

**Contribution of the Republic of Slovenia**

**to request of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights for information related to ending child, early and forced marriage worldwide**

 April 2024

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1. **What efforts have been made or are planned to address the recommendations of the latest report of the Secretary-General on the issue of child, early and forced marriage (A/77/282)? Please, provide information, inter alia, on measures to:**
2. **ensure access to education, decent work, social protection, health services, including sexual and reproductive health, for girls and women who are affected or at risk, who are already married or in informal unions, who have fled such a marriage or union, whose marriage has dissolved, and widowed girls or women who were married as girls;**

Women and girls applicants for international protection (who can be at risk), have the access to: accommodation, material care in the case of accommodation in the Asylum Centre, emergency medical care (including sexual and reproductive health), education, access to the labour market, humanitarian aid and allowance.

In November 2023, Slovenia adopted new Integration Strategy for people who are not citizens of European Union. The main goal is to establish conditions, which will enable foreigners to create an independent life in our society. This is the strategy for all migrants, including women and children. It creates possibilities for women to educate, work, be independent and integrate into society (also at local level).

Government Office for the Support and Integration of Migrants (GOSIM) is responsible for the support and integration of migrants. In that context, all migrant women and girls are informed, when first accommodated in our facilities, about the problem of sexual and gender-based violence and about the available support and help. Furthermore, all women and girls accommodated in the facilities are informed about their rights and about the available support systems through different activities carried out by social workers and other organizations. Main activities are information sharing, awareness raising and finding help and support if needed. Victims of that kind of violence are also directed to NGOs, which can help with their programs.

In 2020, GOSIM, Ministry of Interior, UNHCR, Police, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, and NGOs signed an agreement Standard Operational Procedures on Prevention and Actions in cases of sexual and gender-based violence for persons who are under the International Protection Law and under Temporary Protection of Displaced Persons Act. This agreement is a step forward in the field of systematic approach towards support, prevention and protection of vulnerable migrant women and girls.

Furthermore, the mechanism for identifying, assisting, and protecting victims of trafficking human beings and/or sexual violence in international protection procedures in Slovenia (PATS) is in place for many years. In 2023, the PATS project was re-launched in the Asylum Centre to provide information to applicants for international and temporary protection on the pitfalls of trafficking, gender-based and gender-related violence and to offer possible forms of support within the existing system of assistance to potential and actual victims of trafficking and victims of various forms of violence in Slovenia. In PATS programme, there can be also discussion on the theme of child, early and forced marriages.

1. **guarantee protection measures, remedies and support services for victims;**

Under the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, children enjoy special protection and care. The State provides protection to children whenever their healthy development is at risk and other interests of children so require. Since 15 April 2019, the Family Code has been applicable in the Republic of Slovenia, which, among other things, regulates the system of measures to protect the best interests of the child in cases where it is established that the child is at risk.

A child is at risk if he or she has suffered or is likely to suffer harm and that harm, or the likelihood of harm is the result of an act or omission of the parents or the result of psychosocial problems of the child manifested as behavioural, emotional, learning or other problems in his or her upbringing. Damage includes damage to the child's physical or mental health and development or to the child's property.

Measures to protect the best interests of the child include interim orders, urgent removal of the child and measures of a more permanent nature. Emergency removal shall be carried out by the social work centre, while interim orders and measures of a more permanent nature shall be decided by the court. These measures are taken in accordance with a procedure laid down by law to protect the best interests of the child and to limit parental care to a certain extent (depending on the measure).

The care and support of victims of trafficking in human beings is a task of the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities in provision of which the ministries cooperate with the NGOs that in fact provide the care and support. Accommodation of the victims initially takes place in the scope of the crisis accommodation programme, which (potentially) continues into a safe space programme. The crisis accommodation provides a 30-day care and support for the recognised adult as well as child victims, who urgently need a refuge from their existing environment. During the initial care and support period, the victims are offered a more long-term assistance. Since 2019, Slovenia has also been providing the Reintegration project, which is a logical consequence of the programmes for the support of the victims of trafficking in human beings and represents a first step towards their independent life without violence, exploitation and human rights violations.

The Children's House (Barnahus) provides a child-friendly and safe environment for all the minor victims, who are witnesses or victims of violence, where several support and care services are available and provided under one roof in a coordinated and efficient manner. This prevents re-traumatisation and victimisation during the investigation and court proceedings.

1. **What prevention mechanisms have proved effective to eradicate child, early and forced marriage? Please include examples of promising practices and challenges encountered on engaging family members, religious, traditional and community leaders, in raising awareness about, and countering child, early and forced marriage.**

In accordance with the current Action Plan Against Trafficking in Human Beings for the period 2023-2024, in 2023 and 2024, the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Slovenia will continue to systematically raise awareness among children and adolescents about the dangers of trafficking in human beings, the forms it takes (including forced marriages), the appropriate responses and self-protective behaviour. Prevention workshops are held in primary and secondary schools throughout Slovenia. The workshops are aimed at both pupils and teaching staff.

In line with the Action Plan Against Trafficking in Human Beings for the period 2023-2024, the Ministry of Interior and the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for National Minorities organised a professional training on the issue of trafficking in human beings with the focus on the issue of forced marriages. The professional training was intended for the staff of administrative units, in particular those who work as registrars and come in contact with the phenomenon of forced marriages when they are marrying couples. It is important that registrars are aware, when conducting marriage procedures that forced marriage may also be potentially linked to further exploitation for slavery, servitude or a slavery-like situation.

As regards early marriages, the Slovenian police cooperate with NGOs to identify potential victims of trafficking. Earlier this year we started cooperation with the Office for Equal Opportunities (Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities) and held a lecture on this topic for administrative staff at Administrative Units on how to identify indicators of trafficking in human beings (forced marriages).

In Slovenia, the majority of unofficial marriages take place among the Roma population (where more indicators of trafficking in human beings are present). The police always react to the above after receiving information and check the circumstances of such marriages.

The Slovenian legislation defines forced marriage as a separate criminal offence, as well as defining it in the offence of Trafficking in Human Beings, as an element of the offence (slavery, servitude), as a form of exploitation of the victim.

This problem is often encountered by Social Work Centres, where there are social workers specifically responsible for Roma child marriages, who monitor statistics as well as act preventively in this area. In 2021, experts of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, together with NGOs and the Association of Social Work Centres and other governmental stakeholders, published the “Handbook on the identification and intervention of early and forced marriages in the Roma community”.

Since 2017, the Office of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for National Minorities has been systematically addressing the issue of early and forced marriages in some parts of the Roma community. These activities have been included also in the NPMR 2021–2030, as well as other relevant national strategic and programming documents.

The Office of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for National Minorities is, inter alia, leading an *Ad Hoc Working Group on the monitoring of the issue of minors running away to harmful environments (so-called early marriages) and forced marriages in the Roma community*.

The activities are planned and carried out through the National Roma Platform project in such a way that they bring together all stakeholders who can contribute to addressing this issue more successfully and to take effective action in concrete cases. The Office of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for National Minorities carries out awareness-raising and training activities in the framework of the National Roma Platform project; organises multi-participant events and trainings for a wide range of professionals in public institutions (9 training events were carried out in 2022 and 2023) and opens the debate on how to effectively raise awareness of these issues among members of the Roma community.

Since March 2022, the Office cooperates also with the Centre for Judicial Education in the field of training and awareness-raising of judicial staff on the phenomena of early and forced marriages and active through its representative also in the framework of the Inter-ministerial Working Group on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and its action plans.

In 2024 and 2025, the Government Office for National Minorities will continue the activities initiated by further strengthening inter-institutional cooperation and raising awareness of institutions on the phenomenon of early and forced marriages in the Roma community, and the appropriate action to be taken in these cases. In this context, it is planned to continue the professional trainings that followed the publication of the Handbook for civil servants in administrative units, health care professionals, Roma associations and organizations, and for forensic experts, and to repeat the professional trainings for professionals from different institutions that were carried out in 2022 and 2023, as appropriate, in the local communities concerned.

Awareness-raising among the Roma community will also continue, in cooperation with NGOs and organizations that carry out various projects in Roma settlements. These awareness-raising activities are planned to also use video materials that were selected through a video competition carried out in the first half of 2023.

1. **Are digitalized birth and marriage registration systems being used in your country, requiring mandatory registration of all births and marriages, including childbirths at home and marriages under customary and religious laws? Do these digitalized registration systems allow to verify digitally birth certificates, before registering any marriage?**

The registration of births in Slovenia is digitalised.

In the Republic of Slovenia, the registration of births and marriages of Slovenian or foreign citizens that have occurred in the territory of the Republic of Slovenia is regulated by the Register of Births, Marriages and Deaths Act (Official Gazette RS, Nos 11/11 – official consolidated version, and 67/19, hereinafter: ZMatR), which lays down that the register of births, marriages and deaths is a computerized database, in which vital events are entered: birth, marriage and death and other facts laid down by law. The Rules implementing the Register of Births, Marriages and Deaths Act (Official Gazette RS, Nos 40/05, 69/09, 77/16, 102/20 and 108/22) lay down the methodology and conditions for keeping and maintaining the register, correcting errors and the method of updating the register, the method of providing information from the register, and the type, content and format of extracts and certificates from the register.

ZMatR lays down precisely that the birth of a child is entered in the register by the registrar of the competent authority in whose territory the place where the child was born is located. It also defines who is obliged to register a birth. The birth of a child in a health care institution must be reported to the competent authority by the institution, whereas in cases of birth outside of an institution (such as home births) the birth must be reported by the doctor, registered nurse or registered midwife present at the birth, the child's father or the person with whom the mother lives, or the mother when she is able to do so. In the case of a birth outside a health care institution, the report of birth must be accompanied by a certificate of birth issued by the doctor, registered nurse or midwife present at the birth. The birth must be reported within 15 days of the date of birth and failure to do so is subject to a penalty.

The Central Register of Population Act (Official Gazette RS, Nos 72/06 – official consolidated version, and 3/22) regulates the personal identification number in the Republic of Slovenia. It is the unique master citizen number (hereinafter: EMŠO), which is a unique identifier of a person and represents a basic numerical standard calculated by means of a mathematical method. The identification is intended for managing and maintaining filing systems on the population, for linking the data in these systems, and for rationalization of the work done by government bodies and other users who have a legal basis to use EMŠOs. The identification is also intended to enable individuals to fulfil their rights and obligations. An EMŠO is assigned by the central register of population controller for every individual when the individual is recorded in the CRP at birth, upon immigration or upon the registration of an individual whose EMŠO has not yet been assigned, within three days after the data are received. For a new-born child, the EMŠO is assigned immediately upon birth by the competent health care institution, as the Act provides that, in order to streamline tasks of common interest, the controller of the central register of population (i.e. the Ministry of the Interior) may authorise the filing system controller that communicates certain data for the central register of population to directly maintain these data in the register.

The Residence Registration Act (Official Gazette RS, Nos 52/16, 36/21 and 3/22 – ZDeb), which governs the obligation to register residence, provides that a newborn's permanent residence must be registered within eight days of the determination of a personal name, and that the registration of permanent residence applies from the date of birth.

Electronic birth registration includes the assignment of an EMŠO in the central register of population, the registration of the birth in the register of births, marriages and deaths, and the registration of the newborn's residence in the population register. The above-mentioned legal bases enable the functioning of the e-birth application. The gradual simplification of birth registration in the register of births, marriages and deaths through the e-birth system began in September 2007. All 14 Slovenian maternity hospitals are included in the system.

Electronic birth registration brings a number of advantages for maternity hospitals, administrative units and other public administration bodies, which can obtain information on newborn babies in less time than before. It also benefits parents and is therefore a step closer to a friendly public administration, saving parents the inconvenience of having to travel to an administrative unit, and reducing the time needed to obtain extracts from the register of births, marriages and deaths, a health card, a tax number and other documents for the newborn. The introduction of electronic birth registration improves the quality and timeliness of data for health statistics and analysis, administrative internal affairs, social work centres, the Health Insurance Institute, i.e. in all areas where information on the newborn is needed as soon as possible after birth.

The aim of the system is to assign an EMŠO to a newborn directly after birth, i.e. in the maternity hospital, and to register the birth on-line in the register of births, marriages and deaths. The e-birth system represents an instant communication and electronic data exchange between the information systems in hospitals (maternity hospitals) and the registers - the central register of population and the register of births, marriages and deaths.

The e-birth system allows authorised persons (administrative staff or other employees) in hospitals (maternity hospitals) to obtain the EMŠO of the newborn from the central register of population immediately after confirming the birth information and, at the same time, to obtain from the database of the central register of population the other data necessary to complete their records and, indirectly, for the health statistics they keep.

Marriage solemnization in Slovenia is partly digitalized.

The solemnization of marriage is registered by the registrar of the competent authority (administrative unit) in whose territory the place where the marriage was solemnized is located. The data are kept in the register of births, marriages and deaths, as explained above in the case of births.

In the Republic of Slovenia only civil marriage is legally recognised and it is regulated by the Family Code (Official Gazette RS, Nos 15/17, 21/18-ZNOrg, 22/19, 67/19-ZMatR-C and 200/2 –ZOMTVI, 94/22 – Decision of the Constitutional Court, and 94/22 – Decision of the Constitutional Court, and 5/23) and Rules on the solemnization of marriage and renewal of marriage on special anniversaries (Official Gazette RS, Nos 66/17, 74/21 and 187/21). The persons intending to marry must register in person with the administrative unit in the territory of which they intend to marry and provide proof of the information that cannot be ascertained from the official records of the Republic of Slovenia. Upon registration, the registrar determines whether the conditions for the existence and validity of the marriage (existence of any reservations such as minority, family ties, etc.) are met, based on official records or documents from other countries. In cases where an electronic birth certificate from another country is submitted for the purpose of marriage in the Republic of Slovenia, it can be verified via a QR code or by using the Internal Market Information System (IMI).

1. **What other innovative strategies have been used to address child, early and forced marriage, as well as informal unions and collect data on this practice in your country?**

The Government of the Republic of Slovenia approved the proposal of a Resolution on the National Programme for Prevention of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Resolution). The proposal of a Resolution must also be adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia. The proposal sets out the goals, measures and key bodies responsible for the implementation of policies for the prevention and reduction of domestic violence. Its purpose will be to recognise key fields where deficiencies or poor performance in the field of prevention of violence against women and domestic violence have been detected, and to define objectives and measures for their improvement. The key goals are: (1) high quality, diverse and widely available programmes of assistance and protection of victims of domestic violence and women victims of violence, (2) improved protection, treatment, and situation of victims of such violence, (3) highly trained professional staff and experts who face the issue of domestic violence and violence against women in their work, (4) greater awareness in society about the issue and achieving a higher level of zero tolerance to such violence, (5) improved regulations in the field of prevention of domestic violence and violence against women, (6) provision of quality data about domestic violence and violence against women and (7) improved organization in the fields of prevention of domestic violence and violence against women. All these goals are compliant with the fundamental European guidelines in the field of prevention and treatment of domestic violence and violence against women.

The proposal of a Resolution also includes the following measures:

* Expand and strengthen Social Assistance Programmes for children and adolescents, victims of domestic violence (including forced marriages);
* Improve the practices of comprehensive treatment of victims of sexual violence, sexual abuse and forced marriage for adult victims;
* Further strengthening of inter-institutional cooperation and the awareness of institutions about the phenomena of minors running away to harmful environments, early and forced marriages in the Roma community and appropriate action in these cases and awareness of the Roma community about the harmfulness of all such practices;
* Re-examination of the Criminal Code from the point of view of possible additional necessary harmonization with the Istanbul Convention (contents: forced marriages...);
* Conduct a survey to determine the situation in the field of early and forced marriages, which will serve as a basis for further action.

In 2017, the Guidelines and Recommendations for the Work of CSD Professionals in Cases of Runaways of Minors to Harmful Environments were adopted, which are applicable in all cases where the CSD or the Intervention Service receives information that a minor is in an environment where parents are prevented from exercising parental care.

In 2021, The Government of the Republic of Slovenia Office for National Minorities has issued guidelines for professionals, titled: a Handbook on identifying early and forced marriages in the Roma community and on how to act in these cases. In addition, several trainings for professional workers (civil servants) in the social protection sector, education, police, healthcare, justice, and nongovernmental organizations were held in 2022 and 2023 to enable them to deal properly with instances of early and forced marriages in regions or settings where early and forced marriages are detected. Activities will further focus also on awareness-raising within the Roma community. The measure is listed in the National Programme for Roma under Measure 11. *Ad hoc working group to monitor the problem of minors running away to harmful environments (so-called early marriages) and forced marriages in the Roma community.*