



Slovenia

Tackling child poverty and promoting the social inclusion of children

A Study of National Policies

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Introduction

In 2004, the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs (MLFSA) established a Child Observatory as a department of the Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia. The main responsibility of the Child Observatory is to systematically study and monitor the status and welfare of children in all areas of their lives and to ensure the collection of internationally comparable data¹. The department was originally placed independently and provided a library and a space for workshops for children, but because of cuts in funding it is now an office within the Social Protection Institute. The department has edited a book, *Children and Youth in Transitional Society: Analysis of Status in Slovenia*, and created indicators for monitoring and researching the status of children.

The Government has adopted a Programme for Children and Youth 2006-2013, an initiative that was prepared and coordinated by the MLFSA in cooperation with other Ministries. The Government is now preparing an implementation plan. Once the Plan is complete, the task of the Child Observatory will be to monitor and assess its implementation.

One of the tasks of the Slovenian Ombudsman is children's rights. Children's rights include the rights of the child to contact with both parents; to child maintenance; to protection of the child's property; to foster care, guardianship and institutional care; to services for special needs children and children of minorities and other threatened groups; and to end violence against children (both domestic and from outside the family), among other related issues. The Ombudsman's deputy is aided by expert officers in solving cases addressing violations of children's rights. By clicking on each section you can obtain information on selected cases and get to know our expert officers who can provide information and advice on dealing with any problems within the area of children's rights².

There are a number of non-governmental organisations that are working in the field of protection of children and youth, though very few are working in the field of child poverty.

The main sources of data for our report will be Child Observatory papers and activities, the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia database, and programmes of the Ministries of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, Education and Health.

1. Description and analyses of the extent and nature of child poverty and wellbeing

Slovenia was one of the Member States (together with Finland, Spain and France) that did not respond to the Commission's suggestion to develop a strategic, integrated and long-term approach to preventing and reducing child poverty and the social exclusion of children.³ This is probably the main reason that there is a lack of a comprehensive and integrated policy for the reduction of child poverty and social exclusion. It must be noted that the lack of such a policy does not mean that the issue is neglected or overlooked; it means, however, that we have to take into account incomplete and uncoordinated individual policies addressing children's issues that have been created by different governmental bodies. An additional problem is the lack of the creation of consistent initiatives by non-governmental organisations that will induce the Government to introduce effective children's rights policies. This report

¹ First Annual Report on the Implementation of the National Action Plan on Social Inclusion 2004-2006. Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, 2005.

http://www.mddsz.gov.si/fileadmin/mddsz.gov.si/pageuploads/dokumenti_pdf/nap_inclusion04_06_report1.pdf

² <http://www.varuh-rs.si/index.php?id=44&L=6> 19. 4. 2007

³ Overview of the theme of child poverty in the NRSSPSI of the WU 25. DG Employment and Social Affairs, 32. 10. 2006.

will therefore focus on publicly accessible data and will be structured according to the existing EU documents on child poverty and exclusion.

Eurochild⁴ emphasised that there are just few measures in the NRSSPSI_SI designed for children and young people. Children and youth are designated as 'vulnerable groups', but there are currently no measures designed specifically for them. There is no mention of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), nor a link with the monitoring and reporting process under UNCRC. Furthermore, there is no evidence of children's participation. In 2004, the UNCRC Committee reported a number of key issues that are insufficiently addressed, including:

- Inadequate recognition of the UNCRC;
- Less possibility of presenting views when children are in contact with public institutions and social services;
- The incidence of poverty, particularly among Roma and single-parent families;
- Prejudices and discrimination against the Roma and other minorities, including Serbs, Bosnians, Albanians and Croats;
- The high number of Roma children attending classes for children with special needs;
- The lack of standards and regulations on adoption and of a national adoption register;
- Widespread child abuse in the family and in institutions;
- The relatively poor health status of some children, particularly those belonging to the Roma community, and the relatively high maternal mortality rate;
- The high dropout rate in secondary education.

1.1. Demographics

In 2006 there were 2 008 516 people living in Slovenia, of which 403 028 were children aged 0-19. In 2005, the mean age of women having their first child at the time of birth was 27.8 and overall fertility rate was 1.31 . The average number of live births per woman (aged 15 or over) was 1.55, highest among women without education or with incomplete primary education (2.34) and lowest among women with higher professional and university education (1.13). The infant mortality rate was 3.7 in 2004⁵. There is a problem of maternal mortality. In 2000 the maternal mortality rate was 27.8 per 100 000 live births, while the average for the EU-15 was 5.1⁶. Slovenia does not face a problem of teenage pregnancy, however.

The percentage of children in the population decreased from 16.4 % in 1999 to 14.2 % in 2005, whereas the share of elderly persons (aged 65 and over) in the population increased from 13.7 % in 1999 to 15.5 % in 2005. The age dependence coefficient of young people decreased by 38.7 % in the last 20 years and is currently 20.3 %. The ageing index in 2005 was 108.7⁷. The average life expectancy of a person living in Slovenia in 2005 was 76.2 years: 72.2 for men and 80.0 for women. This age is lowest in the Pomurska region (69.2 for men and 78.5 for women) and highest in the Ljubljana (Central) region (74.0 for men and 81.3 for women).

⁴ Ending Child Poverty within the EU? A review of the 2006-2008 national reports on strategies for social protection and social inclusion. Eurochild: January 2007, p. 81-82.

⁵ Source: SORS: Population: <http://www.stat.si/pxweb/Dialog/Saveshow.asp> 24. 4. 2007.

⁶ NAP/inclusion 2004-2006.

⁷ Javornik S. Jana (2007), Social Overview. Ljubljana IMAD.

1.1.1. Changes in the household structure

The family structure in Slovenia is undergoing multiple changes. In 2002, four-member households were the most common, with 32.9 % of people living in a four-member household, followed by three-member households (22.0 %). Since then, the share of persons living in one- and two-member households has increased, while the share of those living in households with six or more members has decreased. Urban households have fewer members than rural households, with the most common households in urban areas being one-member households, while in the rural areas four-member households are the most common. In 2002, just 5 % of households consisted of members from different generations⁸.

The diversity of family types has been growing. Increasingly, young people remain living with their parents for longer. Among the reasons for the postponed leaving of home are difficulties in attaining economic independence, unemployment, shortage of housing, delayed completion of education, etc. At the 2002 census, 37.1 % of youths aged 25-34 still lived with their parents⁹. The number of families is growing but the number of marriages is declining. The age at first marriage and the divorce rate have also been increasing. The crude marriage rate declined from 3.6 in 2000 to 2.9 in 2005, whereas the crude divorce rate increased from 1.1 in 2000 to 1.3 in 2005. The number of marriages decreased by nearly two thirds between the mid-1950s and 2004. The median age of brides at first marriage was 28.2 in 2005. The number of extra-marital births has been growing, with 46.7 % of children born out of wedlock in 2005.

Concerning the division of labour in the family, Slovenia is still largely a traditional society, with women doing most of the domestic work, while men responsible for small repairs in the house. The caring for children and family members who are sick and in need of help is predominantly left to women.

At the 2002 census, 99 % of children (aged 0-15) lived with at least one of their parents, with 84 % of all children living with both parents and 16 % living with one parent, usually their mothers.

1.1.2.. Lone-parent families

Children living in single-parent families often experience poverty because those families have the highest poverty rate, particularly when the parent is a woman. In 2002, 17 % of families with dependent children were lone-parent families, with 14.7 % of families headed by lone mothers and 2.3 % headed by lone fathers.¹⁰ The main identified risk factors of poverty and deprivation are education, unemployment and unsolved housing problems.¹¹ Social circumstances and social security of lone parents very much depends on their inclusion and participation in the labour market. However, employment in itself does not necessarily guarantee sufficient income, particularly if an individual has a low level of education.

Non-present parents (the other parent – usually the father) are obliged by law to pay child support alimony and therefore to contribute to the family budget. The average alimony in 2006, however, was €100 per month¹², which is too little to cover presumably (at least) half of the costs of raising children.

⁸ Šircelj M., Žnidaršič T. (2005), Children and youth from demographic perspective. In: In: Črnak Meglič, A. (Ed.) (2006), *Children and Youth in the Transitional Society*. Ljubljana: Ministry of Education and Sport, Slovene Office for Youth: Aristej Publishing; P.39-55.

⁹ Javornik S. Jana (2007), *Social Overview*. Ljubljana IMAD; P: 73.

¹⁰ *Study on poverty and social exclusion among lone-parent household* (2005). EC, DG Employment and Social Affairs, p. 4. Source of Slovene data is Census 2002.

¹¹ Sedmak, M. et al. (2006), *Study on poverty and social exclusion among lone-parent household* (2005). Case of Slovenia. Science and Research Centre Koper, University of Primorska.

¹² Ministry of labour, Family and social affairs: <http://www.mddsz.gov.si/si/statistika/prezivnine/> 12. 6. 2008

Lone parents also face problems where reconciliation of work and family life is concerned. In this regard, lone parents face more problems and often rely on family networks for help. The research on social networks of lone parents¹³ shows large social, emotional and material deprivation, as compared with parents in other types of families, since lone parents are often deprived of social support. The housing problem represents one of the most critical issues of lone parenting, particularly because households headed by women are more likely to experience poverty than those headed by men.

1.2. Poverty

In February 2007, the Statistical Office issued new social cohesion indicators for 2004 that were collected under the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions 2005 (EU-SILC) survey. The main source for previous social cohesion indicators was the Household Budget Survey. Social cohesion indicators for 2004 are therefore presented according to both surveys, but here we present the results from the EU-SILC survey because it is EU comparable.

In 2004, 12.1 % people in Slovenia lived below the at risk of poverty threshold; 11.4 % if we take into account income in kind, in addition to income in cash. Equivalised income of those living below the at risk of poverty threshold was below €5 278 (SIT 1 261 821) annually — equivalent to €440 (SIT 105 152) per month. At that time, a four-member family should have had at least €11 083 (SIT 2 649 825) — or €924 (SIT 220 819) per month — of disposable income, in order to exceed the poverty threshold. More detailed data show that women had a greater at risk of poverty rate than men, particularly older women aged 65 and above (26 % for women and 11,2 for men).¹⁴

Social transfers lower the risk of poverty

The at risk of poverty rate is higher if social transfers are not considered as income; in this case the rate is 25 % and shows the positive impact of social transfers on decreasing the at risk of poverty rate. In 2004, the at risk of poverty rate was the highest for women aged 65 and over (36 %). If we subtract old-age and survivors' pensions, in addition to subtracting social transfers from income, the at risk of poverty rate would increase for all age groups to 30-45 %, while for people aged 65 and over, the rate would be over 80 %.

Single-member households more vulnerable to poverty

In 2004, single-member households were most vulnerable to poverty irrespective of age (44 %), with single-member households headed by women being more exposed (48 %). Among other types of households, a high poverty rate was observed among single-parent households with at least one dependent child (21 %) and among families with three dependent children, which were slightly above the average poverty rate.

¹³ Ule, M., Renner, T., Žakelj, T., Kuhar, M. (2003), Family Types and Social networks: research report. Ljubljana, Faculty of social science, University of Ljubljana.

¹⁴ http://www.stat.si/eng/novica_prikazi.aspx?ID=708 20.5.2007

Unemployed and inactive people more frequently poor

Other vulnerable categories are unemployed and inactive people, except retired men. Among inactive people, in 2004 the most vulnerable were the unemployed (25 %), with women again slightly more vulnerable than men. High poverty rates were recorded for retired women and other inactive people (20 %). Persons in paid employment were the least vulnerable to poverty, irrespective of their gender. The lowest at risk of poverty rates were observed among persons in paid employment (4 %), people aged 25-49 (9 %) and families with one or two dependent children (9 %).

Accommodation status also influenced the at risk of poverty rate: tenants were worse off than owners and some 25 % of tenants lived below the poverty threshold, compared with only 10 % of dwelling owners.

Table 1: Social cohesion indicators adopted at the Laeken Council – Income and Poverty, Slovenia, 2004 (Source: SORS, Statistics on Income and Living Conditions 2005)

	Income in cash	Income in cash and in kind
Mean equivalised disposable income	€9 535	€9 886
At-risk-of-poverty-threshold	€5 278	€5 516
At-risk-of-poverty threshold for a household consisting of two adults and two children	€11 083	€11 585
At-risk-of-poverty rate (%)	12.1	11.4
At-risk-of-poverty rate by gender		
Men	10.6	9.6
Women	1.6	13.2
At-risk-of-poverty rate by work intensity (WI) of the household		
All households with dependent children		
WI=0	54.0	48.7
0 < WI < 0.5	26.6	24.4
0.5 <= WI < 1	12.3	11.1
WI = 1	2.6	2.9
At-risk-of-poverty rate with breakdown by household type		
All households with dependent children	9.9	9.3
Single parent households, one or more dependent children	21.4	24.8
Two adults, one dependent child	9.1	9.2
Two adults, two dependent children	10.1	9.9
Two adults, three or more dependent children	16.6	13.4
Other households with dependent children	6.1	4.6
At-risk-of-poverty rate with breakdown by accommodation status		
Aged 0-15		
Owner or rent free	9.8	8.9
Tenant	28.4	27.1
Aged 16+		
Owner or rent free	10.9	10.1
Tenant	25.1	26.6
At-risk-of-poverty rate before social transfers by age and gender		
Aged 0-15	31.6	30.5
Aged 16+	44.1	42.8
men	41.3	40.0
women	46.7	45.5
Relative at-risk-of-poverty gap by age and gender		
Aged 0-15	17.5	17.4
Aged 16+	19.4	20.2
men	20.7	21.4
women	18.7	19.6
Inequality of income distribution: S80/S20 quintile share ratio	3.4	3.3
Inequality of income distribution: Gini coefficient	23.8	23.0

Source: SORS, Social Cohesion Indicators 2004, provisional data.

Relatively few people in Slovenia live below the poverty threshold

EU-SILC results from Member States have shown that, in 2004, Slovenia had a relatively low at risk of poverty rate – lower percentages of poor people were recorded only in the Czech Republic, the Netherlands and Sweden. EU countries with the highest percentages of people below the poverty threshold were Ireland, Greece, Spain, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Portugal. In order to be able to compare living conditions of poor people among countries, poverty thresholds were converted into purchasing power parity, which showed that poor people in Slovenia lived under worse living conditions than poor people in the Netherlands and Sweden, but in better living conditions than poor people in the Czech Republic¹⁵.

Low income inequality in Slovenia

Income inequality is presented with the Gini coefficient and the 80/20 quintile share ratio. The Gini coefficient can vary between 0 % and 100 %, with 0 % meaning that all people receive the same income and 100 % that only one person receives all income. The 2004 Gini coefficient for Slovenia was 23.8 %, one of the lowest values in the EU. Only Sweden and Denmark had lower Gini coefficients. These two countries and Slovenia had the most equally distributed income of all EU Member States. Low income inequality is also demonstrated by the quintile share ratio, which indicates that the top 20 % of the richest people in Slovenia had 3.4 times greater income than the bottom 20 % of the poorest people.

Gender differences

Women represent 44 % of the active labour force in Slovenia. Women make up just 28 % of the self-employed. The rate of registered unemployment is much higher for women (54.2 % in November 2005). There are more women than men amongst the long-term unemployed. Slovenian society is a traditional patriarchal society; women still carry the majority of the responsibilities for household and family. They more often take sick leave to care for their children, they work fewer overtime hours and they are not promoted in work to the extent that men are. They receive 93 % of the gross wages of men. The biggest disparities in wages between men and women are in the service sectors, where women receive 77 % of the salary of men, while the lowest wage disparity is observed among civil servants, with women receiving 94 % of the salary of men¹⁶.

According to Eurostat (Bradshaw et al. 2006: 142), Slovenia's at risk of poverty rate was amongst the lowest in EU25 at 7 %. The deprivation rate is also low, with Slovenia ranking fifth among the EU25, after Sweden, Finland, Germany and Spain.

¹⁵ http://www.stat.si/eng/novica_prikazi.aspx?ID=708 20.05.2007

¹⁶ SORS – Women's day, 07.03.2006

1.2.1. Regional disparity

In the period 2000-2004, the level of registered unemployment decreased in most of the statistical regions. The lowest level of registered unemployment is recorded in the Goriška statistical region. For the period in question, the registered unemployment rate decreased most substantially in Podravje statistical region (by 4.1 %). The highest unemployment rate persists in the Pomurje statistical region. A comparison between 2003 and 2004 data reveals that the registered unemployment rate decreased most significantly in the Spodnje Posavje statistical region; a considerable decrease was also registered in the Zasavje statistical region¹⁷. Eastern regions of Slovenia have a higher unemployment rate than western regions; Zasavje has an above-average youth unemployment rate, Dolenjska has an above-average share of unskilled unemployment, and Gorenjska has an above-average unemployment rate of those aged 40 and over. The above-average unemployment rate is typical of the regions that used to be important industrial and mining centres. Regions with higher unemployment rates are also the ones with the highest poverty rates. Eastern parts of Slovenia and some parts of the southeast of the country are the poorest. There are no data on regional income inequality, while nationally the inequality in wage distribution has increased in the private sector. There is a rapid rise in high wages determined by individual contracts and the difference between the lowest and the highest wages is growing.

Regions with high unemployment are also the regions with the lowest GDP per capita and the regions that receive the highest amount of social benefits. We can assume that poverty is concentrated in those regions, which also affects the wellbeing, prospects and opportunities of children in those regions. We cannot comment further on the issue because of the lack of research and data.

1.3. Health and health behaviour

Main health problems: The most frequent reasons for visiting a doctor are respiratory problems (37 % aged 0-6; 24 % aged 7-19). 10 % of all doctor visits are due to infection or parasites. Among pre-school-aged children the most common affliction is infection; 8 % of doctor visits by school-aged children are due to injuries and poisoning, followed by musculoskeletal diseases (3 %). There has been an increase in the incidence of allergies. There has also been a growth in the rate of underweight and overweight children¹⁸.

Main causes of deaths of children and youths are injuries related to traffic accidents (57.7 %), suicides (21.9 %) and poisoning (60.5 %). Approximately 20 youth suicides (1.3 per 100 000 children) occur per year and the number of attempted suicides is increasing.

Sexual behaviour of youths is becoming increasingly unsafe. Pupils at the end of primary school have weak knowledge about sexuality, pregnancy, protection and sexual diseases. According to the 1997 Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (HBSC) study¹⁹, at the end of primary school (15 years of age), 7 % of girls and 21 % of boys had had sexual intercourse. Four years later, according to the same research there was a significant growth in the number of children with sexual experiences: 21.6 % of girls and 30.8 % of boys had had sexual intercourse. The average age of these individuals at the first intercourse was 14.4 for girls and 14.1 for boys. Because of a lack of information and awareness, just one third used contraception. In the period from 1988 to 1994, teenage mothers experienced a three

¹⁷ First annual report on the implementation of the NAP/inclusion 2004-2006. Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. February, 2005.

¹⁸ Bracar, P. (2005), Health of children and youth. In: Črnak Meglič, A. (Ed.) (2006), *Children and Youth in the Transitional Society*. Ljubljana: Ministry of Education and Sport, Slovene Office for Youth: Aristej Publishing; p. 127-129.

¹⁹ HBSC: Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children. 2002, p. 114.

times greater maternal mortality rate and a 28 % greater perinatal mortality rate than the Slovene average.

Fitness and Nutrition: Only 40 % of secondary school pupils eat breakfast regularly and 25 % of them do not eat breakfast. 70 % of secondary school pupils eat fruit and vegetables every day. One third of university students eat breakfast regularly. On average all of them consume too much fat, sugar and sweets. In 2002, 12 % of youth were either underweight or overweight. They do not drink enough water during the day. HBSC 2002 showed that less than half of children aged 11, 13 and 15 are physically active for one hour or more, five days per week. There is a greater awareness of the importance of physical activity among better educated youths, boys and older youths.

Leisure: There has been an increase in unhealthy behaviour. Slightly more than half of secondary school students (age 15-19) are physically active and participate in at least one sporting activity. Three quarters of fifth grade pupils (11 years old) watch television for 1-3 hours per day and 15.4 % watch television for more than 4 hours per day. HBSC research shows that girls interact more with their peers than boys. Boys tend to play computer games and gamble (slot machines) more frequently than girls²⁰.

Self assessment: Research on the social vulnerability of youths²¹ included questions on health behaviour. The results show that they hold health in high importance – it was ranked as the most important priority (22.9 %), followed by friendship (17.9 %), living a safe and peaceful family life (10.7 %), and love and sexuality (9.6 %). A question about their fears revealed that youths fear drug abuse (30.2 %), loneliness (22.3 %) and suicidal thoughts (15.9 %)²².

Violence: The same research included questions on experiencing violence: 8.2 % have experienced physical violence at the hands of their parents more than once; physical violence at the hands of their peers (18.0 %); humiliation by their peers (31.0 %); humiliation by adults (12.2 %); sexual violence by adults (1.5 %); sexual violence by peers (2.8 %); rape (1.1 %); blackmailing by peers (5.0 %) and blackmailing by adults (1.7 %). A growing problem is bullying in schools, with several severe cases having been reported recently.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 117.

²¹ Research was conducted by Research Centre for Social Psychology at the Faculty of Social Science, University of Ljubljana that focuses especially on youth and also conducted several other national surveys on different youth populations (primary school pupils, secondary school and high school students).

²² Ule, M., Renner, T., Mencin Čeplak, M., Tivadar, B. (2000), *Socialna ranljivost mladih*. (Social vulnerability of Young People). Ljubljana: Ministry of Education and Sport, Slovene Office for Youth: Aristej Publishing, p. 230.

1.4. Drug abuse

The basic starting points for addressing problems concerning the use of illicit drugs within the social assistance system are defined in the National Programme of Social Assistance and Social Services for the period 2006-2010 (Official Gazette RS 39/2006)²³.

Services for drug addicts

According to data selected by the Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia, in 2005 there were 627 persons treated in the Centres for Social Work whose primary problem was connected with the use of illicit drugs. Of this number, 28 were minors (aged 18 years or younger).

Due to the increase in the recorded number of homeless drug users, in 2003 the first shelter serving drug addicts was supported. It operates in Ljubljana within the network of low-threshold programmes and has a capacity of around 15 beds. There are currently two additional programmes providing shelters for homeless users of drugs in Maribor and Žalec. Both are operating within two low-threshold programmes, which also provide day centres and other harm-reduction services. The shelter in Maribor is capable of accommodating up to 8 users overnight and the shelter in Žalec can take 11. The shelter in Žalec is currently financed only by the local community. A provisional shelter with a capacity of a few beds is also about to open in Nova Gorica. For urgent cases there will be a possibility of sleeping on the premises organised within the day centre. In case of need, the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs also support such a shelter in Koper.

Drug-related offenses

In 2005, 78.8 % of all drug-related use/possession offences were due to cannabis, 15.7 % due to heroin, 2.7 % due to cocaine, 1.9 % due to amphetamines and 0.9 % due to Ecstasy. Among all drug-related dealing/trafficking offences in 2005, 43.9 % of cases were due to heroin and 27.5 % due to cannabis.

According to the Police Annual Report, police conducted 3.5 % fewer alcohol tests (255 434 in 2004 and 246 611 in 2005) and required 33.4 % fewer drivers to undergo an examination to confirm the presence of alcohol (3 452 cases in 2004 and 22 289 cases in 2005) or drugs: the total number of expert examinations ordered for illicit drugs in 2005 decreased by 26.6 % from the previous year (2 727 cases in 2005 and 3 741 cases in 2004).

According to the 2005 Police Annual Report, criminal offences involving the abuse of prostitution, enslavement and trafficking in human beings are quite rare at the national level; in 2004 there were 7 recorded cases (9 reported suspects) and in 2005 there were 12 recorded cases (20 reported suspects) of the abuse of prostitution. There are no data available to link prostitution with drug use. Criminal offences (with minors as the suspected offenders) during the period from 2003-2005, by type of criminal offence, suggest a 7.2 % increase in the illegal production and trafficking of drugs between 2003 and 2004, and a 34.3 % decrease between 2004 and 2005 (97 cases in 2003, 104 cases in 2004, 45 cases in 2005). There was a 26.76 % decrease between 2003 and 2004 and a 57.7 % decrease between 2004 and 2005 for the crime of enabling drug use (71 cases in 2003, 52 cases in 2004 and 30 cases in

²³ 2006 National Report (2005 Data) to the EMCDDA by the Reitox National Focal Point. "Slovenia" - New Development, Trends and In-depth Information on Selected Issues. Ljubljana: Institute of Public Health of the Republic of Slovenia.

2005). In 2005, 2 847 cases of juvenile crime were reported, with the illegal production and trafficking of drugs representing 1.6 % and enabling drug use representing 1.0 % of all cases of juvenile crime.

1.5. Housing

Households with children, particularly lone-parent households, often experience housing problems²⁴. Young families also experience housing problems because they cannot afford to buy their own homes and they often live in small premises, even though they have more than two children.

Table 2: Household size by number of children (aged 0-18)

	Average number of persons	Average number of rooms	Average area (m ²)
Private households total	2 936	2 849	76 849
Households with children - total	3 852	3 130	83 573
Households with children aged 0-5	4 402	3 091	83 061
Households with children aged 6-14	4 308	3 169	84 407
Households with children aged 15-18	4 202	3 256	86 195
Households with 1 child	3 012	2 869	77 553
Households with 2 children	4 127	3 242	86 247
Households with 3 or more children	5 697	3 652	95 280

Source: SORS; Census 2002

Households with children tend to have larger premises than other families but with less area per person than other families. The same problem faces young families and families with pre-school children.

Table 3: Household size by number of children (0-18)

	Average area per person (m ²)	Average number of rooms per person
Private households total	26.171	0.962
Households with children - total	21.695	0.805
Households with children aged 0-5	18.867	0.696
Households with children aged 6-14	19.595	0.729
Households with children aged 15-18	20.512	0.767
Households with 1 child	25.745	0.944
Households with 2 children	20.673	0.769
Households with 3 or more children	16.724	0.635

Source: SORS; Census 2002

One of the major problems is the accessibility of housing for young people that want to live independently but are forced to live with parents because they cannot afford their own homes. The Slovenian property market is 'closed'; more than 80 % of households are owned and just 10 % of households are rented. At the last tender for non-profit municipality housing there were 3 493 applicants for just 116 flats²⁵.

²⁴ Filipović, M. (2005), Housing circumstances and housing standard of families with children. In: In: Črnak Meglič, A. (Ed.) (2006), *Children and Youth in the Transitional Society*. Ljubljana: Ministry of Education and Sport, Slovene Office for Youth; p. 189-204.

²⁵ http://www.stanovanjskisklad-rs.si/index.php?location=1_1_0_0_0&range=1 25.04.2007

The Roma population seems to be particularly affected by housing problems. Jozek Horvat Muc, the head of the Slovenian Roma Association, believes that the biggest problems for the Roma in Slovenia are housing and infrastructure. Some Roma settlements are still without electricity or water. Out of 105 Roma settlements in Slovenia, only 34 are legal, but that does not necessarily mean that the remaining settlements are unsuitable for habitation²⁶.

1.6. Foster and institutional care

Foster care in Slovenia has long prevented children from being placed into institutions such as orphanages. Foster care is regulated by the Provision of Foster Care Act and a number of requirements must be fulfilled in order to become a licenced foster caregiver. Foster care is closely monitored by the Centres of Social Work. There are no detailed analyses on the backgrounds of children placed into foster families, therefore we cannot conclude whether poverty is a factor in a child's being placed into foster care.

Table 4. Foster caregivers (March 2007)²⁷

Licenced foster caregivers	Total	887
	women	799
	men	88
Professional foster caregivers		139
Temporary foster caregivers		751
Foster caregivers currently without children		136
Available places in professional foster families		146

Source: Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs

Table 5. Children in foster care (March 2007)²⁸

Number of children in foster care	Total	1211
	girls	614
	boys	597
Number of children in foster care with their relatives		358

Source: Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs

Slovenia still has a strong network of institutions for children and youths. In the last 20 years, some of them were transformed into group homes (smaller houses in urban environments), but most of them remain in larger buildings. Children and youths are still categorised and labelled, experiencing stigma when living in the institutions, even though professional language about children and youths that experience problems has changed.

²⁶ <http://www.uvi.gov.si/eng/slovenia/publications/slovenia-news/4343/4375/> 26.04.2007.

²⁷ <http://www.mddsz.gov.si/si/statistika/rejnistvo/> 18.04.2007.

²⁸ <http://www.mddsz.gov.si/si/statistika/rejnistvo/> 18.04.2007.

In 2005²⁹ there were eight centres for seriously and very seriously mentally handicapped children and youths (577 children and 620 staff); five institutions for blind and weak-sighted, deaf and partially deaf, and physically handicapped children and youths (322 children and 230 staff); 11 institutions for behaviourally and personally handicapped children and youths (412 children and 399 staff) and 11 institutions, child and youth homes, among other establishments, for slightly and moderately mentally handicapped children and youths (275 children and 129 staff). There is no information on the family background of institutionalised children, so we cannot conclude whether institutionalisation is related to poverty.

1.7. Groups of children at risk of poverty

Due to the fact that there has been no research or analysis undertaken on poverty and social exclusion of children, it is difficult to identify such groups. We can only summarise or speculate on the social position of some of the groups that experience discrimination. One such group is the Roma. Roma children experience both poverty and social exclusion, live in deprived communities and consequently have limited access to good education and have poor employment prospects into adulthood. Although there is no detailed study on the poverty and exclusion of Roma children, there has been some research done on their education and housing that has been used in this compiling this report.

The second group consists of immigrant children, with or without guardians, who have entered Slovenia illegally. Immigrants that are to be deported from the country have the right only to necessary and basic healthcare and have no money to buy medicine or other goods necessary for their normal development. There are several non-government organisations that have emphasised this issue.

It is not possible to know whether disabled children experience poverty because they are frequently institutionalised and attend special schools where they receive accommodation and care. Little or nothing is known about their families and their economic status. There is also no study on second- or third-generation immigrants. Research undertaken by Dekleva and Razpotnik (2001) partly shows that second- and third-generation immigrants have limited access to education and employment and are more frequently detained by the police or in touch with social services because of crime and violence.

²⁹ <http://www.stat.si/doc/statinf/09-si-097-0601.pdf> 18.04.2007.

2. Description and assessment of the overall framework for coordinating and developing policies and identification and assessment of the main policies in place to both prevent and alleviate child poverty and social exclusion and to promote the wellbeing of children

2.1. Policy framework

We have already emphasised that there is no consistent and clear policy for preventing and alleviating child poverty and social exclusion in Slovenia. The only programme we can comment on is the Programme on Children and Youth 2006-2016³⁰ (PCY) that aims to reduce risks of social exclusion of children and youth and can therefore also contribute to the reduction of poverty.

PCY is based on 10 principles connected to the *Convention of the Rights of the Child* (aged 0-18), *Slovene Constitution* and *UN Declaration of Human Rights*. The policy fields are:

- Health
- Family
- Education and upbringing
- Social policy
- Policy of special social care and attention
- Protection against violence, neglect and abuse
- Prevention of drug abuse
- Leisure
- Environment
- Culture

Each field is supported by goals and strategies for their achievement. We will list the main goals, since no implementation plan has yet been developed (as previously mentioned, it will be prepared by the Child Observatory in cooperation with other Ministries). Currently we can view PCY as merely a policy document with no concrete impact.

³⁰ Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs.

Health policy

Main goals:

- Creating and implementing a strategy for achieving the best possible health status of children and youths in Slovenia, with a special emphasis on reducing inequalities in health;
- Inclusion of children and youths in the creation, implementation and evaluation of strategies, programmes and measures as a necessary part of all activities;
- Realisation of priorities when drafting programmes and measures for strengthening health of children and youths. The priorities are to have a systematic approach in all developmental periods; to ensure equality with emphasis on underprivileged groups; institutional and private sector cooperation and inclusion of non-governmental organisations; to create supporting systems (in families, local communities, schools, etc.); and to create and implement programmes according to professional standards.

Family policy

Main goals:

- Creating better circumstances for family life;
- Adopting measures for the protection of vulnerable members in case of violence in the family;
- Ensuring resources and means for the implementation of programmes that support families.

Education and upbringing policy

Main goals:

- Ensuring equal opportunities for upbringing and education, while ensuring the accessibility of education;
- Ensuring quality of education and upbringing of children;
- Ensuring life-long learning at all levels of education.

Social policy

Main goals:

- Reaching greater effectiveness in supporting and helping children and their families;
- Ensuring good quality of life for children in their primary social network;
- Reducing poverty and social exclusion of children and youths and their families;

- Ensuring sufficient social benefits that will target the most excluded groups;
- Ensuring measures for reducing dropout rates from secondary education and increasing the opportunities for education, to include raising the number of unemployed youths in education.

Policy of special social care and attention

Main goals:

For children with special needs:

- Systematic approach in the treatment of children with special needs;
- Holistic approach and treatment;
- Individualised services and treatments;
- Enabling the educational system to include children with special needs.

For ethnic minority children and youths (Roma)

- Improving their social status and ensuring social inclusion into their community and society as a whole;
- Ensuring access to healthcare for all Roma children.

Children and youths without guardians (immigrant children)

- Ensuring rights to children and youths without an adult guardian (particularly when applying for refugee status and protection);
- Obtaining information on their status and finding solutions that are in their best interests.

Children with behavioural problems

- Ensuring circumstances that will enable children to get education, knowledge, experiences and opportunities that change their behavioural patterns and to be included into the peer groups and society as a whole;
- Ensuring treatment according to their social circumstances and behavioural problems and respect their integrity in all formal procedures in which they are involved;
- Reducing risks that negatively influence their behaviour.

Policy of protection against violence, neglect and abuse

Main goals:

Protection against neglect and violence:

- Protection against violence against children and the protection of victims must become a top priority;
- Improving legislation in the legal protection of children;
- Ensuring the provision of skilled and trained staff.

Protection against sexual abuse:

- Ensuring programmes for physical and psychological healing of victims of sexual abuse and enforcing compulsory punitive treatment of sex offenders;
- Strengthening primary prevention in cases of sexual abuse.

Policy of prevention of drug abuse

Main goals:

- Reducing demand for drugs and prevention of drug trafficking;
- Better coordination of services (both public and non-governmental) in the field of prevention and treatment;
- Ensuring the existence of quality treatment programmes that will be interconnected and easily accessible, based on needs and properly monitored.

Leisure policy

Main goals:

- Ensure opportunities for quality leisure activities for different age groups to the greatest extent possible;
- To enable non-profit organisations to develop such programmes;
- To influence media to promote quality and non-profit leisure programmes and activities;
- Special attention will be given to children and youths with special needs, socially vulnerable children and youths, migrant and refugee children and youths, children without guardians and children from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Environmental policy

Main goals:

- Better space-environment-urban planning that incorporates the diversity of needs and wishes of children and youths;
- Inclusion of the needs of children and youths in the planning on different levels, whether national, regional or local.

Cultural policy

Main goals:

Inclusion of children and youth in social, cultural, spiritual and artistic life

- Ensuring equal opportunities of all to participate in the listed fields;
- Ensuring adequate enabling of a reading culture for all age groups of children and youths.

Insuring positive media influence and positive role of media

- Ensuring accessibility to all kinds of media that aim to strengthen the social, spiritual and ethical wellbeing of children and youths and their physical and mental health;
- Ensuring respect of legislation that protects children from harmful and destructive media content, while enabling a media policy that will increase the awareness of the problems of discriminated-against and marginalised groups.

Information and participation of children and youths

- Ensuring that active citizenship of children and youths will be enabled;
- Supporting existing and new programmes that offer information, advice and counselling for children and youths.

2.2. Assessment of the document

As is the case with many national plans, the Plan for children and youths is too general and therefore too political to be easily assessed according to its impact on child wellbeing. We deal with such phrases as “ensuring equal opportunities for all to participate” or “ensuring healthcare for all Roma children”. It is particularly difficult to assess the Plan because of a lack of an implementation strategy. The main goals listed above are further broken down into short-term aims and there is also a strategy defined as to how to attain each aim. There are a few areas that we feel are neglected and that we believe should be further developed:

- Regional differences and the urban/rural dimension are not considered at all, despite the fact that regional inequalities have increased in the past decade;

- The accessibility of services is not emphasised, even though the weak public transport system is a growing problem. Plans to organise some services only at regional level will weaken access, particularly in rural areas;
- There is insufficient recognition of the plurality of family structures, particularly those of same sex couple families. There is also insufficient support given to single-parent families, who are the most exposed to poverty;
- There are no plans suggested regarding how to ensure equal access to education, not only in public but also in private schools. Private schools are also part of the public network of schools and the State should therefore attempt to ensure equal access to these schools for all children. It is also not known how discrimination in schools will be addressed;
- There are no goals stated regarding the integration of handicapped children into ordinary schools. Although disabled children have a right to be included in these schools, parents often experience problems registering their children and are expected to send their children to special schools instead;
- More emphasis should be given to the provision of proper housing, particularly the provision of access to decent housing for poor families. This issue is not addressed at all.

The Plan is based on the UNCRC and on the Action Plan for Protection and Development of Children and Youth in the 21st Century. The Plan is based on the 12 basic principles of the convention. To be more precise in assessing how far the Convention is respected, we will have to wait for the implementation plan to be unveiled. Because of the universal and untargeted approach, the implementation plan is needed in order to know which children will benefit.

2.3. Analysis of main policies

2.3.1. Policies to ensure an adequate income for children and their families through:

Social benefits play an important role in reducing the poverty of children. In 1998, social benefits represented 7.8 % of all income in households with children; in 2002, this figure increased to 8.8 % of income. In households with children that live below the poverty threshold, social benefits represented 27.1 % of all income in 1998 and increased to 30.8 % in 2002³¹. Slovenia offers different kinds of financial benefits aimed at reducing the poverty of children:

Child allowance is financial assistance for a child until the age of 18 or 25 (if in education). Its amount varies according to the family income of beneficiaries. It depends upon the income category to which the family belongs (the applicable income category is calculated as a percentage of the average monthly wages of all employees in the calendar year before the application was made; nominal limits are set each year.) The allowance is increased by 10 % if the child is living in a lone-parent family.

³¹ Stropnik, N. (2005), Material quality of life of children and youth. In: Črnak Meglič, A. (Ed.) (2006), *Children and Youth in the Transitional Society*. Ljubljana: Ministry of Education and Sport, Slovene Office for Youth: Aristej Publishing; p. 57-75.

Table 6: Child allowance amounts in 2006 per child per month in EUR (SIT)

Income per family member as % of average wage RS	Income per family member as EUR of average wage RS	Amount of child allowance for each child € (SIT)		
		1st child	2nd child	3rd and following children
up to 15 %	up to 181.92 (up to 43 595 SIT)	92.14 (22 080)	101.36 (24 290)	110.58 (26 500)
15 % to 25 %	181.92 to 303.20 (43 595 to 72 659 SIT)	78.78 (18 880)	87.09 (20 870)	95.35 (22 850)
25 % to 30 %	303.20 to 363.84 (72 659 to 87 191 SIT)	60.05 (14 390)	67.10 (16 080)	74.15 (17 770)
30 % to 35 %	363.84 to 424.48 (87 191 to 101 722 SIT)	47.36 (11 350)	54.04 (12 950)	60.84 (14 580)
35 % to 45 %	424.48 to 545.76 (101 722 to 130 786 SIT)	38.72 (9 280)	45.19 (10 830)	51.62 (12 370)
45 % to 55 %	545.76 to 667.04 (130 786 to 159 849 SIT)	24.54 (5 880)	30.71 (7 360)	36.85 (8 830)
55 % to 75 %	667.04 to 909.60 (159 849 to 217 976 SIT)	18.40 (4 410)	24.54 (5 880)	30.71 (7 360)
75 % to 99 %	909.60 to 1200.67 (217 976 to 287 729 SIT)	16.02 (3 840)	22.16 (5 310)	28.29 (6 780)

Source: Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs

Parental allowance³² is financial assistance to parents when, after the birth of a child, they are not entitled to parental benefit under the Parental Protection and Family Receipts Act. The mother has the right to parental allowance for 77 days from the birth of the child. The father has the right under the same conditions as the mother in the period of 77 days from the birth, if the mother:

- abandons the child
- is permanently or temporarily incapable of independent life and work (on the basis of a physician's opinion)
- dies

The right lasts for 365 days from the birth of the child. A social work centre registers beneficiaries of parental allowance in pension and disability allowance. The right is exercised by the mother and, under the conditions cited above, by the father at the social work centre within the jurisdiction of the mother's permanent residence.

Childbirth allowance is a single monetary payment intended for the purchase of accessories for a newborn child. It is possible to choose accessories for the newborn in the form of a layette instead of money.

- single payment
- in 2006 amounted to €244.16 (58 510 SIT)

Large family allowance is an annual benefit intended for families with three or more children younger than 18 years, or 26 years if they are in full-time education and have the status of pupil, student or apprentice. One of the parents holds the right, provided that the parent and children have a shared permanent residence in the Republic of Slovenia. The right to the large family allowance is determined

³² Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs: http://www.mddsz.gov.si/en/areas_of_work/family/types_of_family_benefit/ 24. 4. 2007

by a social work centre *ex officio* for all recipients of child allowance at the time of processing applications for child allowance. If the applicant has already exercised the right to an allowance for a family with three children during the current year and the number of children increases in that year, the applicant is entitled to a payment of the difference between the allowance for a family with four or more children and the previous allowance.

Anyone who is not entitled to child allowance, or has not exercised this right, must file an application in the current year for exercising the right to the large family allowance in the current year. An application must be filed no later than three months from the day the number of children has increased.

- the allowance for a family with three children in 2006 was 342.18 EUR (82 000 SIT)
- the allowance for a family with four or more children in 2006 was 417.29 EUR (100 000 SIT)

Allowance for care of a child needing special care and protection: a monthly benefit as long as the reasons persist or the child reaches 18 or 26 years.

- in 2006 the allowance for care of a child was €87.88 (21 060 SIT)
- in 2006 the allowance for care of a child with seriously disturbed mental development or serious motor handicap was €175.81 (42 130 SIT)

The allowance for care of a child is a monetary allowance for a child that needs special care and protection and is intended to cover the higher living costs that a family incurs because of care and protection of such a child. The right to the allowance for care of a child is held by one of the parents if the child is a citizen of the Republic of Slovenia and has permanent residence in the Republic of Slovenia. The right is exercised on the basis of the opinion of a medical commission. The right is not held by one of the parents for a child who, because of treatment, training, upbringing or education, is in an institute in which they receive free round-the-clock care.

In case one parent dies, children are entitled to a survivors' pension until they are 15, 18 or 25 years of age (depending on whether or not they are in regular education). There is no age limit if the child is disabled.

Pupils are entitled to receive subsidised food in primary and secondary schools according to the income of their parents. The amount is calculated by the school, according to the criteria set by the Minister responsible for Education³³. In 2004, 33.4 % of primary school children received subsidised meals.

2.3.2.. *Policies to ensure access to essential services:*

Access to childcare

All children have access to the public network of kindergartens. Tuition is based on the parent's income as a percentage of the price of the programme in which the child is taking part (Sedmak 2006). Parents with the lowest incomes pay 10 % of the programme's price, with the municipality covering the difference between this payment and the programme's full price. Parents receiving Financial Social Assistance are exempt from payment.

³³ Ministry of Education and Sport: http://www.mss.gov.si/si/delovna_podrocja/osnovnosolsko_izobrazevanje/prehrana/ 24.04.2007.

Table 7: Organisation and children's enrolment in pre-school education in kindergartens, Slovenia, school year 2006/2007

Programmes by duration	Number of kindergartens	Number of class units	Number of children
Total	793	3 484	58 127
All-day programme	-	3 376	55 318
Half-day programme	-	98	2 670
Shorter programme	-	10	139

Source: SORS; Kindergartens, Slovenia, school year 2006/2007.

Table 8: Children attending kindergartens by years of age and sex, school year 2006/2007

Age (years)	Total	Girls	Boys
Total	58 127	27 787	30 340
1 year	5 281	2 478	2 803
2 years	9 619	4 671	4 948
3 years	12 241	5 891	6 350
4 years	14 657	6 930	7 727
5 years	15 458	7 455	8 003
6 years or more	871	362	509

Source: SORS; Kindergartens, Slovenia, school year 2006/2007.

Table 9: Children with special needs education enrolled in pre-school education in kindergartens, school year 2006/2007

Children by type of disturbances ³⁴	Regular class units	Progressive class units
Total	523	236
Mentally retarded children	191	138
Blind and weak-sighted children	8	3
Deaf and partially deaf children	53	19
Children with speech disturbances	119	16
Children with motive impediments	103	54
Children with emotional and behavioural disturbances	32	4
Children with long-term illnesses	17	2

Source: SORS; Kindergartens, Slovenia, school year 2006/2007.

There are 89 946 children in Slovenia aged 0-4. Approximately 60 % of all Slovenian children are enrolled in kindergartens. The percentage of enrolment has been increasing, although it is still below the average of EU countries that have the most developed network of public childcare services (in 2002: Austria 79.6 %, Denmark 90.6 %, Germany 81.4 %) ³⁵. Kindergartens are accessible to children from low-income families because of subsidies from the municipalities.

³⁴ The language used in the table is direct transcription from the web page of Slovene Statistical office and does not reflect the opinion of the author of this report.

³⁵ Kovač Šebart, M., Gaber, S., Pluško, A. (2005), Education and knowledge. In: Črnak Meglič, A. (Ed.) (2006), *Children and Youth in the Transitional Society*. Ljubljana: Ministry of Education and Sport, Slovene Office for Youth: Aristej Publishing; P. 127-129.

Primary, secondary and tertiary education

During the past 5 years, approximately 95 % of pupils in primary education (aged 6-15) finished schooling. There is no data on the remaining 5 % of children that do not complete primary education.³⁶ It is not known what are their living conditions, social status, family circumstances, ethnic background etc. There are reports³⁷ that show a greater number of Roma children included into the special education programmes for children with learning disabilities, although the situation has been improving in recent years as Roma children have received more opportunities and support for finishing regular primary school.

Table 10: Elementary schools for youth and adults, Slovenia, end of the school year 2005/2006

	Schools	Class units	Participants	Persons who left elementary education	
				Successfully completed elementary school	Did not complete elementary school
Total	888	9 188	170 913	21 183	436
Regular curriculum	801	8 767	167 616	20 577	418
Special curriculum	58	289	1 735	316	18
Programmes for adults	29	132	1 562	290	-

Source: SORS http://www.stat.si/eng/novica_prikazi.aspx?id=800 26.04.2007

At the beginning of the school year 2006/2007, there were 96 310 students (youths) enrolled in upper secondary educational programmes, most of them in 'gymnasiums' (secondary education establishments) and technical and other professional programmes (which represents nearly 98 % of youth from primary education). The number of students enrolled in lower- and mid-level vocational programmes is declining, while in the last three years there have been no differences in +2 and vocational technical programmes, vocational courses or the 'matura' course (study at a gymnasium). Among the institutions that organise adult education for achieving upper secondary education are mostly units of upper secondary schools for youth; more than half of these schools have units for adult education. Less than a quarter of adult education is provided by "folk" universities (public institutions for education of adults), while special organisations for adult education, which play a major part in non-formal education, represent only 10 %.

³⁶ Source: SORS, Education 2006/2007: http://www.stat.si/eng/novica_prikazi.aspx?id=800 26.04.2007

³⁷ Završek Darja (2002), Minority protection in Slovenia. In: *Monitoring the EU Accession Process: Minority Protection*. Ljubljana: Open Society Fund; Peace Institute; p. 65-108.

Table 11: Students (youth) enrolled in upper secondary educational programmes and graduates by type of programmes, end of the school year 2005/2006

Type of programme	Enroled		Graduates	
	total	women	total	women
Total	97 885	48 542	24 021	12 555
In 2-year lower vocational programmes	1 804	454	601	153
In 3-year middle vocational programmes	17 077	5 911	5 054	1 945
In 4-5-year technical and other professional programmes	32 049	15 683	6 725	3 608
In gymnasium programmes	38 368	22 558	8 629	5 290
In +2 and vocational tehcnical programmes	6 897	2 813	2 355	1 098
Vocational courses	334	200	176	121
Matura course	1 356	923	481	340

Source: SORS http://www.stat.si/eng/novica_prikazi.aspx?id=843 26.04.2007

Table 12: Students (youth) enrolled in upper secondary educational programmes, beginning of the school year 2006/2007

	Enroled	Women	Repeaters
Total	96 310	46 953	3 198

Source: SORS http://www.stat.si/eng/novica_prikazi.aspx?id=843 26.04.2007

In the academic year 2006/07 there were 51 post-secondary vocational colleges offering 22 post-secondary vocational study courses, in which 15 831 students were enrolled, with two thirds being enrolled as part-time students. The most common courses of study for students are programmes for commercialists, business secretaries and accountants. 91 426 students were enrolled in higher undergraduate programmes and 8 687 in higher postgraduate programmes; two-thirds of these students were enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate studies at the University of Ljubljana. More than 5 000 students were enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate studies in independent higher education institutions.

Table 13: Tertiary education students by education institution and type of programme, Slovenia, 2006/07

Educational institution	Number of institutions	Students by type of programme			
	Number of institutions	Total	Post-secondary vocational	Higher undergraduate	Higher postgraduate
Total	113	115 944	15 831	91 426	8 687
Higher education institutions	62	100 113	-	91 426	8 687
University of Ljubljana	26	62 314	-	57 598	4 716
University of Maribor	15	25 531	-	23 796	1 735
University of Primorska	5	6 256	-	5 437	819
University of Nova Gorica	5	696	-	524	172
Independent Higher Education Institutions	11	5 316	-	4 071	1 245
Post-secondary Vocational Colleges	51	15 831	15 831	-	-

Source: SORS http://www.stat.si/eng/novica_prikazi.aspx?id=813 26.04.2007

There are more than 40 000 part-time students. Two-thirds of part-time students are enrolled in post-secondary vocational programmes. Among students enrolled in higher undergraduate and postgraduate studies, one-third are part-time students.

The secondary education dropout rate is between 6 and 10 %³⁸. No conclusions can be made as to whether or not the dropout rate is affected by poverty status. Available data on enrolment in all levels of education show high levels of inclusion in education; this is a result of governmental policy on state grants for education. More than 50 000 students in secondary and tertiary education receive state grants. Those with low incomes also receive subsidies for accommodation and all students receive subsidies for meals.

Access to healthcare

Children and youths have the rights to health insurance as family members of the person insured until the completion of schooling (including tertiary education). They are all entitled to immunisation and preventative medical programmes, to any kind of health treatment, to dental care, to rehabilitation in case of accident and to home care if needed. Girls have right to gynaecological examinations and to contraception. One of the parents has the right to stay at home (receiving up to two weeks paid sick leave) to care for ill children and up to 6 months of paid sick leave if the child experiences serious health problems³⁹.

In each community health centre (of which there are 59 throughout Slovenia) there is a department for healthcare of children and youths. There is also an emergency department available 24 hours per day. In 2003, there were 839 children aged 0-6 per medical doctor and 1 944 children aged 7-19 per medical doctor. There are significant regional disparities. In some parts of the country there are 1 100 to 3 500 children aged 0-6 per medical doctor and 2 350 to 7 400 children aged 7-19 per medical doctor⁴⁰.

2.3.3. Policies to promote the care and protection of children at risk, including integrated early intervention initiatives or policies to assist children with special needs (disabled, children in institutions, etc) or policies to counter discrimination.

There are plans in the Programme of Children and Youth conduct such policy. See section 2.1.

³⁸ Kovač Šebart, M., Gaber, S., Pluško, A. (2005), Education and knowledge. In: Črnak Meglič, A. (Ed.) (2006), *Children and Youth in the Transitional Society*. Ljubljana: Ministry of Education and Sport, Slovene Office for Youth: Aristej Publishing; p. 144.

³⁹ Bracar, P., (2005), Health of children and youth. In: Črnak Meglič, A. (Ed.) (2006), *Children and Youth in the Transitional Society*. Ljubljana: Ministry of Education and Sport, Slovene Office for Youth: Aristej Publishing; p. 101-124.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

2.3.4. Policies to promote the participation of children in social, cultural, recreational and sporting life

In broad terms, we can describe the non-governmental youth sector in Slovenia in terms of the following factors or actors at the national and local levels⁴¹:

National Youth Council of Slovenia: is the umbrella organisation of youth organisations which operate at the national level. Organised under its auspices are organisations of different interests, ideological and political orientations (16 members). From the time of its establishment, the National Youth Council of Slovenia has significantly contributed to facilitating cooperation between youth organisations at the local, national and international levels. One of the main aims of the Youth Council is to encourage youth participation in the creation of youth policy in Slovenia.

In addition to the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth, which as a state body is responsible for the realisation of youth policy and enables the implementation of youth activities, there are also other institutions (non-governmental and non-profit) which have assumed the role of national coordinators and service organisations in support of the implementation of various activities for youth and their extension to the local level. These include the Institute MOVIT – the National Agency which is responsible for the implementation of the YOUTH Programme and for the implementation of the EURO<26 card activities, the Youth Information and Counselling Centre of Slovenia (*Mladinsko Informativno in Svetovalno Središče Slovenije*), which is the national coordinator for information and counselling and a member of ERIYCA, and the Network of Youth Centres MAMA (*Mreža Mladinskih Centrov MAMA*).

The Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth has been co-financing the implementation of programmes of organisations whose participants are largely youths and the programmes of largely national youth organisations (which represent the area in which youths realise their interests and are active participants) which have significantly influenced the development of individual youth policy areas. The main aim of the co-financing programme is to enable youth to gain non-formal skills and competencies and to increase the integration of youth in civic and social processes at the local, national and international levels.

Youth policy actors at local level:

Youth centres are places in which youth carry out or participate in various activities. The basic conditions which define what is or what is not a youth centre are the following: regularity of operation; programme plurality of various activities; appropriate infrastructure and location; competency and qualification of the management and external assistants; and democratic organisational management principles and the provision of support to related youth organisations. In addition to all programmes and projects implemented within their framework, youth centres offer counselling, professional, organisational, financial, technical and related help to voluntary associations, autonomous youth groups and individual activities. In this way, youth centres perform a variety of functions: preventative, associative, social, informative, educational, service and developmental.

Local community youth council is a youth-led political organ which links societies, associations of societies, youth organisations within political parties, and other organisations which offer activities of public benefit for youth and which have a membership and leadership in which at least 70 % of people are between 15 and 29 years of age. It is a representative body of youth in a given environment which represents their interests to governmental structures and enables the integration of youth in the

⁴¹ Ministry of Education and Sport: Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth (2005), National report: Achievements of common objectives in the field of participation.

decision-making process regarding public affairs. The Youth Council Act allows for the registration of youth councils at the national and local levels. In line with the above, youth council members may be organisations of national and local character.

Since the adoption of the Youth Council Act (2000) and the Rules on the Registration and Keeping of Youth Council Records (2001), 38 local community youth councils and the National Youth Council of Slovenia have been registered in Slovenia.

At the local youth level, there are a variety of organised youth groups in Slovenia:

- associations (student clubs, local units of national youth organisations, youth sports associations, youth cultural associations etc.);
- youth organisations within political parties;
- youth sections within major civil structures and associations;
- initiative groups;
- public and private institutes.

Youth participation in public affairs: In 2003, there existed some inter-institutional forms of cooperation between youth and the authorities at the national and local levels in Slovenia.

The Government Council of the Republic of Slovenia for Student Affairs. Students and student organisations in Slovenia enjoy a great degree of autonomy which result from good organisation and the availability of financial resources (revenues from concessions for the performance of student work guarantee students' organisations several times greater funds than those received from the budget of the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth). This is also the reason students are an important influence in the political arena. Students meet with governmental representatives within the framework of the Government Council of the Republic of Slovenia for Student Affairs, which consists of representatives of seven sectoral Ministries and seven representatives of student organisations. The Council's tasks include mutual information activities and the organisation of discussions on current affairs (legislation, measures, governmental decisions) which affect the life and work of young people. Due to the participation of high-ranking government representatives (members are Ministers or Secretaries of State), the Council has a great influence on State policy implementation.

Consultative bodies at local level. The participation of youth in public affairs at local level differs greatly between individual local communities, since it is affected by a number of factors, such as the readiness of local authorities (e.g. the Mayor, or municipal council) to engage in dialogue, the commitment of young people in the community, the existence of youth councils, the representation of youth in the municipal council, etc.

The Children's Parliament. Since 1990, the Association of Friends of the Young of Slovenia (*Zveza Prijateljev Mladine Slovenije*) has been carrying out the Children's Parliament programme, the aim of which is to educate children about the democratic process and to create conditions for youth participation. The Programme represents one of the most original forms of encouraging youth to voice their own opinions on current issues. It is a field where the young learn to discuss issues respectfully, taking into account the opinions of all those involved, and presents an opportunity for the integration of knowledge and skills that the young have acquired. The Programme is carried out at most elementary schools in Slovenia, on the premises of municipal buildings, and is concluded in the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia as it is carried out at many levels – in classes at school and at municipal, inter-municipal, regional and national levels.

It is difficult to assess how effective the various youth organisations have been at reaching the most disadvantaged children. Most of the organisations also have local branches that participate in and carry out numerous projects on social inclusion. They run campaigns against social exclusion and work with asylum seekers, Roma children and other at-risk groups. What is less common is a focus on poverty. We were unable to find any programmes run by youth organisations that tackle this issue.

3. Description and assessment of the arrangements in place for monitoring the implementation and impact of policies to prevent and alleviate poverty and social exclusion amongst children and to promote the wellbeing of children

As the poverty of children is not yet systematically monitored, there are currently no documents or specially established governmental bodies that offer information on the issue. The Child Observatory⁴² has a mandate to cover issues concerning children. They have created a set of indicators for monitoring the status of children that can be partly used for monitoring the poverty status of children in connection with the status of their parents. Variables⁴³ and indicators are complex and undertaken through different clusters:

1. Demographics

Population (divided into age groups), births, deaths, number of abortions, family status, marriages, divorces, households, types of families, household income, income distribution in the household, absolute poverty, relative poverty, socio-economic status of the family, subjective poverty, social protection expenditure for the families and children, household expenditure.

2. Health

Substance abuse according to the age of the child, body mass index, frequency and level of physical activity, eating habits of children and youth, number of medical staff per 1 000 children, child mortality rate by age and cause, number of hospital admissions due to poisoning or injuries, subjective health assessment of healthy children.

3. Education

Budget allocated for education, percentage of children in pre-school education, dropout rates, percentage of children completing primary and secondary education, provision of food in schools, educational grants, transport (accessibility of education), active methods of teaching (field trips, etc.), accommodation in secondary and undergraduate education, free of charge school books, active participation, assessment of child's feelings about school.

⁴² Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs established the Child Observatory to monitor the status of children in Slovenia.

⁴³ The document still needs to be improved, but at the current stage it is a good overview of all fields that need to be taken into account when monitoring the status of children in the Slovenia. Most of the listed variables are further divided into more precise indicators.

4. Housing and environment

Housing status, monetary affordability, decent housing conditions (having their own room, toilets, bathroom, acceptable levels of humidity, light, etc.), subjective assessment of the quality of housing, clean air, accessibility of resources, level of the crime, safety of the community.

5. Paid labour

Child labour, paid labour for students, unemployed youth, financial sources for unemployed youth, long-term unemployed youth, employed youth, job satisfaction.

6. Leisure and participation

Leisure activities of children and youth, financial resources for leisure activities, satisfaction of children and youth with leisure time, percentage of membership in NGO's, percentage of youth volunteers, percentage of youth in political parties, trade unions, human rights organisations, youth values.

7. Vulnerable groups

Foster care (number of children in foster care, number of foster care families), alimonies (number of paid alimonies according to age groups of children; number of unpaid alimonies, number of children receiving alimony).

8. Roma children

Number of Roma children by age and gender, types of Roma families, living conditions, health and healthcare, involvement in pre-school programmes and kindergartens, number of Roma children in primary and secondary education, knowledge of Slovene language, inclusion into school and after school activities, subjective assessment of discrimination and violence they experience.

9. Victims of trafficking and illegal immigrant children without guardians

Number of immigrant children without guardians, number of trafficked children according to destination, forms of protection of both groups, number of children granted asylum by Slovenia.

10. Youth delinquency

Percentage of children and youths that commit crime, nature of crimes most often committed, State intervention (role of the court, prosecutors, centres of social work, police), identification of family background that most usually provokes violence, bullying in schools.

11. Children and youth, victims of violence

Violence against children and youth by age, gender and social circumstances, type of violence (physical, sexual, maltreatment, neglect), frequency of violence against children and youth, sexual abuse by age and gender, health problems resulting from violence, number of prosecutions of perpetrators, number of court sentences, subjective assessment of violence (feeling safe at home, at school, feeling in danger), number of programmes at kindergartens and schools that promote non-violence, preventative programmes raising general public awareness of the issue.

12. Children and youth with special needs

Number of children with physical disability, number of children with mental disability, placements for children with disabilities, education (attending special or ordinary schools), number of children being referred to protection working units and day centres, financial resources for childcare, subjective assessment of boundaries (accessibility etc.), reported discrimination.

As can be seen, variables and indicators still need to be cleared up and more precisely defined, but the list gives a very good grounding for monitoring and further planning. It is not possible to say when the process will start, as it depends on the financial resources that will be allocated for the work of the Child Observatory in the future. It is not possible to assess the extent to which different stakeholders are involved into the monitoring and evaluation, because no such process has yet been performed.

Indicators are also included in the response of the Slovenian Government on the ISG Task Force questionnaire, entitled '*Existing tools to monitor child poverty and social exclusion at national level*'.

Most of the indicators and variables correspond to the Unicef Innocenti Report Card 7. Although Slovenia is not an OECD country and it was only partly included into the report, the indicators used are nonetheless relevant to Slovenia.

The second important source for defining indicators in Slovenia was entitled '*A Thematic study using transnational comparisons to analyse and identify what combination of policy responses are most successful in preventing and reducing high levels of child poverty*'.⁴⁴ Again, Slovenia was not one of the countries included in the report, but the indicators listed in the report are relevant for all EU Member States.

Indicators that should be included are:

- Proportion of 15-year olds at or below level 1 of the PISA combined reading literacy scale;
- Pocket money per month (and money regularly given by parents, siblings or other relatives or friends of the parents);
- Gifts of money on special occasions (estimation);
- Ordinary and expensive clothing;
- Break time snacks, sweets and fast-food;

⁴⁴ Hoelscher, Petra (2004), *A Thematic study using transnational comparisons to analyse and identify what combination of policy responses are most successful in preventing and reducing high levels of child poverty*. Brussels: EC, DG Employment and Social Affairs, p. 14-20.

- School materials;
- CDs, videos and computer games;
- Books and magazines;
- Trips to the cinema and disco;
- Sporting equipment;
- Gifts for friends and family;
- Teenage pregnancy;
- School achievement (literacy, numeracy, degrees, failures, exams);
- Children needing private tutoring in order to pass exams;
- Participation in school trips;
- Time spent with parents, relationships with other relatives;
- Support from family members, giving support;
- Arguments and fights at home,;
- Quiet place for doing homework, furnishings of children's room;
- Garden to play in, inviting friends home, feeling of loneliness;
- Involvement in civic activities such as demonstrations, interest in policy;
- Cost of public transport, access to family transport, mobility by bicycle, foot, etc.;
- Access to playgrounds, sporting grounds, and swimming pools;
- Price index for children for specific cultural activities;
- Price index for child-related goods;
- Access to forests, fields, parks or meadows;
- Having places to meet with friends.

Compared with the Bradshaw, Hoelscher and Richardson (2006) study, Slovenian indicators are quite well defined. All of the clusters, domains and indicators are included in the list created by the Child Observatory.

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