

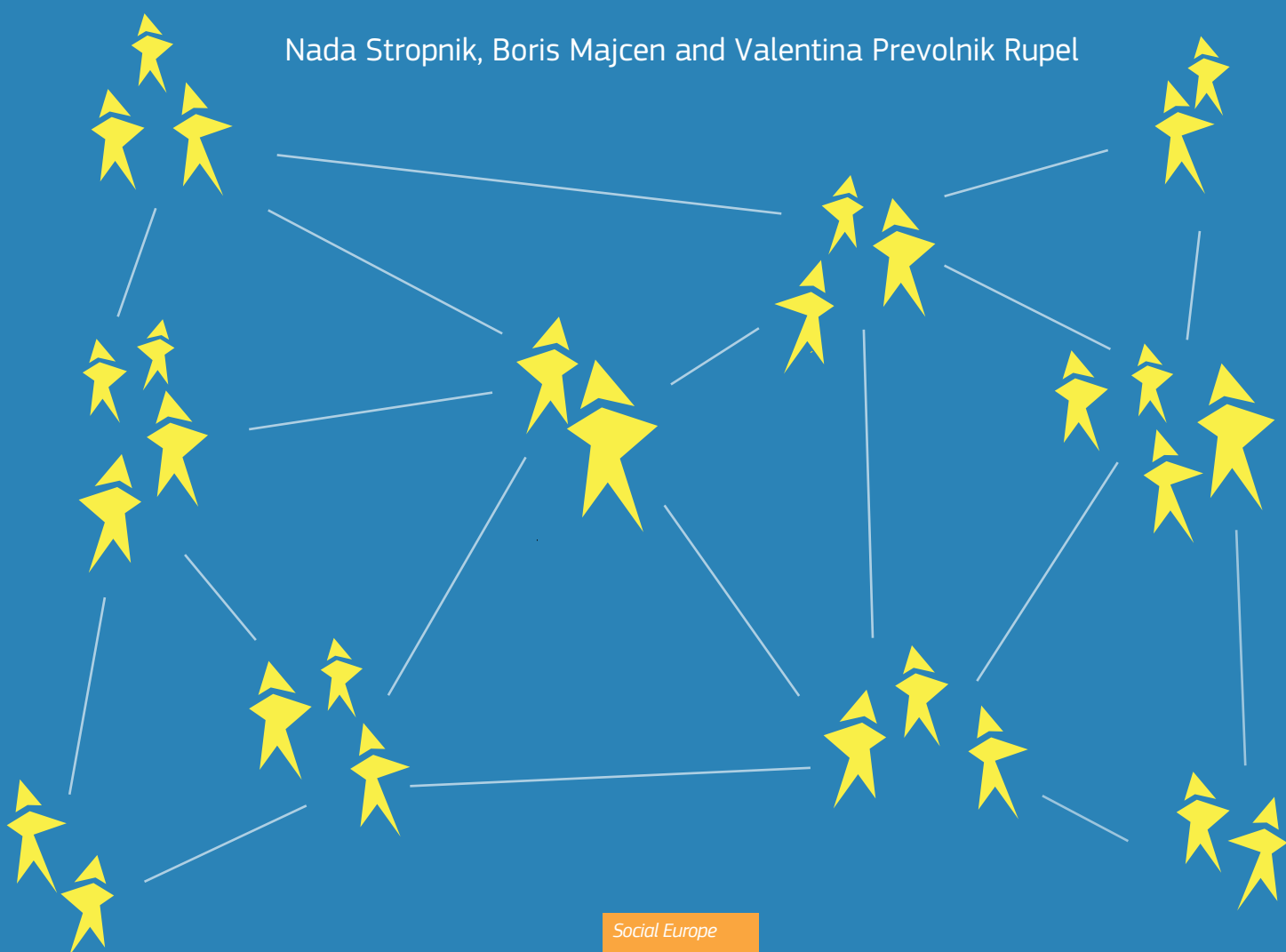


## EUROPEAN SOCIAL POLICY NETWORK (ESPN)

# Making access to social protection for workers and the self-employed more transparent through information and simplification

## Slovenia

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**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

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**European Social Policy Network (ESPN)**

**ESPN Thematic Report on  
Making access to social  
protection for workers and the  
self-employed more  
transparent through  
information and simplification**

**Slovenia**

**2022**

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## CONTENTS

SUMMARY .....	4
1 CURRENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES TO ENSURE INFORMATION ON, AND TO SIMPLIFY ACCESS TO, SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR WORKERS AND THE SELF-EMPLOYED .....	3
1.1 Policies and practices to ensure access to information on social protection rights, entitlements and obligations .....	3
1.1.1 Policies and practices to ensure access to general and personalised information .....	3
1.1.2 General awareness-raising campaigns .....	8
1.2 Policies and practices to simplify access to social protection .....	11
1.2.1 Simplification objective embedded in reforms of social protection schemes ....	11
1.2.2 Simplification of the application process for accessing benefits .....	12
1.2.3 Simplification of the structures within the social protection administration .....	15
2 ISSUES, DEBATES AND ONGOING OR PLANNED REFORMS TO ENSURE INFORMATION ON, AND TO SIMPLIFY ACCESS TO, SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR WORKERS AND THE SELF-EMPLOYED .....	17
2.1 Issues, debates and reforms related to information .....	17
2.1.1 Issues .....	17
2.1.2 Debates .....	17
2.1.3 Ongoing or planned reforms.....	18
2.2 Issues, debates and reforms related to simplification .....	19
2.2.1 Issues .....	19
2.2.2 Debates .....	19
2.2.3 Ongoing or planned reforms.....	20
2.3 Suggestions for improvements .....	20
REFERENCES .....	21

## Summary

The purpose of this report is to identify and analyse policies put in place by the country to improve transparency in access to social protection, considering both access to information and simplification of access. The report focuses on the six social protection branches covered in the 2019 Council Recommendation on Access to social protection for workers and the self-employed (hereafter "2019 Council Recommendation") and covers policies and measures implemented between January 2017 and May 2022.

Social protection policies are presented on the government website and the e-administration website. Both websites contain a description of policies/rights and links to relevant legislation. The e-administration website has links to related topics and answers to frequent questions. The government website also provides electronic application forms in PDF format, while online applications are possible from the e-administration website. In addition, detailed general information on the unemployment benefit scheme is available on the Employment Service of Slovenia webpage for job-seekers; information on sickness and healthcare benefits and benefits in respect of accidents at work and occupational diseases on the Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia (HIIS) website; and information on invalidity, old-age and survivors' benefits on the website of the Pension and Disability Insurance Institute of Slovenia (PDIIS).

General awareness-raising campaigns are among regular HIIS tasks and are focused on any problematic issues detected, and new developments or changes. The topics are defined in co-operation with stakeholders. There have been awareness-raising projects focused on fathers' rights to paternity leave. Stakeholder initiatives targeted at improving information about the conditions and rules of access to invalidity and pension benefits include two communication campaigns by the Slovenian government, PDIIS communication activities, and communication activities by private providers of supplementary pension schemes.

Simplifying access to unemployment benefits was the stated objective of establishing the *Poišči Delo* website in January 2022. Significant simplifications in the procedures for accessing sickness benefits have been implemented since 2017. They include the introduction of electronic sick leave records in 2020 and the planned introduction of mandatory electronic reimbursement of sickness benefits from the HIIS to employees and self-employed people. In co-operation with the Ministry of Public Administration, the procedures have been developed within the "SPOT" system, where users can safely download electronic sick leave documentation. Electronic applications for exercising rights to unemployment benefit, maternity and paternity benefits, healthcare (insurance status, selection of family physician, confirmation of vaccination), invalidity benefits, and old-age and survivors' pensions – available on the e-administration website – simplify the application procedures. The same is true for the information system of centres for social work, all services within the "e-Health" system (e-Referral, e-Prescription) and PDIIS information system services (My eZPIZ and eApplications for All), which all support decision-making.

The HIIS strategic development plan for 2020-2025 includes eight activities to improve information activities and lessen inequities among insured people. The strategic development orientation of the PDIIS, and its focus on digital transformation – aimed at increasing the simplification and reducing the burden for its clients – have undoubtedly improved the accessibility of pensions and disability benefits. Although, in 2017-2022, there have been some stakeholder initiatives targeted at improving information about the conditions and rules of access in relation to disability and pension benefits, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development evaluated communications in the system as incoherent and with significant gaps. The long-term communication plan envisaged by the government is aimed at improving the understanding of the pension system's functioning and gain public support for necessary reform. At the beginning of 2023, a proposal for amendments to the pension and disability legislation is expected to ensure better transparency of the system, its fiscal sustainability, and adequate pensions.

## **1 Current policies and practices to ensure information on, and to simplify access to, social protection for workers and the self-employed**

This section presents policies and practices that ensure access to information on social protection rights, entitlements and obligations or simplify access to social protection. It focuses on policies and measures related to six social protection branches covered in the 2019 Council Recommendation, implemented between January 2017 and May 2022.

### **1.1 Policies and practices to ensure access to information on social protection rights, entitlements and obligations**

This section focuses on policies and practices aimed at providing and improving information about the conditions and rules of access to social protection.

#### **1.1.1 Policies and practices to ensure access to general and personalised information**

In this section we describe the main policies and practices in Slovenia that provide workers and the self-employed with general information on social protection and/or specific information on their individual rights, entitlements and obligations regarding access to the six social protection branches. The policies are presented on the government website<sup>1</sup> and the e-administration website.<sup>2</sup> Both websites contain a description of policies/rights and links to relevant legislation. The e-administration website, started in 2003, has links to related topics and answers to frequent questions. The government website also provides electronic application forms in PDF format, while online applications are possible from the e-administration website. In line with the Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications Act (2018), government institutions use measures to ensure the accessibility of websites and mobile applications for all users, in particular users with various forms of disability.

##### **1.1.1.1 Unemployment benefits**

Apart from the government website<sup>3</sup> and the e-administration website,<sup>4</sup> comprehensive information (both general and detailed) on the scheme is available at the Employment Service of Slovenia (ESS) website (the webpage for job-seekers was introduced in 2009),<sup>5</sup> including: eligibility conditions; where and how to apply; deadlines for applications; the duration and amount of benefit; and payment dates. The website includes five YouTube videos (two to four minutes long) with basic information on: the right to benefit; deadlines for applications; the duration and amount of benefit; beneficiaries' health insurance; and incentives for the employment of beneficiaries (oral presentation and sub-titles in Slovenian, with simultaneous interpretation for deaf-blind people).<sup>6</sup> General information is also provided through a contact centre (a free telephone number and e-mail address are provided on the ESS home webpage, the webpage for job-seekers and some other ESS webpages) and by ESS regional office staff. On the

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<sup>1</sup> See: <https://www.gov.si/podrocja/> (accessed 26 May 2022).

<sup>2</sup> See: <https://e-uprava.gov.si/> (accessed 5 May 2022).

<sup>3</sup> See: <https://www.gov.si/podrocja/> (accessed 26 May 2022).

<sup>4</sup> See: <https://e-uprava.gov.si/> (accessed 5 May 2022).

<sup>5</sup> See: [www.ess.gov.si/iskalci\\_zaposlitve/denarno\\_nadomestilo](http://www.ess.gov.si/iskalci_zaposlitve/denarno_nadomestilo) (accessed 12 May 2022). Up to the end of June 2022, the webpage had been accessed 836,925 times (information was provided by the ESS).

<sup>6</sup> Videos were released in September 2020. Up to the end of June 2022, they had been accessed 8,084 times (information was provided by the ESS).

webpage for job-seekers, there is a link to the webpage where electronic applications for unemployment benefits can be submitted.<sup>7</sup>

Personalised information on the rights originating from unemployment insurance is provided to unemployed people when they register with the ESS, at the first informative seminar, at their meetings with the employment counsellor, and directly from the counsellors conducting the decision-making process regarding applications for unemployment benefits.

On behalf of the ESS, the Faculty of Social Sciences (University of Ljubljana) conducts annual surveys on the satisfaction of users of ESS services. The survey includes questions on satisfaction with the ESS website, informative seminars, contact centres, and employment counsellors. Average scores in 2021 were relatively high (as in previous years), including: 4.11 for satisfaction with the quality of information at contact centres; 4.01 for satisfaction with the contents of informative seminars; and 3.87 for the transparency of the ESS website (Kurdija, Ignjatović and Zupančič, 2021). Unemployment benefit recipients tend to give higher scores than other interviewees.

Neither the ESS nor we are aware of any survey/study carried out in Slovenia since 1 January 2017 to explore the extent to which citizens in general, and more particularly workers and the self-employed, are aware of their rights and obligations regarding unemployment benefit.

#### **1.1.1.2 Sickness and healthcare benefits**

The strategic plan for 2020-2025 of the Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia (HIIS) includes three strategic goals relevant to ensuring access to general and personalised information, as follows (HIIS, 2019).

Strategic goal 1: Improve the provision of information to insured people. The goal includes the simplification of access to information through adaptation of the website, setting up a multimedia centre for a more efficient delivery of the information, and emphasising more personalised communication with insured people.

Strategic goal 6: Improve the responsiveness and efficiency of the HIIS. The goal includes upgrading various processes within the HIIS: their simplification, digitalisation, deregulation, centralisation and specialisation.

Strategic goal 7: Accelerate the process of digitalisation. The goal includes giving the population faster and better access to HIIS e-services.

General information on sickness and healthcare benefits is provided by the HIIS via its information and communication infrastructure. The main aim is to inform the general population through: publishing activities (electronic and printed material); the HIIS website;<sup>8</sup> press releases and press conferences; telephone communication; and face-to-face contacts with the HIIS staff in charge of providing relevant information. Key webpages and web applications are also adapted for mobile devices. In March 2021, a new HIIS website was set up with upgraded key web applications. The website started providing new kinds of information and was adapted to vulnerable groups (according to the law and recommendations). It featured new webpages, and key web applications were also adapted for mobile devices. Between 15 March (the introduction of the new website) and the end of 2021, the HIIS website was visited 1,708,501 times, an average of 5,851 visits per day.

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<sup>7</sup> See: [www.poisaidelo.si](http://www.poisaidelo.si) (accessed 12 May 2022). In 2021, 9,996 applications for unemployment benefits were submitted electronically, which was 12% of all applications. Up to the end of May 2022, there were 3,503 electronic applications (12.5% of the total) (information was provided by the ESS).

<sup>8</sup> See: <https://www.zzzs.si/> (accessed 30 May 2022).



Personalised information and advice on the specific rights of insured people are provided via personal contacts with HIIS employees: in face-to-face meetings, in online meetings, and by telephone, e-mail or regular mail.

For the vulnerable or digitally less literate population, the information is provided through personal contact with HIIS employees and by telephone. The HIIS website is specially adapted for vulnerable groups (such as blind or deaf people) in accordance with the Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications Act (2018). The HIIS also provides information about its services in sign language and easy-to-read versions.

### **1.1.1.3 Maternity and equivalent paternity benefits**

The rights of workers and the self-employed regarding maternity and paternity benefits are presented on the government website<sup>9</sup> and the e-administration website.<sup>10</sup> Both websites contain a description of rights (what has to be done before and after childbirth, benefit duration and how it should/can be used) and useful links (to the Parental Protection and Family Benefits Act and the website of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities – MLFSAEO). The e-administration website has links to related topics and answers to frequent questions. The government website also provides electronic application forms in PDF format, while online applications are possible via the e-administration website. Until 30 June 2019, the MLFSAEO had its own website with the same kind of information. Since 15 March 2022, electronic applications for exercising the rights of mothers and fathers at the birth of a child have also been available on the e-administration website.<sup>11</sup> Before that date, they were available only at the government website.<sup>12</sup>

On the e-administration website, there is an online guide to the procedures to be followed by mothers and fathers before and after the birth of a child.<sup>13</sup>

(Future) parents (including workers and the self-employed) receive comprehensive general information about maternity and paternity benefits in the “School for Parents”<sup>14</sup> (Community Health Centre Ljubljana, 2022). According to the Association of Centres for Social Work (ACSW),<sup>15</sup> this way of informing future parents proved to be very effective since their clients are already well informed when they come to the centres for social work (CSWs) to exercise their rights.

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<sup>9</sup> See: <https://www.gov.si teme/pravice-ob-rojstvu-otroka/> (accessed 5 May 2022).

<sup>10</sup> See: <https://e-uprava.gov.si/>, <https://e-uprava.gov.si/podrocja/druzina-otroci-zakonska-zveza/pravice-prejemki-druzine.html>, <https://e-uprava.gov.si/podrocja/druzina-otroci-zakonska-zveza/pravice-prejemki-druzine/materinski-dopust.html>, <https://e-uprava.gov.si/podrocja/druzina-otroci-zakonska-zveza/pravice-prejemki-druzine/ocetovski-dopust.html>, <https://e-uprava.gov.si/en>, <https://e-uprava.gov.si/en/podrocja/family-children-marriage/family-benefits-and-income.html>; <https://e-uprava.gov.si/en/podrocja/family-children-marriage/family-benefits-and-income/maternity-leave.html> and <https://e-uprava.gov.si/en/podrocja/family-children-marriage/family-benefits-and-income/paternity-leave.html> (accessed 5 May 2022).

<sup>11</sup> See: <https://e-uprava.gov.si/podrocja/druzina-otroci-zakonska-zveza/pravice-prejemki-druzine/materinski-dopust.html> and <https://e-uprava.gov.si/podrocja/druzina-otroci-zakonska-zveza/pravice-prejemki-druzine/ocetovski-dopust.html> (accessed 5 May 2022).

<sup>12</sup> See: <https://www.gov.si teme/pravice-ob-rojstvu-otroka/> (accessed 5 May 2022).

<sup>13</sup> See: <https://e-uprava.gov.si/podrocja/druzina-otroci-zakonska-zveza/vodic-rojstvo.html> and <https://e-uprava.gov.si/podrocja/druzina-otroci-zakonska-zveza/vodic-rojstvo/vprasanje/da/ne/cetrtri.html> (accessed 5 May 2022).

<sup>14</sup> These are preparatory courses for future mothers and fathers, where a CSW staff member explains – among other things – the kinds of benefits that are available, how to exercise the associated rights and when to do so (before or after childbirth).

<sup>15</sup> Information, based on practice/experience, was provided by the ASCW secretary.

Leaflets with information on maternity and paternity benefits are available at CSWs. Information is also accessible at the CSW<sup>16</sup> and ACSW<sup>17</sup> websites. News is published on their Facebook profiles as well.<sup>18</sup>

There have been no surveys/studies carried out in Slovenia since 1 January 2017 to explore the extent to which citizens in general, and more particularly workers and the self-employed, are aware of their rights and obligations regarding maternity and paternity benefits.

#### **1.1.1.4 Invalidity benefits**

The information provided in Section 1.1.1.5 also applies to invalidity benefits.

#### **1.1.1.5 Old-age benefits and survivors' benefits**

All insured people have access to appropriate pension and disability insurance information. Information provided by governmental and non-governmental institutions (such as the Pension and Disability Insurance Institute of Slovenia – PDIIS, the MLFSAEO, trade unions, and media) is spread through various channels and forms of communication.

General information can be obtained from the PDIIS via: a) its website;<sup>19</sup> b) press releases; c) media appearances by PDIIS representatives; d) consultants available on business premises during office hours (face-to-face, by phone or by e-mail);<sup>20</sup> and e) annually updated and published leaflets and brochures available at PDIIS premises and the website. The PDIIS public relations office provides information for the media and manages media coverage of disability- and pension-related topics.

The PDIIS website provides workers, the self-employed, and people in other non-standard forms of employment with: a) general information on the pension and disability system and related rights and obligations; b) the ability to submit applications; c) personalised information on people's insurance status; and d) simulations of future benefit entitlements to old-age pensions.

"My eZPIZ" (*Moj eZPIZ*) is the PDIIS webpage, started in 2010, dedicated to providing secure access to electronic services for insured people and pensioners (eZPIZ).<sup>21</sup> Most services require registration. Some services are also available through an answering machine. My eZPIZ provides the following services: a) a general informative pension calculator (the date when the conditions for an old-age and early-retirement pension are fulfilled and the amount of pension – based on manually entered data); b) a personal informative pension calculator (the same as the general one, but based on people's

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<sup>16</sup> See, for instance: <https://www.csd-slovenije.si/csd-ljubljana/pogosta-vprasanja-in-odgovori/#starsevsko-varstvo-in-druzinski-prejemki> and <https://www.csd-slovenije.si/delovna-podrocja/#starsevsko-varstvo-in-druzinski-prejemki> (accessed 5 May 2022).

<sup>17</sup> See: <https://www.scsd.si/centri-za-socialno-delo/delovna-podrocja-csd/starsevsko-varstvo/> (accessed 5 May 2022).

<sup>18</sup> See, for instance: <https://www.scsd.si/> and <https://www.csd-slovenije.si/csd-ljubljana/> (accessed 5 May 2022).

<sup>19</sup> See: <https://www.zpiz.si/cms/?ids=home2020en> (accessed 30 May 2022). In 2021, the webpage was accessed 6,113,327 times by 891,763 visitors, which were 42% and 34% increases, respectively, compared to the previous year (PDIIS, 2022).

<sup>20</sup> The new automatic answering machine (ATOZPIZ) and the single contact centre (EKC) for providing telephone information have been operating since 20 June 2019. In 2021, over 660 thousand customer calls were recorded at the ATOZPIZ. In the EKC, the PDIIS' experts gave telephone advices to over 377 thousand users. Compared to the previous year, the use of ATOZPIZ increased by 23% and the use of EKC by 16% (PDIIS, 2022).

<sup>21</sup> In 2021, 52,593 users registered to use eZPIZ services, which was 323% more than the year before. The total number of users registered in the eZPIZ system thus increased by more than 65% (to 136,863). In 2015, there were 27,600 registered users of eZPIZ (PDIIS, 2022; PDIIS internal data).

personal data recorded in the PDIIS information system);<sup>22</sup> c) electronic completion and submission of applications (the eApplication service with the real-time verification of the accuracy of data entered, and with a digital signature); d) checking the status of people's individual cases (regardless of how the application was submitted); e) insight into remittance data of people's employers; f) insight into people's insurance data (the Informative Personal Records service enables people to view their data on insurance periods, salaries and benefits affecting their rights under pension and disability insurance – if they find their record(s) to be incomplete, they can request that it be completed via eApplication);<sup>23</sup> and g) the eBox service, enabling people to receive original versions of their documents (including decisions) prepared by the PDIIS via their eBox at the eZPIZ website as soon as they are ready.

In line with the Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications Act (2018), the PDIIS ensures the accessibility of online content for people with multiple forms of disability through various adaptations. Fonts and colour schemes can be adjusted for the visually impaired, web content can be read via the e-reader service, and videos are available for deaf people. Access to information for digitally illiterate people or people with poor digital skills is provided mainly by telephone and personal visits during office hours, where clients can obtain the latest relevant information and submit applications with the help of a consultant. Applications in physical form can be filled in at all PDIIS regional units and offices and in the central information office.<sup>24</sup> All applications that are available on the PDIIS website and do not require a digital certificate (the "eApplications for All" – *eVloge za VSE* – service) can be printed out (by the client or another person) and then manually completed and submitted (in person or by regular mail) by a client with poor/insufficient or no digital skills and equipment.

The MLFSAEO also provides information on the pension and disability system through: a) explanations to journalists covering pensions issues; b) regular press releases and interviews; c) press conferences; d) answering citizens' questions (also through the social media); and e) participation in the "My work. My Pension" (*Moje delo. Moja pokojnina*) project.<sup>25</sup> On the Gov.si webpage,<sup>26</sup> citizens can find information on the essential characteristics of the pension and disability insurance system, the conditions for acquiring individual rights and their enforcement (for more see Section 1.1.2.5).

Communication efforts by private providers of supplementary pension schemes are mainly focused on their websites providing comprehensive information regarding supplementary pension insurance. The webpages intended for insured people and employers show, among other things: data on amounts saved and changes related to particular schemes; calculators for supplementary pension entitlements; and a calculator that provides information on potential tax savings due to contributions to the supplementary pension scheme.<sup>27</sup> Insured people are invited to take advantage of the

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<sup>22</sup> Both calculators, introduced in June 2021, replaced the previous informative retirement date calculation service. The personal informative pension calculator recorded almost 97,000 uses in 2021, and the general informative pension calculator more than 127,000 uses. The two services together collected more than 131% per cent more uses in the first half of 2021 than the previous service in the whole of 2020 (PDIIS, 2022).

<sup>23</sup> The Informative Personal Records service for registered users recorded 107,542 inquiries in 2021, which was more than a two-fold increase compared with 2020 (PDIIS, 2022).

<sup>24</sup> Physical documents in paper form are received by mail and at PDIIS premises (where clients bring the completed applications with them). The PDIIS received almost 562,000 such documents in 2021, of which slightly more than 533,000 (14% more than in the previous year) were sent by mail and just under 29,000 (30% less than the previous year) brought by clients in person. These documents were digitalised by the PDIIS and added to the relevant electronic files (PDIIS, 2022).

<sup>25</sup> See: <https://mojedelo-mojapokojnina.si/> (accessed 30 May 2022).

<sup>26</sup> See: <https://www.gov.si/podrocja/zaposlovanje-delo-in-upokojitev/upokojitev/> (accessed 30 May 2022).

<sup>27</sup> For more information, see, for example, the website of *Modra zavarovalnica*, which is the pension-provider for public sector employees (<https://www.modra.si/>), and the website of *Prva zavarovalnica*, which is the pension fund for voluntary supplementary pension insurance (<https://www.prva.si/>).

facility to receive regularly published financial comments, tips and news on supplementary pension insurance.<sup>28</sup>

#### **1.1.1.6 Benefits in respect of accidents at work and occupational diseases**

The information provided in Sections 1.1.1.2 and 1.1.2.6 also applies to benefits in respect of accidents at work and occupational diseases.

### **1.1.2 General awareness-raising campaigns**

In this section we describe initiatives targeted at improving information about the conditions and rules of access to one or more of the six social protection branches.

#### **1.1.2.1 Unemployment benefits**

The ESS has been continuously improving (updating) information about unemployment benefits through conferences<sup>29</sup> and notifications focusing on employees and employers<sup>30</sup> – all available on the ESS website. People can also subscribe to electronic notifications regarding these publications and events.

During the implementation of temporary measures due to the COVID-19 epidemic in 2020 and 2021, the public was kept informed of all new developments (such as the temporary unemployment benefit and one-off solidarity allowance) and deadlines for exercising individual rights. This was done through the ESS website, press conferences, and interviews and information provided for various media.

#### **1.1.2.2 Sickness and healthcare benefits**

Several initiatives were taken to raise awareness about the importance of healthcare insurance and benefits. In 2021, the HIIS issued several press releases, held many press conferences, and provided several pieces of written information to the Slovenian Press Agency and the Slovenian media. The most important topics dealt with were relations between the HIIS and healthcare-providers, compulsory health insurance rights, HIIS financial management, digitalisation, health policy and absenteeism.

In May 2021, the HIIS distributed three leaflets, namely:

- "Health is wealth – health insurance for the elderly" (5,000 copies) – the aim of which was to inform the general population through HIIS regional offices;
- "Insurance is half of health – student health insurance" (10,000 copies were sent to student organisations); and
- "Healthy and safe childhood – a leaflet about taking care of newborns" (10,000 copies were sent to maternity hospitals).

In 2021, the HIIS also issued the following leaflets:

- "You can also check the data on your health insurance with mobile devices and from abroad" (a new leaflet, of which 1,400 copies were circulated); and
- "Check the information on your health insurance online or by mobile telephone", "Log in, change and unsubscribe from health insurance", "Right to medical devices", "Right to salary compensation during temporary absence from work", "Right to reimbursement of travel expenses", and "What is good to know about health insurance before going abroad" (content update and e-editions).

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<sup>28</sup> See: <https://www.prva.si/info-portal/> (accessed 30 May 2022).

<sup>29</sup> See: [https://www.ess.gov.si/za\\_medije](https://www.ess.gov.si/za_medije) (accessed 12 May 2022).

<sup>30</sup> For both, see: <https://www.ess.gov.si/obvestila> (accessed 12 May 2022).

In March of each year, an annual report is published by the HIIS with information that includes the number of insured people, their rights, and supporting activities (such as promotional activities and information technology).

All these are regular HIIS activities adapted to the population's needs and changes in the environment, such as legislative changes and epidemiological situations.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it was crucial for the measures implemented by the HIIS to be available and reach all citizens of Slovenia, particularly workers and the self-employed. Besides the information and announcements provided on the website, specific or important measures and activities were communicated directly to stakeholders. For instance, the information regarding the right to sickness benefit was shared with representatives of employers' associations and chambers.

### **1.1.2.3 Maternity and equivalent paternity benefits**

The "Action Dad" (*Očka v akciji*) project<sup>31</sup> ran from 1 March 2020 to 31 August 2022. It was an awareness-raising project on the importance of the active involvement of men in fatherhood and an equal distribution of parental care for children. One of its goals was to reduce the deep-rooted inequalities that persist between women and men concerning the uptake of family-related leave. At the micro level, it also addressed men's uptake of paternity leave, encouraged men to increase their involvement (stressing the positive aspects of fathers' participation in childcare from the child's earliest age) and tackled gender-based stereotypes in childcare. Project activities included focus groups with future fathers, guidelines for employers (separately for the private and public sectors) regarding work-life balance, and guidelines for professionals in health centres and CSWs who deal with future parents. Detailed information on maternity and paternity leave was provided on the project website, including: characteristics of maternity and paternity leave (duration, people eligible); earnings compensation; social security payments due to part-time work resulting from parenting; and where to claim the rights and when to exercise them. The public relations activities were targeted at all citizens. They included: a) a media campaign for the general public (including promotional videos, a short documentary on work-life balance, a social media campaign, newspaper articles on active fatherhood and work-life balance, project ambassadors, gadgets for future parents, and posters and leaflets); and b) public events for (future) parents to promote active fatherhood. The project partners were the MLFSAEO and the Peace Institute.<sup>32</sup>

The "Active.All" (*Aktivni.Vsi*) project<sup>33</sup> ran from 2016 to 2017. One of its focuses was on promoting active fatherhood, including raising men's awareness of their rights related to paternity leave. It was aimed at combating gender stereotypes and promoting equal sharing of care duties between parents through enhanced awareness, knowledge and implementation of family-friendly policies, with an emphasis on active fatherhood in the private sector. The project website provided links to the laws governing maternity and equivalent paternity benefits and related Acts.<sup>34</sup> This project was also targeted at all citizens, but the stress was on fathers employed in the private sector. Communication methods included two international conferences, a documentary movie, workshops, seminars and handbooks for various target groups, and a leaflet for future parents. Project partners were: the MLFSAEO; the municipality of Kamnik; the Kamnik CSW; an elementary school, kindergarten and health centre in Kamnik; and the Directorate of Equality, Iceland.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> There is no information readily available on the impact of this project.

<sup>33</sup> See: <http://aktivni-vsi.enakostspolov.si/o-projektu> (accessed 5 May 2022).

<sup>34</sup> For instance, the Parental Protection and Family Benefits Act, the Employment Relationships Act, and the Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act.

<sup>35</sup> There is no information readily available on the impact of this project.



There was no need for particular information initiatives during the COVID-19 crisis. A (one-off) solidarity allowance was paid *ex officio* to beneficiaries of maternity leave salary compensation not exceeding the minimum wage.

#### **1.1.2.4 Invalidity benefits**

Initiatives targeted at improving information about the conditions and rules of access to invalidity benefits can be found in the description of PDIIS communication activities in Section 1.1.2.5.

#### **1.1.2.5 Old-age benefits and survivors' benefits**

Between 2017 and 2022 there have been some stakeholder initiatives targeted at improving information about the conditions and rules of access to invalidity and pension benefits: a) two communication campaigns by the Slovenian government – within the frameworks of the “My Work. My Pension” and the “Comprehensive Support for Actively Ageing Workforce” (*Celovita podpora podjetjem za aktivno staranje delovne-sile* – ASI) projects;<sup>36</sup> and b) PDIIS communication activities.

The “My Work. My Pension” project was co-financed by the EU and the MLFSAEO in 2019-2020 and co-ordinated by the MLFSAEO, with the PDIIS as a partner. An awareness-raising campaign website contains an instructive and straightforward presentation of: the essential characteristics of the pension and disability system in Slovenia, with particular emphasis on women; the pension gap; the pension calculator; and promotional YouTube videos and Facebook posts. There was an e-assistant to answer questions. There were also events and press releases aimed at informing, educating and raising awareness of the broadest possible public, especially women, about pension legislation, the gender pension gap and factors influencing it (thus encouraging informed lifelong decision-making). Representatives of trade unions actively participated in conferences. The campaign’s impact cannot be assessed as the evaluation is not yet available.

The ASI project (2017-2022) is co-financed by the Republic of Slovenia and the EU European Social Fund. The project’s purpose is to respond to various challenges associated with a lack of working-age people (due to the early retirement age, low levels of education and participation in lifelong learning among older people, and a decline in the birth rate). The project is aimed at promoting longer working lives, strengthening older employees’ competencies, overcoming stereotypes regarding older employees, providing employers with the skills to manage an ageing workforce, and postponing retirements. The target groups are employers, employees (particularly those over 45), public institutions involved in forming and implementing active ageing policies, the private sector, social partners and the general public. The project entails the following activities regarding workers and the self-employed: a) supporting companies in developing strategies for the effective management of older employees, and strengthening their competencies through programmes for personal and professional development; b) building a website containing all relevant information about the project, resources, etc.; c) launching an awareness-raising campaign on the issues of the ageing population and older workforce; d) an info point for the general public to provide them with information about the project and its activities; and e) supporting and implementing pilot projects and innovative solutions for maintaining the commitment, productivity and efficiency (etc.) of older employees.

Information on the “My Work.MY Pension” project is also available on the PDIIS website.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The “My Work. My Pension” website is <https://mojedelo-mojapokojnina.si/> (accessed 10 May 2022); the “Comprehensive Support for Actively Ageing Workforce” website is <https://www.srips-rs.si/razvoj-kadrov/celovita-podpora-podjetjem-za-aktivno-staranje-delovne-sile-asi/> (accessed 10 May 2022).

<sup>37</sup> See: <https://www.zpiz.si/cms/?ids=home2020en> (accessed 30 May 2022).

As for information initiatives in relation to the exceptional support measures in force during the COVID-19 crisis (i.e. various solidarity allowances and extraordinary benefits), the PDIIS published press releases regarding individual rights on its website and also sent them to the media. Some rights were granted automatically (i.e. without applying for them). Many clients contacted the PDIIS via e-mail or telephone, asking questions about exceptional allowances. During the pandemic, the PDIIS enabled customers to submit applications through the eApplications for All electronic service without a digital certificate or registration at the My eZPIZ website, which allowed clients to avoid submitting applications at post offices.<sup>38</sup>

### **1.1.2.6 Benefits in respect of accidents at work and occupational diseases**

In Slovenia, the right to sickness benefits and benefits in respect of accidents at work and occupational diseases is a single right and a single type of insurance. This means that there is no special health insurance for occupational diseases or accidents at work, or special insurance for non-occupational diseases or injuries outside work.

Any upgrade or simplification made to the system or on the HIIS website, and any information campaign, always targets both areas (sickness benefits and benefits in respect of accidents at work and occupational diseases).<sup>39</sup>

## **1.2 Policies and practices to simplify access to social protection**

This section focuses on policies and practices aimed at simplifying access to social protection and administrative requirements, with a view to alleviating the administrative burden and clarifying the rules.

### **1.2.1 Simplification objective embedded in reforms of social protection schemes**

In this section we describe the main policies and practices in Slovenia whose stated objective was to simplify access to social protection schemes available for workers and/or the self-employed in one or more of the six branches.

#### **1.2.1.1 Unemployment benefits**

There was no simplification objective embedded in reforms of unemployment benefits.

#### **1.2.1.2 Sickness and healthcare benefits**

There was no simplification objective embedded in reforms of sickness and healthcare benefits.

#### **1.2.1.3 Maternity and equivalent paternity benefits**

One of the stated objectives of the 2018 amendments to the Parental Protection and Family Benefits Act (2014) was to introduce a simpler and more transparent way of using paternity leave for workers and the self-employed. For children born from 1 May 2018 onwards, at least 15 days of leave may be taken until one month following the end of parental leave (lasting 260 days). Up to 15 days of the total of 30 days of paternity leave may be taken before the child completes the first grade of primary school.<sup>40</sup> This means that fathers can use all 30 days of paternity leave immediately or soon after the child's

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<sup>38</sup> The number of e-applications received in 2021 (152,600) almost doubled compared to the previous year (78,200). For comparison: in 2015 there were only 2,300 and in 2019 19,900 (PDIIS, 2022 and PDIIS internal data).

<sup>39</sup> Also see Section 1.1.2.2.

<sup>40</sup> Before, up to 15 days could be used until the child's age of six months and up to 15 days could be used after parental leave and until the child completes the first grade of primary school.

birth if they wish to do so. The leave can no longer be taken as individual working days, but only in one or two continuous blocks. This simplifies the arrangement, but at the same time reduces flexibility.

#### **1.2.1.4 Invalidity benefits**

There was no simplification objective embedded in reforms of invalidity benefits.

#### **1.2.1.5 Old-age benefits and survivors' benefits**

There was no simplification objective embedded in reforms of old-age benefits and survivors' benefits.

#### **1.2.1.6 Benefits in respect of accidents at work and occupational diseases**

The information provided in Sections 1.2.1.2 and 1.1.2.6 also applies to benefits in respect of accidents at work and occupational diseases.

### **1.2.2 Simplification of the application process for accessing benefits**

In this section, we describe the main policies and practices in Slovenia that are designed to simplify the application process for accessing benefits in the six social protection branches.

#### **1.2.2.1 Unemployment benefits**

Simplifying access to unemployment benefits was the stated objective of establishing the *Poišči Delo* website<sup>41</sup> in January 2022. That website is a considerable gain for unemployed people who can now – among other things – electronically sign and submit applications to the ESS and order certificates from the ESS records. On 31 May 2022, the website had 75,899 users, 19,804 of which were unemployed people and job-seekers.<sup>42</sup>

#### **1.2.2.2 Sickness and healthcare benefits**

There have been quite a few policies and practices in Slovenia to simplify access to rights. The more important ones include the introduction of electronic sick leave records (which employers were obliged to engage in through the "SPOT" website from February 2020 onwards)<sup>43</sup> and the planned introduction of mandatory electronic reimbursement of sickness benefits from the HIIS to employees and self-employed people. Generally, the administrative backbone of Slovenian healthcare, the e-health system, was set up in 2015 and has a very advanced infrastructure.<sup>44</sup> The standard used for electronic patient records (openEHR) is also up-to-date: the healthcare system uses various applications. To combine information, the data are stored in an independent platform (Bizovičar, 2021).

Electronic sick leave records have made it possible to provide documentation on sick leave without physical contact between doctors and patients, in cases where doctors estimate that absence from work is justified without examining the patients. The SPOT system (RS, 2022) has further enabled the electronic transfer of sick leave records to employers. In co-operation with the Ministry of Public Administration, procedures have

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<sup>41</sup> See: [www.poiscidelo.si](http://www.poiscidelo.si) (accessed 15 May 2022). The website is presented in the 1½-minute YouTube video released in February 2022 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PhfzONlpPEM>, accessed 30 June 2022).

<sup>42</sup> Information was provided by the ESS.

<sup>43</sup> See: <https://www.zzs.si/novica/uspesna-nacionalna-uedba-elektronskega-bolniskega-lista-1/> (accessed 15 May 2022).

<sup>44</sup> This backbone simplifies procedures for service-users (including employees and the self-employed). For instance, pharmacies have access to prescriptions; and vaccination certificates and referrals are available online. Individuals no longer have to carry documents around; they do not even have to visit the doctor to obtain them (they just make a telephone call).



been developed within the SPOT system, enabling users to safely download electronic sick leave documentation. Electronic sick leave records were introduced at the end of December 2019. In May 2020, regular notification of doctors on the expiry of their digital certificates (used to digitally sign off electronic sick leave) was established. In June 2020, the National Institute of Public Health (NIPH) informed healthcare-providers that they no longer had to send data, because the NIPH received good-quality data from electronic health records from the HIIS. With this, healthcare-providers were relieved of the burden of sending monthly data to the NIPH, which was one of the stated objectives of introducing the electronic sick leave records. The HIIS established an appropriate solution for insured people accessing their electronic sick leave at its website.<sup>45</sup> In November and December 2020, the HIIS distributed thematic leaflets on changes that the electronic sick leave records brought to insured people and primary healthcare centres. To keep insured people well informed, the HIIS upgraded its website and set up a special call centre (HIIS, 2022). In the period from January to August 2020, family physicians issued 1,018,578 electronic sick leave approvals. The electronic sick leave support information system operated very reliably (99.998% availability from January to June 2020) and with acceptable response times (0.055 seconds per sick leave record in May 2020). At least one sick leave document was transferred via the SPOT system between its establishment on 1 January 2020 and 29 June 2020 by 28,738 employers<sup>35</sup>.

Electronic claims for sick leave reimbursement via the SPOT information system (RS, 2022) have been possible since 2017 but will become mandatory for all employers and self-employed people from 1 January 2023.<sup>46</sup> This change represents an upgrade of the existing system and meaningful digitalisation following the introduction of electronic sick leave records.

Submitting e-requests through the SPOT system brings many simplifications for employers and self-employed people (HIIS, 2022), as follows.

- It is possible to enter the claim and the corresponding invoices via the electronic form on the SPOT website. This enables smaller employers, who use more straightforward information solutions to calculate salaries and allowances, to use a modern electronic means of communication with the HIIS.
- The interface is handy for large employers, as there is no need for multiple manual data entries.
- The possibility of error in the calculation of sick leave reimbursement is smaller on the part of both the employer and the HIIS.
- There is greater transparency and insight into the status of claims and payments.

The HIIS is gradually and systematically expanding the digitalisation of all procedures involving insured people. As part of the website renovation, it is now possible to access via mobile devices a lot of information and applications, such as:

- a list of healthcare service-providers;
- a list of suppliers of medical devices;
- a list of HIIS organisational units, and contact information for HIIS employees;
- a list of HIIS electronic materials (e.g. sick leave records, and for signing employees into health insurance in another EU Member State); and
- information on the operation of an online system for direct access to health insurance data.

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<sup>45</sup> See: <https://moj.zzs.si> (accessed 15 May 2022).

<sup>46</sup> See: <https://www.zzs.si/novica/uvajamo-obvezno-elektronsko-vlaganje-zahtevkov-za-refundacije-nadomestil-plac/> and <https://www.zzs.si/novica/uspesna-nacionalna-vedba-elektronskega-bolniskega-lista-1/> (both accessed 15 May 2022).

In some examples given below, applicants can also carry out the entire procedure via the SPOT website (RS, 2022). For example, in line with Articles 12 and 13 of Regulation (EC) 883/2004 (EC, 2004), it is now possible for employers and the self-employed to submit a health insurance application for workers working in other EU Member States, or performing simultaneous activities in two or more EU Member States, at the same time (the "A1 form"). Equally, it is possible for people to report changes in their health insurance status and apply for health insurance or sick leave online (RS, 2022).

Access by insured people to their own data (on medical documentation, vaccinations, and health insurance status) is available via their SI-PASS number or (to a limited extent) via telephone text messages. SI-PASS codes can be obtained at municipality offices.

A positive consequence of digitalisation is the simplification of procedures, leading to savings in time and staff at the HIIS, as well as time savings for employers, employees and the self-employed.

In 2022, the HIIS will further digitalise its administrative procedures and simplify them for workers and the self-employed as well as for medical personnel and employers.

### **1.2.2.3 Maternity and equivalent paternity benefits**

Since 15 May 2022 electronic application forms have been available on the e-administration website.<sup>47</sup> The possibility of applying for maternity and paternity leave salary compensation online has simplified the application procedure. When people log in with their "smsPASS" mobile identity, all their information is copied to the application form from the central population register, so the entering of information by the applicant is no longer needed. Information about the person's employer is filled in from the Slovenian business register kept by the Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Public Legal Records and Related Services (AJPES).

The CSW information system supports decision-making on various rights for which CSWs act as one-stop shops, issuing decisions and benefit payments. It was established in 2000 and upgraded afterwards. Since 2018, CSWs have been able to automatically obtain data on employed people's earnings (the basis for social security contributions) from the Financial Administration of the Republic Slovenia (FURS), so there is no need for applicants to provide proof of their earnings.

### **1.2.2.4 Invalidity benefits**

The PDIIS regularly updates forms used by clients when submitting various applications, so reducing the unnecessary administrative burden of requests to supplement applications. Applications are available on the websites of all online services provided by the PDIIS (eApplications for All and My eZPIZ), and also as PDF documents. Printed forms for some applications are available at PDIIS premises. Providing staff to help clients complete applications at the counters, ensuring that clients submit all relevant documentation at the time of submission, is also a way to reduce administrative burdens.

In line with the General Administrative Procedure Act (2022), the PDIIS obtains data from official records kept by other state bodies and receives data from foreign holders of pension and disability insurance, which reduces the administrative burden on clients.

The strategic focus of the PDIIS on digital business, with the goals of digital transformation and a high degree of business automation, is aimed at greater simplification and lower burdens for clients. It resulted in the following achievements in 2017-2022 (PDIIS, 2017): a) digitalisation of administration processes (almost 100% of

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<sup>47</sup> See: <https://e-uprava.gov.si/podrocja/druzina-otroci-zakonska-zveza/pravice-prejemki-druzine/materinski-dopust.html> and <https://e-uprava.gov.si/podrocja/druzina-otroci-zakonska-zveza/pravice-prejemki-druzine/ocetovski-dopust.html> (accessed 5 May 2022).

core administration processes have been entirely digitalised);<sup>48</sup> b) the establishment and development of eZPIZ digital services for insured people, with the ability to submit applications and get decisions made on them, and the continuous development of new services; c) establishment of the eApplications for All service<sup>49</sup> in April 2020; d) the establishment of remote authentication and digital document-retrieval services in April 2020 for customers, alongside the already established method of digital document-retrieval for registered users;<sup>50</sup> e) the secure digital collection (even without a digital certificate) of documents prepared for users by the PDIIS, through eZPIZ – using the “e-Drawer” (*ePredal*) service;<sup>51</sup> f) solutions for the automatic preparation of pension account information, which the PDIIS forwards to all insured people when they reach a certain age (Pension and Disability Insurance Act, 2012, Article 140);<sup>52</sup> g) solutions for the fully digitalised collection of statements on the amount of pension held abroad; h) automation of the preparation and transmission of decisions; and i) replacement of M-4 forms (data on paid contributions) by the integration of iREK data (withholding-tax returns data), which has significantly reduced administrative burdens on employers as well as improved data transparency and social security for insured people.

#### **1.2.2.5 Old-age benefits and survivors’ benefits**

The information provided in Section 1.2.2.4 also applies to old-age benefits and survivors’ benefits.

#### **1.2.2.6 Benefits in respect of accidents at work and occupational diseases**

The information provided in Sections 1.2.2.2 and 1.1.2.6 also applies to benefits in respect of accidents at work and occupational diseases.

### **1.2.3 Simplification of the structures within the social protection administration**

This section deals with main policies and practices in Slovenia that are aimed at simplifying the structures within the administration of social protection.

#### **1.2.3.1 Unemployment benefits**

There are no current policies and practices aimed at simplifying the structures within the administration responsible for unemployment benefits.

#### **1.2.3.2 Sickness and healthcare benefits**

One of the main issues in health policy is the shortage of family physicians. To tackle the issue, a plan of 18 administrative simplifications (among other measures) was prepared

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<sup>48</sup> The digital transformation indicator (i.e. the share of documents sent to clients electronically in digital procedures) – monitored by the PDIIS – reached 99.2% in 2021. In 2015, the indicator was 33% (PDIIS internal data).

<sup>49</sup> This service allows clients to complete and submit applications electronically, with simultaneous verification of the data entered and a digital signature. In 2021 the PDIIS received more than 73,000 applications, which was a 153% increase compared with 2020 when this service was introduced (PDIIS, 2022).

<sup>50</sup> In 2021 over 63,000 users decided to receive documents digitally using phone authentication, which was 139% more than in 2020. With the new digital (SMS) dispatch service, more than 55,000 codes for digital collection of documents were issued in 2021, and users collected almost 48,000 documents. As of 2020, the number of digitally furnished documents had increased by 171%. The number of active boxes for digital shipping increased to almost 65,000, which represented an increase of 183% compared with the previous year (PDIIS, 2022).

<sup>51</sup> The ePredal service is intended for registered users to whom the PDIIS sends documents to their electronic mailbox at the eZPIZ website. In 2021 the service was used by 3,693 people, to whom the PDIIS electronically served 18,940 documents, which was almost a three-fold increase compared with the previous year (PDIIS, 2022).

<sup>52</sup> In 2021 the PDIIS issued 25,603 informational calculations to insured people who reached the age of 58 in that calendar year, which was a 39% increase compared with the previous year (PDIIS, 2022).

in 2019, and most of them have already been implemented – some still need to be tackled as they require a change in legislation. The aim of the simplifications has been to reduce the administrative burden for family physicians' offices. Since 2020, three significant simplifications have taken place:

- introduction of electronic sick leave records (simplified procedures in registering sick leave and obtaining sickness benefits for employers, employees and self-employed people);
- introduction of extended referral documentation (in the case of chronic diseases, where more control visits are foreseen, an annual referral document can be extended by two more years – this measure reduces the number of visits and the amount of administrative work for employees, self-employed people and medical staff); and
- introduction of permanent referral documentation (since 2021, permanent referral documentation can be issued in the case of chronic disease, simplifying the procedures for employees and the self-employed).

Around 25 million e-documents are issued in the healthcare system annually (e-Prescription, e-Referral, e-Sick leave). Additionally, there are about 2.2 million e-documents of various kinds issued each year referring to the management of insured people's status. Only 4% of all changes are currently handled as paperwork.<sup>53</sup> In 2022, the plan is to continue with the digitalisation processes in further areas, such as medical devices and physiotherapy.

### **1.2.3.3 Maternity and equivalent paternity benefits**

Since 15 May 2022 electronic application forms have been available on the e-administration website.<sup>54</sup> Applicants' information is automatically copied to the application forms from the central population register and the information about employers is filled in from the Slovenian business register. The CSW information system has been upgraded. Since 2018 CSWs have been able to automatically obtain data on employed people's earnings (the basis for social security contributions) from the FURS.<sup>55</sup>

### **1.2.3.4 Invalidity benefits**

To enhance data exchange between different public services departments and to increase the transferability of information regarding social rights, the PDIIS IT department developed the following solutions: a) integration of the eApplications for All service (see Section 1.2.2) into the e-Government (*e-Uprava*) website, in June 2021, which enables users of the e-Government website to prepare and submit an application for PDIIS services directly from this website;<sup>56</sup> b) development and establishment of a multilateral cross-border digital service for data exchange with insurance institutions in other countries (BiZPIZ REDI) and the promotion of its use; and c) development and establishment of a digital service for the efficient exchange of data in the field of social security co-ordination with other EU Member States (IS BiZPIZ EESSI). All these developments have substantially reduced the burden of collecting the necessary data for employees and self-employed people.

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<sup>53</sup> Information presented in this paragraph was kindly provided by the HIIS.

<sup>54</sup> See: <https://e-uprava.gov.si/podrocja/druzina-otroci-zakonska-zveza/pravice-prejemki-druzine/materinski-dopust.html> and <https://e-uprava.gov.si/podrocja/druzina-otroci-zakonska-zveza/pravice-prejemki-druzine/ocetovski-dopust.html> (accessed 5 May 2022).

<sup>55</sup> For more detailed information, see Section 1.2.2.3.

<sup>56</sup> In this way (through the e-Government website), the PDIIS received 21,598 applications in 2021 (PDIIS, 2022).

### **1.2.3.5 Old-age benefits and survivors' benefits**

The information provided in Section 1.2.3.4 also applies to old-age benefits and survivors' benefits.

### **1.2.3.6 Benefits in respect of accidents at work and occupational diseases**

The information provided in Sections 1.2.3.2 and 1.1.2.6 also applies to benefits in respect of accidents at work and occupational diseases.

## **2 Issues, debates and ongoing or planned reforms to ensure information on, and to simplify access to, social protection for workers and the self-employed**

The purpose of this section is to present issues and debates, as well as ongoing or planned reforms, aimed at ensuring information on, and simplifying access to, social protection for workers and the self-employed.

### **2.1 Issues, debates and reforms related to information**

In this section, we present issues, debates and reforms concerning the main policies and practices in Slovenia that are targeted at ensuring access to general and personalised information about some of the six social protection branches.

#### **2.1.1 Issues**

To our best knowledge, there has been no issue related to information on unemployment benefits and maternity and paternity benefits. No evaluation of access to information regarding these areas is readily available either.

There are no specific issues regarding the provision of information on healthcare and on sickness benefits.

An independent review commissioned by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) assessed the strengths and weaknesses of past communication efforts regarding pensions in order to identify potential improvements (OECD, 2022, pp. 212-232). The main conclusion was that communications by the government seem not to have been supported by a clear strategy and sufficient resources. Some positive examples of communications were identified (see Section 1.1.2.5). However, the review also pointed to some areas where a lack of stakeholder communication leads to communication gaps: engagement with the media, young people, and non-standard workers. And finally, the review pointed to the fact that the government failed to consider the views of key stakeholders, which accelerated the demise of many reform efforts.

A survey conducted among employees showed that both women and men had poor knowledge of the pension and disability system and assessed it as quite complex. They also lacked information on the retirement process needed when making final decisions. Only 21% of the respondents believed they were well acquainted with the pension system, 13% agreed that the system was simple, while 22% agreed that they were given enough information to make relevant decisions (OECD, 2022).

#### **2.1.2 Debates**

There are no current debates on unemployment benefit and the maternity and paternity benefits.

In the healthcare and sickness benefits area, initiatives for change occur on an almost daily basis and are triggered by various stakeholders in the system, such as healthcare-

providers, medical organisations, employers' associations or chambers, the Ministry of Health, and users.

While preparing its report on the Slovenian pension system, the OECD had several meetings with representatives of the MLFSAEO, PDIIS, social partners, and experts. The discussion focused on the state of the pension and disability insurance system in 2021, its transparency, adequacy, long-term sustainability and communication efforts. A review of communications regarding long pensions and disability benefits revealed that it failed to raise awareness about pensions and gather public support for reforms.

The OECD concluded that communications regarding pensions is a key policy issue in Slovenia and that there is a need for carefully planned communication campaigns with clear objectives – making use of innovative communication techniques and tools – and co-operation with key stakeholders.

### **2.1.3 Ongoing or planned reforms**

There are no ongoing or planned reforms regarding unemployment benefits.

To provide better information and ensure that users can access it more easily, the HIIS will start setting up a multimedia contact centre in 2022. Digitalisation and improvement of user access to information is ongoing and regularly reported in annual HIIS reports (See Sections 1.2.1.2, 1.2.2.2 and 1.2.3.2).

By the end of 2022, all detailed information regarding maternity and paternity benefits will be transferred from the e-government website to the e-administration website. Only general information about policies will remain on the e-government website, while everything else (e.g. descriptions of rights, and electronic application forms) will be available only on the e-administration website.

The foundation for the new pension reform was laid by a white paper on the pensions framework (MLFSAEO, 2016) and harmonised starting points were agreed upon with the social partners (GRS, 2017). The MLFSAEO has also committed itself to changes in the pension and disability legislation in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (GRS, 2021). In the same document, there is also a commitment to examine the possibilities for implementing the OECD recommendations, in dialogue with the social partners and based on a broader social and inter-generational consensus.<sup>57</sup>

In line with those commitments, raising awareness and informing the public about the importance of pension and disability insurance and the need to adjust it will be carried out in parallel. The MLFSAEO is working to adopt the government's long-term communication plan, to which all key departments would commit. The primary purpose is to strengthen public understanding of the functioning of the pension and disability system and gain public support for the necessary reform. Communication objectives will be the following: a) to harmonise the processes of awareness-raising and informing the public about the importance of pension and disability insurance; b) to strengthen the level of public confidence in the pension and disability system; c) to present the reasons for the pension and disability benefits reform, and inform the public about the consequences of it for their lives; and d) to obtain public support for the implementation of pension and disability benefits reform.

Draft amendments to the pension and disability legislation – to ensure better transparency, fiscal sustainability and adequate pensions – are expected to be prepared by the beginning of 2023.

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<sup>57</sup> Internal information for Sections 1.2.3, 2.1.3 and 2.2.3 was obtained from MLFSAEO.



## 2.2 Issues, debates and reforms related to simplification

In this section we present issues, debates and reforms concerning the main policies and practices in Slovenia that are targeted at simplifying access to some of the six social protection branches.

### 2.2.1 Issues

To our best knowledge, there have been no issues discussed with regard to simplifying access to unemployment benefits and maternity and paternity benefits. No evaluation in these areas is readily available either.

The strategic development orientation of the PDIIS, and its focus on digital transformation, aimed at increasing simplification and reducing burdens for its clients, have undoubtedly improved the accessibility of pensions and disability benefits.<sup>58</sup> However, the existing pension and disability system is complex and non-transparent. The OECD's in-depth analysis of the Slovenian pension and disability system (OECD, 2022) revealed three main weaknesses. Firstly, the eligibility conditions for earnings-related pensions are loose, whereas they are relatively restrictive for safety-net benefits. Secondly, the calculation of benefits is complicated and poorly co-ordinated with safety-net benefits. Pension entitlements are unclear for workers before they are claimed, and gross pensions depend on income tax rates.<sup>59</sup> And thirdly, population ageing will put pressure on pension finances, threatening their sustainability. Government communication has not been continuous and has been broadly focused on gaining public support for pension reform. As a result, the Slovenian public is confused, perceives the area of pensions as unregulated, and has a low level of trust in the pension system (OECD, 2022).

The OECD (2022) gave policy recommendations regarding better transparency of the Slovenian pension and disability insurance system: a) to simplify pension rules;<sup>60</sup> b) to provide more flexibility to combine work and pensions;<sup>61</sup> c) to align pension rules for the self-employed with those for employees; and d) to improve the transparency of pension finances.<sup>62</sup>

### 2.2.2 Debates

There are no current debates on simplifying access to unemployment benefits and maternity and paternity benefits.

Certain much debated issues, such as value-based healthcare (VBHC) and bundled payments, would need incremental additions in digitalisation processes for the data (clinical and other) collected to be of sufficient quality to be used for health policy purposes. While a large amount of data is collected and stored, the problem is data

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<sup>58</sup> For more information, see Section 1.2.2.4.

<sup>59</sup> "The reference wage used to calculate gross pensions is based on gross earnings adjusted by a multiplication coefficient equal to the ratio of the net to the gross average wage. This means that gross pensions are calculated from wages that are expressed in a form that is close to net wages – although it is less than net wages for low-earners and more than net wages for higher-earners due to progressive income taxes" (OECD, 2022, p. 112).

<sup>60</sup> This means: base pensions on average lifetime earnings; base the reference wage on gross wages while adjusting accrual rates accordingly in a budget-neutral way; replace the annual allowance with some other instrument; and complement constant accrual rates applied to earnings during the whole career, or introduce the points scheme, with a contribution-based basic pension.

<sup>61</sup> Access to pensions should be disconnected from whether people are working or not, with different options and a high level of transparency.

<sup>62</sup> This means: a) the financing of disability insurance should be separated from the financing of old-age pensions; b) financial flows related to the redistributive elements within the pension scheme should be precisely identified and reported; c) the health insurance of pensioners should be financed either by health contributions paid by pensioners or general taxation; and d) monitoring of pension finances should be made more transparent through better reporting of annual pension flows.

quality and use. For example, the HIIS administrative database makes it possible to see patients' pathway through the healthcare system; however, the data are neither analysed nor used for further policy decision-making. In such circumstances, it is difficult to persuade clinicians that the data serve a useful purpose and are not simply stored. The newly drafted guidelines for the introduction of VBHC in Slovenia<sup>63</sup> estimate the investment needed in the information technology (IT) system at €3 million. In a survey of stakeholders (including physicians and other medical staff, healthcare insurance companies, medical chambers, and patient associations), 70% of the respondents agreed that healthcare-providers had an IT system that was able to collect the data on costs and outcomes necessary for VBHC. On the other hand, only 10% of the respondents believed that the IT system at the national level (HIIS) could support VBHC and bundled payments. At the same time, the need to collect more data on outcomes and costs was expressed by 85% of the respondents.<sup>64</sup>

### **2.2.3 Ongoing or planned reforms**

No reform has been planned regarding unemployment benefits.

The HIIS strategic development plan for 2020-2025 (HIIS, 2019) includes eight activities to improve information activities and lessen inequities among insured people. In 2022, further digitalisation is planned in order to simplify and reduce the administrative burden in the areas of physiotherapy and medical devices.

In 2023 the CSW information system will start to automatically receive data on the bases for paying social security contributions for the self-employed and farmers (see Section 1.2.2 for employed people), so these people will no longer need to submit this information to the CSWs. This will simplify the application process for maternity and paternity benefits.

The MLFSAEO has committed to the establishment of an expert taskforce that would prepare amendments to the pension and disability legislation (in co-operation with the PDIIS) and establish professional, analytical and communication bases for starting the process of adopting legislative changes in the field of pension and disability insurance, prepared in consultation with the social partners. The transparency (information and awareness) of the pension and disability insurance system will be among the first challenges the taskforce will address.

## **2.3 Suggestions for improvements**

In this section we present suggestions for improving transparency through improved information and/or simplification.

The shortcomings of Slovenian healthcare system are low quality of data, irregular data-reporting, and deficient use of data collected for improvements in health policy. Overall, this overburdens employees and the self-employed with more bureaucratic procedures, more visits to the physicians, and more time needed to obtain services. The suggestion is therefore a higher level of data-usage for targeted health policy measures, which would inevitably lead to better definition of data needs and better data on patients, their health status and the healthcare used. Greater use and analysis of the data collected would motivate the providers to report data more carefully and correctly and improve data quality, resulting in a higher value of care provided.

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<sup>63</sup> The guidelines are not yet available as they are currently in press.

<sup>64</sup> The survey was prepared by the expert taskforce and has not yet been published.



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