# National Fiche – Slovakia

## COVID-19 cases

On 6 September 2020, Slovakia registered 37[[1]](#footnote-1) COVID-19 associated deaths out of a population of around 5.46 million people[[2]](#footnote-2). Data on deaths and cases of COVID-19 were not disaggregated by disability status and no official data about deaths and cases in care homes was published.

## Emergency, lockdown, and confinement

Slovakia declared a state of health emergency from 16 March 2020[[3]](#footnote-3) to 13 June 2020[[4]](#footnote-4) to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, mass events were not allowed and people had to wear a mask when going out, except for children up to two years old and autistic people[[5]](#footnote-5). Regarding disability services, some of the activities were suspended during this period. For instance, the Association for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities suspended group sessions and closed their sheltered workshop[[6]](#footnote-6). Due to quarantine, personal assistants sometimes reduced their services due to concerns about their own health or their clients’. In some cases, clients refused these services for the same reason. To mitigate this situation, the state amended the legislation[[7]](#footnote-7) so that family members can provide personal assistance for up to 10 hours a day and receive a compensation funded by the state.

The Ombudsperson also informed that some social and health care services provided to persons with disabilities have been suspended without compensation or alternative, including daily care and outpatient social services[[8]](#footnote-8). This had a negative impact on health conditions and the social and financial situation of persons with disabilities[[9]](#footnote-9).

While the state of health emergency ended on 13 June 2020, differentiated measures were still applied depending on the situation in regions[[10]](#footnote-10). However, no specific measures have been introduced for persons with disabilities.

## Involvement of organisations of persons with disabilities

The involvement of organisations of persons with disabilities have been limited to those working in the provision of long-term residential social services that have been involved in the development of national policy, task forces or consultations[[11]](#footnote-11).

The NROZP – Slovak Disability Council remained active during the pandemic in commenting on legislative proposals. The Council submitted proposals for measures related to the situation of persons with disabilities including the amendment of the Act on public collections to extend the period of use of funds gathered by 12 months. This would allow NGOs to overcome their financial challenges due to COVID-19 crisis. The proposal is on the agenda of the Slovak Parliament[[12]](#footnote-12).

On 21st April 2020, 25 organisations working with various vulnerable groups, published a call for coordinated approach in support of vulnerable groups. The statement[[13]](#footnote-13) analysed the impact of the pandemic and measures adopted by the state on vulnerable groups, including older people and persons with disabilities. It highlighted important issues that must be addressed by public authorities and institutions including: the limited access to necessary services for families with children or adults with disabilities and the lack of support from experts to provide parents with advice to educate their children with specific needs at home. In this regard, the Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities received complaints from parents of children with disabilities who did not receive any form of social services (since the facilities closed) for more than two months while they were taking care of their children daily. The Commissioner addressed a letter to the Minister of Labor, Social Affairs and Family on 28 May 2020, echoing parents’ call for further information, communication and support while the social services facilities are closed, to help parents cope with the situation[[14]](#footnote-14).

## Communications and announcement

Initially, there was a lack of accessible information about the COVID-19 outbreak. Only Government press conferences were provided in sign language[[15]](#footnote-15). On this issue, the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights recalled the necessity of leaving no one behind in the context of the pandemic and that all information about measures and restrictions on fundamental rights and freedoms should be available in accessible format for persons with disabilities[[16]](#footnote-16).

The situation then improved gradually with interpreters who started wearing transparent face shields. The accessibility for people with visual impairment has also improved since the information in audio format has been added to the government website[[17]](#footnote-17) which also included a section with information about COVID-19 for the older persons. A dedicated hotline had also been launched and the Government announced that further information about the coronavirus will be shared on National TV and radio to reach people who did not have access to internet.

Additionally, easy-to-read information was available on the website of the Commissioner for Persons with disabilities.

Lastly, in terms of announcements, those of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family provided information concerning employment of people with disabilities and social services[[18]](#footnote-18).

## Institutions and closed settings

From 6 March 2020, the Slovak Government suspended visits to vulnerable groups including older persons and persons with disabilities in hospitals and social services [[19]](#footnote-19). The Ombudsperson for persons with disabilities raised the issue of inappropriate application of the Plan to lift up COVID-19 measures in social services. The four phases plan provided a progressive lifting of ban on visits and outings for residents in social care institutions in June 2020 with a cancellation of all restrictions in July 2020. However, the Ombudsperson noted that the plan had not been implemented properly and some institutions did not allow visits or interactions with families. Both persons with disabilities and their family were lacking information about these measures and the Ombudsperson added that “the rights of people with disabilities to maintain contact with people outside are disproportionately restricted”[[20]](#footnote-20).

The restrictions have also been applied recently depending in the situation in the respective regions and facilities[[21]](#footnote-21).

## Health care

During the lockdown, access to health care was extremely limited for diagnosis other than COVID-19[[22]](#footnote-22). The Slovak National Centre for Human Rights monitored this situation since health care facilities and doctors were providing urgent health care only. The Centre raised this issue to the Ministry of Health to take measures to remediate this situation violating the right to health and take steps to adopt legislation avoiding such situation in the future. The Ministry of Health informed that guidance (not disability specific), will be provided to health care providers but in the meantime, the Centre addressed letters to public providers of institutional health care calling them to remediate this situation and provide health care[[23]](#footnote-23).

## Social Protection

Regarding disability-related benefits, the assessment of persons was restricted and the set time for assessment was prolonged.

Working parents who were insured and taking care of a child with disabilities who is 11 years old or more, were entitled to a nursing benefit of 10 days that can be extended with a new application. The benefit is of 14 days for parents taking care of a child under 11 years old in case of closure of the facility due to the quarantine[[24]](#footnote-24).

1. Slovak Government’s website dedicated to COVID-19, 6 September 2020. Available at: <https://korona.gov.sk/en/coronavirus-covid-19-in-the-slovak-republic-in-numbers/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. As of 6 September, data available at: <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/slovakia-population/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Resolution 114/2020, Declaration of a state of emergency, 15 March 2020. Available in Slovak at: <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Resolution/18252/1> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Slovakia, Government of the Slovak Republic (Úrad vlády SR) (2020), Governmental Resolution No. 366/2020, On the Proposal to End the State of Emergency…, 10 June 2020, available at <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Resolution/18506/1> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. FRA Bulletin II, Coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak in the EU Fundamental Rights Implications, Country report – Slovakia, 4 May 2020. Available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/sk_report_on_coronavirus_pandemic-_may_2020.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. FRA Bulletin I, Coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak in the EU Fundamental Rights Implications, Country report – Slovakia, 23 March 2020. Available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/slovakia-report-covid-19-april-2020_en.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Slovakia, Zákon č.63/2020 o sociálnom poistení (Act Nr. 63/2020) on social insurance, 20 March 2020, available at https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2020/63/ and Zákon č.447/2008 o finančných prostriedkoch na kompenzácii ťažkého zdravotného postihnutia (Act nr. 447/2008 on financial aids for compensation of severe physical disabilities), 20 May 2020, available at: <https://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/2008-447> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Information from NROZP – Slovak Disability Council, 18 September 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. FRA Bulletin III, Coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak in the EU Fundamental Rights Implications, Country report – Slovakia, 3 June 2020. Available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/sk_report_on_coronavirus_pandemic_june_2020.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Information from NROZP – Slovak Disability Council, 18 September 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Človek v ohrození (2020), Spájame sa na pomoc zraniteľným skupinám, available in Slovak at: <https://clovekvohrozeni.sk/spajame-sa-pre-ochranu-zranitelnych-pred-covid19/?fbclid=IwAR2fMznAnwsYN7IjEkRDHtmzSEr0FEdwoZ0nhrreWZ__LwfFNl8nNh_S390> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, Request on behalf of parents caring for children with disabilities, 28 May 2020. Available in Slovak at: <https://www.komisarprezdravotnepostihnutych.sk/Aktuality/Media/Prosba-v-mene-rodicov-starajucich-sa-o-deti-so-zdr> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. FRA Bulletin I, Coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak in the EU Fundamental Rights Implications, Country report – Slovakia, 23 March 2020. Available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/slovakia-report-covid-19-april-2020_en.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Slovenské Narodné Stredisko pre l’Udské Prava – Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, Nedovoľme, aby nám vírus zobral našu ľudskosť, 26 March 2020. Available in Slovak at: <http://www.snslp.sk/?locale=sk#page=3047> [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Information from NROZP, 18 September 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. FRA Bulletin I, Coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak in the EU Fundamental Rights Implications, Country report – Slovakia, 23 March 2020. Available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/slovakia-report-covid-19-april-2020_en.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. FRA Bulletin IV, Coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak in the EU Fundamental Rights Implications, Country report – Slovakia, 2 July 2020. Available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/sk_report_on_coronavirus_pandemic_july_2020.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Information from NRZOP, 18 September 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Information from NRZOP, 18 September 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Equinet’s website, available at: <https://equineteurope.org/covid-19-response/#data> [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, Recommendations and binding procedures, guidelines and information for social service providers. Available at: <https://www.komisarprezdravotnepostihnutych.sk/Domov/Oznamy/Odporucacie-a-zavazne-postupy,-usmernenia-a-inform> [↑](#footnote-ref-24)