

# Slovenia

## Country Profile on the 2018 European Semester from a children's rights perspective



### Alternative Country Specific Recommendation for 2018-2019

"Slovenia should take action to adopt a strategic National Programme for Children that integrates all policies concerning children, including those related to child participation. Participation should be strengthened and made more effective."

The Slovenian government is making progress in the field of children's policies and policies affecting children. The past year has seen significant positive steps in this arena. New laws adopted in 2017/2018 include: a new Family Code, a new Resolution on Family Policy, a new Ombudsman Law (which, among other resolutions,

enables institutionalisation of child advocates), and a new Resolution on the National Health Programme. The Third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was also ratified. Furthermore, the Ministry of Justice has established a safe house for child victims of violence called 'A House for Children', which follows

the Icelandic 'Barnahus' model. **Such improvements in the field of children's rights in Slovenia have been significant.** However, there is room for improvement in supporting **children in vulnerable positions**, specifically migrant children, Roma children, and children who are victims of trafficking. More work also needs to be done in enabling

Respondent organisation:  
Slovenian Association of Friends  
of Youth (SAFY) on behalf of the  
Slovenian NGO network ZIPOM



2.07 millions total  
19.4% under 19 yrs  
5.1% under 5 yrs

Population

4.3%

Early school-leavers  
rate

15.1%

Children at risk of  
poverty or social  
exclusion

Data: Eurostat, 2017

### effective **child participation**.

Notably, Slovenia has yet to adopt a new National Programme for Children (the previous one expired in 2016).

Yet there is little mention of these issues, or of the positive planned reforms in Slovenia's Country Report and Country Specific Recommendation (CSR). To ensure that a future National Programme for Children is in line with existing EU guidance – the EU Recommendation on Investing in Children, and the European Pillar of Social Rights – the 2019 country report and CSR should go beyond encouraging Slovenia to develop a new Programme for Children which is holistic and integrates existing policies, and also push to specifically address child participation and increased support for children in vulnerable situations.

In Slovenia the culture of **child participation** is to some extent embedded at local level, including within the family and in schools. There is an informal mechanism which would allow children to participate in the shaping of laws and policies which affect them on a national level, but without a

specific legal mandate, Slovenian politicians are not giving children a real or effective voice. The Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth (SAFY), which is part of the coalition of NGOs working on children's rights (ZIPOM), runs a well-established Children's Parliament that has been running for 28 years, with yearly feedback to national politicians on their concerns and priorities. However, these priorities, including better cooperation with national politicians on matters which concern them, have yet to be discussed at the Slovenian National Assembly. The government has shown that it is prepared to listen to children – but when it comes to concrete action, promised collaboration does not materialise.

Child participation links directly to the Recommendation on Investing in Children and to the 11th Principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights by virtue of its role in giving a voice to children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The EU should therefore recommend that Slovenia adopt a strategic National Programme for Children which highlights the right to participate

and ensures that children's voices are effectively considered.

The Slovenian NGO network ZIPOM has noted that **EU guidance has been instrumental in pushing for reform**. Many adopted resolutions, recommendations or directives concerning children's rights have been helpful in pressuring the government to implement policy reforms. One clear example of the influence of these on national policy is the 2013 Recommendation on Investing in Children. The new Slovenian Resolution on Family Policy, for example, mentions a better health system to address the needs of disadvantaged children and reducing inequality by investing in early childhood education and care.

It is also unfortunate that the issue of child participation, to date, has not been highlighted in either Slovenia's Country Report, nor in any of its CSRs. While the 2018 CSRs brought up some important issues for Slovenia, such as to adopt and implement the Healthcare and Health Insurance Act, in general children are not mentioned specifically in the CSR and not expanded upon in the Country Report. The 2018 CSRs, as

always, prioritise economic, fiscal and business topics. In turn, Slovenia's National Reform Programmes (NRPs) mention positive developments regarding early school leaving but do not expand on it or highlight problematic areas such as the lack of effective child participation at national level. Also, according to the Statistical Office of Slovenia the percentage of children living below the poverty threshold was higher in 2017 (12.8%) than in 2016 (11.9%), yet child poverty is not highlighted in either the Country Report or the CSR.

Overall, stakeholder engagement in decision-making functions relatively well in Slovenia. Although this varies depending on the topic (environment, children's rights, volunteering etc.), in general, ZIPOM feels that the State is prepared to listen. However, the outreach on the European Semester is not that broad across civil society. 2018 was the first time ZIPOM was involved in the Semester process through Slovenia's Semester Officer.

*For more information, please consult the 2018 [Eurochild Report on the European Semester](#) or contact [Reka.Tunyogi@eurochild.org](mailto:Reka.Tunyogi@eurochild.org).*