following principles:

- The State will compensate the owners of land under illegal Roma settlements by purchasing the land or exchanging of the land for state-owned land.

- The State will offer within the time limit for the inhabitants of the Roma settlements divestment of land owned by the state by instalments as a viable alternative to a lump sum or will offer rental through the respective municipality.

On the issue of settlement land there is the targeted activity "Working group for the pilot project of settlement land", which is composed of representatives of the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities, the Ministry of Agriculture of the Slovak Republic, the State Forests of the Slovak Republic and the Slovak Land Fund.

The working group was formed under the initiative of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities supported by the funding schemes of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities in 2014 and aims to tackle land ownership in the area of "Roma settlement" in the village of Krásnohorské Podhradie. Pilot project: "The project of property settlement of ownership to land in locations of MRC with the help of the Regional Manager for the settlement of land and legalisation of illegal construction, surveyors and property developers" is filled with the objectives set out in the Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Roma integration by 2020.

Comments on further points

- To the points 3, 18, 19, 78

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- 39. Following a debate on the institutional strengthening of coordination of human rights agenda on national level in 2014, which has been repeatedly discussed during the preparation of the National Strategy for Human Rights Protection and Promotion in the Slovak Republic, as well as in relation to the increasing intensity of preparation of Slovakia for the EU presidency, a transfer of coordination competences from the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs to the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic in the area of national protection and promotion of human rights has been initiated.

- In this respect the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic elaborated and presented an amendment to the Act No. 575/2001 Coll. on Organisation of Government Activities and Organisation of Central Government, as amended (approved by the Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 122 of March 18, 2015), which enters into force on September 1, 2015 (at the present time it is undergoing a legislative process in the National Council of the Slovak Republic; Parliament Press No. 1471). In terms of the amendment, the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic will be in control of creation and implementation of the human rights state policy and it will be in charge of coordination of human rights tasks-fulfilment.

- The Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic has already been taking the role of coordinator of the Anti-Discrimination Law and the Law on establishing the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights. By transferring of competences, its competence in the area of human rights will extend.

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- 40. The objective of the National strategy for the protection and promotion of human rights in the Slovak Republic, which was approved by the Slovak Government on February 18, 2015, was the identification of tasks and priorities in the field of human rights by 2020. The Committee for National Minorities and Ethnic Groups was also involved in the preparation of the national strategy by producing a separate annexe, which served as the basis for drawing up the actual text of the national strategy.
- Individual tasks arising from the National Strategy have been imposed to the competent ministers and governmental bodies that will be responsible for their execution.
- One of the tasks of resolution to the National strategy of protection and promotion of human rights in the Slovak Republic is to draw up action plans for those vulnerable and marginalised groups and individuals, who are not yet provided with a legislative framework, institutional framework, separate strategies and frameworks of application practice.
- The Government Office of the Slovak Republic and the The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic for National Minorities are responsible for developing an action plan regarding the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and ethnic groups. The process of preparation of the action plan has already been initiated.

41. The Plenipotentiary or the person tasked with the duties of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic for National Minorities (“the Plenipotentiary”) performs all tasks in the area of preservation, development and promotion of rights of national minorities, implements systemic measures to improve the situation of national minorities and its mandate is applied in full and without restrictions.

The Plenipotentiary is the Chairperson of the Committee for National Minorities and Ethnic Groups (hereinafter referred to as "the Committee"), which is a permanent advisory body to the Government Council of the Slovak Republic for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality on the issues related to national minorities and ethnic groups and for the implementation of the Framework Convention for the protection of national minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The Plenipotentiary is also a member of several advisory bodies of the Government of the Slovak Republic – the Government Council of the Slovak Republic for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality, the Council of the Slovak Republic for NGOs and the Government Council of the Slovak for Culture.

The Plenipotentiary is also the coordinator of the grant programme of the Government of the Slovak Republic – Culture of National Minorities, through which it annually allocates funds to protect and promote the preservation and development of the identity and culture of thirteen national minorities living in Slovakia.

One of the major responsibilities of the Plenipotentiary is also regular monitoring, analysing and evaluating observance of the rights of national minorities by state authorities, local government authorities and other relevant entities through reports to the Government of the Slovak Republic.

The Committee as the institutionalised consultation mechanism on matters of participation of national minorities in addressing matters that concern them has a unique position, which differs significantly from other committees of the Government Council of the Slovak Republic for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality. In particular, the right to vote in the committee is held only by representatives of national minorities and the chairperson according

to the principle of one minority - one vote. Representatives of national minorities are elected to the committee by minority organisations and are not chosen by nomination method. It is not possible to address issues concerning a specific national minority in committee meetings without the participation of its representatives. The central government authorities are represented in the committee, but without voting rights.

42. Current data relating to the loss of citizenship of the Slovak Republic as a result of the voluntary acquisition of foreign nationality say that citizenship of the Slovak Republic was lost for that reason by the end of February 2015 by a total of 1,017 people, most often by acquisition of citizenship of the Czech Republic.

Slovak citizenship has been lost for example by 361 persons by acquisition of Czech citizenship, 204 persons by acquisition of German citizenship, 145 persons by acquisition of Austrian citizenship, and 59 persons by Hungarian citizenship.

We further state that pursuant to Regulation of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic No. 1/2015 on granting nationality of the Slovak Republic for specific reasons from 1 February 2015, an application for re-granting Slovak citizenship may be submitted for specific reasons, decided by the Minister of Interior of the Slovak Republic.

To the point 13

43. It is not correct to relate/correlate the increase of the frequency of the Roma ethnic group with a decrease in the number of persons who can claim Hungarian, Czech or Ukrainian ethnic origin. The decrease in the number of persons claiming Hungarian ethnicity is caused mainly by the reproduction ratio in this population (low fertility), changes in the abundance of the Czech and Ukrainian ethnicities are again mainly due to the fact that someone has already separately declared the "Czech" and especially "Moravian" ethnicity, likewise separately "Ukrainian" and especially "Ruthenian" nationality.

To the points 17 and 21

44. The Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (hereinafter "the Centre") is authorised to act within the Act No. 308/1993 Coll. on establishing the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, as amended.

According to the Law, the Centre performs tasks in the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights of the child. The Centre for this purpose, in particular:

- monitors and assesses the observance of human rights and the adherence of the principle of equal treatment under a separate law,
- collects and provides upon request information on racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism in Slovakia,
- conducts research and surveys on the provision of information in the field of human rights, collects and disseminates information in this area,
- develops educational activities and participates in information campaigns with the aim of increasing tolerance of the society,
- provides legal assistance to victims of discrimination and intolerance,
- upon request from individuals or legal entities or on its own initiative provides expert

opinions concerning compliance with the principle of equal treatment under a special regulation,

- conducts independent surveys concerning discrimination,
- draws up and publishes reports and recommendations on issues related to discrimination,
- provides library services,
- provides services in the field of human rights.

45. In the year-end reports on the activities of the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, which are available on the website of the Centre (www.snslp.sk) a specific number of complaints is listed for each year, as well as the busiest areas of petition. At the same time, they also contain information on representing clients in legal proceedings, complaints about children's rights and issued expert opinions. In the area of discrimination, the Centre has mostly dealt with complaints regarding labour law, specifically the harassment at the work place. The other human rights issues have included: civil law complaints regarding descent of intestacy, disputes of neighbours and complaints from the imprisoned persons.

The individual year-end reports on the activities of the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights show that in 2010 the Centre dealt with a total of 1,418 suggestions, and in 2011 it was 2,335 suggestions, in 2012 it was 2,497 suggestions. In 2013 the Centre recorded 2,621 suggestions and in 2014 it was 2,413 suggestions.

The Centre annually through reports on human rights, including the principle of equal treatment and rights of the child in the Slovak Republic, which are available on the website of the Centre, focuses also on the area of the protection of rights of national and ethnic groups.

The topic of the rights of national and ethnic groups is a separate chapter in the Report on human rights, including the principle of equal treatment and rights of the child in the Slovak Republic in 2012. Specifically about topics of *Roma reform, anti-Roma wall, problems of Luník IX and sterilisation of Roma women*.

In 2013 the Centre addressed in the Report on compliance with human rights, including the principle of equal treatment and rights of the child in the Slovak Republic in a separate chapter on Roma rights, *Police intervention in Moldava nad Bodvou and the anti-Roma wall*, which appeared in Slovakia since 2009.

In the Report on human rights, including the principle of equal treatment and rights of the child in the Slovak Republic for the year 2014 the Centre focuses its attention on working to be able to get social assistance benefit (in material and social deprivation). The consistency of amendment to the law on assistance in material and social deprivation to the Constitution is currently being assessed by the Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic. The report is also focusing on the right to housing in connection with the demolition of apartment buildings inhabited mostly by Roma population, since the field of housing is undoubtedly one of the areas where there is the most significantly growing gap between Roma and the majority population.

The Centre continuously implements educational events in the field of human rights and discrimination.

Last year, the Centre began with the project of educating Roma, field social workers, teacher assistants and other staff working directly with Roma to increase their awareness of current issues directly related to the life of the Roma.

The project called "Let's learn together more" – a series of educational activities in Roma

communities on raising public awareness and awareness of non-discrimination, labour rights and human trafficking, began at the end of 2014 with training in Lunik IX in Košice, and continued in Banská Bystrica and Rožňava. Also, based on the positive feedback of the participants in these training sessions, the Centre decided to proceed with the project in 2015, and the first training activity this year was held in Dunajská Streda, next in the village of Pašková in the district of Rožňava. The Centre in organising learning cooperates with Roma leaders and local governments. The Centre's efforts in this project is to organise training sessions mainly directly in Roma communities and thus closer to people living in them. The Centre considers it important to reach people at this level, since it is they who are often the most vulnerable groups in particular as regards human trafficking and discrimination. The Centre hopes that the knowledge acquired by workers in Roma communities will be applied and further served and will raise awareness and protection of the Roma either against trafficking, or discrimination.

The Centre, on the basis of an agreement, closely co-operates with the Council of Non-governmental Roma Communities, which is an apolitical association comprising more than 120 Roma associations. In 2014 the Centre, in co-operation the Council of Non-governmental Roma Communities, organized the “International conference on language, history a cultural identification of Roma” and the international festival “X. International Roam Festival” in order to commemorate the Remembrance Day of Holocaust and Racial Violence. The outcome of the conference included an agreement on the need to develop a cultural awareness of Roma and to inform the young generation on the Roma history and language.

To the point 23

46. According to the results of the Population and Housing Census 2011 Roma ethnicity was claimed by 105,738 citizens residing permanently in the SR (about 15,818 more than in 2001), representing 2% of the total permanent resident population. Contrary to which the authors point out is the result of different methodology used in the present study and in the Population and Housing Census in 2011. The Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic in the Population and Housing Census 2011 did not investigate the number of Roma, but the number of permanently resident population of the Slovak Republic who declared themselves as Roma at their own discretion. The approach of the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic to the inquiry is in accordance with the Slovak Constitution (Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, Art. 12, section (3) Everyone has the right to freely choose his ethnicity.)

To the point 28

47. One of the most important instruments of direct support of culture and language of national minorities as well as education and training to the rights of national minorities is a subsidy programme of the Government of the Slovak Republic – Culture of National Minorities, which is supervised by the Plenipotentiary. After passing of the grant programme from the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic to the Government Office in 2011 on the other hand there was a significant increase in funding to support minority cultures, from the amount of 3,485,362 euros to 4,000,000 euros. The Government Office of the Slovak Republic has a separate budget heading under which a sum is earmarked annually for the subsidy programme Culture of National Minorities.

The Plenipotentiary does not interfere with the amount allocated under the grant programme Culture of National Minorities.

Nationwide austerity measures in the state budget for 2014 also affected the grant programme,

but in the state budget for 2015 there was an increase of funds for the Culture of National Minorities 2015 of 50,000 euros, initiated by the head of the Government Office of the Slovak Republic by means of amendment of the Vice-President of the National Council of the Slovak Republic. The subsidy amount for 2015 thus totals 3,879,250 euros.¹

To the point 29

48. In order to arrive at the drafting of new rules of allocation of funds under the Culture of National Minorities, the Plenipotentiary has established an ad hoc working group composed of representatives of all thirteen national minorities. The working group reached a compromise proposal for conversion of the amount of allocation for individual national minorities, which takes into account a number of criteria with a view to transparent and equitable distribution of resources. The conclusions of the working group were presented to the Committee at the 11th meeting, held on 12 November 2013. The Committee's Resolution No. 30 approved the draft rules of allocation of funds for the Culture of National Minorities. New rules for the allocation of funds, including all other points on the relevant committee meeting were adopted by the original voting system, as the new voting system had to be confirmed – by approval of change of the Statute – also at the Government Council of the Slovak Republic for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality on 20 November 2013. A mathematical model of calculation of financial resources for minority has been incorporated in the internal regulation of the Government of the Slovak Republic. Since 2014, the method of allocating financial resources for national minorities in the programme distributes under that mathematical model. The Slovak Government Office decides on individual project financing based on recommendations of independent evaluation committees, in which the vast majority are always representatives of national minorities.

To the point 30

49. The Government Office of the Slovak Republic was under the grant programme Culture of National Minorities in 2014 ready to pay subsidies also at an earlier date, but it had to wait for the processing of contracts on the part of applicants, respectively beneficiaries and their delivery to the Government Office. Nevertheless, the process of remittance funds to accounts of applicants was the fastest in three years, when more than 90% of funding for minority culture was already paid in August 2014. In the future it will be possible to accelerate the process of signing contracts provided flexibility and promptness on the part of the applicants. The Government Office of the Slovak Republic has requested in February 2013 the European Commission via the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic on the issue of state aid scheme through the Government Office of the Slovak Republic for support of minority cultures. Given the fact that the European Commission's decision was in spite of repeated reminders from the Government Office of the Slovak Republic not issued until December 2014, projects could not be paid earlier concerning the publishing business for some ethnic minorities. Approved State aid schemes allowed the Government Office of the Slovak Republic to pay the last two contracts – one for the Hungarian national minority and one for the Ukrainian national minority – for the publishing business. Approval of State aid schemes allows flexible allocation of subsidies for publishers, which is an important step in the development of culture of thirteen national minorities living in Slovakia. The scheme states that the provision of subsidies to support the periodical and non periodical press in national minority languages in Slovakia in the framework of the Culture of National Minorities is

¹ In 2009, the KNM allocated: € 3,485,362; in 2010: € 3,485,362; in 2011: € 4,000,000; in 2012: € 4,500,000; in 2013: € 4,250,000; in 2014: € 3,829,250; in 2015: € 3,879,250.

compatible with Article 107 section 3 point d) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. It is a publication that focuses on the history and culture of national minorities. These publications may not be replaced by alternatives in the Slovak language or publications in the languages of the national minorities imported from other Member States. The approved aid scheme applies until 2020.

50. The Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic pays due attention to the promotion and protection of cultural rights of national minorities, as well as preventing discrimination, through cultural mechanisms even after transferring of competences in the field of culture of national minorities in 2010 to the Government Office of the Slovak Republic. In addition to specialised national museums (departments of the Slovak National Museum), dedicated to the protection and development of cultural heritage of individual national minorities, the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic and other mechanisms designed to develop the said issue in the context of cross-cutting activities, thereby contributing to preventing prejudices and stereotypes in Slovak society; as well as to the development of intercultural dialogue and promoting social inclusion process.

Act of the Slovak National Council No. 434 of 26 October 2010 on the granting of subsidies by the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic sets out the purpose, scope, method and conditions for granting subsidies to the Ministry. It is an effective and sustainable financial mechanism under the grant system of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, which enables meeting and developing the cultural needs of vulnerable groups, including marginalised Roma communities where the priority is the promotion of social integration through cultural mechanisms. The subsidy programme has been operating since 2004 and at the beginning possessed a volume of funds in the amount of SK 400,000 (in 2004 10 projects were supported). By 2014, the total volume of funds increased by almost thirty times, to 375,300 euros (in 2014 a total of 124 projects were supported). Overview of projects from the grant programme Culture of disadvantaged groups for marginalised Roma communities (children and youth) in the years 2010 to 2014 – the number of projects and amount in euros:

	year 2010	year 2011	year 2012	year 2013	year 2014
marginalised Roma communities (children and youth)	13/44,000	11/38,790	8/23,900	8/23,000	11/29,100

Within the grant system of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic in the years 2010 - 2014 the following entities were supported: Roma Media Centre, Košice; The Roman Catholic Church Lomnička; Cultural Association of Senior Citizens, Banská Bystrica; civic association Wild Poppies, Bratislava; civic association Kežmarský hlas, Kežmarok; civic association Culture - European culture, Banská Bystrica; Cultural and educational civic association Láčho Drom, Kokava nad Rimavicou; civic association Nová cesta, Michalovce; Leisure Centre, Rakúsy; Foundation Good Romany Fairy Kesaj, Košice; civic association Ambrello; Association for Culture, Education and Communication (ACEC); The Milan Šimečka Foundation and others.

An important contribution to the awareness of the majority of Roma culture is the project of the Documenting Information Centre of Roma culture (State Scientific Library in Prešov), which will contribute to raising awareness of the situation and culture of the Roma national minority as well as to the elimination of prejudices and stereotypes. This is a national project under the Operational Programme Information Society to build a specialised workplace - digital database of Roma culture (the project was launched on 23 February 2012 and continued in 2014). The main role of the Documenting Information Centre of Roma culture is to centralise comprehensive information on the Roma culture, history, language, traditions and other areas of life of the Roma community in one place. This will create a unique access to the necessary

and required information about everything related to Roma matters and also will present a new perspective on the culture of the Roma as part of the European cultural heritage.

In the reporting period the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic created space for the promotion of equal opportunities and increasing the availability of culture through removing barriers in cultural institutions also for marginalised groups – free access to cultural institutions every first Sunday of the month, for example. In 2012 this kind of service was only provided by the Slovak National Gallery. In 2013 four ministerial institutions were involved in the initiative: Slovak National Gallery, Slovak National Museum, the Museum of Slovak National Uprising and the Slovak Technical Museum. The measures were implemented by order of the Minister of Culture (the order of the Minister No. 2/2013). It was an opportunity to visit 37 cultural objects in the report of the bodies in Slovakia for free. In 2014 there was also a new measure: in order to increase the availability of cultural institutions the Slovak National Gallery is available free of charge year-round to all visitors.

An important role in the development, protection and promotion of cultural rights of marginalised groups and dissemination of the culture department is performed by the National Cultural Centre. The National Cultural Centre is a national cultural institution, the supreme state institution in the area of education, scientific and educational institutions in the field of culture. The National Cultural Centre through a Social prevention bulletin presents articles and studies on the prevention of discrimination and all forms of violence (intercultural dialogue, prevention of extremism, trafficking, religious extremism, the threat of violence from the media and the Internet, etc.).

To the point 46

51. The method of creating the Council is regulated by the Act on Broadcasting and Retransmission. Its members under this Act are elected by the National Council of the Slovak Republic. Nominations for members of the Board may by law be submitted to the Committee of the National Council of the Slovak Republic by MPs, professional institutions and civic associations active in the audiovisual sector, mass media, culture, science, education, sport, registered churches and religious communities and civil society organisations of persons with disabilities through the Coordination Committee for the Disabled Citizens of the Slovak Republic.

The National Council of the Slovak Republic also elects members of the Board of Radio and Television of Slovakia (hereinafter referred to as "RTVS"), which is the supervisory body of for radio and television broadcasting. According to Section 9 paragraph 3 of Act No. 532/2010 Coll. on the Radio and Television of Slovakia and on amendments to certain laws (hereinafter the "Law on RTVS") nominations for RTVS Council members present to the committee of the National Council of the Slovak Republic legal persons under a special regulation (civic associations, foundations) active in the audiovisual sector, media, culture, economics, law, economy, science, education, development and protection of spiritual values, human rights and the environment, health protection, representing the interests of national minorities or ethnic groups, other minorities, or registered churches and religious societies. The call for proposals for candidates for the Board of RTVS is published by the relevant committee of the National Council of the Slovak Republic by transmitting by RTVS, the web site of RTVS, the web site of the National Council of the Slovak Republic and in at least one national daily periodical.

Composition of the above mentioned authorities is thus the result of the vote in the National Council of the Slovak Republic, and it is not excluded that the members of these bodies may also be representatives of national minorities.

To the point 47

52. In 2013, the Act No. 373/2013 Coll. was adopted, amending and supplementing Act No. 308/2000 Coll. on Broadcasting and Retransmission and on the amendment of Act No. 195/2000 Coll. on telecommunications, as amended, and amending and supplementing certain laws. This Act has amended Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 270/1995 Coll. on the State Language of the Slovak Republic, as amended (hereinafter the "State Language Law"). In the State Language Act, provisions governing the broadcast language were also amended. By Act No. 373/2013 Coll. it was allowed to broadcast in other than the state language in addition to broadcasting programmes also other components of a television programme service and other components of a radio programme service (e.g. advertising), if at the same time ensuring their language version also in the state language, either by subtitling, or transmitting also the Slovak language version. While until the adoption of the amendment to the law it was allowed to include broadcasts of the Slovak language version only immediately after the broadcasts of a minority language programme, an amendment allowed that the broadcaster may choose any order of the version or other component of the programme service in the official language and another language. This adjustment applies to television broadcasting as well as radio broadcasting, for which the exemption applies in relation to regional or local broadcast designed for members of national minorities.

Act No. 373/2013 Coll. has also introduced an additional exemption from the requirement to broadcast in the state language. This exemption applies to the broadcaster, to which the Council has granted a license to broadcast a programme service exclusively in one or more official languages of the European Union, which is not the state language of the Slovak Republic. In deciding to grant licenses for regional broadcasting or licenses for local broadcasting exclusively in one or more official languages of the European Union, which are not official languages of the Slovak Republic, the Council is required to consider and take into account the fact of whether there is a sufficient supply of local or regional broadcasting programme services in the official language in the territory, which should be covered by this broadcasting. The broadcaster, to whom the Council granted a license to broadcast a programme service exclusively in one or more official languages of the European Union, which are not official languages of the Slovak Republic, may broadcast any programmes as well as all other components of its programme service exclusively in a language other than Slovak. Pursuant to the State Language Act, the Slovak language version of any part of the broadcast is not required.

To the point 48

53. The Slovak Republic currently does not provide support of sending of commercial electronic media, regardless of the language of broadcasting.

Public service broadcasting in relation to ethnic minorities is provided by RTVS. RTVS is under the Law on RTVS a public, national, independent, information, cultural and educational institution that provides a public service in the field of radio broadcasting and television broadcasting. Funding of RTVS is governed directly by law. RTVS activity is financed mainly from payments for public services provided by RTVS, paid by individuals who are registered as household electricity customers for consumption in an apartment or a family house and employers who employ at least three employees, and from contributions from the state budget. The Act on RTVS defines specific tasks for RTVS in relation to national minorities. These tasks include broadcasting one programme service that is intended for broadcasting content and regionally balanced programmes in the languages of national minorities and ethnic groups living in the Slovak Republic, broadcasting content and regionally balanced programmes in the languages of national minorities and ethnic groups living in the Slovak Republic in a time

range corresponding to the national and ethnic composition of the population of the Slovak Republic; to ensure the production and broadcasting of programmes for national minorities and ethnic groups the RTVS establishes organisational units of the Slovak Radio and Slovak Television.

To the point 49

54. Applications for positions in the organisation of the public broadcaster are not bound to criteria of ethnicity. Positions are equally accessible for residents of Slovak ethnicity as well as for members of national minorities in accordance with the principle of non-discrimination emanating from the Constitution of the Slovak Republic as well as from the Act No. 365/2004 Coll. on equal treatment in certain areas and on protection against discrimination and on amending certain acts (Antidiscrimination Act) as amended.

To the point 51

55. According to Section 2 section 3 Act No. 184/1999 Coll. on the use of minority languages, as amended, the application of the Act applies to the boroughs of the Slovak capital Bratislava and Kosice, which have, in this sense, the position of municipalities. The law further states that in municipalities in which citizens of the Slovak Republic who are persons belonging to national minorities, residing in the village, form by two successive censuses in the municipality at least 15% of the population (i.e. from 2021) have the right in this village to use the minority language in official contact. At present there is a 20% threshold.

City districts with a larger number of members of the Croatian national minority (e.g. Devínska Nová Ves, Jarovce, Čunovo) constitute an organic part of the city of Bratislava. None of these city districts has so far met the 20% threshold.

According to the results of the latest census of population and housing censuses of 2011:

- in the city district of Bratislava - Devínska Nová Ves out of a total population of 15,612, 67 inhabitants subscribed to the Croats, which represents about 0.5%;
- in the city district of Bratislava - Čunovo out of a total population of 1,010, 124 inhabitants subscribed to the Croats, which represents about 12.28%;
- in the city district of Bratislava - Jarovce out of a total population of 1,438, 220 inhabitants subscribed to the Croats, which represents about 15.30%.

In the above city districts, communication with the members of the Croatian minority is provided for by at least one employee speaking the Croatian language. The same applies to a municipality that is not a part of Bratislava (Chorvátsky Grob).

To the point 56

56. Following the demonstration of the "reports of occasional explicit refusal to issue bilingual documents, especially birth certificates", the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic indicates a record of one such complaint on the alleged refusal to issue the documents in a minority language. According to Act No. 154/1994 Coll. on registry offices as amended, entries in the register are carried out in the state language. The register is headed in the Slovak Republic through a single information system, through which registry documents are issued containing a certain mandatory set, to which manual intervention by the registrar is not possible. The particular citizen was issued a document in a minority language according to a bilingual overprint of registry documents, but some parts were in the Slovak language, as the information system cannot generate them in another language.

To the point 58

57. In connection with the use of signs and inscriptions in the Roma language we refer to the fact that the case is not a codified language, on which basis it is used only in colloquial intercourse, especially at local level.

To the point 79

58. Elections in the Slovak Republic, at the national level to the National Council of the Slovak Republic as well as at regional level take place by the application of the electoral law, which is universal, equal, direct suffrage by secret ballot, where voters express their wish. Based on the above, the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic is not the body that can affect representation in elected bodies, which also relates to representatives from among the Roma minority.

In relation to the criticism concerning the proportion of representation of Roma employed in public administration and the Police Force, it is obliged to observe the application of non-discrimination, which, in the admission procedures for employment in public administration or the Police at central and local level, a decisive factor for the respective position criterion is expertise, and not belonging to a national minority. The Police Force may admit upstanding citizens with the required professional police education, also referred to as a Specialist for the Roma community. The Slovak Republic supports the need to increase the number of police officers who speak the Roma language at least partially.

Conclusion

The Slovak Republic welcomes the constructive dialogue with the Advisory Committee and appreciates its expertise. The results of the fourth round of monitoring cycle of the implementation of the commitments of the Slovak Republic will also be the subject of a follow-up seminar, which the Slovak Republic plans to organise after the conclusion of the present round of monitoring.