THE ACT ON PUBLIC DEFENDER OF RIGHTS

564/2001 Coll. of Laws

ACT

of December 4, 2001

ON PUBLIC DEFENDER OF RIGHTS

The National Council of the Slovak Republic has agreed on the following Act:

§ 1

Subject of Act

This Act shall deal with:

a) the scope and the way, whereby the public defender of rights as an independent body shall participate in the protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of natural persons and legal entities with respect to the activities, decision-making or inactivity of public administration bodies, if such activities, decision-making or inactivity is in conflict with the legal order or the principles of the democratic state and the rule of law, and

b) details of the election and the recall of the public defender of rights, his competence, the conditions of performing his function, the manners of providing legal protection and enforcement of rights of natural persons and legal entities.

Seat and Competence of Public Defender of Rights

§ 2

Public defender of rights shall have his seat in Bratislava.

§ 3

(1) The competence of the public defender of rights shall apply to
a) state administration bodies,
b) local self-governmental bodies,
c) legal entities and natural persons, who are taking decisions on or otherwise intervene into the rights and duties of natural persons and legal persons in the area of public administration, following provisions of the specific act.
The competence of the public defender of rights shall not apply to the National Council of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter only the “National Council”), the President of the Slovak Republic, the Government of the Slovak Republic, the Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic, the Supreme Audit Office of the Slovak Republic, intelligence agencies, decision-making powers of investigators of the Police Corps, the prosecution and courts, with the exception of state management and administration of courts and the reasons, in which disciplinary misdemeanor of the judge is presumed\(^3\). The competence of the public defender of rights is not applied also to the matters of operational or mobilization nature.

\[\text{§ 4}\]

Election of Public Defender of Rights

(1) The public defender of rights shall be elected by the National Council from among the candidates proposed by at least 15 members of the National Council.

(2) A person, who can be elected as public defender of rights, has to be a citizen of the Slovak Republic who

a) has reached the age of 35 years by the day of election,
b) has full legal capacity,
c) is of irreproachable character and has education, skills, experiences and moral character giving a guarantee of properly exercising the function of public defender of rights,
d) is not a member of a political party or political movement,
e) has permanent residence in the territory of the Slovak Republic,
f) agrees with his election as public defender of rights.

(3) The National Council shall examine fulfillment of the conditions contained in paragraphs 2 above before voting on a proposal for election.

(4) For the purposes of this Act, irreproachable citizen is citizen who has not been convicted by a final court decision for the commission of intentional criminal offence or for criminal offence, for which he was sentenced to imprisonment without suspension. The irreproachableness shall be proved by an extract from the Criminal Record\(^4\) not older than three months.

\[\text{§ 5}\]

Term of Office

The term of office of the public defender of rights shall be five years. The period shall start on the day, when oath is taken. The same person may be elected as public defender of rights for the most two consecutive terms.
§ 6

Oath

(1) The public defender of rights shall take the following oath to the Speaker of the National Council: “I swear on my honor and conscience that I shall observe the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, constitutional laws, laws and international treaties promulgated in the manner prescribed by law, that I shall participate in the protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of natural persons and legal entities with respect to the activities, decision-making or inactivity of public administration bodies, and that I shall protect the fundamental rights and freedoms in compliance with the principles of the democratic state and the rule of law.”.

(2) The public defender of rights shall confirm taking the oath by his signature on a document with the text of the oath; the date of taking the oath must be indicated on the document.

(3) The public defender of rights shall start to perform his function by taking the oath.

(4) A refusal to take the oath or taking the oath with reservations shall result in invalidity of the election of the public defender of rights.

§ 7

Incompatibility of Function of Public Defender of Rights

(1) The performance of the function of the public defender of rights shall be incompatible with the performance of the function of the President of the Slovak Republic, a member of the National Council, a member of the Government of the Slovak Republic, a director or president of a central body of the state administration of the Slovak Republic, a president or vice-president of the Supreme Audit Office of the Slovak Republic, a judge of the Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic, a judge, a prosecutor, a member of the Slovak Information Service, a member of the Police Corps or other armed corps, and with a function in public administration bodies.

(2) During performance of the function of public defender of rights, the public defender is not allowed to perform any business or other profit-making activity with exemption of administration of his own assets or assets of his minor children and scientific, educational, literary and artistic activities provided these activities do not interfere with the proper exercise and dignity of his function of public defender and do not affect trust in the impartiality and independence of public defender of rights.

(3) The facts as stated above under section 1 and 2 above are obstacles to the function of the public defender of rights.
Termination of Function of Public Defender of Rights

§ 8

(1) The performance of the function of public defender of rights shall terminate before expiration of the term of office
   a) based on resignation from office,
   b) based on the loss of eligibility to be elected according to Article 4,
   c) if there is a valid final court decision, whereby the public defender of rights was convinced of committing an intentional criminal offence or whereby he was convicted of a criminal offence and sentenced to imprisonment without court’s decision on a conditional suspension of the sentence,
   d) by performance of activity, which is incompatible with the function of public defender of rights, or
   e) by death.

(2) The public defender of rights is obliged to report the facts stated under section 1, subparagraphs a) to d) above to the Speaker of the National Council in writing. The coming into force of a court decision, whereby the public defender of rights was convinced of committing an intentional criminal offence or whereby he was convicted of a criminal offence and sentenced to imprisonment without court’s decision on a conditional suspension of the sentence, and the coming into force of a court decision, whereby he was deprived of legal capacity or his legal capacity was restricted, shall be reported to the Speaker of National Council by a court that has decided in the matter.

§ 9

(1) The public defender of rights may resign from his function by a written notice sent to the Speaker of the National Council.

(2) The function of the public defender of rights shall then expire at the end of the calendar month following the month of delivery of the written notice of resignation to the Speaker of the National Council. However, the public defender of rights shall be obliged to execute all the activities, which may not be postponed for prevention from prejudice to the rights of claimants.

§ 10

(1) The National Council may recall the public defender of rights from his function, if his health condition disables him to properly perform duties arising from the function for a long period of time, but at least for three months.

(2) The public defender of rights shall be recalled from the function on the day following the day when a decision of the National Council on his recall from the function has been delivered to him.
Legal Protection of Natural Persons and Legal Entities

§ 11

(1) Anybody who believes that his fundamental rights and freedoms were infringed contrary to the legal order or principles of the democratic state and the rule of law in relation to the activities, decision-making or inactivity of a public administration body can turn to the public defender of rights.

(2) Natural persons may use their mother tongue in contacts with the public defender of rights. The costs of interpretation shall be borne by the state.

§ 12

(1) The public defender of rights shall be under duty to keep confidentiality in the matters of protection of personality, of which he became aware in performance of his function. The duty shall persist even after termination of performance of the function. The Speaker of the National Council can release the public defender of rights from the confidentiality obligation, except of case of personal data.

(2) Information on the activities of the public defender of rights shall be made available according to specific act.6)

(3) The public defender of rights shall be entitled to handle personal data necessary for complaint settlement, acting in accordance with specific regulation.7)

§ 13

(1) The public defender of rights shall act upon a complaint of a natural person or legal entity or on his own initiative.

(2) A complaint can be filed in writing, verbally into the minutes, by telegram, facsimile or e-mail.

(3) The complaint shall clearly indicate a matter, to which it relates, a public administration body, against which the complaint is filed, and an action, execution of which the claimant requires.

(4) If the complaint does not contain prescribed essentials, the public defender of rights shall ask the claimant immediately to complete or specify an incomplete or unclear complaint within a certain period of time, which may not be shorter than seven days. He shall also instruct the claimant how to do the completion or specification. If the claimant fails to complete or specify the complaint within specified period of time despite the public defender of rights request and the failure makes it impossible to continue in dealing with the complaint, the public defender of rights shall put off the complaint. He shall instruct the claimant on these consequences. If an addressee fails to
pick up the request, sent according to the first sentence above, within three days from putting the request in post office, the last day of the period shall be considered as date of delivery, even if the addressee has not become aware of the put request at all. If the claimant only indicates e-mail address in his complaint, request according to the first sentence shall be considered as delivered after expiration of period of three days from its forwarding, even if the addressee has not become aware of the forwarded request at all.

(5) The written complaint of a person who is deprived of personal liberty or person whose personal liberty is restricted shall not be subject to official inspection, if it is addressed to the public defender of rights.

(6) If the claimant asks the public defender of rights to keep his identity confidential or if the confidentiality is in the interest of proper settlement of the complaint, only a copy of complaint, which contains no personal data, shall be used in dealing with matter. Every person participating in dealing with the matter, who knows the claimant’s identity, shall be obliged to keep it confidential.

(7) If a claimant has asked for his identity to be kept confidential, but the nature of the complaint does not enable to settle the matter without disclosure of some of personal data, the claimant shall be immediately notified of it. At the same time, it shall be necessary to inform the claimant that for further dealing with the complaint his approval with disclosure of certain needed personal information has to be given within certain term.

(8) A complaint, in which the claimant fails to mention his name, surname and address (business name and registered seat in the case of legal entity), is an anonymous complaint. The public defender of rights is not obliged to deal with anonymous complaint.

Procedure Used in Dealing with Complaint

§ 14

(1) The public defender of rights shall investigate the complaint.

(2) If the public defender of rights finds the complaint, due to its content, is actually a remedy according to regulations on proceeding in administrative or judicial matters, a suit or remedy in administrative justice or the constitutional complaint, he shall immediately notify the claimant of the fact and instruct the claimant about the correct procedure.

(3) If the public defender of rights finds facts indicating that there is a person illegally detained at place of custody, imprisonment, disciplinary sanctions for soldiers, court-ordered rehabilitation, juvenile correction, court-ordered hospitalization or residential care of children, or in a detention cell, he shall report the fact to competent prosecutor, asking the prosecutor to act in accordance with specific act, and inform
management of respective facility and person concerned on the situation.

(4) If the complaint relates to review of a final decision of a public administration body or if the public defender of rights considers the decision of the public administration body is contrary to any act or other generally binding legal regulation, he can forward matter to competent prosecutor\(^{(10)}\) to deal with it or he shall take other measure, notifying the claimant of taken action. He can do the same also in the case when complaint contains proposals of measures, for which a prosecutor is competent.

(5) The prosecutor shall be obliged to inform the public defender of rights within the periods set by the law\(^{(11)}\) on the measures he has taken for removing the illegitimacy.

§ 15

(1) The public defender of rights shall put off the complaint, if
a) his competence does not cover the matter, to which the complaint relates,
b) the case, to which the complaint relates, is before a court and there are not delays in proceeding or a court already has decided in the case,
c) the case, to which the complaint relates, is just being investigated or already has been investigated by prosecution,
d) a public administration body, which does not fall within the competence of the public defender of rights, is acting in or taking a decision on the case to which the complaint relates or a public administration body, which does not fall within the competence of the public defender of rights, has already decided on the case,
e) claimant withdraws his complaint or notifies he does not longer insist on investigation, or
f) essentials given under § 13, sect. 4 were not added or specified within set term.

(2) The public defender of rights may put off the complaint if he finds that
a) the complaint does not relate to claimant and the claimant fails to submit written approval with submission of complaint, issued by a person concerned, or power of attorney covering the case,
b) a period of time longer than three years has passed from the time of measure or event, which the complaint concerns, to the date of delivery of the complaint,
c) the complaint is manifestly unfounded,
d) the complaint is anonymous,
e) the complaint concerns a matter which has been already settled by the public defender of rights and the repeated complaint does not contain new facts.

(3) The public defender of rights shall notify the claimant the complaint was put off, informing him on reasons for such action as well; the provision is not applied to anonymous complaints.

§ 16

(1) The complaint shall be considered as settled
a) by notification in accordance with §14, sect. 2, § 15, § 18, § 22, sect. 1,
b) by announcement and notification in accordance with §14, sect. 3,
c) by forwarding and notification in accordance with §14, sect. 4.

(2) The complaint shall be considered as settled even in the case of failed attempt for delivery of the notice of complaint settlement according to section 1 above to an address, which the addressee gave in the complaint or provided to the public defender of rights, when the public defender was dealing with the complaint.

§ 17

(1) Dealing with the complaint, the public defender of rights shall be authorized to
a) enter into the premises of the public administration bodies\(^2\),
b) ask public administration body to provide him with the necessary files and documents as well as an explanation concerning the subject of the complaint. The provision is applied even in the case, when right to look into files is granted only to a limited group of entities in accordance with specific regulation\(^{11a}\),
c) question the employees of public administration body,
d) talk with the persons, who are detained at places of custody, imprisonment, disciplinary sanctions of soldiers, court-ordered rehabilitation, juvenile correction, court-ordered hospitalization or residential care of children, or in detention cell, also in the absence of other persons.

(2) Upon the public defender of rights demand, public administration bodies shall be obliged to
a) provide him with information and explanations,
b) enable him to look into a file or borrow him a file,
c) submit to him a written opinion regarding the factual and legal questions,
d) cope with evidence proposed by the public defender of rights,
e) cope with measures proposed by the public defender of rights,
f) carry out the measures proposed by the public defender of rights in the case of inactivity of the bodies, if they are obliged to carry out such measures based on law or other generally binding legal regulation,
g) enable the public defender of rights to take part in hearing and to question participants of the proceedings and persons taking part in the proceedings.

(3) Public administration bodies shall be obliged to enable a usage of authorizations pursuant to section 1 and immediately comply with the public defender of rights request according to sect. 2, lett. a) and b). Public administration bodies shall be obliged to comply with the public defender of rights request according to sect. 2, lett. c) up to f) within 20 days from its delivery.

(4) As to information and explanation according to sect. 2, lett. a), an employee, who would breach confidentiality obligation, acknowledged or imposed by state\(^\text{12}\), in the case of provision of required information and explanation, can refuse to provide the information and explanation unless he has been exempted of the obligation on the basis of law.
(5) If public administration body fails to comply with the public defender of rights request pursuant to section 2, the public defender of rights shall report the failure to the superior body or to the Government of the Slovak Republic, if such superior body does not exist. Provision of section 4 is not hereby affected.

(6) The superior body or, if no superior body exists, the Government of the Slovak Republic according to section 5 above shall be obliged to notify the public defender of rights in writing of measures adopted in the matter. The notice shall be provided within 20 days from delivery of the public defender of rights report.

(7) If the public defender of rights does not consider the measures adopted according section 6 as sufficient, he shall report the fact to the National Council or to a body authorized by the National Council.

(8) Dealing with complaint the public defender of rights shall be even authorized to look into, make abstracts and extracts from and copies of files related to cases under legal proceedings and under proceedings held by bodies competent for criminal proceedings in matters falling within a scope of his competences, if such activities are necessary for proper settlement of complaint. Provisions of §17, sect. 1 and 2, lett. a) up to e) shall be applied accordingly.

§ 18

If investigation of complaint results in unproved breach of the fundamental rights and freedoms, the public defender of rights shall notify the claimant and the public administration body, against activities, decision or inactivity of which the complaint has been submitted, of the result in writing.

§ 19

(1) If investigation of complaint results in proved breach of the fundamental rights and freedoms, the public defender of rights shall notify the public administration body, against activity, decision or inactivity of which the complaint has been submitted, of the result along with proposal of measures.

(2) The public administration body shall be obliged to inform the public defender of rights of its opinion of the results of investigation of complaint and adopted measures within 20 days from date of delivery of the public defender of rights call for adoption of measures.

(3) If the public defender of rights disapproves with the public administration body's opinion or does not consider the measures adopted as sufficient, he shall report the fact to the body that is superior to the body, against which the complaint has been submitted, or to the Government of the Slovak Republic, if such superior body does not exist.

(4) The superior public administration body or, if no superior body exists, the
Government of the Slovak Republic according to section 3 above shall be obliged to notify the public defender of rights in writing of measures adopted in the matter. The notice shall be provided within 20 days from delivery of the public defender of rights report.

(5) If the public defender of rights does not consider the measures adopted according section 4 as sufficient, he shall report the fact to the National Council or to a body authorized by the National Council.

§ 20

(1) If the public defender of rights finds in investigation of the complaint the facts indicating that a crime, offence or other administrative contravention or disciplinary offence has been committed in the activity of the public administration body or that the duty laid down by the law has been breached, he shall notify competent body of his findings.

(2) The body, which has been notified by the public defender of rights of facts pursuant to section 1, shall inform the public defender of rights of the measures adopted on the basis of his notice.

(3) If the public defender of rights does not consider the implemented measures as sufficient, he shall report the fact to the superior body or to the Government of the Slovak Republic, if such superior body does not exist.

(4) The superior body or, if no superior body exists, the Government of the Slovak Republic according to section 3 above shall be obliged to notify the public defender of rights in writing of measures adopted in the matter. The notice shall be provided within 20 days from delivery of the public defender of rights report.

(5) If the public defender of rights does not consider the measures adopted according section 4 as sufficient, he shall report the fact to the National Council or to a body authorized by the National Council.

§ 21

(1) If the public defender of rights finds in investigation of complaint the facts indicating infringement of the fundamental rights and freedoms by any act, other generally binding legal regulation or internal regulation issued by the public administration body, he can file a motion to change or repeal to the competent body.

(2) The body, to which the public defender of rights has submitted the motion pursuant to section 1, shall notify the public defender of rights of the measures it has implemented on the basis of his motion.

(3) The public defender of rights can apply for commencement of proceedings before the Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic in the matter of consistency of
legal regulations according to the Article 125 sect. 1 of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, if their further application could represent a threat to the fundamental rights and freedoms or human rights and fundamental freedoms, as arise from an international treaty that has been ratified by the Slovak Republic and published in a way specified by a law.

§ 22

(1) The public defender of rights shall notify in writing the complainant and the natural person whose fundamental rights and freedoms have been infringed by the activities, decision-making or inactivity of public administration bodies, of results of the complaint investigation and adopted measures.

(2) The provisions of § 14, section 3 and § 17 up to 21 shall be applied to the public defender of rights and public administration bodies even if the public defender of rights performs tasks, falling within a scope of his competence, on his own initiative without submitted complaint related to the matter.

Report of Activities

§ 23

(1) The public defender of rights shall annually submit to the National Council in the first quarter an activity report which shall contain his findings on observance of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the natural persons and legal persons by the public administration bodies, and his proposals and recommendations for correction of found imperfections.

(2) The public defender of rights shall publish the activity report pursuant to section 1 through internet and periodicals and, possibly, other information media.

(3) The public defender of rights shall inform about his activities and the results thereof using internet and other information media.

§ 24

If the public defender of rights finds facts indicating that an infringement of the fundamental right and freedom is significant or relates to higher number of persons, he can submit an extraordinary report to the National Council. The extraordinary report can also contain a proposal for the report to be discussed on the next plenary session of the National Council.
§ 25

Co-action

Exercising his competences, the public defender of rights shall cooperate with respective public administration bodies and bodies of prosecution. The public defender of rights can cooperate also with other entities, which are active in the field of protection of rights and freedoms.

§ 26

Remunerations Paid to Public Defender of Rights

The public defender of rights shall be entitled to same remunerations, lump-sum reimbursements and reimbursements for other expenses connected with execution of his function as remunerations, lump-sum reimbursements and reimbursements for other expenses paid based on specific regulation to a member of the National Council, who acts as Vice-Speaker of the National Council. During a term of his office, the public defender of rights shall be a subject to health insurance, medical insurance and retirement insurance in the same way as the employees in employment relationship. The public defender of rights shall be entitled to children benefits under the conditions and in the amount, as specified by specific regulation.

§ 27

The Secretariat of the Public Defender of Rights

(1) The Secretariat of the Public Defender of Rights (hereinafter only “the Secretariat”) shall be established.

(2) The Secretariat shall be a legal entity with its seat in Bratislava, and it shall fulfil the tasks connected with arrangement of activities of the public defender of rights from the professional, operational and technical aspect.

(3) The Secretariat shall be entitled to require from the public administration bodies to provide documents and information, which the public defender of rights shall need for fulfillment of his tasks.

(4) The secretariat shall be headed by the Head of the Secretariat, who shall be appointed and recalled by the public defender of rights. The Head of the Secretariat shall be responsible for his activity to the public defender of rights.

(5) The Secretariat of the public defender of rights shall be budgetary organization.

(6) Details of the organization and tasks of the Secretariat shall be specified in the organizational rules issued by the public defender of rights.
§ 27a

(1) Tasks of the Secretariat shall be fulfilled by state employees\(^{18}\) and employees\(^{19}\). Number of employees of the Secretariat shall be approved by the public defender of rights.

(2) The state employees in the Secretariat and the employees of the Secretariat shall be remunerated in accordance with specific regulation\(^{20}\) and rules of remuneration that are included in enclosure. The Secretariat’s rules of remuneration include characteristics of wage categories of state employees in the Secretariat, catalogues of activities of employees of the Secretariat and wage scales of the Secretariat’s employees. Remunerating the state employees in the Secretariat and the employees of the Secretariat and their other matters follow provisions of specific regulation\(^{21}\) unless otherwise specified by this act.

(3) Increase of wage scales of the state employees in the Secretariat and increase of wage scales of the Secretariat’s employees shall be realized in accordance with level determined on the basis of specific regulation \(^{22}\). The increased wage scales of the state employees in the Secretariat and increased wage scales of the Secretariat’s employees and term of efficiency of the scales shall be specified in service regulation.

§ 28

Transitory Provision

The public defender of rights, who is elected for the first time after date of efficiency of the Act, shall start to execute his function within six months from taking the specified oath at the latest.

§ 29

Entry into Efficiency

This Act shall enter into efficiency on January 1, 2002.


The Act No. 400/2009 Coll. entered into efficiency on November 1, 2009.
Rudolf Schuster, in his own writing
Jozef Migaš, in his own writing
Mikuláš Dzurinda, in his own writing

FOOTNOTES:

1) Article 151a, section 1 of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic.


3) § 116, sect. 1 of the Act No. 385/2000 Coll., on Judges and Assessors and on Amendment to and Supplementation of Certain Laws.

4) Act No. 311/1999 Coll. on Criminal Records Registry.


8) § 3 lett. a) of the Act No. 52/1998 Coll. of Laws

9) § 18 of the Act No. 153/2001 Coll. of Laws, on Prosecution.

10) §20 up to §36 of the Act No. 153/2001 Coll. of Laws

11) § 33 of the Act No. 153/2001 Coll. of Laws


12) Act No. 241/2001 Coll. of Laws


Act No. 301/2005 Coll. of Laws, the Code of Criminal Procedure.

13) The Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 120/1993 Coll. of Laws, on the Pay of Certain Constitutional Officials of the Slovak Republic as amended.


17) Act No. 523/2004 Coll. of Laws, on the Budgetary Rules for Public Administration and on Amendment and Supplementation of Certain Laws as amended.

18) Act No. 400/2009 Coll. of Laws, on Civil Service and on Amendment and Supplementation of Certain Laws.

19) Act No. 552/2003 Coll. of Laws, on Works Performed in Public Interest;
Act No. 311/2001 Coll. of Laws, the Labour Code.

20) Act No. 400/2009 Coll. of Laws; Act No. 553/2003 Coll. of Laws, on the Remuneration of Certain Employees at Performing of Work in Public Interest and on Amendment and Supplementation of Certain Laws.

21) Act No. 400/2009 Coll. of Laws; Act No. 553/2003 Coll. of Laws, on the Remuneration of Certain Employees at Performing of Work in Public Interest and on Amendment and Supplementation of Certain Laws; Act No. 311/2001 Coll. of Laws

22) § 113 of the Act No. 400/2009 Coll. of Laws

§ 28 of the Act No. 553/2003 Coll. of Laws