



## Press release

### **PUBLIC DEFENDER OF RIGHTS PRESENTED THE ANNUAL REPORT TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE**

Public Defender of Rights Mária Patakyová personally presented the annual report 2019 in the Committee of the National Council of the Slovak Republic for Human Rights and National Minorities. The members of the committee recommended the report for discussion in parliament.

"In 2019 I focused on issues that are important for the office from the long-term perspective. For example, system of control of police procedures and the independence of the police inspection; processing the applications at the Aliens Police, which I investigated via own-initiative survey (its results will be known in the first half of this year). I have focused on issue relating to children, seniors, marginalized groups and overlooked communities, "said Public Defender of Rights Mária Patakyová.

#### **Enforcement against children**

Already in 2018, Public Defender of Rights has drew attention to the problematic national legislation concerning fees for municipal waste. The national legislation has not sufficiently protected the children who have been exposed to the threat of enforcement for the debts of their parents after reaching adulthood. Therefore, Public Defender of Rights has turned to the Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic. However, a long- term call attention to the issue of legislation, in 2019 was approved legislation pursuant to pay fees transfer from a minor to his or her legal representative. Existing legislation also to set a deadline for dept for the minor. After this period, the debt will become their own (transfer from the minor to the legal representative).

#### **Opportunity to vote from abroad**

The existing legislation does not allow citizens of the Slovak Republic who are outside the territory of the republic at the time of the elections to vote in all types of elections. The Public Defender of Rights recommended the National Council of the Slovak Republic to adopt legislation that will enable them to participate in elections and referendums, even if they are abroad at the time of its proceedings.

#### **Ensuring standards of maternity care**

In order to achieve to standard level of maternity care, the Public Defender of Rights recommended the Ministry of Health to adopt standards that reflect the knowledge of evidence-based medicine, as well as internationally recognized standards in this field. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women also drew the Slovak Republic's attention to the absence of procedures and mechanisms to ensure adequate standards of care and respect for women's rights, dignity and autonomy during childbirth. The Public Defender of Rights informed that, relating to the seriousness of the issue of violations of women's human rights during maternity care in Slovakia, she will investigate this issue via own-initiative survey in 2020.



### **Access to drinking water**

The Public Defender of Rights also focused on time limitation of access to drinking water in the village of Blažice. The regional office of the Public Health Authority found that the water from the well in the Roma settlement is not suitable for drinking. Therefore, the municipality provided the inhabitants the opportunity to draw water at the municipal office. However, time was limited, during the weekend even one hour per day. The Public Defender of Rights has been drawing attention to issue of drinking water for a long time. The Public Defender of Rights recommended to the National Council to adopt such legislative amendments that would determine the entities responsible for access to drinking water, the rights and obligations of these entities, as well as the right to access to drinking water for all citizens.

### **Human rights situation for the past year**

The Office of the Public Defender of Rights worked with a total of 2,825 of complaints. 130 complaints were infringement of fundamental rights and freedoms. Most of them concerned of delays in trials. A special category were the delays in restitution.

In addition, the Office of the Public Defender of Rights has investigated ten of own – initiative survey, focusing on the inspection of facilities for the elderly and the enforcement of fundamental rights and freedoms in these facilities. As well as, the procedure of the aliens police, the process of domestic adoptions, the functioning of the business register, protection of victims of crime, etc.