



PROJECT SUMMARY

Project title	European Union/Council of Europe joint project: Barnahus/Children's House
Budget	112,360 €
Implementation	Children's Rights Division Directorate of Human Dignity, Equality and Sport values, Council of Europe
Duration	19.2.2018 – 18.10.2018 (8 months)

BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

Slovenia is a Party to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention) since 2014. The Committee of the Parties responsible for the monitoring of the Lanzarote Convention referred in its 1st implementation report (2015) to the Icelandic Barnahus (Children's House) as an example of a promising practice with regard to collection of data, the best interest of the child in investigations and criminal proceedings and victim support.

Barnahus is a child-friendly, interagency and multidisciplinary response model for child sexual abuse and offers services for child victims and witnesses of violence. The model ensures collaboration between different agencies (judicial, social and medical) in one child-friendly premise, which offers comprehensive services for the child and the family under one roof. The core of the Barnahus model is the assumption that the child's disclosure is key both to identifying and investigating child abuse for criminal and for protective and therapeutic purposes.

In respect of Slovenia's commitments under the Lanzarote Convention as well as the EU Directives on Victim's Rights (2012/29/EU) and Child Sexual Abuse (2011/93/EU) to prevent and combat sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, protect the right of child victims and promote national and international co-operation, the Slovenian authorities have already taken steps towards more effective justice system for children victims of crimes and committed to implementing the Barnahus model in Slovenia to improve the state response towards child sexual exploitation and abuse.

However, at present, the judicial process for suspected child abuse cases remains long and cumbersome. The process from the first information on a suspicion of a possible criminal act to the court pre-trial procedure, interviews with the child and a decision of the court can last for several months with the child being subjected to multiple interviews by different actors. This increases the risk of trauma and re-victimisation of the child. There is a lack of information on existing support services, coordination and exchange of information between different professionals involved in the process as well as a lack of qualified professionals, including psychologists and psychiatrists with the expertise of treating child victims of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, and qualified staff conducting forensic interviews. No protocols or training in the field of forensic interviewing are available in Slovenia. All these factors have a negative effect on the quality, duration and accessibility of both the process itself and the services provided to child victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.

OBJECTIVE AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The general objective of the project is to contribute towards improving the quality of the justice system in order to support institutional and administrative structural reforms in Slovenia. It will provide support to national authorities for measures aimed at reforming and strengthening institutions, in line with Article 4 of the EU Regulation 2017/825 on the establishment of the Structural Reform Support Programme.

More specifically, the action is aimed at supporting the Slovenian authorities to set up and implement the Barnahus response model for child victims and witnesses of violence. The project will provide:

- An assessment of the current legislative and procedural situation and other factors in Slovenia enabling or hindering the implementation of the Barnahus model in the country and recommendations, including for legislative changes, for creating an enabling environment for the implementation of the Barnahus; and
- Recommendations with regard to implementing and running of Barnahus in Slovenia, including detailed guidance on relevant operating factors, including services to be provided, internal organisation, rules for implementation and implementation modalities.

Project impact	The quality of the justice system to support institutional and administrative reforms for responding to child sexual exploitation and abuse is improved in Slovenia.
Intermediate outcome	Slovenian authorities and institutions are supported to improve the quality of the service of the judicial system for child victims of crimes and the state efficiency to cope with crimes related to children, in particular child sexual exploitation and abuse.
Immediate outcomes:	1.1 Authorities and stakeholders are informed about the current state response to child sexual exploitation and abuse and the added value of setting up Barnahus to improve it. 1.2 Authorities and stakeholders are equipped with practical recommendations for setting up Barnahus 1.3 Authorities and stakeholders commit and take measures to implement Barnahus in Slovenia

Key activities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organisation of a kick-off workshop to seek input from and secure commitment of key stakeholders; - Provision of technical support to carry out desk study research for indicative analysis of gaps, opportunities and challenges; - Provision of technical support to carry out field research through interviews and focus group discussions for validation of indicative findings and drafting of recommendations for action; - Organisation of a technical level participative workshop to process the draft implementation plan for setting up and running Barnahus in Slovenia; - Organisation of a high-level round table to secure commitment of decision-makers to the detailed implementation plan; - Official launch of the detailed implementation plan for setting up Barnahus in Slovenia.
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IMPLEMENTING ARRANGEMENTS

As the key actor in this thematic area, the Council of Europe, through its Children's Rights Division, is in charge of implementing this Project.

The main implementing partner of the project is the Ministry of Justice of Slovenia.

The project will work closely with the Interdisciplinary Working Party established in June 2017, which includes representatives of the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Ministry of Health, Association of Centres for Social Work, Ombudsman, General Prosecutor's Office, Supreme Court of the Republic of Slovenia, Counselling Centre for children, teenagers and parents in Ljubljana, SOS telephone (non-governmental organisation that works to combat violence against children and women).

Synergies will be sought with relevant Council of Europe regional and country-specific projects addressing violence against children, in particular child sexual exploitation and abuse, and as appropriate, with the Lanzarote Committee and the Ad hoc Committee for the Rights of the Child. Close collaboration will be ensured with the European Barnahus Movement launched in June 2017 and the EU-funded PROMISE II project implemented by the Council of the Baltic Sea States.

CONTACT

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FURTHER INFORMATION

EU Structural Reform Support Services:
ec.europa.eu/info/departments/structural-reform-support-service_en

Ministry of Justice of Slovenia: www.mp.gov.si/en