

INTERNATIONAL DAY
17 FOR THE **ERADICATION**
OCT. **OF POVERTY**

ERADICATING POVERTY THROUGH LOCAL & NATIONAL STRATEGIES

SLOVAKIA

POVERTY WATCH 2025



EUROPEAN ANTI POVERTY NETWORK



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Poverty in Slovakia – Statistical Data and Trends (2023–2024)

In Slovakia, poverty and social exclusion have shown relatively stable but worrying trends over the last decade, with limited progress in reducing rates to meet EU targets. The main indicator used is the **at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion (AROPE)** rate, which combines low income, severe material and social deprivation, and very low work intensity.

Slovakia continues to be among the weaker economies. Despite the continuous growth of wages since Slovakia's accession to the EU, the country still remains among the weaker economies in the European context. The Slovak average wage has increased by a significant 905 euros since 2004. However, with 1,583 euros according to EU data, Slovaks lag behind their neighbours. In the Czech Republic, the average employee earns 2,000 euros, while Austria, with more than 4,500 euros, forms a completely different economic segment. On the other hand, Hungarians earn less than Slovaks with an average wage of 1,408 euros and Bulgarians with 1,125 euros. Despite lower salaries in some countries, Slovaks often have higher living costs. For basic food and housing, they pay 25% more than in Poland and 17% more compared to the Czech Republic. The introduction of a reduced VAT rate on selected foods to 5% had a short-term effect, but the increase in the basic rate to 23% significantly worsened the situation.

The average wage in Slovakia is growing, but inflation is holding back real profits. The cost of living and weak purchasing power continue to complicate the improvement of living standards. The average monthly wage in Slovakia has increased again and reached EUR 1,430 in 2023, which represents a year-on-year increase of 9.7%. Despite positive statistics, many residents do not feel this trend in their finances. The main reason is persistent inflation, which is eroding the purchasing power of Slovaks. The EU shows an even higher average wage, namely EUR 1,583, but this indicator is viewed critically mainly due to differences in methodology and the data included. What the employer adds, inflation takes away. After a dramatic rise to 15.4% in early 2023, inflation fell to 2.1% by mid-2024, but the summer period brought a renewed increase in prices. In November 2024, inflation already reached 3.2%, and according to current data for the last month it exceeded 4%. And while wages are expected to grow by 5.5%, real salaries adjusted for inflation will increase only minimally, by about 1%.

In –working poverty is one of the greatest problem in Slovakia. Especially last years many great companies and factories collapsed and reduced workers. Today Slovak workers in automobile industry face unemployment. EU is not competitive.

Many families face energetical poverty. After 3 years of War on Ukraine there are majority PEPs critical towards Rusofobia. Especially Slovak PePs who lost job after separation Czechs and Slovaks, and many of them knew Czecho-Slovak President Vaclav Havel, who was imprisoned several years and persecuted. When he became Head of Czechoslovakia, he didn't spread Rusofobia, but he stopped to produce arming, weapons. Especially Slovaks, who were considered as "smaller brother" and Czechs as "older brothers" - long-time in dominant state positions, can understand inequality and how important is the patience and "soft power" solution of the conflicts. Today they are close relation between Czechs and Slovaks.

Slovak PePs wait the help to the families with the many children, single families with the children, new minimum income, for hard workers time limit to finish hard manual work and to become pensioner.

As of the latest available estimates (2023), **approximately 15.8–16.5%** of Slovakia's population was at risk of poverty or social exclusion, slightly below the EU average but showing limited improvement since 2013 (when it was around 19–20%). While the long-term trend shows a modest decline, progress has slowed in recent years due to inflation and the COVID-19 and energy crises, which increased living costs, especially for low-income households.

People at risk of poverty (income below 60% of national median income) made up around 12–13% of the population in 2023–2024, fluctuating only slightly over the last decade (from about 13.3% in 2013 to 11.9% in 2022). This suggests persistent income inequality despite overall economic growth.

People below the absolute poverty threshold (as defined nationally) are not officially measured in the same way, but severe material and social deprivation rates remain around 6–7% in 2023–2024. This represents some improvement from nearly 12% in 2013, but recent inflation threatens to reverse these gains.

Vulnerable groups continue to be disproportionately affected. The risk of poverty is significantly higher among **children, Roma communities, single-parent households, unemployed people, and seniors living alone**. In segregated Roma settlements, poverty rates often exceed 80–90%, indicating extreme exclusion that national averages conceal.

Overall, while Slovakia has made modest progress in reducing poverty over the past decade, the trend in 2023–2024 highlights rising cost-of-living pressures and persistent structural inequalities that threaten to slow or even reverse gains without stronger, more targeted anti-poverty measures.



Bratislava 2025 – hotel Carlton 2nd Soft power conference organized by European Institute of Democrats and Slovak-Indian Friendship society with the partner org. Slovak Anti-Poverty Network.

Slovakia has adopted NAPS & LAPS

1. **Mapping and general description of existing National and Local Anti-Poverty Strategies (NAPS & LAPS), including:**
 - a. **Scope and Priorities**

Working Definition of Poverty

Slovakia's National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPS) and Local Action Plans for Social Inclusion (LAPS) define poverty not only as a lack of income but as a **multi-dimensional phenomenon** involving limited access to resources necessary for living a dignified life. This includes **material deprivation, low work intensity, and at-risk-of-poverty income levels**, in line with the EU's AROPE (At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion) indicators. The strategy views poverty as both a cause and consequence of social exclusion, placing strong emphasis on long-term structural issues like education inequality, housing segregation, and unemployment.

Main Policy Areas and Priorities

The Slovak anti-poverty strategy addresses poverty through **comprehensive, cross-sectoral policies**, with an emphasis on both preventive and corrective measures. The main policy areas include:

- **Income Support:** Adequate social transfers and minimum income schemes targeted at the most vulnerable populations.
- **Employment:** Activation policies, job placement programs, and incentives for employers to hire long-term unemployed or low-skilled individuals.

- **Housing:** Access to affordable and social housing, especially for marginalized Roma communities and low-income households.
- **Health:** Measures to reduce health inequalities, increase health literacy, and improve access to basic healthcare services for marginalized populations.
- **Education:** Inclusive education policies that focus on early childhood education, desegregation, and reducing early school leaving among disadvantaged children.
- **Child Poverty:** Targeted programs for children in vulnerable households, including school meals, educational support, and family counseling.
- **Homelessness:** Expansion of social housing and services aimed at homeless individuals and families, including emergency shelters and reintegration programs.

Links with Other National Frameworks

The NAPS/LAPS are aligned with and integrated into broader national frameworks, such as:

- The **National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP)**, which includes social reform measures, digitalization of public services, and investments in education and employment.
- The **National Reform Programme**, which outlines Slovakia's socio-economic priorities and supports long-term poverty reduction goals.
- **Regional development strategies** aimed at reducing disparities, especially in Eastern and Southern Slovakia.

This integration ensures that anti-poverty efforts are supported by adequate resources, policy coherence, and institutional coordination.

Intersectional Approach and Focus on Marginalized Communities

Slovakia's strategy acknowledges the **intersecting forms of disadvantage** experienced by specific groups, such as women, children, Roma communities, persons with disabilities, the elderly, and single-parent families. It emphasizes **targeted interventions** that address structural discrimination and systemic barriers.

The **marginalized Roma population** receives particular attention, with integrated programs in education, health, housing, and employment. Measures also aim to improve public infrastructure and community cohesion in segregated settlements. The intersectional approach also involves gender-sensitive budgeting and initiatives to support victims of domestic violence and trafficking.

Alignment with EU and International Social Rights Frameworks

Slovakia's anti-poverty policies are closely aligned with international commitments and EU strategic goals:

- **European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR):** The strategy supports its key principles, particularly those relating to access to education, social protection, healthcare, housing, and inclusion of vulnerable groups.
- **2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** The focus on poverty eradication (Goal 1), quality education (Goal 4), reduced inequalities (Goal 10), and sustainable communities (Goal 11) reflects Slovakia's alignment with the UN 2030 Agenda.
- **EU Child Guarantee:** Slovakia is implementing measures to ensure that all children have access to essential services including early education, healthcare, adequate housing, and nutrition.

- **EU Roma Strategic Framework 2020–2030:** Slovakia’s national Roma inclusion strategies contribute directly to EU-level objectives on equality, inclusion, and participation.

b. Indicators

Indicators Used to Assess Progress of NAPS/LAPS

Slovakia assesses progress in its national (NAPS) and local (LAPS) anti-poverty strategies primarily using **EU-defined and national statistical indicators**, focusing on both **monetary and non-monetary dimensions** of poverty and social exclusion. Key indicators include:

1. **At-risk-of-poverty rate (AROP)**
 - Share of people with income below 60% of national median equivalised income.
 - Standard EU indicator for relative income poverty.
2. **Severe material and social deprivation rate (SMSD)**
 - Measures enforced lack of essential items, such as ability to pay bills, afford nutritious meals, or maintain adequate heating.
3. **People living in (quasi-)jobless households**
 - Especially for children, this assesses labour market attachment of working-age household members.
4. **At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate (AROPE)**
 - A composite indicator combining AROP, SMSD, and low work intensity.
5. **Child-specific indicators**
 - Child AROPE rate; enrolment in early childhood education and care (ECEC); child homelessness or institutional care placements.
6. **Education-related indicators**
 - Early school leaving rates; educational attainment; access to inclusive schooling, particularly for Roma children.
7. **Housing quality and access**
 - Overcrowding, access to water/sanitation, affordability of housing.
8. **Access to employment**
 - Unemployment rate, long-term unemployment, and NEET rate (youth Not in Education, Employment, or Training), disaggregated by region and ethnicity.
9. **Local indicators (LAPS)**
 - Municipal-level needs assessments often include data on informal settlements, access to services, and social work case loads.

Limits of Current Indicators

Despite using a broad set of indicators, there are **significant limitations**:

- **Insufficient disaggregation:** Data often lacks disaggregation by ethnicity, gender, disability, or migration status, especially at the local level. This obscures the full extent of intersectional disadvantages.
- **Lack of qualitative and community-based data:** Progress assessments rely heavily on quantitative indicators, with limited integration of qualitative outcomes (e.g. empowerment, trust in institutions, satisfaction with services).
- **Underreporting in Roma settlements:** Poverty in marginalised Roma communities is often undercounted due to informal housing, unregistered residents, or mistrust of official surveys.
- **Infrequent updates:** Some social inclusion indicators (especially at the municipal level) are updated infrequently, making it hard to track real-time progress or make course corrections.

- **Limited local capacity:** Municipalities often lack the technical capacity or data infrastructure to regularly monitor and evaluate LAPS progress systematically.

Who/What Has Been Included?

Included:

- **Marginalised Roma communities:** Central to both NAPS and LAPS, with targeted interventions in housing, education, employment, and health.
- **Children and youth:** Recognised as a vulnerable group, with alignment to the EU Child Guarantee and targeted early childhood interventions.
- **Unemployed and low-income individuals:** Active labour market policies, minimum income support schemes, and retraining efforts are included.
- **Single-parent families and large families:** Recognised for their higher poverty risk, though support mechanisms are still evolving.
- **Municipalities and local NGOs:** Particularly within LAPS, they are involved in service delivery and outreach to vulnerable populations.
- **EU-level actors:** Slovakia works within the EU monitoring framework and benefits from EU funds such as ESF+ and Recovery and Resilience Facility.

Who/What Is Missing?

- **People with disabilities:** Although mentioned, disability inclusion is inconsistently addressed. There is limited strategic focus on accessible services, inclusive employment, or deinstitutionalisation beyond general social services.
- **Women and gender-based inequalities:** Gender is not sufficiently integrated into the analysis of poverty, particularly in relation to unpaid care, single motherhood, and labour market barriers.
- **Migrant and refugee populations:** These groups are not systematically included in planning or monitoring, despite emerging vulnerabilities (e.g. from the war in Ukraine).
- **Homeless people:** Although addressed in principle, data on homelessness is sparse, and there is a lack of national coordination for homelessness prevention.
- **Voices of the poor:** The direct participation of people experiencing poverty in policymaking and monitoring is minimal, particularly at the national level.

c. Governance mechanisms and consistency amongst policy actors

National vs. Regional/Local Implementation: Gaps and Disparities

Identified Gaps or Disparities

Slovakia faces **significant territorial disparities** in poverty rates and social exclusion risks:

- Higher poverty in **Eastern and Southern Slovakia** versus Western regions.
- Extreme deprivation in **marginalised Roma communities**, particularly in rural segregated settlements.
- Limited access to quality services in **remote and rural areas**.

These disparities are acknowledged in national diagnostics (e.g. Social Inclusion Reports, Roma Inclusion Strategy assessments).

Key gaps identified include:

- Uneven coverage of social services.
- Lack of affordable and social housing in high-need municipalities.
- Weak local labour markets.
- Segregation in education.

Are NAPS/LAPS Covering These Gaps?

Strengths:

- NAPS provides strategic direction and funding frameworks that target high-poverty regions.
- LAPS are explicitly designed to tailor solutions to local needs, prioritising regions with marginalised Roma communities.
- EU and national funding (e.g. Recovery Plan, ESF+) has been channelled into social housing, education desegregation, employment services.

Limitations:

- **Capacity gaps in municipalities:** many small municipalities lack expertise or staff to design and deliver effective LAPS.
- **Variable quality of LAPS:** some local plans are highly specific and needs-based, others are vague or formalistic.
- **Funding sustainability:** heavy reliance on EU funds, with limited secure long-term national funding for local social services.
- **Weak coordination:** National guidance exists, but horizontal coordination between sectors and vertical coordination with municipalities can be fragmented.

Missing Gaps

- **Persistent Roma settlement segregation:** despite local plans, very slow progress on spatial integration.
- **Urban poverty:** Less systematic attention to growing deprivation in certain urban neighbourhoods, including homelessness.
- **Migrants/refugees:** Virtually absent from both national and local plans.
- **Disability inclusion:** Inconsistent implementation of accessible services at local level.
- **Integrated service models:** Limited use of holistic, "one-stop-shop" approaches in many municipalities.

Steering Committee or Other Monitoring Body

Monitoring Structures

Slovakia's NAPS implementation is overseen through **inter-ministerial coordination and EU reporting frameworks**. Specifically:

- The **Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MoLSAF)** is the lead institution, coordinating policy and monitoring.
- A **Council of the Government for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality** includes a **Committee for Social Inclusion**, which can discuss social inclusion progress.

- Regular reporting to the **European Commission** under the Social Open Method of Coordination.
- Ex-ante and ex-post evaluations are required for EU-funded measures.

Methodology

- Primarily **quantitative monitoring**: poverty and social inclusion indicators (AROPE, child poverty, housing quality, employment).
- Administrative data and municipal reports for LAPS implementation.
- EU funds require monitoring of outputs and some outcomes.
- Periodic national reports on Roma inclusion progress.

Participation of People Experiencing Poverty (PEP)

- **Weak direct participation** in formal monitoring bodies.
- NGOs working with marginalised groups may be consulted, but people in poverty rarely participate in agenda-setting or formal evaluation.
- Limited use of participatory methodologies (e.g. community mapping, focus groups with affected groups).

Ministries Overseeing Adoption, Implementation, and Evaluation

- **Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MoLSAF)**: Primary lead, responsible for drafting the NAPS, coordinating LAPS methodology, distributing funding (including ESF+), monitoring outcomes.
- **Ministry of Finance**: Ensures budgeting, alignment with national fiscal policies and EU Recovery Plan commitments.
- **Ministry of Education**: Responsible for measures on educational inclusion, desegregation, early childhood education.
- **Ministry of Health**: Leads healthcare-access measures, reducing health inequalities.
- **Ministry of Transport and Construction**: Oversees social and affordable housing policies.
- **Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities**: Coordinates Roma inclusion policy, with dedicated focus on reducing poverty in marginalised Roma settlements.

These ministries collaborate through inter-ministerial working groups and are expected to align with EU-level frameworks.

Minister of Health Kamil Šaško has established the inter-ministerial working group for mental health prevention. It focuses mainly on children and adolescents. It addresses the shortage of psychiatrists and psychologists and the area of addictions. Šaško announced this after the 9th meeting of the Government Council for Mental Health.

The Institute of Health Analyses plays a key role. By collecting high-quality data, a comprehensive concept of mental health prevention will be developed, including primary, secondary and tertiary.

Together with the Commissioner for Children Jozef Mikloško, he has already defined ten key areas that need to be urgently addressed. He will cooperate mainly with the ministries of education, labour, justice and the interior. They should gradually determine short-term, medium-term and long-term priorities together.

The supra-ministerial group should also deal with investments. The group will also deal with addictions among adolescents, as well as the lack of personnel. Šaško presented a draft strategy for the development of human resources in the healthcare sector for the next 15 years.

In Slovakia, we have only 22 child psychiatric clinics. If you do simple math and divide it by 8 regions, you get a little more than two child psychiatric clinics per region - explained the Minister of Health.

The supra-ministerial group should also deal with investments. Šaško stated that by the end of March 2026, three children's psychiatric hospitals will be built, mainly from the resources of the recovery plan, totaling more than 2.5 million euros - in Martin, Bratislava and Prešov. In addition to prevention, the group will also address early intervention. The minister plans to pay attention to the most vulnerable groups, children in substitute family care, national minorities and migrants. They focused on destigmatization.

According to the commissioner, the number of young people struggling not only with alcohol or drug addiction, but also with non-substance addictions, such as digital technologies, is growing. "According to a survey by our office, up to 85% of children consider drugs and alcohol to be the biggest threat to the young generation," added Mikloško. We are going to address this within the framework of the newly established supra-ministerial group for mental health." - said the Commissioner. Today, children find it more difficult to access treatment for addiction. The system is practically inaccessible to them. The current criteria for entering treatment are so unfortunate that many young people remain without professional help, often until adulthood, when treatment is more complex and less effective. - explained the Commissioner. Treatment of addictions takes place exclusively in child psychiatry departments, which are significantly undersized. There is no specialized psychiatric facility for children and adolescents with drug addiction in Slovakia.

Another problem, according to Commissioner Mikloško, is that the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic requires a 4-week diagnostic phase when admitting children to centers with a resocialization program, while in practice the children do not even get there because they do not have an official diagnosis or have not undergone treatment to which they do not have access.

We also consider the length of treatment to be another problem. It cannot be decided by law or administrative regulation, but only by a specialist - a psychiatrist who knows the condition, individual situation and needs of the child patient.

Addictions among young people do not decrease, they only change the form and age at which they appear. The problem is shifting to an earlier age, and help is paradoxically becoming more distant.

At SAPN, we are dedicated to strengthening physical and mental health in the long term. Also, through the Youth EU program, Youth in Action, European Voluntary Service, and individually. The main method to start the "way up" and stop stagnating, physically and mentally declining - is to adopt psycho-hygienic habits. Teach people holistic health - just as a Matryoshka has more bodies, a person also has more levels, petals, layers like an onion. It is an old Indian model of personality that the Russians portrayed in a Matryoshka.

Unfortunately, today the Western world is oriented towards the outside world, secular life, with its advantages - the achievements of science and technology, and its disadvantages - consumerism, a society oriented towards material well-being, finances. With stress and civilization diseases from an unhealthy lifestyle without exercise and unhealthy diet. Etc. Drugs are an escape from problems.

In Slovakia, alcoholism among teenagers is spreading, along with marijuana and hard drug addiction. This also applies to today's social atmosphere in a polarized society, with the spread of various phobias - Russophobia, fear of war, fear of unemployment after school, fear of poverty, lack of social housing, rising food prices, etc.

And not only our citizens, our children and youth, but also children of refugees are suffering. Many today understand the situation in the EU that one day they must return home and start building what they are now destroying in the war. What their ancestors built. Hopelessness and loss of meaning in life perhaps play a key role here. After all, children and young people do not destroy their health, their lives without a reason.

Modern life constantly dictates the pace. If there's nothing to do, a person reaches for their mobile phone. Just sit and watch their own breathing, do nothing, is a natural tool for restoring mental health. It naturally leads to introspection, i.e. processing emotions, evaluating the day, life, or planning the future. And this process, together with empathy and compassion for others in need, can protect against anxiety, depression.



Mental health crisis.

The results of a large-scale survey of 144,000 European teenagers showed that up to 41% of young people in Europe have problems with mental well-being. Slovakia ranked below average. Only 55% of our teenagers feel psychologically well. Significant differences were also shown between the sexes. Mental health was reported by 64% of Slovak boys, but only 46% of Slovak girls. These data are part of the ESPAD research (European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs), which in 2023 also measured mental well-being for the first time. The survey also confirmed that all countries recorded worse results for girls than for boys, which is a trend observed across Europe.

According to a 2022 analysis in the medical journal The Lancet, rates of mental disorders among adolescents have increased globally over the past decade, largely due to the pandemic, military conflicts, and growing socioeconomic insecurity.

"Mental health is deeply connected to the wider social environment in which young people grow up and live," Kadri Soovova, director of advocacy group Mental Health Europe, told Euronews.

In this context, new findings on the importance of adopting psychohygiene take on even greater weight. Teenagers today live in an environment of constant intimidation by war, the expansion of war from Moscow, Russia to the USA, in constant digital harassment that prevents their mental regeneration and self-development.

Stress, overload, information noise. All this activates the sympathetic nervous system, which is only supposed to serve as a temporary "standby mode". However, if it remains on for a long time, the so-called allostatic overload occurs. The body loses its ability to regenerate and sleep disorders, burnout syndrome, or anxiety, fears, mental disorders, depression, dementia, etc. appear.

In other words, constant stimuli from digital devices prevent people, especially young people, from switching off. And this is one of the reasons why these psychological states are spreading in the era of digitalization.

Switching off, relaxing, thinking freely, yoga practice, calming down, reduces anxiety. This allows the nervous system to regenerate. Gradually, psycho-hygienic habits and cleansing from toxic thoughts, emotions, fears of war, phobias, restores emotional stability, helps with digital detox - you will stop being addicted to notifications and scrolling.

It develops "complex thought", instead of dismemberment, synthesis occurs. Instead of repeating stereotypes, projecting one's own shortcomings onto others (e.g. hatred, revenge to destroy others) and blaming others, gradually, by calming the mind and self-reflection, a person becomes aware of his own vindictiveness, hatred, cruelty. And gradually, self-development and expansion of consciousness occur.

Involvement of Diversity of Stakeholders

Who is Involved?

- **Government ministries** (as above).
- **Municipalities and local self-governments:** Responsible for LAPS preparation and delivery of local social services.
- **Civil Society Organisations (CSOs):** NGOs delivering social services, Roma community organisations, child welfare NGOs.
- **Academia:** Involved in research, needs assessments, and evaluations (though not always systematically).
- **EU bodies and funding instruments:** Provide policy direction and significant funding (e.g. ESF+, RRF).
- **International organisations:** Cooperation with UN agencies (UNICEF for Child Guarantee) on specific inclusion priorities.

Limitations

- **Trade unions:** Generally underrepresented in poverty policy dialogue.
- **Business sector:** Limited systematic engagement on inclusive employment.
- **Direct participation of people experiencing poverty:** Very limited. No standing mechanism to ensure their voices shape design or monitoring.
- **Cross-sector coordination:** Varies in quality; stronger in some regions, weaker in others.

Specific Attention to Urban, Rural, and Remote Areas / Geographical Cohesion

Strengths

- The NAPS and LAPS frameworks explicitly recognise **territorial disparities** as a major challenge.
- Targeted funding is allocated to **Least Developed Districts (NRO regions)** under Slovakia's regional policy.
- Roma Inclusion Strategy is geographically targeted at **municipalities with marginalised Roma communities**, many of which are rural or remote.
- Recovery and Resilience Plan includes investments in **affordable housing, preschool capacity, and healthcare centres** in under-served regions.

Limitations

- **Urban poverty** receives less systematic policy focus; homelessness in cities is acknowledged but under-addressed.
- Some urban neighbourhoods with concentrated poverty (e.g. in Bratislava or Košice) lack tailored social inclusion planning.
- **Rural capacity gaps:** Small municipalities often lack staff or know-how to deliver LAPS effectively.
- **Remote settlements:** Persistent lack of infrastructure and services; limited public transport connectivity complicates access to jobs and education.
- Funding tends to be project-based and time-limited, threatening long-term sustainability of service provision in less-developed areas.

d. Timeframe

Duration and periodicity of strategies

Slovakia's National Framework Strategy for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction (NRS) is intended as a **medium- to long-term strategic framework**.

- The original strategy was approved in 2015 as an open-ended framework with no fixed expiry, meant to guide policy over multiple years.
- A formal government-approved update was adopted in November 2020.
- This 2020 update specifically aligns with:
 - the EU programming period 2021–2027 for ESF+ and cohesion funding,
 - priorities of the European Pillar of Social Rights,
 - national planning cycles including the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP).

In practice, this means the strategy is designed to run in multiannual cycles of around 7 years, linked to EU funding periods.

Local Action Plans for Social Inclusion (LAPS), which implement national priorities at municipal level, typically have **shorter cycles** of about 3 to 5 years, coordinated with local development plans and funding cycles.

Monitoring and revision timelines

The NRS does not have a formal expiry date but is designed to be **periodically reviewed and updated**.

- Monitoring is intended to be continuous, coordinated by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MPSVR SR).
- Mechanisms include:
 - internal ministerial monitoring,
 - inter-ministerial coordination,
 - formal government reviews.
- There is no legally fixed schedule for revision, but in practice, major updates have occurred about every 5 years.
- For example, the 2020 update followed the adoption of new EU funding rules and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- A formal government resolution in December 2024 reviewed progress against the strategy's goals, demonstrating a **roughly 3–4 year review cycle**.

Local Action Plans (LAPS) usually have **clearer and shorter timelines**. They are expected to be revised approximately every 3 years, aligned with municipal strategic planning and EU funding calls.

Continuity beyond political cycles: is it synchronised with elections? Why?

The national anti-poverty strategy is **not legally tied to election cycles**. It is conceived as a strategic policy framework meant to provide stable, long-term direction regardless of changes in government.

However, elections and political changes do have practical effects:

- New governments can reprioritise, update, or adjust the strategy.
 - For example, the 2020 update aligned with the 2020–2024 government's programme declaration.
 - Despite this flexibility, the strategy is **strongly synchronised with the EU's multiannual financial framework (2021–2027)**. This forces any government to maintain a compatible approach to access European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and ESF+ resources.
- Duration and periodicity of strategies (e.g. short-, medium-, or long-term),
 - Monitoring and revision timelines,
 - Continuity beyond political cycles: is it synchronised with elections? Why?
 - Long-term guarantee of continuation of NAPS and LAPS after this policy cycle.

In essence, while the strategy is politically adaptable, EU conditionality ensures a degree of continuity beyond individual election cycles.

Long-term guarantee of continuation of NAPS and LAPS after this policy cycle

There is **no formal legal guarantee** that the NRS or LAPS must continue in exactly the same form after this policy cycle.

However, there are strong practical and institutional incentives that ensure continuity:

- EU funding requirements demand the existence of a consistent national strategy on social inclusion. Access to ESF+ and other cohesion resources depends on having a validated national framework.
- Local governments depend on the NRS to access funding and plan their own Local Action Plans (LAPS). Without a national strategy, municipalities would lose coordinated access to European and national co-financing.
- Slovakia's commitments under the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, the EU Child Guarantee, and the Sustainable Development Goals all require maintaining structured anti-poverty strategies.
- The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MPSVR SR) is responsible for ongoing coordination, monitoring, and updates.

As a result, even though future governments may rebrand, revise, or restructure the NRS and LAPS, the **need for such strategies is effectively “locked in”** by EU obligations, funding requirements, and the structural nature of poverty challenges in Slovakia.

2. *SAPN experience and assessment of the NAPS and LAPS*

a. *Involvement of SAPN (EAPN Member)*

The **Slovak Anti-Poverty Network (SAPN)** was involved in the drafting and monitoring processes of Slovakia's **National Framework Strategy for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction (NRS/NAPS)** and to a more limited and variable extent in the **Local Action Plans for Social Inclusion (LAPS)**.

Role and Nature of SAPN's Involvement

Consultation and Feedback

SAPN was invited by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MPSVR SR) to take part in **consultations** during the revision and updating of the national strategy in 2020. The network submitted **written feedback** and participated in **workshops and roundtables** organised by the Ministry. Its contribution focused on poverty reduction priorities such as child poverty, Roma inclusion, homelessness, access to social services, and participation of people experiencing poverty (PEP).

Participation in Advisory Bodies

SAPN is an **active member of the Government Council for NGOs (Rada vlády pre mimovládne neziskové organizácie)**, which is an official advisory body to the Slovak government. Within this Council, SAPN has used its seat in the **NGO Chamber (Komora mimovládnych neziskových organizácií)** to channel civil society recommendations, including those related to anti-poverty policy.

Participation in Monitoring Committees

SAPN (or its member organisations) also participates in **EU programme Monitoring Committees**, such as the **ESF+ Monitoring Committee**. These bodies oversee planning and monitoring of EU-funded measures that support NAPS/LAPS goals. SAPN provides expert feedback on funding priorities, programme criteria, and progress reviews.

Stages of SAPN's Participation

Drafting Process

SAPN participated during the 2020 update of the National Strategy, offering written comments and taking part in public consultations, workshops, and expert discussions. It also contributed recommendations through the Government Council for NGOs.

Implementation

SAPN itself does not implement state programmes directly but its **member organisations often deliver services and projects** co-financed through the NAPS/LAPS frameworks (e.g. social services, community work, educational support). At local level, some SAPN members participated in **municipal-level planning of LAPS**, although this varied by region.

Evaluation and Monitoring

SAPN provided **informal monitoring** through civil society shadow reporting and expert feedback. It is invited to **government reviews** (such as the 2024 evaluation) in an advisory role. Through Monitoring Committees, SAPN has a **formal consultative role** in assessing EU-funded programme progress.

Was SAPN's Contribution Reflected in the Final NAPS/LAPS?

Partially. Some of SAPN's recommendations were reflected in the final version of the updated national strategy. For example:

- The strategy includes a clearer **alignment with EU frameworks** such as the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals.
- There is formal recognition of **Roma inclusion, child poverty**, and the need for **community-based services**.
- The strategy mentions **participation of people experiencing poverty** as an important principle.

However, other proposals were only **partially or superficially reflected**, such as:

- Concrete commitments to expand **housing-first approaches** for homelessness.
- Systematic inclusion of **PEP** in formal decision-making and monitoring bodies.
- Stronger guarantees for **long-term, sustainable funding** of social inclusion measures.

Reasons for limited incorporation include **political priorities, resource constraints**, and **institutional fragmentation** across ministries and levels of government.

Which Other Stakeholders Were Involved in the Drafting Process?

Public Authorities

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MPSVR SR)

- Lead institution for coordination, drafting, and monitoring.
- Organised consultations, managed inter-ministerial working groups.

Other Line Ministries

- Ministry of Education: Inclusive education, child poverty.
- Ministry of Health: Health equity, access to services.
- Ministry of Interior: Roma inclusion, community policing.

- Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization (MIRRI): Regional cohesion, digital inclusion, EU fund alignment.
- Their involvement was **sectoral** and consultative, providing data, policy expertise, and alignment with their priorities.

Regional and Local Authorities

- Especially involved in **Local Action Plans (LAPS)**.
- Municipalities responsible for developing LAPS with local stakeholders.
- Level of involvement varied depending on capacity and interest.

NGOs and Civil Society

Slovak Anti-Poverty Network (SAPN)

- Advisory and consultative role.
- Participation in national consultations, NGO Council, Monitoring Committees.
- Advocacy for PEP involvement.

Other NGOs

- Slovak Catholic Charity (actively present in all Slovak regions)
- Roma rights organisations (e.g. ETP Slovakia, CVEK).
- Homelessness and housing NGOs (e.g. Proti prídu, Depaul).
- Child and family organisations (e.g. Úsmev ako dar).
- Disability, women's rights, mental health NGOs.
- Level of involvement varied, with stronger input from more established or networked NGOs.

Social Partners

Trade Unions and Employers' Associations

- Represented in the tripartite Council for Economic and Social Agreement.
- Low direct involvement in NAPS/LAPS drafting.
- Engagement largely limited to broader social policy discussions.

Experts and Academic Institutions

- Researchers from universities (e.g. Comenius University, Slovak Academy of Sciences).
- Experts providing background analyses and evaluations.
- Participation through consultations and thematic working groups.
- Level of involvement was moderate, with input valued but non-decisive.

EU and International Partners

- European Commission (technical guidance, funding priorities).
- International organisations (e.g. UNICEF, Council of Europe) providing expertise and advocating for inclusion of child poverty, Roma inclusion, and human rights standards.
- Their involvement was **indirect but influential**, shaping strategic priorities through funding conditions and policy dialogue.

b. Involvement of persons experiencing poverty (PeP)

The involvement of **People experiencing Poverty (PeP)** in the development and implementation of Slovakia's **National Framework Strategy for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction (NAPS/NRS)** and **Local Action Plans for Social Inclusion (LAPS)** has been limited and largely informal.

While the principle of participation of vulnerable groups is **acknowledged in strategic documents**, the actual **involvement of PeP** in the drafting, implementation, or monitoring processes has not been systematic, structured, or meaningfully institutionalised.

Role and Nature of PeP Involvement

1. Consultation through NGOs and Civil Society Networks

The main channel through which PeP were indirectly involved was via **civil society organisations**, especially the **Slovak Anti-Poverty Network (SAPN)**. SAPN and other NGOs with direct contact with PeP consulted with affected individuals and **incorporated their perspectives** in the recommendations submitted to the Ministry of Labour and other authorities.

However, PeP were **not directly invited to government-led consultations** or policy drafting forums. Their voices were filtered through intermediary organisations, rather than included in a direct co-creation process.

2. Local-Level Participation (LAPS)

At the local level, in some municipalities, **PeP were informally involved in community planning activities**, particularly through social workers, field programs, or community centres. For example, people in marginalised Roma communities may have shared their needs through **community fieldwork sessions**, but these interactions were rarely formalised into participatory governance structures.

3. Participation through Public Hearings or Events

Occasionally, PeP or individuals at risk of poverty participated in **public forums, hearings, or local discussions** organised by NGOs. These were typically one-time events without follow-up or structured influence on decision-making.

National Level (NAPS/NRS)

Partially. Some of the issues raised by PeP through NGOs were reflected in the final national strategy, such as:

- Emphasis on **child poverty, material deprivation, and long-term unemployment**.
- Reference to the need for **community-based social services and field social work**.
- Acknowledgement of the **importance of participation** of vulnerable and marginalised groups.

However, these reflections remained **general and declarative**, and there is **no evidence that specific inputs from PeP directly shaped policy content or priorities**. The lack of institutional mechanisms for PeP participation meant that their voices were not formally recorded, debated, or reported on during the policy development process.

Local Level (LAPS)

In some cases, particularly in **municipalities with active community programs**, local authorities incorporated feedback from residents of excluded communities into their LAPS. However, this process was **not consistent across all regions**, and many municipalities developed their LAPS without genuine consultation with PeP.

The variability in local capacities, political will, and absence of national guidance on participatory standards limited the extent to which PeP could meaningfully influence LAPS priorities.

Reasons for Limited Reflection of PeP Contributions

Several factors contributed to the weak institutionalisation of PeP participation:

- **Lack of legal or procedural frameworks** mandating the involvement of PeP in policy processes.
- **Insufficient political prioritisation** of participatory governance by national and local authorities.
- **Capacity constraints** in municipalities and NGOs to enable structured participation.
- **Stigma and marginalisation**, particularly of Roma communities, homeless people, and others, which created barriers to engagement.
- **Limited resources** dedicated to empowering PeP for participation (e.g. training, facilitation, translation, transport).

c. Drafting process of the NAPS/LAPS

The drafting process of Slovakia's National Framework Strategy for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction (NAPS/NRS) and Local Action Plans (LAPS) can be described as **partially transparent and only moderately inclusive**. While the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family did organise **public consultations and workshops**, participation was largely limited to **selected NGOs, experts, and institutional stakeholders**. Opportunities for meaningful participation by affected communities, especially People experiencing Poverty (PeP), were minimal and indirect, often mediated solely through NGOs without formal mechanisms to include their direct voice.

Although feedback was solicited in writing and through discussion forums, its **integration into the final strategy was uneven**. Some proposals—such as prioritising child poverty, Roma inclusion, and community services—were reflected at a general level. However, many concrete recommendations (e.g. ensuring sustainable funding, formal participation of PeP) were only partially adopted or omitted.

At the local level, the inclusiveness of LAPS drafting **varied widely** by municipality, depending on local capacity and commitment. Overall, while the process was **open in principle**, it lacked **systematic, structured, and empowering participation**, especially for the most marginalised groups whose needs the strategy is meant to address.

d. Content of the NAPS/LAPS

Reflection of Real Needs and Priorities of PeP

The **National Framework Strategy for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction (NAPS/NRS)** and **Local Action Plans (LAPS)** in Slovakia do formally acknowledge many of the critical issues faced by People experiencing Poverty (PeP). Their content recognises structural challenges such as:

- **Child poverty** and intergenerational transmission of disadvantage
- **Roma exclusion and segregation**
- **Unemployment and in-work poverty**
- **Barriers to education and lifelong learning**
- **Access to health services and social housing**
- **Homelessness and housing insecurity**

These priorities align with European Union frameworks like the **European Pillar of Social Rights** and the **2030 EU target on poverty reduction**, and signal the government's commitment to reducing poverty in a coordinated way.

However, the strategy's translation of these priorities into **concrete, rights-based measures** is often limited or insufficiently robust. Key challenges include:

- **Vagueness of commitments:** Many measures are described in general terms, without clear timeframes, targets, or guaranteed funding. For example, while acknowledging low benefit levels, the strategy does not commit to raising minimum income to meet basic needs.
- **Limited rights-based approach:** There is no legal guarantee of access to affordable housing or secure tenancy protections. Strategies mention social rental models, but fail to ensure their delivery at scale.
- **Education barriers:** Though school assistants and desegregation are noted, there is no plan to eliminate Roma school segregation fully or enforce anti-discrimination measures robustly.
- **Healthcare:** While health mediation is mentioned, there is limited expansion or secure funding for these services in marginalised communities.
- **Child poverty:** Measures often focus on social work, without structural reforms to improve family incomes or affordable childcare access.

Direct Needs and Priorities Identified by PeP

Feedback collected by NGOs working with PeP consistently points to urgent, concrete needs:

"I need stable housing so I don't keep moving with my kids every year."

"We need proper jobs here—not just seasonal work for men."

"I can't fill out all these forms, they keep turning me away."

"They treat us like criminals because we're Roma."

Such testimonies show that while NAPS/LAPS identify many of these challenges, the **measures proposed often lack enforceable solutions**, adequate financing, and sufficient detail to drive transformative change.

Moreover, participation of PeP in the drafting process was minimal and indirect—mostly through NGOs that themselves often had to advocate strongly to have these issues included at all. This means some local and practical realities (e.g. transport barriers to services in rural areas, fear of discrimination in offices) may be under-addressed.

Are There Other Policy Frameworks That Conflict With or Undermine NAPS/LAPS?

1. Economic and Fiscal Policy

Slovakia's broader **fiscal policy framework**, with strong emphasis on deficit reduction and public spending control, poses significant constraints. Strict budgetary targets have limited the scope for:

- Raising minimum income benefits to sufficient levels
- Expanding social housing stock
- Increasing funding for field social work and mediation programs

This tension means that even well-designed social inclusion measures struggle to secure stable, adequate financing.

2. Housing Policy and Local Resistance

Slovakia's **housing policy** is fragmented and underfunded. Despite recognising the importance of affordable and social rental housing in the NAPS/NRS, other frameworks:

- Prioritise commercial development over social housing construction
- Offer limited national incentives or enforcement to municipalities to build social housing
- Fail to address local-level resistance, particularly to housing for Roma communities

As a result, municipalities may formally adopt LAPS commitments to reduce housing exclusion, but **lack the legal or financial tools to deliver**.

3. Labour Market and Employment Policy

Active labour market policies often prioritise **short-term, low-paid, or subsidised jobs** without addressing structural barriers (e.g. regional economic disparities, discrimination against Roma). This undermines efforts to ensure stable, decent employment as a route out of poverty.

4. Migration and Integration Policy

While the NAPS/NRS mentions inclusion of marginalised communities, **migration and asylum frameworks** are largely separate, with little integration of inclusion measures for migrants or refugees. This can leave certain vulnerable groups **outside the scope of poverty-reduction measures**.

e. Implementation progress

Overall, the **implementation of the National Framework Strategy for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction (NAPS/NRS) and Local Action Plans for Social Inclusion (LAPS) in Slovakia is only partially on track** to deliver on its objectives. While there are positive elements and isolated good practices, significant systemic obstacles remain. These challenges risk undermining the strategy's effectiveness and its ability to reduce poverty and promote genuine social inclusion, particularly for the most marginalised communities.

Positive Factors and Good Practices Supporting Implementation

Despite obstacles, several factors have supported partial progress:

1. Alignment with EU Frameworks and Funding

- The NAPS/NRS aligns with the **European Pillar of Social Rights** and uses **EU structural and investment funds** (e.g. ESF+) to finance social inclusion projects.
- EU funding has supported field social work, community centres, and local social services in disadvantaged areas, particularly Roma communities.

2. Existing Local-Level Good Practices

- Some municipalities have developed **Local Action Plans (LAPS)** in collaboration with local NGOs and social workers, tailoring measures to community needs.
- Local-level cooperation has enabled targeted interventions such as health mediation, education support (school assistants), and community work in excluded settlements.

3. NGO Involvement

- Civil society organisations, including the **Slovak Anti-Poverty Network (SAPN)**, have advocated for vulnerable groups, delivered services, and pressured authorities to maintain poverty-reduction commitments.
- NGOs often act as implementing partners for EU-funded projects, ensuring delivery of field services.

4. Policy Recognition of Key Issues

- National strategies have acknowledged core challenges such as **child poverty, housing exclusion, long-term unemployment, and Roma segregation**, creating a framework for action.

Main Obstacles Hindering Implementation

Despite these positive elements, the overall implementation faces serious and persistent barriers that threaten to prevent the strategy from achieving its objectives:

1. Political Landscape and Instability

- Frequent government changes and political turnover disrupt policy continuity.
- Social inclusion is often **not a top political priority**, with shifting ministerial agendas leading to inconsistent commitment.
- Strategies risk being seen as formal obligations rather than living documents guiding action.

2. Limited and Insecure Funding

- Heavy reliance on **EU funds** creates vulnerability to project cycles and administrative delays.
- National co-financing is often insufficient, limiting the scale and sustainability of services.
- Social inclusion priorities compete with budgetary restraint and deficit-reduction policies, leading to chronic underfunding of social housing and income support.

3. Weak Governance and Coordination

- Fragmented responsibilities across ministries and between national and local levels hinder coherent implementation.

- While inter-ministerial coordination bodies exist on paper, their effectiveness is limited by low political weight and unclear mandates.
- Local authorities vary widely in capacity and commitment, leading to **uneven coverage and quality** of LAPS across regions.

4. Insufficient Monitoring and Accountability

- Monitoring mechanisms are often formalistic, focusing on project outputs (number of beneficiaries, services delivered) rather than long-term outcomes (poverty reduction, social inclusion).
- There is limited **public transparency** or accessible reporting on the impact of NAPS/NRS and LAPS.
- Weak evaluation reduces learning and adjustment of strategies based on evidence.

5. Limited Participation of PeP and Marginalised Groups

- People experiencing Poverty (PeP) have **no systematic, institutionalised role** in implementation monitoring or decision-making.
- Participation is typically indirect and mediated through NGOs, which themselves face resource and capacity limits.
- Marginalised Roma communities often experience **local resistance** to inclusion measures, especially housing initiatives, undermining local implementation.

6. Conflicting Policies

- Broader economic and housing policies often conflict with poverty-reduction goals:
 - Fiscal restraint limits investment in social housing and services.
 - Weak regulation of the rental market and low availability of social housing perpetuate housing exclusion.
 - Active labour market policies often prioritise short-term employment subsidies over structural reforms supporting decent work in disadvantaged regions.

f. Evaluation

The implementation of Slovakia's **National Framework Strategy for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction (NAPS/NRS)** and **Local Action Plans for Social Inclusion (LAPS)** has included formal **monitoring and evaluation mechanisms**, but these have been **uneven in practice**.

National strategies typically set out **planned annual or biennial reporting requirements** to the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. However, actual monitoring has been **irregular** and has often faced delays due to administrative capacity limits and shifting political priorities.

Frequency and Methods

- National-level monitoring has relied on **administrative data** (e.g. number of beneficiaries, services delivered), EU structural fund reporting requirements, and **progress reports** drafted by the ministry.
- At the local level, LAPS have varying monitoring approaches, typically tied to EU-funded project cycles. Municipalities receiving EU funding have been required to produce **evaluation reports** on project outputs.

- **Qualitative evaluations** (e.g. stakeholder interviews, field observations) have been rare, with limited systematic use of participatory methods to capture the experiences of People experiencing Poverty (PeP).

Examples of Good Practices

- Some EU-funded projects (e.g. community centre networks) incorporated regular **local-level participatory monitoring** involving social workers, NGOs, and municipal staff to adapt services to local needs.
- Prešov Region: Developed local monitoring committees involving municipal offices, social workers, and NGOs to review LAPS progress, share data, and adapt services, especially in marginalised Roma communities.
- Community Centres Network: Uses regular beneficiary surveys and staff feedback to evaluate service quality, adjust activities to local needs, and report outcomes to national authorities and EU funders.
- Komora NGOs: Association of NGOs conducts rigorous impact evaluation with own experts to measure improvements providing evidence for scaling up and policy advocacy.
- Municipal Social Departments: In some towns (e.g. Rimavská Sobota, Spišská Nová Ves), social workers gather regular case data to monitor client outcomes and adjust local action plans.
- Field Social Work Programme: Nationally coordinated reporting system tracks client contacts and outcomes, enabling aggregated evaluation of outreach effectiveness in excluded communities.

Local partnerships in certain municipalities have developed **integrated monitoring committees**, though these are not standard practice nationwide.

Which Stakeholders Were Involved in the Evaluation Process?

Evaluation and monitoring processes have involved a **limited set of stakeholders**:

- **Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family** as the lead institution, responsible for national reporting.
- **Regional and local authorities** for local action plan monitoring, often as EU project beneficiaries.
- **NGOs** delivering services or managing projects have produced internal and donor-required reports on activities and outcomes.
- **EU authorities** indirectly shape evaluation through funding requirements (ESF+, ERDF) demanding project-level monitoring and audit processes.

However, **People experiencing Poverty (PeP)** have rarely been directly involved in formal evaluation. Their feedback is often indirect, channelled via NGOs or ad hoc consultations rather than through institutionalised mechanisms.

Were Findings and Lessons Learned Used to Improve Strategies?

Use of evaluation results to **inform and adjust** national or local strategies has been **limited and inconsistent**:

- National strategies often include broad lessons learned sections, but these tend to be **descriptive rather than strategic**, identifying challenges without setting clear corrective measures.
- Local Action Plans (LAPS) funded through EU programmes have sometimes **adapted services** based on monitoring—for example, expanding health mediation or school assistant programmes in response to local demand.
- However, there is **no systematic national mechanism** ensuring that monitoring outcomes lead to policy change, resource reallocation, or redesign of strategic measures.

Examples (Where Available)

- Certain municipalities improved field social work services after identifying gaps in outreach to marginalised Roma settlements.
- Some community centres refined service offers (e.g. adult education, child activities) based on beneficiary feedback in local monitoring processes.

Nonetheless, such examples remain **isolated** and depend heavily on local leadership and EU funding cycles, rather than being integrated into a national learning system.

Transparency and Accessibility

The **drafting process** for the NAPS/NRS and LAPS was **partially transparent**:

- The Ministry organised **public consultations** and shared draft documents for comment.
- Information was made available online, but often in technical language, limiting accessibility for PeP and grassroots community groups.
- NGOs, including the **Slovak Anti-Poverty Network (SAPN)**, participated in consultations and delivered written feedback.

Opportunities for Meaningful Participation

- Participation was generally **consultative**, rather than co-creative. Stakeholders could comment on drafts but were not involved in agenda-setting or decision-making.
- Direct participation of **People experiencing Poverty** was minimal and indirect, usually mediated by NGOs without formal mechanisms to ensure their voice was heard.
- Local-level processes varied widely. Some municipalities held participatory workshops, but others developed LAPS through expert-driven or administrative processes with little public involvement.

Consideration of Stakeholder Input

- Some feedback was incorporated at a **high level** (e.g. recognition of child poverty, Roma exclusion, social housing needs).
- Many **concrete proposals**—for example, rights-based housing commitments, increased minimum income, structured participation of PeP—were only partially included or omitted.
- Local authorities often tailored LAPS to EU funding requirements rather than genuine participatory needs assessments.

3. Identification of good/promising practices

Target Group	Practice / Project Name	Description	Good/Promising Elements
Roma Communities	Community Centres Network	Nationwide network of centres providing social counselling, education support, health mediation.	Tailored local services; outreach to Roma settlements; ESF+ co-financing.
Roma Communities	Omamy Programme	Early childhood development programme training local Roma women to work with mothers and young children.	Empowers local women; improves parenting skills; evidence-based impact.
Children in Poverty	School Assistants Programme	Teaching assistants in schools with high numbers of disadvantaged/Roma pupils.	Supports inclusive education; reduces drop-out; ESF+ funded.
Children in Poverty	Free School Lunches	State-funded free lunches for pupils in selected schools or low-income families.	Reduces child hunger; promotes school attendance; universal/needs-based mix.
Seniors and Students	Free Public Transport	Free train travel for pensioners, students, and children on state-run lines.	Reduces transport costs; improves access to education, health, family ties.
Seniors	Home Care Support Projects	Municipal social services developing home-care and personal assistance.	Supports ageing in place; rural coverage; co-funded nationally/EU.
Seniors / Disabled / Rural Poor	Municipal Home Care Services	Long-term social service provided by municipalities offering daily assistance to seniors and disabled people.	Local delivery; tailored to user needs; formalises care jobs.
People with Disabilities	Supported Employment Services	Job coaching, workplace adaptation, employer incentives for hiring disabled people.	Promotes labour market inclusion; combines counselling and subsidies.
Socially Excluded / Rural Poor	Field Social Work Programme	Social workers deployed in marginalised areas, especially small municipalities.	Direct outreach; supports access to benefits, housing, education, crisis help.

Additional Details and Context

- **Community Centres Network:** Located in municipalities with high levels of Roma exclusion, these centres offer education support, health mediation, and social counselling with EU-funded sustainability.
- **Omamy Programme:** Innovative NGO-led initiative in Roma settlements where local Roma women (Omamy) are trained as early childhood educators. They work directly with families to improve parenting practices and child development outcomes. Evidence shows improved language, cognitive, and socio-emotional skills among participating children.
- **School Assistants Programme:** Funds teaching assistants to help children from disadvantaged backgrounds overcome language and learning barriers, supporting inclusive education and lowering drop-out rates.
- **Obedy zadarmo (Free School Lunches):** National measure offering free school lunches, either universally in certain grades or targeted to low-income families, reducing child hunger and supporting regular school attendance.

- **Cestovanie zadarmo (Free Public Transport):** Policy offering free rail travel for seniors, students, and children on state-run lines, reducing transport poverty and boosting access to school, health services, and family support.
- **Home Care Support Projects:** Municipal initiatives developing personal and nursing home-care services for seniors, funded through a mix of local budgets and EU co-financing.
- **Municipal Home Care Services (Opatrovateľská služba):** Legally defined social service delivered by municipalities to seniors and people with disabilities needing daily personal assistance, enabling ageing in place and supporting family caregivers.
- **Supported Employment Services:** NGO and public-sector projects delivering tailored job coaching, training, and employer incentives to help people with disabilities enter and remain in work.
- **Field Social Work Programme:** State-funded programme placing social workers directly in vulnerable municipalities, supporting families with accessing benefits, preventing eviction, improving school attendance, and resolving crises.

4. Recommendations to your national decision-makers

Recommendations for Improving the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) in Slovakia

1. Strengthen Coordination Across Ministries and Sectors

- Ensure that social, employment, health, housing, education, finance, and regional development ministries collaborate consistently.

2. Guarantee Sustainable and Predictable Funding

- Secure multi-year, dedicated budget lines for NAPS priorities.
- Better leverage EU funds on regional level, ensuring they co-finance strategic goals rather than fragmented short-term projects.

3. Ensure Meaningful Participation of People Experiencing Poverty (PeP) and NGOs

- Formalise involvement of PeP and NGOs in drafting, monitoring, and evaluating the strategy.
- Create participatory structures such as advisory boards including people with lived experience.

4. Adopt a Stronger Rights-Based, Targeted Approach

- Include concrete, measurable commitments addressing child poverty, Roma inclusion, housing, homelessness, and access to health.
- Ensure policy alignment with the European Pillar of Social Rights and SDGs.

5. Improve Data, Monitoring, and Evaluation Systems

- Improve clear, measurable targets and indicators for poverty reduction and social inclusion.
- Independent evaluations, and transparent public communication of progress.

6. Address Policy Coherence and Conflicting Frameworks

- Systematically review economic, fiscal, housing, and migration policies to ensure they do not undermine anti-poverty objectives.
- Incorporate social impact assessments into policy planning.

7. Prepare and Adopt a New Law on Early Childhood Care Starting from Age 3

- Develop and implement legislation guaranteeing access to quality early childhood care and education from age 3.
- Prevent early school leaving by supporting children's development and family inclusion, with a focus on marginalised communities.

8. Expand and Sustain National Projects Supporting First Job and Work Experience for NEETs

- Strengthen existing national programmes aimed at supporting young people Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEETs).
- Provide incentives for employers, mentoring, and quality on-the-job training to ensure sustainable labour market inclusion.

Recommendations for Improving Local and Regional Anti-Poverty Strategies (LAPS)

1. Build Local Capacities and Professional Support

- Invest in training for municipal staff on planning, delivering, and evaluating social services.
- Support local social workers, community workers, and NGOs with stable funding and professional development.

2. Foster Participatory Planning and Co-Design

- Include people experiencing poverty, local NGOs, community leaders (including Roma communities), and social service users in local strategy development.
- Create local advisory councils or participatory planning sessions.

3. Secure Adequate, Predictable Local Funding

- Ensure municipalities have stable financial resources to implement LAPS priorities.
- Promote effective use of EU and national funds for long-term social investments (e.g. community centres, housing, social services).

4. Improve Geographical and Social Targeting

- Prioritise support to marginalised communities in rural, remote, and urban-peripheral areas.
- Tailor interventions to local needs, recognising diversity in social exclusion (Roma settlements, seniors living alone, children in poverty).

5. Strengthen Coordination Between Local Actors

- Develop local coordination platforms among municipal offices, social service providers, schools, healthcare providers, NGOs, and employment offices.
- Share data, plans, and outcomes to avoid fragmented services.

6. Prepare Local Capacity and Infrastructure for Early Childhood Care from Age 3

- Plan and invest in local facilities and staff to deliver universal access to early childhood care starting at age 3.
- Coordinate with education and social services to prevent early school leaving and support children's development, especially in excluded communities.

7. Support Local Implementation of NEET Employment Projects

- Cooperate with national employment offices and programmes to identify local NEET populations.
- Encourage municipal partnerships with employers, training providers, and NGOs to deliver tailored support for first job experience.

8. Monitor, Evaluate, and Adjust

- Define local indicators and collect data on social exclusion and poverty outcomes.
- Regularly review strategies with community participation, making adjustments as needs evolve.

Through this Poverty Watch 2025 Report - Slovakia we aim to contribute to a better understanding of poverty as a multidimensional concept and its root causes, and to amplify the voices of PePs.

Majority Slovak PePs understood that the War on Ukraine is not cross border one. Is it War between USA (during the Ex President-Joe Biden and Russia? Is it War between EU (NATO) and Russia? We will see. The truth prevails.

These days Slovak Anti-Poverty Network is involved in new project „How to install House of Peace in the War time" guided by "5 countries human rights organizations „ - Germany, France, Switzerland, Austria, Slovakia - Czechia.

During the G 20 Indian Presidency the Motto was: One World - One Human Family - One Future. Ancient Vedic mantra known thousands of years ago during Vedic time. (in sanskrit - Vasudaiva Kutumbakam). G 20 is 2/3 of World population. It is the highest time to decide Europe of War or Europe of Peace for next generations, young people, our grand-children.



17.9-18.9.2025 Porto, Social meeting EAPN and Consultation with Mrs Roxana Mînzatu, Vice-president of the EC, Social care

