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REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

Building a Europe
for and with children



Final Conference

Programme

10 June 2026

*Four Points by Sheraton Ljubljana Mons
Pot za Brdom 4, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia*

and via ZOOM

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83354694337?pwd=0aa8uxl8GKbi7SeqM52e3cPj0beGqg.1>

Joint EU-Council of Europe project “Ensuring the best interests of the child in civil court proceedings in Slovenia” 23SI08

The Project is co-funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument, and implemented by the Council of Europe, in cooperation with the European Commission.

Context

The European Union-Council of Europe Joint Project “**Ensuring the best interests of the child in civil court proceedings in Slovenia**” aims to ensure the better protection of children’s rights in civil court proceedings in Slovenia through ensuring the best interests of the child. Implementation of the Project contributes to the ongoing reform in Slovenia on upholding children’s rights and becoming a pioneer country spreading excellence in child-friendly justice in all EU Member States.

While Slovenia has made big steps forward for the protection of **children’s rights in criminal law proceedings**, significant improvements are still needed to uphold children’s rights **in the area of civil law**, particularly as regards delays in family law proceedings involving children. According to the **Slovenian Supreme Court report**, the main two challenges to overcome these delays are:

- **The lack of court experts in clinical psychology**, who are the most appointed experts in family law proceedings.
- **The excessive use of legal instruments**, as the law is often ineffective during the process and there is lack of systemic approach.

The project is co-funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument, and implemented by the Council of Europe, in cooperation with the European Commission and the Slovenian Ministry of Justice from 1 September 2023 to 30 June 2026.

The project is divided in two outcomes:

1. **A comprehensive Action Plan to reform Slovenia’s legal framework in the field of civil court proceedings involving children is adopted;**
2. **The implementation of the Action Plan has been initiated.**

Overview of the project results

Following the inception phase (September to December 2023) and the [Launch conference](#) on 13 February 2024, the project entered into a more analytical phase with the preparation and the presentation of two foundational assessment reports at a first [Roundtable](#) on 24 October 2024:

- an assessment of the current legal, policy and institutional framework with a focus on priority issues (original in [Slovenian](#), unofficial [English](#) translation),
- a training gap analysis for professionals working with and for child involved civil court proceedings (original in [Slovenian](#), unofficial [English](#) translation),

The subsequent stage of the project focused on the development of two strategic documents officially presented at a second [Roundtable](#) on 6 June 2025:

- a comparative study of services, methods and tools suitable to secure the best interests of the child in family proceedings in Council of Europe member and observer States (original in [English](#), summary in [English](#), and in [Slovenian](#)).
- the Strategy and National Action Plan for ensuring the best interests of the child in civil court proceedings in Slovenia (available in [English](#) and in [Slovenian](#)).

The capacity building component was launched in summer 2025 and prioritised inter-agency cooperation, a key need identified in both the training gap analysis and the Strategy and Action plan. A pilot training session was organised on 5 December 2025, and the training handbook (available in Slovenian) will be finalised and made public by the end of the project. A second training session on Interagency cooperation in civil proceedings will take place on 18 June 2026.

Following the approval of a no-cost extension until the end of June 2026, the project focused on implementing a series of priority actions defined in the Strategy, and developed the following outputs:

- Protocol on recommended measures in case of suspicion of violence including a Risk Assessment Form (original in [Slovenian](#)),
- Guidelines on the determination of the Best Interests of the Child in civil proceedings (original in [Slovenian](#)),
- Guidelines on interviewing children in civil proceedings in Slovenia (original in [Slovenian](#)),
- Study report and recommendations on the role and the legal status of Guardians ad Litem in Slovenia (original in [Slovenian](#)),
- Development of a dedicated webplatform on the rights of the child in civil proceedings in Slovenia.

The final conference will serve as a high-level event to showcase these results and celebrate the project's milestones. Attended by the Minister of Justice and representatives from other Ministries, as well as the EU, the Council of Europe, the event will emphasise the project's concrete impact and future steps. To ensure high engagement, the event will be interactive, and all high-quality deliverables will be made available on the [project dedicated website](#).

Agenda	
8:30-9:00	Registration of participants
9:00-9:30	Welcoming remarks
	<i>Moderator: Prof. Dr. Barbara Novak, Professor of civil law, Faculty of Law, Ljubljana</i> • Barbara Levstik Šega, State Secretary, Ministry of Justice of Slovenia • Simona Drenik Bavdek, Human Rights Ombudsperson of the Republic of Slovenia (<i>video recorded message</i>) • Kjartan Björnsson, Head of Unit Governance and Public Administration, SG REFORM, European Commission (<i>online</i>) • Zaruhi Gasparyan, Head of Cooperation and Capacity Building Unit, Children's Rights Division, Council of Europe
9:30-10:00	Keynote Speech: "From Principle to Practice - Our Children's Rights, Voices & Experiences Matter"
	<i>Moderator: Prof. Dr. Barbara Novak, Professor of civil law, Faculty of Law, Ljubljana</i> • Jade Barnett, Co-Founder & CEO of Power2Prevail Community, Public Speaker, Trainer & Youth Advocate
10:00-10:15	Overview, process and key achievements of the project in Slovenia
	<i>Moderator: Prof. Dr. Barbara Novak, Professor of civil law, Faculty of Law, Ljubljana</i> • Frederique Privat de Fortunie, Senior Project Officer, Children's Rights Division, Council of Europe • Mija Cankar, Secretary in Civil law Directorate, Ministry of Justice of Slovenia

10:15-11:00	Panel I: Developing new tools and methods to protect the rights of the child in civil proceedings in Slovenia
	<i>Moderator: Prof. Dr. Barbara Novak, Professor of civil law, Faculty of Law, Ljubljana</i> • <i>Maša Gril, Special education teacher and regional coordinator for child advocacy at the Human Rights Ombudsperson, and representative of PIC, Legal Centre for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment for the Guidelines on the Determination of the Best Interests of the Child</i> • <i>Tadeja Oštir, Family Judge and Head of the Family Law Department in Ljubljana for the Protocol of Recommended Measures in cases of suspected violence and its Risk Assessment Form</i> • <i>Frida Burkelc, Senior Judge and Metoda Maj, Psychologist and Court Expert for the Protocol on interviewing children in civil proceedings</i> Q&A session
11:00-11:15	<i>Group photo and coffee break</i>
11:15-12:00	Panel II: Enhancing the knowledge and capacities of professionals working with and for children in civil proceedings
	<i>Moderator: Prof. Dr. Barbara Novak, Professor of civil law, Faculty of Law, Ljubljana</i> • <i>Maša Gril, Special education teacher and regional coordinator for child advocacy at the Human Rights Ombudsperson, and representative of PIC, Legal Centre for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment for the Training of Trainers on Interagency cooperation in civil proceedings</i> • <i>Katja Stampel, Court expert and participant of the pilot training on Interagency cooperation</i> • <i>Zoran Stankić Rupnik, Lawyer, for the training on guardians ad litem organised within the EU/CoE joint project on "Child-friendly justice"</i> • <i>Tajka Golob, Attorney at Law and participant of the training on guardians ad litem</i> Q&A session
12:00-12:15	Advancing Child Protection: new Council of Europe instruments on protection of the rights and best interests of the child
	<i>Moderator: Prof. Dr. Barbara Novak, Professor of civil law, Faculty of Law, Ljubljana</i> • <i>Seamus Carroll, Chair of CJ/ENF-ISE and Principal Officer Civil Justice and Equality / Legislation (retired), Department of Justice and Equality, Ireland</i> Q&A session

12:15-13:00	Panel III: The way forward
	<i>Moderator: Prof. Dr. Barbara Novak, Professor of civil law, Faculty of Law, Ljubljana</i> • <i>Maša Gril, special education teacher and regional coordinator for child advocacy at the Human Rights Ombudsperson, and representative of PIC, Legal Centre for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment for the future web platform on the rights of the child in civil proceedings in Slovenia</i> • <i>Zoran Stankić Rupnik, Lawyer for the report with recommendations on the status and role of Guardians ad litem</i> • <i>Andrej Del Fabro, Head of the Child-friendly Criminal Justice Department, Ministry of Justice for the Implementation of the national Strategy and action Plan</i> Q&A session
13:00-13:15	Closing remarks
	<i>Moderator: Prof. Dr. Barbara Novak, Professor of civil law, Faculty of Law, Ljubljana</i> • <i>Miha Verčko, Director General of the Civil Law Directorate, Ministry of Justice</i> • <i>Paola Gaffurini, Project Manager, Governance and Public Administration Unit, SG REFORM, European Commission</i> • <i>Zaruhi Gasparyan, Head of Cooperation and Capacity Building Unit, Children's Rights Division, Council of Europe</i>
13:15-14:15	<i>Lunch break</i>