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EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER

Ad hoc report on the cost-of-living crisis

submitted by

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

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**MINISTRY OF LABOUR, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND FAMILY
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

The European Social Charter (revised)

The Report of the Slovak Republic

on the implementation of the European Social Charter (revised)

(Ad-hoc report on the cost of living crisis - 2023)

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Question 1

Please provide information as to whether and how the statutory minimum wage is regularly adjusted/indexed to the cost of living. Please indicate when this last happened, specifically whether it has been adjusted /indexed since the end of 2021.

In the Slovak Republic, the minimum wage is determined on the basis of the procedure provided by the Act no. 663/2007 Coll. on the Minimum Wage. The basis is the so-called payroll machine - i.e. automatic adjustment of the minimum wage based on a fixed formula, provided that the representative social partners do not agree on a different amount of the minimum wage. The minimum wage is determined for the relevant calendar year.

In reality, the minimum wage in the Slovak Republic increases every year. From 2021, the minimum wage was adjusted for the year 2022, for the year 2023 and also for the year 2024. For the year 2022, the automatic adjustment of the minimum wage was applied. For the year 2023 and for the year 2024, the minimum wage was determined by the agreement of the social partners above the level of the amount resulting from the automatic modifications.

The negotiation of the social partners (representative associations of employers and trade unions, which are part of the Economic and Social Council of the Slovak Republic) on the amount of the minimum wage for the following calendar year takes place according to the law from April 1 (note: in practice, it is up to the social partners when the actual negotiations begin). If the social partners agree on the minimum wage by July 15 at the latest, they will notify the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic of their agreement by July 31 at the latest. Subsequently, the amount of the minimum wage determined by their agreement applies (it will be announced in the Collection of Laws). For example, this situation occurred regarding the minimum wage for 2023.

If the social partners do not agree on the amount of the minimum wage by July 15, the issue of the minimum wage becomes the subject of negotiations of the Economic and Social Council of the Slovak Republic - tripartite in the month of August (composition: representative associations of employers, trade unions and representatives of the state). At the tripartite level, the social partners can still agree on the amount of the minimum wage. If they agree, the amount of the minimum wage determined by their agreement applies. If they do not agree, the amount of the minimum wage determined by the machinery according to Act no. 663/2007 Coll. on the Minimum Wage applies.

The formula is: 57% of the average monthly nominal wage of an employee in the economy of the Slovak Republic published by the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic for the calendar year two years before the calendar year for which the amount of the monthly minimum wage is determined. The amount according to the first sentence is rounded up to whole euros.

Example: for the year 2024, the monthly minimum wage would be 57% of the average wage in Slovakia in 2022, i.e. j. 57% of the sum of €1,304 = €744, but the social partners have agreed on a tripartite sum of €750.

Question 2

Please provide information on any supplementary measures taken to preserve the purchasing power of the minimum wage since the end of 2021.

With effect from June 1, 2023, there was a change in the method of determining the amounts of certain wage benefits for work, which consists in the transition from determining their amount through a fixed amount directly in the law to determining their amounts through a legally established percentage of the amount of the minimum hourly wage. This is a wage premium for work on Saturday, a wage premium for work on Sunday, a wage premium for night work, wage compensation for difficult work performance, as well as the determination of the amount of compensation for the inactive part of the work standby. We are of the opinion that the mentioned measures could also contribute to the preservation of the purchasing power of persons receiving low wages.

Question 3

For States Parties with no statutory minimum wage, please describe any measures taken to preserve the purchasing power of the lowest wages since the end of 2021.

N/A.

Question 4

Please provide information as whether the cost of living crisis has led to the extension of in work benefits.

Please, see below.

Question 5

Please provide information on changes to social security and social assistance systems since the end of 2021. This should include information on benefits and assistance levels and the allocation of benefits.

In July 2022, all pension recipients were paid the so-called 13th pension as a state social benefit ranging from 50 to 300 euros, depending on the amount of the pension. The aim of early payment of 13th pensions was to help pensioners in a period of high inflation by timely and partial compensation of increased financial costs. The number of affected persons is approximately 1.43 million beneficiaries with an average amount of approx. 205.4 euros and expenses of approx. 294.0 mil. euro

In December 2022, pension recipients were paid an extraordinary so-called 14th pension in the amount of 70% of the amount of the 13th pension paid in July 2022, i.e. ranging from 35 to 210 euros, depending on the amount of the pension. The measure was taken to mitigate the ongoing negative effects of inflation on pensioners. The number of affected persons is approximately 1.44 million beneficiaries with an average amount of approx. 143.0 euros and expenses of approx. 205.8 mil. Euro.

In order to transpose the obligations arising from EU Directive 2019/1158, specifically in connection with the employee's right to a contribution when taking paternity/parental leave,

the possibility is being introduced that the child's father may be entitled to maternity leave of 2 weeks (14 calendar days) in a period of six weeks from the birth of the child, regardless of whether the child's mother receives maternity or parental allowance. The goal of the legislation, as well as the directive itself, is to support a more equal distribution of caregiving duties between women and men and the possibility of creating a bond between fathers and children at an early age. The rate for calculating paternity is 75% of the insured person's assessment base. The measure is effective from November 1, 2022. The average monthly number of these benefits paid as of October 31, 2023, stands approx. at 1.9 thousand; with an average monthly amount of approx. 380.7 euros and total expenses of 7.4 mil. Euro.

The legal regulation of the so-called parental pension applies the constitutional right according to Art. 39 par. 5 of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic in the version effective from January 1, 2023, which provides that "everyone has the right to decide that part of the paid tax or part of the paid payment connected with participation in the system of adequate material security in old age will be provided to the person who raised them and to whom material security in old age is provided". The amount of the parental pension in 2023 was determined as 1.5% of one-twelfth of the total assessment bases of the child from two years ago, from which the insurance premium for old-age insurance was paid. However, no more than 1.5% of one twelfth of 1.2 times the general assessment base from two years ago. If the child decides that both parents are entitled to a parental pension, or all persons who brought him up, the total amount of parental pensions from one child will be no more than 3% of one-twelfth of the total assessment bases of this child for the period of two years ago. However, at most 3% of one twelfth of 1.2 times the general assessment base for two years ago. Parental pensions for the individual months of 2023 were paid in one aggregate instalment. In total, expenses as of November 30, 2023, amounted to approx. 289.2 million. euro; approx. 925.5 thousand pensioners were provided with this benefit and the average amount was approx. 312.0 euros.

As of January 1, 2023, an insured person, who reaches 40 years of employment and the amount of their early retirement pension is higher than 1.6 times the amount of the subsistence minimum for one natural person of legal age, is entitled to an early retirement pension. The amount of early retirement pension for 40 years of service is reduced by 0.3% for every 30 days of receiving early retirement pension before reaching the retirement age. The years worked do not include certain periods obtained before January 1, 2004, e.g. period of registered unemployment and studies at secondary and university level. On the other hand, periods during which the insured person objectively could not perform a gainful activity (e.g. periods of military service, child care) are also taken into account. The aim of introducing this option is to guarantee the right to an early old-age pension after 40 years of service to insured persons who have been gainfully employed for most of their lives and who have gained the necessary number of years of employment through gainful activity. As of November 30, 2023, the total number of paid early retirement pensions is approximately 15,000 (of which approx. 6.7 thousand for 40 years of service); average monthly amount of approx. 691.7 euros (with 40 years of service, 763.0 euros) and total expenses of approx. 112.6 mil. euros (as of October 31, 2023).

As of January 1, 2023, for a widow or widower who has raised one child, the age limit for renewing the entitlement to the payment of a widow's and widower's pension upon reaching retirement age is reduced to the age of 57. At the same time, the basic support period for receiving a widow's and widower's pension immediately after the death of a relative is extended from one year to two years.

In November 2023, all pension recipients were paid the so-called 13th pension as a state social benefit ranging from 50 to 300 euros, depending on the amount of the pension. The aim of the payment of the 13th pensions was to help all pensioners in Slovakia in the costly pre-Christmas period. We estimate the number of affected persons at the level of approx. 1.46 million. beneficiaries with an average amount of approx. 178.0 euros and estimated expenses of approx. 260.0 mil. Euro.

In December 2023, an extraordinary so-called 14th pension in the flat/uniform amount of 300 euros was provided. The measure was taken due to the still high increase in consumer prices, while the compensation in the form of the 13th pension was insufficient. We estimate the number of affected persons at the level of approx. 1.46 million. beneficiaries with expected expenses of approx. 438.6 mil. Euro.

State social benefits

Child allowance

The amount of the child allowance was increased by valorisation from 01.01.2022 to the amount of EUR 25.88 per month for each dependent child, from 01.07.2022 by an amendment to the law to the amount of EUR 30 per month for each dependent child and from 01.01.2023 also by an amendment to the law to the amount of EUR 60 per month for each dependent child.

In the calendar year 2022, the child allowance increased by the amount of EUR 106.33 (in 2021, this increase was provided in the amount of EUR 104.76) for the calendar month in which the dependent child enters the first year of primary school for the first time. From 01.01.2023, the child allowance was increased once by EUR 110. The very payment of a one-time increase in the child allowance is directly linked to the child starting school.

Supplement to child allowance

The amount of the supplement to the child allowance was adjusted by valorisation from 01.01.2022 from the amount of EUR 11.96 to the amount of EUR 12.14. From 01.07.2023, the amount of the supplement to the child allowance was adjusted by an amendment to the law to the amount of EUR 30.

Parental allowance

From 01.01.2022, the parental allowance was increased by valorisation to the amount of EUR 280 if the applicant was not entitled to maternity leave and to the amount of EUR 383.80 if the applicant was paid maternity leave for the child for which they are entitled.

From 01.01.2023, the amount of the parental allowance was increased by valorisation to EUR 301.00 if the applicant was not entitled to maternity leave and to the amount of EUR 412.60 if the applicant was paid maternity leave for the child for which they are entitled.

As of August 1, 2023, the parental allowance was increased by an amendment to the law to the amount of EUR 345.20 if the applicant was not entitled to maternity leave and to the amount of EUR 473.30 if the applicant was paid maternity leave for the child for which they are entitled. Parental allowance in increased amounts was paid for the first time in September 2023.

As of 30.05.2023, the scope of entitlement to parental allowance has been extended. An authorized person who provides proper care for a child between the ages of 3 and 6 who has not been admitted to the state kindergarten according to the child's place of permanent residence on the basis of proper registration (in the month of May) is also entitled to parental allowance. Entitlement to parental allowance lasts until the beginning of the school year, at the latest, in which the child begins compulsory pre-primary education. Entitlement to this parental allowance also ceases when the child is admitted to a state kindergarten.

Child care allowance

From 30.03.2022, the provision of a child care allowance was also adjusted for emigrants from Ukraine (or persons who were granted temporary refuge or persons who, in connection with the crisis situation, applied for the granting of asylum or the provision of additional protection and the provision of temporary refuge to for that reason was terminated due to the fact that they got employed). From June 2022, the child care allowance was extended to include a new form of providing care in the so-called children's groups, while the amount of the allowance for this form of care was set at EUR 160 per month for each child.

Birth allowance and allowance for multiple children born at the same time

As of April 1, 2022, the child birth allowance was adjusted so that it is provided as an automatic benefit, i.e. the authorized person does not submit an application for an allowance upon the birth of a child, the procedure for this allowance begins ex lege with the delivery of information about the birth, or registration of a child in the register of natural persons, without the need for documentation of the relevant confirmations in paper/electronic form by the citizen. The assessment of the residence of the authorized person was also adjusted. At the same time, the condition of the child surviving for 28 days for entitlement to a higher allowance was abolished. At the same time, from 01.05.2023, the allowance at birth is paid in a higher amount also for a child born from the fourth birth. The amount of the contribution depends on the order of the birth – for the first to fourth birth, it is paid in the amount of EUR 829.86 and for the fifth and subsequent births in the amount of EUR 151.37.

If several children are born at the same time, the amount of the allowance at the birth of a child is increased by EUR 75.69 for each child born at the same time.

Substitute alimony

As of January 1, 2022, the conditions for providing substitute alimony have been adjusted as follows:

- abolition of the maximum amount of provided substitute alimony, i.e. it is provided in the amount determined by the court,
- abolition of income testing as one of the conditions for entitlement to substitute alimony, i.e. anyone can apply for substitute alimony, regardless of the amount of income,
- the entitled person no longer has to wait two months from the filing of the application for enforcement, but can claim the right to substitute alimony immediately after filing the application for enforcement,
- an increase in the amount of substitute alimony provided to eligible persons who are not entitled to an orphan's pension to 0.7 times the amount of the subsistence minimum for a

dependent child (originally it was provided in the amount of minimum maintenance, i.e. 30% of the amount of the subsistence minimum for a dependent child).

From 01.07.2022, substitute alimony intended for orphans, as well as for children who are placed in institutions for the social protection of children and social guardianship, became available.

Contributions to support substitute childcare

To support substitute child care, two new allowances are provided from 01.07.2022:

- The allowance for payment of increased expenses is intended to meet the needs of the child related to his health condition or special needs, artistic activities, needs and sports activities, needs. The allowance is provided in the amount of proven payment of increased expenses, up to €500 in a calendar year (possibility to draw in parts).
- The allowance for the education of a surrogate parent is intended to support the lifelong education of the surrogate parent and is provided in the amount of no more than €100 per calendar year (it is also possible to draw in parts).

The amount of the repeated contribution to the surrogate parent who takes care of the sibling group was also increased, depending on the size of the sibling group (the contribution amount increases depending on the number of children). Also, a special recurring allowance for a surrogate parent who takes care of a severely disabled child was increased.

Contributions to support substitute child care are set as multiples of the amount of the subsistence minimum for a dependent child, i.e. they increase together with the valorisation of the subsistence minimum.

Adjustment of the amount of contributions in substitute care from 01.07.2022

- One-time contribution when entrusting a child to substitute care: EUR 829.86;
- One-time allowance in the event of termination of substitute care when the child reaches the age of majority: 10.2 times the amount of the subsistence minimum for a dependent child;
- Repeated contribution to a child entrusted with alternative care:
 - up to 10 years of age in the amount of 2 times the amount of the subsistence minimum for a dependent child per month,
 - over 10 years of age and up to 15 years of age in the amount of 2.3 times the amount of the subsistence minimum for a dependent child per month,
 - over 15 years of age in the amount of 2.5 times the amount of the subsistence minimum for a dependent child per month,
- Repeated contribution to the surrogate parent: in the amount of 1.95 times the amount of the subsistence minimum for a dependent child per month.

The repeated contribution to the surrogate parent is increased by:

- 0.975 times the amount of the subsistence minimum for a dependent child per month, if the surrogate parent takes care of two children who are siblings,
- 1.95 times the amount of the subsistence minimum for a dependent child per month, if the surrogate parent takes care of three children who are siblings,
- 2.925 times the amount of the subsistence minimum for a dependent child per month, if the surrogate parent takes care of four children who are siblings,
- 3.9 times the amount of the subsistence minimum for a dependent child per month, if the surrogate parent takes care of five children who are siblings,
- 4.875 times the amount of the subsistence minimum for a dependent child per month, if the surrogate parent takes care of six children who are siblings,
- 5.85 times the amount of the subsistence minimum for a dependent child per month, if the surrogate parent takes care of seven or more children who are siblings.

This increased amount is provided even if the surrogate parent is not entitled to a repeated allowance to the surrogate parent due to receiving maternity or parental allowance while caring for the entrusted child.

Originally, this increase was provided in a uniform amount of 1.39 times the amount of the subsistence minimum for a dependent child and was provided from three siblings up, regardless of the number of children.

- Special recurring allowance for a surrogate parent: 2.4 times the amount of the subsistence minimum for a dependent child (originally 0.8 times the amount of the subsistence minimum for a dependent child);
- Substitute parent's education allowance: max EUR 100 per year;
- Child allowance to cover increased expenses: max EUR 500 per year.

Assistance in material need

On the basis of the valorisation established by law, the amounts of assistance in material need are always adjusted on January 1 of the calendar year, depending on how the amounts of the subsistence minimum are adjusted on July 1 of the previous calendar year. In 2023, the amounts of assistance in material need were adjusted several times, namely:

- as of January 1, 2023, based on regular valuation, i.e. increased by 7.5%,
- as of July 15, 2023, the amounts of the housing allowance within the material assistance were adjusted, by differentiating its amounts from 1 to 5 or more members in the household, and at the same time, its amounts were increased at all levels,
- as of October 1, 2023, on the basis of extraordinary valorisation, i.e. increased by 14.7%.

Material need assistance	until 31.12.2021	from 1.1.2022	from 1.1.2023	from 15.7.2023	from 1.10.2023
Material need allowance					
- an individual without children	67 ,80 €	6 8,80 €	7 4,00 €	74 ,00 €	8 4,90 €
- an individual with child 1 to 4	12 9,00 €	1 30,90 €	1 40,70 €	14 0,70 €	1 61,40 €
- an individual with 5 or more children	18 8,40 €	1 91,20 €	2 05,50 €	20 5,50 €	2 35,70 €
- a couple without children	11 7,80 €	1 19,60 €	1 28,60 €	12 8,60 €	1 47,50 €
- a couple with child 1 to 4	17 6,40 €	1 79,00 €	1 92,40 €	19 2,40 €	2 20,70 €
- a couple with 5 or more children	23 7,70 €	2 41,30 €	2 59,40 €	25 9,40 €	2 97,50 €
Protection allowance	69 ,40 €	7 0,40 €	7 5,70 €	75 ,70 €	8 6,80 €
Activation allowance	69 ,40 €	7 0,40 €	7 5,70 €	75 ,70 €	8 6,80 €
Allowance for a dependent child	19 ,00 €	1 9,30 €	2 0,70 €	20 ,70 €	2 3,70 €
Housing allowance					
- single person	58 ,50 €	5 9,40 €	6 3,90 €	83 ,00 €	9 5,20 €
- two persons	93 ,40 €	9 4,80 €	1 01,90 €	14 0,90 €	1 61,60 €
- three persons	93 ,40 €	9 4,80 €	1 01,90 €	17 8,80 €	2 05,10 €
- four persons	93 ,40 €	9 4,80 €	1 01,90 €	21 6,70 €	2 48,60 €
- five and more persons	93 ,40 €	9 4,80 €	1 01,90 €	25 4,50 €	2 91,90 €

In addition to the mentioned changes, the target group for the provision of a subsidy to support the education of children's eating habits has been adjusted, namely for all children in primary school and in the last year of kindergarten from May 1, 2023, and by increasing the amount of the subsidy by:

- EUR 1.40 per child in kindergarten,
- EUR 2.10 per child in the first grade of elementary school,
- EUR 2.30 per child for II. elementary school level.

Social services

By adopting an amendment of the Act No. 448/2008 Coll. on Social Services and on amendments to Act no. 455/1991 Coll. on Trade Entrepreneurship (Trade Act), as amended in 2022, conditions were created for the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family for flexible and targeted financing of care for unaccompanied minors from Ukraine also in non-state centres for children and families in accredited centres for children and families, as a reaction to the emergency situation declared in connection with the mass influx of foreigners to the territory of the Slovak Republic caused by the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine. The aim of this amendment was to support the provision of care for unaccompanied minors from Ukraine.

The legislation in question also enabled the provision of a service to support the reconciliation of family and work life, with the nature of this service only as basic childcare provided by a natural person, without the provision of other professional activities by this natural person within the framework of this service, which are mainly formalized upbringing and education. The material scope of child care provided in this way, basically reduced to only basic child care provided in a children's group to a maximum of four children, makes it possible to waive specific requirements for professional competence and the fulfilment of qualification prerequisites for the natural person who personally provides this care, namely on the one hand, as a formalized provider of this service and, on the other hand, as an actual provider of this childcare. The service to support the reconciliation of family life and work life in the children's group represents a form of childcare that responds more flexibly to the needs of parents and is more accessible to them.

Social and legal protection of children and adults

In the field of social and legal protection of children and social guardianship, a number of legislative, non-legislative and financial measures were adopted, mainly for the purpose of ensuring the protection of the rights and legally protected interests of children during the declared emergency situation in connection with the COVID-19 disease, as well as during the emergency situation in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine.

The main goal was to maintain the implementation of the measures in the widest possible scope, mainly due to the verification of initiatives related to the protection of children, the implementation of measures for children with a determined medium and high level of threat, ensuring the care of children/clients, including unaccompanied minors from Ukraine, in centres for children and families.

Measures of a financial nature were aimed at:

- increasing the flexibility of financing centres for children and families (facilities that, among other things, provide care for children based on court decisions),
- provision of repeated one-off housing allowances to professional surrogate parents (employees of centres for children and families who provide care for children in their own homes) mainly to cover increased energy expenses,
- provision of one-time contributions to former clients of centres for children and families, mainly to cover increased energy and food expenses.

Question 6

Please provide information as to whether social security benefits and assistance are indexed to the cost of living, as well as information in particular on how income-replacing benefits such as pensions are indexed. Please indicate when benefits and assistance were last adjusted/indexed.

Pension benefits are increased every year from January 1 through the year-on-year growth in consumer prices for pensioner households for the first half of the previous year reported by the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (status valid until June 30, 2023). This so-called due to proper valuation, pension benefits were increased by 1.3% from January 1, 2022 and 11.8% from January 1, 2023.

From July 1, 2023, an extraordinary valorisation was introduced in the event that the month-on-month cumulative growth of consumer prices from January exceeds 5% (for 2023, the reference period from July 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023 was used). This so-called through extraordinary valorisation, pension benefits were increased by 10.6% from July 1, 2023. At the same time, the reference period for determining the so-called regular valuation for 9 months of the previous year (with the exception of 2024, when the higher of the indices will be used, i.e. for 6 months). From January 1, 2024, pension benefits paid as of December 31, 2023, will be increased by 3.6%. The so-called newly awarded pension benefits in 2024 will be increased by 14.5%.

Valorisations of selected accident benefits (e.g. accident annuity, survivor's accident annuity, one-time compensation, reimbursement of costs associated with treatment and reimbursement of costs associated with a funeral) were similarly carried out, with the use of the growth in consumer prices for all households, i.e. by 1.6% from January 1, 2022; by 10.9% from January 1, 2023 and by 10.1% from July 1, 2023. From January 1, 2024, accident pensions and survivors' accident pensions paid as of December 31, 2023, will be increased by 3.2% (as well as one-time compensation, compensation for the costs associated with treatment and compensation for the costs associated with the funeral). The so-called newly granted accident pensions and survivors' accident pensions in 2024 will be increased by 13.6%. In particular, the amount of compensation for pain and compensation for the difficulty of social application is regularly valued, where one point of the point evaluation rate represents 2% of the average monthly wage (one point has a value of 26.08 euros for the year 2023).

The minimum pension amounts were frozen in 2021-2022, i.e. they were not valorised and their nominal value was at the level of 2020 (e.g. 334.3 euros for 30 qualified years of pension insurance). Beneficiaries with low pensions were twice supported by the valorisation of minimum pensions from 1 July 2023 and from 1 October 2023. Due to the changing socio-economic environment (especially high growth in consumer prices), the "unfreezing" of the amount was approved with effect from 1 July 2023 of the minimum pension and its re-linking to the amounts of the subsistence minimum. The initial value of the minimum pension was established at the value of 136% of the subsistence minimum for an adult, i.e. 365.7 euros (an increase by 34.6 euros compared to the previous legal status). For each additional qualified year of pension insurance, the amount of the minimum pension was increased by 2 percentage points; from 40 to 49 qualified years by 3; from 50 to 59 qualified years by 5 and from 59 qualified years at 7. In connection with the changes in the area of benefits and contributions in material need, the minimum pensions were subsequently increased from October 1, 2023. The aim of this increase was to ensure the basic purpose of the minimum pension, which is to prevent recipients of the minimum pension from falling into assistance in material need. The initial value of the minimum pension was established at the value of 145% of the subsistence minimum for an adult, i.e. 389.9 euros (an increase of 24.2 euros compared to the previous legal status). For each additional qualified year of pension insurance, the amount of the minimum pension will increase by 2.5 percentage points; from 40 to 49 qualified years by 3; from 50 to 59 qualified years by 5 and from 59 qualified years by 7.5. As of October 31, 2023, the total number of paid minimum pensions was approximately 102.5 thousand; average monthly amount of supplement to the minimum pension approx. 48.9 euros and total expenses approx. 24.8 mil. Euro.

Other short-term social insurance benefits (sickness benefits, guarantee benefit and unemployment benefit) are not regularly valorised. These are short-term benefits that are generally paid only for a few months, and newly awarded benefits are based on the insured person's individual assessment basis for paying insurance premiums (gross salary), which

usually increases for the insured persons on annually (even if it does not - it is simply based on a more current assessment basis, i.e. the more current lost gross income is replaced).

Parental allowance

As of August 1, 2023, the parental allowance was increased by an amendment to the law by a fixed amount equal to the valorisation that will happen on January 1, 2024 and will not be valorised in 2024. It will only be valorised in January 2025 with the index that will be used to adjust the amounts of the subsistence minimum on July 1, 2024.

Child allowance and supplement to child allowance

The valorisation mechanism of child benefit, supplement to child benefit and one-time increase of child benefit has been cancelled as of 01.07.2022. The last valorisation was from 01.01.2022, and subsequently the last increase by an amendment to the law was from 01.01.2023.

Birth allowance and funeral allowance

These allowances do not have a regular valorisation mechanism. The law allows these benefits to be adjusted by regulation of the government of the Slovak Republic, if the government so decides.

Contributions to support substitute child care

Substitute care support contributions are set as multiples of the amount of the subsistence minimum for a dependent child, and thus are valorised together with the valorisation of the subsistence minimum.

The exception is the allowance for placing a child in foster care, which does not have a valorisation mechanism, and is the same amount as the allowance for the birth of a child.

The valorisation mechanism also does not apply to the allowance for the education of the surrogate parent and to the allowance for the child to cover increased expenses.

Substitute alimony

Substitute alimony for orphans is determined as a multiple of the amount of the subsistence minimum for a dependent child, and thus is valued together with the valuation of the subsistence minimum.

The following benefits of state social support were last valorised:

- contributions to support alternative care – July 2023,
- substitute alimony (orphans) – July 2023.

Help in material need

As was already mentioned above, the amounts of assistance in material need are adjusted every year on January 1 of the calendar year, with the exception of 2023, where there was an extraordinary valorisation. The mechanism of valorisation of the amounts of assistance

in material need is linked to the mechanism of valorisation of the amounts of the subsistence minimum. As of April 1, 2023, the valorisation mechanism of the subsistence minimum amounts was adjusted, namely that the subsistence minimum amounts will be adjusted based on the growth in the living costs of low-income households, which was already reflected in their valorisation in July 2023 and subsequently also in the valorisation of material need assistance amounts from 1 October 2023.

Cash contributions for compensation:

Some recurring cash contributions to compensate for the social consequences of severe disability (paid monthly) have a valorisation mechanism established by law. An increase in their amount occurs automatically whenever there is an increase in the subsistence minimum. The change in the subsistence minimum always occurs on July 1 of the current year. The last time the amounts of repeated monetary contributions for compensation were increased in this way from July 1, 2023. This is a cash allowance for transportation, a cash allowance to compensate for increased expenses on dietary meals, a cash allowance to compensate for increased expenses related to hygiene or the wear and tear of clothing, linen, shoes and home furnishings, a cash allowance to compensate for increased expenses related to the provision of the operation of a personal motor vehicle and a cash allowance to compensate for the increased expenses related to the care of a dog with special training.

The other two recurring cash allowances for compensation – the cash allowance for childcare and the cash allowance for personal assistance are increased if the Government of the Slovak Republic decides to do so by a regulation, and also on July 1 of the current year. The Government of the Slovak Republic has decided to increase the amount of these financial allowances every year, most recently from 1 July 2023. The amount of the financial allowance for caregiving reaches the level of the so-called net minimum wage. Similarly, the rate for one hour of personal assistance, on which the amount of the cash allowance for personal assistance depends, was also increased.

Social services

Financial contribution for the provision of social services in facilities subject to dependency according to Article 71 par. 6 and Article 78a of Act no. 448/2008 Coll. on social services and on amendments to Act no. 455/1991 Coll. on trades and businesses (Trades Act), as amended, represents the co-financing of the provision of social services by a specific social service provider in a specific social service facility and is not tied to a specific social service recipient in this facility with a specific recognized degree of dependence on the help of another natural person.

According to Article 78a par. 10 of the Act, the amount of the financial contribution for the provision of social services in facilities subject to dependency according to the form of social service and according to the degree of dependence of a natural person on the help of another natural person is established for the relevant calendar year by the Government of the Slovak Republic by a regulation of the Government of the Slovak Republic, while the amount of the financial contribution for the provision of social services in facilities conditional on dependency is usually directly linked to the development of the minimum wage and its amount. The amount of the financial contribution for the provision of social services in institutions subject to dependency does not represent the coverage of the real cost of providing personal care, it is only one of the sources of co-financing of social services in institutions subject to dependency, as stipulated in Article 71 of the Act on Social Services.

On June 12, 2023, the Government of the Slovak Republic approved a regulation which exceptionally increases the amounts of the financial contribution for the provision of social services in facilities subject to dependency and in crisis intervention facilities per month per place in the facility by 7% compared to the current amount of this financial contribution provided from the Ministry's budget in accordance with the currently effective regulation of the Government of the Slovak Republic no. 234/2022 Coll., namely for the third and fourth quarters of 2023, i.e. with effect from July 2023.

Question 7

Please provide information as to whether any special measures have been adopted since late 2021 to ensure persons can meet their energy and food costs, such as price subsidies for energy, fuel, and basic food items.

The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic has so far implemented the following inflation aid packages in response to the extremely high increase in consumer prices from 2022:

In connection with the increase in prices, for the month of May 2022 there was a one-time increase:

- repeated contribution to the surrogate parent in the amount of EUR 100, while the right to the sum of EUR 100 also arose for the surrogate parent who is a relative in the direct line and is not entitled to repeated contribution to the surrogate parent,
- child allowance of EUR 74.12 for a total amount of EUR 100 for each dependent child.

In connection with the increased rate of inflation and high growth in energy prices, the following state social benefits witnessed a one-time increase in October 2022:

- child allowance of EUR 70 for a total of EUR 100 for children born from June 1, 2022 to October 31, 2022
- substitute maintenance for orphans in the amount of EUR 100.

Inflation subsidy (subsidy to support humanitarian aid):

- financial assistance in the amount of EUR 100 for each dependent child with a maintenance obligation determined by the court in the amount of EUR 150 at most. The subsidy was not paid automatically; it was necessary to apply for it (by 31.12.2022 at the latest).
- financial assistance in the amount of EUR 100 for persons who were entrusted with care replacing the care of parents and in the period from April 30, 2020 to December 31, 2022, this care was terminated due to reaching the age of majority. The subsidy was not paid automatically; it was necessary to apply for it (by 31.12.2022 at the latest).

Inflation aid during the so-called government of experts

- a one-time increase of the recurring contribution to the surrogate parent for the month of August 2023 by the amount of EUR 100, while the entitlement to the sum of EUR 100 also arose for a surrogate parent who is a relative of the direct line and is not entitled to a recurring contribution to the surrogate parent,

- one-time increase of the supplement to the child allowance for the month of August 2023 by the amount of EUR 100, i.e. a supplement to the child allowance was provided in the total amount of EUR 130.

Low-income households

Due to the increase in expenses for housing, energy, and food, inflationary assistance was provided to households receiving assistance in material need. In June 2022, a one-off allowance of EUR 100 was paid to households receiving assistance in material need, and in November 2022 a one-time allowance of EUR 100 was paid to households receiving assistance in material need and who did not become entitled to an increase in assistance in material need as part of the aid provided in June 2022.

The third inflation aid package in the amount of 100 euros was intended for households in a difficult financial situation who did not receive inflation aid in the framework of the previous 2 inflation aid packages in 2022 to cover increased expenses for housing, energy, food, etc. It was possible to apply for a subsidy at the Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family between May 1, 2023 and July 31, 2023.

Persons with severe disabilities and people who provide them with help at home

In connection with the growth of inflation as a result of the unfavourable pandemic situation, as well as the emergence of an armed conflict in Ukraine, the Government of the Slovak Republic decided by its regulations to provide the following forms of one-time financial assistance for vulnerable persons:

- a one-time increase in the amount of the cash allowance for caregiving for the month of May 2022 by 100 euros for all groups of recipients of this allowance;

- a one-time subsidy to support humanitarian aid in the amount of 100 euros to a personal assistant who had a permanent or temporary residence in the territory of the Slovak Republic and who provided personal assistance for at least 12 hours during the first quarter of 2022 (provided June to August 2022);

- a one-time subsidy to support humanitarian aid in the amount of 100 euros to a natural person who provided care (a natural person with a severe disability dependent on care or a close person who was over 80 years old and was not placed in a social service facility or in a medical facility) and they were not provided with a cash allowance for childcare. This was a natural person who had a permanent or temporary residence in the territory of the Slovak Republic and for whom the state paid the public health insurance premium for May 2022 (provided June to August 2022);

- a one-time grant to support humanitarian aid in the amount of 100 euros for a natural person who properly cared for a child with a long-term adverse health condition after reaching six years of age with permanent residence in the territory of the Slovak Republic for no longer than 8 years of the child's age, if the person not pension insured for another reason, she was not granted an early old-age pension or a disability pension and she did not reach the age required to be entitled to an old-age pension. This was a natural person for whom the state was the payer of insurance premiums for old-age insurance, disability insurance and insurance premiums to the solidarity reserve fund for May 2022. (provided June to September 2022).

- a one-time increase in the amount of the cash allowance for transportation and the cash allowance to compensate for increased expenses for November 2022 by 100 euros, if the income of a physical person with a severe disability was not higher than the amount of the subsistence minimum for one adult physical person.

Question 8

Please provide up-to-date information on at-risk-of-poverty rates for the population as a whole, as well as for children, families identified as being at risk of poverty, persons with disabilities and older persons. Please show the trend over the last 5 years, as well as forecasts for upcoming years.

Data on the development of the poverty risk rate are regularly published on the website of the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic and, in an international context, on the website of Eurostat. At the same time, regular monitoring of indicators of poverty and social exclusion is processed annually in the Report on the Social Situation of the Population of the Slovak Republic, which can be found on the website of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic.

Based on the last 5 years, the development of the rate of poverty risk (income poverty) in the case of selected target groups was as follows:

Development of the poverty risk rate in selected age groups and types of households:

	2018			2019			2020			2021			2022		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
At-risk-of-poverty rate by gender (whole population)	12,2	12,2	12,3	11,9	11,6	12,1	11,4	11,1	11,7	12,3	11,7	12,8	13,7	13,5	13,9
Poverty risk rate (0-17)	20,5	21,2	19,8	19,0	19,7	18,2	17,0	16,8	17,1	17,6	17,4	17,7	22,1	22,5	21,6
Poverty risk rate (65+)	6,4	5,2	7,1	8,7	6,1	10,5	9,5	7,3	10,9	10,3	6,8	12,6	8,1	6,1	9,5
Poverty risk rate by household type:															
an individual under the age of 65	23,0	:	:	22,4	:	:	18,9	:	:	20,8	:	:	23,7	:	:
an individual above the age of 65	12,4	:	:	20,1	:	:	27,6	:	:	28,5	:	:	25,9	:	:

an individual	17,2	20,6	15,4	21,1	22,9	20,2	23,8	26,1	22,6	24,9	24,9	24,9	24,8	21,7	26,2
two adults, at least one older than 65 years	3,6	:	:	5,2	:	:	5,3	:	:	6,7	:	:	5,5	:	:
two adults, both under the age of 65	9,5	:	:	7,2	:	:	8,6	:	:	8,4	:	:	8,9	:	:
an individual with at least one child	36,7	:	:	32,1	:	:	33,9	:	:	33,7	:	:	45,9	:	:
two adults with one dependent child	11,4	:	:	10,3	:	:	11,0	:	:	11,4	:	:	14,8	:	:
two adults with two dependent children	14,5	:	:	10,2	:	:	10,3	:	:	10,6	:	:	10,2	:	:
two adults with three or more dependent children	36,7	:	:	37,8	:	:	37,1	:	:	36,3	:	:	40,1	:	:
households with dependent children	16,1	:	:	15,2	:	:	14,4	:	:	14,6	:	:	18,4	:	:
households without dependent children	7,3	:	:	7,9	:	:	8,0	:	:	9,2	:	:	7,7	:	:

Development of the rate of poverty risk in the case of persons with disabilities in productive and post-productive age:

	2018			2019			2020			2021			2022		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Disabled (16-64)	14,5	16,0	13,2	12,6	12,4	12,7	15,6	15,4	15,7	14,0	13,8	14,2	17,7	16,6	18,8
Non-disabled (16-64)	10,7	9,9	11,5	10,5	10,4	10,7	9,1	9,1	9,0	10,6	10,4	10,8	12,0	11,7	12,3
Disabled (65+)	7,3	6,1	8,0	9,1	6,1	11,0	10,1	7,6	11,7	11,3	7,6	13,6	8,7	7,0	9,7
Non-disabled (65+)	3,9	2,8	4,7	7,9	6,1	9,2	7,9	6,6	9,0	8,2	5,5	10,4	6,9	4,4	8,8

At the same time, we state that the Slovak Republic has adopted a goal by 2030, namely to free 70,000 people from the risk of poverty or social exclusion. Monitoring of the objective in question at the national level, as well as within the EU27 countries, is carried out on the basis of a

grouping of indicators, namely income poverty, severe material and social deprivation and very low work intensity, which express the degree of risk of poverty or social exclusion. This is a broader concept of monitoring poverty and social exclusion, not only based on income.

Development of the rate of risk of poverty or social exclusion:

	2018			2019			2020			2021			2022		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Rate of risk of poverty or social exclusion (whole population)	15,2	15,0	15,3	14,8	14,1	15,5	13,8	13,4	14,2	15,6	15,0	16,2	16,5	16,0	17,0
Rate of risk of poverty or social exclusion (0-15)	23,2	23,6	22,8	20,4	19,8	21,1	18,1	17,9	18,3	19,9	20,3	19,5	23,9	25,3	22,4
Rate of risk of poverty or social exclusion (0-17)	23,3	23,6	23,1	21,0	21,0	21,0	18,4	18,2	18,5	19,7	20,0	19,4	24,7	25,2	24,1
Rate of risk of poverty or social exclusion (18-64)	14,0	13,7	14,3	13,7	13,1	14,3	12,9	12,6	13,2	14,8	14,5	15,2	15,4	14,6	16,1
Rate of risk of poverty or social exclusion (65+)	10,3	8,9	11,3	12,3	8,9	14,6	12,3	10,3	13,7	13,9	10,3	16,3	11,9	9,7	13,4
Rate of risk of poverty or social exclusion - according to selected types of households															
an individual	20,6	23,4	19,2	26,2	27,1	25,7	27,8	28,6	27,4	30,1	29,7	30,3	28,8	26,6	29,9
an individual older than 65 years	15,8	:	:	24,2	:	:	31,3	:	:	32,5	:	:	30	:	:
an individual with at least one child	42,3	:	:	38,0	:	:	37,4	:	:	35,2	:	:	46,5	:	:
two adults with three or more dependent children	3,9	:	:	38,0	:	:	38	:	:	37,8	:	:	43,8	:	:

Based on data of Eurostat, the Slovak Republic has the smallest share of people with disabilities at risk of poverty or social exclusion aged 16+; in 2022 it was 18.8%.

Question 9

Please provide information on what measures are being taken to ensure a coordinated approach to combat poverty as required by Article 30 of the Charter, and to diminish reliance on last-resort relief, such as food banks and soup kitchens.

Strategic and conceptual documents

In 2020, Government Resolution No. 736/2020 approved the National Framework Strategy for the Support of Social Inclusion and the Fight against Poverty, which is aimed at supporting an integrated approach to social inclusion and the fight against poverty by focusing on supporting employment measures (including active labour market measures) or supporting the reconciliation of work and family life.

In 2023, by adopting the Concept of Prevention and Ending Homelessness, the Slovak Republic focused on specific problem areas and is trying to solve the problem of homelessness/poverty in a comprehensive and interconnected manner. Currently, the first Action Plan is being prepared in a participatory manner, which elaborates individual measures into activities.

The Strategy of Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030, approved by the Resolution no. 181/2021, was created on the basis of a request for conceptual document, which takes into account the development of the situation and experience from the previous eight years since the approval of the Strategy of the Slovak Republic for the Integration of Roma until 2020 and the relevant action plans. It defines the direction of public policies in order to achieve a visible change in the field of equality and inclusion of Roma. The Action Plan for the Strategy for the years 2022-2024 is also in force, which is implemented annually.

At the level of projects financed by the ESI Fund, the following projects mainly contribute to the fight against poverty:

The National Free Debt Counselling Project (implementation 10/2020 – 12/2023), which directly helps people in critical situations with its activities – each free debt counselling centre has three experts at its disposal: a psychologist, an economist and a lawyer.

The national project "Together for Communities" covers the work of several social services that come into direct contact with people from marginalized Roma communities and homeless people. Social workers provide social counselling and other professional activities to persons experiencing poverty.

The inquiry call "Affordable housing with elements of Housing first", the basis of which was to provide accommodation and professional advice that will help people to return to a full life, independence and integration into society. A call for a similar project is currently being prepared: "Implementation of "Housing-led approaches" with accompanying measures to ensure affordable housing".

Provision of food and basic material aid

At the same time, we state that in the 2014-2020 program period, the Slovak Republic implemented a separate OP FEAD, as a tool for solving food and basic material aid with accompanying measures for the most dependent persons, including children, supporting their social inclusion. For the continuous provision of food and basic material aid for the most

dependent persons, objective focus, nature of activities and its impact on the entire territory of the Slovak Republic, the implementation of the national project "Provision of food and/or basic material aid to the most dependent persons" is ensured for the new program period 2021-2027 within OP Slovakia.

A form of aid was chosen for NP, which is intended to help provide food and basic material needs in order to reduce the overall economic burden and social exclusion of these risk groups in the system of aid in material need.

The goal will be achieved by the implementation of activities such as the distribution of food and hygiene packages to selected groups of recipients of aid in material need, the provision of warm food or the distribution of basic material aid to persons without shelter. This specific form will help people or households that are in a difficult social situation.

Question 10

Please provide information on steps taken to consult with, and ensure the participation of, the persons most affected by the cost of living crisis and/or organisations representing their interests in the process of designing of measures in response to the crisis.

When creating measures within the framework of inflation aid as well as specific steps aimed at mitigating the effects of high inflation and mitigating expenses for the running of households of the most vulnerable groups, the basis was administrative sources, statistical surveys on household incomes and living conditions (EU SILC) and documents where we tried to take into account the groups most at risk of poverty and social exclusion, or the most vulnerable population groups, such as low-income households, persons with disabilities, single parents, families with children, orphans and the like and their opinions.