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A 11 – Initiative for  
Economic and Social  
Rights

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ANNUAL  
REPORT

# INTRODUCTION

The A 11 – Initiative for Economic and Social Rights (hereinafter: A 11 Initiative; A 11) is a non-profit, non-partisan and non-governmental organisation which promotes and protects the rights of individuals from vulnerable, marginalised, and discriminated groups, with a particular focus on economic and social rights. In its work, the organization is guided by principles of equality, dignity, solidarity, social justice, inclusiveness, and gender equality.

The A 11 Initiative has nine full-time and one part-time staff members which strive to govern the organisation through horizontal decision-making processes.

The A 11 Initiative was established in 2018 and has since contributed to the better protection of economic and social rights of vulnerable population, and to the improved understanding of the state's obligation to protect, promote and fulfil these rights. Since its inception, the A 11 Initiative implemented **23 projects**, of which some are still in implementation. Since its establishment, the A 11 Initiative has provided counseling to over **2,000 individuals**, initiated over **190 proceedings** in front of courts and administrative bodies as well as **11 strategic cases** (6 in front of the Constitutional Court, one before the ECtHR), submitted **23 complaints to the NHRIs**, assisted over **30 secondary raw materials collectors** in their work via servicing their cargo bicycles, implemented at least **14 campaigns** aimed at raising public awareness, published **21 reports, analyses and manuals** related to the protection and promotion of economic, social and other human rights in general, written **11 submissions** to international mechanisms for the protection of human rights and produced **10 episodes of podcast** unveiling important human rights issues and questions. More than **60 participants** from Serbia and the region completed A 11 Initiative's annual School of Economic and Social Rights, an educational program on economic and social rights, 28 students participated in the Practicum for Economic and Social Rights organized in cooperation with the Law Faculty, Union University and 5 interns successfully completed their internship in A 11. Furthermore, the A 11 Initiative has become part of various networks, both national and international, including but not limited to the **Movement for Housing Equality, Platform of Organisations for Cooperation with United Nations Human Rights Mechanisms** (national), **Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Network** (a pre-eminent international network of organizations focusing on the protection and promotion of said rights), while we have also been granted **ECOSOC accreditation** by the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

## ACTIVITIES AND IMPACT

We achieve our goals through five complementary activities:

- Legal support and strategic litigation
- Public advocacy
- Education, research and awareness-raising
- Monitoring and reporting
- Coalition building, cooperation, partnership

Since 2020, the A 11 Initiative has active **Solidarity programme**, through which it supports individuals, groups and other organisations that need legal representation in their fights for social justice, equality and that are seeking to stop the impunity for human rights violations. Issues supported through this programme are not necessarily related to economic and social rights, but more broadly to human rights violations. Through this programme, we supported parents of newborn children “missing” from Serbian maternity wards, citizens who were subjected to police brutality during July 2020 protests in Belgrade, and other individuals and collectives in cases where they needed legal support.



# Activity highlights 2021

## Legal aid and strategic litigation

*Through strategic litigation, the A 11 Initiative points out significant legal issues and obstacles in access to socio-economic rights and protection from discrimination and, relying on relevant international standards and examples of good practice from other countries, strives to ensure a more favorable interpretation of the law and easier access to economic and social rights for members of vulnerable groups.*

## What we achieved in 2021:

### Eviction of a social housing tenant with a disability prevented with the ECtHR interim measure

The issue of unaffordability of social housing, which was repeatedly highlighted in various occasions and A 11 activities, came into the spotlight once again after the scheduled eviction of B. S., a person with disabilities who lives in a social housing unit in Belgrade. For more than eight years, B.S. initiated five different proceedings in which he tried to challenge the termination of the lease of the social apartment, but no legal remedy was suitable to provide a review of the decision to terminate the lease. Considering that the forced eviction of a person in an extremely vulnerable position would constitute a violation of the right to life and inhuman and degrading treatment, **A 11 submitted a request for an interim measure to the European Court of Human Rights** seeking desistance of the execution of eviction. The **interim measure** was issued on the following day, whereby the Government of the Republic of Serbia was ordered to abstain from executing the order of forced eviction. The measure was prolonged twice and then indefinitely, until the state provides more precise information and guarantees regarding the provision of adequate alternative accommodation.

In addition to the numerous difficulties faced by social housing beneficiaries, the case of B.S. warns that there is no effective legal remedy in the domestic legal order that would enable the review of decisions on cancellation of the lease of social apartments, after which the beneficiaries of those apartments are threatened by homelessness.

On 29 March 2021, on behalf of B.S., A 11 Initiative submitted an application to the ECtHR, claiming violation of Articles 3, 6, 8 of the ECHR, the Article 13 in conjunction with Article 8 and the Article 1 of the Protocol 1 to the Convention. This case raises various important issues, including the affordability of social housing intended for socially vulnerable persons. We expect that this case will influence the approach of the City of Belgrade towards vulnerable social housing tenants, and that this will result in a better position of vulnerable citizens who are in need of housing.

## Initiated proceedings regarding alleged forced labour and human rights violations in the case of Vietnamese workers and Serbia's silence on the LingLong case

After discovering the case of workers from Vietnam engaged in the construction of the LingLong factory and the suspicion of labor exploitation and human trafficking, the A 11 Initiative informed the competent state authorities about the potential violation of their rights and invited them to use their powers and investigate this case. Letters and reports were sent to the following institutions: Republic Public Prosecutor's Office, Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Zrenjanin, Office for the Coordination of Activities in the Fight against Human Trafficking, Police Department Zrenjanin, Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs / Sector for Social Protection / Center for protection of victims of human trafficking, the Labor Inspectorate, the Labor Inspectorate in Zrenjanin, the Ministry of Health - Department for Sanitary Inspection and the Office of the Ombudsman.

Bearing in mind that, since the publication of this case and the suspicion of human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation, the state authorities have not taken the necessary steps even after several months, A 11 Initiative has filed several criminal charges for violating the right to strike and unlawful deprivation of liberty. Criminal charges have been filed, one against a responsible person in China Energy Engineering Group Tianjin Electric Power Construction Co. Ltd with a branch in Belgrade, and another against the responsible persons in Linglong International Europe d.o.o. Zrenjanin, both for a well-founded suspicion that they committed a crime, i.e., violation of the right to strike. Also, on the basis of a well-founded suspicion that they committed the criminal offense of unlawful deprivation of liberty, by depriving a group of about 30 workers of their freedom of movement, a report was filed against Linglong International Europe d.o.o. Zrenjanin.

In addition, on the occasion of numerous media appearances by representatives of the Government, how this construction site is controlled, A 11 – Initiative for Economic and Social Rights submitted requests for access to information of public importance to the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure, in order to obtain reports and decisions on inspections. By the end of 2021, the requested information was not provided.



## Challenging heavy fines imposed on homeless for violating covid movement restriction - due to their homelessness

The Misdemeanor Appellate Court in Kragujevac adopted the appeal against the judgment of the Misdemeanor Court in Kraljevo by which D.R. and his wife S.A., persons in a situation of homelessness, were declared responsible for violation of pandemic related movement restrictions and sentenced to pay a fine of 50,000 dinars (approximately 426 euros), under the threat of replacing the unpaid fine with imprisonment. They turned to A 11 Initiative for help. Although this procedure ended positively for D.R. and S.A. because their appeal was accepted and the sentence was revoked, this is not an isolated case and A 11 Initiative received information that the fine for homeless people who did not have legal assistance to challenge such verdicts, nor money to pay fines, was replaced by imprisonment in enforcement proceedings, and that some of them even spent 50 days in prison because of it. Punishing the homeless for the violation of the movement ban represents discrimination and another example of the criminalization of poverty. Additional details are available in A 11 Initiative's [press release](#).

## Fighting discriminatory reporting on Roma

In the procedure initiated by the complaint filed by the A 11 Initiative, the Commissioner for Protection of Equality issued an opinion establishing that the Pink International Company d.o.o. discriminated against Roma, by stating the suspect's ethnicity when reporting on a crime in online news at the website Pink.rs. As it is emphasized in the submitted complaint and confirmed in the opinion of the Commissioner, "the nationality of the suspects for this crime has nothing to do with the committed act, nor does the publication of this information contribute to a better understanding of events". The Commissioner adds that "by emphasizing national affiliation, in this case, attention is focused on national minorities, they are labeled as prone to committing crimes, which results in strengthening the stereotypes and discriminatory treatment of Roma".

This opinion of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality is important because it indicates widespread discrimination in the media representation of Roma men and women, which is often a new trigger for hatred and intolerance towards this group of people. Additional details are available [here](#).

## Advancing equal access to rights and services for asylum seekers

Acting upon a complaint filed by Belgrade Centre for Human Rights and A 11 Initiative, the Commissioner for Protection of Equality issued an opinion establishing that the Raiffeisen bank discriminated asylum seekers in the procedure of opening bank accounts. The Commissioner established that Raiffeisen bank a. d. Belgrade refused to open an account for a person who has been granted asylum in the Republic of Serbia, whose country of origin is Iran, even without considering whether the conditions for opening an account are met in a particular case, and that the bank thus violated Article 6 of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination, i.e. committed an act of direct discrimination.

The Commissioner stated that during this procedure Raiffeisen Bank did not submit evidence from which it would be established that this denial was for justified reasons and recommended that the bank, without negative generalizations, in each specific case, assess and consider the requirements for opening an account, in line with the anti-discrimination framework. The Commissioner noted that by its actions the bank indisputably denied the application of the corpus of rights guaranteed by the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection, but also by the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees from 1951. The full information on the case together with the Commissioner's opinion and recommendation can be found [here](#).

### **Additional activities in the domain of legal advice, legal assistance and strategic litigation included:**

- Submission of *the complaint to the Ombudsperson*, after referral from Psychosocial Innovation Network (PIN). The complaint concerned *unaccompanied minor* from Afghanistan, access to healthcare services for *mental health protection* and unlawful acting of medical institutions. This resulted in Ombudsperson's recommendation of activities and measures to the Ministry of Health, which should strengthen youth mental health protection, especially for youth on the migration route.
- Submission of the *complaint to the Ministry of Justice* regarding *irregularities in certification of power of attorney to persons without identity documents*, to whom the public notary unlawfully charged a much higher amount of the fee due to the participation of identity witnesses during the verification of signatures. Having in mind that these problems affect the most endangered persons who are mainly members of Roma ethnic minority, A 11 also *addressed the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality* with the proposal to recommend measures to the Ministry of Justice and the Notary Chamber.
- Submission of the *complaint to the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality* on behalf of Roma woman without permanent residence and ID card, who has been unable to receive State cash assistance to mitigate the consequences of the pandemic
- Submission of *two complaints to the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection*. The first complaint, concerning violation of the right to privacy of patients whose medical history was made publicly available by the public official and the President of the City Assembly of Jagodina, was filed together with the organizations Partners for Democratic Change, Da se zna, Atina and the SHARE Foundation. The second complaint was filed against the Center for Social Work Zemun and refers to the actions of the employees in that center who open letters intended for persons who have registered residence at the address of that social work center.
- *Follow-up on strategic non-discrimination cases* from previous years.

## Advocacy

*The A 11 Initiatives' recommendations for the improvement of regulations and policies relevant to the protection of human rights are based on analyses of relevant practices and their effect on vulnerable groups. The A 11 Initiative identifies deviations from relevant international standards and points out the observed inadequacies to the competent government bodies and institutions, as well as to the wider public. The A 11 Initiative uses procedures that are related to Serbia's membership in international organizations and that are enshrined in relevant international contracts to contribute to the alignment of domestic regulations with international standards and the creation of conditions that would allow full access to social and economic rights to all. Through media advocacy, A 11 strives to expose and explain the most pressing issues related to socio-economic rights and discrimination and to put additional pressure on relevant authorities to address these issues.*

## What we achieved in 2021:

### Important proposals by A 11 accepted in the process of amending the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination

Several significant proposals by A 11 Initiative were accepted in the process of amendments of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination and became an integral part of the new antidiscrimination framework. A 11 Initiative's **membership in the Working Group for drafting the Law on the Amendments of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination** and the submission of **written comments on the Draft law amending the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination** resulted in the introduction of provisions prohibiting discrimination in the field of housing and the introduction of segregation as specific type of discrimination. This is the **first time that discrimination in the field of housing is explicitly prohibited in domestic anti-discrimination regulations**. Equally important, A 11 successfully advocated for the **introduction of the obligation on public bodies to consider how their decisions and public policies could reduce the inequalities associated with socioeconomic vulnerability**. This impact assessment obligation requires the public bodies to assess compliance of proposed regulations and public policies with the principle of equality, by giving special consideration to the most socio-economically vulnerable persons and groups. This is a very positive novelty that could bring tangible improvements in people's lives. If properly implemented, impact assessment minimizes the possibility of adopting policies or legislating in a way that infringes the human rights of the most vulnerable citizens. After successfully advocating for the adoption of the impact assessment obligation, A 11 Initiative will focus on awareness-raising, training, monitoring, and undertaking other efforts that could improve the implementation and effectiveness of this obligation with undeniable potential to make a real difference in people's lives.



## Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR finally on the agenda of the Serbian Government

Following repeated initiatives[1] to ratify the Optional Protocol to the CESCR, in December 2021, the competent Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue informed the public that it proposed the ratification of the Optional Protocol in the Annual Plan of the Government of the Republic of Serbia.[2] Inclusion of the issue of ratification of Optional Protocol to the ICESCR in the Workplan of the Government is a significant step toward ensuring better protection of economic and social rights and serves as another evidence of the A 11 Initiative's advocacy impact. Advocacy for ratification of the Optional Protocol consisted of several complementary activities targeting the government authorities (through meetings, [public debates](#), [initiatives](#) and indirectly, through reports to UN treaty bodies), the media (through a number of press releases), and the general public (through [video materials](#), messages from experts such as [Aoife Nolan](#) and [Koldo Casla](#), [brochures](#), and combination of [informative](#), [awareness raising](#) and [participative](#) activities for citizens). Advocacy activities were underpinned by a comprehensive [analysis](#) demonstrating the benefits and need for ratification of the Optional Protocol in Serbia. This unified advocacy eventually led to the inclusion of the issue of ratification of the OP to the ICESCR in the Workplan of the Serbian Government.

While it is far too soon to speculate whether and when the Optional Protocol will be ratified and further efforts are needed in that regard, this is significant progress in comparison to the previous period when the competent ministry dismissed the initiative for ratification of the Optional Protocol, and particularly having in mind that within the UPR process the State did not accept recommendations to ratify the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR.[3]

## City of Niš changes conditions for working engagement of beneficiaries of social assistance after the A 11 Initiative's warnings about working exploitation

On 7 September 2021, the mayor of Niš announced that the social assistance beneficiaries in this city will be engaged to observe compliance with epidemiological measures, without any compensation for performed work. On the same day, A 11 reacted by publishing [press release](#) and warning that announced the engagement of social assistance, in addition to the beneficiaries would present their labor exploitation. A 11 urged the mayor of Niš to abandon announced unpaid engagement of socially vulnerable citizens, or to engage them under the conditions prescribed by law, by offering them fair and equitable compensation for performed work. As a result, conditions for working engagement of beneficiaries of social assistance were changed. [Mayor of Niš announced that those beneficiaries of social assistance who will be hired by the city, will receive 18,500 dinars per month in addition to their regular social benefits](#). Additional details are available in the [article published by Južne vesti](#), as well as in the [interview with A 11 Initiative's Program Coordinator for N1](#), who also explained the context and regulation that enabled forced labour of beneficiaries of financial social assistance.

[1] See, for example, A 11 Initiative, [Ratifikacija Opcionog protokola uz Pakt o ekonomskim, socijalnim i kulturnim pravima, Kako do bolje zaštite ekonomskih i socijalnih prava?](#), A 11 Initiative, [The Initiative to Ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#), and A 11 Initiative, [Submitted Initiative for Ratification of optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of a Child and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#).

[2] Information from the conference organized by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue on 10 December 2021.

[3] [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NtISChGaJkuPmtba\\_ATTNQiaTGY3nhzY/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NtISChGaJkuPmtba_ATTNQiaTGY3nhzY/view)



## A 11 Initiative at the Thematic Dialogue on Social Protection System

On 10 June 2021, A 11 Initiative participated at thematic dialogue on social protection, organized by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue. A 11 presented main problems regarding social protection system and participated in preparation of the joint NGOs` document enlisting main recommendations for the improvements in this field. These recommendations served as a basis for preparation of [binding conclusions](#) agreed by CSOs and representatives of the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Family Care and Demography.

Conclusions, among other things, envisage that: CSOs will be included in the drafting the Social Protection Strategy, which will be based on the European Social Charter (revised); the Law on Social Protection will be amended to increase coverage and improve the adequacy of cash benefits for the poor; that analyses and additional activities will be undertaken to improve the coverage and adequacy of child allowance; that the possibilities of increasing the number of social workers will be considered. Additional details about the thematic dialogue are available [here](#) and [here](#).

## Submitted comments on the Draft Law amending the Law on Financial Support to the Family with Children

Within the public debate on the Draft Law on Financial Support to Families with Children, the A 11 Initiative submitted its [Comments on the Draft Law](#) to the Ministry of Family Care and Demography and the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veterans' Affairs and Social Affairs. The proposed changes concerned the removal of restrictions and discriminatory conditions that particularly affect families with more children and Roma children. It was especially emphasized that it is necessary to abolish the welfare family cap – the limit on the number of children for whom it is possible to exercise the right to the child and parental allowance, as well as discriminatory conditioning of the right to parental allowance, which disproportionately affects Roma children.

## Marking of the International Human Rights Day

With activists of ASTRA, Zrenjanin Social Forum, Youth Center CK13, Zrenjanin Action, Cooperative October and PAOR - Pannonian Anti-Fascist Organization, Initiative A 11 marked the [International Human Rights Day](#) in front of the building which housed workers from Vietnam engaged in building of tire factory Linglong in Zrenjanin. When workers could see the message during the lunch break, activists unfurled a banner reading, "Workers' rights are human rights! We are not giving up the fight for you!" The message on the banner was written in Serbian and Vietnamese. A short video was made about the action of support: [Workers' rights are human rights](#).

## Reminder: how the most vulnerable citizens in Serbia live during the pandemic

With photographs taken in informal Roma settlements "Vuka Vrčevića" and "Antena" in Belgrade, placed on billboards in the center of Belgrade, A 11 Initiative warned of the conditions in which the most vulnerable citizens of Serbia lived during the pandemic, drawing special attention to the fact that many vulnerable children [did not have access to online education during the pandemic](#), while 40,000 people in Serbia were [without access to drinking water](#), and about 30,000 of them [without electricity](#). Additional details are available [here](#).



## Campaign „The Enemy is Poverty and not the Poor“

To draw the public's attention to the fact that poverty is not a personal matter of an individual but a consequence of human rights violations and that every poor citizen needs state help, Initiative A 11 launched the campaign "[The enemy is poverty and not the poor](#)" through which the question was asked publicly: "[Is the state fighting poverty or the poor?](#)". The campaign symbolically began on October 17, when the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty is marked. In addition to the leased billboard in front of the Government of the Republic of Serbia building with the message "The enemy is poverty, not the poor!" the campaign took place on social media. For the campaign's needs, a [Key visual](#) was created and posted online with three different copies as well as a [video](#). Campaign was also covered in media, in several weekly and daily magazines and online portals, in texts which shared the main messages of the campaign, i.e. problematized the topics of economic and social rights in Serbia and poverty, with particular reference to the possibilities of better protection of these rights through the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

## Focus on local communities – Why has the City of Požarevac been silent for four years on calls for help from tenants of social housing?

In 2021 A 11 Initiative also kept focus on problems and priorities of local communities, which could be illustrated through the example of internally displaced Roma in social housing settlement in Požarevac, whose obstacles in access to water, electricity and affordable housing are depicted in the [short film](#) prepared by the A 11, and shared in local media. This is a part of wider efforts to engage local authorities in solving various problems these inhabitants face in the access to adequate housing and social protection.

## Submitted overview of the domestic regulations in field of economic and social rights in contravention with the ICESCR

Following the meeting with the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, in March 2021, A 11 sent to this Ministry an [overview of the legislation identified as not being in accordance with the provisions of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#). Submitted document points to the shortcomings of the Law on Financial Support to the Family with Children, Law on Property Taxes, Law on Social Protection, Law on Housing and Buildings Maintenance and Law on Health Protection, as well as the Decree on Measures of Social Inclusion of Beneficiaries of Financial Social Assistance.

### International advocacy:

## Submitted three joint alternative reports to the UN CESCR

On the occasion of the third periodic report of the Republic of Serbia on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, A 11 Initiative participated in preparation and coordinated the process of preparation of three alternative reports submitted to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. [The first report](#), prepared with the Platform of Organizations for Cooperation with UN Human Rights mechanisms, draws the attention on the issues such as exclusion of undocumented Roma from measures for mitigating consequences of the pandemic, discrimination of Roma families and Roma children in the access to parental and children allowance, inadequacy of social benefits, arbitrary pension cuts, and difficulties in the access to rights and services for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

[The second report](#) was prepared in cooperation with the Center for Economic and Social Rights, and contains an analysis of the distribution and spending of budget funds since 2014, i. e. since the introduction of austerity measures by the Government of Serbia. The aim of this report was to show how much the austerity measures have degraded the right to health and social protection, education, the right to work, fair wages and other rights from this corpus of human rights. [The third report](#) was prepared in a coalition of 9 civil society organizations dealing with the protection and promotion of economic and social rights in Serbia, with the participation of representatives of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Vojvodina. It covered issues such as justiciability of socio-economic rights, ratification of the Optional Protocol, access to free legal aid, the case of Linglong factory, youth employment, homelessness.

## **European Parliament`s resolution and UN experts` communications concerning alleged forced labour and human trafficking in Linglong factory**

Regarding the case of alleged forced labour, human rights violations, and the human trafficking of around 500 Vietnamese workers at a Linglong tire factory in Zrenjanin, A 11 Initiative [sent a communication to the UN Special Procedures](#). After that the Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings, the Special Rapporteur on Modern Forms of Slavery, the Special Rapporteur on Migrant Rights and the Working Group on Discrimination and Transnational Corporations issued a [joint statement](#) expressing deep concern about the possibility that Vietnamese migrant workers are potential victims of trafficking for the purpose of labor exploitation, as well as about the grave conditions in which they lived and worked in Serbia. UN human rights experts then sent [official communications](#) to Serbia, Vietnam, China and companies involved in human trafficking and labor exploitation of Linglong workers. Also, at the session held in December 2021, members of the [European Parliament adopted a Resolution on forced labour in the Linglong factory](#) in which, among other things, the Republic of Serbia was called upon to investigate reports on the treatment of Vietnamese workers in the Linglong factory in Zrenjanin. In the part of the Resolution text concerning this case, the Parliament expressed deep concern over the alleged forced labour, human rights violations and human trafficking for the purpose of exploitation of about 500 Vietnamese workers on the construction site of the Linglong factory in Zrenjanin. In addition, Serbian authorities were urged to "carefully investigate the case" and ensure respect for basic human rights, particularly workers' rights, to provide the European Union with the results of their investigations and hold perpetrators accountable. 586 parliamentarians voted for this Resolution, 53 were against it, and 44 abstained. The full text of the European Parliament Resolution is available [here](#) and accompanying statement is available [here](#).

## Submitted written contribution for the 2021 European Commission Annual Report for Serbia

At the invitation of the Delegation of the European Union in Serbia, in April 2021, A 11 Initiative submitted [written contribution to the European Commission 2021 Annual Report for Serbia](#). Submission contains A 11 Initiative's views on progress made by Serbia regarding political criteria and chapters 23 and 24, with particular focus on the discriminatory provisions of the Law on Financial Support to the Family with Children, the right to adequate housing, implementation of the Law on Free Legal Aid, NHRIs, access to the right to education and State's measures during the pandemic, with special reference to position of Roma and position of tradeswomen.

### *Additional advocacy efforts in 2021 included the following activities:*

- On 7 May 2021, representative of A 11 Initiative participated at [the public consultation](#) with the [International Commission of Jurists](#) and the [UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing](#), Mr. Rajagopal on "[Access to justice for housing discrimination and spatial segregation](#)."
- On 11 May 2021, A 11 Initiative's representative participated at the [meeting on gender equality organized by the European Parliament](#) and presented, among other, announced changes related to engagement of seasonal workers under the less favorable conditions that could additionally worsen the position of vulnerable workers.
- On 20 July 2021, representatives of A 11 Initiative met with [the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality](#) and discussed the protection against discrimination and the [promotion of the human rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups, with special focus on access to economic and social rights](#). Additional details available [here](#).
- On 2 December, A 11 Initiative (together with three other CSOs) meet with the [Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection](#). Participants of the meeting discussed the improvement of the situation in the field of personal data protection and preparation of new Strategy for Personal Data Protection.
- Participation in organization of media conference and joint [presentation of research findings](#) regarding the first year of implementation of the Law on Free Legal Aid, together with NGO Praxis, in February 2021.
- In April 2021, the A 11 Initiative presented the results of research [Position of Tradeswomen during the pandemic COVID-19](#), which indicates that the labour rights of trade workers (which are among the most endangered workers when it comes to the possibility of infection) additionally regressed in the first year of the pandemic. Video covering the event is available [here](#).

- In December 2021, participation in organization of [media conference](#) on Serbia's reporting process concerning the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, together with Belgrade Centre for Human Rights.
- A 11 Initiative's Programme Coordinator Danilo Ćurčić was one of the [participants in Peščanik episode about the challenges for the most vulnerable population in accessing social rights during the pandemic](#), available [here](#).

## Media advocacy

In 2021, A 11 Initiative published **19 press releases**, appeared in more than **64 media**, while its team members authored **11 articles** and had more than **15 television appearances**. For more details, please see the section "A 11 in media – 2021 Highlights" below.

## Education and awareness-raising

*The A 11 Initiative contributes to the improvement of the position of vulnerable groups as well as to the realization of its organizational goals via implementation of campaigns and educational programs aimed at awareness-raising and human rights education.*

# What we achieved in 2021:

## Implemented the second annual School of Economic and Social Rights

For the second year in a row, Initiative A 11 has successfully implemented the [School of Economic and Social Rights](#), which emerged from the Practicum for Economic and Social Rights, originally conducted in cooperation with the Faculty of Law, Union University in Belgrade. The school lasted from November 2021 to January 2022 and was comprised of eight lectures on the following topics: the place of social and economic rights in the system of human rights protection and the legal nature of economic and social rights; justiciability of economic and social rights; the right to adequate housing; the right to social protection; monitoring of economic and social rights; the impact of economic policy measures on poverty and realization of economic and social rights; access of women and persons with disabilities to economic and social rights; access of Roma and people on the move to economic and social rights. In 2021, our school attracted 33 participants who successfully completed the program (24 women and 9 men), including representatives of domestic and regional civil society organizations, international organizations, trade unions, political parties, activists, students and other interested individuals.

## Impressions:

"Social injustice and social inequality affect the most marginalized members of our society the most. It is the duty of every state to respect legal obligations related to economic and social human rights and ensure for its citizens a dignified life, safety, and protection. In order for this to happen, the proactive action of citizens in order to reduce social inequality and approach social justice is necessary. It was the participation in the School of Economic and Social Rights of Initiative A 11 that further motivated, encouraged and directed me to act in that direction".

*Natalija Havelka from the Center for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights (Osijek), participant of the second School of Economic and Social Rights*

*„As economic and social rights are an inseparable factor affecting the overall well-being of all people, and it is especially necessary to take them into account in work with marginalized groups, the ESR School was very useful for my daily work as an activist. Although most of us participants lack a formal legal education, the lecturers managed to provide us with basic information in a clear and concise manner about the legal framework, theory and practices related to ESRs and how their realization is connected with the position in society. The school really helped me to get a wider view of the problems of the people I work with and to understand how much more struggle we have ahead of us until each of us can enjoy our ESRs as the law provides!"*

*Sara Ristić, Project Manager from Refugee Centre Info Park, Belgrade, participants of the second School of Economic and Social Rights*

## Lecture for Harvard Law students on the human rights situation in Serbia

On 21 April 2021, in association with Canadian Bar Association and the Central and Southeast Europe Harvard Law Students Association, A 11 Initiative`s representatives held a lecture for students of Harvard University on the human rights situation in Serbia and introduced them to issues that are relevant to the rights to adequate housing, conditions in Roma settlements and human rights-protection mechanisms.

## School on Access to Economic and Social Rights for Roma activists and Roma paralegals

In April 2021, A 11 successfully organized School on Access to Economic and Social Rights for Roma activists and Roma paralegals, with the purpose to bring closer the practical mechanisms for advancing local integration of internally displaced persons and Roma and to improve the access to legal assistance and legal remedies.



Organized as series of five lectures during the three weeks period, the program covered the following topics: human rights protection mechanisms, access to personal documents, rights to social protection and health protection, the right to adequate housing, discrimination. Upon the completion of the program, participants received certificates and materials and manual for work with the vulnerable groups.

## **A 11 Program Coordinator participated at PhD Colloquium at the Faculty of Law in Belgrade**

On 8 April 2021, A 11 Initiative`s Program Coordinator Danilo Ćurčić participated in the first PhD Colloquium of PhD students at the Faculty of Law in Belgrade, where professors and representatives from research institutes and civil society organizations were invited to provide inputs, comments and suggestions on research proposals of PhD candidates and PhD students. Danilo Ćurčić was invited to provide comments on the research paper of PhD student at the Faculty of and Law and A 11 Initiative`s intern Mila Đorđević on the State`s pandemic related measures and their impact on eradication of poverty, which also relies on findings from A 11 Initiative`s analyses.

## **Dissemination of information on access to immunization against COVID-19**

In April and May, A 11 Initiative prepared and together with other partner organisations and collectives distributed leaflets providing information on the access to immunization against COVID-19, particularly regarding registration process. In sum, 50,000 leaflets were distributed in informal settlements, to social assistance beneficiaries and other persons facing obstacles in the access to information about vaccination.

## **Internship in 2021:**

- Intern **Edoardo Castiglioni** successfully completed his internship at the A 11 Initiative. His research was focused on **access to the right to water**.
- Intern **Lena Bašić** successfully completed her internship in A 11 Initiative with research focus on identifying **local decisions discriminating against internally displaced persons**.
- Intern **Mila Đorđević** successfully completed her internship at the A 11 Initiative. Her research was focused on **segregation of children in education**, with special reference to the poor and Roma children.

## Podcast

In 2021, A 11 Initiative launched **six new podcasts episodes** focused on the needs and problems of disadvantaged groups. Residents of social apartments and container settlements, persons with disabilities, persons experiencing homelessness, Roma working in the informal economy (collectors of secondary raw materials and baggage porters), were among those who shared their stories and unveiled important human rights issues through the following six episodes of A 11 podcast:

1. **Sugar and water - life in the Shelter for Adults and the Elderly** - In this episode of the A 11 podcast, one of the many homeless in Belgrade shared his experiences about the social protection system and the life in the Shelter for Adults and Elderly, where he had been placed at the end of 2020.
2. **From the Landfill to the street - lesser-known facts about the construction of a waste incinerator in Vinča**; - This episode of the A 11 podcast covers the problems faced by **collectors of secondary raw materials** who used to live in the "Vinča" Landfill, as well as the problems they faced after their eviction from the settlement formed near the landfill.
3. **Exemplary City - social housing in Belgrade** - This episode of the A 11 Initiative podcast covers the problems of social housing and shares experience of one of the inhabitants of social housing settlement "Kamendin" in Belgrade, who faced the **risk of forced eviction and homelessness, despite his disability**.
4. **Gypsies can no longer work here" - Informal economy in Serbia** - This episode covers issues related to informal economy and position of Roma in Serbia. It shares experience of Roma baggage porter who used to work at Belgrade Bus Station, where he faced discrimination and various obstacles due to his Roma ethnicity, which was also established in the opinion of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality.
5. **"Container guards" - Waiting for social housing in Belgrade**; - This episode of the A 11 Initiative podcast covers the problems faced by Roma who, after being **evicted** from an informal Roma settlement under Pančevo bridge, have been living in **container settlement** "Makiš", in deplorable living conditions. Already **inhuman living conditions** are further aggravated due to neglect of all competent social institutions and services, particularly when it comes to two Roma with **disabilities**, who shared their problems for this episode of the A 11 Initiative podcast.
6. **"Call Mey!" - What we know about the position of Vietnamese workers on the construction site of the Linglong factory** - The last episode of A 11 podcast in 2021 focuses on the position of 400 Vietnamese workers engaged in the **Linglong** tire factory, who lived in inhuman conditions, were exploited and are likely victims of **human trafficking**. Details of the case are discussed with two human rights activists involved the case.

## Monitoring and reporting

*Reporting on economic and social rights constitutes an important part of the A11 Initiatives activities. In that avail, the Initiative strives to document cases of economic and social rights violations, but also to provide analyses and recommendations for the improvement of the realization of these rights, especially taking into account the relevant international standards that guarantee them.*

## What we achieved in 2021:

### Policy monitoring, legal analyses and resources:

- [The position of tradeswomen during the pandemic of Covid-19](#)
- [Justiciability of economic and social rights in Serbia](#)
- [Written contribution to the 2021 Annual Report for Serbia on Political Criteria and chapters 23 and 24](#)
- [Overview of the legislation preventing or hindering the access to economic and social rights of the most vulnerable citizens in the Republic of Serbia](#)
- [Proposals for amendments to the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination](#)
- [Comments on the Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on Financial Support for Families with Children](#)
- [What do the Signing and Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Bring us?](#)
- [What do the Signing and Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Bring us? – brief](#)
- [A 11 Newsletter // Eighth Issue // VOL 4 // Topics for the period: January – April 2021](#)
- [A 11 Newsletter // Ninth Issue // VOL 4 // Topics for the period: May – September 2021](#)

## Collaborative work on monitoring and reporting:

- [Living and labour conditions of the Linglong factory construction workers from Vietnam](#) (with ASTRA)
- [Privacy and Personal Data Protection in Serbia – An Analysis of Selected Sectoral Regulations and Their Implementation](#)
- [Joint Submission to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on the occasion of the review of Serbia's third periodic report at the 71st Session – \(with Center for Economic and Social Rights\)](#)
- [Alternative Report for the 71st Session of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - Platform of Organizations for Cooperation with UN Human Rights Mechanisms](#)
- [Joint Submission to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for its 71st session and the review of the Republic of Serbia](#)

## Coalition building, cooperation, partnership

### Cooperation with 12 CSOs and trade unions and platform of 17 CSOs in preparation of three alternative reports to the UN CESCR

Coalition building, information sharing, and cooperation were strong both at domestic level and international level. This component of the A 11 work in 2021 is best illustrated through cooperation with New York based CESCR, as well as with domestic CSOs and trade unions, which resulted in preparation and submission of three joint alternative reports for the 71st session of the UN CESCR: [report](#) with CESR, [report](#) with [ADRA](#), [Centre Living Upright](#), [Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions of Vojvodina](#), [Civic organization 'Youth Center CK13'](#), [Group B1](#), [Association Izlazak](#), [Organization Liceulice](#), [Niš Human Rights Committee](#), [PIN – Psychosocial Innovation Network](#) and [ROZA - Association for Women`s Labor Rights](#), and [report](#) with the Platform of Organizations for Cooperation with UN Human Rights Mechanisms, which gathers 17 domestic CSOs.

## Participation in initiative concerning seasonal worker`s rights

A 11 Initiative, together with Platform for Theory and Practice of Commons – Zajedničko and the Centre of Modern Skills, launched the initiative "[I live out of season too](#)" demanding from the Government of the Republic of Serbia to withdraw the Draft Law on work engagement due to the increased demand in selected areas, claiming that the Draft law violates the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia and ratified international conventions. Additional details about the Draft law and the initiative for its withdrawal (signed by 162 organizations and individuals from civil society, academia and trade unions) are available [here](#) and [here](#). In the conclusion of the public hearing, it is stated that additional consultations will be conducted with the International Labor Organization (hereinafter: ILO) regarding the circumstance of whether some of the ILO conventions have been violated.



### Our collaborative work and partnership in 2021 were also marked by the following activities and events:

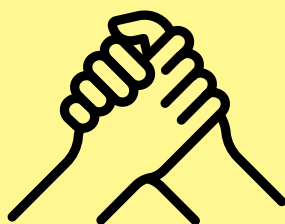
- Participated in piloting of the [community paralegals system](#) together with Forum of Roma Serbia, International Rescue Committee and Public Policy Research Centre.
- Continued cooperation within [the Housing Equality Movement](#) which, during 2021, contributed to the achievement of movement`s set objectives trough various activities such as the realization of the seminar "[Precarious Housing Statuses](#)", participation in the forum "[Homelessness in Serbia today - from denial to reality](#)", participation in the [Terrestrial Forum - Horizons of Change](#).
- Continued cooperation with [Liceulice magazine](#) within a column devoted to human rights and authored texts on the topics such as [social protection](#), [health protection](#), [racism](#) and [solidarity](#).

- Continued to collaborate in publishing joint monthly newsletter „Pojačalo“ by [Zajedničko, Center for Politics of Emancipation - CPE](#), [Institute for Urban Politics/Ministry of Space](#) and [Serbian Green Youth](#).
- In October 2021, representatives of the A11 Initiative visited the [Center for Peace Studies and the Human Rights House in Zagreb](#), where they discussed the system of protection of economic and social rights, experiences in Serbia, [networking and prospects for regional cooperation](#).
- On 10 December 2021, the A 11 Initiative team members held a [lecture on free legal aid](#) at the event organized by the Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization (EHO).
- A 11 Initiative supported an [initiative for amendments of the Law on Social Protection](#) to the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, which was supported by 34 civil society organizations and in which they referred to numerous flaws in the law or its implementation.
- A 11 Initiative supported the request submitted to the Ministry of Justice by more than 80 CSO, demanding the urgent withdrawal of the proposed Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on Civil Procedure, due to numerous [omissions](#), both in the manner of its drafting and in its content and proposed legal solutions. Additional details are available [here](#).
- A 11 Initiative supported “[Raise minimum wage](#)” campaign aiming to increase minimum wage to the level of minimum consumer basket. Additional details available [here](#).
- A 11 Initiative supported the [MDRI-S Letter of Attention](#) sent to various international bodies with the purpose to draw their attention on recent events [regarding the deinstitutionalization process](#) in the Republic of Serbia.
- A 11 Initiative continued to regularly participate in meetings and activities of the [Platform of Organization for Cooperation with UN Human Rights Mechanisms](#).

## Other work

### Participation in solidarity action for Linglong workers

A 11 Initiative participated in collection and distribution of solidarity aid to Linglong workers from Vietnam. Additional details are available [here](#).



## Implemented projects in 2021

### 1. Improved Local Integration of Internally Displaced Persons Through Enhanced Access to Social Rights

Donor: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees / Project duration: January 2021 – December 2021

### 2. Improving Social and Economic Rights of Marginalized Groups

Donor: Olof Palme International Center / Project duration: January 2020 – December 2024.

### 3. Advancement of economic and social rights through improved application of anti-discrimination legislation

Donor: Royal Norwegian Embassy in Belgrade / Project duration: November 2021 – July 2022

### 4. Corruption Planning and Construction – Combating Corruption and Breaching of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom in Urban and Spatial Planning

Donor: Delegation of European Union to Republic of Serbia / Project duration: January 2021 – December 2022

### 5. Closeness and Care: Elderly care in Serbia during the Covid-19 pandemic

Donor: Open Society University Network and supported [in part] by a grant from the Open Society Foundations / Project duration: August 2021 – July 2022

### 6. Improving communication on economic and social rights in Serbia

Donor: CRTA / Project duration: July 2021 – December 2021

### 7. Collectively towards Improved Protection of Economic and Social Rights

Donor: Belgrade Open School (BOŠ) with the support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) / Project duration: April 2021 – October 2021

### 8. Support for Most Vulnerable Communities during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Serbia

Donor: British Embassy in Belgrade / Project duration: September 2020 – February 2021

### 9. Reclaiming Privacy: A Tool to Fight Oppression

Donor: Republic of Serbia European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) / Project duration: January 2020 – December 2021

### 10. Improving institutional practices in preventing discrimination against women in the labour market in Serbia

Donor: Kosovo Women's Network / Project duration: January 2020 – April 2021

## Finances

In 2021, overall **annual budget** of the A 11 Initiative was 265.608,00 EUR.

### A 11 Initiative in 2021 in Numbers

- 9 donors supporting implementation of 10 projects
- 25 field visits to Roma settlements and informal collective centres
- Nearly 650 persons supported in accessing their economic and social rights and the right to non-discrimination
- 5 strategic cases before national and international courts
- 33 participants and 15 lecturers at School of Economic and Social Rights
- 4,76 is the average rate for our School of Economic and Social Rights (on a scale from 1 to 5), with 80% of participants expressing "absolute satisfaction" with the School of Economic and Social Rights and its program. 80% of participants rated the School of Economic and Social Rights with the highest grade (5) and 16,7% gave the score 4 on the scale from 1 to 5
- 6 new episodes of podcast launched
- 1 paralegal supporting internally displaced Roma; participated in strengthening and training 5 new paralegals to provide legal and protection support to Roma
- 63,071 website page views - which was higher than in previous year (61,069)
- 46,100 views for A 11 Initiative`s short documentary „[Life in Uzun Mirkova Street](#)”
- 6569 views for landing page for a campaign "[The enemy is poverty and not the poor](#)"
- 2,972 Twitter followers
- 3,432 Facebook follows

### A 11 in media – 2021 Highlights

- [Eviction of a person with a disability postponed, fear remains - he could not pay the bills](#) (N1)
- [Eviction of a person with a disability postponed, fear remains](#) (Nova S)
- [Suitcase full of debts, the case of Božidar Savić is not alone - what will happen after March 29](#) (RTS)
- [Welfare caps: how the UK and Serbia became outliers in restricting child support](#) (Open Global Rights)
- [Initiative A11: There are more and more poor citizens in Serbia to whom the state does not provide assistance](#) (Južne Vesti)
- [A 11: The state does not provide help to the poor](#) (Danas)
- [Human Rights Are Indivisible](#) (Vreme)



- [Hell on earth in the middle of Banat, workers from Vietnam, are possible victims of human trafficking](#) (N1)
- [360 degrees on the case of Vietnamese workers: Is there "worker slavery" in Serbia](#) (N1)
- [Shocking Claims Of Abuse Of Vietnamese Migrant Workers Abroad Highlight Need For Stronger Labor Protections](#) (Vietcetera)
- [Vietnamese workers at a Chinese factory in Serbia cry for help](#) (Associated Press)
- [Vietnamese in Zrenjanin: Slavery in the presence of the authorities](#) (Al Jazeera)
- [Initiative: If the Law on Labor Engagement Is Adopted, Serbia Will Become a Country of Exploitation](#) (021)
- [Initiative: Ministry to Withdraw the Draft Law on Employment](#) (N1)
- [Workers Are Left without Employment Rights](#) (Politika)
- [Trade Workers Are Aware That Their Rights Have Been Violated, But the Fear of Losing Their Jobs Prevails](#) (Mašina)
- [Workers in Stores Are Especially Exposed to the Risk of Infection](#) (RTV)
- [Tradeswomen Forgotten on the Front Line](#) (NovaS)
- [Trade Workers - Forgotten on the Front Line in the Fight against the Corona](#) (RTS)
- [Workers' rights are human rights. We are not giving up the joint fight! ", Said the activists in front of Linglong](#) (Mašina)
- [Activists protested in front of a Chinese company in Zrenjanin](#) (Radio Free Europe)
- [Solidarity action on the occasion of Human Rights Day for Vietnamese workers](#) (N1)
- [The A11 Initiative filed two more criminal charges with regard to Vietnamese workers](#) (Danas)
- [Initiative A11 filed new criminal charges with regard to Vietnamese workers](#) (N1)
- [Criminal charges against those responsible in Linglong and a Chinese company for Vietnamese workers](#) (021)
- [New criminal charges against Linglong and a Chinese subcontractor](#) (Nova S)
- [Criminal charges have been filed due to the situation with Vietnamese workers in Zrenjanin](#) (Radio Free Europe)
- [Criminal charges filed for violation of the right to strike and unlawful deprivation of liberty of Vietnamese workers](#) (Mašina)
- [Amendments to the Law on Civil Procedure - a loss for citizens and the judiciary](#) (Mašina)
- [Trade Workers - Forgotten on the Front Line in the Fight against the Corona](#) (Radio Beograd 202)
- [How to overcome anti-Gypsyism](#) (Newsmaxadria)

- [Ćurčić: The conditioning of social assistance beneficiaries is forced labor, the court remains silent \(N1\)](#)
- [How to better protect social and economic rights in Serbia? \(Open Doors of Judiciary\)](#)
- [The Law on Social Cards will reduce the number of social assistance beneficiaries by a quarter \(Biznis.rs\)](#)
- [Initiative A 11: People from Uzun Mirkova Street live in extremely difficult conditions \(Boom93\)](#)

