



POVERTY WATCH

REPORT

Slovakia 2021



EUROPEAN ANTI POVERTY NETWORK

Poverty Watch Report - Slovakia 2021

Slovak Anti-Poverty Network is one of the largest networks in Slovakia. The network is a member of the Governmental Council for Non-Profit Non-governmental organisations, as well as part of EAPN. It unites 56 socially oriented NGO's as well as individual members. They are united by effort to protect human dignity in every area of life. For more than 16 years the network has been helping people in need to start living with dignity so they can gradually get rid of the learned feeling of powerlessness to change things and regain courage and optimism to cope with a worse life situation and integrate into society.

Slovak Anti-Poverty Network of NGO's is substantially separated from „power“, not depended. We are not obliged to follow the lead of state, but our effort is to change the weak position of civic societies and non-governmental organisations in our country. And in EU, too. Especially these days during pandemic COVID-19, when more effective is practical and individual approach. More, new government after election last year received great mandate (constitutional majority) to bring justice, to finish corruption and organized criminality on the highest state positions, protected by ex-general procurator, judges, justices, police force, what happens. Majority people don't trust to politicians and state institutions anymore.

Civic society and NGO's sector in Slovakia passed through fragmentation. There are more than 60 000 NGO's. And majority of them collapsed financially. Great opportunity pandemic situation in EU offers for cooperation between EU and member countries, also in this field and to help strengthen NGO's sector on national level. Many our members were in 1st line during pandemic.

It is time to join power and to cooperate more effective and deeper on EU vision, priorities and EU strategy, too. Participation of individuals, Euro-citizens is welcomed, but hand in hand is necessary to promote mutual cooperation among civic societies and NGO's to have chance bargain for European vision, priorities and action plans. Negotiate it on equal level, as partner. As we saw during lock-down, people in 1st line were not rich people... We are aware that financial policy focused on economical sustainability and progress is replaced by Europe for People, Well-being and Planet. Such trend is necessary to implement on national levels, too. We tried to make visible experts on poverty, ecologists, environmentalists, heartfelt people willing to help others without reward, active volunteers, etc.

This document can serve as an awareness raising and advocacy instrument in Slovakia, as well as provide the basis for useful inputs to the EU level, particularly the European Semester/European Pillar of Social Rights implementation process.

EAPN Poverty Watch Report – Slovakia 2021 do not attempt to be comprehensive national research reports on poverty. It starts from our work and the experience/priorities and voice of People experiencing Poverty (PEP). Including video with 4 slogans

1. Our great wish is ending pandemic COVID!

Roma children, who suffer from serious illness of their parents and brothers, sisters, family members. They have no room for isolation of ill ones and quarantine of new comers.

2. Our great wish is to have computer, cell-phone.

Roma children and successful dancers with great effort and responsibility during international performances failure at schools because of lack of IT skills and without approach to computer, without cell-phone. 50% of them must repeat again class. They didn't catch upon. Children with the parents with IT skills and computer and good approach succeeded.

Vlado Sendrei, social worker in Roma community and vice-president of Slovak Anti-Poverty Network informed us: we try to arrange cell-phone cards for parents and their children during distant learning. There is great lack of IT skilled parents. Our children missed distant learning and after meeting with the pupils and teachers couldn't continue, they didn't understand new teaching returning at school in June.

3. Fathers need quality job and fair wage to care their families!

That's why I have been working many years abroad in Germany separated from my wife and family. In Slovakia there is shrinking access to universal affordable, quality services (housing, health, education). In Germany our life is more comfortable and cheaper.

Every government should arrange dignified life for all citizens.

4. My great wish is society without money.

Young school-leavers, girls preferred society without money. Or basic income. They were active and self-sufficient, but they observed tragedy of now-a-days, running behind money.

5. 12.9 – 15.9 2021 Visit of pope Francis in Slovakia. He chose the poorest region east Slovakia, Košice, LUNIK 9 – Roma tenant blocks with the aim to make poverty visible and to help remove prejudice against Roma people.

Let us see in mirror given by pope Francis.

Organizers would prefer to have pope in the beautiful palace, clean streets, clean houses.

Key developments and trends on poverty during Pandemic COVID-19.

The impact of the policy national/European was during 1st wave another than during 2nd wave. Though it was very soon clear that from China COVID-19 spreaded to Europe, there were no quick action. Nobody expected such attack and till today is not known if it was really animals which injured people or biological war. And COVID-19 was created by people as biological weapon. Usually, if our conscience is clean we give without protraction all informations and open door to other researchers. And opposite. As we know very well the true always reveals. Majority politicians except Donald Trump and some others behave as it was problem with animals. Not attack by enemies. That's why we are unable to solve future strategy. Simply told: **much more dangerous are people than animals**. So, in both cases is sure that vaccination is not solution for next years. If some kind of animal in far distance can evoke pandemic situation with lock-down and to close borders among countries, with hundreds millions of died people across the world, even in Antarktida, mankind is fragile and vulnerable. And society, towns, schools, families, etc are not healthy. More, if it was COVID-19 biological weapon, then the vaccination is not helpful, the enemy continues his attacks. And it means we are in danger fight with invisible enemy. And his biological weapon becomes psychological arms, too.

Dignified life for all is in such real situation impossible. And our duty is make EC and EU watchful, unsleeping and focus all effort especially preserve mental health, teach our children psychohygienic habits, and avoid all kinds of self-destroying factors.

Slovak Anti-Poverty Network recognized great role of mental and spiritual development of Europeancitizens to weaken poverty in EU. As many people stopped adore communists during totalitarian regime, especially after their violent attacks on young people during protest in Prague and it helped us to remove totalitarian regime, today we need the same way uplifted new type of elite. As top people we should recognize developed souls and people with higher wisdom, unmeasurable knowledge without attachment towards material property and money. That ´s why we involve to our Report also slogan: **Let us see in mirror given by pope Francis.**

As we informed you last year with the slogan **What we know (don´t know) about ourselves** joined with the Picture 8 floors building and commentary: in basic floor we see small part, in 5th floor we can see much more, and on the top floor we expanded horizon. We see whole town, sky. Such way selfdevelopped maturated people can know much more than people motivated by deficiency needs /after famous american psychologist A.Maslow). So, we should respect psychological laws and genius insight, which help us to know better ourselves, improve world view, and to find solution.

Very good impact on all EU member states has Recovery Plan and Project Next generation, mobilized by EU. Now all concentration of intellectuals is on best use of billions given through Recovery and Resilience Plan. And Eurofunds. In Slovakia on national level has very good impact on poverty priorities of new government and social policy. New government prefers to help especially Roma people. Of course, majoritian society is not too satisfied. We will see impact of Pope Francis after visiting Košice, LUNIK 9 poor Roma locality.

The key issues that impact on the people on poverty are distant learning, home – office based on IT skills and IT equipment. European policy in this direction is effective to support projects helping poor children and poor families improve their IT skills. But there is a lot of children and families who need help in this direction. So, we propose especially students of university, of pedagogical faculty to help children in poor regions. Maybe there is problem with accommodation of the students in poorest localities. Of course, it can be solved with the help of student homes near chosen places. Or municipality can accommodate them. There is necessary intersector cooperation between Ministry of Education, Ministry of regional development, Ministry of Social Affairs, etc. And synergic effect can have cooperation on European and national levels, too. Sharing good practices.

Objectives:

Key trends and policy on poverty and social exclusion in Europe is based on implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and equality among people. Decent life for all. The idea of the Pillar is to emphasize the responsibility of nations to live up to reasonable social conditions for citizens, not through EU law but through measures in each Member State, based on each country's needs and conditions. Each member state reports to the EU what has been achieved and in a dialogue evaluates the various efforts. Negotiation takes place in a dialogue with NGOs, experts on poverty and the rest of civil society. Legislative process is on national level. Slovak Anti-Poverty Network pushes for policy measures in its direction

and take a critical approach to the governmental politicians, if they do not implement the objectives of the pillar.

To reduce poverty in Europe 2030 is possible, when Recovery Plan and Next generations project involve social and environmental dimensions and national governments will involve non-governmental organisations and private sector as partner. Very important is the development of digitalisation in society. During pandemic COVID-19 it is one of the most important issues in the future and it spans the entire life: wide horizon and spreading information, production, health, education, communication etc. How digitalisation takes place largely determines whether society will be inclusive or exclusive, functional or dysfunctional. Access to and knowledge of digital technology becoming crucial for PEP.

1. There is necessary to strengthen volunteer service, and support position of volunteers and to pay honorarium for their work, too. They can dedicate more time, learn poor children and their parents IT skills.
2. To raise awareness about priority issues and impact for PEP. Our experts recognized necessary of the cooperation between government, decision – makers and social NGO's. Social NGO 's without support of government cannot solve effectively the situation of PEP. Of course, it is necessary to make voice of PEP stronger. But it is not enough. Our government needs help and we should offer our help, too. The best, through NGO 's network.
3. How to raise awareness about priority issue and impact for PEP? Till today is negotiation strategy focused on good will of majority society and rich people and their compassion with poor ones, their children. But during pandemic COVID-19 there is necessary emphasized the power of poor people and PEP, not only during election, but in future, because of demographic situation in Slovakia and great changes after election in Slovakia, in EU.

More, if NGO 's sector and civic society will network and create stronger relations on both local, national and European levels. In a healthy system CSOs/NGOs are able negotiate with the "power", or the state (in this context the EU/Commission) on equal level, similarly as during tripartite on national levels. Especially, today we face great corruption causa, organized criminality on state top institutions, and new position of the scientists in our European society, all over the world. More people understand how important is intelligence, especially emotional intelligence, compassion, win-win thinking, real democracy with stronger voice of people, instead of some self-centered politicians and their scandals. CSOs are here to become equal partner of state, not expected to follow the lead of the EU, and become enrolled in the priorities of the Commission. They should not become a branch of the state, financed by the state.

We propose the same way as we network under umbrella of EAPN all member countries and European organisations such way we should cooperate also with NGO sector and civic society. In Slovakia we SAPN became member of Council of Government for NGO sector. Maybe in other member states are NGO 's similar way organized. And together we could

stronger not only voice of NGO and civic society, but also PEP and 40% of lower population in EU, widen public. Middle class and 1% of rich people have their elite clubs.

Summary of key points:

We work with various kind of people experiencing poverty and they have negative expectations, they don't believe that anybody wants to solve their terrible situation. Poor children wish to have better life, but they can't influence it and they live in families with generation poverty, from parents to children. When parents didn't finish basic school, their children have no self-confidence to become better pupils and one day out of poverty. Working poor's have no chance to quality job, to permanent job, so they lost trust to people, government and institutions. Physically handicapped people suffer from mental complexes and fears from COVID-19. Uncomplete families with more children are under great stress because of closed schools several months, distant learning which needs individual approach to every child and care, preparation of the lunch, when schools are closed. Since pandemic COVID-19 children don't get free school meals at schools.



In Slovakia there are more than 100 Roma communities without approach to drinking water, only few hours outside home.



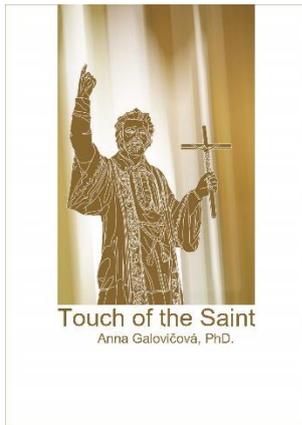
Usually in such conditions of living there are no work opportunities, too. So, Roma people with their children are without job at home, without effort to change their situation. Single parents are affected worse than other, because of obstacles to find quality job and single parents need take care about

children longer time without partner. Especially mothers are in worse position, because of gender discrimination. As in other member countries women are less paid than men for the same work position. Single women with children (risk group) are affected worse than other in Slovakia. There is no will by employers to give them flexible work time, and bonus (spa treatment, stress-management courses, relaxation weekend stay). They have no money for it, neither children care during healing stays. There is increasing trend, more and more single mothers without help of fathers, or family members. Their situation, accomodation, financial situation, health conditions are bad. Access to Essential Services (including social services and care, housing and health) Half millions of these single mothers created NGO and fight for decent life together. They adressed media, too. And together they can move forward also through European projects for example Housing first. Our Network is in process to be active and to apply Housing first project, too. Our EUISG member was responsible for choice of approved Housing first projects. Our longterm member NGO Oasis under the guidance of Mgr. Pater Peter Gombita succeeded and they implement Housing first. Our Network succeeded in the project Restart of seniors and Europe for People. Healthy Planet.

EAPN main priority issues are the 5 key principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights prioritised by EAPN: Minimum Income, Social Protection, Fair Wages and Decent Work, Access to Essential Services (including social services and care, housing and health), Education, Training and Lifelong learning. Our Network is active to make Social Pillar visible in media, too. To fight poverty we gather EMIN Ambassadors, experts on poverty, people and authorities we met during EMIN BUS TRIP, PEP and we are active in Governmental Council for NGO sector. Step by step we act upon past discoveries using know-how and EAPN guidance. Our government makes effort to improve social conditions – decent life for all. But they first year after election fight with COVID-19 ENEMY and today they solve dangerous corruption causa and organized criminality in the highest political and state level. And in such situation we see only islands of positive energy in Slovakia. European Semester helped to progress these priorities on poverty reduction. That´s why will be useful to organize General Assembly , EXCO Meetings , Seminars etc. in member states, not only in Brusselles, to help NN´s make European Pillar of Social Rights, Poverty issue more visible. Surely, in every EU member country is great effort to finish with COVID-19 and implement Recovery Plan and Next generation Project. Both rich and poor people are in one. But, there is stereotypes, that though new government, old bussinesmen have experiences, equipments to build , to construct, and good financial situation. So, there is danger that huge billions of Euros would be lost in new jural cause. How to solve it? As we mentioned several times there is important to create new image of elite. Instead self-centered rich bussinesmen we try introduce St. Francis Xavier, the greatest Christian Missionaire, who as all member of Jesuit Ordert (Society of Jesus)promised poverty, chastitiy and obeydance to travel where is important to work. Today pope Francis is also Jesuit and he makes poverty the most visible also in Slovakia, where he should stay 12 – 15. September 2021. In this occassion we edited publication Touch of the Saint written by PhDr. Anna Galovičova, both in Slovak and English version. Let also oligarchy see themselves in mirror given by Jesuit Francis Xavier reaching top spiritual and psychic level.

<https://youtu.be/DyPWKG-vii>

Let us see in mirror given by pope Francis.



Minimum WAGE

Minimum wage in 2021 pick load Professional intensity

1.	623 euros/month	3,58 euros/hour	coefficient	1
2.	739	4,25		1,2
3.	855	4,91		1,4
4.	971	5,58		1,6
5.	1 087	6,25		1,8
6.	1 203	6,91		2

Development of minimum wage in Slovakia: in 2022 should be 646 euros, increasing 23 euros. It is 57% of medium wage two years ago. (netto 520 euros). Such scenario employers wish. But workers protest for 60% of medium wage from 2020 to receive in 2022. Today this kind of conflict weaken tripartite dialogue among employers, trade union and government. Last year it was hot problem especially because of wages supplements for night work, during weekend time and feriae days. But this year it was frozen. So, minimum wage is problematic for special professions as workers in hotels, restaurants, bakery, textile industry, social care, post service, etc.

The most often work position with minimum wage are: taylor, cleaning woman, helper, school servant, hairdresser. Very low wage have teachers. New government approved increasing of the salaries of teachers (1 billion euros during 3 years). It should be paid by EU (Recovery Plan). Medium wage should be for teacher 1350 euros. Different situation is in east and west Slovakia. But hot problem of education is not financial one, but quality of work and motivation and character of teachers. Especially, in the poorest regions of Roma communities, who needs individual approach and heartfelt contact with children. Especially during the pandemic situation is very important help these children to be able participate in distant learning, to have IT skills, approach to computers. Maybe EU can help replace some older computers to the poorest regions step-by-step. Mutual interaction EU and national government can have synergic effect and mobilize all actors. Especially if we know „Education is way out of poverty“.

In our meetings with the children, especially Roma children from the poor region south – east Slovakia we found out, that especially children between age 12 – 15 years old failed during distant learning. And many of them must repeat again school year, though they are intelligent and responsible ones. But! They parents and teachers could not care for them and help them to receive IT skills and tablets. Even parents have no IT skills, no computers, no patience, no motivation to move forward for they children.

More, as we found out in many Roma families were difficult COVID-19 situation, serious illness of family members and no time for children education. So, Roma children wished very much Let COVID finish! Let my small brother survives and parents buy computer, or cell phone. With these conditions hand in hand goes marginalization and strengtning of prejudice against Roma children. Vicious circle. (Included you-tube document and dialogues).

Whole school system in Slovakia collapsed. Many intelligent Roma children don't finish basic school, neither vocational school and they are without basic education usually without job, on social contribution, marked man. And animosity between Roma communities and majoritian society increases. More, many intelligent children and students prefer to study abroad, because our universities and colleges are low level. We speak about exodus of best students. More, many politicians have plagiat causa, and they received their titles unfair way. Self-centered academics are not willig to change anything. Many professors spoke about financial situation, that they have several jobs in many schools to survive and to pay future advances. Etc. So, all society calls for reform of school system and to establish university campus higher quality.

Principals of Universities in Slovakia proposed to integrate 4 main universities and to create 2 educative centres in west Slovakia – Bratislava, and east Slovakia Košice. Is it solution? More: minister of education is busy with pandemic situation at schools. With distant learning. So, real problems to educate poor children and avoid more generations poverty in poor families goes hand in hand with exodus of most inteligent students abroad. To pay more money to teachers from Recovery Plan without real reform of school system in Slovakia would be vasting Eurofunds and hundreds millions from Recovery and Resiliancy Plan.

It needs new cognitive map and new way of living. When we have old map of old Prague, it will be impossible to find with such map new streets in new Prague. So, such situation is today more or less in EU, in the world. First to increase educative process needs respect psychological laws and avoid self-centered, egoistic approach also in Education. We must respect that if majority parents prefer higher education, quality of high schools is lower and lower. The same way how we became aware of COVID-19 and all process round it, how to protect ourselves, how to solve extraordinary situation, today we need be aware, that distribution of Intelligence among population all over the world is the same: only 3% of people have supreme intelligence, geniuses. Majority of population have IQ between 80 – 110 medial IQ, little by little under medial IQ, and little by little above medial IQ. We should focus on this fact and reform school system such way, that both teachers, parents understand it, and both help children to find concrete and usefull job for them to survive.

There is no other way to improve schools and to educate best experts in EU, in the world. Without such kind of change medial teachers will educate medial school-leavers. And whole society will suffer lack of craftsmen, workmen, usefull jobs and our children and grandchildren will be unsatisfied, unuseful, sitting behind computers, with psychic problems, spreading conspiracy theories,

influenced by delusions. There is enough work for all, BUT outside, in the nature, in the forest, in the streets, in the meadows, in the mountains, near rivers, near trees, etc.

This situation is connected with mothers and fathers, adult children from poorest regions who works abroad usually dirty job. But better paid, as we heard also in our video-film. Every father wish to have quality job and to bring enough money home to care for wife and his children. And parents living and working abroad for many years ask by right: why doing the same work in Germany, in Austria I receive 10-times more money? Instead of 200 euros, 2 000 euros. More, the life and nourishment is there cheaper and better? Of course, with 200 euros there is great pressure in the family life, conflicts what to buy and what is impossible to buy, for example computers for children in school age. Etc. During COVID-19 the situation with pendlers was hot issue, if to allow them go abroad and back, with the risk to bring new mutant of corona, or to stop it. And what about handicapped and ill seniors in neighbour countries – in Austria, Germany, etc.? Should they stay without nurses from Slovakia?

The encreasing of minimum wage:

2021	623/ month minimum wage	3,58/hour minimum wage
2020	580/	3,33/
2019	520/	2,99/
2018	480/	2,76/
2017	435 /	2,5/
2016	405/	2,33/
2015	380/	2,18/
2014	352/	2,02/

Medium wage is 1 203 euros in 2021. It was 858 euros in 2014.

Minimum wage in European countries . Without minimum wage are Finland, Austria, Denmark, Italy, Malta and Cyprus.

The highest minimum wage is in Luxemburg: 2 142 euros (2021). The lowest minimum wage is in Bulgaria 313 euros (2021). Czech R. has minimum wage 574 euros. Hungary 443 euros and Poland 611 euros. Netherlands – 1636 euros, Belgium – 1594 euros, Germany – 1584 euros, France – 1539 e.

Minimal pension – more and more people have minimum pension. Last year it was only 50 000 persons, since january 2021 – more than 200 000 persons. Since january 2021 under new government is minimum pension linked with medium wage. There is effort to change system of minimum pension. Till today is valid after 30 working years is minimum old-age pension 334,30 euros monthly (33% months medium wage in economy). Every working year more increases

pension 2%. 42 working years brings 391,10 euros. After 50 working years – 441,50 euros. Maximum pension is not limited.

Very bad situation is with seniors who needs care. Old people´s homes are low quality and small room. Seniors can´t take with even picture album. Or very expensive. They can´t be paid by pension. Only with the support of children. During 2nd wave of COVID-19 died many people especially in old people´s homes.

Minimum Income

Old people without demand on minimum pension they must ask for minimum income. Since beginning of year minimum income increased 2,5 % (1,60 euros) - **66,30 euros for person**. Old people with minimum income can demand accomodation contribution.

If there is one person with the child, maximum 4 children – minimum income 126,20 euros monthly. Couple without children – 115,30 euros. Couple with children (maximum 4 children) – 172,60 euros. If one person has more than 4 children – 184,30 euros. Couple with more than 4 children – 232,60 e.

Safety contribution is 67,90 euros/ person for the poorest ones. **Accomodation contribution** is 57,20 euros monthly for 1 person and 91,40 euros monthly for more family members. **Lump-sum benefit for extraordinary expanses** of people with minimum income is given by municipality.

To receive minimum income is not automaticaly. Individual must ask for it and complete the form. (<https://www.upsvr.gov.sk/>). The best through e-mail comunication.

There is great discussion, if Slovakia was social state in the past, as it was declared by ex-prime ministers and politicians. Peter Mach, head of Association of Christian Seniors in Slovakia, was statistician , head of Statistic office. He researched from Eurostat datas, that Slovak government financial support of social care is among last member states in EU. The same situation is to pay pensions. We felt down among last ones as Bulgaria, Romania and Baltic countries.

Hand in hand with low minimum wage goes low minimum pension. We need increase the pensions 8 – 10% more. There is a lack of adequate minimum income and social protection. Again we face educative reform and scientific-technological growth, to establish universities with higher wisdom. Not memorizing which can repeat parrot.

Done by Anna Galovičová, PhD., Chairwoman of SAPN