

JUDr. Róbert Dobrovodský, PhD., LL.M.

JUDr. Róbert Dobrovodský, PhD., LL.M. was elected as the Public Defender of Rights by the National Council of the Slovak Republic with 81 votes on 9 November 2022. He took office on the day of taking the oath on 1 December 2022. Previously, he worked as an assistant to a Member of Parliament of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, as a university associate professor or as a civil servant of the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic.

Since his student days, he has worked in NGOs dedicated to protecting human rights and freedoms (League of Human Rights Advocates) or protecting the rights of victims of domestic violence (Alliance of Women of Slovakia). Based on his acquired experience with the help of victims of domestic violence and knowledge of Austrian law as a student, he drafted a legislative ground for Slovak legislation inspired by the Austrian Act for the Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence (Bundesgesetz zum Schutz vor Gewalt in der Familie (Gewaltschutzgesetz, 1997), which was considered a model law at that time.

In 2005, he graduated from the Faculty of Law of Trnava University in Trnava. He simultaneously completed a two-year study of Austrian law at the Faculty of Law of the University of Vienna. He continued to deepen his qualification through a full-time study programme on German Law (LL.M) at the Faculty of Law at the Eberhard Karls Universität in Tübingen in Germany, as well as doctoral studies at the Faculty of Law of the Trnava University in Trnava, where he received the academic degree of PhD.

He accomplished research study visits at the Department of Civil and Commercial Law at the Faculty of Law of the University of Basel in Switzerland (2007-2008) and the Max Planck Institute for Comparative and International Private Law in Germany (2017). His study visits were supported by scholarship programmes from the Federal Government of Germany (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst – DAAD) and the Swiss Federal Government (Bundes-Exzellenz-Stipendien für ausländische Forschende – Eidgenössische Stipendienkommission für ausländische Studierende ESKAS).

Since 2008, he has been working at the Faculty of Law of the Trnava University in Trnava as an assistant professor, where he teaches and researches in areas such as substantive civil law, family law, international and European family law, children's rights and consumer protection in European and Slovak law. From 2015 to 2019, he held the position of Vice-Dean for Foreign Relations at this university. Since 2022, he has worked at the faculty as a "university associate professor". From 2009 to 2020, he held the position of Chief State Adviser on civil and commercial law at the legislative section at the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic. In the area of legislation, he focused mainly on groups of citizens whose fundamental human rights and freedoms have been affected, such as minor children, consumers defending their property rights, seniors as vulnerable persons, persons who cannot defend their rights due to their health condition (guardians), victims of domestic violence and information seekers in the exercise of the constitutional right to information.

In 2010, he prepared an amendment to Act No. 211/2000 Coll. (Freedom of Information Act) and the Civil Code, which introduced mandatory disclosure of public sector contracts, invoices and orders. The amendment in question significantly contributed to increasing the level of citizens' right to information, as evidenced by a survey organized on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic. According to Transparency International Slovakia,

introducing mandatory disclosure of contracts is considered an unprecedented step and one of the best laws in the fight against corruption. According to a report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Slovak Republic has become one of the world leaders and a model of anti-corruption legislation by introducing the regulation of mandatory disclosure of contracts. A study by the Innovations for Successful Societies at Princeton University published in November 2015 recommends the Slovak Open Contract Data model to other countries as a legislative model for open government. The Slovak model of this anti-corruption legislation was discussed in Slovenia. In the Czech Republic, after a lengthy parliamentary debate, Act No. 340/2015 Coll. on the Register of Contracts (the Register of Contracts Act) was approved, which entered into force on 1 July 2016. On 19 June 2012, the City of Hamburg approved the Hamburg Transparency Act (Hamburgisches Transparenzgesetz – HmbTG). Following the example of Slovak legislation, the act requires all city contracts to be published.

From 2020, in addition to teaching at the Faculty of Law of Trnava University until he was elected Public Defender of Rights, he worked as an assistant to Katarína Hetráková, a Member of the National Council of the Slovak Republic. During this period, he was also a member of the Legislative Committee of the Government of the Slovak Republic. As an MP assistant, he participated in the drafting of several parliamentary bills, amendments, and expert analyses. His activities concerned groups of citizens whose fundamental human rights and freedoms were affected, such as victims of domestic violence, abused children, children in the system of social and legal protection, children in parental disputes, recipients of social services in social services facilities, persons in custody, psychiatric patients, patients receiving long-term health care and palliative healthcare, as well as people at risk of energy poverty. His activities also concerned draft regulations concerning the parties' procedural rights, a guardian's appointment, or the use of restraint means at psychiatric clinics.

He has been a member of many expert working groups at national and international levels. He served as chairman of the Council's expert group during the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU (Working Party on Civil Law Matters), where he negotiated two directives: Directive (EU) 2019/770 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2019 on certain aspects concerning contracts for the supply of digital content and digital services and Directive (EU) 2019/771 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2019 on certain aspects concerning contracts for the sale of goods.

He was also a member of the Slovak delegation for the defense of the combined 3rd to 5th periodic reports of the Slovak Republic during the 2116th and 2117th meeting of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva. He worked as a national expert of the Slovak Republic and a member of a Steering Group meeting study to collect data on children's involvement in justice. He was a member of the expert group of the Council of the EU for the analysis of the draft amendment to Regulation (EC) No 261/2004 establishing common rules on compensation and assistance to passengers in the event of denied boarding and of cancellation or long delay of flights.

At the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic, he served as vice-chairman and chairman of an Ad Hoc Commission for Matters Arising from Act No. 211/2000 Coll. on free access to information. As part of preparing the draft of the new Civil Code, he was a member of a Commission for the Recasting of Private Law at the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic.

Since 2020, he has been a member of the editorial board of the international journal FAMRZ – Zeitschrift für das gesamte Familienrecht (published by Verlag Ernst und Werner Gieseking GmbH Regensburg, Germany), focusing on family law.

He is the recipient of two awards. The Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic and the Judicial Revue awarded him the prize entitled "Karol Plank Award for Students in 2005". In 2020, he received an award from the Trnava University in Trnava called "Martin Palkovič Award for Excellent Results in Pedagogical Activities". He received this award from the University rector during a ceremony celebrating the 385th anniversary of the opening of the Universitas Tyrnaviensis.

He actively participated in many domestic and foreign conferences, symposia and seminars, where he presented his experience in the field of protection of civil rights or children's rights. Since 2013, he has taught several specialised seminars on freedom of information issues.