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# CHILD GUARANTEE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA 2022–2030

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

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On 14 June 2021, the Council of the European Union adopted Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 establishing a European Child Guarantee (hereinafter: CG Recommendation). The CG Recommendation aims to prevent and combat social exclusion by providing access to a set of key services for children in need, thereby contributing to respect for children's rights by combating child poverty and promoting equal opportunities. It is used to assist children in need who are defined as persons under the age of 18 at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Taking into account national circumstances, Member States may extend the scope of application also to other groups of children in need.

Member States of the European Union are invited to provide, in accordance with national competences, circumstances and practices and in full respect of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality:

- (a) effective and free access to high-quality preschool education and care, education and school activities, at least one healthy meal each school day and healthcare;
- (b) effective access to healthy nutrition and adequate housing.

Member States should identify children in need of assistance and within this group take into account, wherever appropriate in designing their integrated national measures, specific disadvantages experienced, in particular, by:

- (a) homeless children or children experiencing severe housing deprivation;
- (b) children with disabilities;
- (c) children with mental health issues;
- (d) children with a migrant background or minority ethnic origin, particularly Roma;
- (e) children in alternative, especially institutional, care;
- (f) children in precarious family situations.

Taking into account the best interests of the child, the CG Recommendation also envisages building an integrated and enabling policy framework to reduce the social exclusion of children, focusing on breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty and disadvantage and reducing the socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pursuant to Article 49h of the Rules of Procedure of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted Slovenia's position on the proposal for the CG Recommendation:

*"The Republic of Slovenia supports the adoption of the proposal for a Council Recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee, as it considers that the initiative is key to equalising the life prospects of all children and breaking the intergenerational cycle of social exclusion. The Council Recommendation will contribute to the implementation of Principle 11 of the European Pillar of Social Rights "Childcare and support to children" and to the implementation of the commitment of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, which sets a target of reducing the number of children at risk of social exclusion by at least 5 million."*

The CG Recommendation requires the Member States of the European Union to prepare and submit to the European Commission, by 15 March 2022, national action plans for the implementation of the Recommendation with measures covering the period until 2030. The Member States of the European Union are invited to dedicate all possible resources, including those of the European Union, to combat child poverty and social exclusion.

### I. Legal basis concerning the social and family policy

#### **Resolution on the National Social Assistance Programme 2022–2030**

The strategy for combating poverty and social exclusion in the Republic of Slovenia is set out in the respective resolution on the national social assistance programme. The latest Resolution on the National Social Assistance Programme 2022–2030 was adopted in March 2022. The basic horizontal objective in the field of poverty and social exclusion is to improve the quality of life of individuals and families and to strengthen social cohesion, mutual solidarity and the social inclusion of all population groups. The key objectives of social policy until 2030 are:

- to reduce the risk of poverty and increase social inclusion;
- to improve the availability and accessibility of services and programmes and to strengthen community forms of social assistance;
- to create a supportive environment/conditions for improving the quality of services and programmes.

The basic principles for the implementation of the social assistance system in the Republic of Slovenia are ensuring human dignity and social justice, respect for human rights, ensuring equal opportunities for all, respect for diversity, ensuring social inclusion, promoting volunteering and solidarity, empowering individuals and groups with the aim of preventing and mitigating social distress, promoting intergenerational cohesion, respect for personal autonomy, including freedom of choice, promoting the independence of individuals and enabling individualised integrated support and assistance and the co-creation of appropriate solutions in response to the challenges faced by people.

In the social assistance system, individuals who are unable to provide material security due to circumstances beyond their control are granted social security benefits (social assistance benefit in cash and its special form extraordinary social assistance benefit in cash and income support). Social assistance benefits depend on available income and property or on the material situation of the individual or the family/household. They are intended to facilitate subsistence or solve the social distress of the population and are not tied to paid contributions.

In the area of social assistance benefits, the Republic of Slovenia will simplify social legislation by 2030, monitor the adequacy of the level of social security benefits and ensure that all those entitled thereto receive them (so-called coverage). We will provide an adequate system of minimum income to ensure the means of subsistence (social assistance benefit in cash) or a decent livelihood for the recipients of benefits and those who find themselves temporarily or who live in circumstances that make them particularly vulnerable. We will link minimum income to social services and active employment policy measures. We will create incentives for activities in the form of taking into account the smaller part of the income received when assessing the material situation of the individual for the purpose of granting social assistance benefit in cash, provide the same incentives for the employment of both partners, and monitor and address the passivity and traps of low wages in relation to the tax and benefit systems, especially for low-income households with children. We will monitor the situation of the most vulnerable and design measures to prevent the risk of poverty and social exclusion.

#### **Resolution on Family Policy 2018–2028**

Family policy in Slovenia is based on an integrated and inclusive approach, which means that it includes all types of families, takes into account the plurality of family forms and different needs arising from this plurality, respects the autonomy of the family and the individuality of its members, protects children's rights

in the family and beyond, and places emphasis on the security and quality of life of families and children. Important elements of family policy also include the reconciliation of professional and family life, equal opportunities for both genders, setting up a wide spectrum of programmes and services for families, and contributions towards costs to make the maintenance of children and family protection easier in special life circumstances.

The Resolution on Family Policy 2018–2028 sets out fundamental family policy objectives and measures for the period 2018–2028. The objective of family policy in Slovenia is to ensure the good quality of life of families (particularly children) and their security and protection. At the same time, the number of births in the country is also important for the demographic policy, so family policy also pursues the objective of creating a supportive environment for people to decide to have children. The wider social circumstances (favourable conditions on the labour market, broad accessibility of housing, etc.) that give people a feeling of safety and stability and a family-friendly policy promoting measures facilitating the reconciliation of professional and family life are important for achieving this objective.

The proposal for the resolution defines the following sub-objectives, which are:

- to provide special assistance and protection for the most vulnerable families and individual family members;
- to improve the social and economic position of families and children;
- to develop good quality, diverse and widely accessible programmes to support families;
- to increase the social inclusion of families and children;
- to create conditions facilitating the reconciliation of professional and family life;
- to ensure equality between men and women and to promote more equal distribution of work related to care and housework;
- to provide good quality and accessible care, upbringing and education of children;
- to provide a high-quality cultural programme and access to cultural content for children and families;
- to provide high-quality and widely accessible healthcare for families with an emphasis on the reproductive health of women and men and healthcare for children;
- to improve the accessibility of suitable housing, particularly for couples expecting a child and families with small children;
- to improve the position of young people and parents in the labour market;
- to constantly and systematically monitor areas related to family issues.

The general principles of family policy are inclusion, equality, protection, assistance and respect.

## II. The legal basis concerning children's rights

### **Programme for Children 2020–2025**

The Programme for Children 2020–2025 sets out fundamental objectives and actions in the areas of children's rights and their well-being and quality of life. The Programme for Children 2020–2025 includes priority areas within which activities will be carried out to increase children's quality of life and to establish protective factors for children from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, for the most vulnerable children, and for protective factors in the areas required by the modern era with their challenges, such as the digital environment. The programme's identified priority areas are interlinked and include:

- equal opportunities for all children in the following areas:
  - the family environment and housing deprivation,
  - health,

- inclusive preschool and school education,
- culture and cultural and artistic education,
- the most vulnerable groups of children,
- the participation of all children;
- a life free from violence, and the safety of children in the digital environment;
- child-friendly procedures.

In the Programme for Children 2020–2025, which is the currently applicable strategic document on the protection of children's rights in the Republic of Slovenia, special focus is placed on the following most vulnerable groups of children, which we need to devote particular attention to and which must be adequately protected against discrimination and thus provided with equal opportunities for inclusion:

- children from socially and financially disadvantaged backgrounds;
- children in large and single-parent families;
- children in substitute care for children who are deprived of family life;
- children from ethnic or national minorities, e.g. Roma children;
- children who are refugees and migrants;
- children with special needs and vulnerabilities;
- children involved in various proceedings;
- child victims of violence.

### III. The legal basis concerning health

#### **Resolution on the National Healthcare Plan 2016–2025: Together for a Healthy Society**

The Resolution on the National Healthcare Plan 2016–2025 is the document addressing the key problems of health and the healthcare system in the Republic of Slovenia and laying the foundations for health in all policies which include the guidelines of the World Health Organisation's strategy "European Programme of Work 2020–2025: United Action for Better Health",<sup>1</sup> which highlights, for example, the importance of cross-sectoral action and integration as key to strengthening health and reducing health inequalities.

The Resolution on the National Healthcare Plan 2016–2025 addresses:

- Health in all policies: the adoption and implementation of effective, cross-sectoral coordinated measures, policies and programmes to achieve the highest level of health and well-being: in cooperation with ministries, experts, civil society, social partners and the economy (where appropriate), we will actively co-design policies and take measures that prove to be effective to support health promotion and maintenance. We will develop strategies and implementation plans and ensure the coordination of their implementation in the areas of nutrition and exercise, tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs. Special attention in all measures will be devoted to vulnerable groups, among them, particularly to socially excluded groups and those living in poor social and economic conditions.
- Enhancing the primary level of healthcare: by strengthening the network at the primary level of healthcare, we will improve access to healthcare services as close as possible to the population and enable integrated treatment and focus on preventive healthcare. We will also improve the connectedness of primary healthcare with other healthcare service providers, social assistance and public health.
- Health promotion programmes in educational institutions, at the workplace, in local environments: in order to implement national strategic guidelines aimed at improving health and quality of life, it is crucial

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<sup>1</sup> More information is available at: <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/339209>

to carry out activities in the environments where people live, work and spend their free time. Such programmes cannot be provided solely in the context of public services, as they must reach every individual in his or her local environment.

– Improved healthcare for patients with rare diseases: rare diseases are mostly linked to the genetic record; they manifest themselves already in childhood and are generally incurable. They often require that the patient adapts their entire life to the disease, which will accompany them through all periods of life. Early targeted screening for certain rare diseases is not provided for. The reference centre would represent a specialised point of reference with the highest level of professional competence to treat patients and advise healthcare professionals who care for them in their local environment. We will provide comprehensive early screening for rare diseases, comprehensive treatment in reference centres and support to improve the quality of life of patients, including the possibility of receiving medicine at home in cooperation with healthcare, education and social assistance sectors.

– Improved healthcare for children with special needs: better prevention will reduce the incidence of developmental disorders and, in the event of these disorders, ensure their early identification and appropriate treatment. We will ensure that development clinics connect with services and institutions in the field of education and social assistance to provide comprehensive treatment of these patients, and we will set up clinical pathways to treatment and professional teams that offer support to parents, caregivers (guardians) and children with special needs.

### **National Mental Health Programme 2018–2028**

The Resolution on the National Mental Health Programme 2018–2028 devotes great attention to the mental health of children and adolescents, as 50% of disorders develop by the age of 14 and 75% by the age of 25. Pursuant to this resolution, twenty-five centres for the mental health of children and adolescents are envisaged at the primary healthcare service level (of which nineteen are already in place). Specific priority areas of the resolution include the prevention of suicidal behaviour and the promotion of mental health, and the prevention of mental disorders in children and adolescents.

### **National Nutrition and Physical Activity Programme 2015–2025**

The National Nutrition and Physical Activity Programme 2015–2025 contributes to a better quality of life and better health for young people. The programme specifically identifies measures aimed at young people, such as promoting healthy eating and physical activity for health and the transfer of knowledge and skills on healthy and safe nutrition for all groups of the population, with a particular focus on future parents, the nutrition of pregnant women, the acquisition of skills regarding breastfeeding and the healthy nutrition of young children, the benefits of physical activity and recommendations on adaptations for specific target groups.

### **Resolution on the National Programme on Illicit Drugs 2014–2020**

The Resolution on the National Programme on Illicit Drugs of the Republic of Slovenia for the period 2014–2020 covers the comprehensive development of measures, programmes and activities that contribute to solving the problem of illicit drugs. The main objective of the programme is to reduce and limit the harm caused to individuals, families and society by the use of illicit drugs. Prevention programmes are widespread in Slovenia. They are implemented at the local and national levels. Most prevention programmes are targeted at children and adolescents and are provided at the local level by educational institutions and some also outside such institutions. In addition to teachers and professionals from other public institutions, NGO representatives and local action groups, which coordinate these activities in some local communities, play an important role in the implementation of prevention activities.



In order to ensure effective and free access to quality healthcare for children in need, the Republic of Slovenia covers, under compulsory insurance, the early detection and treatment of diseases and developmental problems, including those related to mental health, and provides access to regular medical examinations, including dental and ophthalmological examinations, and to early diagnosis programmes; it provides curative and rehabilitation measures promptly, including access to medicine, treatment and medical aids, and access to vaccination programmes, as well as targeted rehabilitation and habilitation services for children with disabilities.

Within the framework of the child guarantee, we plan in particular to upgrade accessible programmes for health promotion and disease prevention for children in need and their families, and to provide professionals who work with children.

### **Decree on the implementation of the school scheme<sup>2</sup>**

The EU School Scheme is an action of the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy that provides children in primary schools and educational institutions for children and adolescents with special needs an additional meal of fruit, vegetables, milk and milk products free of charge. Compulsory accompanying educational measures link children to agriculture and promote healthy eating. The aim of the school scheme is to increase the consumption of fruit, vegetables, milk and milk products by children with an emphasis on local production, and to improve children's eating habits. The school scheme is intended to help halt the rise in obesity among children, which is one of the major risk factors for modern diseases.

According to the health sector decree, the National Institute of Public Health is responsible for evaluating the effects of the school scheme.<sup>3</sup> The evaluation includes, *inter alia*, e-surveys for schools (pupils and teachers) and for the providers of accompanying educational measures. On this basis, the National Institute of Public Health produces an evaluation report on the school scheme. The evaluation report shows that the school scheme reaches children from vulnerable groups, thereby reducing health and social inequalities.

## **IV. Legal basis concerning education<sup>4</sup>**

### **White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia 2011**

The White Paper on Education<sup>5</sup> is a strategic document containing the expert groundwork for the development of the education system in the Republic of Slovenia. It contains an analysis of the current

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<sup>2</sup> Decree on the implementation of the school scheme (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [*Uradni list RS*], Nos [26/17](#) and [46/19](#))

<sup>3</sup> More information is available at: <https://www.gov.si/teme/solska-shema-sadja-zelenjave-in-mleka/>

<sup>4</sup> All regulations in the field of education are available on the Ministry's website: <https://www.gov.si/drzavni-organi/ministrstva/ministrstvo-za-izobrazevanje-znanost-in-sport/zakonodaja/> and at <https://zakonodaja.sio.si/seznam-predpisov-po-podrocjih-in-skupinah-2/>

A description of the education system is available on the Eurydice website and in the publication *Vzgoja in izobraževanje v Republiki Sloveniji 2021–22 (Education in the Republic of Slovenia 2021–2022)*: <https://www.eurydice.si/publikacije/Vzgoja-in-izobrazevanje-v-RS-2021-22.pdf>

Key strategic documents, both European and Slovenian, are available at: <https://www.cmepius.si/razvijamo-za-vas/strateski-dokumenti/>

**An overview of the education system for 2021** is available at: <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eac/education-and-training-monitor-2021/si/slovenia.html>

Comparable data on the condition and effects of education in Slovenia and the other 37 OECD and partner countries are available at: <https://www.gov.si/novice/2022-10-04-pogled-na-izobrazevanje-2022/>.

<sup>5</sup> The full text of the White Paper is available at: <http://pefprints.pef.uni-lj.si/1195/>

situation, an overview of values in the education system and possible solutions. As one of the most important general objectives of education, the document highlights the provision of equal educational opportunities for every individual (regardless of gender, social and cultural origin, religion, ethnicity, worldview and physical and mental constitution) and the provision of appropriate assistance and incentives to individuals or groups with a focus on immigrants, individuals or groups coming from a socially and culturally less stimulating background, and persons with special needs with an education guidance decision.

### **Kindergarten curriculum**

Education and other professional staff of public and private kindergartens adhere to the Kindergarten Curriculum, which is the essential programme document adopted in 1999 that specifies preschool education as part of the education system. The introduction of the curriculum defines the principles to be respected by the education and other professional staff of kindergartens, as well as basic professional principles, such as the physical laws of the child's development and learning, the democratisation of everyday (routine) activities (e.g. eating, resting), positive interaction and respectful communication. The covert curriculum is also important; it comprises many elements of educational influence on children that are not defined anywhere but appear in the form of indirect education and as such prove to be more effective than direct educational activities. The curriculum also provides guidelines on how to arrange and use space, as well as on cooperation with parents. The second part of the document presents the areas of activity in kindergartens. These are common for children aged 1 to 6 years. Different "subject" areas are defined for the first and second age groups: movement, language, nature, society, arts and mathematics, which are of equal value in terms of the quality of children's time in kindergarten.

### **Primary school programme**

The primary school programme sets out all compulsory and optional activities that schools are obliged to provide to their pupils. The primary school programme is specified by the timetable and curricula of compulsory and optional subjects, as well as by guidelines and educational concepts that define other methods of working with pupils (morning care, after-school classes, extracurricular activities, outdoor school), cross-curricular contents (days of activities, how to use libraries and information technologies) and other documents to guide the work of the school's education staff. The programme also specifies the knowledge required for subject teachers.

The curricula include guidance and instructions for teaching individual subjects in all nine grades of primary school. In addition to the material that pupils need to master in each class, they also propose a variety of teaching methods that make the lessons more varied and interesting. Special emphasis is placed on experimental and problem-based learning in the upper grades of primary school. Among the more important goals of the curriculum are the emotional, social, physical and moral development of pupils.

Along with compulsory and compulsory optional subjects, class discussion periods and days of activities (cultural, sports, technical, and science days), all primary schools undertake the activities of the extended programme. These include extracurricular activities, non-compulsory optional subjects and morning care for pupils in the first grade, as well as after-school classes for pupils of the first to fifth grades.

### **Upper secondary education programmes**

After successfully completing primary school, pupils can continue their education in any secondary school (gymnasium, short vocational secondary and upper secondary vocational schools, upper secondary technical schools and secondary vocational schools). Secondary education programmes shall have a general part and a special part.

The general part includes: the name of the programme, the objectives of education, the duration of education, the compulsory methods of the examination and evaluation of knowledge, the conditions for inclusion and the conditions for advancement and the completion of education.

General upper secondary education can be obtained through the following education programmes: general upper secondary schools and *matura* examination (upper secondary school-leaving external examination) courses. General upper secondary school programmes and *matura* examination courses end with the general *matura*. A completed general *matura* makes it possible to continue education by enrolling in all university studies and in study programmes of short-cycle higher education and professional higher education. General upper secondary education is divided into general (general upper secondary schools and classical upper secondary schools) and professional (technical, economic and art upper secondary schools). In art upper secondary schools, students can be educated in music, dance and fine arts, and they can also choose theatre and film studies. General and economic upper secondary school programmes can also be carried out in sports classes. All general upper secondary school programmes last four years. The general part of the vocational education programme also includes the vocational or technical education title awarded upon successful completion of the respective education programme.

The special part contains: the syllabus, subject curricula, subject-knowledge catalogues and examination catalogues detailing the content of subjects or subject fields and of elective content, the knowledge standards or objectives of instruction and the knowledge assessed at the end of primary school cycles as well as by the *matura* or final examination, and the skills and knowledge required for subject teachers.

The specific part of the vocational education programme also includes the scope and content of education in short vocational secondary and upper vocational secondary education carried out in a workplace, and the organisation of the implementation of the education programme (all-year, periodic). A special part of the adapted education programmes for children and adolescents with special needs also includes activities necessary to achieve the optimum development of a child or adolescent and instructions for their implementation.

### **School Meals Act**

School meals are regulated by the School Meals Act<sup>6</sup> in conjunction with the Exercise of Rights from Public Funds Act, thus providing funds to subsidise meals for primary and secondary school students from socially less stimulating backgrounds. In providing school meals, all educational institutions must comply with the **Guidelines for Nutrition in Educational Institutions** adopted by the Council of Experts of the Republic of Slovenia for General Education. Taking into account the principles of sustainable consumption, primary and secondary school students are provided high-quality school meals that contribute to their optimum development, to raising awareness of healthy food and nutrition culture, to educating students about a responsible attitude to oneself, one's health and the environment; in this manner, students are given access to healthy school meals. During the school year, schools are obliged to provide meals for all students who apply for it. In addition, schools can also provide breakfast, lunch and afternoon snacks.

## **V. Legal basis concerning the housing policy**

### **Resolution on the National Housing Programme 2015 – 2025**

The basic strategic document in the field of housing policy in the Republic of Slovenia is the Resolution on the National Housing Programme 2015–2025, which envisages some measures to address the housing issue

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<sup>6</sup> School Meals Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [*Uradni list RS*], Nos [3/13](#), [46/14](#) and [46/16](#) – ZOFVI-K)

of young people and young families, including an increase in public rental housing for vulnerable groups, which will also have an impact on increasing access to suitable housing for families with children.

In the allocation of public housing for rent, priority is given to the categories of young people and young families in accordance with the objective of tackling the housing problem of young people and young families. Young people are considered to be applicants of whom none of the users mentioned in the application is older than 35 years as of the date of the submission of the application. In the case of young families, the family must have at least one minor child and none of the family members listed as users in the application may be older than 40 years as of the date of the submission of the application.

In terms of access to non-profit rental housing, families with children are considered a priority category, and housing legislation also contains provisions that allow for the exceptional allocation of non-profit rental housing in order to protect the interests of children. Emergency situations are tackled by allocating housing units that are intended to quickly resolve the current housing distress in which a particular family finds itself.

## VI. Other strategic documents

### **The National Programme of Measures of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Roma for the 2021–2030**

The National Programme of Measures of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Roma 2021–2030 (NPUR 2021–2030) is a programme document of the government that sets out the main objectives and basic measures for improving the socio-economic situation of the Roma community and its members, for creating the conditions for raising the social inclusion of members of the Roma community and their empowerment, and for strengthening their participation in the processes aimed at improving their position and achieving full inclusion and equality in Slovenian society in the period 2021–2030. The sectoral and horizontal objectives of the national programme also relate to Roma children and adolescents.

## **3 DRAFTING A NATIONAL ACTION PLAN TO IMPLEMENT THE CG RECOMMENDATION**

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A **national coordinator** for the child guarantee was appointed to direct the drafting of the Child Guarantee National Action Plan of the Republic of Slovenia 2022–2030 (hereinafter: the CG NAP) in accordance with the CG Recommendation.

In order to draft the National Action Plan of the Republic of Slovenia, an **intersectoral working group** was established by a decision of the minister responsible for social affairs. It will be headed by the national coordinator and include representatives of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education<sup>7</sup> and the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning<sup>8</sup>. The task of the intersectoral working group<sup>8</sup> is to prepare a draft Child Guarantee National Action Plan.

In addition to the intersectoral working group, a **consultative group** was established, which includes representatives of non-governmental organisations, the Family Initiative, the Slovenian Foundation for

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<sup>7</sup> Before the adoption of the Act amending the Government of the Republic of Slovenia Act, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

<sup>8</sup> Before the adoption of the Act amending the Government of the Republic of Slovenia Act, the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning.

UNICEF, the Network for Children's Rights<sup>9</sup>, the Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia and the National Institute of Public Health. The main purpose of the consultative group is to make proposals and comments on the proposed actions of the intersectoral working group.

The Ombudsman and the Advocate of the Principle of Equality also contributed their proposals for vulnerable groups and areas.

In connection with the preparation of the CG NAP, a meeting was also held with the Office of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for National Minorities, which highlighted the measures for the social inclusion of Roma children included in the *National Programme of Measures of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Roma for 2021–2030* (NPUR)<sup>10</sup>, which in terms of content also fall within the scope of the CG Recommendation. The measures provided for in the NPUR which target entire families are not specifically highlighted in the CG NAP, whereas child-centred measures are an integral part of both documents.

**Children** were also involved in drafting the National Action Plan. On 9 March 2022, an event co-organised by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, the Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia, the Association of Friends of Youth of Slovenia, the Legal Information Centre for NGOs and the Slovenian Foundation for UNICEF was held, where 37 children from all over Slovenia aged between 12 and 15 years were consulted.

The CG NAP shall be adopted by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia.

## 4 WHO THE CHILDREN IN NEED OF HELP IN THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA ARE

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As shown by the summary of the strategic documents as well as by the data contained in the Annex on page 81, the quality of life of children in the Republic of Slovenia is well regulated from a systemic point of view. A number of measures relating to the Council's recommendations on establishing a European Child Guarantee are universal, aimed at the entire population of children. Nevertheless, certain social groups need additional assistance in the exercise of children's rights, so we were particularly attentive to them when designing targeted measures.

### **Children of migrants, children with a migrant background and children from ethnic minorities, particularly Roma**

Children with a migrant background, Roma children and children from other disadvantaged ethnic minorities often have poorer learning achievements due to language barriers, discrimination, poor social and cultural capital, etc., and are more at risk of early school leaving. Among the most vulnerable groups, Roma children should be singled out in the first place, as they are culturally and socially marginalised from mainstream society. Data from the field show that Roma often live in poor socio-economic conditions and are therefore trapped in a cycle of poverty and aid dependency. A pressing problem is the forced marriage of Roma girls or the fleeing of minors into harmful environments. Regarding migrant children, unaccompanied children are particularly vulnerable and are therefore in urgent need of a systemic form of treatment and accommodation. All of the above-mentioned vulnerable groups of children should be provided an integrated approach through a mixture of support measures that are interlinked and tailored to the specific needs of a particular target group, while continuing and targeted support should at the same

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<sup>9</sup> The Network for Children's Rights is a network of 40 non-governmental organisations in the Republic of Slovenia working in the field of the protection of children's rights.

<sup>10</sup> The Government adopted the National Programme of Measures of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Roma 2021–2030 (NPUR 2021–2030) at its 108th regular session on 23 December 2021.

time address both the educational, social service and healthcare areas and the arrangement of appropriate housing conditions.

### **Children with special needs**

Children with special needs include children with mental developmental disorders, blind and partially sighted children or children with a visual impairment, deaf and hard-of-hearing children, children with speech impairments, children with mobility impairments, children with long-term illnesses, children with deficits in specific areas of learning, children with autistic disorders and children with emotional and behavioural disorders. All these children need the adapted implementation of education programmes with additional professional assistance or adapted education programmes or special education programmes.

### **Children with mental health problems and/or mental disorders**

Numerous data and research and practice point to an increase in the number of children and adolescents with mental health problems, and the upward trend has intensified during the pandemic period. The most common mental disorders in children and adolescents are mental (psychological) developmental disorders, hyperkinetic disorders, behavioural disorders, reactions to severe stress and adaptation disorders, alcohol-related disorders, depression, anxiety disorders, eating disorders and other behavioural and emotional disorders that usually begin in childhood. The timely detection and proper treatment of mental problems and disorders are key to ensuring the proper functioning and comprehensive development of children and adolescents, as well as for their successful functioning in adulthood, therefore it is important to increase and strengthen the sources of professional assistance in this area, which, however, are often not evenly distributed in the population and not everyone who needs such receives such. In Slovenia, there is a shortage of specialists for children (pedopsychiatrists, neuropsychiatrists, clinical psychologists). There is also a shortage of specialist clinics. Existing clinics are overcrowded and consequently there are long waiting lines for treatment. Domestic violence is also a pressing problem, as it is one of the major and frequent risks to the mental health of children.

### **Children living in dysfunctional, precarious family conditions and/or who have a socially and financially disadvantaged background; children in alternative (particularly institutional) care**

Family problems of different origin (continuous conflicts, addictions, financial problems, physical, emotional or sexual abuse, inappropriate educational approaches, illnesses, etc.) can create unfavourable conditions for the development of children and can lead to serious distress and psychological trauma for children and adolescents, therefore it is important to systematically identify risk factors and strengthen support mechanisms to reduce risk factors in their development and transition to adulthood (teenage years). There is a greater need for community-based forms of residence, such as housing groups and family forms of residence, e.g. foster care, and for longer-term measures to ensure the quality of life of children when leaving institutional care.

## **5 MEASURES TO PREVENT CHILD POVERTY AND THE SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF CHILDREN IN THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA BY 2030**

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The CG NAP envisages measures that are complementary to the objectives and actions of the strategic documents relating to poverty and social exclusion that address the child within the family.

In line with the CG Recommendation and the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, the primary subject of action in the CG NAP is children. **The proposed measures/actions are therefore child-centred, and pursue two objectives:**

- **equal opportunities for all children;**
- **the prevention of the intergenerational transmission of poverty.**

Broader measures aimed at strengthening the whole family and parents of poor and socially excluded children and considered important in pursuing both objectives are covered by the chapter on the supporting policy framework (5.1).

Targeted actions stemming from the Council's main recommendations establishing a European Child Guarantee are identified by policy area in sub-chapter 5.2.

The Republic of Slovenia is a small country by area and is not regionally divided, so such measures are taken at the national level. Activities, services and programmes are or will be carried out throughout the territory of the Republic of Slovenia, except where otherwise stated regarding the specific measure.

## 5.1. SUPPORTING POLICY FRAMEWORK

The CG Recommendation recommends that Member States take into account and ensure a so-called "supportive policy framework" when developing measures to implement specific recommendations, which means that they must provide assistance to the whole family, not just the child in need of assistance within the family. In point 6b of the CG Recommendation, Member States are encouraged to maintain and increase investment in social protection systems in order to ensure an effective response to the needs of children and their families, in particular those at risk of social exclusion. Investment in quality services for children, including enabling infrastructure and a skilled workforce (point 6 g) should be supported.

In order to prevent social exclusion and the intergenerational transmission of poverty, it is therefore essential to also help parents, as the family is the child's primary environment. In order to ensure a decent life and social inclusion, the Republic of Slovenia has in place various mechanisms and measures. The available data show that children living in non-working households are significantly more at risk, so measures to ensure social inclusion and active inclusion in the labour market are also planned in the new Financial Perspective for 2030.

### 1. THE MODERNISATION OF THE SOCIAL ASSISTANCE SYSTEM

An important problem in the intergenerational transmission of poverty is, among other things, also the poorer competences of parents, which is why we will modernise the social assistance system. The aim of the action is to develop and upgrade the services of social work centres for dealing with the most disadvantaged people, including children and families, with a view to reducing and preventing social exclusion.

In order to detect problems early and to help parents provide parental care, we will strengthen social work centres to work more intensively and efficiently with parents or with the whole family. Two operations will be carried out by 2030:

- Training contractors to apply new concepts of working with families. The training will strengthen the counselling role of social work centres for the provision of the "family help for home" social assistance service, the implementation of public authorities and tasks relating to family legislation, as well as the counselling role of other providers of family support programmes. The expected impact of the activity is to

reduce and prevent social exclusion, reduce the risks of high-conflict situations within the family and compensate for deficits caused by different family circumstances.

- In the field of strengthening parental competences, we will introduce evidence-based effective programmes in order to strengthen the safeguarding factors in families and prevent the development of potential risk factors for both children and their families. These programmes will be used by social work centres when working with parents and children. The measure envisages the training and employment of providers of these programmes at social work centres to promote the concept of “positive parenthood”. The aim is to help parents acquire appropriate knowledge and value orientations to increase their parental competences and to become more confident and self-confident, thus preventing risk factors for themselves, their children and their family.

Among the vulnerable groups referred to in the CG Recommendation, there are two activities targeting children of all vulnerable groups, and in particular children in precarious family situations.

#### **Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities	0	768,269.23	4,586,730.77	*

\* These are EU funds, therefore the planning of funds and budget items are still being coordinated within the framework of the implementation plan of the ECP 2021–2027 Programme at the level of the managing authority.

#### **2. MULTIGENERATION CENTRES**

A network of multigenerational centres (hereinafter: the NMC) will aim at the social inclusion of vulnerable groups and the prevention of slipping into social exclusion and poverty through preventive programmes. It will address all generations.

The primary purpose of multigenerational centres is to prevent social exclusion and poverty. They will contribute to this through the inclusion of vulnerable social groups most at risk in this area and free activities aimed at preventing social distress and non-formal education. Through activities, adults acquire competences that improve their employment opportunities, parental competences for better management of family life, competences to raise financial literacy, etc. Children and young people will be provided care, holiday activities, various educational workshops and learning assistance, thus improving their opportunities for development in different areas.

The NMC will organise/develop:

- content aimed at strengthening social inclusion, empowering and developing social, health, cultural and financial competences;
- self-help groups;
- educational and practical workshops;
- content for literacy development, e.g. creative reading and writing workshops, vocabulary development workshops, creative illustration workshops, digital literacy development workshops;
- various other activities for families and individuals according to the expressed needs in the environment.

Vulnerable groups that will be specifically targeted by programmes in multigenerational centres:

- quasi-jobless families/persons;
- persons, in particular children and young people, at risk of social exclusion;
- older people, especially those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds;



- families where poor parental competences have been detected;
- children and young people with special needs;
- migrant and refugee individuals and families, in particular children and young people from these families;
- Roma families, in particular children and young people from these families;
- single-parent families;
- the disabled.

In the period up to 2030, the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities will support the opening of 16 multigenerational centres, which will be geographically dispersed throughout the territory of the Republic of Slovenia. The users thereof will be children (and their family members) of all vulnerable or socially excluded categories of the population.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities	/	/	Slovenia's contribution: 1,379,818.62  EU contribution: 3,461,650.23	*

\* These are EU funds, therefore the planning of funds and budget items are still being coordinated within the framework of the implementation plan of the ECP 2021–2027 Programme at the level of the managing authority.

**3. FAMILY CENTRES**

The Resolution on Family Policy 2018–2028 “*A Society Friendly to All Families*” commits us to developing services for families and children, especially from families at risk. It is necessary to strengthen protective factors in families and to prevent potential risk factors for children from these families. Various measures aim to empower parents so that they can provide their children with a safe environment for growing up and optimum development, and reduce risk factors in their development and transition to adulthood (adolescence). Family centres are one of the measures for empowering parents and through them entire families. Family centres work preventively and provide educational workshops, talks and lectures for families, and are intended for socialising or ensuring the needs of different forms of families at all stages of life. Family centres provide:

- a place for informal gatherings;
- educational and practical workshops on the development of positive parenthood;
- holiday activities for children and organised workshops for children or adolescents;
- counselling with the aim of improving the ability to manage emotions, building a positive self-image, learning to solve various problems, etc.

The aim of the implementation is to offer children and adolescents:

- a variety of learning opportunities for their integrated development and the acquisition of appropriate social and emotional skills, a positive self-image and constructive solutions to a variety of problems;
- to empower their parents for positive parenthood, through which they will have a significant impact on the quality of family life and the constructive resolution of interpersonal conflicts.

By 2025, we will support the operation of 12 family centres, which are geographically dispersed throughout the territory of the Republic of Slovenia. The users of family centres will be children (and their family members) of all vulnerable or socially excluded categories of the population.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities	929,186.00	864,000.00	864,000.00	4071

**4. MULTIPURPOSE ROMA CENTRES**

The strengthened network of multipurpose Roma centres<sup>11</sup> (hereinafter: the NMRC) will enhance the socio-economic position of members of the Roma community. The acquisition of skills and competences that enable more successful performance on the labour market will promote the improvement of the quality of life and integration into the wider community and strengthen the confidence and cooperation of communities with the majority population. The NMRC will act as the first point for the promotion of the empowerment, social integration and social activation of Roma by addressing Roma “at the doorsteps of their houses”, which has so far proven to be the most effective. They will also connect with the local environment and professional organisations, such as the social work centres, the Employment Service and health organisations.

Two new multipurpose Roma centres will be established in the western part of the country, where the needs are lower, as the Roma are better integrated into the local community than the Roma living in the eastern part of the country. Accordingly, we will strengthen the seven already established multipurpose Roma centres in the eastern part of the country and develop an additional 10. Additional multipurpose Roma centres will be established within or close to Roma settlements, thereby contributing to visible improvements in the socio-economic, educational, integration and health areas of Roma.

The content of multipurpose Roma centres are intended for members of the Roma community and their families, i.e. to all family members. Children represent one of the most vulnerable groups within the vulnerable group of members of the Roma community, as they are materially/economically, socially and emotionally and developmentally dependent on environments in which ethical value systems often do not put the value of children’s development first. As a result, it is children who are trapped in the transmission of patterns of behaviour and way of life which often do not allow them to properly develop their potential, personal growth and personal development. As a result of this situation, Roma children need assistance to address disadvantages arising from their narrow (family) and wider (community) social environments.

Multipurpose Roma centres will also ensure the implementation of content that will enable Roma children, their caregivers or parents to acquire practical knowledge and competences in the fields of strengthening language and financial literacy, family planning, active parenthood, creating an (encouraging family) environment that will support children in performing school duties, and familiarise themselves with the importance of completing education and gaining employment for an independent and better-quality life. There will also be activities aimed at de-tabooing and open discussion about contraception, premature parenting, running away to harmful environments, addictions and the harmfulness of illicit drug use. By

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<sup>11</sup> The network of multipurpose Roma centres should not be confused with the multipurpose Roma centres providing innovative learning environments operating under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, as these are two separate programmes.

ensuring the implementation of these activities, the multipurpose Roma centres will also contribute to achieving the goal of exiting the “intergenerational cycle of disadvantage”.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities	0	0	625,000.00	*

\* These are EU funds, therefore the planning of funds and budget items are still being coordinated within the framework of the implementation plan of the ECP 2021–2027 Programme at the level of the managing authority.

**5. SOCIAL INCLUSION PROGRAMMES**

Social inclusion programmes will provide additional and targeted support to users with complex psycho-social problems involved in social protection programmes carried out by social work centres and non-governmental organisations. Users of these programmes face particularly complex problems (these are persons who are victims of violence, persons with disorganised living conditions and the threat of homelessness, people with addiction problems, people with mental health problems and other vulnerable groups). These programmes will involve users who need longer-term support for empowerment and more independent living and who need some basic knowledge and skills to start better managing their lives. Social inclusion measures for the most vulnerable target groups are also designed on the basis of the experience of the existing programming period, when it was found through the implementation of social activation programmes that these programmes are too demanding for some of the persons involved who need more support in tackling long-term exclusion.

Social inclusion projects will thus focus on acquiring new skills that will enable participating persons with complex problems to reflect on their problems and then address them more effectively through continuous support. The projects will contribute in a comprehensive manner to addressing the problems of social exclusion, to promoting social inclusion and preventing sliding into poverty.

Based on a thorough analysis of an individual’s situation, the programmes will provide them with opportunities:

- to develop social competences;
- to strengthen existing competences and acquire new social and functional skills to address specific social and life situations;
- to strengthen and disseminate social inclusion into the wider social environment;
- to raise motivation, build positive self-esteem, self-confidence and empowerment;
- to learn about the possibilities of inclusion in other networks of programmes, which offer the individual additional opportunities for empowering and strengthening their personal and social position (social activation, project learning, active employment policy, etc.) for a more independent and better-quality life.

In measuring the effects of the programme, the focus will be on indicators measuring the quality of the programme’s impact, such as: a change in lifestyle, improvement of psycho-social and health status (less hospitalisations, fewer suicidal thoughts), reduction or elimination of addiction, the solution of housing problems, the reduction or elimination of causes of domestic violence, the acquisition of new useful skills for better empowerment for life, especially in (post)pandemic social conditions, and the acquisition of work skills aimed at increasing social inclusion (approaching the labour market, inclusion in education

programmes, social activation, other programmes aimed at acquiring new functional and social skills and competences or various community programmes, including voluntary ones).

Providers of social inclusion programmes will cooperate with social work centres and providers in education, healthcare and employment. The target group is individuals with complex psycho-social problems, and in conjunction with the child guarantee, the programme will address parents directly, and children in precarious family situations indirectly.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities	0	0	4,167,000.00	*

\* These are EU funds, therefore the planning of funds and budget items are still being coordinated within the framework of the implementation plan of the ECP 2021–2027 Programme at the level of the managing authority.

**6. SOCIAL ACTIVATION PROGRAMMES**

Through social activation programmes, we will provide support also in the new Financial Perspective to the most vulnerable target groups, i.e. beneficiaries/recipients of social assistance benefit in cash, persons registered in the register of unemployed or temporarily unemployable persons, and inactive persons with complex social issues. A specific set of social activation programmes will be targeted at women from other cultural backgrounds (Package 2) and a specific strand for Roma women (Package 3).

Through their integrated approach, social activation programmes will contribute to addressing the problems of social exclusion and the risk of poverty and will contribute to increasing the employment prospects of programme participants.

The purpose of the programmes is to:

- increase motivation and empowerment to enter the labour market;
- strengthen the existing and acquire new social and functional competences to effectively tackle the barriers that prevent people from entering the labour market and consequently lead them to social exclusion and living below the poverty line;
- acquire work competences, i.e. useful knowledge, skills and competences to improve the possibility of entering the labour market.

Social activation programmes are aimed at adults, but through the involvement of parents in the activities of the programmes, positive aspects of inclusion in the programmes are also indirectly reflected in the lives of their children.

This is particularly reflected in the programmes of Packages 2 and 3, i.e. the programmes for women from other cultural backgrounds and Roma women, where particular emphasis is placed on activities that raise awareness among female participants of the importance of integration into the wider social and cultural environment, such as learning about the system of the functioning of institutions (healthcare, social, education, etc.), encouraging participants to engage in the school responsibilities of their children, learning about the cultural norms and customs of the majority society, joint activities with family members, etc. The purpose of the programmes of Packages 2 and 3 is to strengthen the social inclusion of female participants in the wider social environment, to increase motivation, to strengthen the existing and to acquire new social and functional competences for resolving their specific living and social situations that place them in a dependent position and limit their chances of inclusion and integration into the wider social environment.

Many female members of the target group live in the Republic of Slovenia without or with very limited contact with the wider (local) community or have very few opportunities to establish contacts and relationships with members of the wider community, which prevents them from integrating into the environment. This consequently affects their position in society, the family and, indirectly, also the situation of their children, leading to the intergenerational transmission of social exclusion patterns.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities	0.00	999,999.35	7,499,995.13	*

\* These are EU funds, therefore the planning of funds and budget items are still being coordinated within the framework of the implementation plan of the ECP 2021–2027 Programme at the level of the managing authority.

**7. NETWORK OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES (THE AREA OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS)**

The Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities has (co)financed various social assistance programmes (mainly those implemented by NGOs) on a regular basis for almost three decades. Within the framework of programmes focusing on particular areas (a total of ten areas) or on particular target groups, the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities also co-finances programmes aimed at children and adolescents and supports the development of day centres for children and adolescents which are intended to provide social skills. Through the co-financing of programmes, the Ministry supports children who are deprived of a suitable family life and adolescents experiencing difficulties while growing up, and provides educational assistance for children and adolescents with fewer opportunities. In this context, counselling sessions or free telephone counselling hotlines are also co-financed, providing support and counselling to children or adolescents in distress.

In 2021, the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities co-financed approximately 25 programmes totalling EUR 1.3 million, and in 2022 a total of 22 programmes (19 public social assistance programmes and three development social assistance programmes) totalling EUR 1.8 million.

The main objectives of such programmes are to strengthen the social inclusion and the social network of children and adolescents, to provide support in actively resolving different kinds of distress and problems, to strengthen social competences, to learn to spend quality leisure time, and to improve learning habits and one’s attitude towards school responsibilities. Some programmes also offer psycho-social counselling for children and adolescents.

Regarding the co-financing of social assistance programmes, we also wish to draw attention to the public call for tenders for the co-financing of projects to help the most vulnerable groups of population as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and to reduce its consequences, which was published by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities in 2020. The purpose of the public call for tenders was to implement projects that provide innovative approaches to address and tackle the social distress faced by vulnerable groups as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Projects that developed different approaches to addressing the newly created needs due to the COVID-19 pandemic in areas such as psychosocial counselling, awareness raising, providing information, field work, providing practical support to users, setting up new safety spots, offering digital solutions to resolving distress and providing crisis accommodation for target groups were co-financed. The key objective of the selected projects was the promotion of social inclusion and empowerment, and the fight against poverty

and any discrimination. The projects addressed different target groups, including children and adolescents and other people experiencing high levels of social exclusion.

17 projects worth approximately EUR 2 million were included in the co-financing, for all vulnerable groups. Of these projects, 12 addressed specific problems experienced by children and adolescents. The approaches to addressing their problems were diverse, as were the activities carried out by individual selected applicants, such as: psychosocial support, educational assistance for children and adolescents at risk, the organisation of socialising activities, the organisation and implementation of digital literacy, personal monitoring, psychosocial assistance and support for children and families, social skills learning, a telephone hotline, online counselling, electronic counselling, therapeutic work, groups for adolescents, field work involving intervening in particular families and providing comprehensive assistance (assistance with chores, assistance with childcare, information on sources of assistance, assistance with inclusion in programmes, the delivery of food and hygiene packages, psychosocial counselling, socialising activities, etc.), and tailored counselling for victims of violence (including children and adolescents) through pop-up points and online solutions.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities	1,821,929.78	1,800,000.00	1,800,000.00	170082
				170083

## 5.2 TARGETED MEASURES SET OUT IN THE COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.2.1 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE, INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND SCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND HEALTHY MEALS EVERY SCHOOL DAY

#### I. Identification and elimination of financial and non-financial barriers to participation in preschool education and care, education and school activities

##### 1. REDUCED KINDERGARTEN FEES TO FACILITATE ACCESS TO PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

In the Republic of Slovenia, the amount of kindergarten fees is determined according to the income bracket of the child’s parents and already now parents in the highest income brackets pay no more than 77% of the price of the programme. In order to facilitate participation in preschool education, parents from vulnerable groups can benefit from reduced kindergarten fees. Parents have to submit an application for reduced kindergarten fees to the competent social work centre in the month prior to the inclusion of the child in kindergarten. The measure of exempting parents from paying kindergarten fees facilitates access to preschool education for children:

- from families with the lowest income (if the average monthly income per person in the family does not exceed EUR 200);
- from families in which parents receive social assistance benefit in cash;
- in foster care.

A social work centre may provide for reduced kindergarten fees also in other exceptional cases where the payment of the kindergarten programme would jeopardise the social security of persons, or for other important reasons.

Parents who have two children in kindergarten at the same time are exempt from paying kindergarten fees for the younger child. Parents are also exempt from paying kindergarten fees for their third and any subsequent child from the same family, regardless of whether the child is enrolled in a kindergarten at the same time as a sibling. The aim of this measure is to improve the financial accessibility of kindergartens for young families and to contribute to an increase in the proportion of children involved in kindergartens.

**Objective:**

- to carry out a national evaluation study in order to analyse the needs, conditions and possibilities of the compulsory inclusion of children in a preschool education programme with a view to reducing social, economic and cultural inequalities at the national level, and to draft recommendations for any potential changes in systemic measures;
- to identify additional measures to further increase the financial accessibility of kindergartens.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Education	42,832,978.00	50,400,000.00	50,400,000.00	850810 – Free kindergarten for families with multiple children enrolled in kindergarten at the same time

**2. A FREE PRESCHOOL EDUCATION PROGRAMME OF 240 HOURS**

Short-term programmes of 240 hours for five-year-old children and their younger four-year-old siblings who have not yet been included in the preschool education system are based on the voluntary inclusion of children and are free of charge for parents (regardless of their social and economic status). Since special attention has been devoted to children from vulnerable groups, a lower norm for such kindergarten classes has also been set. This means that five children are enough to create a short-programme class, provided that these are children from vulnerable groups, which actually constitutes an almost individualised approach that allows education staff to devote themselves fully to the children. The usual norm for the formation of a regular short-programme class is 8–12 children. The organisation and implementation of short kindergarten programmes provides a more varied range of kindergarten programmes tailored to the interests and needs of the different target groups of parents and children. At the same time, this enables preschool children who are not enrolled in kindergarten in the year before they enter primary school to attend preschool programmes.

The Republic of Slovenia currently achieves rather high participation of children in preschool education, with the overall participation rate in 2021/2022 being 83.7%, while the participation rate in the second age group was 92.6%. The participation rate of five-year-old children, i.e. in the last year before entering primary school, was 95%.

**Objective:**

- to develop more flexible forms of preschool education programmes, thereby gradually increasing the participation rate of children involved in high-quality preschool education programmes, as well as contributing to a softer transition of children to compulsory primary education.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Education	124,074.00	140,000.00	150,000.00	180070 – Short programmes for preschool children not included in kindergarten

### 3. PROMOTING THE INCLUSION OF ROMA CHILDREN AND CHILDREN FROM OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION AT LEAST TWO YEARS BEFORE THEY ENTER PRIMARY SCHOOL

According to the Ministry of Education, about 5% of all five-year-old children in the Republic of Slovenia are not included in preschool education, mainly children from vulnerable groups (it is estimated that in south-eastern Slovenia approximately 35% of Roma children are excluded from preschool education). For kindergartens in which Roma children are enrolled, the state provides general financial relief for the payment of kindergarten fees, promotes the employment of Roma assistants and provides the costs of materials and services that exceed the funds allocated for such purposes to regular classes.

The aim of all such measures is to promote the inclusion of Roma children and children of other vulnerable groups in kindergartens in order for them to acquire basic social and language skills and also to facilitate their integration into primary school.

The measure is aimed at children from vulnerable groups, not just Roma children.

#### **Objective:**

- to increase the inclusion of children from vulnerable groups, including Roma children, in preschool education to a level appropriate for the entire child population in the country.

#### **Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Education	124,074.00	140,000.00	150,000.00	180070 – Short programmes for preschool children not enrolled in kindergarten

### 4. A SAFE AND STIMULATING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The measure promotes a safe and stimulating learning environment and a culture of well-being in schools. Ensuring accessibility takes into account the principle of equity and the inclusion and equal opportunities of the entire population, while taking into consideration the diversity of children and adolescents (children and adolescents with special needs, vulnerable groups – from a socially unstimulating background, immigrants, Roma, children with learning difficulties, etc.). The measure is aimed at the entire school population, both groups and individuals, and parents or families, education staff and kindergarten and school management are welcome to participate.



It also promotes emotional and social literacy, develops and strengthens different skills, increases the flow of information and expands programmes to prevent different forms of violence. This is to be achieved through various activities, such as:

- promoting project work, teamwork, setting up mutual assistance and solidarity protocols, strengthening tolerance;
- ensuring access to cultural content in various cultural institutions (libraries, museums, galleries, cinemas, theatres...) and artists/cultural institutions visiting educational institutions;
- ensuring accessibility to programmes with an emphasis on movement, care for health (physical and mental), strengthening self-esteem and promoting taking responsibility and respect;
- the implementation of programmes for developing communication, social skills, a culture of quality peer-to-peer relationships and non-violent communication (e.g. workshops for managing anger, aggressive impulses, recognising and expressing of emotions, etc.);
- more conversation lessons with students;
- promoting the integration of education staff – vertical expert working groups, team building for teachers;
- promoting cooperation between schools and classes (horizontal and vertical) and students (intergenerational networking, tutoring, peer mediation, etc.);
- providing teachers with the possibility of supervision, intervision, collegial coaching and other forms of support;
- the implementation of programmes to strengthen social and emotional skills aimed at children and primary and secondary school students (e.g. outdoor education camps/outdoor school programmes in nature for pupils and secondary school students, summer school, etc.);
- the prevention of peer violence: a protocol has been drawn up to be followed in the event of the detection of and for handling peer violence in educational institutions. In conjunction with other competent authorities, a network of institutions will be developed for immediate action upon the detection or occurrence of peer violence.

**Objective:**

- to disseminate and build on examples of good practices;
- the continuous advanced professional training of education staff.

**Sources of funding:**

ACTIVITY	FINANCING
– The promotion of project work, teamwork, setting up mutual assistance and solidarity protocols, strengthening tolerance	Activities of all education and head staff; there is no special financing
– Ensuring access to cultural content in various cultural institutions (libraries, museums, galleries, cinemas, theatres, etc.) and arranging artists/cultural institutions to visit educational institutions	Activities carried out by primary schools as part of activities that are an integral part of the compulsory primary school programme; generally financed as part of the programme carried out by the school
– Providing accessibility to programmes with an emphasis on exercise, care for health (physical and mental), strengthening self-esteem and promoting taking responsibility and respect	Activities carried out by primary schools as part of activities that are an integral part of the compulsory primary school programme; generally financed as part of the programme carried out by the school
– The implementation of programmes for developing communication, social skills, a culture of quality peer-to-peer relationships and non-violent communication (e.g.	Components of the comprehensive primary school programme; activities carried out according to the curricula and the topical focus on subject content;

workshops for managing anger, aggressive impulses, recognising and expressing emotions, etc.)	generally financed as part of the programme carried out by the school
– More conversation lessons with students	Regularly as part of lessons, days of activity and classroom community hours; generally financed as part of the programme carried out by the school
– Promoting the integration of education staff – vertical expert working groups, team building for teachers	Permanent task for all education staff; funds for implementation allocated to the programme
– Promoting cooperation between schools and classes (horizontal and vertical) and students (intergenerational networking, tutoring, peer mediation, etc.)	Implementation activity of the primary school programme; carried out in different forms and at different levels
– Providing teachers with the possibility of supervision, intervision, collegial coaching and other forms of support	Continuous training of all education staff; Part of the implementation programme and cannot be separately specified
– The implementation of programmes to strengthen social and emotional skills aimed at children, and primary and secondary school students (e.g. outdoor education camps/outdoor school programmes in nature for primary and secondary school students, summer school, etc.)	Components of the comprehensive primary school programme; activities carried out according to the curricula and the topical focus on subject content; generally financed as part of the programme carried out by the school
– The prevention of peer violence: a protocol has been drawn up to be followed in the event of the detection of and for handling peer violence in educational institutions. In conjunction with other competent authorities, a network of institutions will be developed for immediate action upon the detection or occurrence of peer violence.	

## II. Taking measures to prevent and reduce early school leaving by including a gender perspective, reintegration measures for children at risk of leaving school and training for children who have left school or training, and providing individual counselling to families and strengthening cooperation with families

### 1. THE PROMOTION OF THE REGULAR PARTICIPATION OF ROMA CHILDREN IN LEARNING PROCESSES AND COMPLETED PRIMARY EDUCATION

The Republic of Slovenia has one of the lowest rates of early school and training leaving in Europe, with the share of young people leaving school being 4.2%. Although there is no legal basis for collecting data on the basis of ethnicity, local observations suggest that there are a large number of Roma children among school drop-outs, and it is therefore planned to strengthen incentive measures to make it easier for Roma pupils to participate in schooling.

Currently, the following is provided:

- a reduced number of teaching hours for a second teaching professional in first grade classes with at least three Roma pupils enrolled;
- a classified additional professional position to work with Roma pupils in accordance with certain criteria;
- a lower norm for setting up classes with at least three Roma pupils (the regular norm is 28 pupils, the norm for setting up a class with Roma pupils enrolled is 21 pupils);

- a lower norm for setting up a combined class from two classes in which at least three Roma pupils are enrolled (the regular norm is 21 pupils, the norm for a class with Roma pupils enrolled is 16 pupils);
- a lower norm for setting up a combined class from three classes in which at least three Roma pupils are enrolled (the regular norm is 14 pupils, the norm for a class with Roma pupils enrolled is 10 pupils).

According to a survey on the school results of Roma pupils in primary school carried out by the Institute for Ethnic Studies in 2021, only approximately 20% of Roma pupils successfully complete primary school or the 9th grade. Significant differences between regions are recorded. In north-eastern Slovenia, about 40% of Roma pupils on average successfully complete primary school (9th grade), while in south-eastern Slovenia this share is only around 11%.

**Objective:**

- to achieve a minimum of 40% of Roma pupils completing primary education by 2025 and a minimum of 50% by 2030;
- to achieve a minimum of 20% of Roma pupils completing primary education by 2025 and a minimum of 40% by 2030 in south-eastern Slovenia and in Posavje.

**Sources of funding\*:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Education	7,150,000.00	9,030,000.00	11,690,000.00	667210

\* All funds are taken into account except funds for Roma assistants.

**2. THE EMPLOYMENT OF ROMA ASSISTANTS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

Based on the positive results of a project, as of 1 September 2021, Slovenian schools can employ Roma assistants who until then had worked on a project basis and proved to be an important connecting link between Roma children, their parents and education staff of educational institutions. The key tasks of Roma assistants are: helping children overcome emotional and language barriers; establishing and maintaining contact with parents and assisting them in their communication with school/kindergarten education staff; cooperation with school/kindergarten education staff in activities aimed at the better integration of Roma children with other children; working with school/kindergarten education staff to develop and implement measures to improve the performance of Roma children; carrying out activities for children and their parents in the communities where they live; promoting the importance of education in the Roma community.

With their education and employment, Roma assistants set a very important example for Roma children, parents and the entire Roma community in a given environment that education is the key to better career prospects and a better quality of personal life. Currently, 48 Roma assistants are employed in primary schools and primary schools with an adapted programme, with a share of 39.5 work positions.

**Objective:**

- to carry out an evaluation of the work of Roma assistants following the introduction of a classified position and to analyse the need for new jobs and training for Roma assistants;
- to increase the number of Roma assistants in schools and employ them in other institutions as well;
- to draw up a plan for appropriate professional education and training of Roma assistants.

**Sources of funding\*:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Education	800,000.00	940,000.00	987,000.00	667210 – Primary education activity

\* Roma assistants in primary schools and primary schools with an adapted programme – estimated value based on job classification for 2021/22 and 2022/23.

### 3. PREVENTING INEQUALITIES IN EDUCATION BY DEVOTING GREATER ATTENTION TO THE INDIVIDUALITY OF PUPILS AND THEIR NEEDS – PRODUCTION SCHOOL

Dropping out of school during adolescence is a risk factor for healthy growing up and integration into the wider society. As a group, adolescents are also the most exposed to risks, such as the abuse of illicit and legal substances, etc. As a rule, those included in the production school programme generally come from at-risk groups of adolescents with fewer opportunities who have emotional or behavioural problems or mental health problems. The production school offers a programme of activities for adolescents who have dropped out of secondary school programmes and who need additional support for healthy growing up (emotional and behavioural problems, mental health problems, etc.). They can engage in manual work activities, prepare meals, prepare projects together with teaching staff and participate in the external environment. The programme is aimed at activating young people first in an informal field, and then also as support in returning to a formal environment by continuing their education or looking for a job. Extensive support in the form of individual counselling and joint meetings is also provided to parents. Participation is voluntary.

The programme takes place during the school year at a time when children and adolescents would otherwise be participating in schooling (Monday to Friday from 8:00 to 15:00). During the holidays, the adolescents are monitored following previous encouragement to be active in their environment. There is also a post-completion follow-up programme aimed at occasional reintegration support. The project is being implemented in Ljubljana and is intended for the wider region.

**Objective:**

- the establishment of a production school in each of the four regional centres performing the tasks set out in the Act on Intervention for Children and Youth with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders in Education.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Education	80,000.00	12,000.00	13,000.00	667410 – Activities of training institutes

### III. Providing learning support to children with learning disabilities to bridge their linguistic, cognitive and educational gaps

#### 1. ROMA CHILDREN CLASSES IN THE PRESCHOOL EDUCATION SYSTEM

Only Roma children are enrolled in Roma children classes. Children are given the opportunity to get used to life in the classroom, especially during the initial period when Roma children enter institutional education for the first time. Children in such a class are not completely isolated, because through the flexible organisation of work and activities, they quickly enter into contact with non-Roma children from other kindergarten classes.

For each financial year, funds to cover the higher costs incurred by the Roma children classes are allocated by the national budget, in accordance with norms and standards. The national budget also covers the costs of additional didactic aids intended for Roma children or Roma children classes, of ongoing professional training for education staff working with Roma children, and of expert lectures intended for Roma parents, for additional household linen for Roma children and Roma children classes, for additional hygiene products and first aid for Roma children classes, and similar.

In 2005, 98 children were enrolled in Roma children classes in six kindergartens (including in the Roma settlements of Pušča and Brezje), and in 2022, 109 Roma children were enrolled in five kindergartens in Roma children classes.

The number of children in Roma children classes has been stable over the years and classes have been operating successfully for 16 years.

#### **Objective:**

- to increase the number of Roma children enrolled in the preschool education system;
- to increase the number of Roma children classes;
- to increase the number of kindergartens or units with Roma children classes.

#### **Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Education	17,941.00	22,000.00	24,200.00	887210 – Preschool education of children of Italian and Hungarian nationalities

#### 2. ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR ROMA PUPILS

The Ministry of Education provides:

1. a reduced number of teaching hours for a second teaching professional in 1st grade classes with at least three Roma pupils enrolled;
2. a classified additional professional position for work with Roma pupils in accordance with certain criteria, according to which the school may allocate the share of the job position between the position of a teacher for additional professional assistance for Roma pupils and the position of a counsellor;

### 3. lower norms for setting up classes:

- a lower norm for setting up a class with at least three Roma pupils (the regular norm is 28 pupils, the norm for setting up a class with Roma pupils enrolled is 21 pupils);
- a lower norm for setting up a combined class from two classes in which at least three Roma pupils are enrolled (the regular norm is 21 pupils, the norm for a class with Roma pupils enrolled is 16 pupils);
- a lower norm for setting up a combined class from three classes in which at least three Roma pupils are enrolled (the regular norm is 14 pupils, the norm for a class with Roma pupils enrolled is 10 pupils);

4. funds for additional material expenses for Roma pupils and for the employment of Roma assistants.

#### **Objective:**

- to increase the number of Roma assistants in schools and employ them in other institutions as well;
- to promote the regular participation of Roma children in the learning process.

#### **Sources of funding\*:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Education	2,280,000.00	2,430,000.00	2,550,000.00	667210 – Primary education activity

\* Only additional professional assistance for Roma pupils based on the 2021/2022 job classification (64 positions) has been evaluated.

#### IV. The adaptation of facilities and educational materials for preschool education and care and educational institutions for children with special educational needs and children with disabilities, and an appropriate response to their specific needs by using inclusive teaching and learning methods; the provision of qualified teachers and other professionals such as psychologists, speech therapists, rehabilitators, social workers or teacher assistants

##### 1. SUPPORT FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF SLOVENIAN SIGN LANGUAGE INTO EDUCATION

Deaf children are one of the most excluded groups due to difficulties in communicating. Accordingly, in the Republic of Slovenia, the right to use the Slovenian sign language was incorporated into the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia in 2021, and developing communication skills in Slovenian sign language is also one of the objectives of the language policy. The activities of the measure will be aimed at supporting the inclusion of Slovenian sign language in preschool education and the primary and secondary education system for the deaf and hard-of-hearing with the purpose of improving access to education in and about Slovenian sign language, preparing the relevant programme documents (curricula, catalogues of knowledge standards, etc.) and developing the didactics of team-based educational work with deaf and hard-of-hearing children and an appropriate programme for the provision of professionally and linguistically qualified teachers and other professional staff for teaching Slovenian sign language, as well as for communication in Slovenian sign language.

**Objective:**

- to develop the didactics of team-based educational work with deaf and hard-of-hearing children by involving a professional for communication in Slovenian sign language in the process of learning and teaching, and the related development of a programme to provide competent professional staff for educational work with the deaf and hard-of-hearing;
- to prepare a curriculum/catalogue of knowledge standards for teaching Slovenian sign language for adapted primary and secondary education programmes with an equivalent standard of education for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, adaptations for bilingual schools and schools with Italian as the learning language, and the preparation of an adapted curriculum for Slovenian (Italian or Hungarian in nationally mixed areas) for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, for users of Slovenian sign language, for adapted primary education programmes with an equivalent educational standard for the deaf and hard-of-hearing;
- the inclusion of optional learning/teaching of Slovenian sign language in primary and secondary education programmes, the preparation of curricula or other relevant programme documents and experimental implementation.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Education	10,000.00	5,000.00	/	687010 – Evaluations and national curriculum
	16,500.00	24,500.00	12,500.00	716910 – Research and professional tasks for education
	60,000.00	240,000.00	180,000.00	667410 – Activities of training institutes

**2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF EASY READING MATERIALS AT DIFFERENT LEVELS OF DIFFICULTY FOR DIFFERENT TARGET GROUPS WITH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USE IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS**

One of the objectives of Slovenian language policy is to develop and strengthen the communication skills of children with specific disabilities (e.g. dyslexia, poor reading and learning skills, speech impairments, colour blindness), children with mental developmental disorders and mobility-impaired children, and to provide conditions for the development and strengthening of these skills. Creating the conditions for the development of reading literacy and a reading culture for vulnerable groups is essential to preventing the isolation of these children, and at the same time it enables them to exercise their fundamental rights on an equal footing with other people and to actively participate in social life. As part of the measure, materials for easy reading at different levels of difficulty for different target groups (by both age and deficit or disability) with recommendations for use in the educational process will be developed and trial-tested (preparation, printing and e-design).

**Objective:**

- to develop, prepare, print and design literary works and other easy reading materials (including in e-form);

- to create computer programmes to check the difficulty of texts;
- to adapt lists of texts for all groups of children with special needs;
- to formulate recommendations for the use of these materials in the educational process;
- to train education staff for the use of these materials in the educational process.

**Sources of funding:**

\* The financial consequences of the measure have not yet been definitively confirmed, as these are European sources of funding within the ECP perspective with the working title “The development of adapted materials at different levels of difficulty for different target groups with recommendations for use in the educational process”.

**3. CLASSES WITH AN ADAPTED PROGRAMME – DEVELOPMENT CLASSES IN KINDERGARTENS FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

Classes with an adapted programme are intended for children with moderate, serious or severe mental disorders and children who have other disorders in addition to the mentioned ones. They are also intended for deaf and hard-of-hearing children, blind and partially sighted children, mobility-impaired children and children with speech impairments who have the most severe forms of deficits, impairments or disorders, and who need an adapted programme to correct them. The adapted programme includes basic knowledge of the development of preschool children and special teaching experience in educational work with children with special needs. It represents the framework for the planning and implementation of the educational process in a class and kindergarten or institution and for designing individualised and individual education programmes.

The norm for the implementation of the programme provides for the inclusion of a maximum of six children with special needs in each class and adapted implementation of the preschool programme. In 2019/2020 there were 52 classes with an adapted programme, while in 2021/2022 there were already 59 classes with an adapted programme.

The measure is aimed at children with special needs.

**Objective:**

- to continue with the measure of co-financing the difference in the price of the kindergarten with a view to establishing a network that follows the needs identified in practice.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Education	2,731,856.00	2,919,545.00	2,919,545.00	180069 – Co-financing of kindergarten development classes

**4. HOSPITAL KINDERGARTENS**

Humanising the hospital experience is extremely important for children. Preschool children who are being treated at the Paediatric Unit of the University Medical Centre Ljubljana, the University Rehabilitation Institute of the Republic of Slovenia – Soča, and at nine regional hospitals are included in education with the help of preschool teachers who perform educational work in paediatric departments. They help hospitalised children overcome fear and homesickness by talking to them and paying attention to them,



and by comforting and encouraging them. With a wide selection of activities from all curricular areas, they enrich the children's days in the hospital and cooperate with parents and hospital staff. They brighten up the days spent in a hospital with a number of celebrations and puppet and theatre shows.

The measure is aimed at children whose absence due to illness could lead to interruptions in the educational process and knowledge gaps.

**Objective:**

- to maintain and strengthen the structure and network of hospital kindergartens, which operate in all regional hospitals and also at the University Medical Centre Ljubljana.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Education	894,046.00	918,500.00	1,010,350.00	873610 – Salaries of trainees in kindergartens and staff employed in hospital kindergartens

**V. Measures to support inclusive education and prevent segregated classes in preschool educational institutions and in educational institutions, including by providing priority or, where appropriate, early access to help for children in need.**

**1. INITIAL SLOVENIAN LESSONS FOR MIGRANT PUPILS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES**

The language of instruction in Slovenian primary schools is Slovenian.<sup>12</sup> In order to achieve learning goals and standards and to successfully participate in school activities, each pupil must master Slovenian as much as possible. As pupils whose first language is not Slovenian (immigrants, Roma) also enter the Slovenian school environment, the education system, based on equity and accessibility to education, must provide additional support for these pupils in learning the Slovenian language.

The legislation on the implementation of the primary school programme provides for additional lessons in Slovenian language in the first year of schooling for immigrant pupils, including if only a small number of pupils are enrolled in primary school (up to 4 pupils – 120 hours, from 5 to 8 pupils – 160 hours, from 9 to 17 pupils – 180 hours) and for the possibility of a classified job of a teacher for teaching Slovenian language to pupils whose mother tongue is not Slovenian. Additional lessons in Slovenian language are also provided for pupils whose mother tongue is Slovenian but who have previously been educated in schools abroad.

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<sup>12</sup> The language of instruction in the primary schools of the Italian national community is Italian, while the languages of instruction in bilingual primary schools are Slovenian and Hungarian. In primary schools located in areas where Slovenians and members of the Italian national community live and which are defined as ethnically mixed areas, learning Italian is compulsory for all pupils in schools with Slovenian as the language of instruction, while in schools with Italian as the language of instruction, Slovenian is compulsory for all primary school students.

In the second and third school years, immigrant pupils have the opportunity to obtain support in learning Slovenian and other subjects (remedial lessons, individual or group assistance, enrolment in the extended programme – morning care, extended stay in school, etc.). If necessary, a child may be included in the existing group of initial Slovenian language classes also for the second and third year after their enrolment in primary school in the Republic of Slovenia.

**Objective:**

- to strengthen the support provided to immigrant pupils and other groups of students for whom Slovenian is not the first language so that they are better able to learn Slovenian as a second language. Assistance is also provided to Slovenian emigrant pupils after returning to Slovenia, as pupils abroad cannot make progress in Slovenian language to the same extent as those in Slovenia.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Education	302,191.00	350,000.00	367,500.00	667210 – Primary education activity

**2. ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR LEARNERS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES – INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP ASSISTANCE, COMPLEMENTARY LESSONS**

Working with pupils with learning difficulties is based on the principles of good teaching practice, the fundamental principles of helping pupils with learning difficulties, and on adapting the methods and forms of work specific to a particular group of learning difficulties. Assistance for pupils with learning difficulties has five stages:

- teaching assistance in lessons, remedial lessons and within the extended stay section;
- assistance of the school counselling service or mobile specialist pedagogical services;
- additional individual and group assistance;
- the opinion and assistance of an external expert institution;
- a programme with adapted implementation and additional professional assistance.

**Objective:**

- to upgrade the implementation of assistance for pupils with learning difficulties in accordance with education guidance decisions due to learning difficulties.

**Sources of funding:**

- Drafting guidelines for the preparation and evaluation of individualised programmes will be carried out as part of the regular tasks of the National Education Institute of the Republic of Slovenia.
- Raising awareness of the importance of implementing the five-stage model (meetings of principals) is a regular task of the National Education Institute of the Republic of Slovenia.

**3. RAISING AWARENESS AND ENCOURAGING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS REGARDING THE POSSIBILITY OF TRANSITIONING BETWEEN PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES**

Children with special needs, in accordance with the education guidance decision issued by the Commission for the education guidance of children with special needs, are included in the programme that best suits

their needs, and are provided other appropriate assistance. Various forms of assistance for students with special needs are implemented:

- an individualised programme defined by an expert group at the school (with specified additional professional assistance, objectives and forms of work, necessary adjustments in the examination and assessment of knowledge, the transition between programmes, etc.);
- adjustments and additional professional assistance defined in the education guidance decision; a more detailed implementation method is laid down in the individualised programme;
- physical assistance of persons assisting pupils with serious or severe mobility impairment;
- Assistance of an interpreter for deaf and hard-of-hearing pupils who communicate in Slovenian sign language.

The following programmes are carried out:

- a nine-year primary school education programme with adapted implementation and additional professional assistance;
- adapted education programmes with equivalent education standards (for the deaf and hard-of-hearing and for mobility-impaired children; for the blind and visually impaired; for speech impairments; for children with autistic disorders).

Awareness-raising takes place through the school counselling service and through the training of school's education staff. The transition between programmes refers to the transition from a less demanding education programme to a more demanding one and not vice versa. The transition of pupils in individual subjects between education programmes is made possible depending on the pupil's knowledge and their ability to follow the curriculum of the subject of the education programme to which the pupil is progressing.

If a pupil in individual subjects is progressing to a "higher" education programme, their knowledge in these subjects is assessed in accordance with the assessment rules applicable in the programme concerned.

The transition measure is carried out at the national level in primary school programmes. Additional professional assistance is provided in primary and secondary school education programmes.

**Objective:**

- in line with the current trends, a 5% increase in the transition of pupils from primary schools with adapted programmes to primary schools with standard programmes, i.e. from less demanding education programmes to more demanding ones, is anticipated.

**Sources of funding\*:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Education	10,000.00	10,000.00	/	716910 – Research and professional tasks for education

\* The main task of the National Education Institute of the Republic of Slovenia is the revision of the guidelines for the operation of the counselling service in kindergarten, primary and secondary schools. Social changes require expert review and updating in accordance with recent theoretical knowledge of counselling work in kindergartens and schools, and an appropriate response to the experience and challenges encountered in practice in the field of counselling services in the Republic of Slovenia. They will complement those substantive aspects (the area of mental health, social and emotional learning, career counselling, work with gifted children, work with vulnerable groups and other current content) that are lacking or need upgrading in accordance with the needs of children, and primary and secondary school students and the time in which we live.

#### 4. ROMA ASSISTANTS IN KINDERGARTENS

Since 1 September 2021, the position of a Roma assistant has been classified in kindergartens with 10 or more children from Roma settlements, in accordance with the norms. The fact that the new work position of Roma assistant is an important link between Roma children, their parents and professional staff in kindergartens was recognised by 15 kindergartens with a classified position of Roma assistant in the very first year, as well as by three kindergartens which have classes in the Roma settlements of Pušča, Vejar and Brezje.

Roma assistants were included in the education system in the Republic of Slovenia within several projects based on the aim of improving the educational achievements of Roma children. After the successful completion of the project "Together for knowledge" (2021), the position of Roma assistant was systemically regulated in the field of education as a new work position in kindergartens starting with the school year 2021/2022.

The cost of labour of a public employee in the position of Roma assistant, which is covered by the national budget, includes:

- funds for salaries and
- the reimbursement of costs and other remunerations from employment (holiday allowance, the reimbursement of meal expenses during work time, the reimbursement of travel expenses to and from work, the long-service bonus, severance pay upon retirement, and similar).

The measure is aimed at Roma children.

#### **Objective:**

- to strengthen the role of a Roma assistant in kindergartens through regular professional training and education;
- to carry out annual analyses and, on the basis of the identified shortcomings and challenges, appropriate upgrading of the system.

#### **Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Education	189,391.00	210,499.00	291,060.00	887210 – Preschool education of children of Italian and Hungarian nationalities

## VI. Providing at least one healthy meal each school day

### 1. NUTRITION IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

Children spend a lot of their time in kindergarten, which is the dominant form of preschool care and education in the Republic of Slovenia, so it is very important that their nutrition and menus in kindergartens be carefully planned. From a systemic point of view, children's nutrition in kindergartens is regulated by

sectoral legislation, which stipulates, among other things, that nutrition is part of the programme and that kindergartens must provide conditions for the child’s physical and mental development. This cannot be guaranteed without quality nutrition and a proper attitude to food. During this period, children form dietary habits, and professional staff in kindergartens try to instil in children a positive attitude towards a healthy diet from the earliest years. Kindergartens provide children with at least three (and up to five) different meals (breakfast, morning snack, lunch, afternoon snack and extra late snack). Nutrition is particularly important for children who come from vulnerable groups and disadvantaged backgrounds.

**Objective:**

– to maintain and, where necessary, to upgrade the existing standard, which, in terms of the recommendations taken into account and the quality and number of meals offered, is also unique on a European scale.

**Sources of funding:**

Preschool education programmes, which also cover food costs, are financed from municipal budgets, parents’ payments and other sources.

**2. SCHOOL NUTRITION**

The Republic of Slovenia is one of the countries in the world that devotes special attention to school nutrition for children. Well-planned and organised school nutrition is the most effective remedy for improper family nutrition, which, however, cannot fulfil its purpose if the child refuses to consume it. Therefore, the educational role of the school in developing awareness of healthy nutrition, eating habits, eating culture and a responsible attitude towards oneself and one’s health is of utmost importance. This is also the reason why school nutrition is part of the school development policy from the time children enter primary school to the completion of secondary school.

In the Republic of Slovenia, schools are obliged to organise a snack for all students. They also provide additional meals, such as breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack. Students from less stimulating backgrounds are entitled to a snack subsidy and in primary school also to a lunch subsidy. In preparing meals, schools must adhere to the *Guidelines for Nutrition in Educational Institutions*, adopted by the Expert Council of the Republic of Slovenia for General Education, which contain:

- objectives, principles and educational activities related to school nutrition;
- professional guidelines and instructions that define the criteria for the selection of foods, composition planning, quantitative norms and the method of preparing school meals, and the timetable for the implementation thereof, which are determined by the public health institution authorised by the ministry responsible for health. Expert monitoring of school nutrition is provided.

**Objective:**

- to maintain and, if necessary, upgrade the existing standard.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Education	43,164,504.00	58,206,090.00	58,212,193.00	152710 – Subsidised nutrition

				of primary school students  863810 – Subsidised nutrition of secondary school students
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## VII. The provision of educational materials, including digital educational tools, books, school uniforms or other necessary clothing

### 1. TEXTBOOK FUNDS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

In the mid 1990s, the ministry responsible for education encouraged the creation of textbook funds, which lent textbooks to pupils for a third of their price. In this way, schools made textbooks available to all participants in education. In the years 2006–2008, the ministry gradually took over the payment of borrowing fees and since then pupils have been borrowing textbooks free of charge.

The state co-funds the production of textbooks for the Italian and Hungarian national communities, for blind and visually impaired pupils and for pupils in schools with an adapted programme.

Expert working groups of teachers in schools are autonomous in their selection of textbooks and teaching materials.

#### **Objective:**

- to maintain free borrowing of textbooks in primary education.

#### **Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Education	5,436,439.00	6,000,000.00	6,000,000.00	* 483210 – Textbooks and learning technology

\*The same budget item applies to the textbook fund in primary and secondary schools.

### 2. TEXTBOOK FUNDS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Although textbook funds are not compulsory in secondary schools, most schools have them. It is also specific for secondary schools that in some programmes, especially vocational and technical programmes where there is no economic interest in the printing of textbooks due to the small number of students, the Ministry of Education co-finances the production and publication of such materials.

#### **Objective:**

- to maintain and, if necessary, upgrade the existing standard.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Education	5,436,439.00	6,000,000.00	6,000,000.00	* 483210 – Textbooks and learning technology

\*The same budget item applies to textbook funds in primary and secondary schools.

VIII. To provide high-speed connectivity and appropriate equipment and digital services needed for distance learning to ensure access to educational content online, to improve the digital literacy and skills of children and teachers in need of assistance, and to make the necessary investments to close all forms of the digital gap.

### 1. SUCCESSFUL DIGITALISATION OF EDUCATION

The Republic of Slovenia has been investing in the development of digital skills and digital infrastructure for schools. Slovenian schools are better equipped and digitally connected than the European Union average (hereinafter: the EU) but connectivity problems persist in remote schools. In order to successfully digitise education, educational institutions need to take an integrated approach through the elaboration of schools' digital strategy. The Republic of Slovenia will strengthen the connectivity of educational institutions as part of the *Recovery and Resilience Plan*.

**Objective:**

- to earmark approximately EUR 50.50 million for ICT equipment by 2027;
- to develop new IT solutions to support the digitalisation of the pedagogical process for all levels of education;
- to ensure more comprehensive integration of digital skills into curricula at all levels;
- to additionally train 20,000 teaching staff and principals in digital skills, i.e. half of the teaching population.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Education	11,819.00	100,000.00	100,000.00	445510 – Kindergartens – computer literacy and informatics
	4,808,436.00	1,825,000.00	1,825,000.00	483010 – Computer literacy and informatics
	46,005.17	50,000.00	50,000.00	448810 – Secondary school hostels – computer

				literacy and informatics
0	12,542,974.00	6,179,794.00	221164	C2K7IJ Digitalisation of Education and Sport (RRP - MIZŠ)
0	2,554,725.00	1,528,436.00	221099	VAT payment for RRP – education

## 2. DISTANCE LEARNING

In the context of the COVID-19 outbreak and the transition to distance learning, the provision of distance learning and ensuring accessibility for all educational institutions and children was the highest priority. At that time, all schools received professional guidelines and recommendations for conducting distance learning. These guidelines have been supported professionally, financially and also legislatively, so that now distance learning can be carried out with as few complications as possible.

Distance working with pupils takes place through online classrooms. In planning work, interactivity, real-time feedback and incentives are provided, as well as peer collaboration. Online classrooms also allow the monitoring of activities and the assessment of pupils' knowledge.

The quality of distance learning depends on a variety of factors. One of the key concerns is providing access and equipment for children from socially disadvantaged families and those living in rural areas with poor conditions for distance learning. Not all internet access problems can be solved by mobile access, as the whole territory of Slovenia is not sufficiently covered by a mobile signal, and these issues cannot be solved quickly. Schools dealt with all such cases on a case-by-case basis, and they were instructed to lend school computers to families who did not have one, and if they ran out of school computers and equipment, the schools would come to each other's aid and lend equipment to each other during the distance learning period.

### **Objective:**

to provide all primary and secondary school students with the opportunity of distance learning.

### **Sources of funding:**

To support distance learning, educational institutions received 6,464 desktop computers, 22,078 laptops and 3,306 tablets with a total value of EUR 21,995,440.00 in 2020 and 2021. The Academic and Research Network of Slovenia – ARNES received EUR 799,241.00 to strengthen the central information infrastructure (also including the use of the Zoom video conference system for all teachers).

Through donations (A1, d.d., and Telekom Slovenije, d.d.), institutions received 800 mobile modems with unlimited data packets; additionally, 760 mobile modems with unlimited data packages, 400 webcams and 400 headphones with microphones were purchased.



## IX. Provision of transport to preschool education and care institutions and educational institutions

### 1. FREE ORGANISED TRANSPORT TO KINDERGARTENS, SCHOOLS, INSTITUTIONS AND BACK HOME FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

In the Republic of Slovenia, children with special needs are entitled to free-of-charge transport in the context of the organised transport, public transport or transport provided by parents of a child with special needs. The implementation and financing of transport costs takes place at both the local and national levels. The organisation and reimbursement of transport costs for preschool children, for primary school students who are accommodated in homes and institutions for children and adolescents with emotional and behavioural disorders, who are cared for in educational institutions and are included in education programmes outside these educational institutions, and for secondary school students with a serious or severe mobility impairment, are covered by the state budget.

#### **Objective:**

- to ensure that sufficient resources continue to be available to finance transport costs for all beneficiaries, including children in development classes.

#### **Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Education	186,715.00	206,360.00	216,678.00	190138 – Transport of children enrolled in the development classes of kindergartens

### 2. PAYMENT OF TRANSPORT FOR CHILDREN FROM DISADVANTAGED BACKGROUNDS OR IN SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCES

When children who come from disadvantaged backgrounds do not have the possibility of transport from home to kindergarten (the kindergarten is optional, there is no legal basis for paying the costs), a solution is sought at the local level or occasionally in short programmes fully funded by the Ministry of Education. In specific circumstances, children have organised transport to kindergartens even within short programmes, when transport cannot be provided otherwise. Kindergartens may also cover transport costs from the Ministry's funds.

The measure is aimed at all children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Covering transport costs at preschool level is also occasionally carried out as part of the co-financing of Roma children classes, as part of the financing of short programmes and occasionally from municipal budgets, which the state will continue to encourage in the future, as logistical incapacity sometimes constitutes an obstacle that prevents the enrolment of a child in kindergarten. The latter is also of the utmost importance in terms of a smooth transition to primary school, which is why kindergartens will be provided support in the form of financial compensation in such cases. Parents are informed of such by the kindergarten's counselling service, which also assesses whether the latter is justified and actually necessary.

Free transport to primary school: A pupil is entitled to free transport if their residence is more than four kilometres from the primary school. The primary school, parents and local community must agree on the method of transporting pupils. The local community (municipality), which also finances the transport, decides on the eligibility of pupils for free transport on the basis of an application submitted by the parents.

Regardless of the distance of residence from primary school, the following pupils have the right to free transport:

- pupils of the first grade of primary school;
- pupils of other primary school classes if the competent road safety authority finds that their safety is at risk on the way to school;
- children with special needs, if so determined by the education guidance decision.

A pupil attending a primary school in the school district outside the school district they reside in shall have the right to the reimbursement of transport costs in the amount that they would have been entitled to in the event of attending a primary school in the school district he or she resides in.

Subsidised transport to secondary school: Secondary school students are entitled to financial assistance when purchasing public transport tickets if the place where they study is at least two kilometres away from their home.

The ministry responsible for education also subsidises the adapted transport to secondary school of students with a serious or severe mobility impairment.

Adapted transport: Primary and secondary school students with a serious or severe mobility impairment are entitled to free adapted transport to school. Adapted transport is provided for by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport on the basis of a contract concluded with the educational institution and the transporter.

On the basis of a public notice, the educational institution where students with a serious or severe mobility impairment are educated shall select the provider of transport that is most appropriate in terms of qualifications, equipment and transport prices.

**Objective:**

- to maintain the existing co-financing standards in all these areas.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Education	1,250,609.00	1,474,000.00	1,508,000.00	439510 – Subsidised transport for pupils due to dangerous animals

## X. Ensuring equal and inclusive access to school activities, including participation in school trips and in sports, leisure and cultural activities

### 1. WIDE AND INCLUSIVE ACCESS TO CURRICULAR AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

School excursions: The implementation of planned programmes is co-financed by the Ministry of Education: for 2022, the data are as follows: 20 km per class from 1st to 4th grade, or EUR 23 per class, and 120 km per class from 5th to 9th grade, or EUR 138 per class.

Cultural activities are part of the compulsory primary school programme, which intertwines disciplines and subject areas included in the primary school curriculum. Pupils learn about different linguistic, social and artistic fields, natural values and values of human society, and connect them with each other. Pupils actively participate in the implementation of cultural days, i.e. they plan, adopt and experience activities and express themselves through them.

The following activities are available to all children according to their interests and abilities:

- Primary schools organise activities of interest, which are determined by the annual school action plan. Their purpose is to identify and develop pupils' interests and to enable them to spend their leisure time in a useful and healthy way. These activities are performed before or after school. Pupils participate in them on a voluntary basis.
- School sports clubs are organised according to the pupils' interests. Their goals are for children to acquire a variety of sports skills, to meet children's needs for movement and play, to encourage mutual cooperation, healthy competition, respect for sportsmanship, tolerance and acceptance of diversity, and to teach them how to spend quality leisure time.
- Leisure activities (or undirected leisure time) take place within the framework of extended stay and help children properly develop psychomotorically and psychosocially, as well as to learn responsibility and to manage their own time. Each activity must be planned in advance and adjusted according to school duties, home duties, and so on.

Most extracurricular activities are free of charge, insofar as they are organised and implemented by the school within the number of hours determined by the syllabus and are carried out at the school. Some activities, however, have to be paid for if the school offers more activities considered to be above-standard activities.<sup>13</sup>

#### **Objective:**

- Currently, activities of interest fall under the extended programme and not the compulsory programme, which, however, is expected to change along with the change in norms. The objective is to include part of the activities of interest in the classification of activities in order to ensure equal access to activities for all pupils.

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<sup>13</sup> In such case, the additional list of activities must be approved by the school council with the prior consent of the council of parents. If certain costs are expected in the implementation of an above-standard activity, the annual school action plan has to identify the source of funding. Additional lessons may then be financed in whole or in part by the municipality, and part of the costs, if necessary, may be borne by the parents with their consent. Some extracurricular activities are to be fully paid for, most often those carried out by external providers.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Education	3,100,000.00	12,500,000.00	12,500,000.00	667210

**2. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

Nutrition and physical activity have a beneficial effect on health and reduce the burden of obesity. Physical activity helps to improve physical fitness and can improve the balance of blood sugar and blood fats, blood pressure, prevent the development of a metabolic syndrome, inhibit the development of osteoporosis and prevent muscle mass loss. Physical activity in schools alone (as part of physical education) is not sufficient for healthy development and the maintenance of health.

**Objective:**

- to encourage and organise an active way to school.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Health (the programmes "Active Way to School", "Healthy City" and "Special Healthy Body" – "Aktivno v šolo", "Zdravo mesto" and "Specialni Zdravko")	54,774.42	70,128.30	70,128.30	* 180050 – National Nutrition and Physical Activity Action Plan, Measure No 2711-18-0005 – Health in the fields of nutrition and physical activity

XI. Developing a cooperative framework for educational institutions, local communities, social services, healthcare and child protection services, families and social economy actors to support inclusive education, providing after-school care and opportunities to participate in sports, leisure and cultural activities, and investing in educational institutions as centres of inclusion and participation

**1. INCREASING THE COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF ROMA CHILDREN**

The planned project will develop, upgrade and pilot instruments to measure the communication skills of Roma children in the preschool period and in the first education period, establish a system for tracking the development of the communication skills of Roma pupils and upgrade the system for establishing assistance and involving parents. The implementation of the project will take place both in the environment of educational institutions with the involvement of professional and managing staff as well as in multipurpose Roma centres in cooperation with the Roma community.

The implementation of the instrument will take into account the results, findings and experiences of all previous projects on raising the linguistic and social capital of Roma children and pupils.

**Objective:**

- to develop instruments for measuring and tracking the development of the communication skills of Roma children and pupils in the Slovenian and Roma languages;
- to establish a system to assist Roma children and pupils in developing communication skills, including through the involvement of parents;
- to prepare programmes for parents in multipurpose Roma centres.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Education	548,480.00	335,944.00	/	For the cohesion region of Eastern Slovenia: 150044 – PN10.1- Improving competences and promoting flexible forms of learning-14-20-EU (80.00%)
	137,120.00	83,986.00		150046 – PN10.1- Improving competences and promoting flexible forms of learning-14-20-Slovenia's contribution (20.00%)
	91,520.00	56,056.00		For the cohesion region of Western Slovenia: 150045 – PN10.1- Improving competences and promoting flexible forms of learning-14-20-EU (80.00%)
	22,880.00	14,014.00		150047 – PN10.1- Improving competences and promoting flexible forms of learning-14-20-Slovenia's contribution – (20.00%)

## 2. PROMOTING THE SOCIAL INCLUSION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

Strengthening social, personal and professional competences is important for children and adolescents with special needs who enrol in institutions for the education of children and adolescents with special needs, in

primary schools with adapted programmes or in upper secondary vocational education programmes, in order to promote their social inclusion.

Persons with special needs require the development of adapted forms of training and education in order to acquire and further develop skills and knowledge that will enable them to lead a quality independent life and possible inclusion in the working environment. It is necessary to create the conditions for acquiring new social experiences, for developing social, interpersonal and communication skills, the ability to participate in teamwork and in problem-solving, the use of ICT, and strengthening professional skills, and similar. In order to facilitate the transition from educational institutions to local environments, it is necessary to establish strong links with the local environment and all the stakeholders needed to carry out various activities that help integrate persons with special needs in the local environment and encourage them to lead a more active independent life.

**Objective:**

- to upgrade programmes for the development of the social, personal and professional skills of children and adolescents with special needs also in the context of the European cohesion policy 2021–2027;
- to establish a support system in the local environment to promote the social inclusion of children and adolescents with special needs.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Education The ECP project “Promotion of the social inclusion of children and young people with special needs in the local environment”	/	/	200,000.00 (EU contribution, 40%) 300,000.00 (Slovenia’s contribution, 60%)	*

\* These are EU funds, therefore the planning of funds and budget items are still being coordinated within the framework of the implementation plan of the ECP 2021–2027 Programme at the level of the managing authority. The project will be financed from the funds earmarked for the Western Cohesion Region.

**3. MULTIPURPOSE ROMA CENTRES AS INNOVATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS – INCREASING SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CAPITAL IN SETTLEMENTS WITH ROMA POPULATION**

The social and cultural capital of Roma is low, especially in the Dolenjska region. According to the assessment of the Ministry of Education, many Roma children do not complete primary school successfully and they also face poverty and inadequate living conditions. Therefore, for a number of years, projects with the aim of raising the social, cultural and educational capital of Roma children have been implemented in Roma environments. A very successful project which took place between 2016 and 2021 was called *Together for Knowledge*, and it has been followed by the project *Multipurpose Roma Centres as Innovative Learning Environments*<sup>14</sup>. The project highlights, among other things, the development of innovative pedagogical practices and more flexible forms of educational work with Roma children, adapted to the specific features of working with this group of children. The introduction of these practices in the learning

<sup>14</sup> Multipurpose Roma centres as innovative learning environments should not be confused with the multipurpose Roma centres co-financed by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, as these are two different programmes.

environments of multipurpose Roma centres is carried out by taking into account the principles of individualisation, personalisation and differentiation at the level of basic and extended education programmes. The purpose of the action is to strengthen the competences, skills and knowledge of Roma children by improving their integration and performance in the education system and society.

**Objective:**

- to develop innovative pedagogical practices and more flexible forms of educational work aimed at strengthening the competences, skills and knowledge of Roma children by improving their integration and performance in the education system and society;
- to successfully introduce innovative pedagogical practices and more flexible forms of educational work with Roma children in the learning environments of multipurpose Roma centres;
- to provide additional professional competences and skills to professional staff in educational institutions in their educational work with Roma children.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Education	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	715310 – Training of teachers

**4. STRENGTHENING THE COMPETENCE OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF TO WORK IN A MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT**

One of the objectives of the continuing education and training of professional staff in education is the provision of professional competences for teaching a subject or subject area or for carrying out professional work, which includes training to work in a multicultural environment. Professional staff in education are regularly trained to work in a multicultural environment and the projects within which such training takes place refer to multicultural environments, which also means immigrants from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds, as they do not exclusively address Roma individuals.

**Objective:**

- to implement professional training programmes for professional staff to work in a multicultural environment.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Education	2,000	2,000	2,000	715310 – Training of teachers

## 5.2.2. HEALTHCARE

- I. The early detection and treatment of diseases and developmental problems, including those related to mental health, and ensuring access to regular medical examinations, including dental and ophthalmological examinations, and to early diagnosis programmes; ensuring timely curative and rehabilitation measures, including access to medicine, treatment and medical devices, and access to vaccination programmes

In order to ensure effective and free access to quality healthcare for children in need, under compulsory insurance Slovenia covers the early detection and treatment of diseases and developmental problems, including those related to mental health, and provides access to regular medical examinations, including dental and ophthalmological examinations. Slovenia also provides access to early diagnosis programmes, timely curative and rehabilitation measures, including access to medicine, treatment and medical devices, and access to vaccination programmes, as well as targeted rehabilitation and habilitation services for children with disabilities. Within the framework of the child guarantee, Slovenia plans in particular to upgrade accessible programmes for health promotion and disease prevention for children in need and their families, and to provide professionals who work with children.

In Slovenia, all children under the age of 18, or until the end of schooling, are included in compulsory insurance, either as close or wider family members of the insured person or as insured persons, if their parents do not take care of them or do not themselves meet the requirements for inclusion in compulsory insurance.

As part of compulsory insurance, they are entitled to a wide range of healthcare services, such as:

- preventive examinations of children, adolescents and students, education for health and treatment for health promotion as defined in the amended Rules on carrying out preventive healthcare at the primary level (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [*Uradni list RS*], No 57/21);
- counselling, education, training, and assistance in changing unhealthy lifestyles;
- the treatment and rehabilitation of children;
- mandatory vaccinations according to the programme (haemophilus influenza b, diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio, measles, mumps, rubella and hepatitis B);
- emergency medical assistance;
- community nurse visits, treatment and nursing in home care and in social welfare institutions;
- medicine, medical devices and foodstuffs for special medical purposes;
- the stay of one parent, foster parent or caregiver at a health institution or health resort with a sick child up to and including 14 years of age or more in the case of certain serious conditions;
- group health programmes to improve the health of children up to 18 years of age who are repeatedly hospitalised or ill at least twice in a calendar year, or who have certain medical conditions, such as cerebral palsy, neuromuscular diseases or other types of mobility impairment, head injury, juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes, phenylketonuria, celiac disease or excess weight, autism spectrum disorder, developmental delay or intellectual impairment, multiple sclerosis, poliomyelitis, Parkinson's disease, or serious or severe mental disorders.

Excellent coverage of healthcare services is also shown by the EU-SILC 2017 Module on Health and Children's Health survey. The survey has shown that medical care and medicine do not pose financial



burdens. The share of children vaccinated for DTP3 (diphtheria-tetanus-whooping cough) in 2020 is 95.2%, compared to 94.3% vaccinated against measles, mumps and rubella.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the wide availability of high-quality preventive and curative treatment for children and adolescents, the programmes need to be continuously upgraded and supplemented in order to reach the most vulnerable children and adolescents. Within the framework of the Child Guarantee, Slovenia plans in particular to upgrade accessible programmes for health promotion and disease prevention for children in need and their families, and to provide professionals who work with children.

#### 1. THE FIRST 1000 DAYS OF A CHILD'S LIFE – AN INTENSIVE PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT PROGRAMME FOR VULNERABLE PREGNANT WOMEN AND FAMILIES AT RISK WITH HIGH HEALTH RISK AT HOME (DURING PREGNANCY AND POST-BIRTH)

Between 18,000 and 19,000 children are born annually in Slovenia. It is important to identify pregnant women, children and families with different vulnerabilities and risks to health and the quality of life. Vulnerable pregnant women and families with high health risks must be supported, monitored and provided appropriate assistance, treatment and guidance already during pregnancy or from the very beginning of family life. In so doing, we protect the health of the fetus and the child and support its development, prevent addiction and transgenerational transmission of trauma, reduce poverty and social exclusion, and have a significant impact on the child's well-being in the short term and on health and quality of life when they grow up. The foundations of physical, mental and social health are laid during this earliest period.

From this point of view, the overall (mental, physical and social) health of pregnant women and mothers is important. It is estimated that one in five pregnant women and women after childbirth experience depression and/or anxiety, and about 6% experience post-partum post-traumatic stress disorder. Mental distress during the perinatal period is particularly tabooed and stigmatised. Help and treatment in case of mental distress are generally not sufficiently accessible, and especially so for the vulnerable (remoteness, certain payable services such as psychotherapy, waiting times for such services in the healthcare system are too long, and similar).

Women with an infant find it more difficult to visit healthcare professionals due to practical challenges, child care problems and more difficult access to transportation. Some of them hide their distress because they fear stigmatisation. The overall (mental, physical and social) health of the (future) father is also important. It is essential to recognise the impact of burdensome experiences on parental roles, in order to resolve them and support good parental practices (safe attachment, cooperation with the child, the identification of, and appropriate responses to, the needs of the child). It is very important to develop a coordinated transplant algorithm regarding perinatal depression, domestic violence, addictions, etc., during the perinatal period and to introduce such at the national level (who is screening, when to screen, to determine guidance paths, etc.). Intensive and long-lasting cooperation between a pregnant woman, an expectant father, or a family with an infant and an expert, based on trust and orientation towards a common goal (quality care for the baby and his or her health and good development) has been proven to contribute to the welfare of the child already in pregnancy and after his or her birth and to reduce inequalities among the most vulnerable (and adult dependent) population groups, i.e. children. Intensive

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<sup>15</sup> Vaccination coverage of the population: 1: Vaccination coverage of preschool children (in %) against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio and Hib infections, annually – estimated, Slovenia, annually, 2: Vaccination coverage of preschool children (in %) against measles, mumps and rubella – estimated, Slovenia, annually. National Institute of Public Health data portal. As of 22 December 2022, available at: [https://podatki.nijz.si/pxweb/sl/NIJZ%20podatkovni%20portal/NIJZ%20podatkovni%20portal\\_\\_3%20Preventivni%20programi\\_\\_1%20Precepljenost%20prebivalstva/](https://podatki.nijz.si/pxweb/sl/NIJZ%20podatkovni%20portal/NIJZ%20podatkovni%20portal__3%20Preventivni%20programi__1%20Precepljenost%20prebivalstva/)

support and assistance during this period are very effective. Reducing child inequalities is of paramount importance at the very beginning of the formation of a family.

The programme will focus on the period of pregnancy, childbirth and the periods of family life up to approximately the second year of the child’s age. It will include pregnant women, expectant fathers, infants, children, fathers, mothers or caregivers of children and siblings, and also members of the extended family, where relevant; it concerns vulnerable pregnant women and families at risk with a high risk to the health, development and the quality of life of their child, and families facing many challenges. It will support families who, *inter alia*, face previous and existing mental health problems have several burdensome experiences from childhood and youth, families suffering from crisis situations, unemployment, addictions (e.g. alcohol, drugs, non-chemical addictions), domestic violence, families expecting or having a child with a serious illness, a child with special needs or a child with developmental problems, families that are immigrant families or that face marginalisation, poverty, poor living conditions, etc.

The programme will consist of:

- (a) identifying the needs of pregnant women and mothers, parents or caregivers of children, children, and families for increased support, monitoring, assistance, treatment and identification, i.e. screening for vulnerabilities and risks; and
- (b) long-term and in-depth cooperation between the pregnant woman or (future) parents or caregivers and the child and the professional. Once a confidential relationship has been established, the professional will provide long-term intensive support and assistance at home. If necessary, the professional will also provide guidance to other sources of assistance.

In addition, the programme envisages the following:

- the education and training of healthcare and other professionals working with the specified target population (gynaecologists – obstetricians, midwives, nurses, community nurses, clinical psychologists, paediatricians, psychiatrists, etc.) and the relevant professionals from other sectors;
- setting-up medical institutions specialised in treating trauma;
- raising awareness and informing expectant parents, parents and the general public.

**Objective:**

- to strengthen the physical, mental and social health of pregnant women and mothers or parents, to improve parental competences in order to increase the chances of the proper development of the fetus and the child, to strengthen his or her mental, physical and social health in the short term and in adulthood, and to prevent transgenerational transmission of harm and trauma and the deepening of inequalities.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Health	/	120,000.00	170,000.00	*

\* These are EU funds, therefore the planning of funds and budget items are still being coordinated within the framework of the implementation plan of the ECP 2021–2027 Programme at the level of the managing authority.

**2. ORAL HEALTH**

Oral health is an inseparable part of overall health and an important factor in quality of life. The relationship between dental and oral diseases and the most common chronic diseases and the impact of oral and dental diseases on children’s health has been established. Oral diseases also represent an important expenditure

of the health insurance budget. The current prevention programme does not cover all population groups, and at the same time the system does not include the monitoring of oral health, which is a necessary step for monitoring and planning activities. It will be necessary to establish a comprehensive system for the monitoring, implementation and evaluation of prevention activities. Moreover, it is necessary to upgrade the existing prevention programme by including vulnerable groups and to define more precisely the tasks and responsibilities of individual stakeholders involved in prevention activities (educational activities in educational institutions, other prevention activities in educational institutions and clinical procedures).

**Objective:**

- to upgrade the existing prevention programme, including the monitoring, implementation and evaluation system;
- to maintain, strengthen and improve oral health, especially for children from vulnerable groups with targeted free oral health promotion programmes.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Health	/	50,000.00	50,000.00	7084 – Public service provision by the NIJZ

**3. PREVENTION PROGRAMME FOR CHILDREN, ADOLSCENTS AND STUDENTS “Health Today for Tomorrow – the Now Programme”**

In the Republic of Slovenia, we have a long tradition of a successful prevention programme for newborns in maternity hospitals, and for infants, preschool children, primary and secondary school students, children and adolescents who are registered athletes, children with developmental disabilities, and students at the primary level of healthcare. The Rules amending the Rules on carrying out preventive healthcare at the primary level, Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [*Uradni list RS*] No 57/21 defined the mechanisms and approaches in managing the programme. However, some children and adolescents are overlooked and not included in the prevention programme, which may mean a loss of opportunities for monitoring growth and development, as well as a loss of prevention and health promotion activities. This can have negative effects on health during childhood and, from a lifelong perspective, also on adult health. It is assumed that children born abroad, born at home (outside maternity hospitals), children who are not included in education programmes (kindergarten, school), those who drop out of the mainstream education programme, children of Roma families, immigrant children, etc., are more frequently left out of the preventive healthcare system. In order to facilitate the identification of these children, a system for monitoring the inclusion of the target population in the preventive healthcare programme is needed, allowing for up-to-date monitoring and implementation of activities to improve the situation, which is particularly important for vulnerable children and adolescents.

As part of the Now Programme, healthcare professionals and their colleagues also carry out FAMILY TREATMENT FOR A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE, which is intended for children and adolescents with obesity and reduced physical capacity, and also includes parents and siblings. This activity is carried out by a multidisciplinary team led by a paediatrician, a kinesiologist, a dietician, a psychologist and a graduate nurse. The programme is a combination of individual and group treatments (examinations, team meetings, counselling, workshops, etc.) and is aimed at changing lifestyles in the fields of nutrition, physical activity, the use of electronic devices and sleep. An important aspect is psychological support or motivation for

change. It is important to work with the school and the local community to support children, adolescents and their families in changing their lifestyle. Multidisciplinary teams at the primary level or in the local environment also provide support to children and adolescents who complete their treatment in a hospital environment or at the Slovenian Red Cross Youth Health Resort at Debeli rtič.

**Objective:**

- to set up programme management and establish a system for monitoring the inclusion of children and adolescents in the prevention programme, the identification of non-responding persons and the development of a protocol for their inclusion in preventive healthcare;
- to provide regular training of programme providers to improve preventive healthcare for vulnerable children and adolescents;
- to develop protocols of cooperation with the Centres for the Mental Health of Children and Adolescents;
- to expand Health Promotion Centres to other areas of Slovenia in order to ensure accessible, comprehensive and high-quality treatment in the field of health education and treatment for health promotion at the primary level;
- to develop new treatments to manage obesity and consequently other non-communicable chronic diseases;
- to adapt treatments to individual target groups with a focus on vulnerable children and adolescents.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Health	200,000.00	400,000.00	400,000.00	7084 – Public service provision by the NIJZ ZZS – Health Promotion Centres

**4. ESTABLISHING A NETWORK OF CENTRES FOR THE MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS WITHIN HEALTH CENTRES THAT PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE, COMPREHENSIVE AND HIGH-QUALITY TREATMENT**

Care for the mental health of society is based on the good mental health of children and young people. In accordance with the Resolution on the National Mental Health Programme 2018–2028, Centres for the Mental Health of Children and Adolescents (CDZOM) are being established, which provide prevention and comprehensive, multidisciplinary outpatient and community-based treatment to children and adolescents. In 2022, 18 of the 25 planned centres are operational and will work in geographical areas with an estimated population of 80,000, of which around 16,000 are children and adolescents from 0 to 19. Providing a safe and supportive environment that prevents mental health problems in childhood is a social investment. Mental health continues to be one of the key areas of child and adolescent health and is also linked to the development of many harmful behaviours. Given the continuing high indicators of negative mental health, such as the increase in treatments in the healthcare system and high suicide rates, there is an urgent need to increase activities in this area in the future and to involve different sectors in order to tackle the problem more effectively.

**Objective:**

- to ensure accessible, comprehensive and high-quality mental health treatments in the community for children.

**Sources of funding:**

The activities and healthcare services of the Mental Health Centres are financed by the Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia (ZZZS).

## II. Targeted rehabilitation and habilitation services for children with disabilities

### 1. UPGRADING SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

In accordance with the Rules on carrying out preventive healthcare, additional treatment for developmentally disabled children is provided at the primary level, so that, in addition to regular systematic examinations under the programme for all eligible children, examinations in the developmental clinic and other services of the habilitation programme are also carried out. The same applies to children and young people with developmental disabilities up to the age of 19.

In accordance with its annual programme, the Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia provides insured persons with muscular and neuromuscular diseases, paraplegia, cerebral palsy, the most severe form of generalised psoriasis, multiple sclerosis and paralytics with certain functional impairments with the opportunity to participate in group and tailored rehabilitation. Participants are provided the co-financing of physiotherapy and accommodation costs. Children and adolescents with cerebral palsy, other severe and permanent physical disabilities or chronic diseases (juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes mellitus, phenylketonuria and coeliac disease) are provided the possibility to participate in organised group training to manage their disease or condition. The Institute co-finances the necessary healthcare services, the costs of therapeutic working groups and the costs of accommodation. Exceptionally, a parent of the child or adolescent may also attend such training. The maximum duration of the training is 14 days per year. This entitlement cannot be claimed by children and young people who are in the care of appropriate medical, education, social welfare or training institutions during the year. The Institute co-finances holidays in organised and professionally run health camps for children who have been hospitalised several times or who are frequently ill.

**Objective:**

- to construct a new facility for the Šentvid pri Stični Centre for the Treatment of Children's Illnesses, which will ensure better care for children (more successful treatment and a higher proportion of more lasting effects of treatment), reduce the time needed to treat children (the reduction of hospital-acquired infections), improve healthcare services (more suitable accommodation for children and accompanying persons), provide additional activities to the existing programmes (healthy lifestyle school, therapeutic treatment for children with developmental disabilities, etc.) and improve the working conditions of the staff. This will also enable greater social integration of young people with special needs into the local environment and the development of deinstitutionalised forms of care.

**Sources of funding:**

The upgrading of services for children with disabilities is financed by the European Regional Development Fund in a total amount of EUR 5,523,902.76.

### III. Accessible health promotion and disease prevention programmes for children in need, their families and professionals working with children

#### 1. DEVELOPING PREVENTION PROGRAMMES TO PREVENT NON-CHEMICAL ADDICTIONS

The problems related to the use of digital technologies have been exacerbated during the COVID-19 epidemic, and measures are envisaged to address the multiple and multifaceted consequences of the COVID-19 epidemic for children and adolescents and their families.

In order to prevent and treat non-chemical dependencies in children, the following activities will be implemented:

- complementing the existing and/or developing new content to raise digital and media literacy in relation to non-chemical addictions;
- development, piloting, evaluation and possible adaptation of support workshops to reduce the risk of developing digital addictions;
- developing a training programme for professionals in child and adolescent mental health centres in the field of non-chemical addictions.

#### **Objective:**

- to prevent non-chemical addictions among children and adolescents.

#### **Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Health, the co-funding of NGOs working in the field of the prevention of non-chemical addictions	275,000.00	290,000.00	216,000.00	221091 – Mental health and dementia programmes
Ministry of Health, as part of the regular activities of the NIJZ  The work of the NIJZ in the field of non-chemical addictions is also funded by the Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia (ZZS)				7084 – Public service provision by the NIJZ + General agreement by ZZS
Ministry of Health	additional resources	additional resources	additional resources	the Recovery and Resilience Facility: project "Development of mental health programmes for children, adolescents and young adults"

#### 2. THE "COOL KIDS" PROGRAMME FOR OVERCOMING ANXIETY IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Data on the most common disorders across the lifespan show that the most common mental disorders among older children (aged 6–14) are emotional and behavioural disorders, hyperkinetic disorder and, to a lesser extent, developmental disorders. Among adolescents (aged 15–19), the most prevalent are “severe

stress response and adjustment disorders”, other anxiety disorders, depressive episodes and eating disorders.

"Cool Kids" is a proven effective programme for overcoming anxiety, which we are also introducing in Slovenia. It is a structured programme for children and adolescents with anxiety problems or disorders and is aimed at children and adolescents aged 7 to 17 and their parents. It is delivered in a group or on an individual basis and is based on cognitive-behavioural therapy and focuses on teaching practical skills for coping with anxiety. The Cool Kids programme also includes a version aimed at children and adolescents suffering from anxiety with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) aged 7–12 years – Cool Kids Autism Spectrum Adaptation (CKASA).

The institution bearing responsibility for implementing the programme in the Republic of Slovenia is the Ljubljana Counselling Centre for Children, Adolescents and Parents, and within the project experts from four partner institutions (Ljubljana Counselling Centre, Maribor Counselling Centre, Ljubljana Health Centre and Velenje Health Centre) will be accredited to implement the programme in the first step.

**Objective:**

- to set up a programme to overcome anxiety, including for children with autism spectrum disorders.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Health	71,120.00	50,393.00	37,795.00	221091 – Mental health and dementia programmes
	additional resources	additional resources	additional resources	the Recovery and Resilience Facility: project "Development of mental health programmes for children, adolescents and young adults"

**3. INCREDIBLE YEARS**

Data on the most common disorders across the lifespan show that the most common mental disorders among older children (aged 6–14) are emotional and behavioural disorders, hyperkinetic disorder and, to a lesser extent, developmental disorders. The “Incredible Years” programme is a proven effective programme for the prevention and early treatment of behavioural problems in children. Children who are not treated and whose behavioural problems escalate are at higher risk of unemployment, mental health problems, addictions, early parenthood, delinquency, imprisonment, domestic violence and reduced life expectancy as adults.

**Objective:**

- the prevention and early treatment of emotional behavioural problems and autistic developmental disorders;

- increased access to parenting programmes, including for parents of children with autistic spectrum disorder;
- implementation of a classroom management programme for teachers.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Health	102,209.00	50,400.00	37,800.00	221091 – Mental health and dementia programmes
	additional resources	additional resources	additional resources	the Recovery and Resilience Facility: project "Development of mental health programmes for children, adolescents and young adults"

**4. PROGRAMMES TO REDUCE PEER VIOLENCE**

According to the 2014 HBSC International Survey, 44% of 13–15 year-olds have been bullied and/or involved in a fight in school at least once in the previous year.<sup>16</sup> In the Republic of Slovenia, various mechanisms are already in place to prevent peer violence, but children perceive a need for a greater number and more effective ways to combat this problem.

**Objective:**

- to pilot test and gradually and systemically roll out proven effective peer violence reduction programmes that sensitise children to the issue and target the treatment of identified cases of peer and online peer violence, as well as programmes that work successfully to create a safe and supportive school environment;
- to pilot and evaluate programmes to reduce peer violence;
- to update the programme, prepare a national implementation plan and start the national roll-out;
- to draft guidelines and protocols.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Health	62,202.00 EUR	50,324.00 EUR	37,743.00 EUR	7084 –

<sup>16</sup> One in twelve (8.2%) adolescents participated in bullying every month, one in ten (9.6%) participated in fights frequently, and one in four (24.1%) was the victim of bullying. One in eight (12.4%) adolescents was a victim of online bullying and one in twenty (5.1%) participated in online bullying on a monthly basis. The trend (11, 13, 15 years): the percentage of adolescents who bullied their peers and the percentage of 15-year-olds who were bullied increased between 2002 and 2018. The percentage of adolescents who fought frequently decreased.



				Public service provision by the NIJZ
	additional resources	additional resources	additional resources	the Recovery and Resilience Facility: project "Development of mental health programmes for children, adolescents and young adults"

**5. DO YOU GET IT (YOURSELF)?!" AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO STRENGTHENING MENTAL HEALTH AND THE PRIMARY PREVENTION OF SUICIDAL BEHAVIOUR FOR ADOLESCENTS**

The programme aims to strengthen coping and intervention skills in case of distress in children and adolescents and aims to shape healthy lifestyles in later life. It includes teaching adolescents how to recognise dysfunctional patterns, how to cope effectively with their own distress and how to recognise distress in others. The programme is run in cooperation with the education system, which means cooperation with primary and secondary schools, student hostels, leisure activity organisations for adolescents, etc. The programme includes training for adolescents, teachers, parents and local stakeholders. Three associations of psychology students participate in the activities of the programme.

**Objectives:**

- to strengthen mental health and prevent suicidal behaviour among adolescents through work in schools;
- to create a wide network of support and postvention activities for primary and secondary school students in the event of a classmate's suicide.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Health	57,775.00	49,958.00	37,469.00	221091 – Mental health and dementia programmes
	Additional funds	Additional funds	Additional funds	The Recovery and Resilience Facility: project "Development of mental health programmes for children, adolescents and young adults"

## 5.2.3 HEALTHY EATING

- I. Access to healthy meals also outside school days, including in-kind or financial support, especially in exceptional circumstances such as school closures

### 1. FOOD AID

The Operational Programme for Food and/or Basic Material Assistance, which is supported by the Fund for European Aid for the Most Deprived, provides non-financial assistance to the most materially and socially deprived persons in the Republic of Slovenia in the form of food parcels and various accompanying measures to promote the social inclusion of the most materially and socially deprived persons. As part of the Union's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, EUR 7.7 million for the purchase of food products for the most deprived were allocated in 2021, 2022 and 2023.

Under the new Financial Perspective 2021–2027, the Programme for the Elimination of Material Deprivation in Slovenia for the period 2021–2027 will make available more than EUR 32.5 million.

#### **Objective:**

- to provide sufficient assistance in the form of food parcels, basic material assistance for the socially most deprived families and implementing various accompanying measures to promote the social inclusion of the most materially and socially deprived.

#### **Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities	5,739,375.10	7,388,021.73	5,032,072.00	140074, 140075, 211190*

\*two additional budget items are not known, as they have not yet been identified.

- II. Providing for special dietary needs in the nutrition standards in preschool education and care institutions and educational institutions

### 1. KINDERGARTEN AND SCHOOL MEALS

The nutrition of children and adolescents has a number of specific features, which is why schools devote special attention to it. In addition to the content defined in the subject curricula, schools are required to identify in their annual work plans nutrition-related educational activities and activities to promote healthy eating and a nutrition culture. In the Republic of Slovenia, schools are obliged to provide all primary and secondary school students with a snack which, on the basis of a medical certificate, corresponds to the medically indicated diets of students. Schools are not obliged to provide special diet options for other meals they provide, but many schools nevertheless provide such special diet meals in accordance with their capacities. The same applies to alternative diets according to parents' wishes.

Meals for all children and adolescents should be balanced in composition so that they contain sufficient quality proteins and wholesome carbohydrates and vegetables and so that good quality fats with a favourable composition are used in their preparation; they should not be too salty and should be properly cooked. Particular attention should be devoted to the inclusion of quality local food adapted to seasonal

supply and to the inclusion of organic products, as also emphasised by measures applicable in food procurement, the school programme and environmental policy.

**Objective:**

- to maintain the existing standard and continuously improve it through ongoing monitoring, with a special focus on children from socially disadvantaged groups;
- to connect with the local community;
- to increase the competences of children from vulnerable backgrounds (e.g. farms) because of their specific skills.

**Sources of funding:**

As part of regular activities.

**III. Restricting the advertising and availability of high-fat, high-salt and high-sugar foods in preschool education and care institutions and educational institutions.**

**1. RESTRICTING THE ADVERTISING OF UNHEALTHY FOODS TO CHILDREN**

The environment is one of the main causes of rising obesity in children – alongside insufficient physical activity – because it encourages the frequent consumption of large amounts of energy-dense foods. The intensive marketing of energy-dense and nutrient-poor foods has a negative impact on dietary choices. Regulating the marketing of food and beverages to children would have a positive impact on changing the environment that currently encourages the frequent consumption of large quantities of unhealthy foods and beverages and on the worrying trends of increasing obesity described above.

In the Republic of Slovenia, the advertising and availability of foods high in fat, salt and sugar in preschool education and care institutions and educational institutions is restricted, as the School Meals Act bans vending machines in schools.

**Objectives:**

- to restrict the marketing of unhealthy foods (energy-dense and nutritionally poor foods and sugary drinks) to children, with a particular focus on limiting the digital marketing of unhealthy foods that most intensely target children from vulnerable groups;
- to promote measures to reduce the consumption of unhealthy foods (foods that are nutritionally unfavourable in terms of composition and energy density), in line with proposals from the profession.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Health, co-funding of the Slovenian Consumers' Association programme "My Choice, You Know What You're Eating Choice"	32,690.00	26,522.00	26,522.00	180050
Ministry of Health, co-funding of the Nutrition.si portal	26,588.00	31,900.00	31,900.00	180050

## 2. RESTRICTING CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO UNHEALTHY FOODS

The School Meals Act sets out the conditions for adequate nutrition for all socio-economic groups of pupils and defines the educational functions of nutrition education. In accordance with this Act, food vending machines are prohibited on school premises in order to have full control of school meals. Professional monitoring is used to determine whether school diets comply with the healthy eating guidelines which are binding on educational institutions, and to provide advice from a health point of view. The professional monitoring of school meals shows that the composition of menus in line with the healthy eating guidelines (with the exception of kindergartens) is generally not being implemented to the desired extent.

School meal guidelines advise moderation in the use of salt, saturated fats and, in particular, sugary drinks. In order to ensure that children in need have effective access to adequate and healthy nutrition, the Republic of Slovenia ensures that the nutritional standards in preschool education and care institutions and in educational institutions take into account special dietary needs. Monitoring through counselling and determining the compliance of menus in educational institutions with professional guidelines is laid down in the School Meals Act. In addition to ensuring the monitoring of the quality of meals, counselling also enables the dissemination of up-to-date expert content in the field of the nutrition, exercise and health of children and adolescents, which can serve as a basis for teachers in their educational and healthcare work with children and adolescents. The Ministry of Health is co-funding the continuous updating of the School Pot portal and developing a computer application to enable catering organisers to improve the quality of school meal planning in line with the Guidelines for Healthy Eating in Educational Institutions. In addition, the nutrition.si portal has been set up to provide expert and validated information on healthy eating for different target groups.

The proportion of overweight and obese children and adolescents has doubled in the last 30 years. The increase is more pronounced among boys, with the proportion of overweight boys increasing from 13.3% to 19.9% and the proportion of obese boys increasing from 2.7% to 7.5%. Overweight and obesity are also associated with an increase in the number of patients with diabetes. Type 2 diabetes, which until recently was mainly a disease of the elderly, is now also found in overweight children, who also have elevated blood pressure and cholesterol levels and a fatty liver. It is particularly worrying that inappropriate overnutrition in children and adolescents is also reflected in their exercise performance (Strel et al., 2011). An increasing body mass index usually leads to a decline in exercise performance (Figure 6), as increased body mass represents an additional burden for children and adolescents to overcome.

### Activities:

- regular monitoring and reporting on the suitability of the supply in accordance with the guidelines and adjustment of the actual supply;
- education and training and the setting up of facilities for the provision of meals in educational institutions;
- professional monitoring of school meals, including the provision of advice;
- participation in the implementation of schemes to improve access to food (e.g. the existing School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme and the Milk Scheme) or other foodstuffs in line with the guidelines;
- the promotion of drinking water, including by installing drinking fountains in buildings and playgrounds;
- participation in the Traditional Slovenian Breakfast project and similar projects by selecting recommended locally produced foods and increasing the share of organically produced food;
- restricting the marketing of food and drink on school premises;
- sharing good practices and effective educational approaches in implementing nutrition education in kindergartens and schools.

**Objective:**

- To improve the quality of nutrition in educational institutions, based on the implementation of the Guidelines for Healthy Eating in Educational Institutions in the Republic of Slovenia.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Health, co-funding of the School Pot project and education on the guidelines	36,000.00	40,000.00	40,000.00	180050 – National Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan
Ministry of Health, co-funding of the programme of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia "More foodstuff with a more favourable composition in public institutions"	34,200.00	/	/	180050 – National Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan
Ministry of Health, co-funding of the Slovenian Consumers' Association programme "My Choice, You Know What You're Eating Choice"	32,690.00	26,522.00	26,522.00	180050 – National Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan
Ministry of Health, funding of the NIJZ public service on nutrition Supporting nutrition in educational institutions through change and impact detection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• supporting the implementation of the revised dietary guidelines and the School Pot programme for kindergartens and schools</li> <li>• professional monitoring of school meals, including the provision of advice</li> <li>• supporting the implementation of the School Scheme</li> <li>• supporting the implementation of the Traditional Slovenian Breakfast by selecting recommended locally produced foodstuffs and increasing the proportion of organic food consumption</li> </ul>	158,357.00	162,756.00	162,756.00	7084 – Public service provision by the NIJZ

## IV. Providing children and families adequate information on healthy diets for children

### 1. TREATMENT OF OVERFED CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

The Ministry of Health co-funds the nutrition.si portal, which provides expert and validated information on healthy eating for different target groups.

From 1989 to 2010, the number of overweight and obese children increased, but the upward trend reversed after 2010, with the proportion of overweight and obese children steadily declining. However, in 2020<sup>17</sup> and 2021 (preliminary data), we were again facing very pronounced negative trends due to the COVID-19 epidemic. According to the Sport and Education Scoreboard (Slofit, 2020), this deterioration has been evident in a whole generation of children – most of all in those children who were previously very physically active. There are also significant differences by region, with worse results in the Eastern region compared to the Western region, probably related to economic deprivation, the educational structure and also the environmental deprivation of the region.

Overall, the proportion of boys with obesity increased by more than 20% compared to the previous school year, i.e. to 7.1% of the population, the proportion of boys with pre-obesity increased by more than 11%, i.e. to 19.7%, while the proportion of boys with morbid obesity also increased by 25%, i.e. to 2% of the population. For girls, the trends in changes in overnutrition were similar, with the proportion of girls with obesity increasing by almost 17%, i.e. to 5.6% of the population, while the proportion of those with morbid obesity increased from 1.3% of the population to 1.5% of the population, which is an increase of 15%. The largest increases in pre-obesity and obesity occurred in children up to 11 years of age, who are mainly taught by classroom teachers who did not devote enough attention to sports education in their distance education.

The SLOFIT analysis highlights that children have been one of the population groups most affected by the COVID-19 prevention measures, as they have prevented them from normal daily physical activity and completely changed their lifestyles. It also shows that distance teaching of physical education was not able to prevent the dramatic decline in children's physical performance, but only slightly mitigated it. The proportion of both boys and girls with obesity in 2020 and 2021 was the highest in the history of SLOFIT analyses.

Support for the implementation of an interdisciplinary programme in the treatment of overweight children and adolescents is provided at the Slovenian Red Cross Youth Health Resort at Debeli Rtič. The two-week treatment programme is aimed at children aged 7–19 years and is delivered via a team approach (doctor, nutritional counsellor, psychologist, physiotherapist and/or occupational therapist and kinesiologist). Children are actively involved in preparing healthy meals, outdoor activities, lots of sport and exercise, building self-esteem and learning for life. The programme also includes the active presence of parents or caregivers, who attend workshops at the end of the week during the 14-day programme. Once home, multidisciplinary teams (a paediatric team and a kinesiologist, nutritional counsellor, psychologist and registered nurse) provide support to children, adolescents and their parents or caregivers at the primary level, in the local environment.

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Data for 2020 are available in the [Report 2020 online \(slofit.org\)](https://www.slofit.org/reports/2020);

The preliminary report for 2021 is available at: [Report for the public SLOfit 2021.pdf](https://www.slofit.org/reports/2021);

Healthy lifestyle conditions should be promoted and provided in the local environment, in particular adequate exercise opportunities for children and adolescents who have been involved in interdisciplinary programmes for the treatment of overnutrition.

A similar Healthy Lifestyle School programme is run at Stična Hospital, which provides rehabilitation for chronically ill children aged 0–19 for all medical conditions. In addition to treating the disease itself, the aim is to prepare the child for life with a chronic illness and, in doing so, to equip them with a positive self-image and self-esteem. As primary school education is also provided, the child also acquires the skills to balance his or her condition with his or her school obligations. In addition to the medical staff needed for treatment and care, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, a dietician, a speech and language therapist, psychologists and a psychotherapist are involved in the activity, so that teamwork is provided for each individual child. Children and adolescents who are overweight and obese are also treated at primary level in the Health Promotion Centres under the programme "Family treatment to reduce the risk of obesity and reduced physical capacity", which is aimed at children and adolescents in grades 3 and 6 who have been identified as meeting inclusion criteria during a regular systematic screening.

With the help of the European Regional Development Fund, the Ministry of Health will build a new facility for the Šentvid pri Stični Centre for the Treatment of Children’s Illnesses. The investment will ensure better care for children (more successful treatment and a higher proportion of more lasting effects of treatment), reduce the time needed to treat children (the reduction of hospital-acquired infections), improve healthcare services (more suitable accommodation for children and accompanying persons), provide additional activities to the existing programmes (healthy lifestyle school, therapeutic treatment of children with developmental disabilities, etc.) and improve the working conditions of the staff. This will also enable greater social integration of young people with special needs into the local environment and the development of deinstitutionalised forms of care.

Activities: Promoting healthy lifestyles for children and adolescents in local communities, with a focus on physical activity.

**Objective:**

- to implement and evaluate an interdisciplinary programme for the treatment of overweight children.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Health, co-funding of the Prehrana.si (Food.si) portal	EUR 26,588.00	EUR 31,900.00	EUR 31,900.00	180050 – National Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan
Ministry of Health, co-funding of the Interdisciplinary Approach to the Treatment of Overfed Children and Adolescents programme, focusing on health literacy for the whole family	EUR 35,600.00	EUR 31,666.00	EUR 31,666.00	180050 – National Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan* **

\* Interdisciplinary treatment of children at the Šentvid pri Stični Children's Hospital and the Health Promotion Centres is financed by the Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia (ZZZS).

\*\* The financial implications of the evaluation action have not yet been finalised, as it involves EU funds.

## 5.2.4 ADEQUATE HOUSING

- I. Ensuring that homeless children and their families are provided adequate accommodation, that they are quickly moved from temporary to permanent accommodation, and that they are provided appropriate social and counselling services.

### 1. HOUSING UNITS TO TEMPORARILY ADDRESS THE HOUSING NEEDS OF VULNERABLE GROUPS

For the most vulnerable groups, who for various reasons are left homeless, there is too little housing on the market or rents are too high. Some are also unable to secure housing because of prejudice and mistrust of landlords, who are often reluctant to rent to socially disadvantaged people. In the Republic of Slovenia, there are 1,280 beds available under social protection programmes for vulnerable groups. The largest number of beds are available in violence prevention programmes (safe houses and maternity homes, 427 beds), followed by homelessness programmes (shelters, 352 beds), then mental health programmes (housing groups, 278 beds), social rehabilitation programmes for addicts (185 beds) and programmes for people with disabilities (38 beds). However, data<sup>18</sup> show that there are not enough transitional housing groups, with 498 users being turned away by providers due to overcrowding.

In the draft Resolution on the National Programme for Social Protection 2021–2030, we envisaged a change in the role of social protection accommodation programmes (safe houses, maternity homes, shelters, etc.) so that they gradually become part of the public network and are guaranteed 100% state funding. In addition, in line with modern standards in the field of social work, we envisaged the use of the *Housing First!* approach, as the most vulnerable people need to be provided safe accommodation and then professional support to enable them to cope with their distress.

The aim of the measure is to complement the existing social housing programmes by providing housing units (through purchase, construction and renovation) to temporarily address the housing needs of vulnerable groups such as homeless people, evicted families and individuals, people with mental health problems, women and children who have been displaced from their family environment due to violence, children and adolescents who find themselves in acute distress that they cannot resolve in their home environment: unbearable situations at home (psychological and physical violence, sexual abuse, parental alcoholism, etc.), resistance to parents for various reasons, parental rejection, emotional distress, adolescent crisis or school-related problems.

The measure is envisaged to provide 24 housing units, with each unit accommodating 5–12 persons. The housing units will provide accommodation with professional support for 168 of the most vulnerable persons.

#### **Objectives:**

- to provide additional housing units to temporarily address the housing needs of the most vulnerable groups;
- to provide safe accommodation and professional support to the most vulnerable groups to help them cope with social and other distress → *Housing First!*

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<sup>18</sup> Source: Monitoring the implementation of social protection programmes in 2020. Final report; DRAFT, Ljubljana, 2021.



### Sources of funding:

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities	0	0	2,000,000.00	*

\* Budget item not yet defined, to be known when the budget is revised.

- II. Assessing and, where appropriate, revising national and local housing policies and taking measures to ensure that the interests of families with children in need are duly taken into account, including addressing energy poverty and preventing the risk of homelessness; ensuring priority and timely access to social housing for children and their families in need or housing assistance

#### 1. RENTAL HOUSING

The Housing Act identifies young people and young families as a priority category for obtaining non-profit rental housing. Persons with disabilities and families with a disabled member also fall within a priority category. Non-profit rental housing is provided at the local level by municipalities, while at the national level public rental housing is provided by the Housing Fund of the Republic of Slovenia.

In 2022, public rental housing is to be introduced, which is also intended for young people and young families. The Housing Fund of the Republic of Slovenia will rent housing on the market from private individuals and sublet it to eligible tenants, including young people and young families with children and families with a disabled child.

By reforming key segments of the housing legislation, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia has made it possible to ensure that at least 5,000 additional public rental housing units will be provided by 2026. The Housing Fund of the Republic of Slovenia alone will provide 2,360 new public rental and rental sheltered housing units in the period 2020–2023, and has already planned to build another 1,333 public rental and rental sheltered housing units from 2023 onwards as part of its own projects<sup>19</sup>.

In addition to the above-mentioned projects of the Housing Fund of the Republic of Slovenia, it is also important to take into account the investments of municipalities and municipal housing funds, for which the more favourable legal conditions facilitate the acquisition of new public rental housing. The harmonised level of non-profit rents, the transfer of the full cost of subsidising market rents to the state budget, the possibility of higher borrowing for housing funds and higher average rents will allow municipalities to pursue a more active housing policy. The Ljubljana Housing Fund alone will provide an additional 1,044 public rental dwellings by 2025, and other municipal funds are also active.

On the basis of its Recovery and Resilience Plan, the Republic of Slovenia will receive a total of EUR 60 million in the field of housing policy to address the shortfall in public rental housing through a combination of reform and investment, and to establish sustainable financing schemes for the construction of such

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<sup>19</sup> These are projects distributed across the country according to need. The largest of these are Novo Brdo, Ljubljana (498 flats), Pod Pekrsko Gorco, Maribor (400 flats), Ob Savi, Kranj (187 flats), Nad Dolinsko 3, Koper (90 flats), while larger investments are underway in Celje, Jesenice, Slovenj Gradec, Lukovica, Kočevje, Črnomelj and other Slovenian cities.

housing, thereby improving access to public rental housing for the socially disadvantaged and other marginalised groups.

**Objectives:**

- to increase the number of public rental housing units;
- to activate vacant private housing through public renting, especially in areas where demand is highest;
- to regulate the rental housing market and improve legal certainty for tenants and landlords;
- to renovate the housing stock and address energy poverty and non-functional housing.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	SUB-MEASURE	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of a Solidarity-Based Future	Increasing the number of public housing units	1,500,000.00	1,500,000.00	1,500,000.00	221083 – Capital increase in the Housing Fund of the Republic of Slovenia
	Public rental housing	270,001.54	1,039,300.00	1,500,000.00	153254 – Housing

**2. RENT SUBSIDIES**

Although non-profit rent is capped upwards and is much lower than market rent, tenants can find themselves in social distress. This may be due to low wages, loss of a job, death in the family or an increase in family members. In these cases, tenants can apply for a subsidy on non-profit rent. Tenants of non-profit rental housing with incomes below a certain threshold are entitled to a rent subsidy, which can be up to 85% of the rent.

Tenants who are unable to get non-profit rental housing, but who would qualify for it according to the set criteria can find housing on the market themselves. Market rents are high and tenants often find themselves in distress. If a family does not have sufficient resources to pay the rent and has an income below a certain threshold, it can apply for the right to a rent subsidy of up to 85% of the rent. Also, under the current legislation, the fact that the tenant or occupant of the dwelling is a person with a disability that makes it difficult or impossible for them to move around normally is taken into account when calculating the amount of the rent subsidy.

Both measures are aimed at addressing the housing needs of families with children.

**Objectives:**

- to reform the rent subsidy system;
- to regulate the rental market and rent levels.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of a Solidarity-Based Future	10,613,331.88	12,877,822.00	15,106,053.00	200030 – Rent subsidies

- III. Taking into account the best interests of the child, his or her general situation and individual needs when placing children in institutional care or foster care; ensuring that children are moved from institutional care or foster care to quality care in the community or with a family, and supporting their independent living and social integration

#### 1. PURSUIT OF THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD IN FOSTER CARE

The purpose of fostering is to allow children healthy growth, education, schooling, balanced personal development and training for independent life and work with persons other than their parents. The court decides on the placement of a child in foster care and on the appointment of a foster parent. The social work centre then concludes a fostering contract with the foster parent, which specifies the fostering relationship in detail and the rights and obligations of the contract parties. The social work centre is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the foster care activity, cooperating with the foster family, the child and the child's family of origin at all times, and preparing an individual foster care plan for each child. Planning the termination of foster care is also an important task. By placing a child in foster care, parents or caregivers shall retain those rights and obligations which are compatible with the purpose of foster care, unless otherwise decided in order to protect the best interests of the child. Every foster parent must obtain a licence to carry out the activity of foster care, compulsory continuous training for foster parents is introduced at both national and local levels, there is compulsory ongoing monitoring of every child in foster care (by individual project teams), a system for financing foster care is in place, and there are annual awards for the most deserving foster parents.

In September 2022, 783 children were living in foster care and 578 persons were included in the foster carer system in the Republic of Slovenia, but the need for foster families is greater than that, which is particularly evident in the case of the placement of several children at the same time or in the case of the placement of Roma children.

#### Objectives:

- to promote foster care in order to attract more foster families;
- to upgrade professional support for foster carers, as well as for professionals at social work centres;
- to ensure that children and adolescents in foster care are included as soon as possible in the necessary treatment and in the existing programmes to support individuals and families, or that these opportunities are expanded (including in cooperation with other ministries);
- to upgrade support for children upon leaving foster care and beyond.

#### Sources of funding:

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities	5,628,133	5,628,133	5,628,133	7057

#### 2. DEINSTITUTIONALISATION STRATEGY

Slovenia has a long tradition and a wealth of experience in deinstitutionalisation and the establishment of community-based services for children with special needs and their families. In the Republic of Slovenia, three residential special institutions were converted into community services as early as in the 1980s, but there are still a few large institutions for the placement of children with special needs. In order to better

implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, we need to modernise the system of care for children with special needs in a way that promotes child participation and community-based forms of support. Currently, 178 children are placed in training, work and care centres in the Republic of Slovenia, and around 300 children are placed in specialised training centres for children and adolescents with special needs. In the current system of regulation, children and adults with special needs are placed in the same institutions, but will be separated during the process of deinstitutionalisation, so that children are treated separately and with services tailored to the individual child.

Deinstitutionalisation is an important segment of the prevention of social exclusion, and we are therefore preparing a deinstitutionalisation strategy that will also include the deinstitutionalisation of children with special needs.

**Objectives:**

- to promote deinstitutionalisation in the community (both in the social work centres, which are the first to accept the family for treatment, and in the family and community itself, where services will be provided);
- to provide training on the importance of deinstitutionalisation and community care for actors in the field of child care (support and additional training for social work centre staff to implement preventive measures for early intervention and the prevention of the institutionalisation of children);
- to develop services as an alternative to the institutionalisation of children (including intensive home-based support for parents and families, early intervention and the development of quality community-based services for children with complex needs and their families);
- to promote and develop family-based and other alternative forms of care for children with special needs and support services for providers (the development of specialised foster care and family-like care for children who cannot return to their families of origin);
- to develop support services for the transition from institutions to the community (for both children and their families or caregivers).

The vulnerable groups referred to in the CG Recommendation and targeted by the measure are children with disabilities, children with mental health problems and children in alternative care, especially institutional care.

**Sources of funding:**

The financial implications of the measure are not yet finalised, as European funding is involved.

## 5.2.5 OTHER MEASURES ENVISAGED FOR CHILDREN IN NEED IN THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

### 1. UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

Unaccompanied minors are one of the most vulnerable groups of children who need to be protected and properly cared for when they arrive in a country. Until 2016, the Republic of Slovenia was considered a transit state. Since 2016, when several unaccompanied minors arrived and stayed in Slovenia during the refugee crisis, a pilot project for the care and integration of unaccompanied minors into Slovenian society has been in progress. The pilot project has already been evaluated and an inter-ministerial working group has been set up to develop a comprehensive solution for the establishment of a systemic form of accommodation and treatment of unaccompanied minors. In order to protect unaccompanied minors, the competent social work centre assigns a legal representative to each unaccompanied minor to represent them in the procedure for the recognition of international protection and in the areas of health protection, education, the protection of property rights and benefits and the exercise of reception rights. The list of

legal representatives of unaccompanied minors is managed by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. The list includes persons who fulfil the conditions for guardianship laid down in the Marriage and Family Relations Act and who have received 40 hours of professional training.

**Objectives:**

- to establish a systemic form of accommodation and treatment for unaccompanied minors.

**Sources of funding:**

The financial implications of the measure have not yet been finalised.

**2. INCREASED SOCIAL INCLUSION OF CHILDREN FROM VULNERABLE FAMILIES**

Children growing up in poverty are socially excluded, stigmatised and have less developed social support networks, and are at the same time less likely to do well in school, be in good health and develop all their capabilities successfully. Particularly socially vulnerable children include children of parents without work or having low incomes, children with a migrant background and children growing up in single-parent families (in the latter, one in four children faces the risk of social exclusion, according to Eurostat data). The factors and circumstances of children from socially and financially disadvantaged backgrounds are diverse and often complexly intertwined, hence the need to analyse their living conditions, to identify the risk factors for their socially disadvantaged situation, and to develop targeted financial and other measures to equalise the life opportunities of children from single-parent families, children with a migrant background, and children of parents with no or low income with those from other types of families.

**Objectives:**

- to monitor and analyse the situation of different types of (vulnerable) families and to design targeted measures for families who temporarily find themselves or live in circumstances that make them particularly vulnerable;
- to develop a methodology for scaling the costs or needs of children in the Republic of Slovenia by age and any other specificities;
- to develop a methodology for determining the minimum child maintenance in the Republic of Slovenia and the child maintenance allowance.

**Sources of funding:**

The measure is under preparation, so the financial implications of the measure are not yet known.

**3. ASSISTANCE OF A THIRD PARTY**

Caring for a child with special needs, especially if his or her condition is severe, is often physically and mentally extremely demanding for parents, leaving them exhausted and burnt out. Because of the specific family dynamics, growing up in this type of family can also be challenging for the sibling of a child with special needs, as they may experience the denial of their own needs, various types of distress and harmful behaviour.

In order to help families with a child with special needs, a comprehensive framework (and legislative solution) for third-party assistance for the family will be set up. We will define:

- which families need assistance from a third party (mainly depending on the child's condition);
- what forms of assistance from a third party are needed by the family;
- how much assistance is needed by the family (in time);
- who can provide third-party assistance, or what references and skills the third party providing assistance needs;

- the organisation of the right to third-party assistance (payment for the assistance, where such persons will be employed and other questions related to implementation).

In addition to the individually identified forms of assistance for the family, the third party will also be responsible for informing parents and children about other opportunities to involve family members in the activities and programmes of various organisations in the local area. True inclusion means encouraging and enabling family members to integrate into the environment; therefore, we will look at ways and possibilities to encourage the involvement of individual family members in family support programmes and multi-generational centres.

**Objectives:**

- to implement a pilot project to test different ways of assisting children and families with children with special needs in practice;
- based on the analysis of the pilot project, to prepare systemic regulation of third-party assistance for a child with special needs and his or her family at home.

**Sources of funding:**

The measure is under preparation, so the financial implications of the measure are not yet known.

**4. FLEEING TO HARMFUL ENVIRONMENTS**

In 2017, an ad-hoc working group was formed to develop a protocol for procedures for dealing with cases of minors fleeing to harmful environments (early marriages) and forced marriages in the Roma community, which is led by the Government Office for National Minorities. As part of the work of the working group, a "*Handbook on the identification of early and forced marriages in the Roma community and on taking actions in these cases*" has been prepared together with the National Roma Platform. The assessment of all the participants in the working group was that the key to preventing this phenomenon and to taking effective action is the integration and cooperation of all stakeholders and their education and training. In 2022, training sessions are being organised for managers and professionals from all key institutions, such as the police, social work centres, schools, in healthcare, the prosecution service, the judiciary and NGOs. The training sessions are held in small groups and in local settings where these phenomena are more common.

The ad-hoc working group will meet regularly (at least once a year) to prevent early and forced marriages and intervene in case they take place. The Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities will carry out a survey to determine the situation, which will serve as a basis for further action.

**Objectives:**

- to adopt a multidisciplinary approach to the problem with the effective exchange of experiences between representatives of different institutions;
- to increase field work with members of the Roma community to address a range of social and economic challenges;
- to enhance the staffing of social work centres to work with vulnerable groups, including Roma.

**Sources of funding:**

The financial implications of the measure have not yet been finalised.

**5. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR FOOD AND/OR BASIC MATERIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE MOST DEPRIVED FOR THE PERIOD 2014–2020**

The Operational Programme for food and/or basic material assistance from the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived ("the Programme") has been running since 2014. The objectives of the Programme are:

to promote social cohesion, to increase social inclusion and contribute to poverty eradication, and to eliminate the most severe forms of poverty by providing non-financial assistance to the most deprived in the form of food and by carrying out social inclusion activities for the most deprived. Three activities are carried out under the Programme: the purchase of food, food distribution and accompanying activities, and technical assistance.

The Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities purchases the food through a public procurement procedure for the selection of suppliers. Since the programme was launched in 2014, the range of food items has expanded. Since 2017, eight food items (wheat flour, short pasta, long pasta, milled long grain rice, UHT milk, edible refined sunflower oil, canned vegetables – beans and canned vegetables – and tomatoes) have been supplied by suppliers.

The Ministry coordinates the range of food items with two partner organisations – the Slovenian Red Cross and Slovenian Caritas, which carry out food distribution activities and accompanying measures. The two partner organisations ensure that the most socially and materially deprived people receive the food items. Before the distribution of the food items, both partner organisations prepare criteria for the distribution of food to the most deprived, which are communicated to both the food distributors and the beneficiaries of the Programme. For the deprived, both providers offer a range of activities to improve their social inclusion.

As part of the European Union's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities has been granted additional funding by the European Commission to implement the Programme and purchase food products for the most deprived. Food products from the additional funding were already made available in 2021 and will continue to be made available in 2022 and in 2023.

In 2021, 20.14% of all final beneficiaries receiving food aid were children aged 15 years or younger.

**Objectives:**

- to provide food parcels to the most deprived;
- to implement accompanying measures to contribute to poverty eradication.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities	5,739,375.10	5,230,491.73	0.00	140074, 140075, 211190

**6. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME FOR THE ELIMINATION OF MATERIAL DEPRIVATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA FOR THE PERIOD 2021–2027**

The key objective of the Programme for the Elimination of Material Deprivation in Slovenia 2021–2027 is to provide continuous food assistance to people with the highest at-risk-of-poverty rate and to involve them in various accompanying measures. Food will be made available free of charge at distribution points of humanitarian organisations, in shelters, maternity homes, safe houses, transitional homes, crisis centres and day centres. The selected humanitarian organisations will be responsible for the distribution of the food and the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities will be responsible for the regular delivery of the food to the central warehouses of the selected humanitarian organisations. The Ministry will consult the humanitarian organisations and nutrition experts beforehand on the volume and type of products. Particular attention will be devoted to ensuring a balanced diet for the most deprived and, where possible, to procuring locally produced foodstuffs.

We will enable all final beneficiaries to participate in accompanying measures that will address their social exclusion and contribute to poverty eradication. The following will be implemented: referral to welfare state mechanisms and information on rights from public funds, information and encouragement to join other programmes aimed at promoting social inclusion and social activation, the organisation of the socialisation of beneficiaries in the form of various networking activities and workshops, and psychosocial counselling.

Particular attention will be devoted to monitoring the number of final beneficiaries, namely children under 18 years of age.

**Objectives:**

- to provide food parcels to the most deprived;
- to implement accompanying measures to contribute to poverty eradication.

**Sources of funding:**

COMPETENT AUTHORITY	2022	2023	2024	BUDGET ITEM
Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities	0.00	2,157,530.00	5,032,072.00	221652, 221654, 221653, 221655

**6 MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN**

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a) In order to inform parents and children about the forms of assistance available, the following will be set up by the end of 2022: an online information point to provide information on all sources of free forms of assistance for children and families in one place.

b) Action (measure) indicators will be developed to monitor the implementation of the Child Guarantee National Action Plan (expected by June 2023).

c) A national framework for data collection and monitoring of the implementation of the Child Guarantee National Action Plan will be set up, which will also define children’s participation and a financial framework for monitoring implementation (expected by June 2023).



## ANNEX 1: OVERVIEW OF MEASURES FOR CHILDREN IN NEED IN THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

GROUP OF CHILDREN	MEASURES BY AREA
<p><b>CHILDREN OF IMMIGRANTS, CHILDREN WITH A MIGRANT BACKGROUND OR FROM ETHNIC MINORITIES, ESPECIALLY ROMA</b></p>	<p><b>PRESCHOOL EDUCATION AND CARE, INCLUDING SCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND HEALTHY MEALS EVERY SCHOOL DAY:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. PROMOTING THE INCLUSION OF ROMA CHILDREN AND CHILDREN FROM OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS IN PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION AT LEAST TWO YEARS BEFORE THE START OF PRIMARY SCHOOL</li> <li>2. ROMA ASSISTANTS IN KINDERGARTENS</li> <li>3. ENCOURAGING THE REGULAR PARTICIPATION OF ROMA CHILDREN IN LEARNING PROCESSES AND THE COMPLETION OF PRIMARY EDUCATION</li> <li>4. EMPLOYING ROMA ASSISTANTS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS</li> <li>5. CLASSES OF ROMA CHILDREN IN THE PRESCHOOL EDUCATION SYSTEM</li> <li>6. ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR ROMA PUPILS</li> <li>7. INITIAL SLOVENIAN LESSONS FOR MIGRANT PUPILS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES</li> <li>8. INCREASING THE COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF ROMA CHILDREN</li> <li>9. MULTIPURPOSE ROMA CENTRES AS INNOVATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS – INCREASING SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CAPITAL IN SETTLEMENTS WITH ROMA POPULATION</li> <li>10. STRENGTHENING THE COMPETENCE OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF TO WORK IN A MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT</li> </ol> <p><b>OTHER MEASURES:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. UNACCOMPANIED MINORS</li> <li>2. FLEEING TO HARMFUL ENVIRONMENTS</li> </ol>
<p><b>CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS</b></p>	<p><b>EDUCATION AND CARE OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN, INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, AND A HEALTHY MEAL EVERY SCHOOL DAY:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CLASSES WITH AN ADAPTED PROGRAMME – DEVELOPMENT CLASSES IN KINDERGARTENS FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS</li> <li>2. SUPPORT FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF SLOVENIAN SIGN LANGUAGE INTO EDUCATION</li> <li>3. ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR PUPILS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES – INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP ASSISTANCE, COMPLEMENTARY LESSONS</li> <li>4. RAISING AWARENESS AND ENCOURAGING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS REGARDING THE POSSIBILITY OF TRANSITIONING BETWEEN PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES</li> <li>5. FREE ORGANISED TRANSPORT TO KINDERGARTENS, SCHOOLS, INSTITUTIONS AND BACK HOME FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS</li> <li>6. PROMOTING THE SOCIAL INCLUSION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT</li> <li>7. HOSPITAL KINDERGARTENS</li> <li>8. PREVENTING INEQUALITIES IN EDUCATION BY DEVOTING GREATER ATTENTION TO THE INDIVIDUALITY OF PUPILS AND THEIR NEEDS – PRODUCTION SCHOOL</li> <li>9. THE DEVELOPMENT OF EASY READING MATERIALS AT DIFFERENT LEVELS OF DIFFICULTY FOR DIFFERENT TARGET GROUPS WITH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USE IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS</li> </ol>

	<p><b>HEALTHCARE:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. UPGRADING SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES</li> <li>2. ASSISTANCE FROM A THIRD PARTY</li> </ol>
<p><b>CHILDREN WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS AND/OR MENTAL DISORDERS</b></p>	<p><b>HEALTHCARE:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ESTABLISHING A NETWORK OF CENTRES FOR THE MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS WITHIN PRIMARY HEALTHCARE CENTRES THAT PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE, COMPREHENSIVE AND HIGH-QUALITY TREATMENT</li> <li>2. THE "COOL KIDS" PROGRAMME FOR OVERCOMING ANXIETY IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS</li> <li>3. DEVELOPING PREVENTION PROGRAMMES TO PREVENT NON-CHEMICAL ADDICTIONS AND ESTABLISHING A CENTRE FOR THE TREATMENT OF NON-CHEMICAL ADDICTIONS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL</li> <li>4. "INCREDIBLE YEARS"</li> <li>5. "DO YOU GET IT (YOURSELF)?!?" AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION AND PRIMARY PREVENTION OF SUICIDAL BEHAVIOUR FOR ADOLESCENTS</li> <li>6. TREATMENT OF OVERFED CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS</li> </ol>
<p><b>CHILDREN LIVING IN DYSFUNCTIONAL, PRECARIOUS FAMILY CONDITIONS AND/OR IN A SOCIALLY AND FINANCIALLY DISADVANTAGED ENVIRONMENT; CHILDREN IN ALTERNATIVE (PARTICULARLY INSTITUTIONAL) CARE</b></p>	<p><b>EDUCATION AND CARE OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN, INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, AND A HEALTHY MEAL EVERY SCHOOL DAY:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. REDUCED KINDERGARTEN FEES TO FACILITATE ACCESS TO PRESCHOOL EDUCATION</li> <li>2. PAYMENT OF TRANSPORT FOR CHILDREN FROM DISADVANTAGED BACKGROUNDS OR IN SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCES</li> </ol> <p><b>HEALTHCARE:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. THE FIRST 1000 DAYS OF A CHILD'S LIFE – AN INTENSIVE PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT PROGRAMME FOR VULNERABLE PREGNANT WOMEN AND FAMILIES WITH HIGH HEALTH RISKS AT HOME (DURING PREGNANCY AND POST-BIRTH)</li> </ol> <p><b>HEALTHY EATING:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. FOOD AID</li> </ol> <p><b>ADEQUATE HOUSING</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. HOUSING UNITS TO TEMPORARILY ADDRESS THE HOUSING NEEDS OF VULNERABLE GROUPS</li> <li>2. RENTAL HOUSING</li> <li>3. SUBSIDISING RENTS</li> <li>4. PURSUIT OF THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD IN FOSTER CARE</li> <li>4. DEINSTITUTIONALISATION STRATEGY</li> </ol> <p><b>OTHER MEASURES:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. INCREASED SOCIAL INCLUSION OF CHILDREN FROM VULNERABLE FAMILIES</li> <li>2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR FOOD AND/OR BASIC MATERIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE MOST DEPRIVED FOR THE PERIOD 2014–2020</li> <li>3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME FOR THE ELIMINATION OF MATERIAL DEPRIVATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA FOR THE PERIOD 2021–2027</li> </ol>

<p><b>GENERAL POPULATION OF CHILDREN</b></p>	<p><b>EDUCATION AND CARE OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN, INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, AND A HEALTHY MEAL EVERY SCHOOL DAY:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A FREE PRESCHOOL EDUCATION PROGRAMME OF 240 HOURS</li> <li>2. A SAFE AND STIMULATING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT</li> <li>3. PREVENTING INEQUALITIES IN EDUCATION BY DEVOTING GREATER ATTENTION TO THE INDIVIDUALITY OF PUPILS AND THEIR NEEDS – PRODUCTION SCHOOL</li> <li>4. TEXTBOOK FUNDS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS</li> <li>5. TEXTBOOK FUNDS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS</li> <li>6. SUCCESSFUL DIGITALISATION OF EDUCATION</li> <li>7. DISTANCE LEARNING</li> <li>8. WIDE AND INCLUSIVE ACCESS TO CURRICULAR AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES</li> <li>9. NUTRITION IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION</li> <li>10. SCHOOL NUTRITION</li> </ol> <p><b>HEALTHCARE:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ORAL HEALTH</li> <li>2. PREVENTION PROGRAMME FOR CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND STUDENTS “Health Today for Tomorrow – the Now Programme”</li> <li>3. PROGRAMMES TO REDUCE PEER VIOLENCE</li> <li>4. FAMILY TREATMENT FOR A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE</li> </ol> <p><b>HEALTHY EATING:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. KINDERGARTEN AND SCHOOL NUTRITION</li> <li>2. RESTRICTING THE ADVERTISING OF UNHEALTHY FOODS TO CHILDREN</li> <li>3. RESTRICTING CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO UNHEALTHY FOODS</li> <li>4. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY</li> </ol>
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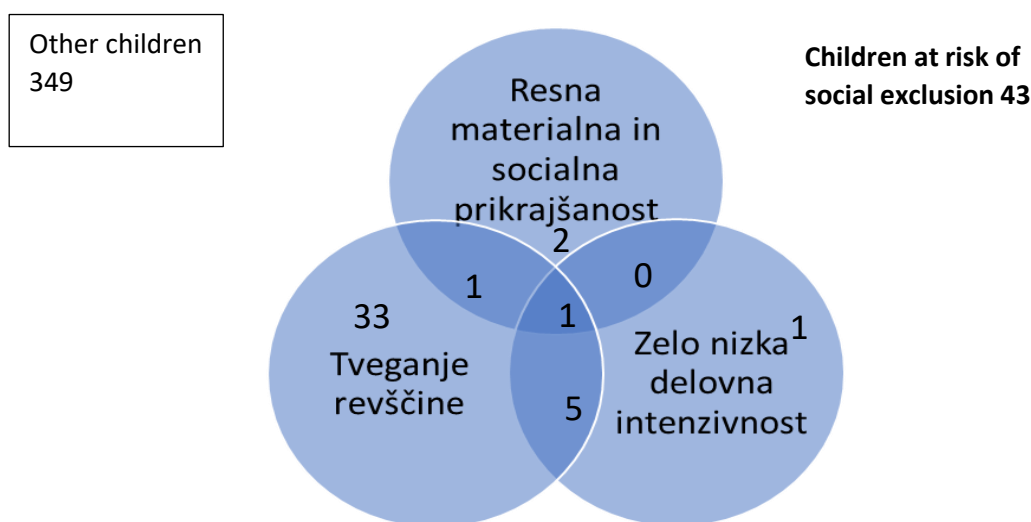
## ANNEX 2: ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

Slovenia has the lowest risk of the social exclusion of children among EU Member States. With 11.0% of children at risk of social exclusion, Slovenia ranks first among EU countries, compared to the EU average of 24.4%. It is also characteristic of Slovenia that children are generally at a lower risk of social exclusion than the general population.

One of the reasons for Slovenia's favourable position can be found in the relatively high impact of the Slovenian social benefits system on reducing the risk of poverty.<sup>20</sup> Trbanc et al. (2021, 44) state that social transfers reduced child poverty by 53.7% in 2017, by 51.7% in 2018 and by 54.9% in 2019. A good standard of living for children and families in the Republic of Slovenia is also ensured by a well-regulated family policy through family benefits, by enabling the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities and by ensuring equal opportunities for the sexes (Trbanc et al. 2021, 46 after Stropnik 2014).

The data that in 2021 11.0% of the children in the Republic of Slovenia were at risk of social exclusion means that 43,000 children were at such risk. Figure 1 shows the distribution of children according to the sub-indicators of the risk of social exclusion. The largest number of children (40,000) were at risk of poverty, of whom 33,000 were exclusively at risk of poverty. One thousand children were at risk of social exclusion according to all three sub-indicators of the risk of social exclusion. The Republic of Slovenia ranks among the top three countries in the EU for all three sub-indicators of the social exclusion of children in 2021.

Figure 1 Number of children (aged 0–18) (in 1000) at risk of social exclusion (new definition of AROPE<sup>21</sup>) in 2021, broken down by sub-indicators (serious material and social deprivation, risk of poverty and quasi-joblessness)



Source: EUROSTAT

<sup>20</sup> Trbanc et al. (2021, 44) in the Social Situation in Slovenia 2019–2020 report state that, compared to the average of the EU countries, the impact of the entire social benefits system (from insurance for various risks and social assistance without taking into account pensions) on reducing the risk of poverty in Slovenia is high.

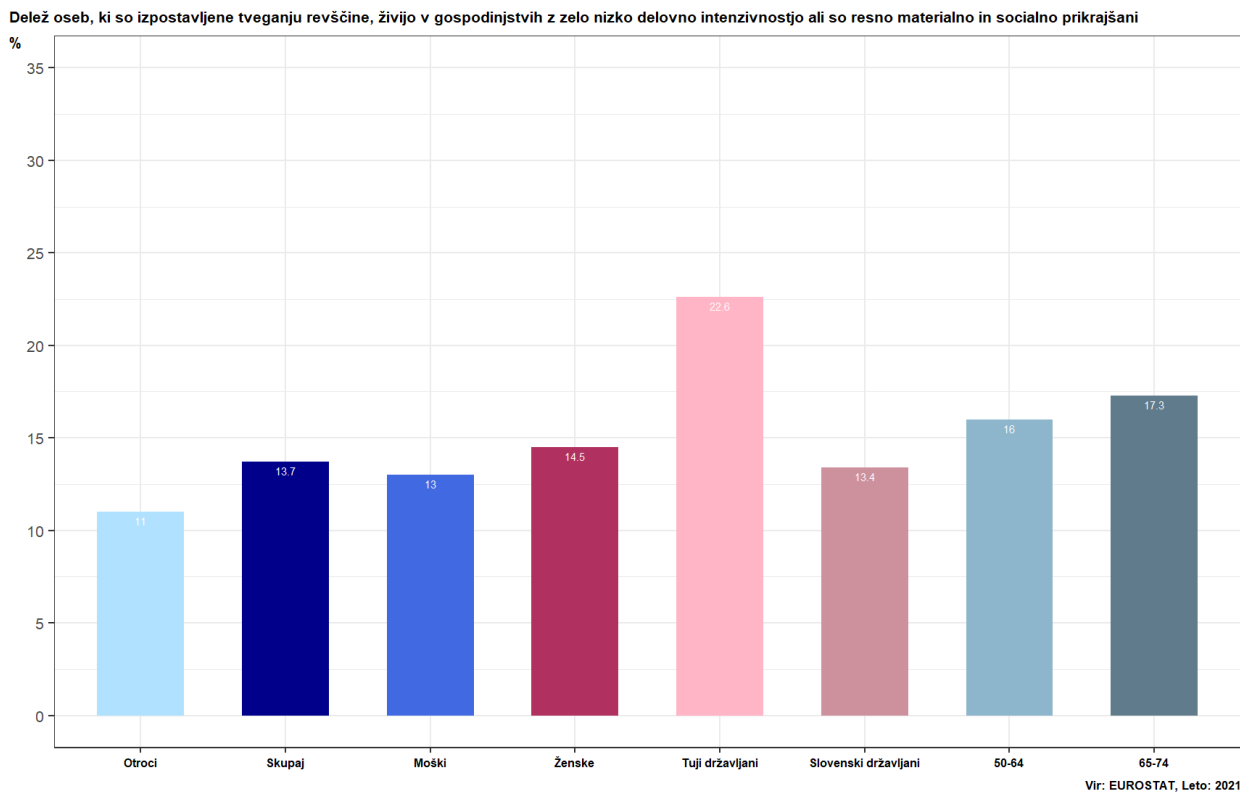
<sup>21</sup> In 2021, the social exclusion risk indicator (AROPE) was amended in line with the new EU 2030 target:

Adjusting the severe material deprivation component by defining a new level of severe material and social deprivation as a percentage of the total population which, out of the thirteen elements of material and social deprivation, is deprived of at least seven elements.

According to the new methodology (EU 2030), the quasi-jobless rate is the percentage of persons aged 0–64 living in households whose adult members (i.e. 18–64 years old) worked less than 20% of their available working time expressed in months in the income reference year (i.e. in the year preceding the SILC survey).

The risk of social exclusion indicator shows that children are at a lower risk of social exclusion than the general population, by almost 3 percentage points. Among the exposed groups in Figure 2, the highest risk is in the group of foreign nationals.

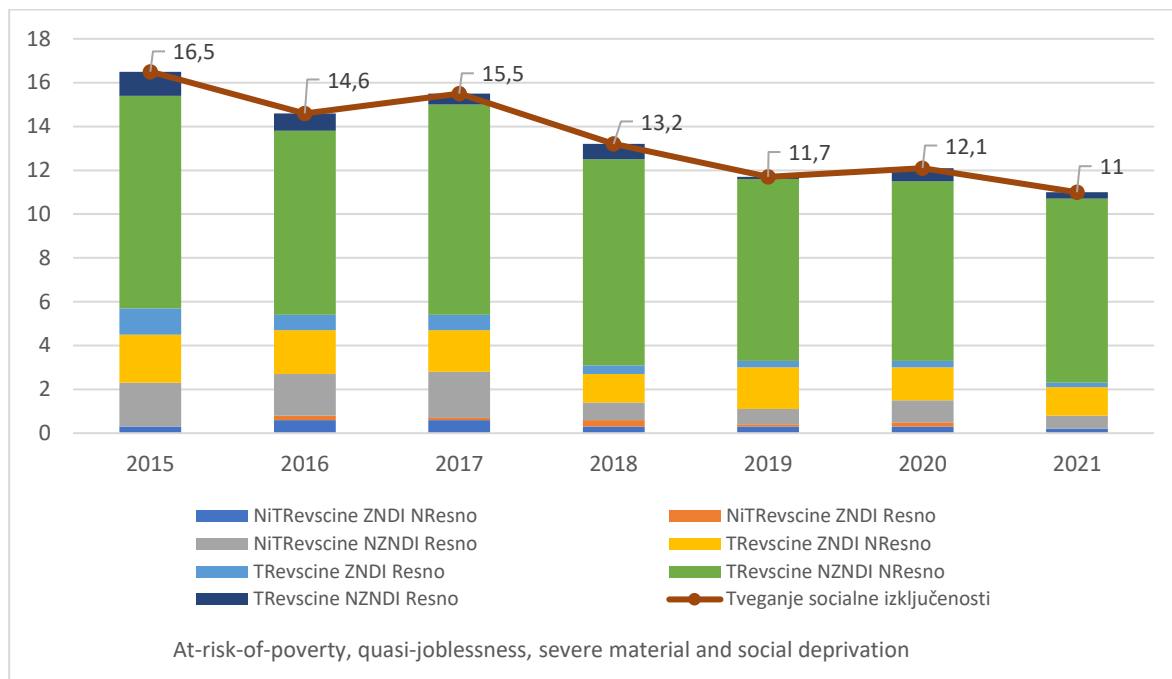
Figure 2 Risk of social exclusion for different groups of people in the Republic of Slovenia, 2020



The rate of children at risk of social exclusion was 11.0% in 2021, with the largest share (8.4 percentage points) pertaining exclusively to the risk of poverty<sup>22</sup>, followed by 1.3 percentage points of children below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold who at the same time live in quasi-jobless households but are not severely materially deprived (Figure 3). Relative to 2020, the rate of children at risk of social exclusion fell by 1.1 percentage points and is at its lowest level since 2015.

<sup>22</sup> For the sub-indicator of the at-risk-of-poverty rate, a weight of 0.3 is applied to children under 14 years of age and a weight of 0.5 to children over 14 when calculating household income per adult household member equivalent.

Figure 3 The risk of the social exclusion of children, share in %

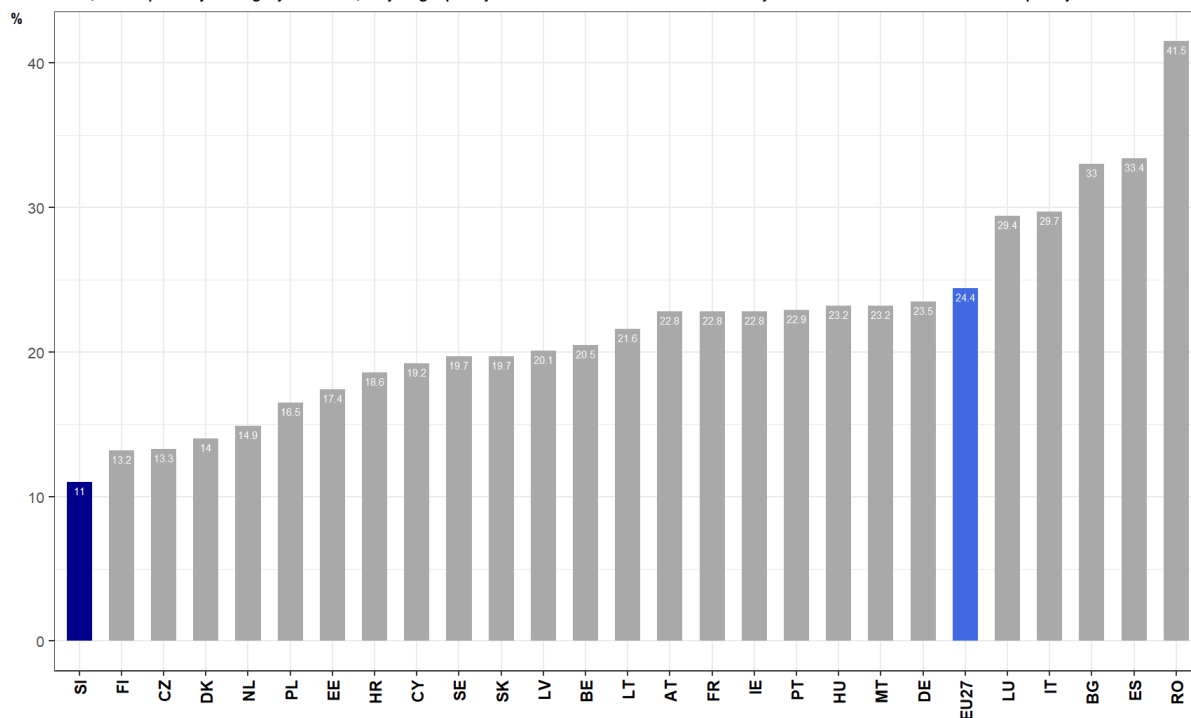


Source: EUROSTAT

In 2021, Slovenia had the lowest proportion of children exposed to social exclusion among EU countries (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Children at risk of social exclusion in EU countries in 2021

Delež otrok, ki so izpostavljeni tveganju revščine, živijo v gospodinjstvih z zelo nizko delovno intenzivnostjo ali so resno materialno in socialno prikrajšani

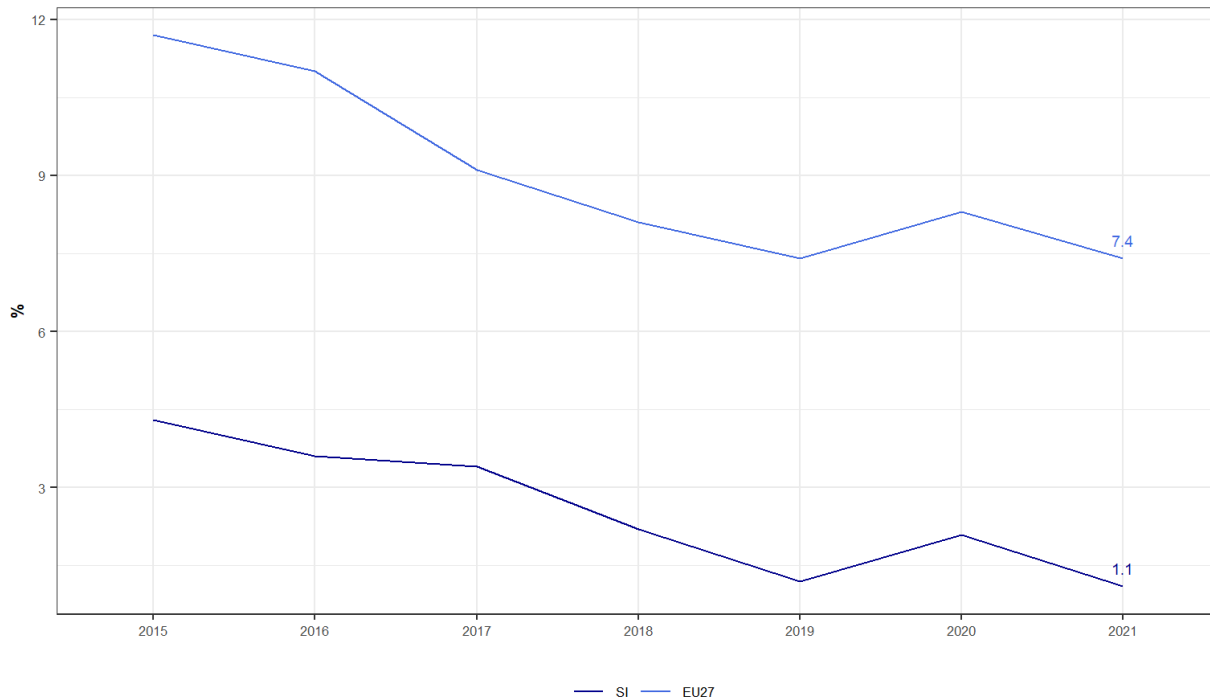


Vir: EUROSTAT, preračuni SAR MDDSZ, zadnja objava: 09.09.2022

Figure 5 shows the low level of severe material and social deprivation among children, which had a downward trend until 2019, but stopped in 2020 and even turned slightly upwards. In 2020, only three countries in the EU had lower levels of severe material and social deprivation among children.

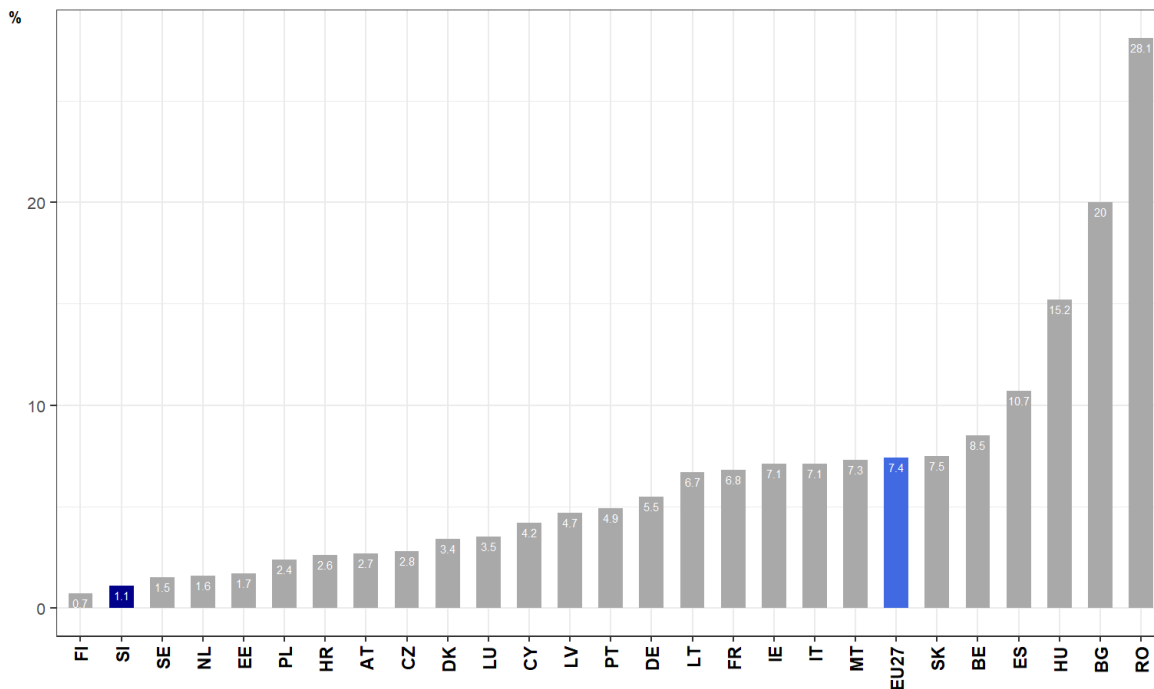
Figure 5 Severe material and social deprivation rates, EU and Slovenia

Delež mlajših od 18 let, ki so izpostavljeni resni materialni in socialni prikrajšanosti



Vir: EUROSTAT, preračuni SAR MDDSZ, zadnja objava: 09.09.2022

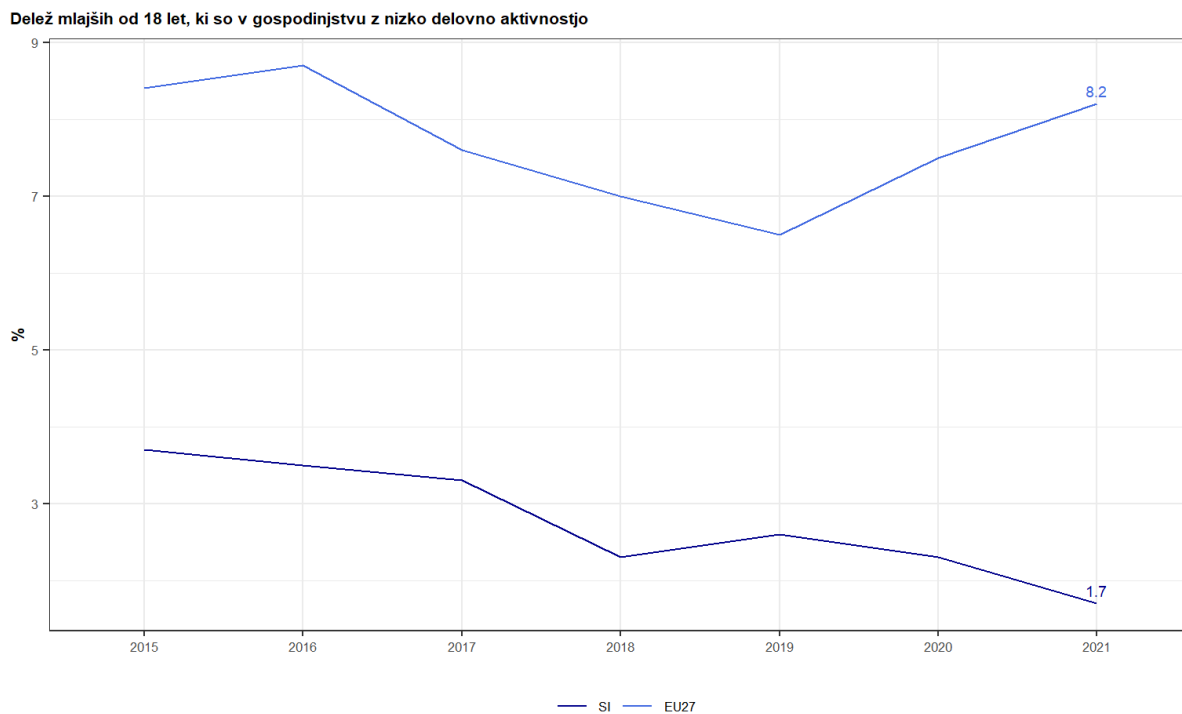
Delež mlajših od 18 let, ki so izpostavljeni resni materialni in socialni prikrajšanosti



Vir: EUROSTAT, preračuni SAR MDDSZ, zadnja objava: 09.09.2022

In Slovenia, the quasi-jobless rate is lower than the EU average, both for the population as a whole and for children. There has been a downward trend in recent years, with the share of children in quasi-jobless households just above 2% in 2018–2020.

Figure 6 Quasi-jobless rate



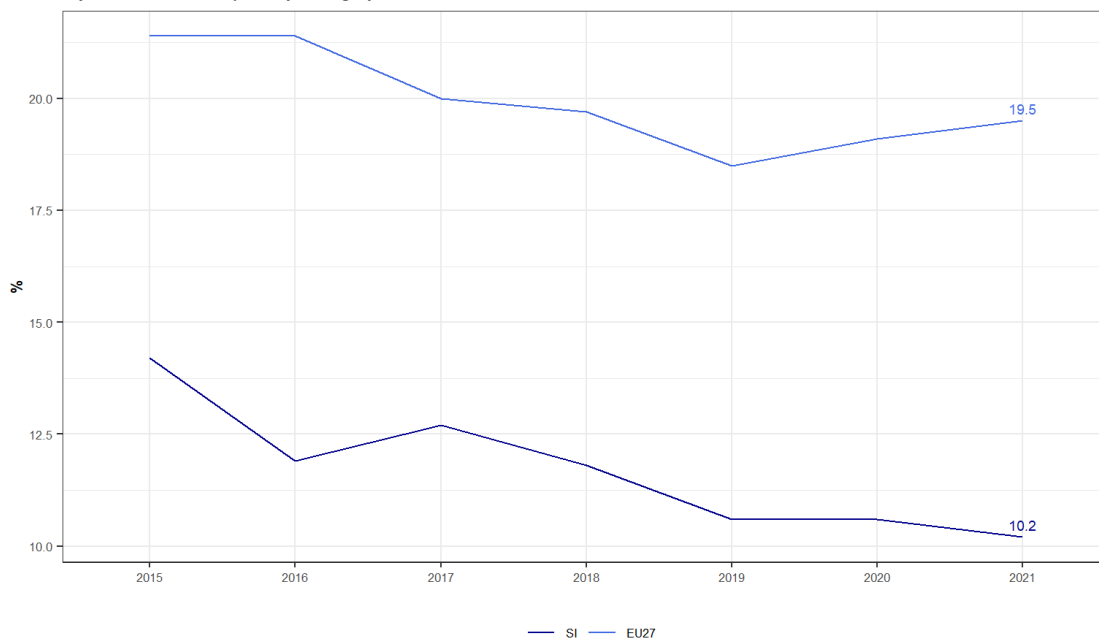
The at-risk-of-poverty rate<sup>23</sup> is lower in Slovenia than in the EU. The rate for children is lower in Slovenia than in the population as a whole. In 2021, only two countries in the EU had a lower child at-risk-of-poverty rate.

<sup>23</sup> The at-risk-of-poverty rate indicator remains unchanged in the new definition of the social exclusion risk indicator. The at-risk-of-poverty rate is relative and shows the share of people living in households whose income per equivalent adult member is below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold, which is set at 60% of the median of the equivalent (net) disposable income of all households. The rate thus calculated is not an indicator of absolute poverty, but measures inequality within the population.



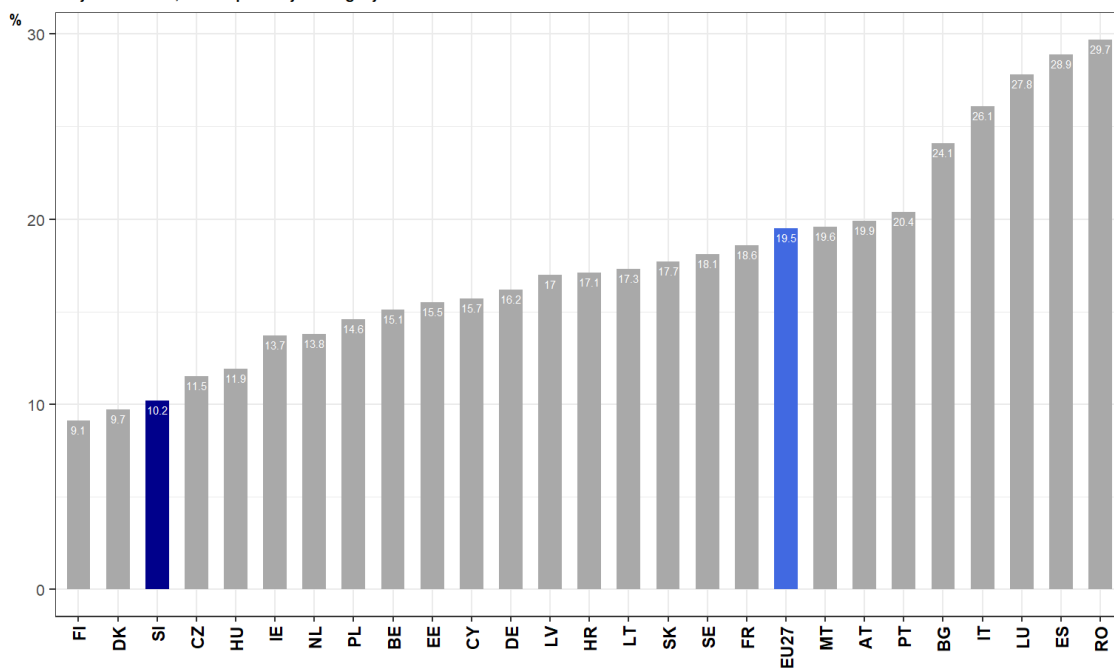
Figure 7 At-risk-of-poverty rate

Delež mlajših od 18 let, ki so izpostavljeni tveganju revščine



Vir: EUROSTAT, preračuni SAR MDDSZ, zadnja objava: 09.09.2022

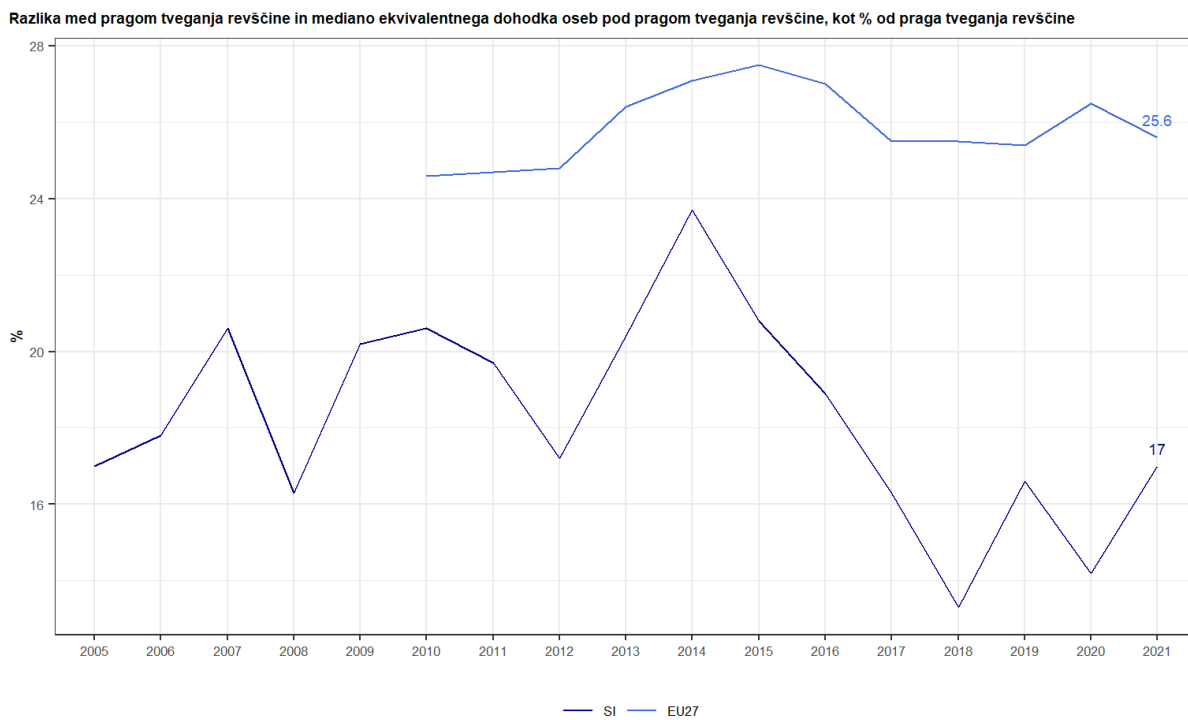
Delež mlajših od 18 let, ki so izpostavljeni tveganju revščine



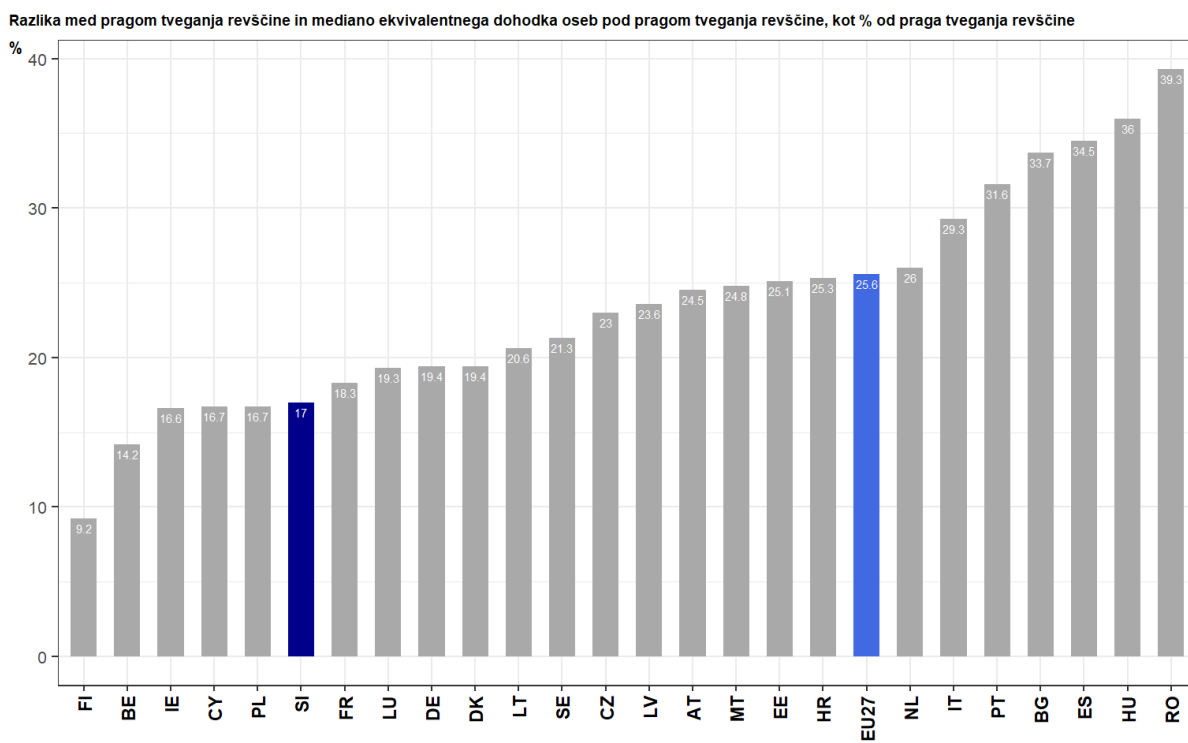
Vir: EUROSTAT, preračuni SAR MDDSZ, zadnja objava: 09.09.2022

In 2021, the median of the equivalent income of persons below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold in the Republic of Slovenia was 17.0% lower than the at-risk-of-poverty threshold. This gap is also among the lowest in the EU, being lower only in five EU countries.

Figure 8 Relative at-risk-of poverty gap



Vir: EUROSTAT, preračuni SAR MDDSZ, zadnja objava: 09.09.2022

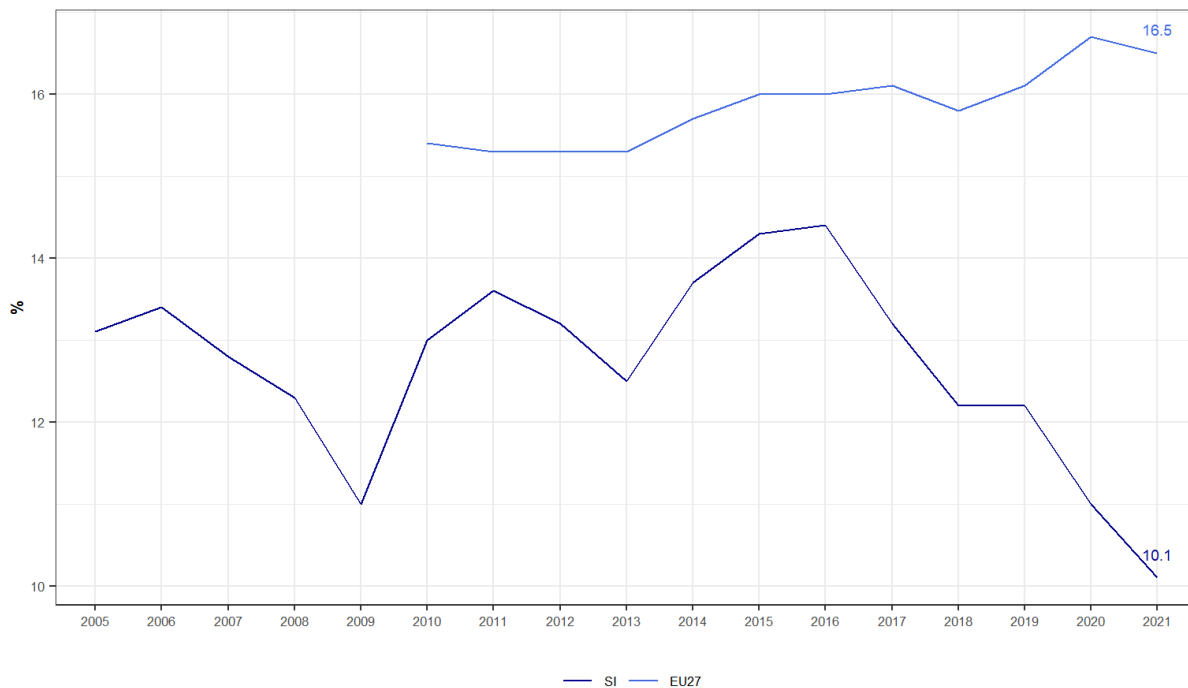


Vir: EUROSTAT, preračuni SAR MDDSZ, zadnja objava: 09.09.2022

In the Republic of Slovenia, 10.1% of children lived in single-parent families in 2020, the lowest share since 2005. The EU average for children in single-parent families was 16.5% (Figure 9).

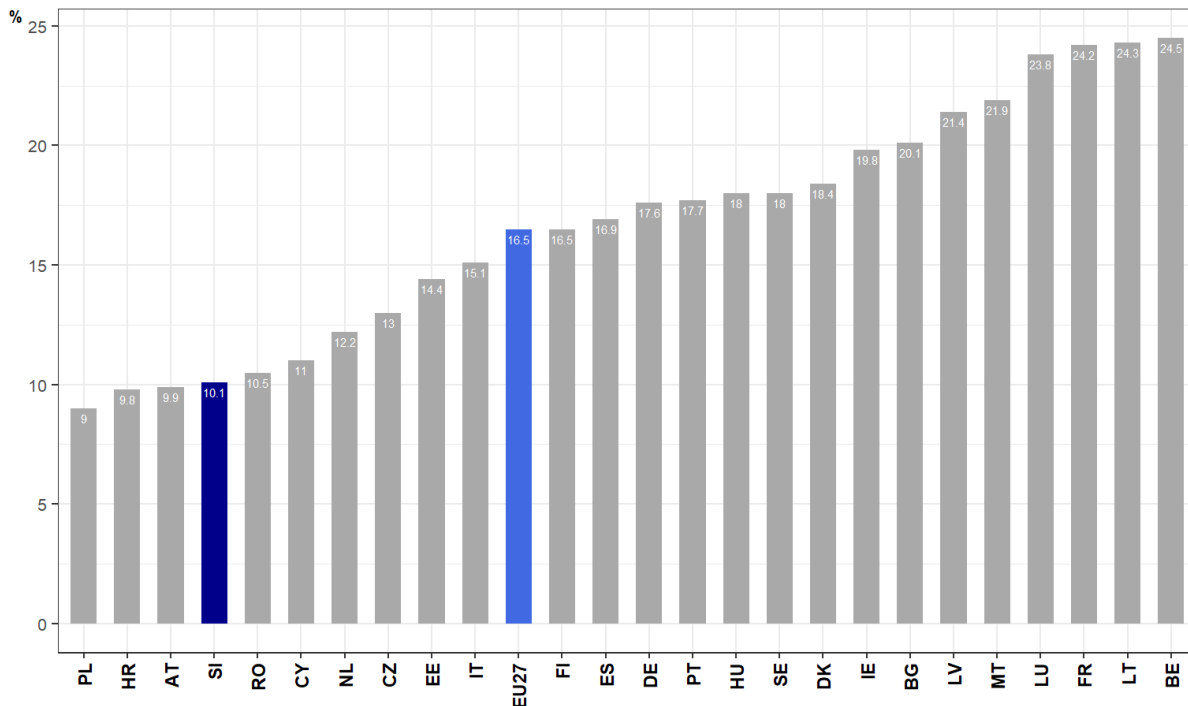
Figure 9 The proportion of children in single-parent families

Delež otrok (mlajših od 18), ki živijo v enostarševskih družinah



Vir: EUROSTAT, preračuni SAR MDDSZ, zadnja objava: 09.09.2022

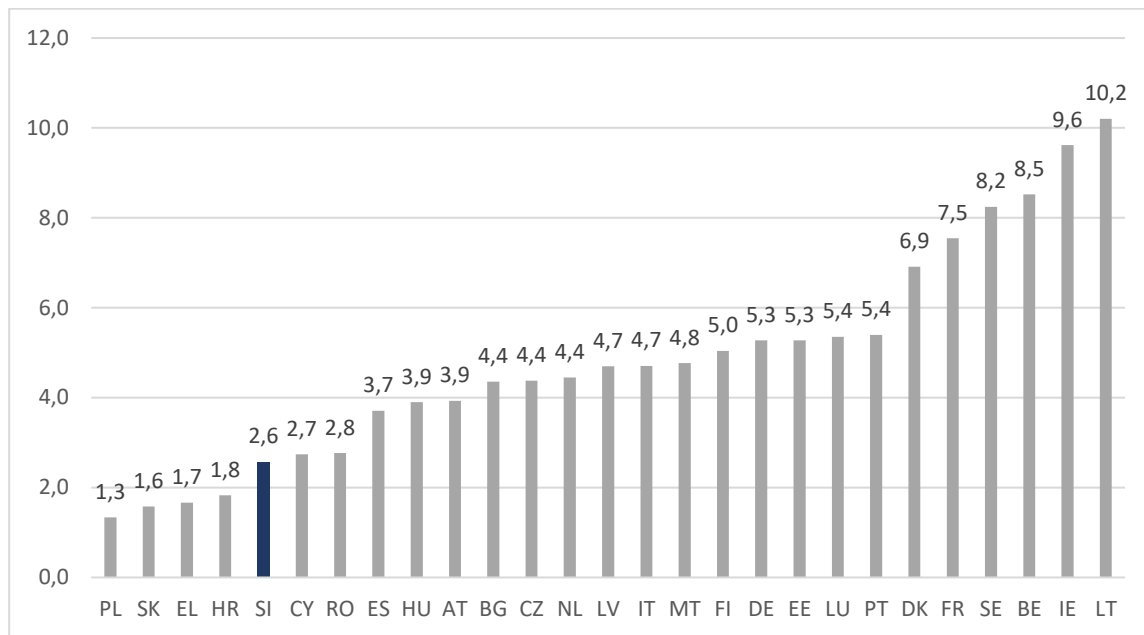
Delež otrok (mlajših od 18), ki živijo v enostarševskih družinah



Vir: EUROSTAT, preračuni SAR MDDSZ, zadnja objava: 09.09.2022

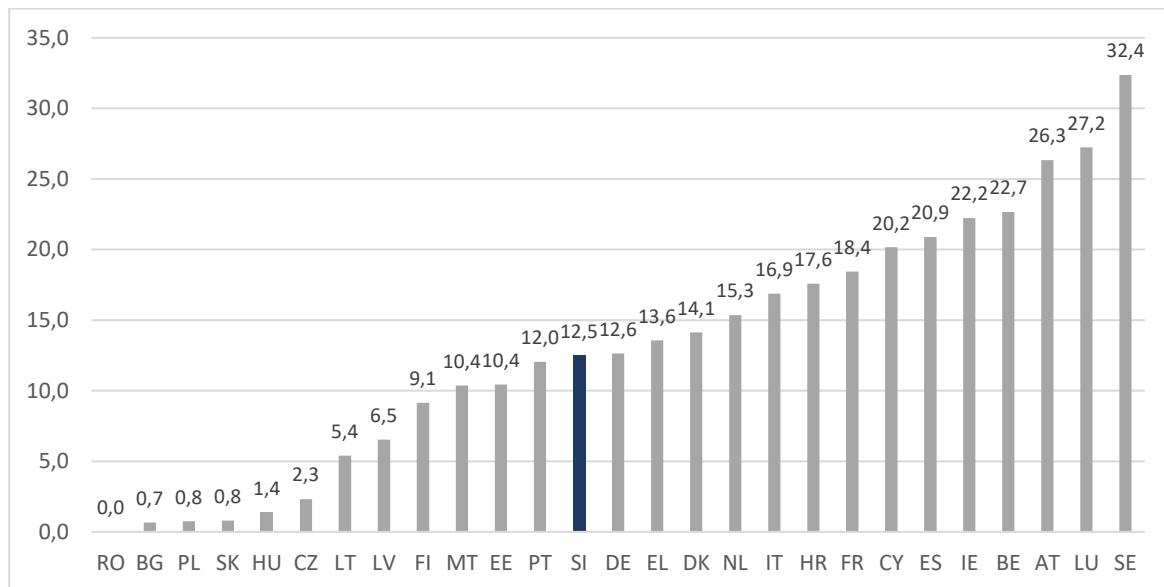
Figures 10 to 13 show the EUROSTAT calculations made for the Indicators' Sub-Group (ISG) of the Social Protection Committee (SPC).

Figure 10 The proportion of children living in single-parent families who are also at risk of social exclusion as a % of all children in 2019



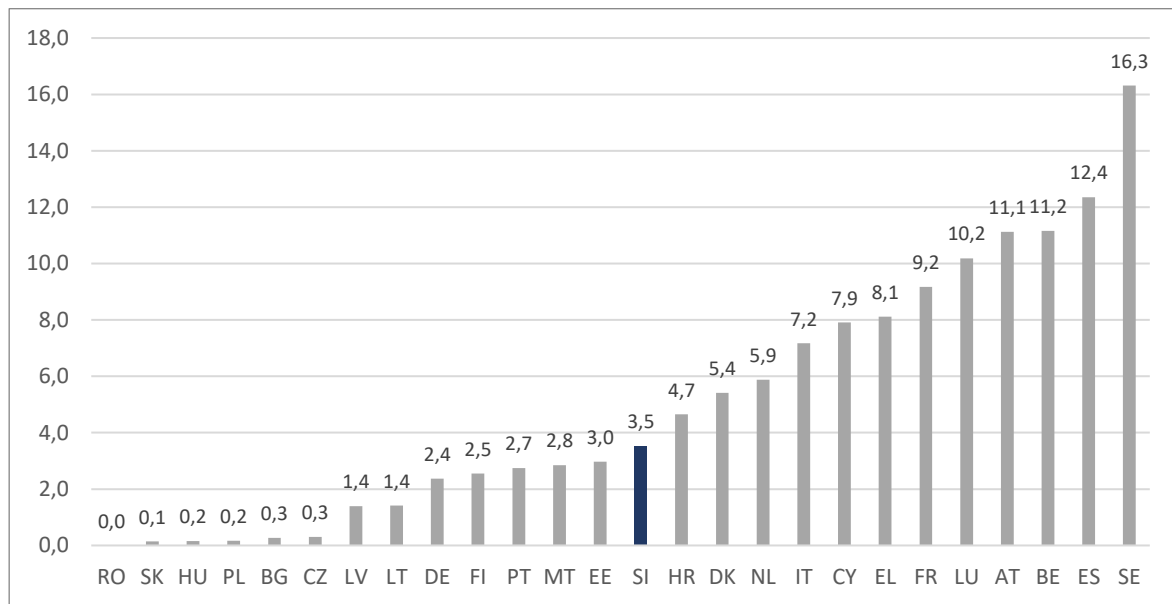
Source: specific EUROSTAT calculations for ISG SPC (the Indicators' Sub-Group (ISG) of the Social Protection Committee (SPC))

Figure 11 The proportion of children with at least one parent born outside the EU in 2019



Source: specific EUROSTAT calculations for ISG SPC

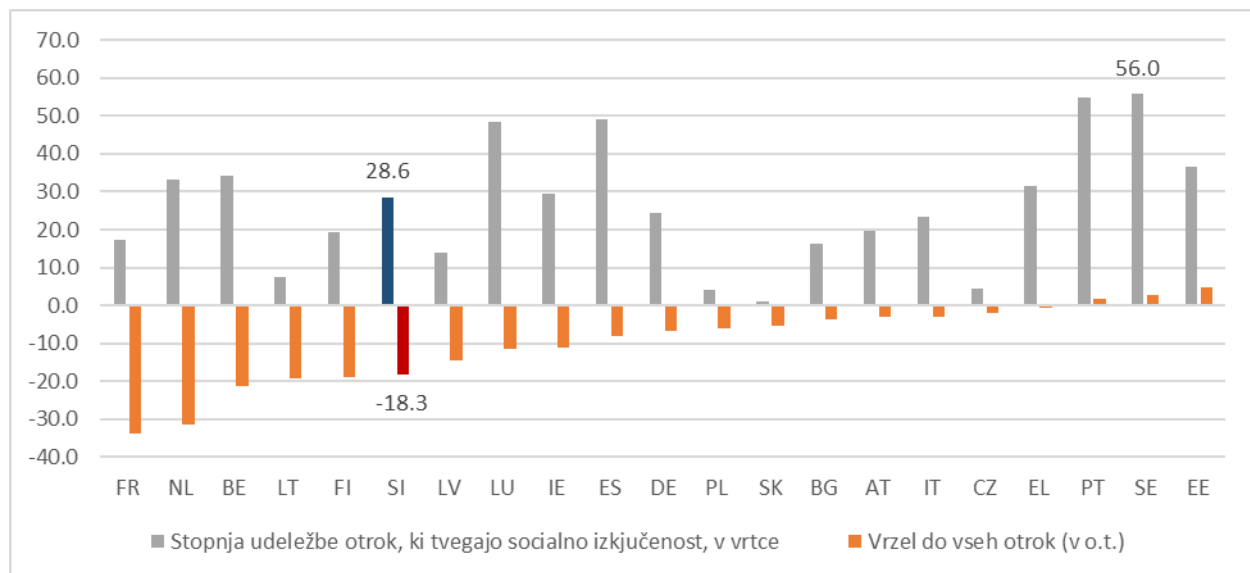
Figure 12 The proportion of children with at least one parent born outside the EU who are also at risk of social exclusion in 2019



Source: specific EUROSTAT calculations for ISG SPC

Among the EU countries for which data on the proportion of children under the age of 3 who are at risk of social exclusion are available, Slovenia ranked 10th with 28% in 2019. However, in the Republic of Slovenia there is a more pronounced gap between the proportion of all children in kindergarten and those at risk of social exclusion; the gap to the proportion of all children is 18 percentage points higher, which makes it the 16th largest gap among EU countries.

Figure 13 The proportion of children under three (<3) at risk of social exclusion in kindergarten and the gap (in percentage points) to the proportion of all children (<3) in 2019



Source: specific EUROSTAT calculations for ISG SPC