



MINISTERSTVO PRÁCE,  
SOCIÁLNYCH VECÍ A RODINY  
SLOVENSKEJ REPUBLIKY

## **National Concept for Preventing and Ending Homelessness**

Bratislava 2022



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## List of abbreviations and explanatory notes

TEA - Temporary Employment Agency

ALMMs - Active Labour Market Measures

ALMP - Active Labour Market Policy

Bezdomovstvo/Bezdomovectvo (Homelessness) - both nouns are linguistically correct, spelled correctly and have the same meaning<sup>1</sup>

CCFs – Centres for Children and Families

ETHOS - acronym for European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion

EC – European Commission

EP - European Parliament

EU – European Union

FEANTSA - European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (acronym of the French Fédération Européenne des Associations Nationales Travaillant avec les Sans-Abri)

CCBA - Capital City of the Slovak Republic Bratislava

IVPR - Institute for Labour and Family Research

PwH - People without a Home

MoLSAF/Ministry - Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic

MoTC SR - Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic

FANP - Full-Aged Natural Person

PHSR- Program hospodárskeho a sociálneho rozvoja obce (Programme of Economic and Social Development of a Municipality)

EU Council - Council of the European Union

RIÚS - Regionálna integrovaná územná stratégia (Regional Integrated Territorial Strategy)

CPH - Census of Population and Housing

SLPoCSG -

SR - Slovak Republic

SHDF - State Housing Development Fund

SO SR - Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

JS - Job Seeker

OLSAF - Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

COLSAF Central Office - Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

HTU- Higher Territorial Unit

HC - Health Care

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<sup>1</sup> Both variants *bezdomovectvo* and *bezdomovstvo* are correct and are mentioned in the dictionary 'Krátký slovník slovenského jazyka' (for the word *bezdomovec* (*homeless person*)), which is available in electronic form on the website of our institute [www.juls.savba.sk](http://www.juls.savba.sk).

## Introduction

Homelessness and housing exclusion are the most extreme manifestations of poverty and social exclusion. They refer to the living situations of persons who do not have adequate<sup>2</sup> housing because they have lost stable and suitable housing or are unable to secure it through their own activities in the current circumstances.

Since 2010<sup>3</sup>, awareness of homelessness and exclusion from housing has increased and more approaches based on integrated strategies to combat homelessness and exclusion from housing are called for across the EU<sup>4</sup>. This includes relevant Council of Europe Conclusions from 2012 and 2016, the European Parliament (EP) Resolution of 2014 and the European Commission (EC) document “*Solving homelessness in the European Union*”, which is a companion document to the 2013 Social Investment Package (SIP). In recent cycles, the analysis in the country reports produced as part of the European Semester cycle has increasingly focused on homelessness and housing exclusion. **The European Pillar of Social Rights, in Principle 19, recognised the rights to housing** and assistance for people without a home, as well as protection from forced eviction. The Revised Common Employment Guidelines, adopted in June 2018<sup>5</sup>, including Guideline 8 on equal opportunities, social inclusion and combating poverty, state that for those in need or in a vulnerable situation<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Adequate and dignified housing is considered to be housing that fulfils the basic functions of housing (functions that provide for the needs of sleep, rest, food preparation, personal hygiene and storage of personal belongings) and at the same time fulfils the definition of home in all three levels according to the ETHOS classification (physical - exclusive use of the dwelling, social - sufficient privacy and space for the formation of functional social relationships, legal - legal right to use the dwelling).

<sup>3</sup> The European Union has declared the year 2010 for the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. The key objectives are to raise public awareness of these issues and to renew the political commitment of the EU and its Member States to fight poverty and social exclusion. This was also supported by, for example, the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on ‘Homelessness’ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:024:0035:0039:SK:PDF>, but also by the opinion of the Committee of the Regions on ‘Combating homelessness’ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SK/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52010IR0018&from=SK>.

<sup>4</sup>Source: 1. ETHOS typológia bezdomovstva a vylúčenia z bývania: Stručná charakteristika, základné tézy a možnosti slovenskej terminológie, I. Lorenc, D. Ondrušová, Table 1.1: Seven theoretical categories of homelessness and exclusion from housing, <https://www.ceit.sk/IVPR/images/IVPR/vyskum/2015/Ondrusova/kapitola1.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SK/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018D1215&from=DA>

<sup>6</sup> In the conditions of the Slovak Republic, the ‘vulnerable situation’ can be framed through the definition of ‘disadvantaged and vulnerable person’ in Act No 112/2018 Coll. on social economy and social enterprises and on amendment and supplementation of certain acts, as amended <https://npise.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Znevychodnena-zranitelne-osoby.pdf>. The definition of a vulnerable person is based on Act No 448/2008 Coll. on social services and on amendment and supplementation Act No 455/1991 Coll. on Trade Enterprise (Trade Licensing Act), as amended, Act No 305/2005 Coll. on Social Legal Protection of Children and Social Guardianship and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts, as amended and Act No 36/2005 Coll. on the family and on amendment and supplementation of certain acts, as amended.

*“Member States should ensure access to adequate social housing<sup>7</sup> or housing support. The problem of homelessness should be addressed”.*

In the Slovak Republic, the issue of homelessness has so far been addressed only indirectly and implicitly, through policies aimed at other disadvantaged groups of the population, where a positive impact on some groups of people without a home has also been assumed. **A coherent vision for preventing and ending homelessness has been lacking.** The emergence of the Concept can thus be seen as the result of a long-term effort of the professional public to point out the need for a more active approach to systemic solutions to homelessness, as well as the interest of the state administration, especially the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic, to create and improve the conditions for the reintegration of people without a home into ordinary life.

Homelessness and exclusion from housing is a social problem that negatively affects individuals, groups of people and society as a whole. **Integrated approaches that combine prevention, addressing the causes of homelessness, rapid access to long-term housing and the provision of support services are recognised as effective responses compared to those that focus on managing homelessness predominantly through emergency and temporary accommodation and the provision of support for basic needs.** However, minimal provision of temporary accommodation (e.g. in 24-hour services) as well as outreach social services remains an essential part of integrated emergency response strategies and the provision of transit (temporary) accommodation until a long-term housing solution can be found.

At national level, the involvement of a wide range of public and private stakeholders, including local and regional authorities as well as relevant NGOs, in the design and implementation of strategies to combat homelessness and housing exclusion is essential. **The involvement of persons and bodies working on homelessness and housing exclusion in the design of concrete solutions is considered desirable.** Strong inter-agency collaboration helps to better identify and address the multiple and differing needs of homeless persons. In the context of the new multi-annual financial framework, the full potential of EU funds for preventing and ending homelessness needs to be exploited. It is important to systematically collect, analyse and evaluate quantitative and qualitative data on people experiencing

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<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of this document, social housing is understood as a social housing defined by Act No 443/2010 Coll. on Subsidies for Housing Development and on Social Housing, as amended.

homelessness. The introduction of regular monitoring of progress would be an important step forward and would allow, among other things, ongoing verification of the effectiveness of the interventions implemented and the achievement of the objectives.

The Concept is an overarching strategic document defining global and specific objectives in each key area. The present Concept is valid until 2030, thereafter the Concept will be valid for 10 years. **The Concept will be followed by an action plan refining the broad objectives to be quantifiable and measurable and containing concrete measures to achieve these objectives. It will be prepared in cooperation with the relevant central government authorities, local government, representatives of the non-governmental sector and all other entities active in the field of homelessness. They shall be developed for a period of up to five years in order to allow for a flexible response to the realities of society and people without a home.** This document, as well as the corresponding action plan, is promoted by the MoLSAF SR, and the action plan will contain elaborated global and sub-objectives at the level of measures and activities, with defined measurable indicators, responsible promoters and partners, and identification of the necessary financial requirements and the appropriate resources to cover them. The implementation of the measures of the Action Plan will be evaluated annually by the responsible entities and the individual task owners.

Under the contract for the years 2017 and 2018, the Ministry has entrusted the Institute for Labour and Family Research with the elaboration of the background material for the national concept. The result is the *Podkladový materiál koncepcie prevencie a riešenia bezdomovectva na národnej úrovni (Background Material of the Concept of Prevention and Solution of Homelessness at the National Level)*<sup>8</sup> by authors D. Ondrušová and M. Fico, which serves as a key basis for the preparation of this strategic document, and the Concept contains many quoted parts from this very document.

The intention to elaborate a strategic document to address this issue was also supported by the initiative of NGOs working in the field of homelessness assistance and other concerned entities. Last but not least, the document is a fulfilment of the task from the Programme

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<sup>8</sup> Podkladový materiál Koncepcie prevencie a riešenia bezdomovectva na národnej úrovni, D.Ondrušová, M.Fico, 2018 Available at: <https://ivpr.gov.sk/podkladovy-material-koncepcie-prevencie-a-riesenia-bezdomovectva-na-narodnej-urovni-darina-ondrusova-milan-fico-2018/>

Declaration of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the period 2021-2024, in which the Government has set itself the task of “*preparing a draft National Concept for the Prevention and Ending of Homelessness, increasing the availability of crisis intervention services and introducing a separate housing allowance*”. The MoLSAF SR took over the patronage of this task. The Ministry followed up on the activity of the working group established in 2019, whose activities were dampened by the pandemic period. The task of the working group was, and still is, to seek the best possible solutions to this issue and to set principles, goals and tasks in the field until 2030, by a broad discussion between representatives of central state administration bodies, regional and local self-governments, as well as representatives of organisations working with people without a home. The text of the Concept is mainly the result of the discussions within the working group<sup>9</sup> set up for this purpose, as well as the current possibilities of the Slovak Republic to implement reforms and investments resulting from the objective of preventing and ending homelessness.

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<sup>9</sup> The working group was composed of representatives of the Central Government Authorities, representatives of local government (SK8, Union of Cities, ZMOS, Capital City of Slovakia Bratislava, Banská Bystrica), public and non-public providers of social services, and representatives of the local authorities (SK8, Union of Cities, AoTMoS, the Capital City of Slovakia Bratislava, Banská Bystrica), and representatives of the local authorities services, organisations working with people without a home and others.



## 1. Terminological Background

In terms of its global understanding, homelessness refers to a social phenomenon that includes a social group of people who “do not have access to adequate housing”.<sup>10</sup> It does not only refer to the social situation of individuals, but also to couples, families, diverse groups and communities.

The term ‘homeless person/people without a home’ has not been explicitly defined so far, neither in the conceptual materials nor in the legislation of the Slovak Republic. Also, the legislative terminology does not define selected groups of people without a home, with the exception of Act No 448/2008 Coll. on Social Services and on Amendments to Act No 455/1991 Coll. on Trade Enterprise (Trade Licensing Act), as amended (hereinafter referred to as the “Act on Social Services”), effective from 1 January 2018, which also established the loss of housing or the threat of loss of housing as an unfavourable social situation.<sup>11</sup>

In the European context, the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) has long had the greatest influence on the terminology and typology of homelessness. In the first decade of the 21st century, FEANTSA developed the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS<sup>12</sup>), which has become the basis for social policies to prevent and end homelessness in several countries. **The concept has adopted the ETHOS typology as the underlying terminology.** Home is understood in terms of three domains:<sup>13</sup>

- *Physical area* - having adequate housing that can be used exclusively by the person and his or her family;
- *Social area* – having adequate space for one’s own privacy with the possibility of social relationships;
- *Legal area* - having the right to occupy the dwelling.

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Institute of Global Homelessness. 2015. *A Global Framework for Understanding Homelessness*.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Section 2(2)(i) of Act No 448/2008 Coll. on Social Services and on amendment and supplementation of Act No 455/1991 Coll. on Trade Enterprise (Trade Licensing Act), as amended.

<sup>12</sup> ETHOS - European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion. 2017. Available at <https://www.feantsa.org/download/ethos2484215748748239888.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Etgar et al., 2002, In Ondrušová, 2015.

The ETHOS typology contains four basic conceptual categories<sup>14</sup>:

**1. Roofless persons<sup>15</sup>**, which include

- People living and sleeping outdoors, e.g. on the street, under a bridge, in woods, parks, canals, bus and train stations, etc.;
- People sleeping in low threshold night shelters or other ad hoc organised crisis accommodation (e.g. tent cities), where accommodation usually has to be arranged on a nightly basis.

**2. Persons without housing<sup>16</sup>**, which include

- People using temporary accommodation in crisis intervention social service facilities (e.g. shelters, halfway houses);
- Women and their children in emergency accommodation due to domestic violence, whether in social protection and social welfare institutions (centres for children and families providing crisis intervention), social service institutions (emergency housing facilities) or intervention centres;
- People seeking asylum and temporarily residing in asylum facilities;
- People about to leave institutional care, with no other housing available, in particular from
  - Centres for children and families;
  - Health care facilities, drug treatment centres and psychiatric hospitals,
  - Custodial or detention facilities;
  - Special educational establishments (in particular re-education centres).

**3. Persons in precarious housing, including**

- People using standard housing or land without a legal reason (no tenancy agreement, living in illegally occupied buildings, temporary housing with friends);

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<sup>14</sup> The four basic conceptual categories of the ETHOS typology are listed in the Concept, but in the context of its ‘enculturation’ to Slovak conditions, it no longer precisely distinguishes its operational categories and life situations. These are dealt with in more detail in the study by Lorenc, Ondrušová, 2015.

<sup>15</sup> The English term *roofless* means to be unsheltered, ‘homeless’, without shelter, and we prefer this translation, although in the Civil Code shelter has so far been understood as a housing substitute in the sense of temporary accommodation (cf. Section 712(4) of Act No 40/1964 Coll., as amended).

<sup>16</sup> There are several Slovak translations of the English term *houseless*, Beňová, Matiaško, 2018 *without accommodation*, Lorenc, Ondrušová, 2015 *without housing*, Mátel, 2015 *without dwelling*. As we also take into account the typology of the International Institute of Global Homelessness, which links the first two ETHOS categories into the category *people without accommodation*, we propose to translate the term as people without housing.

- People in imminent danger of eviction due to the existence of a legal reason (e.g. after being served with a notice to quit, in the event of evictions, loss of property rights, etc.);
- People living under the threat of losing their standard housing due to the threat of domestic violence.

#### **4. Persons in inadequate (substandard)<sup>17</sup> housing, which include**

- People living in substandard housing that is not intended for permanent housing and who have no other housing option (living in caravans, trailers, shacks, garden cabins, sheds, etc.);
- People living in dwellings or settlements which are unfit for habitation (e.g. according to building or hygiene regulations);
- People living in extremely overcrowded dwellings.

All of the above conceptual categories fall within the social phenomenon of homelessness, and ending and preventing homelessness in all categories is an equal subject of the Concept. People without a home are the most visible group of apparent homelessness in the eyes of the general public, but they are not the only group of people without a home. Homelessness in terms of form and time spent out of home is defined in several typologies.<sup>18</sup> The temporal aspect represents one important factor in the classification.<sup>19</sup>

With regard to preventing and ending homelessness, it is also important to identify the following three time-limited situations:

- Prevention of homelessness for people at risk of housing loss;
- The period immediately after homelessness<sup>20</sup>;

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<sup>17</sup> In English *Inadequate housing* can be translated into Slovak as *unsuitable housing* (Slovak translations of the UN and RE international documents listed below follow this meaning, cf. Mátel, 2015) or *substandard housing* (cf. Ondrušová, Fico, 2018).

<sup>18</sup> Obvious, hidden and potential homelessness have been classified in their works by Vlastimila and Ilya Hradecký. 1996. Available at: [https://nadeje.cz/img-content/files/docs/odborne/1996bezdomovstvi\\_exv.pdf](https://nadeje.cz/img-content/files/docs/odborne/1996bezdomovstvi_exv.pdf), M. Oláh (2015, *Ľudia bez domova v krízovej intervencii*, VŠZaSP sv. Alžbety (University of Health and Social Work St. Elizabeth) in Bratislava, RESOTY - Anton Srholc's resocialization community) distinguishes visible (public), invisible (hidden), and potential people without a home.

<sup>19</sup> Draganová a kol. 2006. *Sociálna starostlivosť*; Bočáková 2014 classify homelessness in terms of time into short-term and long-term.

<sup>20</sup> For example due to partnership problems, relationship problems in the family, death of a partner or parents, health problems, loss of employment, various disadvantages in access to the labour market, migration to metropolitan areas, inability to fulfil the conditions of occupancy, loss of use of the apartment due to other circumstances, exit from an institutional institution, return from imprisonment, inclination to an unconventional

- Obtaining affordable or supported housing - and the associated help<sup>21</sup> to maintain housing.

As a rule, a large group that meets the accepted characteristics of people without a home in the conditions of the Slovak Republic are the inhabitants of marginalised Roma communities. Due to the fact that in the Slovak Republic a specific *Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030* has been adopted, this group of people is not specifically addressed by the Concept. In order to ensure consistency between the measures resulting from the two strategic materials, coordination meetings and consultations between the promoters are taking place when drafting the relevant measures in the Action Plans.

Another important concept used in the Concept is ending homelessness. Based on the ETHOS typology, ending homelessness refers to a situation where a homeless person regains rental housing and has the conditions in place to sustain it, thus creating the conditions for the development of a positive relationships with themselves and their environment and for social reintegration. At the level of systemic solutions, then, ending homelessness includes measures that aim to support people without a home to regain and maintain housing and to prevent people at risk from losing their homes. These include measures related to access to social counselling and social services, housing, material security including debt relief, health care, support for access to the labour market and others. Ending street homelessness is also an important part of ending homelessness, which means providing sufficient access to 24-hour accommodation in shelters or other temporary accommodation facilities for a limited period of time for people without a home, including those who use night shelters or are in high need of complex assistance. At the same time, ending homelessness does not necessarily mean that homelessness as such will not be present in society at all. Even in the future, various crisis situations and other circumstances that can lead to homelessness cannot be fully prevented. Nor is it possible to expect that, along with obtaining a home, every person will be successful, for example, in finding a job, which for various objective and subjective reasons is not possible in the rest of the population either. The essence of ending homelessness is that every homeless person should have the opportunity, to address their situation with adequate support, obtain affordable housing and integrate into life within a reasonable time. In the context of the Slovak Republic, the above understanding of ending homelessness as a set of measures aimed

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way of life adopted as a solution to problems, various types of addictions, as a result of a natural disaster, which could not be prevented by homelessness prevention measures.

<sup>21</sup> Chapter 5.1 Social security, social services and social protection

at supporting people without a home to regain and maintain housing and preventing people at risk from losing their homes represents a new approach to tackling homelessness.

## 2. The Right to Housing and Access to Housing in the International and Slovak Context

Nowadays, we face housing affordability as a global challenge at local, regional, national and transnational levels. Globally, markets are failing to provide adequate housing for their populations. However, individual countries are pursuing their own approaches and instruments to increase housing affordability. The Slovak Republic also has obligations in this area under international human rights instruments<sup>22</sup>. The right to housing is a fundamental human right and is defined as a separate right, or as part of the broader right to a decent standard of living in both general and specific (relating to specific vulnerable groups of people) international human rights instruments. By its very nature, however, this right cannot be interpreted as an obligation of the State to ensure an adequate standard of living for everyone, including housing. It is the role of States to create conditions that enable all groups of people, especially those in various vulnerable situations, to realize this right. We understand these conditions as the creation of an appropriate legal framework to increase the affordability and physical accessibility of housing, as well as the quality of housing, and also as instruments of social policy to raise living standards, and at the same time, actively collecting the necessary data and evaluating the effectiveness of the actions taken. States will take active steps, as in the light of progressive implementation of the commitments, they are expected to increasingly improve the realisation of the rights thus defined.

### UNITED NATIONS

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights “*Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his/her family, including food, clothing, **housing**, medical care and necessary social services, as well as the right to security in case of unemployment, sickness, incapacity for work, widowhood, old age, or other want of livelihood not caused by him/her*” (United Nations, 1948, No. 25, para. 1).<sup>23</sup>

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights states that “*The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and **housing**, and to the*

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<sup>22</sup>Bytová politika Slovenskej republiky do 2030 (Housing policy of the Slovak Republic until 2030), <https://www.mindop.sk/ministerstvo-1/vystavba-5/bytova-politika/dokumenty/koncepcie>

<sup>23</sup> The term *housing* is used in the original English text. Slovak translation available at [https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR\\_Translations/slo.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/slo.pdf).

*continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent.*” (United Nations, 1966, Art. 11, para. 1)<sup>24</sup>

The Convention on the Rights of the Child states in the context of the rights of every child to a standard of living adequate for his or her physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development that “*States Parties , shall, in accordance with the conditions of the State concerned and within their means, make the necessary arrangements for the provision of assistance to parents and other persons having the care of the child for the realization of this right, and shall, where appropriate, provide material assistance and support programmes, in particular in the areas of the provision of food, clothing and **housing***” (United Nations, 1989, Art. 27, para. 3).<sup>25</sup>

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities<sup>26</sup> states that “*The States Parties recognize the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live in the community, with choices equal to others, shall take effective and appropriate measures, that enable the full enjoyment of this right by persons with disabilities and their full inclusion and participation in society, and ensure that persons with disabilities have the **opportunity to choose their place of residence as well as where and with whom they will live on an equal basis with others, are not obliged to live in a particular living arrangement.***” (United Nations, 2006, Art. 19(a).

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women<sup>27</sup> states that “*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas with a view to ensuring to them, on a basis of equality of men and*

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<sup>24</sup> The original English text uses the phrase *adequate food, clothing and housing*. Some older Slovak translations give *apartment* instead of housing, cf. Decree of the Minister of Foreign Affairs No. 120/1976 Coll., General Comment No. 4 of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights explains this right as *the Right to Adequate Housing, the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity*. It defines the fulfilment of the obligation to ensure access to adequate housing through the criteria of: stability of legal relations, habitability, accessibility, affordability, appropriate location, cultural appropriateness, availability of services and infrastructure. Cf. CESCR General Comment No. 4: The Right to Adequate Housing (Art. 11 (1) of the Covenant), E/1992/23, Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/47a7079a1.html>

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Communication of the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the negotiation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child No. 104/1991 Coll. Available at: <https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/slovensky/ministerstvo/narodne-koordinacne-stredisko/dohovor-pravach-dietata.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Communication of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic No. 317/2020 Coll. Available at: <https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/slovensky/uvod/legislativa/socialna-pomoc-podpora/dohovor-osn-pravach-osob-so-zdravotnym-postihnutim-opcny-protokol-sk-aj.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Communication of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women No. 62/1987 Coll. Available at: [https://www.gender.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/CEDAW\\_1979.pdf](https://www.gender.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/CEDAW_1979.pdf)

women, participation in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right to enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly with regard to **housing**, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.”(United Nations, 1979, Art. 14, para. 2 (h))

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>28</sup>(2015) lists ending poverty as one of its overarching goals (Goal 1), which includes “ensuring access to adequate, safe and affordable housing” (Goal 11.1).

## COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Council of Europe’s most important instrument for the protection of social rights is the European Social Charter (1961), which has been gradually replaced by the revised version of 1996. The Slovak Republic ratified the revised Charter in 2009, but most of the articles committing states to the fulfilment of the right to housing (including Article 31 Right to Housing) have not been ratified by the Slovak Republic to date. However, in the area of housing, SR has obligations under Article 30, which defines the right to protection from poverty and social exclusion (1996, Art. 30-31):<sup>29</sup>

Right to protection from poverty and social exclusion (Art. 30)

*In order to ensure the effective enjoyment of the right to protection from poverty and social exclusion, the Parties undertake to:*

*(a) Take measures, as part of a general and coordinated increase in practices, to promote effective access to persons living in a situation of social exclusion or poverty or at risk of such a situation, as well as to their families, in particular to employment, **housing**, vocational education and training, education, culture and social and medical assistance,*

*(b) Review<sup>30</sup> these measures with a view to adjusting them if necessary.*

The Right to Housing (Art. 31)<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Available at <https://www.mirri.gov.sk/sekcie/investicie/agenda-2030/index.html>. The Slovak Republic has signed up to the 2030 Agenda in the document Outlines for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, approved by Government Resolution No. 95 of 2 March 2016.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Communication of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic No. 273/2009. Available at <https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/legislativa/dokumenty-zoznamy-pod-europska-socialna-charta-revidovana.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> A more appropriate translation of review is *reassess*, as it is a commitment to continuously ascertain whether the measures taken are appropriate and to modify them if necessary.



*In order to ensure the effective exercise of the right to housing, the Contracting Parties undertake to take measures designed to:*

- 1. Promote access to **housing** at an adequate level;*
- 2. Prevent and reduce **homelessness** with a view to its progressive eradication;*
- 3. Make the price of **housing** accessible to those without sufficient resources<sup>32</sup>.*

Beyond these articles, the European Social Charter lists the rights of persons belonging to specific vulnerable groups in which housing has an important place.

With regard to the **rights of persons with disabilities** to independence, to social integration and to participation in society, the Parties undertake to “*promote their full social integration and participation in society, in particular through measures including technical assistance aimed at overcoming communication and mobility barriers and enabling them to access transport, housing, cultural activities and leisure activities*” (cf. Article 15 para. 3).<sup>33</sup>

**The right of the family** to social, legal and economic protection is set out in the European Social Charter as follows: “*In order to ensure the necessary conditions for the full development of the family as the fundamental unit of society, the Parties undertake to promote the economic, legal and social protection of family life by such means as social and family benefits, financial measures, the acquisition of family housing, assistance to young marriages or other appropriate means*” (Art. 16).<sup>34</sup>

In the context of the **rights of older persons** to social protection, it states “*measures aimed at enabling older persons to remain full members of society for as long as possible through the provision of housing adapted to their needs and state of health or appropriate support for the adaptation of their housing, as well as to provide adequate assistance to elderly persons living in the institutions concerned, while respecting their privacy and guaranteeing their participation in determining the living conditions in the institution*” (cf. Article 23).

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<sup>31</sup> The English text refers directly to Article 31 with the title *The right to Housing*. The text reads *to promote access to housing of an adequate standard* (to promote access to housing of an adequate or satisfactory standard). The Slovak Republic has not yet (as of 30.11.2022) acceded to the ratification of Article 31, i.e. the Article is not part of the instrument of ratification.

<sup>32</sup> English text *to make the price of housing accessible...* is more appropriately translated as *making the price of housing affordable...*

<sup>33</sup> Article 15 para.3 is not yet part of the instrument of ratification.

<sup>34</sup> Article 16 is not yet part of the instrument of ratification.

The **rights of migrant workers** and their families to protection and assistance include ensuring that such workers lawfully present in their territory are treated no less favourably than their own nationals, including in the area of accommodation (cf. art. 19, para. 4(c)).<sup>35</sup>

## EUROPEAN UNION

The EU policies underpinning the Concept have raised awareness of homelessness and exclusion from housing significantly since 2010, and there is a call for stronger EU-wide implementation of rights-based approaches and integrated strategies to combat homelessness and exclusion from housing. These were the relevant Council of Europe Conclusions of 2012 and 2016, the European Parliament Resolution of 2014, and the European Commission's document 'Tackling Homelessness in the Europe', a companion document to the 2013 Social Investment Package (SIP). In recent cycles, the analysis in the country reports produced as part of the European Semester cycle has increasingly focused on homelessness and housing exclusion. The European Pillar of Social Rights, in Principle 19, recognised the rights to housing and assistance for people without a home, as well as protection from forced eviction. The revised Common Employment Guidelines adopted in June 2018, including Guideline 8 on equal opportunities, social inclusion and combating poverty, state that "*for those in need or in vulnerable situations, Member States should ensure access to adequate social housing or housing assistance. Homelessness should be specifically addressed.*"

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union states: "*In order to combat social exclusion and poverty, the Union recognises and respects the right to social assistance and **housing assistance** in order to ensure a dignified existence for all persons who lack sufficient resources, in accordance with Union law and national law and practice:* (EU, 2010, Art. 34, para. 3).<sup>36</sup>

According to the European Parliament Resolution on Social Housing in the European Union (2013), "**access to housing is a fundamental right, which can be regarded as a prerequisite**

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<sup>35</sup> Article 19 is not yet part of the instrument of ratification.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. In: OJ 2012/C326/391 - 407. The English text literally states *the right to social and housing assistance*. The Slovak text is available online <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SK/TXT/?uri=celex%3A12012P%2FTXT>

*for the enjoyment of and access to other fundamental rights, as well as a prerequisite for a life of dignity”.*<sup>37</sup>

The European Pillar of Social Rights (2017), which seeks to introduce new and more effective rights for EU citizens, is also an important background document to the Concept at European level. Among the principles enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights are, for example, the right to a minimum income that guarantees a decent life at all stages of life, or the right to timely access to affordable and quality preventive and curative healthcare. In addition, one of the twenty principles of the Pillar explicitly refers to housing and assistance for the homeless: *“People in need must be provided with access to quality social housing and housing assistance. Vulnerable persons have the right to adequate assistance and protection against forced eviction. Adequate shelter and services should be provided to people without a home to promote their social inclusion”* (EU, 2017, Principle 19).<sup>38</sup>

Principle 19 of the European Pillar of Social Rights was joined under the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU by the Lisbon Declaration on the EU Platform on Combating Homelessness (2021)<sup>39</sup>, which states that *“homelessness is one of the most extreme forms of social exclusion, negatively affecting people’s physical and mental health, well-being and quality of life, as well as their access to employment and access to other economic and social services”*. Slovakia has thus joined other Member States that support the launch of the European Platform to Combat Homelessness and End Homelessness by 2030, so that no one would sleep rough due to lack of accessible, safe and appropriate emergency accommodation; no one has lived in emergency or transitional conditions for longer than necessary for a successful transition to a permanent housing solution; no one has been discharged from any facility/institution (e.g. prison, hospital, nursing home) without being offered suitable accommodation; no one has been prevented from eviction whenever possible; no one has been evicted without assistance in finding a suitable housing solution when needed; and no one has been discriminated against because of their homelessness status. The document also states that *“solving homelessness requires an understanding of how diverse*

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<sup>37</sup> European Parliament resolution of 11 June 2013 on social housing in the European Union (2012/2293(INI)). In: OJ C 65, 19.2.2016, pp. 40-55. The English text states *access to housing is a fundamental right*. Slovak text available online: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SK/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52013IP0246&from=SK>

<sup>38</sup> Slovak text available online: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles\\_sk](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_sk)

<sup>39</sup> English text available online: [file:///C:/Users/Matel/Downloads/20210619\\_bb%20-%20Lisbon%20Declaration%20on%20the%20European%20Platform%20on%20Combating%20Homelessness%20FINAL.pdf](file:///C:/Users/Matel/Downloads/20210619_bb%20-%20Lisbon%20Declaration%20on%20the%20European%20Platform%20on%20Combating%20Homelessness%20FINAL.pdf)

*groups are affected by homelessness in communities, including children, youth, women, single-parent and multiple children families, the elderly, migrants, members of ethnic minorities, and other vulnerable groups*". The ambitious goal of the Declaration and Platform is to end homelessness by 2030.

## **SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

The Slovak Republic is bound in the implementation of the right to housing and the promotion of access to housing to the extent resulting from the above-mentioned international treaties and political commitments. However, the Constitution of the Slovak Republic does not enshrine the right to housing and this right is not applied in the legal order of the Slovak Republic. There is no legal entitlement to housing in the Slovak Republic, which means that individuals cannot claim it from the State.<sup>40</sup>

However, the Constitution of the Slovak Republic guarantees the right to the protection of the dwelling as well as the inviolability of the right to property (Article 20 of the Constitution). There is a large number of laws and subordinate legal norms in the legal order of the Slovak Republic which regulate specific areas of housing. On the basis of an analysis of housing legislation, the MoHA has identified as many as 75 laws and 31 other sub-legislative norms that directly or indirectly affect the housing sector<sup>41</sup>. The Constitution of the Slovak Republic states that *"everyone who is in material need has the right to such assistance as is necessary to ensure basic living conditions"* (Article 39 para. 2).

The Constitution of the Slovak Republic in Article 12 para. 1 guarantees the right to equal treatment. Act No 365/2004 Coll. on Equal Treatment in Certain Areas and Protection against Discrimination and on Amendments to Certain Acts (Anti-Discrimination Act) (hereinafter referred to as the "ADA") demonstratively enumerates the forms and grounds of discrimination. One of the grounds is the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of social origin or social status, which relates to the living conditions of an individual in relation to society and the State, to his material and comprehensive security in society, where the individual started, grew up, found himself in or was otherwise linked to those conditions. Section 5(2)(d) of the ADA further provides that the principle of equal treatment in section 2(1) of the ADA shall apply only in conjunction with the rights of persons established by

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<sup>40</sup> Bytová politiky Slovenskej republiky do roku 2030, available at <https://www.mindop.sk/ministerstvo-1/vystavba-5/bytova-politika/dokumenty/koncepcie>

<sup>41</sup>A report on the conclusions of the Housing Legislation Analysis, together with an overview of the legislation, is available at [www.mindop.sk](http://www.mindop.sk)

special laws in the areas of access to and provision of goods and services, including housing, which are provided to the public by legal persons and natural persons-entrepreneurs.

### 3. Concept Basis at National Level

From the point of view of primary prevention of homelessness, an essential part of the social security of citizens is represented by the Slovak legal system of social security. In terms of the extent of coverage of existing social risks, the current legal situation corresponds to international standards in this area. One of the main pillars of the social policy of the state is, according to the Programme Declaration of the Government, the availability of housing. In its Programme Declaration for 2021-2024, the Government of the Slovak Republic undertook to promote access to adequate housing for all citizens of the Slovak Republic in order to create conditions for a dignified life for everyone, especially socially vulnerable groups of the population, young families and groups of the population in selected professions. The social policy system shall be set up to be socially just, transparent, sustainable and fundable and to ensure equality of opportunity.

In the light of the international documents and commitments referred to above, it should be noted that the primary responsibility for tackling homelessness lies with the EU Member States. Apart from basic normative acts such as the Constitution of the Slovak Republic or other internationally valid conventions, the following strategic documents, listed in Annex 1 of the Concept, have so far addressed the issue at national level.

So far, most of the strategic documents have not focused exclusively on people without a home, but have mostly subsumed them under various other target groups or defined them on the basis of other characteristics (e.g. income level, non-/employment, etc.). However, there are also changes in legislation towards a gradual inclusion of people without a home among the target groups of social policies. For example, the amendment to the Social Services Act, with effect from 1 January 2018, redefined the threat of social exclusion of a natural person or the limitation of his/her ability to socially integrate and independently solve his/her problems **due to the loss of housing or the threat of loss of housing**.<sup>42</sup> This is a specific reason for intervention by the provision of a social service in relation to the target group, which is broader and more specific than natural persons who are in an unfavourable social situation due to the fact that they do not have the necessary conditions to meet the basic needs of life.

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<sup>42</sup> Section 2(2)(i) of Act No 448/2008 Coll. on social services and on amendment and supplementation of Act No 455/1991 Coll. on trade business (Trade Licensing Act), as amended

The importance of a separate exhaustive definition of the target group **people without housing**<sup>43</sup> is demonstrated in recent years by several analytical materials that map the living conditions of people without a home and are an important basis for the development of this strategic document. These are mainly the reports of the research tasks of the Institute for Labour and Family Research, several of which have been produced recently and are listed in Annex 2 of the Concept Paper.

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<sup>43</sup> Roofless persons and people without housing form the group of people without a home for whom the objectives and measures to end homelessness are primarily intended, see page 10.

## 4. Basic Information on People without a Home

### 4.1. Causes of homelessness

In order to gain a deeper understanding of this social phenomenon, it is important to identify the causes or risk factors that promote exclusion from housing and homelessness.

A common trigger for the absence or loss of housing is the interplay and combination of two or more risk factors. Individual factors and some family and relationship factors are also often referred to as subjective causes of homelessness, but not all of them are within the individual's control (e.g. childhood abuse, health disadvantage, death in the family, etc.). **Subjective causes of homelessness** are related to the individual, their past, social and family background, health, innate and acquired skills, etc. According to the findings of Ad-hoc modul o materiálnej deprivácii, životnej spokojnosti a problémoch s bývaním (Ad-Hoc Module on Material Deprivation, Life Satisfaction and Housing Problems), the most commonly represented main causes of individual homelessness include family breakdown, loss of partner, lack of financial resources, uninhabitable dwelling, loss of employment, ending tenancy and health problems<sup>44</sup>.

A person usually loses his/her home when a critical situation occurs in which the personal social network (family, friends, acquaintances) and the social safety net (at community and state level) are absent or fail, and the person is no longer able to cope with that situation in other ways.

However, it is important to see the causes of homelessness beyond the subjective factors of a particular person, often conditioned by realities beyond his or her control (e.g. generational poverty, health, etc.), but from the point of view of objective conditions of the social setting, at the level of the community and the socio-political setting of the state. They are also called **structural causes of homelessness**. In particular, housing policy and the availability of housing, employment support (sufficiency or lack of employment opportunities), social security for families and groups at risk, law enforcement, equality of opportunity and prevention of losing a home, also enshrined in legislation, play a decisive role in this respect.

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<sup>44</sup> Eurostat (2018): EU-SILC Ad-Hoc Module: Material deprivation, well-being and housing difficulties Assessment of the implementation. March 2020. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/1012329/8706724/2018+EU-SILC+module\\_assessment.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/1012329/8706724/2018+EU-SILC+module_assessment.pdf)



As a result, some low-income groups (seniors, single parents, the unemployed, multiple children families, young adults after leaving institutional care and after leaving alternative care for children and foster care, people with low incomes, people living in generational poverty or segregation) face serious problems in securing and maintaining stable housing. In this context, the research and census of people without a home also found out that one in two adults enumerated in the facility had never had his/her own housing in the past, and the loss of housing occurred after leaving the parental home or the Center for Children and Families (e.g., to a residential facility without the ability to obtain stable, affordable housing).

The combination and representation of multiple structural and individual causes of home loss was confirmed by the research and census of PwH in Bratislava, in which the most frequent causes of home loss were leaving the parental home, marriage breakdown, eviction due to debt or leaving due to family problems. These four reasons accounted for two thirds of the total number of reasons given.

#### **4.2. Available statistics on the number of people without a home**

From the point of view of planning public policies aimed at preventing and ending homelessness, it is essential to know the baseline situation of the issue being addressed and to collect data that allow the evaluation of changes and the impact of the measures taken. In the Slovak Republic, the number of people without a home has not yet been the subject of regular surveys.

The first attempt to establish the number of people without a home in the SR was a direct census, carried out by the Statistical Office of the SR in 2011, as part of the Census of Population and Housing (hereinafter as the “2011 CPH”). In the 2011 CPH, 23,483 people without a home were counted<sup>45</sup>. This census was subsequently followed by the 2021 CPH, the data will be processed using a methodology that ensures comparability of the data between the two censuses. In addition, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has estimated that there are between 1 to 8 people without a home per 1,000 people of working age<sup>46</sup> in the countries it brings together. In the Slovak Republic, according to the 2021 CPH, there were 3,652,679

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<sup>45</sup> Ivančíková, L. Škápik, P. Sčítanie bezdomovcov ako súčasť posledného cenzu, V: The transformation of Slovak society in the light of the results of the last three population censuses, 2015.

<sup>46</sup> Slovenská štatistika a demografia (4/2016), [https://ssad.statistics.sk/SSaD/wp-content/files/4\\_2016/4\\_2016\\_clanok\\_5\\_Ondrusova\\_Stukovska.pdf](https://ssad.statistics.sk/SSaD/wp-content/files/4_2016/4_2016_clanok_5_Ondrusova_Stukovska.pdf)

people of working age (15-64 years) on 1 January 2021. Thus, applying the above estimate, there are between 3,652 and 29,221 people without a home in the SR. The average is 14,610 people.

Among the first to survey the minimum number of people without a home at the local level was a research and census of people without a home in the territory of the city of Bratislava, conducted in 2016. The research and census relied on the ETHOS typology of homelessness and housing exclusion to define the homeless population. A total of 2,064 people without a home were counted. At least 219 people were sleeping directly on the streets on the night of the count. Slightly less represented overnight locations were transport vehicles and carriages, bridges, parks and fields. There were 354 people who spent the night in night shelters at the time of the count. Thus, the minimum number of homeless persons was 593, or 29% of the total number of homeless persons counted.

In terms of age structure, the majority of people without a home in Bratislava were aged 25-49 (35.7%), 50-64 (25.8%) and over 65 (22.2%). The representation of young adults was relatively low. Thus, it turned out that almost half of the PwH in Bratislava were over 50 years old, which is related to the need to create a housing and service offer for this group.

The registration week for families in housing need in Košice, which ran from 24 to 30 May 2021, involved 309 families<sup>47</sup>. The total number of members of these families was 1,738. Of these, 552 were adults (including spouses and partners of respondents) and 1,187 were children. In addition, at the time of data collection, one in ten households were expecting the birth of an additional child. 45% of families lived in shelters (substandard housing) and 16% lived in garden huts. There were also 5 people registered as having no home and living outside on the street - in these cases, no children were currently living with them. 24% of families were living in emergency housing and shelters. 11% of households were living in an apartment or house, half of them without a valid lease. More than one-third of the total number of children were pre-school age: 20% of children were aged three and under, and a further 14% were aged three to six. More than 12% of the parents of families experienced homelessness or exclusion from housing as children, suggesting that in Košice, homelessness is being experienced by a proportion of the population as early as the second generation of children.

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<sup>47</sup> Gerbery, D. Turkovič, Z. Ondrušová D. Záverečná správa z registračného týždňa rodín v bytovej núdzi v Košiciach. 2021. Available at <https://ivpr.gov.sk/zistenia-z-registracneho-tyzdna-rodin-v-bytovej-nudzi-v-kosiciach/>

According to administrative data sources, according to the Social Situation of the Population Report for 2021, the number of people sleeping in night shelters as of 31.12.2020, corresponding to the ETHOS-2 category, was 7,609 people, which is an increase of 939 people compared to the data from 2019. In temporary accommodation facilities (ETHOS-3 and ETHOS-4), this was 3,007 people. At the same time, administrative data on different forms of hidden homelessness, such as temporary accommodation with relatives and acquaintances due to the absence of own housing (ETHOS-8) or living in overcrowded housing (ETHOS-13), are not yet collected. The findings of the Ad-Hoc Module on Material Deprivation, Life Satisfaction and Housing Problems show that 1.3% of the respondents in the Slovak Republic had ever experienced staying with relatives and acquaintances in the past, due to the absence of their own housing<sup>48</sup>.

A prominent form of hidden homelessness, particularly in the larger cities of the Slovak Republic, also appears to be casual housing in commercial hostels, which can often be episodic, alternating with other forms of homelessness, as indicated by the results of research and census of people without a home in Bratislava.

Finally, according to the EU-SILC survey, in 2019 the share of households with a housing cost burden of more than 40% in Slovakia was 5.7% of households, which is 3.7 p.p. lower compared to the EU average. However, the share of households below the income poverty line that had housing costs higher than 40% of disposable income was significantly higher, accounting for up to 26.7% of them in 2019.

### **4.3. Duration of homelessness**

An important indicator of the effectiveness of policies to prevent and end homelessness is the duration of homelessness - the length of time between losing one's home and gaining independent or supported housing. Based on the duration of homelessness, a distinction can be made between short-term, long-term and recurrent homelessness, with long-term homelessness being defined as a loss of housing that lasts more than one year<sup>49</sup>.

Repeated or episodic homelessness is a situation where a person moves between different unstable forms of housing - for example, living in a cottage or hostel for a period of time, then

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<sup>48</sup> Eurostat (2018): EU-SILC Ad-Hoc Module: Material deprivation, well-being and housing difficulties Assessment of the implementation. March 2020. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/1012329/8706724/2018+EU-SILC+module\\_assessment.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/1012329/8706724/2018+EU-SILC+module_assessment.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> Tsemberis, 2010

living in a night shelter, a shelter, with friends, and then living in a night shelter again. Measuring the representation of PwH by duration of homelessness is particularly useful for the appropriate setting of services for people with high levels of need for complex support. Experience from the USA and many European countries<sup>50</sup> has shown that there is a correlation between the duration of homelessness and the occurrence of several negative phenomena, in particular the onset or development of psychological and psychiatric problems and substance dependence. The longer the duration of homelessness, the more likely the association of other negative phenomena increases.

In terms of ending homelessness and accessing affordable housing, the most vulnerable group are people in long-term homelessness, pathological gamblers, alcohol abuse or abuse of other substances or suffer from dual diagnoses (psychological or psychiatric problems in conjunction with substance use). In addition, these people often do not have access to traditional crisis intervention services, especially if these services are not specialised to work with people requiring a high level of comprehensive support and/or are not low-threshold in nature. In order to end the homelessness of this group of people without a home, housing-first programmes have started to emerge<sup>51</sup>, which, compared to other programmes based on the offer of rental housing, provide housing on a vulnerability basis and include intensive support and counselling, which is provided to each of the participants in the programme by an interdisciplinary team of professionals<sup>52</sup>.

A connection between the length of homelessness and other negative phenomena was also confirmed by the findings of the research and the census of the people without a home in Bratislava: the longer a person is without stable housing, the more often he or she changes places of subsequent accommodation. There was also a positive connection between the length of time elapsed since the first loss of housing and the incidence of debt. As this period lengthened, the proportions of people who reported having a GP also decreased. At the same time, the research and census of PwH reported a high proportion of people with a long experience of homelessness in Bratislava. Almost 40% of people without a home who were

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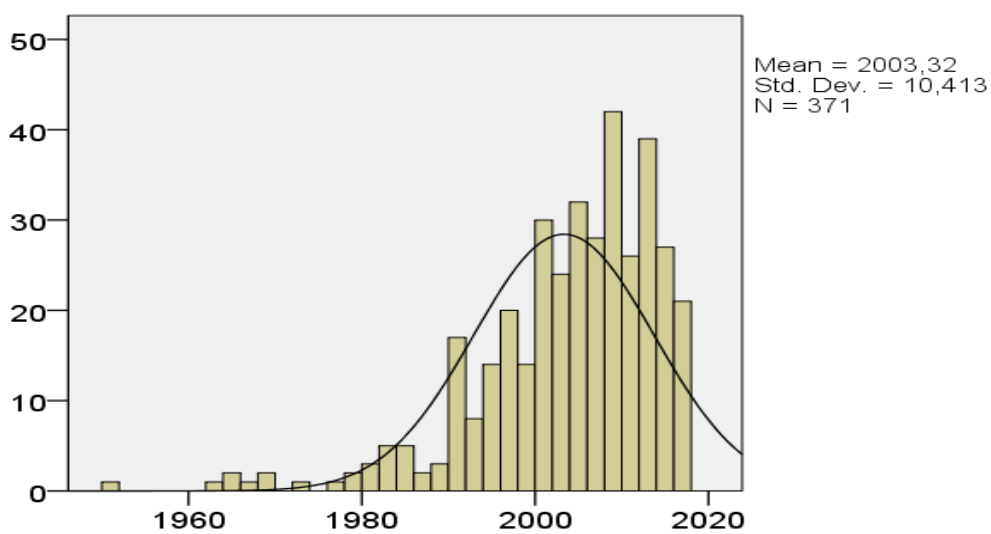
<sup>50</sup> Tsemberis, 2010; Pleace, Bretherton, 2013; Busch-Geertsema, 2016

<sup>51</sup> PLEACE, Nicholas. *Evropská příručka Bydlení především*. 1st ed. Prague: Úřad vlády ČR - Sekce pro lidská práva, 2017. 120 p. ISBN 978-80-7440-159-6

<sup>52</sup> For more details see e.g.: Škobla, D., Ondrušová, D., Csomor, G. Uplatiteľnosť systému prestupného byvania a „housing-first“ v podmienkach SR. Bratislava: Inštitút pre výskum práce a rodiny. 2016. Available at: [http://www.ceit.sk/IVPR/images/IVPR/vyskum/2016/Skobla/uplatitelnost\\_systemu\\_prestupneho\\_byvania\\_housing\\_first\\_vu\\_2016.pdf](http://www.ceit.sk/IVPR/images/IVPR/vyskum/2016/Skobla/uplatitelnost_systemu_prestupneho_byvania_housing_first_vu_2016.pdf)

counted in facilities had experienced their first experience of homelessness ten years ago or even earlier. Further 11% had experienced their first loss of housing between six and nine years ago. Only 8% of respondents had a relatively 'new' experience of housing loss, in less than 1 year prior to the census.

**Figure 1: Year of first housing loss - frequency distribution**



**Note:** Data only for adults who responded to the question.

**Source:** Záverečná správa z výskumu a sčítania ľudí bez domova v Bratislave, IVPR 2016.

Similarly, the average length of stay in the type of housing in which households were recorded during the Families in Housing Need Registration Week in Košice was up to eight years. 22% of households in housing need had lived in the same place for 10 years or more. This was especially true for households in shelters, houses and apartments.

In terms of time, we distinguish between **short-term** and **long-term homelessness**. Short-term housing loss, which lasts from a few days to a few weeks or months, involves a sudden change in a person's life, with the desire for social reintegration, being the motivating incentive for that person to resolve the housing problem. The vital support of family, friends, acquaintances and social policies plays an important role in this process.

**Time is one of those important factors for an independent return to standard housing.**

As a rule of thumb, the longer a homeless person lives on the streets, the less likely will he/she be able to resolve his/her situation independently. Practice shows that the time taken to do this is double the time spent homeless.

In order to prevent the emergence of a high need for comprehensive support for people without a home, reducing the duration of homelessness and preventing long-term homelessness is one of the main objectives of the national approaches of many European countries (e.g. Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Norway).<sup>53</sup> Prompt help provided at the root of the problem, at the earliest stage after housing loss, is the most effective. When rapid support is provided, there is a high likelihood of a quick return to normal life.<sup>54</sup> This is why the Framework also considers the timing, or duration, of home loss to be an important determinant of its prevention.

#### **4.4. Homelessness of men and women, individuals and families**

Tracking the representation of people without a home by gender may also have merit due to the different most common forms of homelessness among men compared to women. Men are significantly more represented among homeless persons than women. Conversely, women are more likely to experience hidden forms of homelessness and to seek informal help, e.g. staying with friends<sup>55</sup>. This was also confirmed in the research and census of PwH in Bratislava, where the vast majority, 74% of people, counted on the streets and in night shelters were men, while in institutions the representation of men and women was more balanced, with men accounting for 58% of the total. Taking the number of people living temporarily with relatives and acquaintances was not part of the research and census. Domestic violence is one of the common causes of women's exclusion from housing<sup>56</sup>.

To adequately address homelessness, it also proves important to consider the structure of the households in which PwH live - homeless individuals, families, communities. For example, people living as individuals are significantly more likely to be in high need of complex support (see below for more details) among PwH compared to families in temporary accommodation<sup>57</sup>. In the research and census of people without a home in Bratislava, people

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. FEANTSA, 2012, Ondrušová a kol., 2015.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Hradecký, In MPSV ČR, 2015.

<sup>55</sup> Fabian, Ed., 2016

<sup>56</sup> Mayock, Bretherton, Baptista, 2016; Fabian, Ed., 2016

<sup>57</sup> Culhane, 2007

who live alone were most often represented (40% of respondents). If they live with someone else, it is most often a partner (19%) or friends or acquaintances (9%). Other forms of cohabitation are rare. Cohabitation with friends was found mainly among men and among people sleeping rough or in hostels.

A typical example of families in temporary accommodation (including hostels) are single mothers with their children who are unable to secure other stable housing due to their low income. However, in the case of the Slovak Republic, these may also be young families becoming independent from their parents. The research and census of the people without a home in Bratislava showed that one of two adults enumerated in the facility had never had their own housing in the past. Loss of housing occurred most often after leaving the parental home or CCF. Only one-third of adults in facilities reported having their own housing in the past. The registration week of families in housing need in Košice confirmed that the majority, 57%, of the 59 female single mothers lived with their children in emergency housing facilities and shelters. This is also based on the fact that emergency housing facilities are specifically designed for this target group (women who have experienced domestic violence) and many shelters do not provide their services to families as a whole.

Another phenomenon is **the status of parental homelessness, which in many cases is also a generational issue**. Families experiencing homelessness face exclusion from housing and difficulty accessing a variety of public services. The solution to preventing the transmission of the experience of homelessness to the next generation of children in the family is primarily to remove systemic barriers and discrimination and make housing, health and social services, education and employment more accessible.

The homeless community can be considered a group of individuals who have a high need for comprehensive assistance. In the conditions of the Slovak Republic, there are other types of homeless communities, such as street homelessness, which arise mainly in urban environments, either as a result of forced eviction of a group of inhabitants (this is how the Mašličkovo settlement was created after the eviction from the apartment buildings in the Luník IX housing estate in Košice due to their disturbed statics), or the use of abandoned building(s) by a large number of squatters. In both cases, given the possibility of obtaining and maintaining housing, these are particularly vulnerable groups of PwH.

## 5. Preventing and Ending Homelessness in Priority Areas

### 5.1 Prevention

Prevention of homelessness is important in a conceptual approach to ending homelessness, particularly as it involves systemic measures to keep homeless populations at risk of homelessness housed. Preventing homelessness is the most effective and efficient tool to address homelessness itself. The primary purpose of homelessness prevention is to design and implement measures that will keep a person in long-term housing and, in partnership with the person concerned, eliminate the threat of homelessness. Prevention also requires a coordinated approach to providing a comprehensive range of public services, as well as the need for multi-institutional cooperation between the entities involved in dealing with the issue.

According to the literature, the primary instruments for preventing housing loss are housing policy (supply, accessibility and affordability) and social policy (appropriate cumulation of social benefits, unemployment benefits, housing allowances, etc.). The effectiveness of housing benefit depends on its setting (scope, targeting, accessibility, etc.). In EU countries, the most common instruments to prevent housing loss are early warning systems based on early identification of households with housing arrears<sup>58</sup>. As part of the support, one of the tools for households at risk is the housing allowance. The effectiveness of this allowance depends on its setting (scope, addressability, accessibility, etc.). In EU countries, the most common secondary instruments to prevent housing loss are early warning systems based on early identification of households with housing arrears. It also includes the identification of the causes and appropriate solutions to such problems - rapid re-housing, housing first, harm-reduction, mediation, financial and family counselling. The capital of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava, was the first city in Slovakia to prepare and launch a pilot project of affordable housing with social support based on the principles of "housing first" in 2020 and signed a memorandum of mutual cooperation with several Bratislava civic associations dedicated to the target group of people without a home.<sup>59</sup> At the same time, the City of Košice launched the Housing First project for families with children in Košice, in cooperation with the DEDO Foundation, in which 10 families with children experiencing homelessness were found a

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<sup>58</sup> Busch-Geertsema, V., & Fitzpatrick, S. (2008). Effective homelessness prevention? Explaining reductions in homelessness in Germany and England. *European Journal of Homelessness*, 2, 69-95

<sup>59</sup> Hlavné mesto SR Bratislava. 2020. Available at: <https://bratislava.sk/sk/dostupne-byvanie>



home. Elements of the rapid re-housing approach were used by the town of Dolný Kubín, which entrusted a part of its housing stock to the Department of Social Affairs and Family of the municipal authority for this purpose<sup>60</sup>. In Banská Bystrica, a system of transferable housing with merit-based elements has long been applied.

The offer of a payment plan is also a relatively common instrument for resolving arrears to municipalities. In the case of recipients of assistance in material need, it is also possible to make use of the special recipient<sup>61</sup> institution in order to prevent housing-related debts and thus achieve regular reimbursement, for example, of housing costs. However, there is an overall lack of standardisation of procedures for the incurrence of debts for rent and other housing charges, which would ensure early intervention and prevent debts from growing to the point where a low-income household is no longer able to pay them. The process of recovering these arrears is governed by the Civil Code, which especially clearly implies a reminder obligation for the housing manager<sup>62</sup> towards the debtor, as well as the creation of an obligation to pay a late payment charge. The Civil Code<sup>63</sup> does not provide for an obligation on the housing manager to cooperate with the city's social welfare department, which should ensure direct contact with debtors and the search for an adequate solution to their situation, when dealing with arrears. There is little or no use by the municipality of the housing contact points currently being set up by several municipalities in the Czech Republic to help their residents retain or acquire housing.

In the Slovak Republic, municipalities have the most important competences in the field of eviction prevention as well as homelessness prevention when leaving institutional care. According to the Act of the Slovak National Council No 369/1990 Coll. on Municipal Establishment, as amended, one of the basic tasks of a municipality is to take care of the needs of its inhabitants. The municipality creates and protects healthy conditions and a healthy way of life and work for the inhabitants of the municipality, creates conditions for the provision of health care, as well as procures and approves housing development programmes

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<sup>60</sup> Source: Report on the situation in the area of rental housing in 2014 for the meeting of the Municipal Council of Dolný Kubín. Available at: [http://www.dolnykubin.sk/download\\_file\\_f.php?id=583964](http://www.dolnykubin.sk/download_file_f.php?id=583964)

<sup>61</sup> Special recipient under Act No 417/2013 Coll. on aid in material distress and on amendments and supplements to certain acts, as amended, shall be determined if the provision of aid in material distress to date has not achieved the purpose for which it is intended or it can reasonably be assumed that the provision of aid in material distress will not achieve the purpose for which it is intended, for example, in part to cover housing-related expenses.

<sup>62</sup> The administrator of the apartment building is responsible under the Act of the National Assembly of the Slovak Republic No. 182/1993 Coll. on the ownership of flats and non-residential premises, as amended, for the recovery of debts.

<sup>63</sup> Civil Code - Act No 40/1964 Coll. Civil Code, as amended

and cooperates in the creation of suitable conditions for housing in the municipality<sup>64</sup>. At the national level, in the field of homelessness prevention, the National Council of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the Slovak Republic are responsible for setting up the appropriate legislative framework and financial support for homelessness prevention measures so that individual actors in direct contact with the target group have sufficient motivation, as well as the tools to address their situation.

The need for homelessness prevention in preparation for and after leaving an institution is based on the fact that a long-term stay in an institution (especially in a CCF, re-education centre, detention facility, psychiatric care unit), combined with some other factors, causes difficulties in obtaining and maintaining the first independent housing, or in returning to the original housing. The aim of preventive measures is to prevent people from becoming homeless within a short time of leaving the institution (whether this means living on the streets, in hostels or other types of homeless facilities).

On the other hand, the main limitations of the current options for preventing homelessness after leaving institutional care relate mainly to the lack of a mechanism for maintaining contact or social work with people after leaving institutional care, as well as the underdeveloped supply of affordable rental housing, which results in people not being able to be offered affordable rental housing when they leave institutions.

According to FEANTSA (2004)<sup>65</sup>, homelessness prevention includes:

- Identifying and contacting the target group based on the recognition of risk factors that may lead to homelessness;
- Support to maintain the original standard housing, offer of social housing (in council rented housing);
- Good management of social housing;
- Housing support services (including social or financial counselling);
- Support in acquiring the basic skills needed for independent living (daily living skills);
- Support for access to social benefits, health care, community services.

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<sup>64</sup> Section 4(3)(h) and (j) of Act No 369/1990 Coll. of the Slovak National Council on Municipal Establishment, as amended

<sup>65</sup> Available at: <https://ivpr.gov.sk/podkladovy-material-koncepcie-prevencie-a-riesenia-bezdomovectva-na-narodnej-urovni-darina-ondrusova-milan-fico-2018/>

In the context of prevention, an elementary step is the provision of counselling to people at risk of losing their housing by any entity. Particularly in the context of public rental housing, this is the role of cities and municipalities. However, their capacity to provide advice and the existing limits arising, for example, from their size and professional staff capacities are questionable. The situation is different in municipalities where there is communication and cooperation at the level of the COLSAF (social curatorship), the HTU (possibility of crisis housing), or knowledge of the network of possible housing providers. Often this is a form of distributive advice, but also possibilities for cooperation between municipalities. A coordinated approach involves not only informing the citizen in writing about the threat of losing their current housing and the related conditions, but especially contacting them directly in order to find the reasons for rent arrears and to consider and seek solutions. However, the more the competent organisational units of the municipality have information about defaulters and communicate with each other and with the basic social counselling provider at the municipality, the more effective prevention can be. The absence of an offer of assistance is more pronounced in the case of private housing, where information about emerging debts does not reach the competent bodies in time and owners do not know where to seek help.

**Signing the Lisbon Declaration on the European Platform to Combat Homelessness is a major step for the Slovak Republic in the area of preventing and ending homelessness.**

The launch of the Platform is the beginning of a process to create a common understanding and commitment and to ensure concrete progress in Member States to homelessness. It offers an opportunity to engage and cooperate with local actors, including cities and service providers. It will allow all actors to better share their knowledge and practices and identify effective and innovative approaches to make progress in ending homelessness.

## 5.2 Housing

The fundamental role of the State in the area of housing is to create systemic conditions and conditions for residents to ensure their access and ability to maintain adequate housing, which is a basic human need and right. However, housing is nowadays becoming more and more unaffordable for an ever-wider part of the population (whether due to rising property prices, rents or energy prices). This is increasing the number of people and households for whom it is difficult to acquire and maintain adequate housing. The group at risk of housing loss are the households spending more than 40% of their income on housing<sup>66</sup>.

In Slovakia, the overall physical shortage of housing and consequently the lack of affordable rental housing has been a long-standing and repeated fact. Based on data *from the Census of Population Housing in 2021*<sup>67</sup>, the share of privately owned dwellings accounted for more than 91% of the housing stock in Slovakia, 2.5% were in the public rented sector and less than 1%<sup>68</sup> were rented dwellings.

A significantly negative element in the housing sector is the absence of rental housing, while a developed and diversified rental housing market (affordable) represents one of the supporting mechanisms to increase the availability of housing for different population groups. The development of public rental housing (also intended for social housing)<sup>69</sup> by municipalities is in many cases also limited by the absence of suitable land in their ownership, lengthy processes in the creation or amendment of the zoning plan, the length of public procurement and the investment process itself. The low allocation of funds for non-repayable housing support can also be an obstacle. The number of dwellings supported by the subsidy of the Ministry of the Interior in accordance with Act No 443/2010 Coll. on Subsidies for Housing Development and on Social Housing, as amended (hereinafter referred to as Act No

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<sup>66</sup> For low-income households, this may be less than 40%

<sup>67</sup> <https://www.scitanie.sk/byty/zakladne-vysledky/pocet-bytov-podla-formy-vlastnictva/SR/SK0/SR>

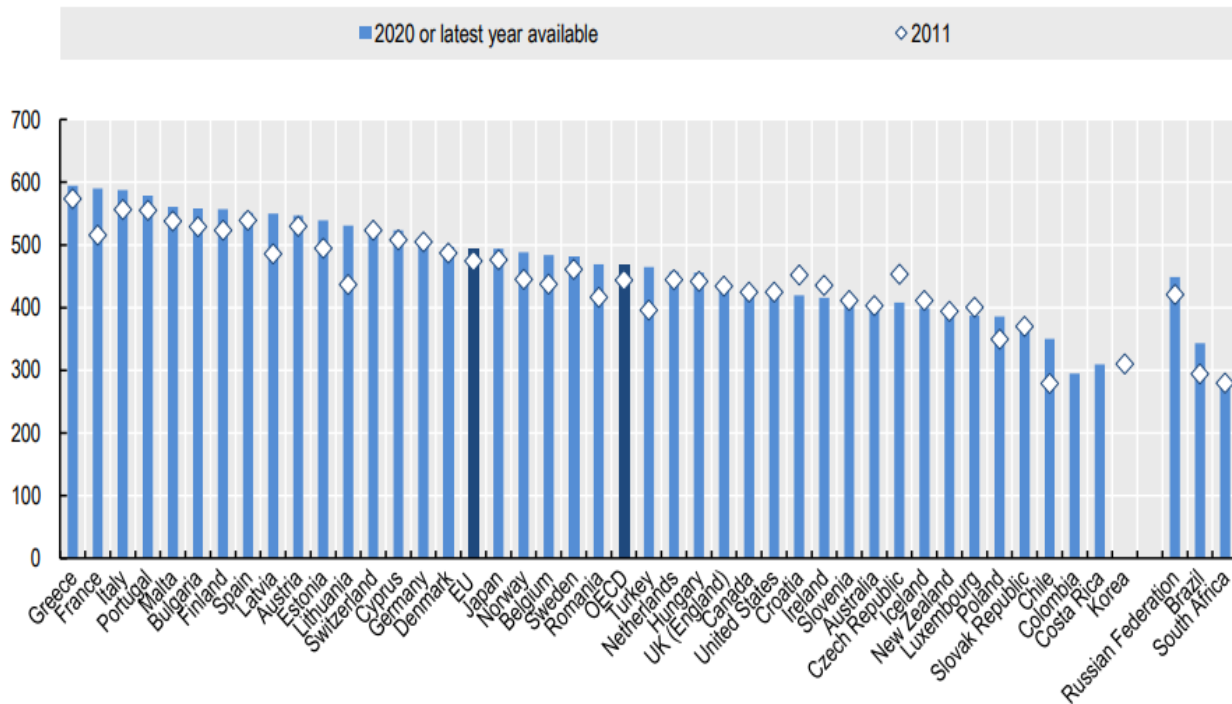
<sup>68</sup> The MoTC SR has long considered the lack of relevant information on the private rented sector to be a significant shortcoming. This is mainly related to the fact that rental flats offered on the market are in most cases rented by private owners - natural persons. In many cases, flats rented out by individuals can be classified as grey market, as not all landlords fulfil their tax obligations. From secondary information, the MoTC SR assumes that the extent of flats rented out in this way is higher than the 2021 Census data. The extent is still assumed to be at a minimum level of 3% of the housing stock. This is also stated in the Housing Policy of the Slovak Republic until 2030.

<sup>69</sup> Prieskum nájomného bývania a mestských ubytovní v okresných mestách SR (Fico, Ondrušová, Škobla, 2019)

443/2010 Coll.) decreased from 2,303 to 1,269 in comparison between 2010 and 2020<sup>70</sup>. This decrease is linked precisely to the amount of funds allocated in the state budget, but also to the recent significant increase in the prices of construction materials and works.

**Figure 2: Number of dwellings per thousand inhabitants**

Total number of dwellings per thousand inhabitants, 2020 or latest available year<sup>1</sup>



Source: <https://www.oecd.org/els/family/HM1-1-Housing-stock-and-construction.pdf>

As a result of the lack of both physical and affordable housing, as well as the lack of affordable rental housing, low-income groups of the population (older people, single-parent families, the long-term unemployed, families with multiple children, people with low incomes or living in generational poverty, etc.) face serious problems in securing and maintaining stable and decent housing. Commercial/worker hostels are often unaffordable for low-income workers and at the same time do not provide conditions for decent and long-term housing for individuals or families. The frequently used private renting options are also problematic, besides apartments, single rooms, family houses or parts of them, there are garages, garden cottages, marquees or adapted vehicles, sheds or non-residential premises that are also rented. In this case, people have no protection, they are often exploited economically - by inadequate rents, the problem is the temporal instability of these rentals - alternative housing. In addition,

<sup>70</sup> Informácia o bytovej výstavbe v Slovenskej republike za rok 2021. Available at: <https://www.mindop.sk/ministerstvo-1/vystavba-5/bytova-politika/dokumenty/informacie/informacia-o-bytovej-vystavbe-v-slovenskej-republike/rok-2021>

such temporary or alternative housing is also a problem in terms of the grey economy. Similarly, in terms of apparent homelessness, the absence of affordable accommodation is one of the main problems experienced by people without housing. Without the security of housing and the opportunity for respite, a person's ability to hold down a job or a stable job is very limited.

### **Problems related to housing<sup>71</sup>:**

- Housing costs overburden rate, which refers to the proportion of people living in households where the total housing costs represent more than 40% of total household disposable income;
- The overcrowding rate<sup>72</sup>, which refers to the proportion of persons living in dwellings that meet the overcrowding conditions;
- Severe housing deprivation<sup>73</sup>, which refers to the proportion of people living in households that have housing problems.

According to Eurostat<sup>74</sup>, almost a third of inhabitants in the Slovak Republic live in overcrowded flats and houses (overcrowding rate 30.1%), which is well above the EU27 average (2020: 7.4%). Limited living space is particularly characteristic for households with children. In 2019, almost half of persons from households with dependent children (44.4%) lived in an overcrowded household, compared to 21.6% of persons from households without dependent children. Multi-child households (56.9 %) are most often affected by overcrowding.

The basic legislation in the field of social housing in the Slovak Republic is Act No 443/2010 Coll. One of its main objectives was to address the housing of socially vulnerable groups of the population and citizens in material and social need. The Act defines social housing as

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<sup>71</sup> EU SILC-based indicators of housing conditions, which are monitored and produced annually at EU level ([https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Housing\\_statistics/sk&oldid=413257](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Housing_statistics/sk&oldid=413257))

<sup>72</sup> A person is considered to be living in an overcrowded household if the household does not have a minimum number of rooms equal to: one room per household; one room per couple in the household; one room for each single person aged 18 years and over; one room for a same-sex couple aged 12 to 17 years; one room for each single person aged 12 to 17 years not included in the previous category; one room for a couple of children under 12 years of age; one room for a couple of children under 12 years of age;

<sup>73</sup> Severe housing deprivation = severe housing deprivation rate is defined as the percentage of the population living in a dwelling that is considered overcrowded and also exhibits at least one of the measures of housing deprivation. Housing deprivation is a measure of inadequate facilities and is calculated with reference to those households that have a leaking roof, no bath/shower and no indoor toilet, or dwellings that are considered too dark.

([https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Severe\\_housing\\_deprivation\\_rate](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Severe_housing_deprivation_rate))

<sup>74</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/TESSI170/>

*“housing procured with the use of public funds intended for adequate and humanly dignified housing of natural persons who cannot acquire housing by their own means and meet the conditions under this Act”*. Adequate and decent housing shall be defined as housing which fulfils the basic functions of housing. These are functions that provide for the needs of sleep, rest, food preparation, personal hygiene and storage of personal belongings.<sup>75</sup> Act No 443/2010 Coll. does not set a minimum income threshold for the allocation of social housing. This creates room for cities and municipalities to provide social housing also to residents with low or zero income, which is, however, subject to local conditions. However, cities and municipalities generally do not make use of the possibility of providing part of the flats to persons with low or zero income and set the minimum threshold of regular monthly income in the general binding regulations regulating the criteria for allocation of rental housing<sup>76</sup>, which is to ensure the ability of tenants to pay the rent. Furthermore, these criteria often include a condition of residence in the municipality in which the application is made, as well as a condition that the applicant must not have any debts to the municipality - for example, not even a debt for municipal waste collection<sup>77</sup>. However, the criteria for the allocation of rental housing thus determined represent a high threshold for people without a home to be included as applicants for public rental housing. In many cases, they are even contrary to equal access to all applicants and municipalities should be motivated to revise their housing allocation rules. For example, owning a residential property where the applicant cannot be fairly required to occupy it, or a debt that is being properly repaid, should not be grounds for disqualifying an application and should be considered on a case-by-case basis. However, in terms of the financial sustainability of the management and development of the housing stock, some of these conditions are unavoidable for municipalities in the current setting. Public rental housing is not built with only one source of financing - it is multi-source financing (the municipality's own budget, subsidy and loan). The obligation to pay for the acquisition of the housing is thus transferred to the tenant. The municipality's budget cannot be set up in such a way that it will consider the non-payment of the loan, so municipalities set such rental conditions that they are guaranteed a minimum loan payment and the necessary costs

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<sup>75</sup> Section 2(1)(l) of Act No 443/2010 Coll. on subsidies for housing development and social housing, as amended

<sup>76</sup> Suchalová, A. – Staroňová, K. (2010) Mapovanie sociálneho bývania v mestách Slovenska. Bratislava: ÚVP FSEV UK

<sup>77</sup> Škobla, D., Csomor, G., Filadelfiová, J. (2016) Zmeny v systéme pomoci v hmotnej núdzi a prieskum dopadov zmien v poskytovaní príspevku na bývanie v rámci pomoci v hmotnej núdzi. Available at: [https://www.ceit.sk/IVPR/images/IVPR/vyskum/2016/Skobla/zmeny\\_v\\_systeme\\_pomoci\\_v\\_hmotnej\\_nudzi\\_sko\\_bla\\_csomor\\_filadelfiova\\_2016.pdf](https://www.ceit.sk/IVPR/images/IVPR/vyskum/2016/Skobla/zmeny_v_systeme_pomoci_v_hmotnej_nudzi_sko_bla_csomor_filadelfiova_2016.pdf)

associated with the operation and maintenance of the rental apartment. The above is decided at the level of the council, which adopts measures to protect the municipality. For a person in need of housing, this is a vicious circle which is closed and opened by the lack of a financial mechanism which would solve this problem and enable towns and municipalities to create a socially targeted system for allocating rental housing.

Act No 112/2018 Coll. on the Social Economy and Social Enterprises and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts, as amended (hereinafter referred to as the “Social Economy Act”), contains another form of definition of rental housing built on the principle of non-profitability. The adoption of the Social Economy Act created a legal framework for the establishment of a specific type of registered social enterprise, the so-called social housing enterprise, which aims to provide adequate and dignified housing for a specifically defined circle of natural persons after meeting the legal conditions. By *socially beneficial rental housing is meant the provision of housing, management, maintenance and renovation of the housing stock through the construction, conversion or acquisition of dwellings for the purpose of renting them to eligible persons or through the rental of dwellings to such natural persons*.<sup>78</sup> Socially beneficial rental housing is a social service of general interest according to a special regulation. Defining this type of registered social enterprise within the provisions of the Act on the Social Economy strengthens the space for the development of rental housing in Slovakia, which is inspired mainly by the model from Austria. It is not a replacement for or interference with the existing social housing model, which is based on a combination of subsidies and a favourable loan from the ŠFRB (Social Fund for Housing Development). It is a new instrument that complements and extends this existing system. The vision was for the social rented housing sector to operate on the principle of non-profitability or strictly regulated profit from the point of view of lower-income users, thus ensuring its affordability.

In the Slovak Republic, access to housing for people with a long-term experience of homelessness, including people experiencing homelessness, in housing as a first step-based projects is also very limited so far, although gradually improving. Non-profit organisations providing services to people without home have started pilot testing this approach in their projects - o.z. Proti prúdu<sup>79</sup>, o.z. Vagus<sup>80</sup>, DEDO Foundation<sup>81</sup>. In 2021, the capital city of the

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<sup>78</sup> Section 13(2) of Act No 112/2018 Coll. on the Social Economy and Social Enterprises and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts, as amended

<sup>79</sup> Bývanie – NotaBene (Bratislava): <https://www.notabene.sk/?byvanie>

<sup>80</sup> Housing Cverna – Vagus. (Bratislava): <https://www.vagus.sk/housing-first-cverna/21/o-programe/>

<sup>81</sup> Starostlivé bývanie – Nadácia DEDO. (Košice): <https://www.nadaciadedo.sk/starostlive-byvanie/>



Slovak Republic Bratislava and the city of Košice also started to implement such projects. This approach is an important basis for the national concept also in the context of deinstitutionalisation of social services and support for full integration of people into society in their natural environment.

The housing issue is often solved by renting an apartment on the commercial market. According to the provisions of the Civil Code, the lease of an apartment is created by a lease contract, by which the landlord lets the tenant use the apartment for a rent, either for a definite period of time or without specifying the period of use<sup>82</sup>. From the point of view of the protection of households threatened with eviction from the rented dwelling, according to the Civil Code, the notice period from the lease of the apartment is set for at least 3 months, followed by a protection period of another 6 months if the tenant is in material need. The tenant has a total of 9 months to deal with his/her unfavourable situation. If the tenant pays the rent due or agrees in writing with the landlord on the method of payment before the expiry of this grace period, the reason for the termination of the tenancy will cease to exist. On the other hand, if the tenant is unable to meet the above conditions within the protection period and is in material need for objective reasons, he/she is only entitled to alternative accommodation. If the tenant is caring for a minor child or a person without a family, in such a case, a replacement flat is provided, which may be of a lower quality and smaller area than the flat the tenant has to vacate. However, only if the landlord's terms allow it. Measures to prevent the loss of housing in this way are aimed at maintaining the occupied dwelling which may, however, also be to the detriment of the landlord (increased costs in the event of non-payment of rent, etc.).

An alternative legal regulation of flat rental to the Civil Code is the definition of Act No 98/2014 Coll. on short-term flat rental as amended by Act No 125/2016 Coll. The Act regulates the lease of privately owned flats and does not apply to lease relations in flats procured under special regulations<sup>83</sup>, lease relations in service flats, special purpose flats, in flats located in special purpose houses according to special regulations<sup>84</sup>, in cooperative flats,

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<sup>82</sup> However, the legal regulation of the lease of flats in the Civil Code and the relevant case law of the courts discourages owners to lease flats for an indefinite period of time, also for this reason, in practice, lease contracts concluded for an indefinite period of time are encountered only exceptionally.

<sup>83</sup> Act No 443/2010 Coll. on subsidies for housing development and social housing, as amended, Act No 261/2011 Coll. on the provision of subsidies for the acquisition of replacement rental housing, as amended by Act No 134/2013 Coll., Act No 150/2013 Coll. on the State Fund for Housing Development, as amended.

<sup>84</sup> Act of the Slovak National Council No. 189/1992 Coll. on the regulation of certain conditions related to the rental of flats and housing compensation, as amended.

in flats owned by municipalities<sup>85</sup>, higher territorial units<sup>86</sup> and in flats owned by the capital of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava, the city of Košice and their urban districts. **Therefore, in the area of housing, we are focusing on the identification of public instruments and not on the adjustment of existing conditions for the rental of privately owned housing, which is intended to be complementary to national policies and not to be the main element of the solution in the area in question.**

The reasons for termination of the lease of an apartment, which are aimed at the loss of housing, are related to low or no income of the tenant and non-payment of rent, but also to damage to the apartment, violation of house rules, etc. In general, preventing and ending homelessness through the creation of housing conditions should be addressed through instruments other than the use of commercial housing stock.

Reasons for loss of privately owned housing occur when an individual or family stops paying the costs associated with the use of the dwelling, a mortgage or other loan provided. From the point of view of the legislation in force, the reason for the threat of losing ownership of a dwelling is the existence of a debt to the owner of more than €2,000.<sup>87</sup>

In case of delay in mortgage loan repayments, the bank notifies the client. The call for early repayment of the mortgage in full comes after 3 to 4 months of default on the mortgage and between the 6th and 9th month the bank submits a proposal to the auction company for the auction of the property. The auction company sends another notice to repay the loan and avoid the auction. The auction can take place at least 30 days after the date is set. The last opportunity to pay off the debt (and already the cost of the auction) ends after the auction opens.<sup>88</sup>

The persons concerned try to deal with their adverse social situation individually, choosing their own survival strategies based on their own capabilities and preferences. Due to the loss of their own home, they usually try to use housing solutions through family and friends, if possible, then in commercial hostels, or seek accommodation through the municipality, the HTU or directly in social service facilities (e.g. shelter). If these options fail, they lose their home completely and become roofless or homeless.

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<sup>85</sup>Act of the Slovak National Council No. 138/1991 Coll. on municipal property, as amended.

<sup>86</sup> Act No 446/2001 Coll. on the property of higher territorial units, as amended.

<sup>87</sup> Act No 527/2002 on voluntary auctions and on supplementing Act No 323/1992 Coll. of the Slovak National Council on notaries and notarial activities (Notarial Code), as amended

<sup>88</sup> <https://www.financnykompas.sk/clanok/co-robit-ak-mam-hypoteku-a-nezvladam-ju-splacat>

Within the framework of strategic documents and legislation, there is room for a variety of both, supported construction and reconstruction of housing, such as subsidies from the MoTC SR, the Social Fund for Housing Development, support for transitional housing, support for affordable housing with elements of 'Housing first', as well as construction and reconstruction of social service facilities, not excluding crisis intervention facilities. In addition, in 2021, the MoLSAF SR has prepared a call for demand-driven projects under the Human Resources OP, financed through the ESIF, under the title Affordable Housing with Housing-First Elements<sup>89</sup>. The aim of the call was to support NGOs providing services to people without a home in the implementation of housing-first projects, through the reimbursement of salary costs of staff of expert teams or partial reimbursement of rent for project participants. Despite the fact that these initiatives will enable only dozens of people to end homelessness, which represents only a small part of the estimated number of people without a home in Slovakia, they need to be continued on an increased scale.

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<sup>89</sup> Further information on the call is available at: <https://www.itms2014.sk/vyzva?id=15036331-a45a-484f-9b35-435b14e913e6>

### 5.3 Health Issues

People without a home often suffer from a variety of illnesses, usually of a chronic nature. According to *Záverečná správa z výskumu a sčítania ľudí bez domova na území mesta Bratislavy v roku 2016* (Final Report of the 2016 Homelessness Research and Census) 49% of homeless adults reported the presence of a long-term health problem, and up to 60% of people in the older age groups reported the presence of a long-term health problem. The most commonly reported long-term health problems were leg problems and heart and blood pressure problems. Mental health problems and breathing difficulties were also strongly represented. According to the Final Report of the 2021 Registration Week of Families in Housing Need in Košice, respondents reported breathing problems, neurological diseases, heart diseases and high blood pressure, muscular and skeletal problems and diabetes as the most common health problems. However, the biggest problem of poor health for people without home tends to be the critical exacerbation of chronic diseases with fatal consequences. Denial of non-emergency care for chronic illness often exposes people without home to pain, lack of necessary medications, and significantly reduces their life expectancy.

In winter, health care providers record hypothermia, frostbite, injuries and other complications arising from living on the streets as reasons for admission. People with a lower standard of hygiene undergo the cleansing necessary for movement in the hospital environment in central admissions and, where possible, the hospital will provide them with clothing if necessary. However, not every health facility may be operationally, staffed or materially equipped to do so.

The provision of health care in Slovakia is regulated in particular by Act No 576/2004 Coll. on health care, services related to the provision of health care and on amendment and supplementation of certain acts, as amended. Similarly, as in the case of other disadvantaged groups of the population, the legislation of the Slovak Republic does not prevent people without home from accessing health care; on the contrary, it prohibits discrimination and unequal treatment in this area also on the basis of the social status or property of the person to whom health care is to be provided<sup>90</sup>.

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<sup>90</sup> Cf. Section 5 of Act No 365/2004 Coll. on equal treatment in certain areas and protection against discrimination and on amending and supplementing certain acts (Anti-Discrimination Act), as amended

Nevertheless, there are several barriers that make access to healthcare difficult or even impossible, especially for roofless people. According to a survey of organisations working with people without a home<sup>91</sup>, these include in particular difficulties in finding a general practitioner or specialist, the restriction to emergency care for people who are debtors to public health insurance, and the lack of follow-up treatment after discharge from institutional care or addiction treatment options. Difficulties in finding a doctor for people without a home are on the one hand linked to the local jurisdiction requirement - general practitioners, dentists and gynaecologists-obstetricians provide health care according to the health district, which is determined by the municipality. However, it is often the case that a homeless person lives for a long period of time outside his or her place of residence and therefore outside the health district in which the selected doctors are obliged to enter into a health care agreement with the patient. On the other hand, there is a great need for assistance for the target group in exercising their rights and legally protected interests (limited possibilities and abilities to assert their own rights) as well as the overload of the health system. People without shelter often face denial of health care or discriminatory behaviour due to full capacity, lack of hygiene, health insurance debt, as well as social status. A large number of people do not seek health care at all, e.g. because of previous negative experiences with the attitude of health professionals or limited financial possibilities (especially in relation to the cost of transport to the doctor, co-payments for medicines or other expenses).

Financial barriers to access to health care affect not only roofless people, but also people without housing in crisis intervention social service facilities or people living in hostels. Research and the 2016 census of people without a home in Bratislava showed that such situations are not at all rare in the facilities where PwH were counted. 24% of persons had the experience of not seeking medical help when they needed treatment due to lack of funds, yet up to 18% had this experience repeatedly.

The importance of accessible health care in the aftermath of homelessness is linked to the fact that poor or worsening health, as a result of long-term homelessness, makes ending homelessness much more difficult - it creates major barriers for people to obtain housing or employment and, without timely and adequate treatment, can lead to a gradual increase in dependency on the help of another person in residential facilities of the social services system, which ultimately represents a high cost to public finances.

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<sup>91</sup> Podkladový materiál koncepcie prevencie a riešenia bezdomovstva na národnej úrovni, Ondrušová, Fico

Every citizen of the Slovak Republic, including people without a home, has the right to receive urgent health care. For a person in an unfavourable situation, residing in the territory of the Slovak Republic, who cannot prove his/her insurance relationship with an insurance card, the costs incurred will be reimbursed by the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic to the health insurer. The costs are charged to the General Health Insurance Fund. However, even if such a person is able to show his/her insurance card, from the point of view of the public health insurance it may be a person who does not pay the public health insurance premiums, and thus the health insurance companies incur debts that are often uncollectable. As a result of non-payment of insurance premiums, these persons are published in the debtors' list with a claim only for urgent health care. A particularly serious problem with the access to health care for people without a home is the existence of debts to public health insurance. They are particularly vulnerable to health insurance debts if they are not registered as job seekers with the COLSAF, or as recipients of assistance in material need, in these cases they are insured by the state. The consequence of the existence of health insurance debts is the impossibility of providing the debtor with non-emergency health care<sup>92</sup>, with certain exceptions<sup>93</sup>.

Regular care for chronic diagnoses is absent, and long-term care for residential treatment of addictions, etc. is not reimbursed and therefore not provided. It is therefore necessary to pay due attention to this area.

The exclusion of debtors from the full range of health care services results in the long-term absence of debtors from the use of primary health care services, thus creating a situation where they are not provided with prevention, early diagnosis and treatment of diseases, which subsequently lead to the development of complications, deterioration of health and premature mortality. It also creates mistrust in the 'system' amongst a medically vulnerable population,

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<sup>92</sup> Except in the cases defined in Section 9 of Act No 580/2004 Coll. on health insurance and on amendment and supplementation of Act No 95/2002 Coll. on insurance and on amendment and supplementation of certain acts, as amended. Thus, full health care may be provided, for example, to a debtor who has been granted instalment payments by a health insurance company and who pays the instalments in accordance with the terms agreed with the insurance company; from whom the insurance premiums due are recovered in enforcement proceedings and paid by instalments; whose property has been declared bankrupt or who has been granted a restructuring

<sup>93</sup> Pursuant to Section 2 of Act No 576/2004 Coll. on health care, services related to the provision of health care and on amendment and supplementation of certain acts, as amended by later regulations, health care provided to a person in the event of a sudden change in his or her state of health which immediately threatens his or her life or one of his or her basic life functions, which without prompt provision of health care, may seriously endanger his or her health, which causes him or her sudden and excruciating pain, or which causes a sudden change in his or her behaviour and actions under the influence of which he or she immediately endangers himself or herself or his or her surroundings; the examination and treatment of a person identified as a possible source of a rapidly spreading and life-threatening infection.

with no outreach when education or health interventions are needed. There is also the problem of the use of costly and complex emergency care, usually hospitalizations, as emergency care, repeatedly, in a period when complications and deterioration of health status occur due to long neglected and untreated health problems. Borrowers are not treated in the outpatient sector, are excluded from dispensary care and subsequent long-term care, and are unable to have long-term medications prescribed for chronic conditions. Ultimately, borrowers' deteriorating health ultimately further reduces their ability to repay their debts and to contribute again to the health insurance system and economic activity. All of this contributes to preventable and cumulative deterioration in health, increased social, economic and employment difficulties, and loss of housing or inability to obtain and maintain housing. People without a home without full access to health care are thus increasingly falling into an intractable situation where deteriorating health makes it impossible for them to deal effectively with health insurance debts.

Finally, a barrier to access of people without a home access to emergency care is the lack of post-discharge follow-up opportunities after hospitalisation. In such a case, the person may receive care in a social services facility with nursing care provided or arranged, but this depends on a number of other circumstances, such as the availability of capacity in the facility, the outcome of a social services dependency procedure, or substance dependency, or the absence of an ID card, all of which can be barriers to admission. The sick and people without a home are therefore usually clustered in shelters, which are understaffed and underfunded and do not provide nursing or care. At the same time, social services cannot be provided in an institution to a natural person whose health condition requires inpatient health care in a health care facility<sup>94</sup>. Crisis intervention social service facilities cannot substitute for health care facilities and the person placed in them must be self-supporting and independently functioning.

The issue of accessible care for people without a home after the end of hospitalisation is also closely related to one of the proposed objectives of the Concept in the area of assistance to people without a home in crisis situations after the loss of their home, which is access to 24-hour accommodation so that no homeless person has to use the services of a night shelter for more than 30 days or nights. Data on the number of people discharged from hospital care to

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<sup>94</sup>Section 61, paragraph (3) of Act No 448/2008 Coll. on social services and on amendment and supplementation of Act No 455/1991 Coll. on trade business (Trade Licensing Act), as amended.

crisis intervention social services and temporary accommodation for people without a home are not aggregated for the SR.

In addition to the barriers already identified, there is also a lack of systemic linkage to treatment and systemic work on multiple disadvantages such as homelessness, addictions, lack of supportive environment, unemployment, etc. A complication in this regard is again the fact that addiction treatment is not part of the emergency care, so that people who are debtors on health insurance, including people without a home, have virtually no access to it. In the same way as the 'Self-sufficiency Plan'<sup>95</sup> is set up, the system of transition from health to social care should be set up if the client has no background. This would reduce the risk of relapse.

Access to safe drinking water is an important health protection factor. Consumption of safe drinking water can prevent the onset or development of infectious diseases, in particular, but also others such as cancer. From a hygiene point of view, drinking water is an important tool for health protection and, at the same time, it is a tool for protecting the health of workers who provide health care to people without a home without proper hygiene. Providing information on the need to consume safe drinking water, on the health risks and consequences in terms of consuming water that does not meet safe water criteria is another tool to protect the health of people without a home. Other tools to protect the health of people without a home, and at the same time those who come into contact with them, are the preparations for the implementation of measures to ensure the supply of safe drinking water and obtaining up-to-date information on the number of people and areas without access to drinking water.

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<sup>95</sup> Section 55(2) of Act No 305/2005 on social protection of children and social guardianship and on amendments to certain acts, as amended, reads as follows: “*Care pursuant to paragraph 1 may be provided to a young adult until the young adult becomes self-sufficient, up to a maximum age of 25 years. Self-sufficiency for the purposes of this Act is the provision of housing and the ability to be self-supporting. The centre shall agree in writing with the young adult the terms and conditions of the young adult’s stay at the centre. The written agreement shall include a plan to prepare the young adult for self-sufficiency. If, for reasons on the part of the centre, the centre does not agree with the young adult on the terms of their stay in the centre, it shall, within seven days of the date of receipt of the request referred to in paragraph 1, inform them in writing of the reasons for not concluding the agreement.*”



## 5.4 Employment

The purpose of promoting the employment and labour inclusion of PwH is primarily to end homelessness and promote their social inclusion. People without a home face a number of significant barriers to accessing the labour market, are multiply disadvantaged in the labour market and need intensive specific support. The most significant barriers to unemployment for PwH are low educational attainment or age disadvantage. This is confirmed by the findings of the research and census on PwH in Bratislava, according to which people aged between 25 and 49 years (51%) were mainly employed. Both the younger age category 18-24 years (38%) and the older age category 50-64 years (21%) were worse off in terms of the incidence of paid work.

Other barriers are specifically related to homelessness. These include the absence of stable housing with basic amenities, the problems associated with entering and remaining on the job seeker's register and other administrative barriers, such as the obligation to be available to the COLSAF for a job offer within three working days of being invited<sup>96</sup>, the existence of debts as a serious barrier to finding employment, often adverse health conditions, and, until recently, the very limited possibilities for gradually reacquiring work skills in a social economy environment.

At the same time, when increasing access of PwH to the labour market, it is necessary to promote the linking<sup>97</sup> of social and employment services in a systemic way, so that the rights and obligations of these persons in the performance of work take into account their real possibilities. By default, in employment, employees are largely expected to perform their work on a regular basis within the agreed working hours, which is a demanding requirement for people without a home. The Labour Code, on the other hand, has many flexible tools to make the process of work adaptation suitable for people with weak or absent work habits. One of the examples can be found in Act No 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts, as amended (hereinafter referred to as the

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<sup>96</sup> Several active labour market measures target primarily registered long-term unemployed job seekers. However, PwH who are unemployed are largely not registered as job seekers - of the 11% of the unemployed, only 4.2% of people without a home counted in the institutions were registered as job seekers, including the condition of local affiliation when contacting the OLSAF.

<sup>97</sup> The coexistence of a social service provider within the meaning of Act No 448/2008 Coll. on Social Services and on amendment and supplementation of Act No 455/1991 Coll. on Trade Enterprise (Trade Licensing Act) as amended (hereinafter referred to as the "Social Services Act") and a registered social enterprise within the meaning of Act No 112/2018 Coll. on Social Economy and Social Enterprises and on amendment and supplementation of certain acts as amended, is not possible under the current wording of the acts in question.

Employment Services Act), such as temporary assignment through the use of the services of the Temporary Employment Agency (TEA)<sup>98</sup>. However, it is questionable whether ADA is an addressable tool for PwH, as their use does not guarantee support to people in need. TEAs are about the temporary assignment of a specific employee to a specific position and thus flexibility as well as the creation of work habits in a specific environment is less present. The legislative framework for the implementation of active labour market measures (ALMMs), which are also applicable in supporting the employment of people without a home, is the Employment Services Act. Employment services are a system of institutional instruments to support and assist labour market participants in finding a job, changing jobs, filling vacancies and applying ALMMs, with particular regard to the employment of disadvantaged job seekers (JSs). Employment services in the territory of the Slovak Republic are provided by the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (the COLSAF Central Office) and local competent Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (the OLSAF), legal entities and natural persons who provide employment mediation, provide professional advisory services and apply ALMMs on the basis of a written agreement concluded with the COLSAF Central Office or on the basis of a written agreement concluded in partnership under Section 10 of the Employment Services Act, legal entities and natural persons who provide employment mediation for a fee, a temporary employment agency and an agency of assisted employment.

Even possibly trivial obstacles, such as the absence of a bank account, existing foreclosures, a one-off payday or the loss of an identity document or an insurance card, hinder people without a home from being employed in a normal way. Thus, they often opt for illegal employment, which does not provide stability but is more flexible to their current needs - payment "in hand", in cash, after one day worked or once a week, etc.

The role of Active Labour Market Policy (ALMP) is primarily to create space for facilitating and shortening the transition of citizens from unemployment to employment or self-employment, and to maintain and increase people's ability to work and find a place in the labour market through specific programmes. APTP is implemented through measures, programmes, projects and activities that facilitate access of JSs to the labour market, including through ALMMs instruments, especially for disadvantaged JSs. ALMMs also assist the development of entrepreneurship and self-employment, support the growth of professional

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<sup>98</sup> Section 29 of Act No 5/2004 Coll. on employment services and on amendment and supplementation of certain acts, as amended (Employment Services Act).

competences of both JSs and employees, support the creation of new jobs and the retention of existing jobs and employees in these supported jobs, and also support employers.

At the same time, supported employment services - time-limited services provided to disabled and long-term unemployed citizens to obtain and maintain employment in the open labour market - have great potential in promoting employment of PwH. According to the Employment Services Act, these services include the identification of the abilities and professional skills of disabled and long-term unemployed citizens with regard to the requirements of the labour market, the search for suitable employment, expert advice on obtaining and keeping a job, as well as expert advice to the employer on adjusting working conditions and solving any difficulties the client may have in employment. These are provided by supported employment agencies, but not yet explicitly for PwH, but only if they are long-term unemployed or disabled. Their main benefit for this target group is to provide advice and support in finding a job, as well as training or resolving difficulties with the employer once they have started a job, which can alleviate the mutual fears of both employers and people without a home about not being able to cope with the demands of the job. In addition, in the conditions of the Slovak Republic, the services of supported employment agencies are undersized; as of 31 December 2021, according to the data of the COLSAF Central Office, only 21 agencies were actively carrying out such activities, including 7 in the Bratislava self-governing region, 4 in the Žilina region, 3 in the Banská Bystrica region, 3 in the Košice region, 2 in the Prešov region, 1 in the Nitra region, 1 in the Trnava region, and 1 in the Košice region. There is none in the Trenčín self-governing region. It is therefore necessary to resolve the issue of systemic and sustainable financing of the activities of supported employment agencies.

At the same time, the development of the social economy can significantly help the access to the labour market for a part of PwH. The legislative framework in this respect is the Social Economy Act. This law defines the social economy as a set of productive, distributive or consumer activities carried out through economic or non-economic activities, independently of the state authorities, the main objective of which is to achieve a positive social impact, whereby the social enterprise must use more than 50% of its profits to achieve a positive social impact, among other things. In the case of the integration type of registered social enterprise, the positive social impact is the promotion of employment through the employment of disadvantaged or vulnerable persons. The integration enterprise is obliged by

the Social Economy Act to employ at least 30% of its total workforce of disadvantaged and/or vulnerable persons. A disadvantaged person is also defined by the Act as a person who has not been employed and who does not have to be registered as a job seeker, and who must also meet the other conditions set out in the Social Economy Act, such as having attained a lower level of education, being over 50 years of age, being under 26 years of age, etc. Vulnerable persons include, e.g. recipients of social services, persons in an unfavourable social situation and others<sup>99</sup>.

The Act also sets out the forms of support that may be provided to social enterprises. The actual contribution of the social economy to promoting the employment of people without a home will also depend on the provision of this support.

People without a home are a vulnerable group who may be objectively more susceptible to some forms of abuse in employment opportunities. For this reason, it is essential that this group is protected from, for example, illegal employment or other types of abuse in the labour market, which can ultimately have a positive impact on all sections of the population of the Slovak Republic.

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<sup>99</sup> Non-entrepreneurs whose monthly income does not exceed three times the amount of the minimum subsistence level for a natural person of full age according to a special regulation shall not be considered a vulnerable person for the purposes of an integrating registered social enterprise. A person without a home is a vulnerable person as a natural person in an unfavourable social situation according to Act No 112/2018 Coll. Of course, persons without a home may also have other disadvantages or vulnerabilities and thus be reclassified, but they are primarily considered in the sense of the above.

## 5.5 Social Security, Social Services and Social Protection

### 5.5.1 Eligible financial contributions, subsidies and other support

In Slovakia, the poverty line is not explicitly defined; it is expressed by the minimum subsistence level<sup>100</sup>, which is the focal point of social policy in this area, from which various social measures of the State are derived.

Most countries in the world have set benefits within their social policy to ensure basic survival. Slovakia, for example, has three dozen different financial payments for different types of recipients: material hardship assistance, which provides a material hardship allowance, a housing allowance, a protection allowance, an activation allowance or an allowance for a dependent child. In the context of family support in the Slovak Republic, one can mention, for example, child allowance or child maintenance, but here it is a state support for a certain life event, not a benefit to ensure basic living conditions for people who find themselves in a state of material need. There are also 17 types of cash allowances to compensate for the social consequences of severe disability, care allowances and others.

Within the framework of the State's social system, financial contributions to support the maintenance of housing are an important instrument for preventing the loss of housing. In the Slovak Republic, this is a **housing allowance** provided as part of the aid for material need. According to Section 14 of Act No 417/2013 Coll. on aid in material distress and on amendments and supplements to certain acts, as amended, the owner or tenant who is a member of a household receiving aid in material distress is entitled to a housing allowance if he or she duly pays the costs of all services related to housing (e.g. rent, property tax, municipal waste fee) or if the home owner is in arrears with the payment of the costs of housing-related services, he or she shall submit an instalment agreement and a certificate of proper fulfilment of the instalment plan. In relation to people without a home, the housing benefit can be of great importance in preventing homelessness or avoiding homelessness and eviction. It also has the potential to be an effective tool to support housing retention once housing has been regained. Housing benefit is part of material hardship assistance, which means that only those claimants who are receiving material hardship assistance are eligible for it, subject to other criteria being met. Currently, a household member in material need is entitled to housing benefit if he or she is the owner or co-owner of a flat, the owner or co-owner of a family house, a tenant of a flat, a tenant of a family house or a tenant of a living

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<sup>100</sup> Act No 601/2003 Coll. on the minimum subsistence level and on amending and supplementing certain acts

room in an establishment intended for permanent housing, or lives in a flat or a family house on the basis of the right of lifetime occupancy. Entitlement to the housing allowance shall also arise if the recipient of social services lives in a supported housing facility, a facility for the elderly, a social services home or a specialised facility with year-round residence, a shelter, a halfway house, an emergency housing facility or a crisis centre. **Although the housing allowance, according to the applicable eligibility criteria and the amount of the allowance, cannot by itself solve the problem of homelessness, it is one of the basic tools that the state can use to increase the availability of housing for its inhabitants in a targeted and effective manner. The housing allowance can be used as a tool to increase the accessibility of housing for its inhabitants. However, its current set-up does not reflect the trend of the deteriorating socio-economic situation in Slovakia and does not at all address the problems of people experiencing homelessness and living in deep poverty, and its framing in relation to material hardship benefits limits its use significantly. On the other hand, there is an equal need to promote the supply of affordable rental housing.**

A one-off financial contribution in the form of a lump sum can also be an effective form of financial assistance for people without a home in material need. The **one-off benefit** is intended to partially cover the extraordinary expenses of household members receiving assistance in material need. It serves in particular to provide essential clothing, linen, footwear, essential household equipment (bed, table, chair, refrigerator, stove, cooker, heater, fuel, washing machine, duvet, bed linen, ordinary kitchen utensils), exceptional medical expenses or school supplies. The provision of aid for material hardship and the provision of a one-off material hardship allowance are not mutually exclusive. The granting of the one-off material hardship allowance shall be decided by the municipality in which the members of the household receiving the material hardship allowance reside. The one-off benefit may be granted on a one-off basis up to the amount of proven actual expenses, up to a maximum of three times the amount of the minimum subsistence level for a natural person of full age.

A non-requestable form of aid that can serve to prevent the loss of housing is the subsidy for the support of humanitarian aid, provided on the basis of Section 9 of Act No 544/2010 Coll. on subsidies within the competence of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic, as amended. This subsidy is intended to support the solution of a crisis living situation or an extremely unfavourable social situation, which in some cases may result in the loss of housing. However, this subsidy is targeted only at persons who find themselves

in an unfavourable situation suddenly and unexpectedly due to the loss of the breadwinner, the onset of a serious illness or a natural disaster and does not serve to support the solution of a long-term unfavourable social situation, where material hardship assistance is an adequate form of assistance. If a person suddenly finds themselves in a situation where they are at risk of losing their housing, a subsidy of up to EUR 800 may be provided, e.g. also for the purpose of paying rent. Persons who suddenly find themselves in difficulty can therefore be greatly helped to overcome a difficult period and to maintain their housing. However, the applicant for the subsidy must also meet the conditions laid down in Act No 523/2004 Coll. on budgetary rules of the public administration and on amendments and additions to certain acts, as amended (e.g. no debt to the health or social insurance company).

Assistance for particularly vulnerable groups of the population, including PwH, is also provided in Slovakia through the measures of the **Operational Programme of Food and Basic Material Assistance - OP FEAD (Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived)**<sup>101</sup>, which include the distribution of food and hygiene parcels to selected groups of beneficiaries in material need, the provision of hot meals to the homeless or also support for the distribution of donated food in order to prevent significant food wastage. This particular form of assistance helps people or households in a difficult social situation. First of all, the intention is to reduce their economic burden of providing basic commodities such as food and basic hygiene items. The provision of food and material assistance to the most deprived, i.e. groups at risk of material and nutritional deprivation, is planned to continue to be targeted through the distribution of food parcels, the provision of hot meals, the distribution of hygiene parcels and the distribution of basic material assistance. The above activities will be complemented by accompanying measures, in particular social counselling or other professional activities to prevent the emergence of crisis situations in the family, and to reduce and mitigate or eliminate their negative habits and influences or the behaviour of the final beneficiaries.<sup>102</sup>

### 5.5.2 Social Services

Within the framework of ensuring the basic life needs of a person in an unfavourable social situation, the types and forms of assistance are defined by the **Social Services Act**. This Act

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<sup>101</sup> <https://www.employment.gov.sk/sk/rodinasocialna-pomoc/operacny-program-potravinovej-zakladnej-materialnej-pomoci/>

<sup>102</sup> Priority 'food and material deprivation', specific objective 'to address material deprivation through food and/or basic material assistance for the most deprived persons, including children, and the provision of accompanying measures to promote their social inclusion'.

regulates legal relations in the provision of social services, the financing of social services and control activities in matters of social services.

Crisis intervention social services provided through outreach<sup>103</sup> are often at the beginning of the process of ending homelessness, as they involve finding people in critical situations or contacting people who do not use services provided in other ways. Therefore, special attention needs to be paid to promoting their accessibility<sup>104</sup>. If a person is in an unfavourable social situation (threat of social exclusion or limitation of the individual's ability to socially integrate and independently solve his/her problems) due to loss of housing or threat of loss of housing, then it is necessary to provide all dimensions of homelessness, starting with basic subsistence needs, but this is beyond the scope of social services as such.

The provision of social services of crisis intervention or their provision is within the divided competence of municipalities and higher territorial units, depending on the type of social service, according to the Social Services Act. The municipality is obliged by the Act to draw up and approve a community plan for social services, and it is also within its original competence to establish a night shelter (Section 25), a low-threshold day centre (Section 24b) and a crisis intervention field social service (Section 24a) and to provide or arrange for these social services. A higher territorial unit shall establish or found an integration centre (Section 24c), a shelter (Section 26), a halfway house (Section 27) and an emergency housing facility (Section 29). Other social services applicable to preventing and ending homelessness include so-called support services: a canteen (Section 58), a laundry (Section 59), a personal hygiene centre (Section 60) and support for independent living (Section 57). Only social services related to homelessness are listed, not all social services as such.

The provision of crisis intervention social services includes the provision of conditions for the satisfaction of basic living needs, i.e. the provision of accommodation, food, necessary clothing, footwear and essential basic personal hygiene, as well as the provision of professional activities, in particular social counselling, assistance in the exercise of rights and

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<sup>103</sup>Under Act No. 448/2008 Coll. on social services and amendment and supplementation of Act No 455/1991 Coll. on Trade Enterprise (Trade Licensing Act), as amended, such services are considered to be field social service of crisis intervention (Section 24a), community centre (Section 24d), low-threshold social service for children and family (Section 28),

<sup>104</sup> The number of registered social service providers under Section 24a (outreach social service for crisis intervention) in Slovakia was 62 in 2019. This is a slight increase compared to 2016 (41 registered providers). In the case of low-threshold day centres, there has been no change over the years. For the number of 79 district towns and the rest of the Slovak Republic, the given situation is unsatisfactory. Source: [https://ivpr.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/plnenie\\_nar\\_priorit\\_rozvoja\\_soc\\_sluzieb\\_analyza\\_repkova\\_2020.pdf](https://ivpr.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/plnenie_nar_priorit_rozvoja_soc_sluzieb_analyza_repkova_2020.pdf).



legally protected interests, the development of work skills and assistance in finding employment, and the creation of conditions for other activities, in particular leisure activities. In Slovakia, as of 3Q/2022, there are 1 248 beds registered in night shelters and 2 519 beds in shelters, 684 beds in Emergency Housing Facilities and 225 in Halfway Houses.

Region	social services provided by a <b>public</b> provider	capacity	social services provided by a <b>non-public</b> provider	capacity	total number of registered social services	total capacity
Bratislava Self-Governing Region	7	58	14	602	21	660
Trnava Self-Governing Region	11	184	9	159	20	343
Trenčín Self-Governing Region	17	341	5	146	22	487
Žilina Self-Governing Region	17	280	18	334	35	614
Nitra Self-Governing Region	12	218	10	212	22	430
Bánská Bystrica Self-Governing Region	9	160	22	419	31	579

Region						
Prešov Self-Governi ng Region	9	177	23	521	32	698
Košice Self-Governi ng Region	8	181	19	684	27	865
In total for Slovak Republi c					210	4676

**Table 1: Regional structure of selected residential crisis intervention social services (night shelter, shelter, halfway house and emergency housing facility)**

**Source:** Selected data from the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic soc-1-01

In the case of measures to maintain housing, an important social service is also *the support for independent living* (Section 57). It is a social service aimed, in particular at assistance in running a household, money management, support in organising time, participation in social and working life, support for the development of personal interests, prevention and resolution of crisis situations, support for socially appropriate behaviour. It provides social counselling, assistance in exercising rights and legally protected interests, and preventive activities and social rehabilitation.

The setting of individual levels of prevention in terms of social services is their incorporation into the Concepts for the Development of Social Services of individual higher territorial units, which are based on individual community plans of social services of municipalities. The National Priorities for the Development of Social Services for 2021-2030, which are developed and approved by the MoLSAF SR, are the supporting document for the above two levels.

In application practice, it is not possible to bring local governments to establish social services in their original competence, but even so, in some types of social service facilities for

crisis intervention it would be beneficial to have a minimum network covering the entire territory of the Slovak Republic. In the field of social services, one of the main challenges in ending homelessness is the lack of integration and coordination of social services for people without a home. The non-public providers of social care, who are elementary players in the work with people without a home, have an important role to play in the provision of services to people without a home.

The second challenge is the long-term persistence of people without a home in crisis and transitional housing within the crisis intervention social services system, due to the lack of affordable rental housing. Another challenge is the underdevelopment of housing support services, which is also related to the fact that housing as a first step projects in the Slovak Republic have so far been implemented only on a small scale and in the pilot testing phase.

Similarly, there is support for financing the construction of social service facilities for crisis intervention, primarily facilities providing 24-hour accommodation, and support for existing facilities in order to remedy disrepair and substandard conditions in terms of safety.

In the Slovak Republic, a model of multi-source financing of social services is currently applied<sup>105</sup>. The table below shows all sources of funding for crisis intervention social services facilities. In 2021, revenues from public sources accounted for the majority of the total revenues of night shelters, with the contribution provided by the MoLSAF SR to the night shelter being the most significant. For other facilities, the most significant representation of resources provided by municipal/local government budgets is visible, above 50%.

**Table 2: Share of public resources in the financing of social services for crisis intervention in 2021**

	Emergency housing facilities		Refuge		Night shelters		Halfway home	
	Amount (EUR)	Share (%)	Amount (EUR)	Share (%)	Amount (EUR)	Share (%)	Amount (EUR)	Share (%)
<b>Total revenue</b>	4,162,204	100	10,284,736	100	4,111,433	100	909,331	100
<b>Revenue from the state budget</b>	638,800	15.3	443,815	4.3	166,553	4	29,996	3.3
<b>Contribution of</b>	396,838	9.5	1,890,723	18.4	3,101,563	75.4	9,697	1.1

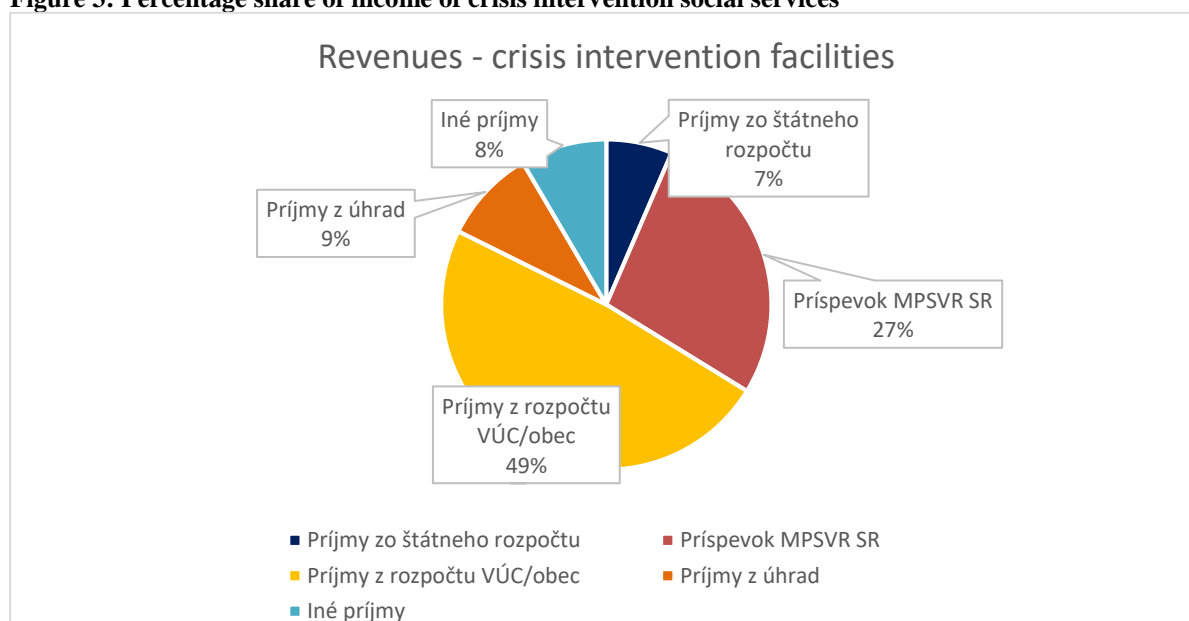
<sup>105</sup> For more details, see e.g. Report on the social situation of the population of the Slovak Republic for 2017, p. 103. Available at: <https://www.employment.gov.sk/sk/ministerstvo/vyskum-oblasti-prace-socialnych-veci-institut-socialnej-politiky/spravy-socialnej-situacii-obyvatelstva-slovenskej-republiky.html>

<b>MoLSAF SR</b>								
<b>Budget of the municipality /local authority</b>	2,344,628	56.3	6,124,363	59.5	497,998	12.1	630,226	69.3
<b>Other income<sup>106</sup></b>	712,539	17.1	677,095	6.6	160,386	3.9	122,216	13.4
<b>Reimbursements for care<sup>107</sup></b>	202,930	4.9	1,239,141	12	250,064	6.1	131,517	14.5

Source: Selected data from the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic soc-1-01

The percentage share of public resources in the financing of social service facilities for crisis intervention (emergency housing, shelter, night shelter and halfway house) can be seen in the graphic below.

Figure 3: Percentage share of income of crisis intervention social services



Source: MoLSAF SR, 2022

Looking at a broader time period, between 2010 and 2019, the expenditure of facilities providing social services for crisis intervention increased 1.9-fold, from €7.7 million to €14.7

<sup>106</sup> Other revenue includes: income from health insurance companies; income from the private sector and the sector of non-profit institutions serving households; income from domestic and foreign grants (including EU funds), donations, collections and others.

<sup>107</sup>Reimbursement from a social service client for the care provided

million<sup>108</sup>. At the same time, in the period 2014-2019, the funds spent on these services from the state budget through contributions provided by the MoLSAF SR have also increased, from €2,497,680 to €2,833,141 (by 13.4%). On the other hand, the share of these funds in the total expenditure of facilities has been decreasing, from 28.30% in 2014 to 19.24% in 2019. This situation was due to the establishment of a fixed amount per place in the establishment per month, which has not been indexed for several years. As of January 2022, an amendment to the Social Services Act came into force which increased this amount, from €150 per place in a facility per month to €250 (from €120 to €250 in the case of night shelters).

The current system of financing social services of crisis intervention does not take into account the specificities and additional costs associated with their provision for selected groups of people without a home, e.g. services provided in a low-threshold way for PwH with a high need for complex assistance, or services for PwH with (long-term) impaired health.

### **5.5.3 Social and Legal Protection of Children and Social Guardianship**

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 18 of Act No 305/2005 Coll. on social protection of children and social guardianship and on amendment and supplementation of certain acts, as amended (hereinafter referred to as the “Act on SLPoCSG”), the SLPoCSG authority (COLSAF) carries out social guardianship measures for adult natural persons (hereinafter referred to as “FANPs”), in particular after release from imprisonment or detention, if the person is a participant in probation or mediation, if he/she abuses or uses drugs, after the termination of institutional care or protective education after reaching the age of majority, if he/she has been released from a health care institution for the treatment of drug addictions or other addictions, if he/she has been released from a facility for the re-socialisation of drug addicts, if he/she requests assistance in dealing with an adverse life situation.

Social probation measures for FANPs in relation to the resolution of problems of PwH can help in particular to prevent situations where a FANP finds himself/herself homeless, as the assistance of the social probation officer is concentrated mainly in the period after release, most often from prison/jail, detention, a centre for children and families with a resocialisation programme, or after the end of protective institutional treatment, when the need for assistance is the most pronounced. However, it should be stressed that the social probation officer for a FANP has limited possibilities to provide assistance to FANPs in terms of resolving their

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<sup>108</sup> Data from the Social Situation Report 2020

housing situation - providing information and advice on available social assistance, social services, employment opportunities, public rental housing, the Social Fund for Housing Development and other tools.

In 2020/2021, social probation measures for FANPs have been implemented for a total of 5 396 FANPs (of which 609 women) / 5 988 FANPs (of which 770 women). For the above target group, the measures have been implemented mainly due to: release from imprisonment for 2,975/2,997 FANPs, conditional release from imprisonment for 681/740 FANPs, release from detention for 221/230 FANPs, assistance in dealing with adverse life situations for 282/663 FANPs, participation in a resocialisation programme in a CCF for 454/461 FANPs, completion of a resocialisation programme in CCF for 197/207 FANPs, drug abuse or dependence for 328/510 FANPs, assistance in finding housing for 48/119 FANPs or assistance in finding employment for 44/192 FANPs.

**Table 3: Number of social welfare measures implemented by reason in 2020 and 2021**

Cause	Number of FANPs in 2020	Number of FANPs in 2021
Release from imprisonment	2,975	2,997
Conditional release from imprisonment	681	740
Release from imprisonment	221	230
Help in dealing with an adverse life situation	282	663
Participation in a resocialisation programme in the CCF	454	461
Completion of the resocialisation programme in the CCF	197	207
Help in dealing with drug abuse or dependence	328	510
Help in finding housing	48	119
Job search assistance	44	192

**Source:** MoLSAF SR, 2022

The provision of social welfare assistance to FANPs is mainly set up to support the social integration/reintegration (housing - education - employment) of the FANP, subject to his/her active participation and on the basis of a social work plan with the FANP. In this context, cooperation with the municipality and the accredited entity is necessary for the effective implementation of social probation measures for FANPs. Interaction with the local government (municipality) is particularly important in this respect, as the COLSAF offices always need up-to-date information on all possibilities of assistance, including accommodation options for roofless people, so that they can correctly direct FANPs to a specific network of effective assistance. At the same time, there is a need to continue to

support and develop transit programs<sup>109</sup> that provide pre-release accompaniment to people in preparation for and after release from custody, in areas such as housing and job searches.

The social work plan for a child in a CCF includes a plan for the young adult's preparation for independence, drawn up at least one year before the child reaches the age of majority. Young people, after leaving the institution, are given special attention in the framework of the social curatorship for FANPs - and again, as a matter of priority, from a preventive point of view, since the aim is to prevent the actual situation where a young person finds himself or herself homeless after leaving the CCF. The social work plan for the child in the CCF includes a plan for the young adult's preparation for self-sufficiency, drawn up at least one year before the child reaches the age of majority. As part of the young adult's plan for self-sufficiency, the young adult is expected to make provision for his or her future living arrangements.

In 2020/2021, residential measures were implemented in the CCF for a total of 4,986/4,928 children and of these 992/993 were for children aged 15-18, 297/288 for young adults aged 18-25 and 4/3 for young people aged 25-27. There were 88/82 children aged 15-18 and 35/32 young adults (aged 18-25) placed in professional foster families out of a total of 1,426/1,401 children placed in professional foster families.

**Table 4: Number of children living in Child and Family Centres and professional foster families in 2020 and 2021**

	2020 persons aged 15-18	2021 persons aged 15-18	2020 persons aged 18-25	2021 persons aged 18-25	2020 persons aged 25-27	2021 persons aged 25-27
CCF - residential form	992	993	297	288	4	3
Professional substitute families	88	82	35	32		

Source: MoLSAF SR, 2022

3,560/3,527 children were placed in self-organised CCF groups of which 903/910 children aged 15-18 years - of which: 738/720 in a self-contained group, 73/75 children in a self-contained group for children with disabilities, 47/49 in a self-contained group for children with mental disorders, 10/18 in a self-contained group for unaccompanied minors, 7/18 in a self-contained group for minor mothers with children, 9/9 in a self-contained group for children with behavioural disorders, 14/2 in a self-contained group for children with

<sup>109</sup> This is currently the case in particular with the national project Opportunity to Return: <https://sancananavrat.sk/aktuality/>

behavioural disorders as a result of alcohol/drug use. Between the ages of 18-25, 262/255 young adults were placed in self-contained CCF groups - of which: 144/170 were cared for in a self-contained group for young adults the remainder in a self-contained group or a self-contained specialist group. Between the ages of 25-27 years, 4/3 young adults were cared for in a separate young adult group.

**Table 5: Number of people in self-contained CCF groups**

Self-contained CCF groups	Number of people in 2020	Number of people in 2021
Stand-alone group	738	720
Separate group for children with disabilities	73	75
Separate group for children with mental disorders	47	49
Separate group for unaccompanied minors	10	18
Separate group for minor mothers with children	7	18
Separate group for children with behavioural disorders	9	9
Separate group for children with behavioural problems due to alcohol/drug use	14	2

**Source:** MoLSAF SR, 2022

In 2020/2021, a total of 1,229/1,323 children - including 239/295 young adults over the age of 18 - of whom 218/267 young adults (of whom 20/28 young adults were subsequently placed in social services facilities) - had their care terminated by the CCF in 2020/2021.

In 2020/2021, a total of 1,086/1,070 young adults have been discharged from CCF care. Of this number, CCF has contact with 801/800 young people, which represents approx. 74% - this contact with CCF gradually decreases to 20% after the first year after the young adult leaves CCF care (statistically tracked up to 4 years after the young adult leaves the CCF). Based on this tracking, we can report that of the 801/800 young adults listed above, the CCF maintains contact with them after leaving care: 483/472 live in rented accommodation, 220/260 live with members of the original family, 73/56 live in their own accommodation and 25/12 young adults are unsheltered (approx. 3%/1.5%).

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 68 of the Act on SLPoCSG, a CCF provides a one-off allowance to the young adult (Section 65(b) of the Act on SLPoCSG) to facilitate the young adult’s self-sufficiency, namely to provide housing, housing-related matters and training for the young adult’s profession. The allowance to facilitate the young adult’s self-sufficiency



shall be granted in a set amount, up to a maximum of 10 times the amount of the minimum subsistence allowance for a dependent child, and shall be paid to the young adult on the day of his/her departure from the CCF, at the latest. The allowance to facilitate the young adult's self-sufficiency shall not be granted if, at the time of the termination of the court's residential measure on the young adult's coming of age, the young adult is staying outside the CCF without the Centre's consent, is serving a custodial sentence or is in detention. In 2020/2021, 238/273 young adults received this support, mainly in financial form and a relatively small amount in combined form (6/17), while the in-kind form remains unused (0/0).

According to Section 75(1)(e)(4) of the Act on SLPoCSG, the municipality provides the young adult with assistance in securing housing and employment after the end of alternative care, foster care and institutional care. And according to Section 75(1)(f)(2) of the Act on SLPoCSG, the municipality shall provide assistance to the institution or a CCF in ensuring the young adult's independence - to ensure housing, housing-related matters and the young adult's preparation for a profession.

According to the provisions of Section 55(2) of the Act on SLPoCSG, this care may be provided to the young adult until the reach of his/her self-sufficiency, up to a maximum age of 25 years. Section 69 of the Act on SLPoCSG, the municipality shall grant a young adult who has become entitled to a contribution pursuant to Section 68 a contribution for the young adult's self-sufficiency in the amount of 30% of the contribution if he/she applies for the contribution within 30 days after the end of the implementation of the measures, was permanently resident in the territory of the municipality at the time of his/her placement in the centre. The municipality may decide that the young adult's self-sufficiency allowance shall be granted in several instalments; the full amount of the allowance must be granted no later than six months after the decision becomes final. In 2020/2021, 107/144 young adults were granted this allowance, according to the available information.

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 55(1) of the SPODaSK Act, if the implementation of the court's residential measure in the centre ends when the child reaches the age of majority, the CCF shall, at the request of the young adult submitted within two years from the date of termination of the implementation of this measure, continue to provide care in a professional foster family, in a separately arranged group in which he/she was provided with care until reaching the age of majority, or in a separate group for young adults; this shall not apply if, on

reaching the age of majority, the educational measure or urgent measure has come to an end and no application for an order for institutional care has been made.

According to the provisions of Section 55(2) of the Act on SLPoCSG, this care may be provided to the young adult until the reach of his/her self-sufficiency, up to a maximum age of 25 years. Self-sufficiency for the purposes of this Act is the provision of housing and the ability to be self-supporting. The CCF shall agree in writing with the young adult the terms and conditions of the young adult's stay at the CCF. The written agreement shall include a plan to prepare the young adult for self-sufficiency.

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 55(3) of the Act on SLPoCSG, a young adult with a disability who is unable to become independent due to his/her state of health, after the end of the execution of the court's residential measure, upon reaching the age of majority, the CCF, in cooperation with the municipality, a higher territorial unit and a body for the social protection of children and social guardianship or an accredited entity, shall arrange for his/her admission to an institution of supported housing or another institution established pursuant to the Social Services Act, if the young adult is in need of the provision of such services. CCF continues to provide care if the young adult is unable, because of his or her disability, to request continued care and does not have a court-appointed guardian.

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 55(4) of the Act on SLPoCSG, the CCF may create conditions for the extension of the stay of a FANP who has been provided with care in the CCF pursuant to paragraph 1 until the age of 25, if he/she is continuously preparing for a profession. The maximum duration of this stay is 24 months - i.e. until the young adult reaches the age of 27.

Pursuant to Article 55(7) of the Act on SLPoCSG, the CCF maintains in contact with the young adult, with his/her consent, after he/she has left the CCF and provides him/her with the necessary counselling. A young adult who is unable to secure accommodation after the expiry of the application period referred to in paragraph 1 may be provided with residential care by the centre by written agreement, but not longer than until the young adult reaches the age of 25; the duration of residential care may not exceed 90 consecutive days in any 12 consecutive months.

## 5.6 Administration

The protection of the rights and legitimate interests of the PwH in the broadest sense of the term includes support for access and communication of the PwH with state and local government institutions, as well as the protection of other legitimate interests, e.g. employment, health care, housing or other interests, which may help to resolve the person's situation promptly or prevent it from deteriorating.

Access to public administration institutions for PwH is primarily related to the possibility of changing permanent residence, processing documents and the now common requirement to contact institutions according to local jurisdiction. The possibility to change permanent residence according to the place of habitual residence and the possibility to obtain an identity card are basic prerequisites for contact with most public administration institutions or for an access to routine health care. The place of residence determines, for example, an access to a general practitioner, the possibility of registering as a job seeker, and access to a number of other services that can help to alleviate the negative consequences of losing one's home. In general, municipalities often use this condition in the criteria for the allocation of rental housing (a document approved by the municipality, in the form of an ordinance or an internal standard), but it is not a legal requirement. Often, the municipality considers the applicant's actual residence in the municipality's territory to be decisive, rather than the condition of his/her permanent residence. Every citizen is obliged to declare his/her permanent residence, unless he/she is permanently residing abroad.

The aim of keeping a residence register is to ensure that there is no situation where a citizen has nowhere to declare his/her permanent residence or where he/she has nowhere to be served with a document from the public authorities. The residence registration offices ensure the delegated performance of the state administration in the field of residence reporting within the meaning of Act No 253/1998 Coll. on reporting the residence of citizens of the Slovak Republic and the population register of the Slovak Republic, as amended. As a rule, a citizen is to have his/her residence registered in the place of his/her permanent residence. A citizen has the right to apply for a change of permanent residence by fulfilling the legal conditions (e.g. ownership of the property, consent of all persons in ownership of the property to which the person concerned is applying). The declaration of residence to the municipality is considered to be the last resort to fulfil the condition of maintaining residence in the territory of the Slovak Republic in case the citizen is actually unable to declare his/her residence for a

specific property. In such a case, the address of the seat of the municipal office is the address of the citizen for the purposes of service of documents from public authorities and other state bodies and for the purposes of registration on the voters' list. Consequently, a citizen may apply for a change of domicile to any municipality in which he resides and is habitually resident, and it is not for the municipality to examine how often the citizen resides in the municipality. The discrepancy between the actual state of residence of citizens and the data contained in the population register has a negative impact on the redistribution of personal and corporate income tax resources to municipalities.

The issue of limited access of people without a home to public administration institutions due to the requirement of local affiliation is not only specific to the Slovak Republic, but is also discussed to varying degrees in a number of other European countries, for example, in connection with proving the place of permanent residence when accessing social services or social housing<sup>110</sup>. As an example of the complications arising from the condition of local jurisdiction in the Slovak Republic, one can mention contacting the OLSAF for the purpose of entering the register of job seekers. If a homeless citizen does not live in his/her place of permanent residence, he/she has to either travel for this purpose, sometimes repeatedly, e.g. due to the obligation to submit additional documents no later than 8 days after submitting the application for inclusion in the register. Or, if the circumstances allow, he/she must first change his/her permanent residence and process the ID card and contact the OLSAF to apply for registration only afterwards.

In the recent period marked by the pandemic, PwH have had to cope with a number of impossible measures - from the obligation to isolate themselves in the safety of their homes, to the obligation to be tested on the basis of proof of identity. Several of the measures taken were unenforceable for people without a home under threat of fines. In reality, this resulted in violations of unenforceable measures and the imposition of ultimately unenforceable fines. In addition to the likely unenforceability of these fines and the potential for foreclosure on unpaid fines, these people may subsequently be exposed to further problems and real complications in their attempts to integrate into mainstream life. This was particularly the case for PwH who had no contact with crisis intervention social services.

An indirectly related area is also the municipal charges of organisations working with PwH, e.g. waste collection charges. This was again evident during the pandemic, when these

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<sup>110</sup> European Observatory on Homelessness, 2015

organisations were often responsible for the collection of organic waste and this negatively affected their budgets. It is also important to note that if a citizen is resident in a municipality in which he does not reside and does not declare his long-term stay outside the city (more than 90 days per year), which must be supported by documents (working abroad, receiving residential services outside the city, studying, etc.), he/she incurs a debt in the place of residence for municipal waste disposal charges, which is multiplied by the number of years and by the fees of the enforcement procedure (the municipal waste charge is linked to the birth number, not to the address of the permanent residence).

Another barrier for PwH themselves is the fee for issuing an ID card. Administrative fees are regulated by the Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 145/1995 Coll. on Administrative Fees, as amended (item 22a). Issuance of the ID card after expiry of its validity is free of charge. If a citizen loses, damages or has stolen an identity card issued with a validity of 10 years, the administrative fee is €16,50. If the document is lost repeatedly, the amount together with the fine amounts to €33. In connection with the problematic change of the place of permanent residence and the processing of the ID card, the requirement to contact the authorities exclusively at the place of permanent or temporary residence is a challenge in the approach of the PwH to the institutions of the state administration.

Roofless people, especially people without a home sleeping rough, are also particularly vulnerable to criminals. This is particularly the case in the event of physical assault and threats to life - arson and other hate speech. 16.7% of people sleeping in the streets and 20.9% of people sleeping in abandoned buildings faced physical assault from the beginning of 2016 to the time of the homelessness census<sup>111</sup>. In the same period, 30.1% of people sleeping in the streets and 35.8% of people sleeping in abandoned buildings were robbed. However, currently, according to the legislation in force, Act No 274/2017 Coll. on victims of crime and on amendments and supplements to certain acts, as amended, homeless persons are not included in the group of particularly vulnerable victims of crime.

People without a home are often coerced by perpetrators into the role of a “white horse” through violence or manipulation. Such PwH become partners in limited liability companies (s.r.o.) and it is impossible to dissolve the business and delete it from the commercial register. These persons end up serving sentences for embezzlement, non-payment of taxes, etc. They

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<sup>111</sup> Research and census of people without a home in Bratislava in 2016

remain completely without financial resources, because as partners in the companies they are not even entitled to material hardship allowance. Another problem is trafficking in PwH, which is, however, very difficult to prove. Luring people into lucrative jobs, waiting outside social services with offers of work abroad, borrowing documents while they draw up a contract, etc.

## 5.7 Education and Public Sensitisation

It is important to use a non-stigmatising and human rights-based approach when sensitising the professional and lay public, as well as debunking current widespread myths. Experience abroad also shows that homelessness does not have to be an immutable problem in society; the key is also, among other things, e.g. stable and affordable housing<sup>112</sup>. In order to prevent homelessness, it is necessary to start working with young people already in primary and secondary schools and also in institutional settings - preparation for life after leaving centres for children and families, etc. Providing leisure activities, emphasising the importance of education, developing individual skills, working with “vulnerable groups of children” - children living in families where there is a poor social situation, suspected neglect, violence, identify or are identified with one of the marginalised groups in society (e.g. national, linguistic, religious).

Counselling and assisting young people in managing their finances could also be a key tool to help. Young people in difficult social circumstances are often victims of manipulative behaviour by entities profiting from offering easily accessible loans and becoming indebted to banks, telephone operators or other entities. Poverty and social exclusion tend to be interpreted primarily as the individual failure and laziness of people in crisis situations, making the public less sensitive to their need for help. Despite the great efforts made by NGOs in overcoming negative stereotypes of the PwH and despite the fact that the Social Services Act refers to a limited capacity (not inability) for social inclusion, adverse social circumstances, there are many challenges to be addressed in sensitising the public.

From the point of view of planning public policies aimed at preventing and ending homelessness, it is essential to know the baseline state of the problem addressed and to collect qualitative and quantitative data that allow the evaluation of changes and the impact of the measures taken.

People without a home, and roofless people in particular, are often subject to negative public perceptions. They are attributed with a lack of interest in dealing with their situation, abuse of assistance, problems with order or hygiene and poor living habits. It is therefore necessary to promote education of both the professional and the general public in communicating with and about people without a home. This applies especially to the staff of the OLSAF offices, the

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<sup>112</sup> Coalition for the Homeless. 2022. Available at: <https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/myths-and-facts/>

staff of the social departments of the local authorities and the medical staff, the police force, as these professionals can have a great influence on the further development of the situation of specific PwH, for example, by their decision on the form of their assistance. Also, many of the planned projects to help PwH are unsuccessful not only because of the reluctance of the aforementioned entities, but also because of the lack of support from MPs, mayors and mayors of local authorities. For this reason, it is necessary to prevent prejudice against PwH among these workers and to raise their awareness of the circumstances that lead to homelessness. It is also advisable to inform these staff about possible solutions, to prepare them for contact with PwH based on respect and to avoid judgemental, lecturing and demeaning attitudes. An effective form of education can be a cooperation with social service providers who, on the basis of their experience of working with this group, can play the role of peer facilitators, particularly in the training of students in social work and health professions.



## 5.8 Data and Statistics

A major barrier to tackling homelessness is the lack of relevant data on homelessness. An overview of currently available statistical data on people without a home in the Slovak Republic is presented in more detail in section 4.2 of the Concept Paper. PwH

Currently, there is no regular statistical survey on PwH in the Slovak Republic. There is also no accurate data on the size of the PwH group or the group of people according to the ETHOS homelessness and housing exclusion typology categories. This is partly due to the fact that PwH represent a ‘hidden population’ which is difficult to capture with a full survey. Thus, the absence of a data collection system greatly hinders coordinated action to address housing-related disadvantage. Nevertheless, a number of statistical surveys have been carried out in the Slovak Republic, which also provide data on the target group. These include, in particular, the 2011 and 2021 Census of Population and Housing, carried out by the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.<sup>113</sup> Due to the requirement of completeness of the population census and its nature, the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic in the preparation of the 2021 Census of Population and Housing (hereinafter referred to as “2021 CPH”) paid increased attention to specific population groups and population groups whose census for various reasons required a specific approach. People without a home were considered to be such a population group. Prior to the census itself, a need was identified to deepen the knowledge of this population group with a view to setting up procedures that would facilitate their enumeration and ensure that the required data of the required quality were obtained. For the 2021 CPH itself, the homeless population could be enumerated during the self-census or with the help of a stationary/mobile assistant during the assisted enumeration. At the same time, municipalities were also obliged to contact all facilities in their territory that provide services to homeless residents (regardless of their founder). This ensured, as far as possible, that the homeless population was counted. By linking the population to the dwellings in which they live, it will also be possible to populate with data some of the subcategories according to the ETHOS methodology, e.g. people using temporary accommodation in crisis intervention social service facilities (shelters, halfway houses), people in custodial or detention facilities, people living in non-standard dwellings that are not intended for permanent housing (caravans, trailers, shacks, garden huts, sheds, etc. ), people living in dwellings or settlements that are unfit for

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<sup>113</sup> For the purposes of the SODB, the term “people without a home” refers to residents of the Slovak Republic who frequently move between temporary accommodation or are registered for both permanent and current residence at the address of the municipal / local / city authority or at the municipality.

human habitation (according to building or hygiene regulations, etc.). 2021 CPH will therefore provide broader data capabilities to support decision-making in this area.

Some data on the size of the group of people at risk of losing their housing as well as people in substandard housing is offered by the EU SILC statistical survey, also conducted by the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic in a population-wide sample without a specific focus on PwH. In particular, the proportion of people living in households whose housing costs are higher than 40% of disposable income is measured annually. In 2018, the aforementioned survey was supplemented by an Ad-Hoc Module on Material Deprivation, Life Satisfaction and Housing Problems<sup>114</sup>, which, among other things, measured the prevalence of housing-related problems, their duration, causes and means of resolution.

At the local level, mapping the state of homelessness has been addressed, among others, by the Výskum a sčítanie ľudí bez domova (Homelessness Research and Census) in Bratislava in 2016, the Registračný týždeň ľudí bez domova (Homelessness Registration Week) in Nitra in 2021, and the Registračný týždeň rodín v bytovej núdzi (Registration Week of Families in Housing Need) in Košice in 2021. To a lesser extent, administrative data are also available in the framework of the reports on the social situation of the population, which are processed annually by the Institute of Social Policy of the MoLSAF SR, concerning the recipients of social services, including social services of crisis intervention, which will also be available in the coming period from the resources of the Information System of Social Services. The fact is, that administrative data are not yet collected on various forms of hidden homelessness, such as temporary accommodation with relatives and acquaintances due to the absence of own housing (ETHOS-8), or living in overcrowded housing (ETHOS-13). For example, the database of beneficiaries of material assistance has potential in this respect, as the application for material assistance<sup>115</sup> also identifies the housing situation of the applicant. Social service providers also have their own data, which are currently as well a valuable source of information (however, they only tell us about one group of people without a home using social services) and the aforementioned local authorities.

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<sup>114</sup> Eurostat (2018): EU-SILC Ad-Hoc Module: Material deprivation, well-being and housing difficulties Assessment of the implementation. March 2020. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/1012329/8706724/2018+EU-SILC+module\\_assessment.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/1012329/8706724/2018+EU-SILC+module_assessment.pdf)

<sup>115</sup> The application form is available at: [https://www.upsvr.gov.sk/buxus/docs/SSVaR/tlaciva/ziadost\\_o\\_pomoc\\_v\\_hmotnej\\_nudzi.pdf](https://www.upsvr.gov.sk/buxus/docs/SSVaR/tlaciva/ziadost_o_pomoc_v_hmotnej_nudzi.pdf)

## 6. Specific Objectives and Proposals for Action

### Global objective

- ❖ **To end homelessness in Slovakia by 2030 so that: - no one is sleeping rough due to lack of accessible, safe and adequate emergency accommodation; - no one stays in emergency or transitional accommodation longer than is necessary for a successful transition to permanent housing; - no one is released from prison, hospital, social services facility or other institution without being offered suitable housing; - forced evictions are prevented as far as possible and, if they do occur, assistance is made available to secure suitable housing if necessary; - no one is discriminated against because they are homeless.**

The essence of ending homelessness in the context of an integrated strategy is that every homeless person should have the opportunity, with appropriate support, to address their situation, obtain affordable housing and integrate into life within a reasonable period of time.

In the context of the Slovak Republic, the above understanding of ending homelessness as a set of measures aimed at supporting people without a home to regain and maintain housing and preventing people at risk from losing their homes represents a new approach to tackling homelessness. On the one hand, many of the existing measures to help homeless people have not even explicitly focused on this target group. At the same time, they have not been clearly targeted and systemically linked. Limited access to housing, or the lack of affordable rental housing and the consequent impossibility of linking it to social services for crisis intervention, has the effect of perpetuating rather than ending homelessness.

There are a number of arguments in favour of an integrated strategy to end homelessness: the starting point for ending homelessness is the promotion and implementation of fundamental human rights.

## 6.1 Prevention

### Specific objective:

- ❖ **To create a functional homelessness prevention system which, through individual measures, will reduce the number of people at risk of homelessness**

The integrated model for preventing and ending homelessness is a coherent set of measures in different sectors leading to ending homelessness, implemented on the basis of a systematic cooperation of all relevant actors.

The structure of the integrated model for preventing and ending homelessness is based on a combination of three time-bound homelessness situations and different areas of assistance that are more strongly linked to one or more of these situations. The time-bound situations are:

- Prevention of homelessness for people at risk of housing loss;
- The period immediately after housing loss<sup>116</sup>;
- Obtaining affordable or supported housing - and the associated help to maintain housing.

Systematic cooperation and coordination of all relevant actors at both national and municipal level is also essential for the implementation of an integrated model and the achievement of the objectives of preventing and ending homelessness. However, the Slovak Republic still lacks a coordination mechanism that would support such cooperation and whose role would also be to ensure monitoring and updating of the implementation of the objectives and measures of the Concept. In this respect, it is necessary to create a separate apparatus for the coordination and implementation of measures to prevent and end homelessness and the other objectives set out in the Platform.

### Measures:

- Creation of a separate supra-ministerial unit to coordinate and implement measures aimed at preventing and ending homelessness in the Slovak Republic, taking into account the objectives set out in the Lisbon Declaration on the European Platform to Combat Homelessness;

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<sup>116</sup> For example as a result of a natural disaster which could not have been prevented by homelessness prevention measures

- Identifying and contacting the target group based on the recognition of risk factors that may lead to housing loss - defining a homeless person and a person at risk of housing loss;
- Supporting outreach programs and outreach social service crisis intervention to locate and contact persons at risk of housing loss or experiencing homelessness and early detection of households at risk of housing loss, at risk of disproportionate debt, including in relation to energy providers;
- Establishing a system of support to maintain the original housing (e.g. financial support through a new separate state benefit, or modification of an existing one - housing benefit);
- Creating registers of supply of free social housing (in public rental housing);
- Financial support for the opening of housing focal points in all cities with a population of over 30,000 inhabitants;
- Exploring the possibility of introducing a mechanism to inform debtors about the possibility of (debt) counselling in the respective municipality / explore the possibility of informing the municipality about the risk of losing housing and eviction of one of their residents;
- Support services for dealing with (including social or financial counselling);
- Support in acquiring the basic skills needed for independent living;
- Support to access welfare benefits, health care, community services;
- Strengthening funding and performance of community work including with PwH;
- Conducting research on specific homelessness topics;
- Implementing research on good practice on integrated urban systems to prevent and end homelessness from abroad, preparation of a methodology for cities and implementation of activities aimed at its accessibility and dissemination, and in particular its application by municipalities;
- Prevention activities (discussions, lectures with a practical part) to prevent human trafficking, as PwH are a vulnerable group and frequent victims of this crime;
- Providing free debt and family counselling and assistance to people who find themselves in a difficult financial, family and life crisis; this is a combination of economic-financial, legal and psychological counselling;
- Developing and publishing specific tools for the early detection of households at risk of housing loss and disproportionate debt in relation to energy providers.

## 6.2 Housing

### Specific objective:

- ❖ **To Increase the physical and affordable housing of people from vulnerable groups to prevent and end homelessness**

Based on the ETHOS typology, which defines PwH as those who lack any of the three domains that characterise home (physical, legal, social), ending homelessness refers to a state where a homeless person regains a home and has the conditions in place to maintain it, i.e. where they obtain sustainable and affordable housing, thereby creating the conditions for social reintegration and the development of social and community relationships. At the level of systemic solutions, then, ending homelessness includes measures that aim to support rehousing and housing retention for PwH and to prevent people at risk from losing their homes. At the same time, ending homelessness does not necessarily mean that homelessness per se will not be present in society at all. Even in the future, various crisis situations and other circumstances that can lead to homelessness cannot be fully prevented. The essence of ending homelessness is that every homeless person should have the opportunity to address their situation, obtain affordable housing and integrate into life, with appropriate support, in a reasonable period of time.

### Draft measures:

- Increasing the physical and affordable availability of rental housing for vulnerable populations;
- Taking measures to strengthen support for the financial sustainability of adequate housing - develop new legislation on housing benefit by removing it from material hardship assistance;
- Creating conditions for more efficient management of the public rental housing stock;
- Systematic linking of social housing with the provision of supportive social services in justified cases and adequate financial provision of these services;
- Creating conditions (legislative, financial, etc.) to ensure access of vulnerable groups to affordable and quality rental housing;
- Increasing the share of the non-profit private sector in affordable rental housing for vulnerable groups;

- Financial and non-financial support for the introduction of Housing First and Rapid Re-housing programmes for people without a home and people at risk of homelessness;
- Financial support for outreach programs and crisis intervention social services for mapping and contacting people at risk of losing their housing or experiencing homelessness;
- Implementing pilot projects aimed at supporting the establishment and operation of social rental housing agencies, in order to increase the availability of housing for low-income populations, including PwH;
- Promoting the creation and development of social housing enterprises, raising awareness of the possibilities of setting up a social housing enterprise;
- Creating conditions conducive to the elimination of possible ghettoisation and physical exclusion of low-income population groups within settlements/municipalities in the planning of social rental housing;
- Exploring the possibilities regarding judicial control before voluntary auctions (ex ante control) with a limitation only to the group of people who are tied to a property permanently;
- Examining the possibilities for the protection of the debtor's dwelling in the event of forced enforcement of the creditor's pecuniary claims in the legal order of the Slovak Republic;
- Examining possibilities for the state/local government to acquire real estate subject to compulsory execution for the purpose of securing possible 'public rental housing'.

## 6.3 Health Issues

### Specific objective:

- ❖ **Improving access to health care for PwH through the provision of full health care (not only emergency), including preventive health care and access to effective and affordable medicines for PwH, while maintaining equity of access. Ensuring equal access to health care for PwH - establishing and promoting services that ensure overcoming barriers to access to HC, namely outreach medicine, low-threshold clinics, respite care, etc. Developing systematic cooperation between social providers of crisis intervention services and health care providers in assisting PwH, or integration of health and social services for PwH to ensure multidisciplinary and continuous care leading to ending homelessness.**

The National Health Policy understands health as a basic human right. It aims to direct the interests and efforts of all sectors of society towards health as a key factor in the development of society and to create an environment in which citizens are guaranteed the conditions for the promotion, protection, development and restoration of health, regardless of age or social status.<sup>117</sup> This Concept is followed by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which also addresses 'Good Health' within its six priority areas, and these priority areas are intended to become the basis for further strategic and conceptual work and professional policy settings. To set up a combination of social and health services is an essential need to financially support the provision of health care in shelters, to create space for the provision of nursing care directly also in social service facilities for crisis intervention.

### Draft measures:

- Providing full health care to citizens regardless of the existence of a health insurance debt that can still be recovered in enforcement proceedings;
- Improving access to palliative care for people without a home (including those with health insurance debt);
- Improving access to basic sanitation facilities, e.g. through the development of personal hygiene centres to remove barriers to visiting health facilities;

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<sup>117</sup> Source: [https://www.ruvztn.sk/koncepcia\\_SP\\_zdravia\\_SR.pdf](https://www.ruvztn.sk/koncepcia_SP_zdravia_SR.pdf)



- Establishing low-threshold, mobile clinics and dispensaries for people without a home;
- Preparing and implementing a pilot project aimed at the provision of low-threshold primary health care, both outpatient and outreach, in the natural environment of the PwH, in cooperation with social service providers;
- Creating a legislative framework for the possibility of linking health and social services provided by PwH (possibility of financing health jobs in social services);
- Introducing an innovative mechanism to finance prevention (primary, secondary and tertiary) and treatment of diseases, including addictions, for people without a home in the context of the European Pillar of Social Rights and its Action Plan and to increase the availability of specialised harm reduction services for people without a home in Slovakia;
- Improving the availability of supportive psychological, psychiatric, therapeutic services for PwH;
- Developing an analysis of the subject area of solutions in other countries and identify examples of good practice;
- Creating conditions for the provision of nursing care (currently Section 22 of the Social Services Act) also in the provision of social services of crisis intervention (also in the field form);
- Supporting the implementation of measures to ensure the supply of safe drinking water;
- Support for obtaining information on the number of inhabitants without access to drinking water.

## 6.4 Employment

### Specific objective:

- ❖ **To improve access of people without a home to the labour market, to active labour market measures and to employment, including in the social economy, with a view to employment or labour market activation, and eliminating the exploitation of the disadvantaged position of people without a home for illegal work.**

The application of an integrated comprehensive approach to the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market is a crucial factor in reducing unemployment of disadvantaged people. The key elements in removing barriers that prevent disadvantaged JS from integrating into the labour market include the provision of basic needs (including housing security/safety) and further education opportunities necessary for labour market integration, as well as the flexibility of the labour market itself for the employment opportunities of people with different levels of ability (skills, endowments or limitations due to health conditions). Individual counselling and the development of skills necessary for the labour market, including basic and soft skills, are also important support tools. Retraining courses support the matching of knowledge and practical skills with the needs of the regional labour market. A very effective ALMM instrument is the promotion of job creation through a financial contribution to the employer. We also consider equally important to promote adaptability, on the part of both the employer and the employee, providing continuous support to ensure integration, communication and sensitisation of employers and employees. Another important tool to support the employment of PwH is to provide support and assistance to registered social enterprises and potential social entrepreneurs through regional social economy centres located in each regional city in Slovakia, informing them about the possibilities of employing people in unfavourable life situation and also informing employers about the possibilities of support that can be provided to registered social enterprises.

### Draft measures:

- Systematic support for the provision of supported employment services, including assistance in finding and retaining employment for PwH and the introduction of systemic funding;
- Implementing activities within the framework of the application of a comprehensive approach including support for employability, i.e. support in solving personal and social situation and removing obstacles that hinder integration into the labour market - debt counselling, solving health condition, accompaniment in the offices (e.g. processing of missing documents, registration at the OLSAF, counselling at the Legal Aid Centre);
- Providing individualised vocational counselling based on the analysis of the life situation of JS and inactive persons - vocational counsellors at the OLSAF or entities involved in the call for demand-oriented and national projects;
- Developing further education and retraining programmes for labour market integration (REPAS), including the development of skills necessary for labour market integration (including basic and soft skills);
- Supporting job creation through a financial contribution to the employer, with the possibility of using mentored placement, including post-employment support (adaptability and on-the-job support, continuous support);
- Supporting the establishment and operation of information and consultation activities aimed at supporting the activities of social economy actors and supporting employers in identifying sustainable employment opportunities for vulnerable, disadvantaged and inactive people;
- Raising awareness of the risks of undeclared work and increasing the resilience of people without a home in this area.

## 6.5 Social Security, Social Services and Social Protection

### Specific objective:

- ❖ **To improve access and availability to individual social benefit instruments, availability of social services or social protection measures and increase the efficiency of the social assistance system.**

State social benefits are a set of cash benefits which the State contributes to the management of several living situations, in particular for families with dependent children. It contributes to covering the cost of children's maintenance and other personal needs, as well as costs related to other social events. State social benefits form a part of the social security system and aim to support social events that are not covered by the social insurance system, and their acceptance by the State makes it possible to prevent an individual from being in a state of material or social need and relying on assistance. Their role in preventing and ending homelessness is essential.

Social services, either as such or specifically social crisis intervention services, are an equally important part of the process of ending homelessness. However, ending homelessness through affordable housing also presents new challenges for social services. Crisis intervention social services are currently more likely to fulfil the function of long-term assistance to people without a home, as the lack of affordable rental housing does not create the space to leave the crisis intervention service system. The purpose of social crisis intervention services should be different - in the short-term assistance needed to overcome the crisis. All types of social services for people without a home should be directed towards and contribute to the goal of ending homelessness and appropriately complement services aimed at improving access to and provision of social housing. In addition to addressing crisis situations, the provision of social services and the delivery of social work is also important in supporting the retention of rental housing for PwH people at risk of losing a home, including housing-first and rapid re-housing programmes. There is also a growing need for social services to be interconnected and comprehensive so as to effectively accompany PwH throughout the process of ending homelessness.

A need to prevent situations where FANPs find themselves homeless can also be facilitated by the child welfare and social welfare system, specifically social welfare probation for individuals of legal age. In this context, it should be noted that social

guardianship measures are carried out on a purely voluntary basis. Social probation measures for FANPs in relation to the resolution of problems of PwH can help in particular to prevent situations where a FANP finds himself/herself homeless, as the assistance of the social probation officer is concentrated mainly in the period after release, most often from prison/jail, detention, a centre for children and families with a resocialisation programme, or after the end of protective institutional treatment, when the need for assistance is the most pronounced.

### **6.5.1 Eligible financial contributions, subsidies and other support**

The design of the social protection system and its expenditures, i.e. social transfers, including old-age and survivors' benefits, play an important role in reducing the risk of poverty. Social transfers in Slovakia have been successful in reducing the risk of income poverty, with a focus on protecting recipients from poverty and social exclusion. Increasing the amounts of state social benefits provided as one of the options to motivate education and, in particular, the availability of education for vulnerable groups of the population could undoubtedly contribute to the elimination of homelessness. On the other hand, social transfers, together with levies and taxes on potential employment, may be a barrier to labour market participation or may lead to persistence in reliance on social transfers and weaken the incentive to seek other sources of income.<sup>118</sup>

#### **Draft measures:**

- Amending the relevant legislation to ensure that citizens are enabled to apply for inclusion in the register of job seekers, to contact adult social welfare and to apply for other forms of social assistance and state benefits, as well as to apply for pension benefits, sickness benefits, unemployment benefits, at any OLSAF, or at any branch of the Social Insurance Institution, regardless of their place of permanent or temporary residence, and then to communicate further with the selected office;
- Ensuring the availability of state benefits for persons residing outside their place of permanent residence.

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<sup>118</sup> Národná rámcová stratégia podpory sociálneho začlenenia a boja proti chudobe (aktualizácia), [https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/slovensky/rodina-socialna-pomoc/chudoba/narodna-ramcova-stratogia-podpory-socialneho-zaclenenia-boja-proti-chudobe\\_aktualizacia.pdf](https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/slovensky/rodina-socialna-pomoc/chudoba/narodna-ramcova-stratogia-podpory-socialneho-zaclenenia-boja-proti-chudobe_aktualizacia.pdf)

## 6.5.2 Social Services

In this context, new challenges for social services focused on PwH arise. Crisis intervention services need and will need **stable funding** in order to contribute to the goal of ending homelessness, especially street homelessness - and to respond to the needs of PwH, related in particular to the accessibility of services (both geographically and in terms of entry conditions). Some PwH will be dependent on the provision of 24-hour social services for a long period of time, for example, because of ill health (dependency facilities) or a preference for community housing rather than independent living. Crisis intervention services should be more flexible in the future in order to respond more effectively to the needs of PwH. There should be an emphasis on **outreach work and access to 24 hour accommodation**. At the same time, 24-hour accommodation should be more reflective of the needs of PwH with high complex support needs, providing low-threshold services, addressing vulnerable groups - PwH with physical or mental illness, women, people of pensionable age. In the provision of social services to PwH, there will be a need for a strong emphasis on **community work**. Low-threshold day centres, integration centres and personal hygiene centres should be appropriately combined with community centres to provide more community work and inclusion support (including for people in housing). Community work will be an equally important part of housing-first and rapid re-housing programmes. Last but not least, 24-hour accommodation should not be a substitute for rental housing and should be developed alongside rental housing in proportion to the needs of PwH. At the same time, the number of days in the night shelter should only be necessary to overcome the crisis (max. 60 days) and PwH should be moved from there to 24-hour accommodation (shelter or other facility depending on the reason for the adverse social situation), but primarily to rental housing.

### **Draft measures:**

- Exploring options for a new way of financing crisis intervention services with a view to streamlining, stabilising, equalising and increasing the targeting of funding for social services. The aim is to improve access to social crisis intervention services for people without a home (including PwH with a high level of need for complex support

- with mental illness and/or substance dependence), with a view to improving access to social crisis intervention services;
- Within the framework of legal regulations of social services of crisis intervention, redistributing logically and conceptually the responsibilities and competences of the state, self-government units, towns and municipalities in such a way as to ensure mutual synergy with the possibility of conceptual development of interrelated services;
- Supporting the establishment of new services that will provide social services based on harm reduction principles (e.g. ‘wet’ shelter, ‘wet’ day centre) or adjusting the conditions within the currently provided social services;
- Expansion/reformulation of currently statutorily defined activities that are provided or carried out within crisis intervention social services to better reflect social service practice;
- Increasing the total capacity of social service facilities for crisis intervention with the introduction of mandatory quotas in cities with more than 20 thousand inhabitants. population (e.g. 10 places in a facility per 10 thousand inhabitants) with regard to the provision of 24-hour accommodation and the reconstruction of existing facilities so that they meet all standards and requirements related to the legislation in force, while also taking into account the principles of the gradual deinstitutionalisation of social services;
- Ensuring the availability of social services for crisis intervention in a field-based form with active search and comprehensive counselling and accompaniment of homeless persons through the promotion of the employment of qualified personnel, the building of staff capacities and the development of centres (not only) at community level;
- Creating synergy and a coordinated system between the different crisis intervention services - prevention of housing loss, support for independent living and referral social services;
- Creating systemic conditions for the dissemination of good practice in innovative approaches to ending homelessness in order to support their scaling up.

### **6.5.3 Social and legal protection of children and social guardianship**

The provision of social welfare assistance to FANPs is mainly set up to support the social integration/reintegration (housing - education - employment) of the FANP, subject to his/her

active participation and on the basis of a social work plan with the FANP. In this context, cooperation with the municipality and the accredited entity is necessary for the effective implementation of social probation measures for FANPs. Interaction with the local government (municipality) should be particularly emphasized in this respect, as the COLSAF always needs up-to-date information on all assistance options, including accommodation options for FANPs, in order to be able to correctly direct them to a specific network of effective assistance. However, the actual assistance of PwH does not belong to the system of social and legal protection of children and social probation. For this reason, the provision of a wide range of integrated approach activities must continue to be supported.

The target group at risk that needs to be highlighted in this context is young adults who leave the CCF after reaching the age of majority. After leaving the institution, young people are given special attention in the framework of the social curatorship for FANPs - and again, as a matter of priority, from a preventive point of view, since the aim is to prevent the actual situation where a young person finds himself or herself homeless after leaving the CCF.

**Draft measures:**

- Promoting cooperation and information (especially on the possibility of accommodating FANPs in a given region - based on the offer of cooperating entities) between municipalities/local governments, NGOs providing preventive/curative services for PwH and the OLSAF - networking:
  - Updating the Internal Standard of the COLSAF Central Office, which regulates the procedure of the OLSAF staff in conducting social case work in the implementation of SPODaSK measures - in the part related to case work with FANPs, with emphasis on cooperation with the municipality, based on its offer of assistance possibilities for PwH;
  - Implementing working meetings of stakeholders for the purpose of networking and exchange of up-to-date information and examples from practice;
  - Supporting cooperation in order to ensure continuous social work for FANPs during and after release/leaving from residential institutions (e.g. re-education centre, prison/jail facility) and the OLSAF, municipality, NGOs;



- Expanding the possibilities of assistance/preparation of children/young adults for leaving the CCF, as well as increase the expertise of CCF staff to work with children preparing to leave the CCF, as well as with young adults after leaving the CCF - especially through working meetings, sharing examples of good practice, etc.

## 6.6 Administration

### Specific objective:

- ❖ **To introduce measures to facilitate people without a home's access to public administration institutions**

The information systems currently used by authorities (e.g. OLSAF offices, client centres, etc.) allow for a number of possible flexible approaches. Therefore, in the case of public administration institutions, where this is possible, it is advisable to consider allowing the first contact of the citizen at any workplace of the institution, with whom he/she will subsequently communicate further.

In addition to improving the conditions of access to public institutions and their services, equally important in the protection of the rights of PwH is support in contacting institutions and accompanying PwH in the administrative process in a given case, i.e. the availability of professional activities within the framework of social services for crisis intervention, which is assistance in the exercise of rights and legally protected interests. Assistance in exercising rights and legally protected interests may include direct accompaniment of the client in state and local government institutions, with employers, landlords or in other situations in which he/she exercises his/her legally protected interests.

It is also important to find a way of dealing with the identified problem of losses and the subsequent re-processing of documents and associated fees. In the case of PwH, the aim is to find a systemic solution that will make it easier for them to reissue their ID cards or reduce the fees involved.

### Draft measures:

- Facilitating the possibility of registering for permanent residence where the individual resides (e.g. on the basis of a social service certificate);
- Facilitating access of PwH to public administration institutions;
- Modifying access to free legal aid for PwH to make it free of charge and more accessible;

- Reducing fees for the processing of documents with the PwH through a separate allowance, or waiving of fees through proof of homelessness status, which would be evidenced, e.g. by an affidavit from a social service provider;

## 6.7 Education and Public Sensitisation

### Specific objective:

- ❖ **To raise the standards of work with people without a home in key professions, sensitising society, raising awareness of homelessness and implementing preventive measures to eliminate the negative impacts of homelessness on those at risk**

The main objective is to educate society in general and people who come into contact with PwH, in particular. The people who should be part of the educational activities in question are those who actively work with the group of PwH (medical staff, police officers, teachers, employees of social services institutions, OLSAF, client centres, volunteers), because it is to this group that people without a home turn for help, from whom they get the necessary information (about work, housing, further education), as well as to whom the majority turn for help (police). Compulsory training on the topic of PwH would make individual workers aware of the causes and reasons for homelessness and set standards for working with PwH in their professions. Sensitising society and people working in professions that are in regular contact with the target group is essential for changing public opinion, breaking down prejudices and the general attitude towards PwH.

### Draft measures:

- Strengthening education on homelessness prevention, including relevant cross-cutting themes (specifically financial literacy), in formal and non-formal education, as well as in the training of teaching staff;
- Creating guidelines for solutions to life situations related to the threat of housing loss - how 'first point-of-contact' professionals (e.g. employees of the OLSAF, staff of social departments of local governments and police forces) should approach PwH;
- Educating public administration employees - state and municipal police officers, health workers, educators, employees of the OLSAF, social workers and other employees in other relevant fields on topics about PwH in order to sensitise their subsequent work and approach to PwH, basic education, breaking down prejudices and training of communication skills for working with PwH;

- Providing regular trainings for social workers of public administration (field social workers, social curators of the OLSAF - state administration, social workers of cities and municipalities of local and regional self-government...) to provide support, education and assistance of access to health services and health mediation at community level (*following the model of Healthy Regions*);
- Providing regular trainings for staff in health facilities, hospitals, RMA (Rapid Medical Assistance) to increase understanding and adoption of appropriate communication tools for working with PwH to avoid humiliation or denial of appropriate health care provision;
- Analysing the education of health professionals on the social determinants of health and the ethical and social aspects of the provision of HRH for vulnerable populations, including people without a home, both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels of education;
- Introducing social work into procedures for dealing with tenants' rent arrears or other housing-related costs;
- Media campaigns to sensitise public opinion on homelessness and housing need and the needs of people experiencing homelessness;
- Media campaigns to sensitise the public and public authorities in relation to respect for human rights;
- Promoting programmes aimed at preventing discrimination and criminalisation of people without a home and people in material and social need.

## 6.8 Data and Statistics

### Specific objective:

- ❖ **Creating a source of regularly updated administrative data on homelessness and PwH in the Slovak Republic, to obtain more detailed evidence on the prevalence and forms of hidden homelessness, risk factors for falling into homelessness, and success factors for exiting homelessness, in order to plan services more effectively and to regularly evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of services provided to people at risk of housing loss and PwH.**

In order to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of interventions to prevent and end homelessness, it is necessary to design and ensure regular collection of qualitative and quantitative data on PwH. At the same time, to better understand the determinants of successful exits from homelessness, there is a need to conduct data collection and research on hidden forms of homelessness, including trajectories of homelessness for individuals and families, or the prevalence and opportunities for exits from homelessness in small towns and rural areas.

### Draft measures:

- A clear and consistent definition of homelessness; PwH;
- Promoting regular comprehensive data collection on PwH in order to effectively set up interventions towards ending homelessness (in collaboration with: MoLSAF SR, OLSAF SR, Statistical Office of SR, IVPR, local governments, providers of social services of crisis intervention) with specific focus on:
  - Hidden homelessness - in insecure or inadequate housing, including trajectories into homelessness, with particular attention to women and mothers with children;
  - Generational homelessness;
  - Mapping of intentions, barriers, current forms of provision of social housing by local authorities and NGOs or social housing enterprises;
  - Forms of homelessness of families - experience of PwH with placement of their children in foster care, methods, support, barriers in maintaining contact with them;

- Scope, barriers, examples of good practice in the provision of social and health services to PwH, including outreach social work and outreach health care/medicine;
  - Evaluating the impact of the implementation of selected measures aimed at ending homelessness on people at risk of losing a home (in cooperation with the MoLSAF SR, IVPR and NGOs);
  - Introducing or harmonising the typology of homelessness and exclusion from housing into the ETHOS registration forms when registering persons for the purpose of providing different forms of support, especially by the OLSAF offices, in order to identify housing need through administrative data for the purpose of prevention and ending homelessness policies;
- Promoting the use of available data and its analysis for the development of social policies at municipal, regional and national level; Raising awareness and competence of social policy makers in working with data and using it in strategic planning to increase housing affordability;
  - Promoting the mapping of PwH requiring palliative care and those who have been discharged from institutions (hospital, prison, etc.);
  - Collecting data on the number and structure of households and individuals evicted from public rental housing and evicted by foreclosure through the sale of the property in which they were reported to be residing permanently or temporarily, including data on the causes of eviction;
  - Systematic monitoring to ascertain the living situation and offer counselling, particularly in the area of housing, for young people who have reached the age of majority and have been placed in CCF foster care or in a re-education centre;
  - Implementing a project for working with substance abusers and people providing sexual services on the street to map the target group within the SR and the specific needs, to address their fulfilment and to support the establishment of services providing prevention (I, II, III) with the aim of increasing public health protection.

## Conclusion

A comprehensive approach is the key to tackling homelessness. Addressing the problem comprehensively means tackling it at all levels, from the material, to the medical and legal, to the social component. Both the homeless person himself/herself and society need to be involved.

A great deal of emphasis must be placed on preventing homelessness. Systematic efforts to prevent a slide into homelessness in all its forms can make a significant contribution to reducing the number of people who lose their homes and become dependent on crisis services provided by the public and non-public sectors. In the SR context, efforts should therefore be focused in particular on increasing the physical and affordable availability of rental housing for low-income groups, in conjunction with available social services, employment services and financial counselling.

Helping to make housing sustainable and affordable is also a way of contributing to human dignity and, ultimately, to the development of society as a whole, which in every respect appears to be a more effective way than tackling homelessness after the fact.

The Concept aims to contribute to the prevention and ending of homelessness in the Slovak Republic through mutual consensus and a coordinated comprehensive approach of all actors concerned. The specific and measurable measures to be implemented in each area, including the identification of financial requirements and appropriate resources to cover them, will be contained in an action plan, the development of which will follow the adoption of the Concept.