

Coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak in the EU

Fundamental Rights Implications

Country: Slovakia

Contractor: Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture

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1. Measures taken by government/public authorities

As of 16 March 2020 the Government declared the state of emergency in the health care system pursuant to the Article 5 of the Constitutional Law No. 227/2002 Coll.¹ That means work obligation to secure smooth performance of health care, i.e. no health care professional can refuse to come to work and exercising the right to strike is prohibited.² The Government Resolution declaring the state of emergency³ does not specify the end date. However, the Law No. 227/2002 specifies in its Art. 5 (2) that state of emergency can only be declared for a maximum of 90 days. The Law allows the Government to restrict the freedom of movement (Art. 5(3g)) but this measure has not been introduced yet.

The conscious spread of the virus is punishable by law. Pursuant to the Law No. 355/2007 Coll. on Protection of Public Health⁴ every person is obliged to notify The Office of Public Health Care of any circumstances preventing spread of communicable disease and to undergo quarantine. Violation of these regulations are punishable by a fine in the amount of 1659 EUR.⁵

Central Crisis Staff of the Slovak Republic and the Public Health Care Office recommends to limit everyone's mobility to only what is necessary – commute to work and securing basic necessities (groceries, hygiene, medicine, caring for an elderly or sick family member etc.). So far, no restrictions of free movement have been imposed. There is only a recommendation to limit social interactions as much as possible.

Mandatory quarantine

The Government introduced a 14-day mandatory quarantine period for all people coming to Slovakia from abroad. If they come individually, they are required to remain in a domestic quarantine (together with their household members if they cannot isolate themselves).⁶ However, there are many citizens living, working or spending their vacation abroad for whom the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs arranged assisted returns. More than 2000 citizens have requested repatriation. Mandatory 14-day quarantine applies to them as well. In this case the returnees are placed in one of the three facilities

¹ Slovakia, Law No. 227/2002 Coll. On the State Security in Times of War and State of Emergency. Available at <https://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/2002-227>; Slovakia, Government of the Slovak Republic (2020), 'Government Resolution No. 114/2020 on the Proposal to Declare State of Emergency Pursuant to the Law No. 227/2002 Coll.', 15 March 2020, available at <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Resolution/18252/1>

² Please see <https://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy&sprava=koronavirus>

³ Slovakia, Government of the Slovak Republic (2020), 'Government Resolution No. 114/2020 on the Proposal to Declare State of Emergency Pursuant to the Law No. 227/2002 Coll.', 15 March 2020, available at <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Resolution/18252/1>

⁴ Slovakia, Law No. 355/2007 Coll. on Protection of Public Health as amended, 21 June 2007, available at <https://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/2007-355>

⁵ Slovakia, Law No. 355/2007 Coll. on Protection of Public Health as amended, 21 June 2007, Para 56(2), available at <https://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/2007-355>

⁶ Slovakia, Office of the Public Health Care (Úrad verejného zdravotníctva) (2020), 'Opatrenie Úradu verejného zdravotníctva', 12 March 2020, available at http://www.uvzsr.sk/docs/info/covid19/Opatrenie_UVZSR_pri_ohrozeni_verejneho_zdravia_12.03.2020_karantena.pdf

of the Ministry of Interior for a period of 14 days.⁷ Their free movement is thus restricted for this period of time. Violation of the mandatory quarantine is punishable by a fine in the amount of 1659 EUR.⁸

Public Transport

The Office of Public Health Care recommends that only people wearing protective equipment (face masks, respirators) be allowed in the means of public transportation.⁹ Public transportation is organised by municipalities and self-governing regions. Some municipalities introduced free of charge use of public transport to limit contacts of drivers with passengers (i.e. otherwise passengers would have to buy tickets from the driver).¹⁰ State railways suspended all InterCity trains until further notice. All passengers are required to wear face masks or respirators. Trains operate in a restricted mode that usually applies during public holidays.¹¹

Small and medium-size business owners

As of 16 March 2020, all retail operations have been closed down for a period of 14 days (with the exception of groceries, pharmacies, drug stores, petrol stations, banks, post offices, news agents, animal food stores, telephone service providers, laundrettes, fast food stands,). Business associations (Association of Business Owners of Slovakia and Slovakia Trade Association) therefore call on the Government to introduce compensation measures for small and medium size business owners.¹² At the moment the Financial Administration of the Slovak Republic only postponed the deadline for submission of the tax declaration (from 31 March to 30 June).¹³ The Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic prepared 13 measures to help the business sector overcome the impact of coronavirus (deferral of instalments, provision of short-term loans, deferral of social and health security payments etc.).¹⁴ These have not been approved yet.

Education and schooling

Schooling on all levels (pre-school, primary and secondary schools and universities) and in all schools have been suspended for the period of 16 – 27 March.¹⁵ In relation to this measure parents can claim

⁷ SME (2020), 'Slovensko má 61 prípadov koronavírusu, sprísňujú sa opatrenia (minúta po minúte)', 15 March 2020, available at <https://domov.sme.sk/c/22358998/slovensko-ma-desat-novych-pripadov-celkovo-je-54-infikovanych.html?ref=tab>; SME (2020), 'Začali platiť sprísnené opatrenia', 16 March 2020, available at <https://domov.sme.sk/c/22359439/obchody-su-na-14-dni-zatvorene-v-statnych-nemocniciach-plati-nudzovy-stav.html?ref=trz>

⁸ Slovakia, Law No. 355/2007 Coll. on Protection of Public Health as amended, 21 June 2007, Para 56(2), available at <https://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/2007-355>

⁹ For more information, please see <https://www.korona.gov.sk/covid-19-prijate-opatrenia.html>

¹⁰ See for instance Briška, P. (2020), 'Aj medzimestské autobusy jazdia pre koronavírus zadarmo', My Trnava SME Daily, 17 March 2020, available at <https://mytrnava.sme.sk/c/22361301/aj-medzimestske-autobusy-jazdia-pre-koronavirus-zadarmo.html>

¹¹ For more information please see <https://www.zssk.sk/koronavirus/>

¹² Podnikate.sk (2020), 'Koronavírus a jeho dopady na živnostníkov a MSP – podnikatelia žiadajú kompenzačné opatrenia', 16 March 2020, available at <https://www.podnikajte.sk/financie-na-podnikanie/podnikatelia-zivnostnici-kompenzacie-koronavirus>

¹³ For more information please see <https://korona.gov.sk/informacie-pre-danovnikov/>

¹⁴ Podnikajte.sk (2020), 'Ekonomický balíček proti koronavírusu: 13 opatrení, ktoré plánuje vláda', 17 March 2020, available at <https://www.podnikajte.sk/financie-na-podnikanie/ekonomicky-balicek-proti-koronavirusu-13-opatreni>

¹⁵ Slovakia, Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (*Ministerstvo školstva, vedy, výskumu a športu SR*) (2020), 'Usmernenie ministerky školstva, vedy, výskumu a športu vo veci prerušenia vyučovania v školách a školských zariadeniach', 12 March 2020, available at <https://www.minedu.sk/usmernenie-ministerky-skolstva-vedy-vyskumu-a-sportu-sr-vo-veci-prerusenia-vyucovania-v-skolach-a-skolskych-zariadeniach/>

benefits called „taking care of a family member“ (*ošetrovanie člena rodiny, OČR*) that covers the 14-day period but only in case a child left home from school is younger than 11 years of age.¹⁶

On 12 March 2020, the Ministry of education published an official statement for the directors of schools on their website¹⁷. The directors are responsible for organisation of the distance education for their students but did not provide any specific instructions or support measures. The only official support from the Ministry of education is the recommendation to use official web portal VIKI¹⁸. This web portal contains some school materials for pre-schools and primary schools. School materials are available in Slovak and Hungarian language, not in Romani language or other minority languages. Accordingly, no support is currently provided for children with a migration background. The new government came was sworn in on 20 March and new measures are expected to be announced in upcoming days.

The state does not officially organise the childcare of those who are in “the first line”, such as service providers or health care providers. However, some of the municipalities (e.g Bratislava as the capital city) organize the care by themselves for their employees who provide the necessary services in the public interest.

Deficiencies in measures

Cases of various deficiencies in adopted measures have emerged, such as hotline dedicated to the provision of information about the virus being unavailable for hours¹⁹ or people being sent home from the hospital after having been tested for COVID-19.²⁰

Lack of protective equipment (face masks) and inadequate pricing

There is a general lack of protective equipment in pharmacies and shops as the Government failed to secure sufficient stock. The Prime Minister said people should not expect the Government to provide face masks and should start making their own (hand made).²¹ In fact, many local initiatives emerged sewing face masks for free for those in need. Furthermore, some business changed their production

¹⁶ Slovakia, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (*Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny SR*) (2020), 'Koronavírus a pracovné právo, PN a ošetrovné', 10 March 2020, available at <https://www.employment.gov.sk/sk/informacie-media/aktuality/koronavirus-pracovne-pravo-pn-osetrovne.html>

¹⁷ Slovakia, Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (*Ministerstvo školstva, vedy, výskumu a športu SR*) (2020), 'Usmernenie ministerky školstva, vedy, výskumu a športu vo veci prerušenia vyučovania v školách a školských zariadeniach', 12 March 2020, available at: <https://www.minedu.sk/usmernenie-ministerky-skolstva-vedy-vyskumu-a-sportu-sr-vo-veci-prerusenia-vyucovania-v-skolach-a-skolskych-zariadeniach/>

¹⁸ <https://viki.iedu.sk/resources/browser/verejne>

¹⁹ Topky.sk (2020), 'Slovenka Diana po návrate z Talianska zotrela náš systém: Márne telefonáty a zúfalé čakanie doma', 10 March 2020, available at <https://www.topky.sk/cl/1003201/1867839/Slovenka-Diana-po-navrate-z-Talianska-zotrela-nas-system--Marne-telefonaty-a-zufale-cakanie-doma>

²⁰ SME (2020), 'Má koronavírus. Po výtere ho poslali domov po vlastných (rozhovor)', 15 March 2020, available at [https://domov.sme.sk/c/22359299/ma-koronavirus-po-vytere-ho-z-kramarov-poslali-domov-po-vlastnych-rozhovor.html?ref=tab](https://domov.sme.sk/c/22359299/ma-koronavirus-po-vytere-ho-poslali-domov-po-vlastnych-rozhovor.html?ref=tab)

²¹ SME (2020), 'Samosprávy majú nedostatok rúšok, ZMOS žiada otvorenie galantérií', 18 March 2020, available at <https://domov.sme.sk/c/22362013/samospravy-maju-ndostatok-rusok-zmos-ziada-o-otvorenie-galanterii.html>

orientation and started producing face masks.²² However, the Police also warned against selling protective equipment for inadequate prices.²³ Facebook is also said to start removing such ads.²⁴

Vulnerable groups (seniors and persons with disabilities)

To protect vulnerable groups such as seniors and persons with disabilities visitations to all hospitals and social service facilities (such as retirement homes) were suspended.²⁵ The official Government website dedicated to providing information about the virus in Slovakia features a section with practical information for seniors.²⁶ It is difficult to assess vulnerable groups' access to information. Most of the information is in fact online but the Government also launched a hotline providing information on corona virus and National TV (Rádio a televízia Slovenska) also features daily Breaking News on corona virus.²⁷ In his press conference on 24 March 2020 the new Prime Minister also said the Government would launch a massive info-campaign regarding corona virus using National TV and radio to make sure that even those without internet access would have all the information needed.²⁸ Some municipalities try to mitigate the impact of the current situation on seniors, they organize support networks, provide information and also material help. For instance, Bratislava (capital city) has launched a helpline for seniors living in the town (similar helpline has been launched for parents taking care of their children)²⁹. The Government also plans to send information messages to persons older than 65 years of age³⁰. No systematic measures to reduce isolation and loneliness of the elderly in institutions have been identified.

On the local level various initiatives emerged to help seniors and persons with disabilities with grocery shopping, getting their medicine from the pharmacy etc..³¹ For instance, the city of Bratislava introduced

²² TA3 (2020), 'Slovenská firma mení výrobu, bude vyrábať ochranné rúška', 9 March 2020, available at <https://www.ta3.com/clanok/1178128/slovenska-firma-meni-vyrobu-bude-vyrabat-ochranne-ruska.html>

²³ Please see https://www.facebook.com/policiaslovakia/posts/3174664549230412?_tn=-R; Mitro, M. (2020), 'Slováci predávajú na Facebooku drahé ochranné rúška, na koronavírusu chcú zbohatnúť', 10 March 2020, available at <https://fontech.startitup.sk/slovaci-predavaju-na-facebooku-drahe-ochranne-ruska-na-koronaviruse-chcu-zbohatnut/>; Breiner, V. (2020), 'Koronavírus: Facebook sľúbil, že zruší reklamy na drahé ochranné rúška. Ako to dopadlo?', 14 March 2020, available at <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/772778/koronavirus-facebook-slubil-ze-zrusi-reklamy-na-drahe-ochranne-ruska-ako-to-dopadlo/>

²⁴ Denník N (2020), 'Minúta po minúte', 9 March 2020, available at <https://dennikn.sk/minuta/1790470/?ref=mpm>

²⁵ Slovakia, Ministry of Health Care (*ministerstvo zdravotníctva SR*), (2020), 'Tlačová správa: COVID-19: Zákaz návštev nemocníc, domovov sociálnych služieb', 6 March 2020, available at <https://www.health.gov.sk/Clanok?koronavirus-krizovy-stab-opatrenia>

²⁶ For more information please see <https://korona.gov.sk/prakticke-informacie-pre-seniorov/>

²⁷ For more information please see <https://www.rtv.slovakia.sk/koronavirus>

²⁸ For more information please see <https://www.ta3.com/clanok/1179264/tb-predstavitelov-vlady-o-novych-opatreniach-proti-nakaze.html>

²⁹ FB post of the mayor of Bratislava Matúš Vallo from 18 March 2020, available at: [https://www.facebook.com/vallo.primator/photos/a.904640343027299/1519507684873892/?type=3&theater](https://www.facebook.com/vallo.primator/photos/a.904640343027299/1519507684873892/?type=3&theater;); FB post of the mayor of Bratislava Matúš Vallo from 17 March 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/vallo.primator/photos/a.904640343027299/1518606831630644/?type=3&theater>

³⁰ SME Daily (2020), 'Matovič chce, aby mal štát možnosť využívať lokalizačné dáta operátorov', 24 March 2020, available at: <https://ekonomika.sme.sk/c/22366707/matovic-chce-aby-mal-stat-moznost-vyuzivat-lokalizacne-data-operatorov.html>

³¹ For instance the city of Brezno provides food delivery, for more information please see <https://www.facebook.com/1610164139261497/photos/a.1611072269170684/2598698570408044/?type=3&theater>; Nový čas (2020), 'Šľachetný čin Nových Zámkov: Mesto bude osamelým ľuďom roznášať potraviny a drogeriu', 16 March 2020, available at <https://www.cas.sk/clanok/957954/slachetny-cin-novych-zamkov-mesto-bude-osamelym-ludom-roznasat-potraviny-a-drogeriu/>; the City of Trnava provides shopping for people in need, for more information please see <https://www.facebook.com/brockatt/photos/a.1502729359939962/2529992490546972/?type=3&theater>

a hotline for seniors in case they need assistance.³² Bratislava also published information on their official Facebook Fanpage on how individuals can help the elderly.³³

As to persons with disabilities, there is a lack of accessible official information on the coronavirus outbreak. Only the website of the Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities features easy read information about the covid-19.³⁴ There is also a lack of information for persons with hearing impairment as Government's statements are not translated to sign language. The representative of persons with hearing impairment was supposed to meet in the week following 16 March with a representative of the Ministry of Interior to solve the issue.³⁵ Government's press conferences are now translated to sign language.

Due to corona virus outbreak some activities for persons with disabilities had to be suspended. For instance, Association for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (*Združenie na pomoc ľuďom s mentálnym postihnutím v SR*) suspended all group sessions for self-advocates and also had to close down their sheltered workshop. They are now collecting donations to even sustain the workshop.³⁶

Churches and religious communities

The measures adopted by the Government have also affected the possibilities to practice religion. All churches and religious groups suspended masses as the ban organisation of sport, cultural and social events applies to them as well.³⁷

Migrants

For the period of 13-23 March entry to territory of the Slovak Republic is also restricted. Entry is only allowed to the following categories: foreigners with a valid temporary or permanent residence permit, foreigners who are close relatives to citizens of the Slovak Republic, foreigners who regularly commute to work in Slovakia (they must prove this by a letter from their employer) and diplomatic missions officers.³⁸

Almost all border crossing and all international airports have been closed.³⁹

As of 13 March 2020, the Immigration Police offices shortened their office hours for the following 14 days and do not register any newcomers from the EU or their relatives in person. In this 14-day period it is sufficient for the EU citizens to send their registration by mail and finish it in person once the

³² For more information please see <https://bratislava.sk/sk/informacie-a-odporucania-k-novemu-koronavirusu-a-ochoreniu-covid-19>

³³ For more information please see https://www.facebook.com/Bratislava.sk/posts/3061067550622928?_tn_=_K-R

³⁴ For more information please see https://www.komisarprezdravotnepostihnutych.sk/getmedia/fc6f84aa-d79d-4a8c-a78e-1a0c550aa383/13-03-20_EasyRead_Coronavirus_forSlovak.aspx

³⁵ Blšák, M. (2020), 'Nepočujúcim chýbajú informácie o koronavírusu, vyhlásenia sa neprekladajú do posunkovej reči', 10 March 2020, available at <https://egoodwill.sk/aktuality/spravy/nepocujucim-chybaju-informacie-o-koronaviruse-vyhlasenia-sa-neprekladaju-do-posunkovej-reci/>

³⁶ For more information please see <https://www.facebook.com/bivio.centrum/photos/a.1428992447211639/2727904897320381/?type=3&theater>

³⁷ Slovakia, Office of Public Health Care (*Úrad verejného zdravotníctva*) (2020), 'Zdôvodnenie zákazu svätých omší a usmernenie ostatných cirkevných obradov', 11 March 2020, available at http://www.uvzsr.sk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4079:zdovodnenie-zakazu-svaetych-omi-anusmernenie-ostatnych-cirkevnych-obradov&catid=250:koronavirus-2019-ncov&Itemid=153

³⁸ Slovakia, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic (*Ministerstvo zahraničných vecí a európskych záležitostí SR*), 'Vstup cudzincov na územie SR', 18 March 2020, available at <https://www.mzv.sk/cestovanie/covid19/vstup-cudzincov-na-uzemie-sr-pocas-mimoriadnej-situacie>

³⁹ TA3 (2020), 'Zverejnili zoznam hraničných priechodov, ktoré sú ešte otvorené', 17 March 2020, available at <https://www.ta3.com/clanok/1178742/zverejnili-zoznam-hranicnych-priechodov-ktore-su-este-otvorene.html>

quarantine measure is lifted. Third country nationals can only submit their application for a renewal of their temporary or permanent residence permit. No other applications will be accepted at this time.⁴⁰

Roma communities

The Government has no strategy to prevent the spread of virus or deal with the actual spread in marginalised Roma communities many of which face high density of population and lack access to clean water.⁴¹ No specific and coordinated attention has been paid to Roma communities with respect to the spread of coronavirus.⁴² The Prime Minister only called on municipalities to provide clean drinking water to marginalised Roma communities.⁴³ Payment of social welfare was also of concern to the Government as they are paid at post offices and the officials were worried that Roma would gather in groups waiting for their welfare to be paid. The Government therefore ordered the police to ensure they are wearing face masks and to prevent any incidents.⁴⁴

As a reaction to the lack of coordinated attention paid to the needs of Roma communities the current Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities sent information in Roma language to 272 communities.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, marginalised Roma communities are recognised as communities at risk of spreading the virus in the new analysis of the Institute of Health Policy. The analysis models three possible scenarios of how the virus will spread in Slovakia depending on the severity of measures adopted. However, the authors admitted that even though they realize the risk of spreading the virus in marginalised Roma communities they could not factor it in the current version of the analysis. The updated version of the analysis will, however, works with the factor of vulnerable communities.⁴⁶

An NGO ETP Slovakia also published information leaflets on covid-19 in Romani language.⁴⁷ An NGO Healthy Regions (*Zdravé regióny*) launched a website for Roma containing informational videos about the coronavirus featuring various Roma community leaders and personalities.⁴⁸

⁴⁰ Please see

<https://www.facebook.com/policiaslovakia/photos/a.1525315730831977/3181599305203603/?type=3&theater>

⁴¹ Kovačič Hanzelová, Z. (2020), 'Koronavírus: Štát pre vysoko rizikové rómske osady nemá plán', 13 March 2020, available at <https://domov.sme.sk/c/22357032/koronavirus-stat-pre-vysokorizikove-romske-osady-nema-plan.html>; Vražda, D., hrivňák, T. (2020), 'Môžu sa stať z osád ohniská nákazy? Štát sa zatiaľ nespamätal, rúška tam prenikajú len pomaly', 17 March 2020, available at <https://dennikn.sk/1806084/mozu-sa-stat-z-osad-ohniska-nakazy-stat-sa-zatial-nespamatal-ruska-tam-prenikaju-pomaly/?ref=mwat>

⁴² For more information on the situation in marginalised Roma communities please see a description by Irena Biháriová, a former director of the People Against Racism NGO and currently a member of the Progressive Slovakia party at

<https://www.facebook.com/bihariova.irena/photos/a.108768310468620/214003679945082/?type=3&theater>

⁴³ SME (2020), 'Slovensko má 61 prípadov koronavírusu, sprísňujú sa opatrenia', 15 March 2020, available at <https://domov.sme.sk/c/22358998/slovensko-ma-desat-novych-pripadov-celkovo-je-54-infikovanych.html?ref=tab>

⁴⁴ SME (2020), 'Vyplácanie dávok: v Moldave ukázkovo, na Luníku IX bola tlačienica', 18 March 2020, available at <https://kosice.korzar.sme.sk/c/22361829/vyplacanie-davok-v-moldave-ukazkovo-na-luniku-ix-bola-tlacenica.html>

⁴⁵ Please see a Facebook status of Ábel Ravasz, the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities at <https://www.facebook.com/abelravasz/posts/2680210775380543>

⁴⁶ Slovakia, Institute of Health Policy (*Inštitút zdravotnej politiky*) (2020), 'Covid-19 – nový koronavírus', available at <https://izp.sk/covid-19/>

⁴⁷ For more information please see http://etp.sk/informacne-letaky-o-koronaviruse-aj-v-romcine/?fbclid=IwAR0JTA_a8U0HQyEwrma_iejR_vfLWtXiOvLVzo3smQPNK7UV8FpFk7u8Aq8

⁴⁸ For more information please see <http://koronatemerel.sk/>

Measures taken in prisons

Following the emergency meetings of the Security Council of the Slovak Republic in connection with the confirmed cases of Covid-19, the Prison and Court Guard Service have adopted the following measures:

- Visit entitlement of the accused and the convicted has been cancelled until further notice
- Body temperature of all entering persons into all correctional facilities and facilities of the service (including members of the prison guard service) shall be measured with a contactless thermometer
- A person with a body temperature exceeding 37.5 °C, with symptoms of Covid-19, or a person who has refused to measure their body temperature will be denied an entry to the facility
- In the case of a law enforcement authority, a judge, a lawyer and any other person providing legal aid and another authorized person and authority, the entry restriction shall be considered. If such entries are allowed, the facility will provide the entering person with a face mask which will be handed over upon departure (this applies only if they do not secure their own face masks).⁴⁹

As of March 23, the first case of the coronavirus in a convict was confirmed in the prison in Bratislava. He was transferred to the Prison Hospital in Trenčín.⁵⁰ The Prison Hospital also had to take protective measures in connection with the severe epidemiological situation. Further steps to increase protection against the coronavirus depend mainly on the situation that occurs in the state and in individual facilities. The hospital has already taken urgent precautionary measures.⁵¹

Measures taken regarding judicial proceedings

The courts have adopted several measures related to the coronavirus outbreak. First, they recommend the public only necessary contact with the courts, keeping social distance, they also shortened the opening hours and try to limit the number of persons present at the courts' premises⁵². The Ministry of Justice published guidance on the activities of notaries and lawyers saying that their services are not limited at this moment, they just need to respect general recommendations to prevent spread of coronavirus (avoid gatherings of a large number of persons, disinfect the premises, etc.)⁵³.

On 24 March, the Government approved a new law on certain emergency measures in relation to the spread of Covid-19 according to which in the state of emergency the courts shall hold hearings, main hearings, and public hearings only to the necessary extent. Because of the health protection reasons, the public shall be excluded from the hearings, main hearings, and public hearings⁵⁴. The law has been submitted to the Parliament under accelerated legislation procedure⁵⁵.

⁴⁹ Information provided by the Prison and Guard Service on their website:

<https://www.zvjs.sk/sk/aktuality/Zbor%20prijal%20C5%A1peci%C3%A1lne%20opatrenia%20v%20boji%20proti%20koronav%C3%ADrusu>

⁵⁰ Dennik N, Minúta po minúte, 23 March 2020, available at: <https://dennikn.sk/minuta/1817332/?ref=mwat>

⁵¹ Information provided by the Prison and Guard Service on their website:

<https://www.zvjs.sk/sk/aktuality/Koronav%C3%ADrus%20ohrozuje%20aj%20v%C3%A4z%C5%88ov.%20V%20tren%C4%8Dianskej%20nemocnici%20s%C3%BA%20na%20boji%20s%20ochoren%C3%ADm%20pripraven%C3%AD>

⁵² Slovakia, Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic (Ministerstvo spravodlivosti SR) (2020), 'Ministerstvo spravodlivosti SR prijalo preventívne opatrenia proti šíreniu koronavírusu', Information published at the website of the Ministry on 11 March 2020, available at:

<https://www.justice.gov.sk/Stranky/aktualitadetail.aspx?announcementID=2655>

⁵³ Slovakia, Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic (Ministerstvo spravodlivosti SR) (2020), 'Oznámenie Ministerky spravodlivosti k výkladu opatrenia ÚVZ SR', Information published at the website of the Ministry on 23 March 2020, available at: <https://www.justice.gov.sk/Stranky/aktualitadetail.aspx?announcementID=2706>

⁵⁴ Slovakia, Government of the Slovak Republic (Vláda SR) (2020), Návrh zákona o niektorých mimoriadnych opatreniach v súvislosti so šírením nebezpečnej nákazlivej ľudskej choroby Covid-19 a v justícii a ktorým sa menia a dopĺňajú niektoré zákony (The proposal of the Act on certain emergency measures in relation to the spread of dangerous contagious human disease Covid-19 and in the judiciary and amending certain laws), approved by the Government on 24 March 2020, available at: <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/24643/1>

⁵⁵ Slovakia, Government of the Slovak Republic (Vláda SR) (2020), Návrh na skrátené legislatívne konanie o vládnom návrhu zákona o niektorých mimoriadnych opatreniach v súvislosti so šírením nebezpečnej nákazlivej

2. Impact of the outbreak on certain national or ethnic communities

Impact on foreigners

Regarding the selected nationalities (Asian origin or Italians), there has not been reported or published any severe incidents, hate speech or harassment acts. Neither equality body, nor Public defender of rights or relevant NGOs have noticed any incidents of hate crimes or hate speech against above mentioned groups. According to journalist from public television (RTVS) who is covering the broadcasting for foreigners, migrants do not report any problems or incidents. When she monitored the situation, several foreigners living in Slovakia had stated they feel very safe in Slovakia⁵⁶.

However, migrants as such (as generalised group of strangers or foreigners) are being portrayed as one of the primary causes of the virus outbreak by extremists. For instance, the leader of extreme right wing party Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko (Peoples' party – Our Slovakia), that is currently part of the new parliament stated, that *“due to the open borders within the EU there are thousands people coming from different countries and we do not know anything about their health conditions, there are many migrants wandering across Europe without any control. And those people brought the coronavirus to Europe. And we have to limit ourselves now, wash our hands and put our people to the quarantine. If government is serious about our safety, it should close the borders and protect us”*⁵⁷. On 18 March, the video had more than 44 thousand views on internet.

The police confirmed that they have not recorded any attacks on incidents against foreigners in relation to the coronavirus outbreak⁵⁸.

Impact on Roma communities

In the case of Slovakia, another group most vulnerable to be hated are the people of Roma origin. Even though there have not been officially reported any incidents, many Roma activists reported on Facebook or other social media incidents of hate speech against Roma. For instance, a Roma teacher from eastern Slovakia reported, that Roma people waiting in lines in front of the post offices are targeted by non-Roma neighbours screaming on them and blaming them that they abuse social benefits and they are “cause” of coronavirus widespread in Slovakia⁵⁹. Unfortunately, no official institution or public media informed about these incidents so far, so we have just anecdotal evidence of such cases.

Another example is the attempt of the mayor of Rimavská Sobota, who published on his FB page an open letter for the Prime minister expressing his concerns that the virus will spread among the population due to the fact that many Roma recently returned from abroad and they do not respect the mandatory quarantine. He calls for the lock down of Roma settlement even though there has not been any single case of positive testing of inhabitants of the town so far⁶⁰. Until now, no lock down has been approved by the government. However, after the mayor published his open letter on his Facebook, huge amount of racial and xenophobic reactions appeared on internet.

ľudskej choroby Covid-19 a v justícii a ktorým sa menia a dopĺňajú niektoré zákony, approved by the Government on 24 March 2020, available at: <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/24644/1>.

⁵⁶ Information provided by a journalist from radio Slovakia International (public radio broadcaster) via telephone on 19 March 2020.

⁵⁷ Slovakia, Magazin 1: `Kotleba – do Európy prúdia migranti o ktorých nič nevieme a my si musíme umývať ruky (Kotleba – there are migrants flowing to Europe and we have to wash our hands), 12 March, available at: <https://magazin1.sk/kotleba-do-euro-py-prudia-migranti-o-ktorych-nic-nevieme-a-my-si-tu-mame-umyvav-ruky/>

⁵⁸ Information provided by the police on 20 March 2020.

⁵⁹ Michal Sivák, FB post from 18 March 2020, available at:

<https://www.facebook.com/michal.sivak.14/posts/2841868965850232>

⁶⁰ Jozef Šimko, FB post from 18 March 2020, available at:

<https://www.facebook.com/jozef.simko.125/posts/1418257628335103>

According to the police, they have not officially recorded any attacks on incidents against persons of Roma ethnic origin in relation to coronavirus outbreak⁶¹.

Activities and reactions of human rights institutions and public authorities

The equality body Slovak National Centre for Human rights (Slovenské národné stredisko pre ľudské práva – SNSLP) published announcement noting that regardless the state of emergency announced by the government on 16 March, all fundamental rights and freedoms still apply in the territory of the Slovak Republic. The fundamental rights and freedoms are guaranteed to all people without exception. No one can be harmed, favoured or disadvantaged, even in this situation marked by COVID-19. In the context of the current situation, the state may impose obligations only by law or by virtue of the law, within its limits and while respecting fundamental rights and freedoms. However, the measures taken must respect the principle of equal treatment in the area of employment and similar legal relations, social security, health care, the provision of goods and services and education⁶².

According to information provided by a representative of SNSLP, they have not recorded any incident of violation of human rights or discrimination based on nationality or ethnic origin so far. However, they intensely monitor the situation and are prepared to actively act if they notice any violation of human rights. The situation in Roma communities is of great concern since of the high risk of the negative impact of coronavirus due to the inadequate living conditions (see part 1). The equality body will monitor the protection of human rights in the Romani settlements regarding the upcoming measures by national and local authorities.⁶³

The office of the Public defender of rights have not recorded any complaints about human rights violation, discrimination based on ethnicity or nationality regarding the measures adopted in the current situation⁶⁴.

The governmental Plenipotentiary for national minorities also published an official statement about the translation of all relevant documents and measures adopted by the government to the languages of national minorities (Hungarian, Roma, Ukrainian, Ruthenian and German) and asked the government and other public authorities to respect the law on minority languages, which requires to publish all relevant information also in minority languages⁶⁵. For the time being, there is no official information to what extent the public authorities respect or violate this law.

3. Impact on privacy and spread of disinformation

Public authorities' reaction

The Office for personal data protection (data protection authority) published a statement explaining two issues related to the coronavirus outbreak⁶⁶. The office reacted to questions received from the public in

⁶¹ Information provided by the police on 20 March 2020.

⁶² Information provided by Slovak National Centre for human Rights on their website, <http://www.snslp.sk/#page=3043>

⁶³ Information provided by the director of Slovak National centre for Human Rights via Telephone interview on 18 March 2020.

⁶⁴ Information provided by the Public Defender of Rights office via telephone on March 19 2020.

⁶⁵ Official statement provided by the Office of plenipotentiary on their Facebook page on 18 March, available at <https://www.facebook.com/splnomocnenecpremensity/photos/a.200634817333002/591572834905863/?type=3&theater>

⁶⁶ Slovakia, Office for Personal Data Protection (*Úrad na ochranu osobných údajov*) (2020), Koronavírus a spracovanie osobných údajov (updated on 13 March 2020), available at:

connection to the coronavirus outbreak. The first explained issue concerns the measurement of the body temperature of employees by the employer. Regarding this issue, the Office for personal data protection says that the body temperature may be measured by employer however this data fall into a specific category of personal data and thus must be processed accordingly. The office refers to the GDPR, Article 9, paragraph 2, letter i) and on the national level to the Act no. 42/1994 Coll on civil protection of population as amended⁶⁷.

The second explained issues concerns working from home. The office points out that the risk of leakage of personal data during such work is higher, thus it is necessary to adopt additional measure to prevent leakage of personal data, for instance the computers used by employees at home shall be protected by password at least and other appropriate measures must be taken.

The Office for personal data protection confirmed that by 23 March 2020 they have not received any complaints about breach of the right to protection of personal data⁶⁸. The Office also did not react to the declaring of the state of emergency from the data protection perspective.

There have also not been any cases of the publication of personal data of patients by media. When the first cases of people with Covid-19 started to occur, the media informed on the locality they live in, or the company/organization they work for. No further details have been made public.

Monitoring of the migration of population

A private initiative has developed an application called ‘Zostaň zdravý’ (*Stay healthy*) that shall notify users whether there is a sick person having COVID-19 within 50 meters and less distance. The application notifies only (on) those persons who are using it. The application raised questions if it does not pose a threat to privacy and protection of personal data. However, according to the developers, the application does not record the personal data of its users, after the download and registration the users receive a registration number that is used by the application⁶⁹. No official complaints have been raised regarding the application *Stay healthy*. However, experts say that it is necessary to be careful when using various technology tools for monitoring people (their health status, migration, etc.) since it may be a potential threat of breach of fundamental rights⁷⁰.

The information on decreased internal migration of the population in Slovakia has been published based on the information from mobile network operators. According to mobile network operators, the overall migration of the population decreased by approximately 30 percent in recent days⁷¹. The government announced that if the migration will rise, it will adopt even more strict measures against coronavirus widespread, for instance, the Government will widen the state of emergency to apply for the whole country (by 20 March the state of emergency applies for the area of health care)⁷².

<https://dataprotection.gov.sk/uouu/sk/content/koronavirus-spracuvanie-osobnych-udajov-aktualizovane-1332020>

⁶⁷ Slovakia, Act no. 42/1994 Coll on civil protection of population as amended.

⁶⁸ Information provided by the Office for personal data protection via e-mail communication on 23 March 2020.

⁶⁹ Hospodárske noviny (2020), ‘Táto aplikácia vám povie, či sa nachádzate v blízkosti nakazeného človeka’, 18 March 2020, available at: <https://style.hnonline.sk/tech/2114921-zostan-zdravy-aplikacia-vam-povie-ci-sa-nachadzate-v-blizkosti-nakazeneho-cloveka> ; Pravda Daily (2020), ‘Slovenská aplikácia vás upozorní, ak ste v blízkosti človeka nakazeného vírusom’, 18 March 2020, available at:

<https://vat.pravda.sk/komunikacia/clanok/545872-slovenska-aplikacia-vas-upozorni-ak-ste-v-blizkosti-cloveka-nakazeneho-koronavirusom/>

⁷⁰ Denník N (2020), ‘Sme poslušní, lebo dúfame, že by sa nám katastrofa mohla vyhnúť, tak ako viackrát v minulosti’, 19 March 2020, available at: <https://dennikn.sk/1811382/sociolog-vasecka-sme-poslusni-lebo-dufame-ze-by-sa-nam-katastrofa-mohla-vyhnut-tak-ako-viackrat-v-minulosti/?ref=list>

⁷¹ Denník N (2020), Minúta po minúte, 18 March 2020, available at:

<https://dennikn.sk/minuta/1808508/?ref=list>

⁷² FB post of the Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini from 18 March 2020, available at:

<https://www.facebook.com/pellegrini.peter/posts/1564933810340684>

In recent days, media brought information that mobile network operators offered to provide the Government with information on the movement of persons mainly those who are or were abroad recently⁷³. Three biggest mobile network operators are saying that they have not provided public authorities with information on individuals who are/were abroad, they also say that it is technically impossible. They insist that they can provide only aggregated and anonymized data. The mobile network providers also call for the public authorities to set a frame when asking for data on migration of the population during a crisis so that the protection of personal data is fully respected⁷⁴. At a press conference held on 24 March 2020, the Prime Minister Igor Matovič announced that the Government will prepare an amendment of the Act on electronic communication⁷⁵ to be able to use localization data from mobile network operators⁷⁶. The Government passed the amendment and submitted it to the Parliament under the accelerated legislation procedure⁷⁷. According the amendment of the Act on electronic communication the data that are subject to telecommunications secrecy may be made available to the Public Health Authority at the time of emergency in the health service for the purpose of their collection, processing and preservation to the extent of necessary for the identification of natural persons in order to protect life and health. Such data may be collected, processed and retained by the Public Health Authority for the duration of emergency until 31 December 2020 at the latest⁷⁸. After the discussion in Parliament, the amendment has been softened so that smaller amount of data will be provided by mobile network operators to Public Health Authority⁷⁹.

⁷³ Týždeň.sk (2020), 'Koronavírus a údaje z mobilov. Operátori poskytnú vláde dáta, čo s nimi štát spraví?', 17 March 2020, available at: <https://www.tyzden.sk/politika/63250/data-o-vasej-polohe-moze-za-istych-okolnosti-ziskat-stat/>

⁷⁴ Žive.sk (2020), 'Mobilní operátori: Štátu pre koronavírus pomáhame, no podrobné údaje o pohybe poskytnúť nevieme', 13 March 2020, available at: <https://zive.aktuality.sk/clanok/145828/mobilni-operatori-statu-pre-koronavirus-pomahame-no-podrobne-udaje-o-pohybe-poskytnut-nevieme/>

⁷⁵ Slovakia, the Act no. 351/2011 Coll on electronic communications as amended.

⁷⁶ Slovakia, Government of the Slovak Republic (Vláda SR) (2020), Návrh zákona o niektorých mimoriadnych opatreniach v súvislosti so šírením nebezpečnej nákazlivej ľudskej choroby Covid-19 a v justícii a ktorým sa menia a dopĺňajú niektoré zákony (The proposal of the Act on certain emergency measures in relation to the spread of dangerous contagious human disease Covid-19 and in the judiciary and amending certain laws), approved by the Government on 24 March 2020, available at: <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/24643/1>

⁷⁷ Slovakia, Government of the Slovak Republic (Vláda SR) (2020), Návrh na skrátené legislatívne konanie o vládnom návrhu zákona o niektorých mimoriadnych opatreniach v súvislosti so šírením nebezpečnej nákazlivej ľudskej choroby Covid-19 a v justícii a ktorým sa menia a dopĺňajú niektoré zákony, approved by the Government on 24 March 2020, available at: <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/24644/1>

⁷⁸ Slovakia, Government of the Slovak Republic (Vláda SR) (2020), Návrh zákona o niektorých mimoriadnych opatreniach v súvislosti so šírením nebezpečnej nákazlivej ľudskej choroby Covid-19 a v justícii a ktorým sa menia a dopĺňajú niektoré zákony (The proposal of the Act on certain emergency measures in relation to the spread of dangerous contagious human disease Covid-19 and in the judiciary and amending certain laws), approved by the Government on 24 March 2020, available at: <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/24643/1>

⁷⁹ Slovakia, National Council of the Slovak Republic (Národná rada SR) (2020), Vládny návrh zákona o niektorých opatreniach v súvislosti so šírením nebezpečnej nákazlivej ľudskej choroby Covid-19 a v justícii, ktorým sa menia a dopĺňajú niektoré zákony (Government act on certain measures in relation to the spread of dangerous contagious human disease Covid-19 and in the judiciary amending certain laws), approved by the National Council on 25 March 2020, available at: <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Default.aspx?sid=zakony/zakon&ZakZborID=13&CisObdobia=8&CPT=29>; Slovak Spectator, 'Green light for government to collect data from mobile phones to halt the virus', 26 March 2020, available at: <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/22368365/green-light-for-government-to-collect-data-from-mobile-phones-to-halt-the-virus.html>

Most widespread hoaxes and misinformation

As for the most often shared hoaxes, one of them has been about that all shops and shopping centers will be closed, while soldiers are heading to capital city Bratislava and martial law is likely to be declared because of the widespread of coronavirus⁸⁰. Another massively shared hoax was the information about medicine, namely Ibuprofen, which should be by no means used to cure the COVID-19, as it worsens the course of the disease⁸¹. In this case, the police have already found the woman who spread the hoax about the coronavirus and Ibuprofen. According to the Slovak Police Force President Milan Lučanský the spread of hoaxes in an emergency situation may have aggravating circumstances, the police consider it as dissemination of alarm messages⁸².

Further misinformation and hoaxes are brought forward by representatives of different political parties. In recent days, coronavirus related news has been spreading saying that the US military is heading to Europe or large numbers of migrants are arriving uncontrollably. Milan Uhrík, the deputy chairman of ĽSNS party, a member of the European Parliament, has been spreading the scaremongering hoax for several days saying that “at the time of the spreading epidemic, the largest American army is heading to Europe.”⁸³ The Ministry of defense has denied this information and confirmed that US tanks and transporters were moving through Slovakia heading for Ukraine. The transport was properly authorized⁸⁴. According to the Ministry of foreign affairs, it is regrettable that member of European Parliament Milan Uhrík is spreading the hoax and exacerbates the tense situation⁸⁵.

The leader of extreme right-wing political party Peoples’ Party Our Slovakia (ĽSNS) Marian Kotleba criticizes the EU's approach where the virus has been spread all over the Europe thanks to open borders. He also mentions migrants from the Middle East and Africa who are not controlled by anyone and arrive illegally to Europe in huge numbers⁸⁶. Kotleba in another widely shared video calls for people to study alternative websites and the topic of the New World Order, criticizing the European Union for inaction⁸⁷.

The activities of public authorities against hoaxes and misinformation

Since the outbreak of coronavirus in Slovakia, various misinformation and hoaxes have been spreading mainly via Facebook, either in the form of shared posts, videos or sound recordings. The Police of the Slovak Republic regularly informs about hoaxes and misinformation with the highest impact on its official Facebook page⁸⁸ as well as on their page related to hoaxes and misinformation: Hoaxes and Scams – The Slovak Police⁸⁹. The police comment on the most widespread hoaxes and misinformation and provide official information. Beside other relevant information, police, for instance, shared the WHO information bulletins about the coronavirus and other relevant information materials on how to

⁸⁰ FB post from 15 March 2020, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=199204861308396>

⁸¹ FB post from 14 March 2020, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/hoaxPZ/videos/524209165168482/>

⁸² Denník N, Minúta po minute, 16 March 2020, available at: <https://dennikn.sk/minuta/1805097/?ref=mpm&fbclid=IwAR1z6653nKhNvJhSoY44O-pnC0l-ZVZ8zc17uONnV1aFV5nIllgg-kyWTJo>

⁸³ FB post of Milan Uhrík from 11 March 2020, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/ing.milan.uhrík/photos/a.193582427661544/1090953887924389/?type=3&theater>

⁸⁴ Slovakia, Ministry of defense of the Slovak Republic (*Ministerstvo obrany SR*), FB post from 15 March 2020, available at: US tanks and transporters are moving through Slovakia, heading for Ukraine.

⁸⁵ Dennikn.sk, Minúta po minute, 15 March 2020, available at: <https://dennikn.sk/minuta/1801867/?ref=mpm>

⁸⁶ Magazin1.sk, ‘Kotleba sa pustil do EU’, 16 March 2020, available at: <https://magazin1.sk/kotleba-sa-pustil-do-eu-zrazu-unia-mlci-a-nechava-staty-nech-sa-v-tom-topia-same/>

⁸⁷ Youtube channel of ĽSNS, video from 16 March 2020, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdyRyACTwBA&feature=youtu.be>

⁸⁸ FB page of Police Force of the Slovak Republic, available at: https://www.facebook.com/policiaslovakia/?ref=br_rs

⁸⁹ FB page of Police Force of the Slovak Republic on hoaxes and scams, available at: https://www.facebook.com/pg/hoaxPZ/posts/?ref=page_internal.

prevent from being infected. The police also call people for sharing only the official information on the coronavirus.

Media and private sector initiatives against hoaxes and misinformation

Regarding the media or private sector initiatives, we have noted several of them.

One of the initiatives is the “Charlatan Hunters” platform which refutes misinformation and hoaxes about coronavirus these days. Their long-term endeavour is “to put an end to a flood of non-medical nonsense, absurdities and obvious scams that pile on websites and forums.”⁹⁰ For example, they also responded to the statement by the Orthodox Church in Slovakia that Orthodox believers have a strong and lively belief, so they are protected by prayer and blessing of the saints depicted on icons and are not afraid of getting ill⁹¹. Their editor-in-chief, Maroš Rudnay, says that “the state still lacks a comprehensive initiative. Hoaxes are refuted only by the Slovak Police Facebook page and I am under the impression that their activity is driven by enthusiasts”.⁹²

Another similar initiative is the website konspiratori.sk. They published an article on “six tips on how to protect yourselves from the nonsense around coronavirus and how to select reports and news”⁹³.

The latest initiative is infosecurity.sk⁹⁴. They publish the reactions to the current hoaxes and misinformation concerning the coronavirus or provide official information and claims about the coronavirus and they also respond to the abovementioned misinformation disseminated by the representatives of the ĽSNS political party.

⁹⁰ Lovci šarlátanov, Web page available at: <https://www.lovcisarlatanov.sk/about/>.

⁹¹ Lovcisarlatanov.sk, ‘Reakcia na vyjadrenie Pravoslávnej cirkvi na Slovensku v súvislosti s koronavírusom’, 10 March 2020, available at: <https://www.lovcisarlatanov.sk/reakcia-na-vyjadrenie-pravoslavnej-cirkvi-na-slovensku-v-suvislosti-s-koronavirusom/>

⁹² Dennikn.sk, ‘Čakal som, že hoaxov bude ešte viac, hovorí lekár z Lovcov šarlátanov’, 15 March 2020, available at: <https://dennikn.sk/1802272/cakal-som-ze-hoaxov-bude-este-viac-hovori-lekar-z-lovcov-sarlatanov/>

⁹³ Dennikn.sk, Blog konspratori.sk, ‘Informačná karanténa: 6 tipov ako sa chrániť pred nezmyslami okolo koronavírusu’, 16 March 2020, available at: <https://dennikn.sk/blog/1802843/informacna-karantena-6-tipov-ako-sa-chranit-pred-nezmyslami-okolo-koronavirusu/>

⁹⁴ Infosecurity.sk, FB page available at: <https://www.facebook.com/infosec.sk/>