

THE OFFICE OF THE PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY

— OBJECTIVES — ACTIVITIES — INITIATIVES —



THE OFFICE OF THE PLENIPOTENTIARY
OF THE SLOVAK GOVERNMENT
FOR THE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY

**THE OFFICE OF THE PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE GOVERNMENT
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY
Objectives, Activities, Initiatives**

Published by: Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic /
The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic
for the Development of Civil Society, 2025

Responsible Editors: Dominika Kováčová, Alena Petrželková
Translation: Matej Miklián
Graphic Design: Zuzana Chmelová
Photo: Tomáš Batiz, Andrea Sýkorová, Jakub Kočíš and Archive

The brochure can be found here



Address by the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Development of Civil Society, Ms. Simona Zacharová



I accepted the role of Government Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic with humility and a deep sense of responsibility—to the Government of the Slovak Republic, to my colleagues, but above all, to civil society. My goal is to remain authentic, not to offer empty political slogans, but to bring forward solutions that have a measurable impact on people's lives. The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Development of Civil Society, which I lead, is meant to be an expert space where the state, municipalities, civil society organizations, volunteers, and the academic community come together. I am convinced that only through cooperation can we strengthen Slovakia and prepare it for the challenges of today's world.

My priorities are clear: to build bridges between the state and civil society, to strengthen the country's resilience to crises and extraordinary situations, and to engage all stakeholders in solutions—from public administration to civic initiatives. At the same time, I firmly believe that transparency and fairness are not merely formal principles but the very foundation of trust, without which no society can function well and justly.

I pay special attention to volunteering—the backbone of our cohesion and resilience. We see it every day in social assistance, education, extracurricular activities, healthcare, but also in times of floods, storms, pandemics, or humanitarian crises. Volunteers are often the first to help, and that is why they deserve systemic solutions that support and protect them. I am proud that the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Development of Civil Society has become the national contact point for the United Nations' International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development 2026. This is both an honour and a challenge—an opportunity for Slovakia to showcase the best of what it achieves in the field of volunteering, while also setting new goals.

Since the beginning of my tenure, we have managed to launch several important initiatives and oversee four national projects funded from European resources, which bring systemic solutions in the areas of food assistance, support for umbrella NGOs, higher-quality participation in policymaking, and effective involvement of civil society in the implementation of EU funds.

I am convinced that civil society is a space for everyone who wants to contribute to positive change. My goal for the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Development of Civil Society is to be an expert hub for all those who decide to work with us. We will continue to pursue what we are convinced is meaningful: transparency as the foundation of trust, genuine participation as a standard, and equal partnership as the basis for a strong and confident Slovakia.

The Institute of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Development of Civil Society and its subordinate office were established in Slovakia in 2011. The Plenipotentiary serves as an advisory body to the Government of the Slovak Republic and through its activities:

“contributes in particular to connecting actors from state administration, local self-government, and civil society—especially non-governmental non-profit organizations, the academic community, an engaged public, including volunteers. At the same time, it fulfils the tasks arising from its Statute, as well as those assigned by the Government of the Slovak Republic.”

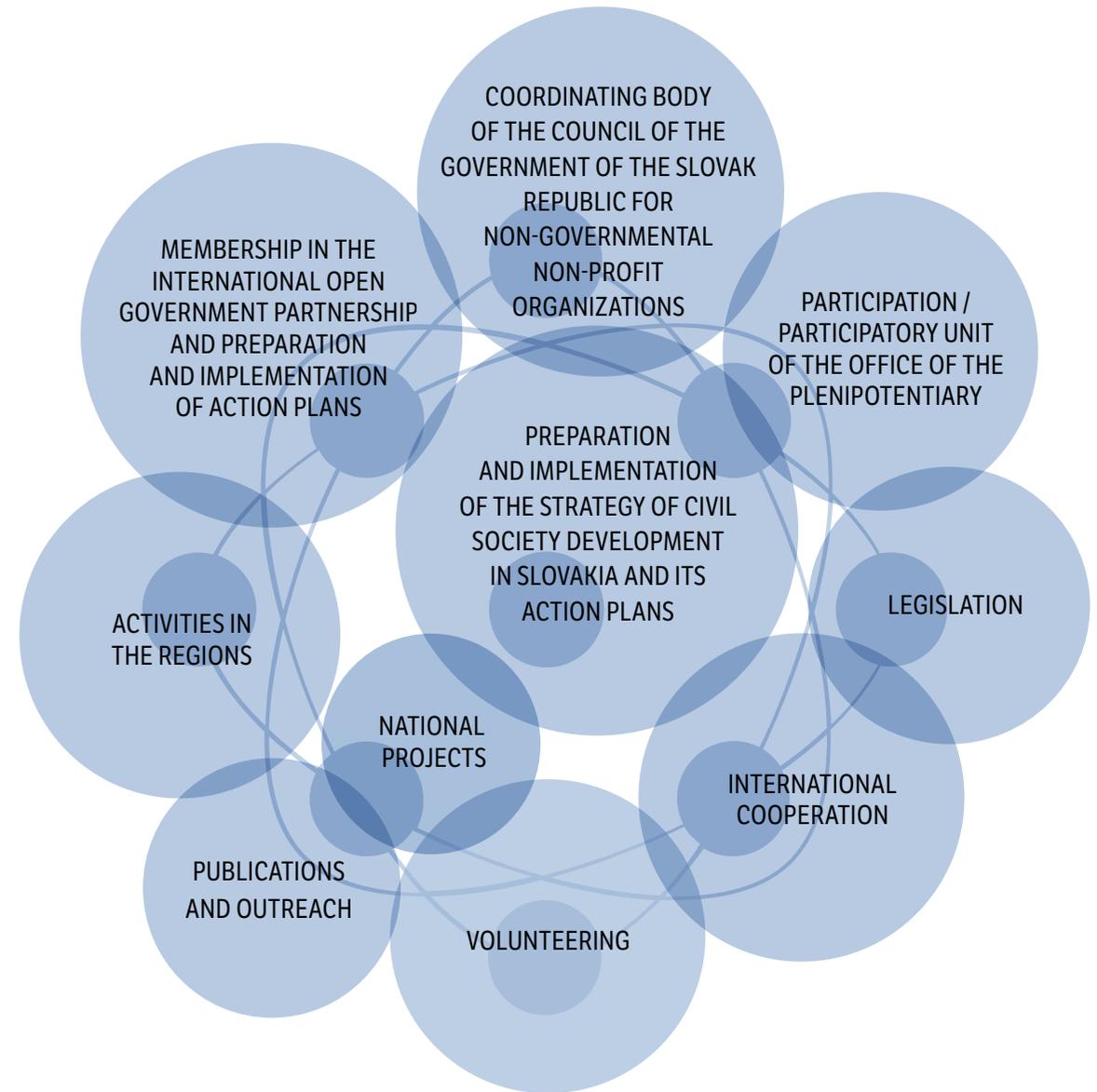
On 6 March 2024, the Government of the Slovak Republic appointed **Simona Zacharová** as the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Development of Civil Society.

The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Development of Civil Society (hereinafter referred to as “the Office of the Plenipotentiary”) consists of several expert teams that ensure the activities of the office’s core agenda as well as the implementation of projects.



Contacts

The Office of the Plenipotentiary has been consistently and purposefully fostering, developing and carrying out activities and initiatives aimed at supporting civil society in Slovakia.



COUNCIL OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

ADVISORY BODY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

The Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organizations (hereinafter referred to as “NGOs”) is a permanent expert, advisory, coordinating, and consultative body of the Government of the Slovak Republic in the field of non-governmental non-profit organizations in Slovakia, operating under its own Statute.

It consists of two chambers: the Public Administration Chamber (state administration and local self-government) and the NGO Chamber.

Within its mandate, the Council in particular:

- cooperates with ministries and other central state administration bodies, municipalities, local self-government, local state and public administration authorities, research institutions, and academic organizations, providing them with initiatives, proposals, and recommendations;
- submits proposals to the government concerning strategies in the development of non-governmental non-profit organizations and civil society;
- issues opinions and adopts resolutions on draft laws and other generally binding legal regulations, as well as governmental, sectoral, and other non-legislative measures that may affect the current state or development of non-governmental non-profit organizations and civil society;
- expresses and publishes positions on current issues in the development of non-governmental non-profit organizations and civil society.



CORE AGENDA OF THE OFFICE OF THE PLENIPOTENTIARY

Strategy of Civil Society Development in Slovakia

The aim of the Strategy of Civil Society Development in Slovakia is to analyze the current state of civil society in Slovakia, identify the priorities for its development, and at the same time provide proposals for measures to intensify cooperation between state authorities and civil society.

- The Strategy of Civil Society Development in Slovakia for 2022–2030 and its Action Plan for 2022–2026 have been approved by a resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic.



Open Government Partnership

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is an international initiative aimed at bringing together the state, civil society organizations, and active citizens, who work collectively to ensure that their government is:

- responsible,
- transparent,
- participatory,
- accountable.

The Open Government Partnership was launched on 20 September 2011, when eight founding member countries signed the **Open Government Declaration** and presented their first action plans. The Slovak Republic was among the first countries to join the initiative in the same year. The Office of the Plenipotentiary serves as the coordinator of the Open Government agenda and related processes in Slovakia, implementing this agenda primarily through commitments defined in biennial action plans.

- Action Plan for 2024–2026, approved by a resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic.



PARTICIPATION

Participatory Unit of the Office of the Plenipotentiary

The Participatory Unit of the Office of the Plenipotentiary was established in January 2024 as part of the long-term sustainability of the national project Support for Partnership and Dialogue in the Field of Participatory Public Policy Making II (hereinafter referred to as “NP Parti II”). It consists of expert staff whose task is to educate and assist public administration employees in public participation—engaging the public in the development of public policies. The team of the Participatory Unit of the Office of the Plenipotentiary carries out a wide range of activities which support participatory approach to public policy-making at all levels of public administration.



PARTICIPATORY UNIT
THE OFFICE OF THE PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE GOVERNMENT
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Learning Institutions

Since 2021, the Office of the Plenipotentiary has been implementing a three-day educational program called Learning Institutions, through which it trains civil servants in the field of participatory public policy-making. The aim is to support colleagues in the public administration to produce documents that take into account the needs of target groups as effectively as possible.

In addition to this program, the Participatory Unit of the Office of the Plenipotentiary also conducts one-day modular training to showcase public participation as a modern tool for preparing and creating public policies (e.g., focus groups, stakeholder mapping, facilitation, surveys, etc.). More than 150 employees of central state administration bodies (hereinafter referred to as “CSABs”) have participated in individual modular training workshops.

Learning Cities and Municipalities

Learning Cities and Municipalities are full-day workshops on public participation intended for local self-government employees, which the Office of the Plenipotentiary has been organizing since 2023. The Participatory Unit of the Office of the Plenipotentiary has already carried out workshops for nearly 40 cities and municipalities in Slovakia.

Design and Consultation of Participatory Processes

The Participatory Unit of the Office of the Plenipotentiary assists in designing and implementing participatory processes and activities in cooperation with central government authorities, according to their needs. It collaborates with the Department of Crime Prevention at the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic, the Department of Strategic Priorities Management at the Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic, the Section for Nature and Landscape Protection at the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic for the Recovery Plan and the Knowledge Economy, as well as with other central government authorities.

Participatory Index

The Participatory Index is a tool for assessing institutional conditions for public participation and open governance at the level of ministries and regional self-government. The Open and Participatory Government Index and the Participatory Index at Self-Governing Regions use comparable indicators to examine the contribution of individual ministries and regional self-government offices to introducing the principle of public participation into public administration and to fostering a culture of open governance in Slovakia.

Participation Coordinators at Self-Governing Regions

Within the framework of the NP Parti II national project, new positions of participation coordinators were established at self-governing region offices (Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region, Košice Self-Governing Region, Nitra Self-Governing Region, Prešov Self-Governing Region, Žilina Self-Governing Region). These coordinators continue to operate at the respective offices even after the conclusion of the national project. Their role is to integrate public participation into the daily operations of their offices and to provide professional and methodological support in planning and implementing participatory processes. Each participating region has adopted a Manual for Supporting the Management of Participatory Processes Implemented by Self-Governing Regions.

Analytical Activities

The Office of the Plenipotentiary carries out analytical work in the areas of public participation, civil society, and the principles of transparency and accountability:

- Analysis of the contribution of the charitable advertising scheme in the Slovak context, aimed at improving its effectiveness and attractiveness
- Analysis monitoring the consequences and impacts on civil society organizations during crisis situations
- Analysis of the publication of preliminary information and reports on public participation in the drafting of legislation
- Mapping and analysis of the current state of umbrella organizations in Slovakia
- Analysis of grant schemes funded from the state budget

Cross-Sectoral Coordinators

Cross-sectoral coordinators, operating in **six self-governing regions of Slovakia**, are based in regional offices. Their key role is the ongoing identification of civil society organizations (NGOs) active in the regions, creating opportunities for networking among NGOs in the area, and supporting their functioning according to defined needs.

Reconciliation of Family and Work Life for Women

The Office of the Plenipotentiary, in cooperation with the Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic, the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung representation, organizes a series of discussion events in Slovak regions. The aim of these meetings was to identify specific needs, challenges, and proposed solutions from local self-governing regions, employers, trade unions, non-governmental organizations, and the women themselves. The outcome of these meetings is a position paper, which was presented to the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic.

LEGISLATION

Exemption of NGOs from paying transaction tax

The Office of the Plenipotentiary, in cooperation with the non-profit sector, initiated communication with the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic regarding the exemption of NGOs from the obligation to pay transaction tax, which was successfully adopted.

Amendment to Laws Concerning Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organizations

A group of Members of the National Council of the Slovak Republic submitted a proposal to amend laws concerning non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The original aim of the proposal was to introduce a requirement for NGOs receiving funding from abroad to be labeled as “organizations with foreign support” (so-called “foreign agents”). Subsequently, the Constitutional and Legal Affairs Committee of the National Council of the Slovak Republic submitted an amending proposal that removed this labeling requirement but introduced provisions regulating lobbying activities exclusively in relation to NGOs.

The Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organizations discussed both the original parliamentary proposal and the subsequent amendment and adopted resolutions recommending that the Government of the Slovak Republic express its disagreement with them and calling on Members of Parliament not to approve them. The Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Development of Civil Society actively advocated for changes to the proposal in line with the requirements of international institutions (OECD, MONEYVAL, FATF, and others) aimed at ensuring greater transparency in NGO financing and had a significant influence on the final version of the law. In the adopted legislation, all provisions concerning the so-called foreign agent and lobbying were removed.

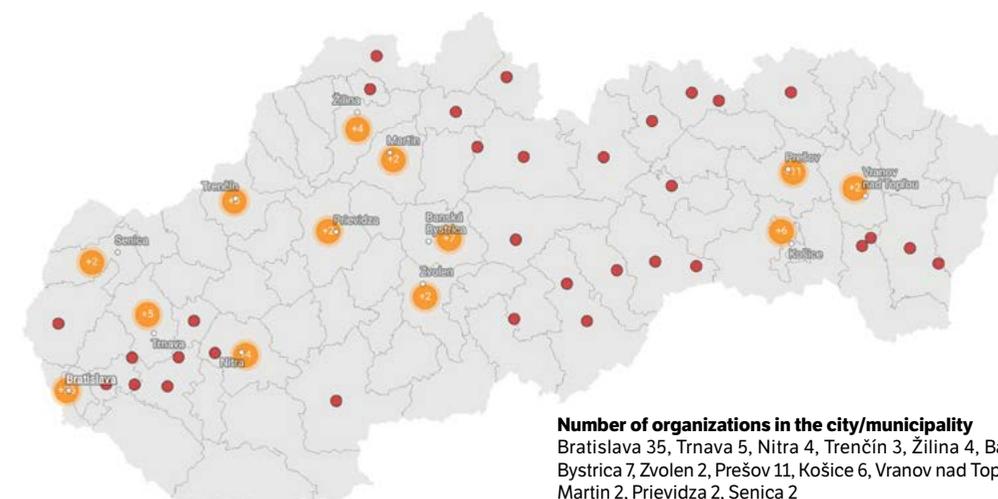
We perceive volunteering not only as an expression of solidarity and social cohesion but also as a reflection of society’s resilience.

Accreditation

In 2024, the Office of the Plenipotentiary launched an accreditation process for volunteer activities. Accreditation is a legislative tool—a state verification of capability for organizations and recipients of volunteer activities—which guarantees the quality of their programs. The Office of the Plenipotentiary serves as the coordinator and administrator of the accreditation process. To date, 116 entities have been accredited.

Map of accredited organizations

• Bardejov • Kováčová • Martin • Michalovce • Plaveč • Poprad • Rožňava • Veľké Zálužie • Čierny Balog • Lubotice • Banská Bystrica • Bratislava • Cinobaňa • Dolný Kubín • Dražice • Dvorianky • Galanta • Hlohovec • Hnúšťa • Hrubá Borša • Igram • Jelšava • Košice • Kysucké Nové Mesto • Levice • Liptovský Michal • Liptovský Mikuláš • Malacky • Nitra • Prešov • Prievidza • Senec • Senica • Sereď • Sečovce • Spišská Belá • Spišská nová Ves • Stará Ľubovňa • Trenčín • Trnava • Trstená • Vranov nad Topľou • Vysoká nad Uhom • Zvolen • Čadca • Žilina



International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development 2026



In December 2023, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution declaring 2026 as the International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development (IVY26). By a resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic on 10 September 2025, the Office of the Plenipotentiary became the national contact point for IVY26. The main objectives of IVY26 are to:

- Promote the importance of volunteering for sustainable development in line with Agenda 2030;
- Recognize and assess the contribution of both formal and informal volunteering in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals;
- Propose public policies that eliminate inequalities and risks associated with volunteering;
- Support the creation of platforms for sharing good practices and knowledge transfer, with the aim of developing and promoting new forms of volunteering.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

JRC—European Commission’s Competence Centre on Participatory and Deliberative Democracy

The Office of the Plenipotentiary **intensively cooperates** with the European Commission’s Competence Centre (Joint Research Centre) on Participatory and Deliberative Democracy under a Memorandum of Understanding. The Office of the Plenipotentiary collaborates with the Joint Research Centre on topics such as the monitoring and evaluation of participatory processes and citizens’ assemblies. These joint activities were also highlighted in the JRC Highlights Report 2024, in which the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre showcases its most successful collaborations.



OECD—Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

The Office of the Plenipotentiary cooperates with the OECD in the areas of public participation and open governance. Within the Open Government Working Group, it participates in the development of the international Open Government assessment mechanism—the OECD Citizens’ Participation Barometer. Slovakia was also **among the first countries** to provide data during its pilot testing.

International Conference Building Bridges: Enhancing Public Engagement

In 2025, the Office of the Plenipotentiary organizes the second edition of this international expert conference, focusing on topics such as public participation, civil society development, and the role of data in public policy-making. The aim of the event is to present examples of good practices from abroad, foster collaboration, and showcase the results of the Office of the Plenipotentiary’s work. Experts from across Europe—including Finland, France, Sweden, Portugal, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland, Belgium and Slovakia—have accepted invitations to actively participate.



Not All Cities Are Alike

A Game on Participatory Budgeting. The board game Not All Cities Are Alike was developed at the Office of the Plenipotentiary in 2020. The game introduces students to the functioning of participatory budgeting in a playful way and has been used by schools across Slovakia for several years. It also attracted the attention of a Hungarian non-governmental organization, which, through a joint project, successfully translated the game into Hungarian in 2024 and supported the promotion of this agenda beyond Slovakia.



PROJECTS

REDIPOM—Food Assistance

Development of a Proposal for a Unified Food Redistribution System (NP REDIPOM). The proposed system aims to provide safe and nutritionally valuable food to people in need across Slovakia by establishing a stable infrastructure for the redistribution of food surpluses.

Activities

- In cooperation with the Slovak Food Assistance Platform, mapping the current state of the food assistance system: analysing the legislative environment of organizations, infrastructure, quantities of donated food, supply, demand, and potential for food surplus redistribution.
- Collaboration with key stakeholders from the state, self-governing regions, businesses (wholesale, retail, primary production, distribution), NGOs, and the target group—people in need.
- Transfer of good practices from abroad suitable for the Slovak context (inspiration from the Czech Republic, Austria, and other countries).
- In cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic, managing the inter-ministerial working group under the National Platform for Preventing Food Loss and Waste (members include representatives from the ministries of Labour, Finance, Interior, Environment, Agriculture and Rural Development, the Public Health Authority, the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities, self-governing regions, the Slovak Trade Association, the Slovak Chamber of Agriculture and Food, the Agrarian Chamber of Slovakia, the Slovak Chamber of Commerce, the Slovak Alliance of Modern Trade, the Slovak Food Bank, Socioforum, the academic community, and other entities).

Integration

Integration of Third-Country Nationals, including Migrants (NP Integration). The project aims to ensure the provision of financial contributions to municipalities and NGOs, whose role is to implement integration activities for the benefit of the target group (third-country nationals). The project seeks to strengthen the quality of long-term integration services provided to the target group and their impact on inclusion and quality of life within the community.

Activities

- Mapping the scope and nature of integration services provided in the context of local conditions (collecting information from NGOs and municipalities).
- Cooperation with selected municipalities—Bratislava, Trnava, Michalovce, Prešov—to support the development of strategic materials focused on the integration of third-country nationals and migrants in cities and towns, aiming to assist municipalities in participatory development of strategic documents.
- Opening a discussion on setting criteria for NGOs in the area of long-term integration, based on experiences from the accreditation of NGOs in the field of volunteering.

NGO Umbrella Organizations

Support for the Expert and Coordinating Capacities of Civil Society Umbrella Organizations (NP UMBRELLAS). The project focuses on two key areas of activity—participatory public policy-making and the institutional development of the involved civil society umbrella organizations.

Activities

- Cooperation with 14 NGO umbrella organizations in participatory public policy-making in collaboration with public administration bodies, as well as in the preparation and implementation of the umbrella organization's development plan.
- Collaboration with the NGO Chamber of the Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organizations through the establishment of a coordination and support unit for the NGO Chamber and the initiation of its operations.

Social Innovation

Permanent Grant Scheme for Supporting Social Innovations in Volunteering

Activities

- In cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic, a call for proposals was launched to support social innovations—scaling up already tested and active long-term volunteering programs.
- A total of 53 accredited NGOs in the field of volunteering were supported through this call, with an allocation of approximately €1.6 million for 2025.



Projects



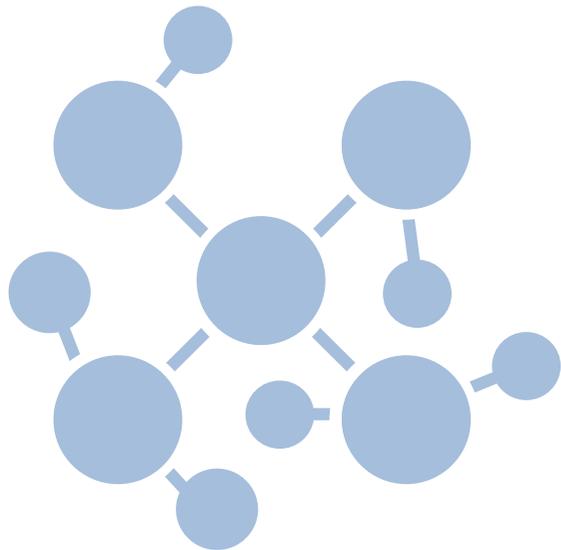
Partnership 6

Effective Involvement of Civil Society in the Implementation and Monitoring of EU Funds through the Introduction of Participatory Procedures in the 2021–2027 Programming Period—II (NP Partnership 6)

The project aims to ensure the proper design of processes at all levels of EU fund management and implementation so that the participation of civil society representatives in the preparation, management, and implementation of EU funds is effective, transparent, and based on clear rules. The project builds on the Partnership 1–5 projects implemented during the previous programming period, 2017–2021.

Activities

- Providing methodological and support services to central government authorities responsible for the implementation of EU funds in the area of participation and effective partner engagement.
- Developing methodological and guidance materials in line with the application of the partnership principle in the context of the European Union's cohesion policy in Slovakia, and within the framework of the management system for cooperation and partnership with civil society representatives during the preparation, implementation, and monitoring of EU funds in the 2021–2027 programming period.
- Preparing the 2025 Evaluation Report on the application of the partnership principle.
- Training representatives of managing authorities/intermediate bodies and socio-economic partners within the Learning Institutions—EU Funds and Learning NGOs programs.
- Partnership at the regional level: preparing for the new programming period after 2027.
- Cooperation of the Office of the Plenipotentiary with the NGO Chamber of the Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organizations.



PUBLICATION ACTIVITIES

The Office of the Plenipotentiary collects and processes knowledge in the fields of open governance, civil society development, and participation, which it presents in the form of outputs from the Office of the Plenipotentiary Book Series: **Participation** and other thematic publications.

The **Participation book series** summarizes interesting findings, new facts, and important insights from the field of participation in Slovakia, explored from various angles and perspectives. The publications are prepared in an engaging and clear manner, aiming to meet the needs of the professional public while also serving as practical guidance for participatory work in the context of Slovak reality, highlighting further pathways, possibilities, opportunities, and benefits of public engagement.



Thematic publications and analytical outputs focus on additional topics related to civil society and participation, including:

- Analysis of the socio-economic contribution of the non-profit sector and the state and trends of civil society development.
- Participatory development of demand-driven calls.
- Other analytical outputs.

