



2022 ANNUAL REPORT

A 11 – INITIATIVE FOR ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

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 organization dedicated to the promotion and protection of the rights of vulnerable, marginalized, and discriminated groups, with a particular focus on economic and social rights. In its work, the organization is guided by the principles of equality, dignity, solidarity, social justice, inclusivity, and gender equality.

In 2022, the A 11 Initiative had ten full-time employees, who strived to manage the organization through horizontal decision-making processes.

The A 11 Initiative was founded in 2018 and, from the beginning, has aimed to contribute to the improved protection of the economic and social rights of vulnerable, marginalized, and discriminated groups, as well as to a better understanding of the state's obligation to protect, promote, and fulfill these rights. Since its founding, the A 11 Initiative has implemented **23 projects**, some of which are still ongoing. The A 11 Initiative has also provided legal advice to over **2,000 individuals**, initiated more than **200 proceedings** before courts and administrative bodies, and **12 strategic cases** (seven before the Constitutional Court and one before the European Court of Human Rights), submitted over **30 complaints to national human rights institutions**, assisted more than **30 secondary raw material collectors** by servicing their cargo bicycles, conducted at least **15 awareness-raising campaigns**, published **23 reports, analyses, and manuals** on the protection and promotion of economic, social, and other rights, submitted 13 reports to international human rights mechanisms, and released **10 podcast episodes** addressing important human rights issues and challenges. Over **100 participants** from Serbia and the region have attended the School of Economic and Social Rights, an educational program on economic and social rights organized annually by the A 11 Initiative. In addition, 28 students participated in the Economic and Social Rights Practicum organized in cooperation with the Union University Faculty of Law, and **9 interns** successfully completed their internships at A 11. Furthermore, the A 11 Initiative has become a member of various networks, both national and international, including the **Housing Equality Movement** (national), the **Platform of Organizations for Cooperation with United Nations Human Rights Mechanisms** (national), the **International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** (a leading global network of organizations working to protect and promote these rights), the **Network for Fight Against Homelessness**, and has been granted **Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council**.

Activities and Results

We achieve our objectives through the implementation of five complementary activities:

- legal support and strategic litigation;
- public advocacy;
- education, research, and awareness-raising;
- monitoring and reporting;
- coalition building, cooperation, and partnerships.

Since 2020, the A 11 Initiative has maintained an active **Solidarity Program** through which it provides support to individuals, groups, and other organizations in need of legal assistance in the fight for social justice and equality, as well as those seeking to combat impunity for human rights violations, even when such violations are not directly related to economic and social rights. Through this program, we have supported parents of newborn children who “disappeared” from maternity wards in Serbia, citizens subjected to police brutality during the July 2020 protests in Belgrade, Vietnamese workers at the Linglong factory, as well as other individuals and communities in need of legal assistance.

Key Activities in 2022

Legal Support and Strategic Litigation

Through strategic litigation, the A 11 Initiative highlights significant legal issues and barriers related to access to social and economic rights and protection from discrimination. Relying on relevant international standards and good practice examples, the A 11 aims to secure more favorable interpretations of the law and improved access to economic and social rights for vulnerable, marginalized, and discriminated groups.

What we achieved in 2022:

An interim measure from the ECHR prevented forced eviction and family separation

In early July 2022, the Š. family faced the risk of homelessness and family separation due to an initiated eviction procedure, without any alternative accommodation being provided. The eviction was prevented thanks to an interim measure from the European Court of Human Rights.

For years, this four-member family had lived in an inadequate shack with no electricity or water. Their residence was officially registered at the address of the local social work center, as the shack

itself could not be used to register permanent residence. The competent city authorities treated the shack, their only home, as an illegally constructed structure on public land that needed to be demolished. They initiated eviction proceedings and scheduled the eviction for July 5, 2022. The Š. family, whose youngest child was 12 years old at the time, was not offered any alternative accommodation. The only “solution” they were presented with, which would also entail the separation of the family, was placement of the minor child in the Children’s Shelter, and the adult family members in the Shelter for Adults and the Elderly – “if there is capacity.”

Considering the risk of irreparable harm from forced eviction and family separation, and the risk of a violation of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, the A 11 Initiative submitted a request to the European Court of Human Rights for the issuance of an interim measure. The ECtHR issued an interim measure to the Republic of Serbia, after which the state withdrew from the eviction and demolition process. More details available [here](#).

Combatting discriminatory reporting on Roma people

In the procedure initiated based on complaints by the Vojvodina Roma Center, the association “Rise up, Roma,” and the A 11 Initiative, the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality issued an opinion stating that the daily newspaper Danas and Marko Vidojković, through the article “Paradise in Vuka Vrčevića,” published on February 22, 2022, engaged in harassing and humiliating behavior that violated the dignity of members of the Roma national minority.

The Commissioner found that statements in the column referring to the building of cardboard settlements as a Roma tradition, to stoning firefighters, begging, pickpocketing, and drug use represent a form of discrimination, as they promote negative stereotypes and prejudices against Roma. The Commissioner set a 30-day deadline within which the daily newspaper Danas and Marko Vidojković were to meet with the complainants to become more familiar with the challenges faced by the Roma population. Additionally, the Commissioner issued a recommendation to Danas and Marko Vidojković to refrain in the future from publishing content that offends the dignity of Roma men and women.

More details are available [here](#) and [here](#).

Ministry of Finance paid pandemic relief to a Roma woman after previously denying it due to a lack of ID and registered residence

In an effort to end the exclusion of undocumented Roma from government aid measures designed to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, the A 11 Initiative filed a lawsuit with the Administrative Court against the Ministry of Finance on behalf of E. H., a Roma woman who was denied financial aid for pandemic relief because she did not have a registered residence or ID card. In its response to the lawsuit, the Ministry of Finance informed the court that it had, in the meantime, paid E. H. the relief amount of 60 euros, along with an additional 20 euros in support. This marked a positive step, especially considering that the Ministry had previously rejected her application for this aid as

well as her subsequent complaint, explaining that to receive the financial assistance, all requirements had to be cumulatively met, including having both a valid ID card and registered residence. However, the core issue remains unresolved: no mechanism has been developed to include other vulnerable citizens, like E. H. in support measures, despite their need for assistance and difficulties in accessing personal documents.

As a reminder, beginning in 2021, the state provided financial aid on multiple occasions to various categories of the population (all adult citizens, youth under 30, retired persons...) to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, a practice which continued in 2022. These types of assistance were available to all individuals with a valid ID card and registered residence, regardless of whether they truly needed such support. However, the aid remained inaccessible to those without registered residence, who in Serbia are almost exclusively Roma.

The difficulties Roma face in accessing documentation are exemplified by the case of E. H. She was not registered in the Registry of Births because, during the Kosovo conflict, three years before her birth, the registry books containing her parents' data were destroyed, and her undocumented parents could not register her birth. Both of her parents passed away (her mother when she was seven, her father when she was fourteen), which made registration in the registry even more difficult. Once she was finally registered in the Registry of Births, she encountered problems proving her citizenship, followed by challenges in registering her residence—a process that lasted seven months, despite her fulfilling all conditions and submitting sufficient documentation to prove residence.

The A 11 Initiative also highlighted the issue of exclusion of undocumented individuals from support measures in its alternative report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, submitted during the review of Serbia's Third Periodic Report on the implementation of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In April 2022, the Committee expressed concern over the lack of specific measures to protect vulnerable and marginalized individuals and groups during the pandemic, and recommended that the state "immediately remedy the situation by ensuring that COVID-19-related financial assistance is provided to those who were excluded, including due to lack of residence or identity documents." Nothing has been done to act upon this recommendation, and the case of E. H., who was granted assistance only after initiating administrative proceedings, remains an exception. Individuals who have since found themselves in the same situation continue to have their applications for financial aid rejected on the grounds that they do not meet the requirements, specifically, the lack of an ID card or registered residence. Relying on guarantees of equal protection of rights and the prohibition of discrimination, A 11 will continue to advocate for this situation to be remedied.

Support to former residents and secondary raw material collectors displaced from the Vinča landfill

Throughout 2022, the A 11 Initiative continued providing support to 17 families of secondary raw material collectors displaced from the Vinča landfill due to the implementation of the waste incinerator construction project. In 2018, the City of Belgrade and a consortium of companies Suez, Itochu, and Marguerite launched the project to build a municipal waste incineration plant on the landfill, with financial backing from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

Once the project was underway, the Roma families previously living on the landfill had to be relocated. Some were not provided with any alternative accommodation and faced homelessness, while others were placed in inadequate housing that they could not afford to maintain, particularly the utility costs. These families, who lived off collecting secondary raw materials and had contracts with the Public Utility Company "City Sanitation," lost their source of income when the project began. "City Sanitation" unilaterally terminated their contracts and banned them from entering the landfill or collecting recyclables. Due to all the above and the non-compliance with domestic and international obligations, the A 11 Initiative filed a complaint on behalf of the displaced families with the Independent Project Accountability Mechanism (IPAM), requesting an investigation into whether the measures taken were in line with the EBRD's environmental and social policies. The outcome of the process should result in a sustainable solution for the families affected by the resettlement, particularly regarding the right to housing and the restoration of income sources.

Discrimination against children in a kindergarten in Pećinci due to the political affiliation of family members

At the end of December 2022, acting on a complaint filed by the A 11 Initiative, the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality determined that the preschool institution Vlada Obradović Kameni discriminated against children on the basis of the political affiliation of their parents and family members. The complaint was filed after the children from the M. and M. families, who had previously been enrolled in the mentioned kindergarten, were unlawfully removed from the enrollment list in early September 2022. The parents contacted the 11 Initiative, suspecting that the removal was due to their membership in the Democratic Party and involvement in farmers' protests in Vojvodina. Following the investigation, the Commissioner concluded that the preschool's decision to place the children on a waiting list was unjustified and failed to consider the best interests of the children or the provisions of the Law on the Fundamentals of the Education System.

As one of the mothers of the discriminated children stated: "The Commissioner only confirmed what we, as parents, were trying to prove—that our children were discriminated against because of our political affiliation. The preschool, under the leadership of the director, never once considered the children, their interests, or their wellbeing when it decided to put them on the waiting list. Simply put, the admissions committee had no grounds to review our children's

attendance, because nothing had changed in our circumstances - we still live at the same address, we are both employed, and we regularly fulfilled all our obligations toward the kindergarten.”

More details are available [here](#) and [here](#).

Additional activities in the field of legal counseling, legal aid, and strategic litigation included:

- Filing a **criminal complaint against the director of the preschool institution** Vladimir Obradović Kameni in Pećinci for acting negligently in violation of the law, regulations, and other general acts, which led to the severe violation of the rights of three children who were expelled from the preschool. More details available [here](#);
- **Monitoring ongoing strategic cases for protection against discrimination** initiated in previous years;
- Conducting **25 field visits to informal settlements**, social housing units, informal collective centers, and other locations inhabited by vulnerable groups, primarily internally displaced Roma.

Advocacy

The recommendations of the A 11 Initiative for improving legislation and policies relevant to the protection of human rights are based on analysis of relevant practices and their impact on vulnerable, marginalized, and discriminated individuals and groups. The A 11 Initiative identifies deviations from international standards and points out observed shortcomings to competent state bodies and institutions capable of addressing them, as well as to the general public and media. The A 11 makes use of procedures related to Serbia’s membership in international organizations and provisions of relevant international treaties to help align domestic law with international standards and create conditions for full access to social and economic rights for all. Through public advocacy, the A 11 seeks to expose and explain the most urgent issues related to social and economic rights and discrimination, and to exert additional pressure on relevant authorities and institutions to address them.

What we achieved in 2022:

Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights announced

Following nearly four years of continuous advocacy and several successive initiatives¹ for the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which eventually led to the **inclusion of the ratification in the Government's work plan**, in February 2022 the delegation of the Republic of Serbia **announced the ratification of this important instrument during the presentation of Serbia's Third Periodic Report on the implementation of the Covenant** at the 71st session of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The announced ratification of the Optional Protocol, now part of the Government's annual work plan, marks a significant step toward better protection of economic and social rights and serves as further evidence of the A 11 Initiative's advocacy impact. Advocacy for the ratification of the Optional Protocol involved a set of complementary activities targeting government bodies (meetings, [public debates](#), [initiatives](#), and indirectly, submissions to UN treaty bodies), media (numerous press releases), and the general public ([video materials](#), expert messages by figures such as [Aoife Nolan](#) and [Koldo Casla](#), [brochures](#), and a mix of [informative](#) and participatory activities for citizens and [awareness-raising campaigns](#)). These advocacy efforts were supported by an [analysis](#) highlighting the need for ratification of the Optional Protocol in Serbia and the benefits it would bring. This comprehensive advocacy campaign ultimately resulted in the inclusion of the Optional Protocol's ratification in the Serbian Government's work plan.

Moreover, on November 4, 2022, at a conference dedicated to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) organized by the Platform of Organizations for Cooperation with UN Human Rights Mechanisms, the **Minister for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue announced that the Ministry would propose the ratification of the Optional Protocol**. On **Human Rights Day**, December 10, 2022, the Prime Minister also announced that Serbia would ratify the Optional Protocol to the Covenant.

This represents significant progress compared to the previous period, when the competent ministry rejected the ratification initiative, particularly in light of the fact that, during the previous, third, UPR cycle, the state did not accept recommendations to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Covenant.²

Constitutionality review initiative of the Social Card Law

In April 2022, the A 11 Initiative and Share Foundation submitted an initiative to the Constitutional Court to initiate proceedings for a review of the constitutionality of the Social Card Law, citing

¹ See more on: [Ratifikacija Opcionog protokola: Kako do bolje zaštite, ekonomskih i socijalnih prava](https://www.a11initiative.org/en/the-initiative-to-ratify-the-optional-protocol-to-the-international-covenant-on-economic-social-and-cultural-rights/); <https://www.a11initiative.org/en/the-initiative-to-ratify-the-optional-protocol-to-the-international-covenant-on-economic-social-and-cultural-rights/> and <https://www.a11initiative.org/podneta-inicijativa-za-ratifikaciju-opcionih-protokola-uz-konvenciju-o-pravima-deteta-i-pakt-o-ekonomskim-socijalnim-i-kulturnim-pravima/>

² https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NtISChGaJkuPmtba_ATTNQiaTGY3nhzY/view

inconsistencies between its provisions and the Constitution, ratified international treaties, and the principle of legal system unity.

The initiative pointed out, among other things, that the law foresees the processing of approximately 135 data points on citizens who have received or attempted to access social protection rights, indicating a violation of one of the fundamental principles of personal data protection: the principle of data minimization and purpose limitation.

Of particular concern is Article 17 of the Law, which allows for the automated processing of personal data, in contradiction with the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data.

The constitutionality review initiative also requested that the Court determine that the law is inconsistent with Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) which guarantees the right to private and family life, as well as with Article 9 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which guarantees the right to social protection and social security. Finally, the initiative emphasized that Article 9 of the Social Card Law contradicts constitutional provisions regarding the unity of the legal order, the prohibition of discrimination, and the protection of personal data.

Expert Opinion (amicus curiae brief) in support of the constitutionality review of the Social Card Law

The review of the Social Card Law by the Constitutional Court was also requested by members of the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Network (ESCR-Net) organizations with long-standing experience in human rights protection, particularly in areas affected by social registry systems. By submitting an amicus curiae brief (joint expert opinion), organizations including Amnesty International, Dejusticia, ERRC, Initiative for Social and Economic Rights, the Kenya Human Rights Commission, the Program on Human Rights and the Global Economy, and the Digital Welfare State and Human Rights Project expressed support for the initiative submitted by the A 11 in April 2022. In their expert opinion, the organizations emphasized that the extensive processing of data on social protection users, as foreseen by the Social Card Law, contradicts principles of data protection, the right to social protection, and the prohibition of discrimination, primarily due to the overrepresentation of Roma in the social protection system. Both in the amicus brief and in the constitutionality initiative, the Netherlands' SyRI case was referenced, wherein the Dutch government attempted to use an algorithm to predict and detect social welfare fraud. The District Court in The Hague ruled that the system violated the right to private and family life as guaranteed by Article 8 of the ECHR and failed to include adequate privacy safeguards.

More information and the full amicus brief are available [here](#).

Recommendation of measures for the Notary Chamber and the Ministry of Justice regarding the certification of powers of attorney for persons without identification documents

Acting upon information received from the A 11 Initiative, the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality issued a [recommendation of measures](#) to the Notary Chamber and the Ministry of Justice in order to address irregularities identified in the certification of powers of attorney for individuals without identification documents. The A 11 Initiative contacted the Commissioner due to the unlawful charging of significantly higher notary fees for the certification of powers of attorney for clients without ID cards, whose identity is verified through identity witnesses. Specifically, it was found that some notaries charge individuals without identification documents substantially higher fees than those prescribed by the notary fee schedule, in some cases up to four times more. Some notaries unlawfully charged fees of 4,000 or even 5,000 dinars, while others correctly applied the law and charged 1,080 dinars, as prescribed, for certifying a power of attorney in the presence of identity witnesses.

It is important to note that individuals without ID cards, who are required to certify a power of attorney with identity witnesses, are among the most vulnerable citizens in Serbia, and these powers of attorney are often necessary for initiating procedures that would allow them to finally obtain personal documents.

After submitting complaints to the Notary Chamber and the Ministry of Justice, which failed to address the issue, the A 11 Initiative turned to the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality. The Commissioner then recommended that the Ministry and the Notary Chamber undertake measures to ensure that when determining notary fees for certifying signatures for this category of the population, it is taken into account that they belong to the most vulnerable groups, and that for them, documentation is a prerequisite for exercising all other rights, especially in areas such as health care, social protection, and education, etc. The Commissioner also noted that individuals without documents are unable to prove their poor financial status precisely because of their lack of documentation and therefore cannot claim the right to reduced or waived notary fees, which is available to beneficiaries of financial social assistance.

Additionally, given that some notaries refuse to certify powers of attorney at all for individuals without documents, the Commissioner recommended that measures be taken to ensure the proper implementation of existing regulations, which require notaries to verify identity by hearing two identity witnesses when a person lacks formal identification. Since certifying a power of attorney can be a prerequisite for initiating other procedures that enable the most vulnerable citizens to obtain personal documents, the Commissioner issued this recommendation in order to improve their position and reduce discrimination.

More information is available [here](#) and the Commissioner's recommendation is available [here](#).

Participatory forums – “How to achieve social protection that meets citizens’ needs?”

In 2022, the A 11 Initiative, in cooperation with the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory and the Ministry of Space, organized participatory forums (citizens’ assemblies) with recipients of social protection and those who are in need of financial social assistance but have not been able to access it in practice. Participatory forums were held in Šabac, Novi Sad, and Belgrade, with the aim of involving the most vulnerable citizens in the process of adopting policies and decisions in the field of social protection.

After an explanation of the conditions and procedures for obtaining financial social assistance, current and potential beneficiaries collectively formulated recommendations to improve the process for accessing social benefits. These participatory forums focused on the field of social protection, in light of the long-anticipated amendments to the Law on Social Protection, and were designed to serve as a model for active citizen engagement in decision-making, while simultaneously educating and informing participants. The approach was based on the assumption that those most affected by certain decisions and policies have the best insight into the realities those decisions aim to address, and that their experience and perspective can significantly contribute to the formulation of better and more legitimate policy proposals.

The First Social Rights Days were held

In May 2022, the A 11 Initiative organized the first-ever “[Social Rights Days](#)”, conceived as an annual event that serves as an opportunity for collaboration, networking, and joint engagement with key issues in the field of economic and social rights. The program of the inaugural “Social Rights Days” included three components: a photo exhibition marking ten years since the forced eviction of the informal Roma settlement “Belvil” in New Belgrade, the presentation of A 11 Initiative’s annual report on the state of economic and social rights in Serbia, and a discussion on the state of economic and social rights in the region, as well as opportunities for joint efforts to improve these rights regionally.

More details are available [here](#).

Panel discussion: “Digitalization of Social Protection – Exclusion by Automatization”

On November 30, 2022, the A 11 Initiative organized a panel discussion titled “Digitalization of Social Protection: Exclusion by Automatization” to explain why the Social Card Law needs to be repealed.

In March 2022, Serbia began implementing the Social Card Law, which, under the slogan of reducing abuse, began a process of dehumanizing the social protection system. Since its implementation, more than 20,000 people have been excluded from the system. Digital monitoring of beneficiaries involves the collection of at least 135 personal data points, combined with

automated decision-making and the non-transparent use of algorithms that assess eligibility for social assistance. These algorithms send notifications and instructions to social workers, which are most often instructions to terminate rights. The panel discussed the implications of the Social Card Law, featuring: Andrea Čolak (European Roma Rights Centre), Imogen Richmond-Bishop (Amnesty International), Brian Kiira (Initiative for Social and Economic Rights, Uganda), and Danilo Ćurčić (A 11 Initiative).

A recording of the panel discussion is available [here](#).

Participation in the social dialogue “Homelessness: Mapping and First Steps Toward Social Inclusion”

On the International Human Solidarity Day, December 20, 2022, the A 11 Initiative participated in the social dialogue titled “Homelessness: Mapping and First Steps Toward Social Inclusion,” organized by the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue. In addition to the Ministry and the A 11 Initiative, participants included representatives from ADRA, Caritas Serbia, the Center for Youth Integration, and Izlaz. During the dialogue, participants reached an agreement on several “operational steps,” including: 1) Undertaking actions to collect data on measures and activities focused on addressing homelessness and securing rights for people experiencing homelessness; 2) Establishing a working group to prepare a report on the key issues discussed during the dialogue; 3) Submitting a proposal to the Ministry to hold a thematic session of the Council for Monitoring the Implementation of UN Human Rights Recommendations, dedicated to homelessness. The next social dialogue on homelessness was announced for February 20, 2023, on the World Day of Social Justice. Additionally, in recognition of the World Day Against Child Labour, a separate social dialogue was announced, dedicated to children in street situations.

Advocacy initiatives at the international level

Report submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Council for Serbia’s Fourth UPR Cycle

In the context of the Fourth Universal Periodic Review (UPR) for Serbia and the 43rd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, the A 11 Initiative submitted a report in October 2022, focusing on denial of parental and child benefits to Roma children, exclusion of undocumented Roma from financial assistance measures related to pandemic relief, human rights risks associated with the Social Card system, access to healthcare for Roma women and undocumented children, and ratification of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The report is available [here](#).

Contribution submitted for the 2022 European Commission Report on Serbia

In April 2022, the A 11 Initiative prepared a report as its [contribution to the European Commission's 2022 Annual Report on Serbia](#). The report provided a detailed analysis of discriminatory provisions in the Law on Financial Support to Families with Children, the Social Card Law, labor rights, the right to adequate housing, including the Draft National Housing Strategy, and the lack of access to pandemic relief measures for the most vulnerable citizens.

Presentation of alternative reports to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

In connection with the review of Serbia's Third Periodic Report on the implementation of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the A 11 Initiative participated in an online session of the Committee on February 21, 2022. It presented alternative reports submitted to the Committee together with other organizations, trade unions, and the Platform of Organizations for Cooperation with UN Human Rights Mechanisms.

Additional advocacy activities in 2022:

- On September 16, 2022, the Program Coordinator of A 11 Initiative participated in a **meeting of NGOs with the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatović**, presenting key issues related to access to and protection of social and economic rights for vulnerable groups in Serbia.
- In October 2022, the A 11 Initiative conducted the "(Anti)Social Cards" campaign, aimed at highlighting the negative consequences of introducing social cards into the social protection system, as regulated by the Social Card Law. The campaign was implemented across social media and media portals. During the campaign, the "[\(Anti\)Social Cards](#)" section, created on the A 11 Initiative's website, recorded 3,900 views.

Public advocacy and media

Throughout 2022, the A 11 Initiative issued 31 press releases and was featured in over 155 media outlets. For more details, see the section ***A 11 Initiative in the Media in 2022*** at the end of this report.

Education and Awareness-Raising

The A 11 Initiative contributes to improving the position of vulnerable groups and achieving the organization's goals through campaigns and educational programs aimed at raising awareness and

educating the public about human rights, as well as through the publication of educational materials and manuals to facilitate the exercise of rights.

What we achieved in 2022:

Third Annual School of Economic and Social Rights Held

The A 11 Initiative successfully held the third **School of Economic and Social Rights**, developed from the original Practicum on Economic and Social Rights, initially implemented in cooperation with the Union University Faculty of Law in Belgrade. The school ran from November 2022 to February 2023, consisting of eight lectures covering the following topics: the place of social and economic rights within the human rights protection system 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 the realization of economic and social rights; access to economic and social rights for women and persons with disabilities; access to economic and social rights for Roma and people on the move. In 2022, the program was attended by 27 participants (23 women and 4 men), including representatives of domestic and regional civil society organizations, international organizations, trade unions, political parties, activists, students, and other interested individuals.

Impressions:

"The excellent discussions during the lectures are proof of how important it is to bring the education on economic and social rights down from the level of abstraction to the level of lived experience. That's something the School of Economic and Social Rights has successfully achieved for the third year in a row, making it unique in the field of human rights education."

- Sandra Kasunić, Trade Union Collective of Precarious Workers and Activists (Zagreb/Karlovac), lecturer at the third School of Economic and Social Rights

"Organization, hospitality, and warmth left the strongest impression on me. The organizers thought of every detail and provided us with genuinely useful reading materials. The lectures were highly engaging and interactive, and the instructors made an effort to bring abstract concepts closer to us. Finally, what left the most beautiful impression on me was the international character of the school. Over the past few months, I have had the chance to discuss with colleagues from Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, gaining insight into systemic problems that are largely shared across the region. I'll fondly remember the school and Belgrade, and I look forward to future collaborations."

- Medina Bejtović, participant in the third School of Economic and Social Rights

Trainings on Impact Assessment for Socioeconomically Vulnerable Groups and Recommendations for Impact Assessment Measures

In cooperation with the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, A 11 Initiative organized training sessions for representatives of public authorities on how to conduct impact assessments of laws and public policies on vulnerable social groups - an obligation introduced by the 2021 amendments to the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination. After successfully advocating for the introduction of this obligation, which holds undeniable potential to bring change to the lives of vulnerable citizens, A 11 Initiative focused in 2022 on training, education, and other activities aimed at enabling its effective implementation. Furthermore, recognizing the significance of introducing the obligation to assess the impact on reducing inequality, and the fact that the first year since its adoption passed without any examples of proper implementation, the A 11 Initiative approached the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality with a request to remind the newly formed Government and ministries, through a recommendation of measures, of their obligation to conduct impact assessments and the manner in which they should be implemented. Following the A 11 Initiative's proposal, the Commissioner issued a [recommendation](#) to local self-government units to carry out an impact assessment on socioeconomically vulnerable individuals or groups when preparing new regulations or public policies relevant to the realization of their rights.

Workshop: "Improving the Status of Roma through Better Access to Economic and Social Rights"

In November 2022, A 11 successfully organized a three-day workshop "Improving the Status of Roma through Better Access to Economic and Social Rights" for Roma activists, focused on improving access to economic and social rights. Topics included mechanisms for protecting economic and social rights, access to personal documents, rights to social and health protection, the right to adequate housing. Updates to the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination were presented, and emphasis was placed on the key role of activists in monitoring the law's implementation, especially provisions requiring public authorities to conduct impact assessments on vulnerable groups. The workshop concluded with a discussion on networking and collaboration opportunities to strengthen economic and social rights for vulnerable citizens.

Meeting on the Implementation of the Social Card Law

To present the effects of the Social Card Law and initiate a discussion on mitigating its negative consequences, the A 11 held a meeting on November 30, 2022 with civil society organizations.

The focus was on the impact of the Social Card system on social protection, the right to equality, and data protection. Particular attention was paid to the lack of algorithm transparency and the automation of decision-making. Key concerns raised included disproportionate effects on Roma and survivors of domestic violence, the exclusion of important indicators (e.g., housing conditions, access to utilities) that reflect actual living standards, the system's proactive nature in identifying exclusion criteria but not in identifying eligibility for additional rights. Participants also discussed

information flows in the Social Card system and explored whether reverse engineering could help uncover how the system functions and identify error sources.

Collaboration with the Edinburgh Legal Clinic

In March 2022, the A 11 established a partnership with the Edinburgh International Justice Initiative (EIJI), a student-run *pro bono* legal clinic at the University of Edinburgh. EIJI provides free legal research assistance to institutions and organizations working on access to justice and fighting impunity. Given Serbia's recent introduction of a legal obligation to conduct impact assessments for new regulations and policies, mirroring the UK's "socio-economic duty" first implemented in Scotland, EIJI will support the A 11 in researching how these assessments are conducted in jurisdictions where they exist. The results will help the A 11 build capacity for more effective implementation in Serbia, an effort the Initiative has championed since the amendments to the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination. Regarding data protection, the cooperation also explored engaging the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection in safeguarding the rights of individuals whose data is processed in the Social Card register.

Additional Education and Awareness-Raising Activities

- On December 23, 2022, the A 11 representatives **participated in a Legal Clinic on Refugee Law**, delivering a lecture on economic and social rights.
- On December 8, 2022, an A 11 representative held a **training session on the right to adequate housing, focused on recognizing and preventing residential segregation**, for local government officials participating in the EU-funded "Social Housing and Active Inclusion" Program, implemented through the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance.

Internships in 2022

- **Ondine Jevremov** successfully completed her internship, focusing her research on identifying **human rights violations arising from the Social Card system**.
- **Ana Trifunović** completed her internship with a focus on access to the **right to free legal aid**.
- Gwen Berghof successfully completed her internship, researching the **role of independent institutions in protecting economic and social rights**.

Monitoring and Reporting

Reporting on economic and social rights is an important part of the A 11 Initiative's efforts to create conditions for equal access to rights. Through reports, legal analyses, and other publications, the Initiative aims to document cases of discrimination and violations of economic and social rights, highlight gaps in the legal and strategic framework that led to such violations, and offer recommendations for improvement, particularly in line with relevant international standards that guarantee these rights. Our research also provides a strong foundation for advocacy activities and strategic litigation.

What we achieved in 2022:

Reports, legal analyses, and other resources:

- *Distorted Image – Economic and Social Rights in Serbia*
- *Report on the Implementation of the Law on Free Legal Aid in 2022*
- *Legal Opinion on International Comparative Human Rights Legislation in the Context of the Social Card Law before the Constitutional Court of Serbia*
- *Contribution to the Human Rights Council for the 43rd Session and the Fourth UPR Cycle for Serbia*
- *Case Study – Publication of Personal ID Numbers of Citizens Affected by Eviction and Relocation Procedures*
- *Contribution to the European Commission's Annual Report on Serbia for 2022*
- *A 11 Bulletin // Tenth Issue // Topics for the period: January – December 2022*

Monitoring and Reporting Partnerships:

- *Guide to Personal Data Protection for civil society organizations working in social protection (in cooperation with Partners for Democratic Change Serbia, Share Foundation, Atina, Belgrade Open School, and Da se zna!)*
- *Personal Data Protection Is Your Right (leaflet, in cooperation with Partners Serbia)*

- *Joint Report to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for the 71st session and review of Serbia's Third Periodic Report (in cooperation with the Center for Economic and Social Rights)*
- *Alternative Report for the 71st Session of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – Platform of Organizations for Cooperation with UN Human Rights Mechanisms*
- *Contribution to the Joint Report of the Platform of Organizations for Cooperation with UN Human Rights Mechanisms for Serbia's Fourth Universal Periodic Review and the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council*

Collaboration and Partnership

Coalition-building, information exchange, and collaboration were active at both the national and international levels. This aspect of the A 11 Initiative's work in 2022 is best illustrated by its cooperation with members of the **ESCR-Net**, which resulted in the preparation and submission of a joint **amicus curiae brief** to the Constitutional Court of Serbia, challenging the compliance of the Social Card Law with domestic human rights regulations and ratified international treaties. A successful example of cooperation with domestic NGOs includes joint efforts to establish a night shelter for people experiencing homelessness.

Joint advocacy for adequate and accessible night shelters for people experiencing homelessness

On the occasion of the International Day to Combat Homelessness, October 10, 2022, A 11 Initiative, in cooperation with other members of the Network to Combat Homelessness (Adra Serbia, Caritas Serbia, Liceulice, PIN, Klikaktiv), submitted a letter to the relevant institutions highlighting the extremely poor conditions and systemic challenges faced daily by people experiencing homelessness in Belgrade. The letter also pointed to the limited access to shelter services at the Shelter for Adults and the Elderly and proposed that institutions develop a systemic solution for unhindered access to these vital services. The network members also advocated for the establishment of adequate and accessible night shelters as an alternative accommodation option during the winter months. They supported the institutions' past steps toward opening day shelters for homeless persons and suggested extending their operating hours. Two months after the letter was submitted, on December 24, 2022, recognizing the urgent need, the City Secretariat for Social Protection, in cooperation with the Red Cross, opened the first temporary night shelter for people experiencing homelessness at Dr Milutina Ivkovića no. 2, Autokomanda. The shelter could

accommodate 25 people each night between 8:00 PM and 8:00 AM, and a personal ID was not required for access. The shelter operated until March 31 and was used by approximately 60 individuals during its opening period.

Our collaborative work and partnerships in 2022 also included the following activities and events:

Cooperation with 12 NGOs and trade unions, as well as a platform of 17 NGOs involved in the preparation of three alternative reports to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Cooperation with the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory and the Ministry of Space in organizing participatory forums as a model for citizen education and participation in social protection policymaking.

A joint [statement](#) marking the International Day of Homeless Persons and World Mental Health Day (October 10, 2022), with organizations including CK13 Youth Center, ADRA Serbia, Liceulice, KlikAktiv – Center for Social Policy Development, and PIN – Network of Psychosocial Innovations.

Collaboration with the Network of Civil Society Organizations Against Homelessness, including the organization of a joint action on the International Day of Homeless Persons and submission of an appeal to the City Secretariat for Social Protection, as well as a joint [statement](#) regarding the opening of the temporary night shelter.

Participation in the preparation of **contributions for the Platform of Organizations for Cooperation with UN Human Rights Mechanisms for the Fourth Universal Periodic Review** of the Republic of Serbia.

Co-authored article by Jovana Timotijević (Ministry of Space) and Danilo Ćurčić (A 11 Initiative) published in the weekly magazine Vreme, [on spatial inequality and housing segregation in Jabučki Rit](#).

Continued collaboration with the [Housing Equality Movement](#), which contributed to advocacy efforts throughout 2022, such as submitting comments on the Draft National Housing Strategy and a letter of concern to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing regarding problems in the strategy's adoption process.

Participation in the **Regional Housing Forum**, held in May 2022 in Podgorica, alongside Housing Equality Movement members. Key topics included housing policy, affordable and adequate housing models, and modalities for regional cooperation, considering the shared housing-related challenges across the Western Balkans.

Continued cooperation with [Liceulice magazine](#), contributing to its human rights section with articles on topics such as social cards and the impact of opaque technologies on the right to social protection.

Ongoing collaboration on the joint monthly bulletin “Pojačalo” with [Zajedničko, Center for Politics of Emancipation \(CPE\), Institute for Urban Policies / Ministry of Space](#), and the [Green Youth of Serbia](#).

Continued work with the Platform for the Theory and Practice of the Commons – Zajedničko and the Center for Modern Skills as part of the **“Living Beyond the Season”** initiative, aimed at preventing the erosion of seasonal workers’ rights due to the adoption of an inadequate Draft Law on Seasonal and Other Occasional Work. More details are available [here](#).

Ongoing cooperation with organizations that signed the **Living Wage Declaration**, including a joint letter to the Government of Serbia, the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, and the Employers’ Union, advocating for an increase in the minimum wage. More information and the full letter are available [here](#).

Continued participation in meetings and activities of the **Platform of Organizations for Cooperation with UN Human Rights Mechanisms**.

Collaboration with the **Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory (IFDT)** on a research project focused on elder care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Implemented Projects in 2022

Improving Local Integration of Internally Displaced Persons through Better Access to Social Rights

Donor: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Project duration: January 2022 – December 2022

Advancing Economic and Social Rights of Marginalized Communities

Donor: International Olof Palme Centre

Project duration: January 2020 – December 2024

Strengthening Economic and Social Rights through Improved Implementation of Anti-Discrimination Legislation

Donor: Royal Norwegian Embassy in Belgrade

Project duration: November 2021 – July 2022

Corruption in Planning and Construction – Combating Corruption and Human Rights Violations in Urban and Spatial Planning

Donor: Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia

Project duration: January 2021 – December 2022

Closeness and Care: Elder Care in Serbia During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Donor: Open Society University Network, partially supported by the Open Society Foundations

Project duration: August 2021 – July 2022

Dignified Life for Citizens – Cooperation for the Protection of Economic and Social Rights

Donor: Belgrade Open School (BOŠ), supported by the European Union

Project duration: November 2022 – July 2023

Protection of Rights and Personal Data of Social Protection System Beneficiaries

Donor: Internews Network

Project duration: November 2022 – July 2023

Support to Gender Equality and Awareness Raising on Gender Equality in Serbia During the EU Accession Process

Donor: REACTOR – Research in Action, supported by the European Union and co-financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

Project duration: February 2022 – July 2023

The Sigrid Rausing Trust – Institutional Support

Donor: The Sigrid Rausing Trust

Project duration: December 2021 – November 2022

Strengthening the Capacity of CSOs in Serbia to Protect Economic and Social Rights of Roma and Migrants During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Donor: Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia

Project duration: June 2021 – November 2022

The Sigrid Rausing Trust – Institutional Support

Donor: The Sigrid Rausing Trust

Project duration: December 2022 – November 2025

Finances

In 2022, the total **annual budget** of A 11 Initiative amounted to 380,217.00 EUR.

A 11 Initiative in 2022 – By the Numbers:

9 donors supported the implementation of 11 projects;

25 visits to Roma settlements and informal collective centers;

Nearly **550** people received support in accessing economic and social rights and the right to non-discrimination;

5 strategic cases before domestic and international courts;

27 participants and **17** lecturers took part in the School of Economic and Social Rights

Average rating of **4.85** (out of 5) for the School; **85.7%** of participants said they were “completely satisfied” with the program; 85.7% of participants gave the School the highest score (5) while 14.3% gave it a 4;

1 community paralegal providing support to internally displaced Roma;

49,186 website views;

56,025 views of A 11’s short documentary “[**Life in Uzun Mirkova**](#)”;

3,900 views of the “(Anti)Social Cards” section on A 11’s website, created for the campaign on the effects of the Social Card Law;

3,255 Twitter/X followers;

3,944 Facebook followers.

A 11 in the Media – Key Events in 2022

[Why Europe will have to face the true cost of being in debt to China – BBC](#)

[Serbia: Green waves washing over polluted land – Solomon](#)

[How an algorithm overnight made life harder for more than 20,000 of Serbia's poorest citizens – Nova RS](#)

[A 11 – Initiative for Economic and Social Rights highlights the consequences of the Social Card Law and demands its withdrawal – Mašina](#)

[Social Cards: How an algorithm overnight made life harder for more than 20,000 citizens of Serbia – 021](#)

[A computer decides about our citizens! Over 20,000 socially vulnerable denied financial aid because a private ALGORITHM does the selecting – Kurir TV](#)

[Due to mass denial of rights and constitutional violations, A 11 demands immediate withdrawal of the Social Card Law – Dijalog.net](#)

[An algorithm left 22,000 people in Serbia stranded and without social aid in a second – Danas](#)

[Not science fiction: An algorithm just left 22,000 people in Serbia stranded and without social aid in a second – Nova RS](#)

[Help blocked by outdated technology: Social Card system still not implemented nearly eight months after legal framework was adopted – Novosti](#)

[A 11: Immediate withdrawal of the Social Card Law – Magločistač](#)

[Ćurčić: Social Cards prevent people from accessing their social benefits – N1](#)

[Social Cards – K1](#)

[A 11 Initiative: European Court temporarily halted a forced eviction – N1](#)

[European Court of Human Rights stopped a family's forced eviction from Serbia – Radio Free Europe](#)

[European Court of Human Rights banned the forced eviction of a Serbian family – Danas](#)

[A 11: Commissioner found discrimination in Pećinci, demands children's return to preschool – N1](#)

[Commissioner: Discrimination in the case of children not enrolled in preschool in Pećinci – RTV Vojvodina](#)

[Preschool in Pećinci found to be discriminatory – Insajder](#)

[Party membership card for preschool – Peščanik](#)

[Poll: These are the 5 biggest problems for workers in Serbia, tell us your pick – Nova RS](#)

[A 11 Initiative: Social Card Law is unconstitutional – Vreme](#)

[A 11 submitted initiative to assess the constitutionality of the Social Card Law – N1](#)

[Marinković: The state has both the means and money to help the most vulnerable – N1](#)

[Mass violation of labor rights – Jugpress](#)

[The Law on Social Investigation – NIN \(print edition\)](#)

[DW: Serbia's disenfranchised precarious workers – N1](#)

[N1 guests on Linglong: Foreign investors are "sacred cows," applying their own laws – N1](#)

[Kamendin – RTS – Belgrade Chronicle](#)

[How regulations and public policies affect vulnerable social groups – RTV Kragujevac](#)

["He was our Dule": Classmates campaigning for a park named after murdered Roma boy – Radio Free Europe](#)

["We still don't know how the Social Card works" – Nova Ekonomija](#)

[The rich get richer, the poor get poorer: Everything will just get more expensive and we'll keep paying – 021](#)

[Digitalizing poverty in Serbia: Cut off from aid for selling secondary raw materials – Radio Free Europe](#)

[Punishing labor – Peščanik](#)

[Legal challenge: The Serbian government attempts to digitize the social security system – European Digital Rights \(EDRI\)](#)

[Serbia, algorithmic discrimination rehearsals – Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa](#)