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The Slovak cultural community announced a nationwide Culture Strike

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Dear media representatives,

today, on Thursday **5 September at 11:00 a.m.** in front of the Propeller building on Rázusovo nábrežie in Bratislava, a press conference was held at which representatives of the cultural community announced the beginning a strike alert called **the Slovak Culture Strike**.

"**The alarming state** of the Slovak culture sector caused by the management of Culture Minister Martina Šimkovičová and Chief-of-Staff at the Culture Ministry Lukáš Machala forces us to act," said **Katarína Mišíková**, representative of the Committee of the Slovak Culture Strike and the Open Culture! (Otvorená Kultúra!) platform. "**We announce that today we are declaring a strike alert.**"

The aim is to create a solidarity network across the entire cultural sphere in Slovakia and increase public pressure on political representatives to address the critical situation in the cultural sector. The cultural strike is a collective gesture through which the cultural community shows its unity, interconnectedness, and determination to resist the destruction of culture.

Speakers at the press conference included **Jana Kovalčíková**, a representative of the theatre sector, **Bohunka Koklesová** and **Martin Šmatlák**, rectors and representatives of the management of art universities, **Ráchel Rimarčíková** and **Dominik Devečka**, representatives of students, **Rozália Vlášková** and **Martin Bednárík**, representatives of the Strike Committee of the Slovak Television and Radio employees.

The strike committee and the representatives of the cultural community formulated the following reasons for declaring the strike emergency:

I. The Ministry of Culture is taking steps aimed directly against cultural workers

More than 30 highly skilled employees of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic have lost their jobs in recent days and three ministerial departments have been abolished. At the same time, the staff of other organizations established by the Ministry of Culture is facing unexpected and unjustified dismissals and layoffs. The management of the Ministry denigrates and dehumanizes both groups and individuals that are part of the culture community and it spreads a false narrative that they try to enrich themselves with public funds using contrived ways.

II. Laws that worked well have been replaced by chaos

Mismanaged legislative changes paralyze the operation of the Slovak Arts Council, jeopardising the future use of subsidies and, if the planned grant calls are not opened, causing the interruption or closure of cultural centres and the loss of employment of people working in them.

III. The culture community face constant and growing financial insecurity

The current management of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic does not take any steps to systematically increase the now insufficient funding of the culture sector; on the contrary, its actions are putting more and more cultural workers in financial distress.

Representatives of the cultural community announced the following **demands of the Slovak Culture Strike**:

Demand #1:

We demand that the culture sector be managed in a professional and competent manner and we demand an immediate halt to the purposeful and destructive changes in this sector, so as to ensure freedom of scientific research and artistic expression and fair and satisfactory working conditions without direct or indirect intimidation. We demand a halt to the creation of an unfree working environment that discourages creativity.

Demand #2:

We demand an immediate halt to ideologically motivated censorship with economic implications resulting from the amendments to the Slovak Audiovisual Fund Act, the Slovak Arts Council Act, the Museums and Galleries Act and the Slovak Television and Radio Act. Freedom of expression is the starting point of artistic creation; its restriction is a gross distortion of the quality of the working environment in art and culture.

Demand #3:

We call for immediate financial stabilization of the cultural sector, with an emphasis on increasing the salaries of cultural workers and their social security, across the spectrum of both established and independent institutions, and individuals, regardless of whether they are employed or self-employed. We demand that the remuneration for work done in cultural and artistic institutions established by the state or local governments to be adjusted to the high inflation rate that has grown over the recent years.

At the same time, we demand that a fair remuneration system for self-employed workers in various artistic sectors be developed in a close cooperation with cultural and artistic community and that this system be respected and made binding in public subsidy systems. We demand that the social security and precarity of self-employed cultural and art workers be partly compensated from public funds, for example by creating the status of the cultural worker.

The cultural community called on **the chairpersons of the coalition parties to receive the representatives of the Committee of the Slovak Culture Strike and to open negotiations with the Committee urgently**. They also appealed to the **President of the Slovak Republic, Peter Pellegrini**, to pay attention to the problems in the cultural sector and to facilitate solutions from his position.

"We, the members of the whole cultural community across Slovakia, **symbolically join our hands as an expression of solidarity and mutual support** by the means of the Slovak Culture Strike. Lend us your

hand too, so that we can create **a culture open to all!**" concluded Katarína Mišíková, presenting the Declaration of the Committee of the Slovak Culture Strike.

In its first phase, the Slovak Cultural strike has the character of a general strike alert of the cultural sector, without any work stoppage or interruption.

The escalation of public pressure will involve interventions in various artistic productions such as performances, concerts, film screenings and public readings. The production may be disrupted by actions like sounding a siren, reading strike demands in the middle of an event, or during guided tours in museums and galleries, or temporarily switching off lights and sound for a few seconds. These disruptions may take place not only on stages, but also in galleries, museums, shops, and other public spaces.

As of this morning, we have registered nearly **1,300 people from more than 25 cities and towns in Slovakia** on strike alert. At least one person in 135 cultural organizations is on strike. Almost 250 people have gone on strike alert at the Slovak National Theatre. Additionally, 100 people have gone on strike alert at the Slovak National Gallery, and 68 people have gone on strike alert out of 220 Slovak Ministry of Culture employees. We are still receiving more numbers and will keep them up to date.