



National Guidelines for Barnahus in Slovenia



REPUBLIKA SLOVENIJA
MINISTRSTVO ZA PRAVOSODJE

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National Guidelines for Barnahus in Slovenia

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When a child is a victim or witness of sexual violence, a number of different actors have a duty to respond to protect and assist the child. This can expose children to series of encounters with different professionals in different settings, repeatedly reliving their experience, often without appropriate support. A growing body of research and experience confirm that this can place the child at serious risk of trauma.

National Guidelines for Barnahus in Slovenia (“National Guidelines”) propose a Barnahus model, which promotes the coordination and teamwork that is required to ensure a timely, comprehensive, coordinated and child-friendly response by the State to child sexual violence. The purpose of Barnahus is to coordinate and facilitate parallel criminal and child welfare investigations and to provide support services for child victims and witnesses of sexual violence. The aim is to reduce the potential trauma of the child that can be caused by reliving experiences without appropriate response and support and to provide a fair justice procedure for all.

The National Guidelines were developed in the framework of the joint European Union-Council of Europe project “Barnahus/Children’s House” (2018) implemented in close collaboration with the Ministry of Justice of Slovenia. A broad range of research and consultation with national and international experts, including the Interagency Working Party in Slovenia, was carried out and reviewed in order to ensure the relevance and appropriateness of the model in a Slovenian setting. Lessons learnt and promising practices especially from the Nordic countries that are pioneers of the Barnahus model were integrated into the guidelines.

The National Guidelines draw on Slovenia’s international and European legal obligations, including notably the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse which entered into force in Slovenia in 2014, the EU Directives on Combating child sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and child pornography (2011/92/EU) and on Minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime (2012/29/EU). The National Guidelines do not, however, give rise to any legally binding obligations and are in no manner meant to interfere or encroach on existing legislation of the Republic of Slovenia.

The National Guidelines set out a framework for the organisation and operational procedures of Barnahus, including implementing parties, target group, organisational structure, roles and responsibilities of the implementing parties, forensic interviews, finance and resource allocation, venue, training and competence building and evaluation. In doing so, the guidelines draw on Barnahus Quality Standards: Guidance for Multidisciplinary and Interagency Response to Child Victims and Witnesses of Violence.

The National Guidelines and the process leading towards the establishment of Barnahus in Slovenia, represent significant progress towards Slovenia’s commitment to ensure child friendly justice and provision of support for child victims in line with EU and Council of Europe legal obligations and policies.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Barnahus Quality Standards	Barnahus Quality Standards: Guidance for Multidisciplinary and Interagency Response to Child Victims and Witnesses of Violence
CoE	Council of Europe
EU	European Union
EU Directive on Child Sexual Abuse	Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA
EU Directive on Victims Rights	Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime
EU SRSS	European Union Structural Reform Support Services
Explanatory memorandum	Explanatory memorandum to the National Guidelines for Barnahus in Slovenia
Lanzarote Committee	The Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse
Lanzarote Convention	The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse
MDIA services	Multidisciplinary interagency services
National Guidelines	National Guidelines for Barnahus in Slovenia
NCAC	National Children's Advocacy Center
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
NICHD	National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
Roadmap	Roadmap towards establishing, operating and evaluating Barnahus in Slovenia
UN	United Nations

INTRODUCTION

The National Guidelines for Barnahus in Slovenia, hereinafter National Guidelines, contain a series of guiding principles for the establishment and operation of the first Barnahus in Slovenia. They were developed in the framework of the joint European Union-Council of Europe project “Barnahus/Children’s House” (2018), which aimed to contribute towards improving the quality and effectiveness of the justice system to support institutional and administrative reforms for responding to child sexual exploitation and abuse in Slovenia. The project was developed following a request by the Ministry of Justice in Slovenia to the EU Structural Reform Support Services to provide guidance for setting up Barnahus in Slovenia. The Barnahus model is regarded as a means to implement more effectively Slovenia’s legal obligations to protect and assist child victims of sexual violence, as set out in international, European and domestic legislation.

Prior to the project important steps were taken towards this direction at national level. In 2017, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted a Decision¹ to establish Barnahus/Children’s House and an Interagency Working Party was established to support this process². The Interagency Working Party has since met regularly to explore legal, policy and practical opportunities and obstacles to establishing Barnahus in Slovenia, and has been actively involved in the process of drafting the National Guidelines.

The National Guidelines can be considered as an important outcome of the government’s strong and long-term commitment for the protection of children from sexual violence. They represent a key milestone in the process to strengthen the state response towards child sexual exploitation and abuse in Slovenia.

The Barnahus Model

Barnahus (Icelandic for “a house for children”) is a leading model in Europe for a coordinated child-friendly, interagency and multidisciplinary state response towards child sexual abuse and other forms of violence against children. The first Barnahus became operational in Iceland in 1998. Today, there are several Barnahus and similar interagency services for example in the Nordic and Baltic Sea States and the practice is spreading across Europe.

In 2015, the Committee of the Parties responsible for the monitoring of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse identified the Icelandic Barnahus as an example of a promising practice with regard to collection of data, ensuring the best interest of the child in investigations and criminal proceedings, and victim support.³ The Barnahus model has been since recognised by practitioners, legislators, children and their families as a good practice example for a child-friendly, multidisciplinary and interagency (MDIA) response to child sexual abuse and provision of services for child victims and witnesses of sexual abuse.⁴

¹ Government of Slovenia, Decision No. 70000-2/2017/3 (8 June 2017).

² The Interdisciplinary Working Party established in June 2017 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).

³ Lanzarote Committee, Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (T-ES), 1st Implementation Report, Protection of Children against Sexual Abuse in the Circle of Trust, The framework, adopted by the Lanzarote Committee on 4 December 2015.

⁴ Lind Haldorsson, Olivia, Barnahus Quality Standards: Guidance for Multidisciplinary and Interagency Response to Child Victims and Witnesses of Violence (2017).

The central goal of the Barnahus model is to coordinate parallel criminal and child welfare investigations. Barnahus offers a one-stop-shop approach in one child-friendly premise, which hosts an interagency team of relevant authorities and agencies such as police, social services, child protection, physical and mental health services, prosecutor and, in some countries, a judge. The core purpose of Barnahus is to avoid repeated interviews with the child by many agencies in different locations by ensuring collaboration between relevant judicial, social and medical actors in one child-friendly premise.

Key common criteria of Barnahus

- (1) Forensic interviews are carried out according to an evidence based protocol;
- (2) The evidentiary validity of the child's statement is ensured by appropriate arrangements in line with the principles of "due process";
- (3) Medical evaluation for forensic investigative purposes, as well as to ensure the child's physical well-being and recovery, is available;
- (4) Psychological support and short and long term therapeutic services for trauma to the child and non-offending family members and caretakers are available; and
- (5) Assessment of the protection needs of the victim and potential siblings in the family is made.

Legal and Policy Background

Slovenia ratified the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse hereinafter the Lanzarote Convention in 2013 and it entered into force in Slovenia in 2014. As an EU member state, Slovenia is equally bound by the Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography (hereinafter the EU Directive on Child Sexual Abuse) and the Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime (hereinafter the EU Directive on Victims' Rights), both proving legal foundations for the reform of national law, procedure and practice to protect and assist child victims of sexual violence.

The National Guidelines draw heavily on these international and European legal obligations and are drafted with an objective to support their effective implementation at national level. It is, however, important to note that the National Guidelines do not give rise to any legally binding obligations and are in no manner meant to interfere or encroach on existing legislation of the Republic of Slovenia.

Like in many other countries that have already implemented the Barnahus response model, the current legislation in Slovenia does not provide for a clear legal basis for the establishment of Barnahus. However, existing domestic legislation provides some important measures to protect child victims of sexual violence in criminal proceedings and initiatives to further strengthen the procedural rights of child victims are underway. For example, Slovenian domestic legislation to implement the EU Directive on Victims' Rights is being prepared at the time of writing and will introduce important legal provisions to protect child victims of violence in criminal proceedings. In September 2018, the Ministry of Justice started a process to prepare a Decree, including a coordinated consultation process in the Government, on the provision of child-friendly hearing of child/juvenile victims of sexual offences. The relevant domestic law is discussed in more detail in the Explanatory memorandum in Annex 2, which also identifies gaps and includes recommendations for legislative review to ensure effective implementation of the National Guidelines.

The National Guidelines are informed by international policy and guidance, in particular the Council of Europe (hereinafter CoE) Guidelines on child-friendly justice (2010)⁵, the CoE Recommendation for child-friendly social services (2011)⁶, and the Reflection Paper of the European Commission proposing 10 principles for integrated child protection systems⁷. The interagency agreement of Barnahus in Linköping, Sweden, was particularly helpful in structuring and informing the content of the National Guidelines. Finally, the European Barnahus Quality Standards: Guidance for Multidisciplinary and Interagency Response to Child Victims and Witnesses of Violence⁸, hereinafter the Barnahus Quality Standards, served as a helpful framework in exploring and developing the different elements of the National Guidelines. The Barnahus Quality Standards embody the operational and organisational framework for the organisation and practice of Barnahus building on relevant international and European legal and policy framework.⁹

Structure and methodology

The National Guidelines contain guidance in key areas relevant to the establishment and operation of Barnahus in Slovenia. This includes a series of guiding principles in the area of target group, implementing parties and their roles and responsibilities, organisational structure, forensic interviews, finance and resource allocation, venue, training and competence building, and evaluation. Annex 1 provides an overview of the envisaged procedure from initial report of suspected sexual violence, referral to Barnahus, action in Barnahus and follow-up in Slovenia.

The explanatory memorandum in Annex 2 provides further commentary to the provisions in the National Guidelines, drawing on good practice examples and lessons learnt at the European level. As mentioned above, it also identifies main relevant domestic legislation and the potential legal obstacles in current legislation to practicing according to the National Guidelines.

The National Guidelines were drafted on the basis of desk research¹⁰ and consultations with professionals in Slovenia and international experts carried out in the period May – June 2018¹¹ into the legal and policy basis and potential options of an operational and organisational framework for Barnahus in Slovenia. The National Guidelines also draw heavily on the preparatory work that the Interagency Working Party carried out in 2017 and 2018.

A participative approach was adopted, involving extensive consultations with Slovenian professionals to ensure feasibility and relevance of the National Guidelines. The drafting also relied heavily on a

⁵ Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on child-friendly justice, adopted on 17th November 2010.

⁶ Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2011)12 on children's rights and social services friendly to children and families, adopted on 16th November 2011, <https://rm.coe.int/168046ccea>.

⁷ European Commission, Reflection paper on Coordination and cooperation in integrated child protection systems (30 April 2015) https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/rights_of_the_child_2015_-_reflection_paper.pdf

⁸ Lind Haldorsson, Olivia, PROMISE Project series, Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat and Child Circle (2017).

⁹ The Barnahus Quality Standards were developed in the framework of the PROMISE project funded by the European Union and coordinated by the Council of the Baltic Sea States.

¹⁰ The findings of the desk study are summarised in a Joint EU-CoE project "Barnahus/Children's House" in Slovenia: Desk research summary, Council of Europe (August 2018).

¹¹ The consultations took place in meetings organised by the Slovenian Ministry of Justice on Forensic examination and criminal investigation (15 May 2018), Therapeutic assistance (16 May 2018), Judiciary (16 May 2018), Social Work (17 May 2018), Medical examination (17 May 2018), Field Research Workshop (18 May 2018) and Judicial Workshop (15 June 2018).

peer-to-peer learning approach, involving key experts from Barnahus in Iceland, Barnahus Bergen in Norway, the National Police Directorate in Oslo, Norway, Barnahus Linköping in Sweden and the Netherlands Forensic Institute¹².

The research was carried out by a team consisting of one international and one Slovenian researcher¹³ with the support of the Ministry of Justice in Slovenia on the basis of a research framework structured around the Barnahus Quality Standards, including the following elements: Purpose & Goals; Multidisciplinary and interagency engagement, collaboration and case management; target group; staff, and venue.¹⁴ Each of these elements were explored in detail, including an analysis of enabling and/or hindering factors in law, policy, procedure and other issues, such as financial constraints.

The desk research and, in particular, the consultations with Slovenian stakeholders and international experts provided important information about areas of improvement that need to be addressed to enable the establishment and operation of Barnahus in Slovenia in line with the National Guidelines. This led to the development of the Roadmap for establishing, operating and evaluating Barnahus in Slovenia¹⁵ hereinafter the Roadmap, which was drafted in parallel with and complementing the National Guidelines. The Roadmap sets out key elements towards establishing, operating and evaluating Barnahus in Slovenia, including relevant action, deliverables and time framework. It also includes short, mid- and longer term recommendations for potential policy and law reform to support the successful implementation of the National Guidelines in Slovenia.

¹² Ms Olöf Asta Farestveit (Director, Barnahus Iceland), Ms Eirin Baugstø (Director, Barnahus Bergen, Norway), Ms Anna Petersson (Coordinator, Barnahus Linköping, Sweden), Ms Anne Siv Ävistland (Assistant Chief of Policy, National Police Directorate, Oslo, Norway), Mr Wouter Karst (Forensic Physician, Netherlands Forensic Institute).

¹³ The local research was carried out by Ms Maja Zadel with the support of the international expert, Ms Olivia Lind Haldorsson and staff from the Ministry of Justice, Ms Sabina Klaneček and Ms Mija Cankar.

¹⁴ See Ibid pp. 44-48. [Long Version](#).

¹⁵ Roadmap for establishing, operating and evaluating Barnahus in Slovenia, Council of Europe, (2018).

NATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR BARNAHUS IN SLOVENIA

1. BARNAHUS IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

- 1.1. The following actors share the key responsibility to ensure effective, coordinated and child-friendly response to child victims and witnesses of sexual violence in the current system and are therefore key implementing partners in establishing and operating Barnahus in Slovenia:

Ministry of Justice
Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
Ministry of Health
Ministry of Interior
Police
Supreme Court
The Office of the State Prosecutor General

2. CONTENT AND PURPOSE OF THE GUIDELINES

- 2.1. These guidelines outline the proposed roles and responsibilities of the Barnahus implementing parties that will play a role in establishing and collaborating in Barnahus in Slovenia. The guidelines furthermore propose organisational details, governance and financing of the Barnahus.
- 2.2. The purpose of these guidelines is to propose an operational and organisational framework for effective collaboration between the implementing parties in delivering timely, professional, comprehensive interventions (criminal investigation, child protection, medical evaluation and treatment, forensic medical evaluation and therapeutic evaluation and treatment) in one child-friendly premise and to ensure sustainable funding of the Barnahus.
- 2.3. The legal and policy background to the items regulated in these guidelines are set out in Annex 2. Explanatory Memorandum.

3. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF BARNAHUS

- 3.1. The overall purpose of Barnahus is to facilitate the parallel criminal and child protection investigations and to avoid the primary Barnahus target group defined in paragraph 4.1, having to repeat their story multiple times to different persons in different locations.
- 3.2. All the collaborating agencies and the child shall come to Barnahus, which offers a child-friendly and safe environment.
- 3.3. The Barnahus places children and their rights at the centre of all activities, at all times respecting the rights of the defendant to a fair trial. The Barnahus is truth-seeking and objective.
- 3.4. The specific objectives of Barnahus are to ensure that:
 - 3.4.1. The best interests of the child are a primary consideration in all actions and decisions concerning the child and the non-offending family/caregivers/support persons.
 - 3.4.2. The right of the child to information and his/her right to be heard are central to the practice and process in Barnahus.
 - 3.4.3. The child is interviewed and supported by highly qualified professionals, with adequate education, experience, knowledge and skills to work with children in their specific area of expertise.

- 3.4.4. The child is heard and examined with due care to avoid traumatising and/or re-traumatising of the child (secondary victimisation), while respecting fair trial and related rights of the defendant.
- 3.4.5. The child protection assessment is carried out professionally and in the best interests of the child.
- 3.4.6. Undue delay is avoided at all times, in accordance with national law and guidelines.
- 3.4.7. The child is treated with respect and safeguarded from abuse in the context of investigation, examination and treatment.
- 3.4.8. The child and defendant are guaranteed justice, a fair trial and legal certainty.

4. TARGET GROUP

- 4.1. The primary target group includes children, aged 0-18 years, who are suspected victims and/or witnesses of criminal offences of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, as defined in the Criminal Code (Articles 170 – 176).
- 4.2. The secondary target group includes close non-offending family such as parents/care-givers and siblings. This group should be offered continuous information, counselling and crisis support.
- 4.3. The Barnahus deals with cases, which were first reported to the competent authorities.
- 4.4. The uptake area for Barnahus is the whole of Republic of Slovenia.

5. ORGANISATION

- 5.1. The Ministry of Justice is the lead agency for Barnahus and will act as the representative of the juridical person, which is Republic of Slovenia, for Barnahus during the inception period, after which the Barnahus will be registered and operate as an independent legal person.

5.2. Barnahus Steering Group

- 5.2.1. The Barnahus Steering Group gathers one (1) representative from each implementing party and the Barnahus Coordinator.
- 5.2.2. The Steering Group is chaired by the lead agency.
- 5.2.3. The role of the Steering Group is to ensure that the activities of Barnahus are implemented in accordance with these guidelines. The Steering Group monitors the activities and the financial situation of Barnahus.
- 5.2.4. The respective agency representatives can only take decisions in line with the decision-making mandate and authority of their role in their respective agencies.
- 5.2.5. Substitute members shall have a similar mandate and decision-making powers as the Member of the Steering group that is replaced.
- 5.2.6. The Steering Group meets bi-monthly. Additional meetings can be convened by the Chair of the Steering Group if there is a need.

5.3. Barnahus Team

- 5.3.1. The Barnahus hosts a team of permanent staff members.
- 5.3.2. The team shall consist at least of the following team members:
 - i. 1 Barnahus Coordinator (50% Coordinator/50% Therapy & Forensic Interviews)
 - ii. 2 Therapeutic Staff/Forensic Interviewers (100%)
 - iii. 1 Receptionist/team assistant (100%)

- iv. 1 IT technician and other maintenance (50%)
- 5.3.3. The recruitment and employment of Barnahus staff is the responsibility of the lead agency, taking the opinion of the Steering group into consideration where relevant. Staff is recruited taking specific child safeguarding precautions into account, including carrying out necessary checks of disciplinary and criminal background and records.
- 5.3.4. The role and tasks of the Barnahus team include:

5.3.4.1. Interagency Coordination

- i. Act as responsible for the organisation and coordination of interagency case planning meetings and for convening Steering Group and Working Group meetings;
- ii. Chair the Barnahus interagency case planning meetings and the Working Group meetings;
- iii. Participate in the Barnahus interagency planning meetings and share case specific information in the best interests of the child and according to national law and guidelines;
- iv. Act as responsible for the coordination of the interagency response for each child;

5.3.4.2. Forensic Interviews

- v. Allocate specifically trained staff member from the Barnahus team to carry out forensic interviews following nationally and internationally recognised protocols for child forensic interviews;
- vi. In accordance with the law, may observe forensic interview and participate in the activities in the observation room during forensic interviews. All reasonable efforts will be made to hold joint interviews with the full presence of the interagency team in Barnahus to eliminate any unnecessary interview duplication that may result in trauma to the child;
- vii. Ensure high-quality transmission and recording of the forensic interview.

5.3.4.3. Crisis support and therapy

- viii. Offer crisis support to the Barnahus target group defined in paragraph 4.1 and 4.2;
- ix. Carry out assessments of trauma symptoms in the primary target group defined in paragraph 4.1;
- x. Offer short-term therapeutic interventions for the Barnahus target group defined in paragraph 4.1;
- xi. Refer cases to long-term therapy with local services, if needed;
- xii. Act as a liaison with the Barnahus target group defined in paragraph 4.1 and 4.2 and ensure that adequate information is shared at all times;
- xiii. Contribute to ensuring that all children who come to the Barnahus are welcomed and well attended to.

5.3.4.4. Team Information and Support

- xiv. Ensure that all relevant information, guidelines, checklists, routines for the interagency collaboration are accessible for all partners of the interagency team;
- xv. Gather and share relevant information and research with the interagency team and support continuous competence development;
- xvi. Participate in joint interagency training;
- xvii. Participate in training relevant to the target group in the Barnahus

5.3.4.5. External Relations and Competence Building

- xviii. Responsible for ensuring regular data collection, keeping statistics, evaluation and follow up of Barnahus activities;
 - xix. Contribute to information sharing and awareness raising about Barnahus;
 - xx. Participate in international Barnahus networks;
 - xxi. Act as a liaison with other relevant actors that work to promote and support Barnahus, including but not limited to Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Association of Centres for Social work, municipalities, NGOs, professional networks, Universities, Human Rights Ombudsman.
- 5.3.5. The Barnahus team shall have access to regular and organised managerial supervision, training and, if needed, counselling.

5.4. Barnahus Coordinator

- 5.4.1. The Barnahus Coordinator is a permanent employee of the Barnahus;
- 5.4.2. The Barnahus Coordinator is responsible for overseeing and managing the activities and financial situation of Barnahus;
- 5.4.3. The Coordinator prepares and submits activity and financial reports to the Steering Group;
- 5.4.4. The Coordinator participates in Steering Group and Working Group meetings and acts as a liaison between the Working Group and the Steering Group.
- 5.4.5. The Coordinator acts as team leader and coordinate the Barnahus team activities;
- 5.4.6. The Coordinator coordinates the day-to-day collaboration of the agencies in the Barnahus;
- 5.4.7. The Coordinator is responsible for developing, updating, monitoring and disseminating guidelines and routines in the Barnahus in close collaboration with the Working Group members;
- 5.4.8. The Coordinator acts as secretary of the Steering Group;
- 5.4.9. The Coordinator acts as chair of the Working Group;
- 5.4.10. The Coordinator organises information, awareness raising and study visits to the Barnahus with an external audience;
- 5.4.11. The Coordinator acts as a contact for matters relating to child safeguarding;
- 5.4.12. The Coordinator ensures that statistics are collected, including from the implementing parties to these guidelines, and are made available to relevant actors;
- 5.4.13. The Coordinator regularly informs and updates the Steering Group about the activities in the Barnahus;
- 5.4.14. The Coordinator ensures relations with partners, external actors including, but not limited to, to Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Association of Centres for Social work, municipalities, NGOs, professional networks, Universities, Human Rights Ombudsman.

5.5. Barnahus Working Group

- 5.5.1. The Working Group consists of representatives from all implementing parties to these guidelines who work in the Barnahus, including the members of the Barnahus team;
- 5.5.2. The role of the Working Group is to discuss, develop and improve the collaborating partners' day-to-day activities, guidelines and routines in the Barnahus;
- 5.5.3. The Barnahus Coordinator acts as chair of the Working Group;
- 5.5.4. The Working Group meets every month;

5.5.5. If a permanent member of the Working Group cannot attend a meeting, a substitute member should be appointed.

6. TASKS AND COMMITMENTS OF THE RESPECTIVE IMPLEMENTING PARTIES

- 6.1. Each implementing party plays a role in ensuring that its agency allocates staff who contributes to the activities and collaboration in the Barnahus.
- 6.2. Each implementing party shall:
 - 6.2.1. Appoint a representative¹⁶ and ensure participation in the Barnahus Steering Group;
 - 6.2.2. Ensure competence and training of staff working in the Barnahus;
 - 6.2.3. Contribute to information sharing and awareness raising about the Barnahus¹⁷;
 - 6.2.4. Contribute to data collection, evaluation and follow-up of the Barnahus activities¹⁸.
- 6.3. Each agency and professional operating in the Barnahus commits to:
 - 6.3.1. Contributing to ensuring that all children who come to Barnahus are welcomed and well attended to;
 - 6.3.2. Participating in Barnahus Working Group meetings;
 - 6.3.3. Participating in joint interagency training.

6.4. Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

- 6.4.1. Responsible for ensuring that the relevant local social work centre allocates staff for cases examined in Barnahus to:
 - i. Carry out the social welfare investigation, including an assessment of potential protection needs;
 - ii. In accordance with the valid legislation, observe forensic interview and participate in the activities in the observation room during forensic interviews, or if presence is not possible in spite of a reasonable effort, commits to watching a recording of the interview;
 - iii. Participate in the Barnahus interagency planning meetings and share case specific information in the best interests of the child and according to national law and guidelines;
 - iv. Accompany the child and potential non-offending parents/care-givers or support persons to Barnahus.

6.5. Ministry of Health

- 6.5.1. Responsible for ensuring that the relevant hospital or clinic allocates specifically trained and certified staff to:
 - i. Carry out child-friendly medical and, where relevant, gynaecological evaluation and treatment in the Barnahus, if required;
 - ii. In accordance with the valid legislation, observe forensic interview and participate in the activities in the observation room during forensic interviews, or if presence is not possible in spite of a reasonable effort, commits to watching a recording of the interview;
 - iii. Participate in the Barnahus interagency planning meetings and share case specific information in the best interests of the child and according to national law and guidelines.

¹⁶ The representative of the Supreme Court will be a judge of first or second instance.

¹⁷ This responsibility of the Supreme Court will be implemented by relevant first or second instance court.

¹⁸ This responsibility of the Supreme will here be implemented by relevant first or second instance court.

6.6. Ministry of Interior - Police

6.6.1. Responsible for ensuring that the relevant police district allocates staff for cases examined in Barnahus to:

- i. Carry out a criminal investigation;
- ii. In accordance with the valid legislation, observe forensic interview and participate in the activities in the observation room during forensic interviews, or if presence is not possible in spite of reasonable effort, commits to watching a recording of the interview;
- iii. Potentially, in cases where Barnahus staff are not available to carry out the interview, and in accordance with the valid legislation, carry out child-friendly forensic interviews in the Barnahus, following nationally and internationally recognised protocols for child interviews by specifically trained and certified staff for this purpose;
- iv. Participate in the Barnahus interagency planning meetings and share case specific information in the best interests of the child and according to national law and guidelines.

6.7. The State Prosecutor Office

6.7.1. Responsible for ensuring that a prosecutor is allocated for cases examined in Barnahus to:

- i. Participate in the Barnahus interagency planning meetings and share case specific information in the best interests of the child and according to national law and guidelines;
- ii. In accordance with the valid legislation, observe forensic interview and participate in the activities in the observation room during forensic interviews;
- iii. Participate in the judicial interview in accordance with the valid legislation.

6.8. Supreme Court / Courts

6.8.1. Relevant Courts are responsible for appointing a judge for cases examined in Barnahus to:

- i. Lead and observe the forensic interview in Barnahus, including monitoring quality and content of interview;
- ii. Ask questions during the interview via the professional carrying out the forensic interview, if relevant;
- iii. Decide if a second interview is necessary and approve further questions to the child.

7. FORENSIC INTERVIEW

7.1. The forensic interview is led by a judge and performed in accordance with existing legislation;

7.2. The Barnahus convenes an interagency meeting with all professionals involved, to discuss the case, the strategy for the interview, the special characteristics and potential needs of the child before the forensic interview is carried out. Staff share case specific information in the best interests of the child, respecting law, procedures and professional codes of conduct;

- 7.3. The forensic interview is led by a judge; facilities are available to allow the judge to, if necessary, communicate directly with the interviewer through an earpiece or other means of communication technologies;
- 7.4. Forensic interviews are routinely carried out by one single professional from the Barnahus team. Professionals who are allowed to be present during a judicial interview according to existing legislation, can observe the interview from another room or watch a recording of the interview; Non-offending family and caregivers are not allowed to observe the forensic interview.
- 7.5. The judicially conducted forensic interviews are only carried out by staff members of the Barnahus or the police who are specifically trained and certified in carrying out child-friendly forensic interviews. Forensic interviewers have access to regular training, peer review and supervision;
- 7.6. Evidence-based protocols, such as NICHD or NCAC¹⁹, are used for all forensic interviews. The forensic interviewers are trained in using evidence-based practice and protocols;
- 7.7. Forensic interviews are only carried out in special child-friendly forensic interview rooms in the Barnahus;
- 7.8. It is recommended that the number of interviews is limited to the absolute minimum necessary for the criminal investigation, which routinely consists of one interview. If a second interview is requested or needed, it is carried out, to the greatest extent possible and where appropriate, by the same professional who conducted the first interview;
- 7.9. Interview rooms are equipped with at least one camera and a sound system, which allows high quality recording and live observation of the forensic interview. All interviews are audio-visually recorded;
- 7.10. The interview is adapted to the individual's situation and characteristics in terms of age, development, linguistic, cognitive and social level, cultural background, emotional state. Special needs are explored and met;
- 7.11. If necessary, interpretation is possible as per existing legislation. Forensic interviewers should be trained how to use the interpreter during the interview;
- 7.12. A medical examination, including a forensic medical examination if required, is carried out after the forensic interview unless, in urgent cases, the forensic medical examination takes place in a hospital before the child is referred to the Barnahus. It should be noted that the forensic medical doctor should never engage in interviewing the child or posing questions about the abuse, regardless of when the forensic medical examination takes place;
- 7.13. The Barnahus convenes an interagency meeting after the interview to ensure that there is a mutually and formally agreed interagency plan on how to follow up with the child, including potential child protection, crisis support and therapy.

8. FINANCE, BUDGET & COST SHARING

8.1. Barnahus budget

- 8.1.1. The staff costs for the permanent Barnahus team, specified in paragraph 5.3.2, will be covered by the Barnahus budget;
- 8.1.2. The Barnahus operational costs, the furniture, IT hardware and software and the material for visitors (e.g. toys, games, books, magazines) will be part of the Barnahus budget;

¹⁹The NICHD protocol (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development <http://nichdprotocol.com/>) and the NCAC protocol (National Children's Advocacy Center <http://nationalcac.org/>) are two internationally recognised protocols for forensic interviews with children that are commonly used in Barnahus, Child Advocacy Centres and similar services.

- 8.1.3. The equipment in the Barnahus is covered by the Barnahus budget;
- 8.1.4. Maintenance of the Barnahus premises and equipment, including but not limited to cleaning and IT support, is covered by the Barnahus budget;
- 8.1.5. The costs for the interagency training of the Barnahus team, for forensic interviewers and forensic medical examinations as well as operating the IT equipment for forensic interviews will be part of the Barnahus budget;
- 8.1.6. The Barnahus budget will include costs for external competence building, including an annual conference and seminars;
- 8.1.7. Travel for national and international training, study visits and conferences will be part of the Barnahus budget;
- 8.1.8. The costs for evaluation will be covered by the Barnahus budget.

8.2. Budget Allocations

- 8.2.1. The Barnahus budget will be allocated from relevant budget lines of the State Budget under the lead agency (Ministry of Justice);
- 8.2.2. Each implementing party covers costs for its respective staff coming to work in the Barnahus, specified in paragraphs 6.4.1, 6.5.1, 6.6.1, 6.7.1 and 6.8.1, including their professional supervision, training and development, unless otherwise stated in the guidelines;
- 8.2.3. Each implementing party covers costs incurred as a consequence of the work carried out by its respective staff coming to work in Barnahus, specified in paragraphs 6.4.1, 6.5.1, 6.6.1, 6.7.1 and 6.8.1;
- 8.2.4. Barnahus can seek co-financing of the Barnahus budget, as well as additional funding to cover costs for e.g. potential pilot(s), equipment, training and capacity building and networking from external grants from private, corporate and international donors;
- 8.2.5. Barnahus can accept donations from private and corporate sources, under the condition that it does not compromise Barnahus' neutral and non-biased performance of tasks.

9. VENUE

9.1. Place and Accessibility

- 9.1.1. The Barnahus premises are situated in a detached building, hosting only the Barnahus activities;
- 9.1.2. The premises are accessible by public transport. The premises are easily accessible, including for individuals with disabilities and/or special needs;
- 9.1.3. The location and sign-posting of Barnahus are discreet.

9.2. Interior Environment

- 9.2.1. The Barnahus includes a reception, waiting room(s), interview room(s), observation/conference room(s), medical examination room(s), therapy room(s), visitor and staff toilets, archive room, storage and IT/printer room, boiler room and a staff room with kitchen;
- 9.2.2. Furnishing and material are child and family-friendly and age-appropriate, catering the needs of children at all ages and development stages. Specific requirements are set out below;
- 9.2.3. The premises are physically safe for children at all ages and developmental stages, including for children with disabilities and/or special needs. Safety inspections of the premises are carried out regularly;

- 9.2.4. The interior is designed according to best practice guidance to maintain indoor accessibility;
- 9.2.5. There are separate, soundproof and private areas available to ensure privacy if needed;
- 9.2.6. The Barnahus is set up so that contact between victim and alleged offender is avoided at all times;
- 9.2.7. The views and ideas of children and their non-offending care-givers on the venue are sought regularly to ensure that the venue meets the requirements of the venue set out in these guidelines.

9.3. Reception and waiting room(s)

- 9.3.1. Furnishing and material are child and family-friendly and age-appropriate, catering the needs of children at all ages and development stages;
- 9.3.2. Content, for example toys, magazines and books, and furniture in the waiting area meet the needs of both younger and older children, children with special needs and disabilities;
- 9.3.3. The toilets meet the needs of both younger and older children, children with special needs or disabilities.

9.4. Interview and observation room(s)

- 9.4.1. The interview room(s) is(are) comfortable and child-friendly;
- 9.4.2. The interview room(s) is(are) furnished and decorated to avoid distraction;
- 9.4.3. The camera(s) is(are) set up so that it(they) can follow the child and capture hand movements if the child is drawing or showing something;
- 9.4.4. The Barnahus provides for live observation of interviews on a screen in an adjacent room. Interview and observation rooms are separate but connected via intercom audio-visual systems.

9.5. Medical examination room(s)

- 9.5.1. The medical examination room(s) is(are) child-friendly and adapted to different ages and needs;
- 9.5.2. The medical examination room(s) is(are) equipped with child-friendly technical equipment for top-to-toe and forensic medical examinations.

9.6. Therapy room(s)

- 9.6.1. The therapy room(s) is(are) child-friendly and adapted to different ages and needs;
- 9.6.2. The room(s) is(are) equipped with the necessary equipment and content to carry out therapy.

10. DOCUMENTATION MANAGEMENT, DATA PROTECTION AND PRIVACY

- 10.1. Each implementing party is responsible for its own documentation according to its specific requirements for documentation;
- 10.2. Information sharing is governed by relevant laws, protocols and professional standards and is done in the best interests of the child. The respective implementing parties are responsible for upholding legal requirements and specific agency requirements for information sharing;
- 10.3. Barnahus staff take minutes from interagency meetings and the discussions during the observation of forensic interviews. The documentation should be kept brief. Minutes are stored in the Barnahus and shared with the relevant agencies;

- 10.4. The lead agency is responsible for archiving the documentation from Barnahus and for data protection and privacy;
- 10.5. Barnahus staff takes minutes from Steering Group and liaison/Working Group meetings. Minutes are stored in the Barnahus and shared with the relevant agencies.

11. COMPETENCE, TRAINING, SUPERVISION

- 11.1. The implementing parties should commit to ensuring that the services in Barnahus meet high quality standards and are implemented by highly qualified and competent staff;
- 11.2. The Barnahus will only use the services of certified Barnahus forensic interviewers. The Barnahus is responsible for ensuring training and certification of forensic interviewers and forensic medical doctors;
- 11.3. The specific training requirements of Barnahus staff and the respective implementing parties' staff are set out in para 5.3.5 and 6.2.2 of these guidelines;
- 11.4. The Barnahus will act as a competence centre for professionals who come in contact with the Barnahus target group defined in paragraph 4.1 and 4.2.

12. EVALUATION

- 12.1. An initial evaluation of Barnahus will be carried out after two years of operation. The findings of the evaluation may result in changes being made to these guidelines.
- 12.2. Following the initial evaluation, regular evaluations will take place every 3 years.

ANNEX 1. OVERVIEW OF PROCEDURE FROM INITIAL REPORT, REFERRAL TO BARNAHUS, ACTION IN BARNAHUS & FOLLOW UP

Step 1. Report to Social Work Centre or Police of suspected sexual violence or sexual exploitation of child

- If the report is made to the social work centre a decision is made whether the case should be reported to the police.
- If the report is made to the police, the police notifies the social services.
- The police and the social work centres engage in mandatory collaboration and coordination in cases which are reported to the police.

Step 2. Joint action by Social Services and Police

- The police and social services initiate their respective investigations (criminal investigation and child protection investigation), without hearing the child. If needed, an urgent decision is taken and executed to protect the child from the suspected offender.
- The prosecutor is notified and decides if the case will be prosecuted.

Step 3. Referral to Barnahus

- A judge can order the performance of a forensic interview and, if necessary, a medical examination in the Barnahus.
- The Barnahus convenes an interagency case planning meeting with all relevant actors to share case specific information and plan the technical and child accommodating aspects of the interview.

Step 4. Forensic Interview

- An interagency planning meeting is held before the interview according to paragraph 7.2 of the National Guidelines.
- The child is accompanied to the Barnahus by a staff member of the local social work centre and a non-offending family member or support person.
- The forensic interview is held according to paragraph 7 of the National Guidelines.

Step 5. Medical Examination

- After the forensic interview, a child-friendly medical examination is carried out by especially trained medical doctors on the same day.

Step 6. Interagency case planning

- An interagency case planning meeting is held after the forensic interview and the examinations of the child to draw up a plan for the interagency response to the child and non-offending family members,

including child protection, crisis support, medical treatment, therapy, information sharing with the child and the non-offending family members, etc. as per paragraph 7.13 of the National Guidelines.

Step 7. Trauma assessment and therapy

- A trauma assessment is carried out with the child without undue delay. If needed, the child is offered short-term therapy in the Barnahus.

Step 8. Follow-up

- For a period of at least 24 months the Barnahus follows matters up regularly with the local social work centres to ensure that the child and the non-offending family have received the necessary support and assistance.
- The Barnahus staff is informed about the decision(s) of the Court.

ANNEX 2: EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

CONTEXT - CHILD SEXUAL VIOLENCE

1. Available data on the prevalence of sexual violence against children in Europe suggests that as many as one in five children has suffered from some form of sexual violence, often with a severe impact on the physical and mental health and development of the child. Underreporting of sexual violence continues to be a serious concern across Europe. Sexual violence against children remains a sensitive issue and not all victims disclose. Reported cases do not always lead to criminal investigation or trial.²⁰ This is a serious concern, since victims who do not disclose often remain invisible and vulnerable to further abuse, with little help to recover from physical and mental trauma and to access justice.
2. Statistics of criminal offences in Slovenia between the period of 1 January 2016 to 14 December 2017 include 49 reported cases of sexual assault on a person under 15 years old, 31 cases of presentation, manufacture, possession and distribution of [child] pornographic material, 17 cases of trafficking in human beings and 1 violation of the sexual integrity by abuse of position²¹. Consultations with professionals in Slovenia indicate that underreporting is a concern also in Slovenia, however, this has not been substantiated with facts in the context of the project.
3. When sexual violence is reported, children often become vulnerable to re-traumatisation due to inadequate safeguards in law, policy and procedures and a lack of a child-friendly and coordinated response from the various agencies that play a role in protecting the child and bringing perpetrators to justice. Traumatisation and re-traumatisation is a serious concern since the child's disclosure is fundamental to ensure the safety and protection of the child, to determine the need for physical and mental recovery, and to secure a successful and child-friendly²² criminal investigation and judicial process.
4. In Slovenia, a number of different actors have a duty to protect child victims of violence. Each of these actors are responsible for ensuring that their role is fulfilled in an effective and child-friendly manner, that the child is protected from (re-)victimisation and that the child's best interest remains a primary consideration. If these actors do not work together, the child is often subjected to parallel enquiries in different agencies and with different professionals, potentially causing repetitious and intimidating experiences. Repetitious enquiries and assessments, in particular, when carried out by untrained professionals, may lead to traumatisation or re-traumatisation and to the child being discredited as a witness.²³
5. Consultations with professionals in Slovenia confirm that children often are subjected to multiple interviews, often with untrained professionals, which can lead to a traumatisation of the child and

²⁰ See e.g. Lalor, K. and Mc Elvaney, R., Overview of the nature and extent of child sexual abuse in Europe, in "Protecting children from sexual violence – A comprehensive approach", Council of Europe (2011).

²¹ Report on the number of cases – inter-ministerial working group for implementing the Barnahus project (prepared by Jana Skerbinek based on the iK system, 2018).

²² Child-friendly justice "refers to justice systems which guarantee the respect the effective implementation of all children's rights at the highest attainable level" (Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on child-friendly justice and their explanatory memorandum, p. 4).

²³ Repeated interviews with different persons, in different locations and by different services in combination with inadequate interviewing methods have been shown by research and clinical experiences to contribute to the retraumatisation of the child. See for example Newgent, Rebecca A., Fender-Scarr, Lisa K. and Bromley, Jamie L., The Retraumatization of Child Sexual Abuse: The Second Insult (National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children, Volume 2, Number 2, Fall 2002); Jansson, Helene, Rathje, Pia and Gade Hansen, Søren, The experience of children testifying in court in cases of sexual abuse (Sexological Clinic at PCK Copenhagen, Center for Sexual Abuse, Rigshospitalet Copenhagen and the National Council for Children, Denmark, 2015).

impede the parallel criminal and child protection investigation. The consultations also revealed that there is often a substantial delay between reporting of suspicion of abuse and a forensic interview as well as subsequent assistance and support, including therapy, to the child victim. Interagency collaboration and coordination remains a challenge. Lack of human resources with adequate training was stated as key concern across sections, in particular in the area of clinical psychology, therapeutic support, social work and forensic medical examination of suspected child sexual violence. It was also noted that police carrying out forensic interviews lacked training and did not use internationally recognised evidence-based interview protocols.²⁴

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM BY PARAGRAPH

1. Implementing Partners (Paragraph 1 of the National Guidelines)

6. Paragraph 1 of the National Guidelines lists the Barnahus implementing partners.
7. These actors share the responsibility to establish and operate Barnahus in Slovenia, and have been identified on the basis of the role that they, and their implementing bodies, play in ensuring effective, coordinated and child-friendly response to child victims and witnesses of sexual violence in the current system and in the forthcoming Barnahus in Slovenia. Paragraph 6 sets out the commitments and tasks of the respective agencies and Annex 1 outlines the procedure through which the respective agencies are involved.
8. The implementing partners' respective operational bodies, including the police, social work centres, child hospitals and clinics (physical and mental health), prosecutor's office and Courts are key stakeholders in the child protection and criminal investigation and judicial process concerning child victims and witnesses of violence.
9. Other important stakeholders include Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Association of Centres for Social work, municipalities, NGOs, professional networks, Universities and the Human Rights Ombudsman. These stakeholders are not mentioned as implementing partners since they are not present in the Barnahus. They are nevertheless crucial actors in terms of for example detecting and reporting violence, educating children, parents, caregivers and professionals, advocating for children's rights and child protection and providing support to children and their families. Special measures have been inserted in the guidelines to ensure that Barnahus does not work in isolation of these actors and that there is regular exchange and competence building (5.3.4.4 and 11.4).

2. Content and purpose (Paragraph 2 of the National Guidelines)

10. Paragraph 2 describes the content and purpose of the National Guidelines.
11. The purpose of these guidelines is to set out an operational and organisational framework for effective collaboration between the implementing parties in delivering timely, professional, comprehensive interventions (criminal investigation, child protection, medical evaluation and treatment, forensic medical evaluation and therapeutic evaluation and treatment) in one child-friendly premise and to ensure sustainable funding of the Barnahus.

²⁴ The consultations took place in meetings organised by the Slovenian Ministry of Justice on Forensic examination and criminal investigation (15 May 2018), Therapeutic assistance (16 May 2018), Judiciary (16 May 2018), Social Work (17 May 2018), Medical examination (17 May 2018), Field Research Workshop (18 May 2018) and Judicial Workshop (15 June 2018).

12. Whereas the National Guidelines draw on existing international and Slovenian domestic law, the National Guidelines do not give rise to any legally binding obligations and is in no manner meant to interfere or encroach on existing legislation of the Republic of Slovenia. The Guidelines are furthermore based on good practice, building on national guidelines and interagency agreements in Barnahus in Sweden and Norway, and are coherent with the recommendations and indicators set out in the Barnahus Quality Standards.
13. The guidelines have undergone extensive consultation in the Interdisciplinary Working Party and have been reviewed by international experts associated to Barnahus in Iceland, Norway and Sweden and the Council of Europe.
14. The guidelines can serve as a basis for the development of an interagency agreement or a Barnahus law in case a decision is made in Slovenia by the implementing partners to enter into formal agreement on Barnahus. Experience from Barnahus in other countries show that an interagency formal agreement which covers key elements such as purpose, goals, commitments, roles and responsibilities, organisation, finance, privacy, and conflict management, contributes to efficient and collaborative interagency teams, mutual respect of roles and a shared sense of responsibility. The formal agreement by leadership to collaborate and to allocate staff from their respective implementing bodies secures quality, continuity and sustainability of the Barnahus. The guidelines can also provide a useful basis for developing a Barnahus law to strengthen the legal basis for Barnahus in Slovenia.

3. Purpose and Objectives of Barnahus (Paragraph 3 of the National Guidelines)

15. Paragraph 3 of the National Guidelines describes the purpose and objectives of Barnahus in Slovenia.
16. The purpose of the Barnahus in Slovenia is “to facilitate and coordinate the parallel criminal investigation and child protection investigation”. The purpose and the objectives have been defined in accordance with European law and guidance on child victims of sexual violence and child victims of crime²⁵, Slovenian national law and procedures and the Barnahus Quality Standards, after consultation with the Interdisciplinary Working Party and international experts²⁶ (Paragraph 3.1).
17. The research and consultations with the Interdisciplinary Working Party and other stakeholders confirm that the purpose and objectives are not in conflict with the roles and responsibilities of the implementing partners in cases of sexual violence against children.²⁷ They are furthermore not in conflict with pre-trial procedures (Criminal Procedure Act, ZKP-UP8²⁸) or national rules on multidisciplinary collaboration between agencies in cases of domestic violence, which includes sexual violence against a family member regardless of age (Domestic Violence Prevention Act (2008, 2016, 2017) Article 3.2).²⁹

²⁵ The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention), the EU Directive on Child Sexual Abuse(2011/92/EU) and the EU Directive on Victims’ Rights (2012/29/EU).

²⁶ Joint EU-Council of Europe project “Barnahus/Children’s House” in Slovenia: Kick-off meeting (19-20 March 2018), Field Research meetings on Forensic examination and criminal investigation (15 May 2018), Therapeutic assistance (16 May 2018), Judiciary (16 May 2018), Social Work (17 May 2018), Medical examination (17 May 2018), Field Research Workshop (18 May 2018) and Judicial Workshop (15 June 2018).

²⁷ Barnahus Interagency Working Group Preparatory Research Compendium.

²⁸ Criminal Procedure Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [Uradni list RS] No 32/12).

²⁹ Rules on cooperation between the police and other authorities in the detection and prevention of domestic violence (2010), Rules on the organisation and work of multidisciplinary teams and regional services and on the

18. Paragraph 3.1 of the National Guidelines identifies **child protection investigation** as a key element of Barnahus and paragraph 3.4.5, stipulates that child protection assessments in Barnahus should be carried out with professionalism and in the best interests of the child. Whereas the role of the Barnahus is limited to child protection in the context of the sexual violence case investigated and addressed in Barnahus it should be noted that the protection assessment must be a part of a broader child welfare investigation to ensure durable solutions, longer-term assistance and follow-up with the child and family/caregivers. The child protection assessment and action plan developed by the multidisciplinary team under the lead of the relevant Social Work Centre should never be done in isolation of a full investigation into the child's living conditions. This is particularly important since children often are exposed to multiple child protection concerns, which often are related to social exclusion, marginalisation and poverty.
19. Article 6, 7 and 8 of the Rules on the organisation and work of multidisciplinary teams and regional services and on the activities of social work centres in dealing with domestic violence³⁰ allows the social work centres to form a multidisciplinary team to ensure the long term protection of the child. The tasks of the multidisciplinary team can include: exchange of information in order to clarify the circumstances necessary for the protection and assistance of the victim by telephone, e-mail and at the meetings convened by the Social work centres; coordination of activities; making the victim aware of all forms of assistance provided by the authorities; drawing up a plan for assistance to the victim and monitoring its implementation, if this is necessary in the light of the assessment of the victim's risk assessment; providing the most appropriate protection to the victim; and taking decisions with a view to implementing the assistance. The envisaged multidisciplinary work by the National Guidelines on child protection in the Barnahus conforms with these tasks.
20. A key objective of the Barnahus is to ensure that child victims and witnesses do not have to repeat their testimony multiple times in different locations, with different, potentially unqualified, staff (Paragraph 3.2). Paragraph 3.2 is directly linked with the provisions set out in 3.4.4, which stipulates that children in Barnahus should be heard and examined with due care to avoid or minimise (re)-traumatisation.
21. This involves that professionals from all the collaborating agencies and the child come to Barnahus, which offers a child-friendly and safe environment, to carry out their specific role in each individual case. The research in Slovenia has not revealed legal or policy barriers to multidisciplinary collaboration under one roof. Whereas there are rules regarding multidisciplinary cooperation in cases of domestic violence, mentioned above, there is currently no legislation or rules regarding multidisciplinary practice, including forensic interviews, *in one child-friendly location*.
22. Slovenia operates a few so called "safe rooms" for hearing children, however, the research has revealed that they rarely are used. The National Guidelines set out to address potential obstacles in terms of lack of willingness, commitment and competence to practice in the context of a multidisciplinary team in a child-friendly location. Section 9 of this explanatory memorandum looks closer at the characteristics of the Barnahus venue and section 7 looks closer at the requirements for the forensic interview. The tasks and commitments of the respective agencies are further explained in section 6 of this explanatory memorandum. The Roadmap proposes a process for evaluating potential expansion of the agencies' involvement and tasks.

activities of social work centres in dealing with domestic violence (2009; 2017), Rules on the Treatment of Domestic Violence for Educational Institutions (2009) and Rules on procedures for dealing with domestic violence in the implementation of health activities (2011).

³⁰ Rules on the organisation and work of multidisciplinary teams and regional services and on the activities of social work centres in dealing with domestic violence (2009; 2017).

23. Barnahus places the needs and rights of the child at the centre of its activities to ensure a **child-friendly justice process** and assistance to the child (Paragraph 3.3). The Barnahus equally ensures the defendants' rights and principles such as the right to a fair trial, equality of arms, and legal certainty. The practice in Barnahus ensures a neutral, truth-seeking approach to hearing and examining the child, which enhances the evidentiary value of findings, speaking to the overlapping objective of prosecution, defence and the Court to ensure the quality and correctness of testimonies and forensic evidence. This is further discussed in section 7 in this explanatory memorandum.
24. Paragraph 3.4.1 of the National Guidelines specifies that **the best interests of the child** must be a primary consideration in all actions and decisions at Barnahus. The research has not identified any obstacles to practicing in this way, and has found that it is in line with the requirements to protect the interests and wellbeing of the child set out in Slovenian legislation and rules related to criminal investigation, judicial proceedings and child protection. For example, the Act Amending the Police Tasks and Powers explicitly mentions the best interests of the child in the context of informing parents³¹ and Social Work Centres are assigned by law to support the protection of the best interests of the child during legal proceedings and special protection, including removal of the child from the family³². The obligation to take the best interests of the child into account is furthermore a fundamental principle in international law, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child³³ and a general obligation in the Lanzarote Convention, the EU Directives on Victims' Rights (2012/29/EU) and Child Sexual Abuse (2011/92/EU). This also has relevance to paragraph 4.4.5 of the National Guidelines, which stipulates that child protection assessments in Barnahus should be carried out with professionalism and in the best interests of the child.
25. **Children's rights to information and to be heard** are central to the activities of Barnahus (Paragraph 3.4.2), not only in terms of the Barnahus' facilitation of the child-friendly forensic interview (Paragraph 3.4.3), which is further discussed in section 7 of this explanatory note. The Barnahus plays an imperative role in ensuring the rights of the child and non-offending caregivers to receive adequate information throughout the process, including on treatment, therapy, next steps and follow-up. Children must also be provided with opportunities to express their views and inform decisions. Children can also provide invaluable feedback on the environment, the process and interventions so that they can be made more child-friendly and appropriate to the needs and wishes of children. The research has not identified legal or policy obstacles to practicing according to Paragraph 3.4.2 of the National Guidelines.
26. **Preventing undue delay** is a key concern for Barnahus (paragraph 3.4.6 of the National Guidelines). Delay was identified as a concern in most sectors during consultations with professionals including police, social workers, medical and mental health professionals, prosecutors and judges organised in the framework of the project³⁴. There are no legal or policy obstacles to this provision, however, resources and procedures are often inadequate. European law, including the Lanzarote Convention, The EU Directives on Victims' Rights (2012/29/EU) and

³¹ Act Amending the Police Tasks and Powers (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [Uradni list RS], No 10/17, 18.3).

³² A Record of the Child's Journey in the event of violence during the procedures at a Social Work Centre, p. 3.

³³ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

³⁴ Field Research meetings organised in the premises of the MoJ in Ljubljana, Slovenia, on Forensic examination and criminal investigation (15 May 2018), Therapeutic assistance (16 May 2018), Judiciary (16 May 2018), Social Work (17 May 2018), Medical examination (17 May 2018), De-briefing and initial validation workshop of the field research (18 May) and Towards effective implementation of the Barnahus model in Slovenia: The role of legal professionals (15 June).

Child Sexual Abuse (2011/92/EU) include provisions on preventing unjustified delay in relation to several different aspects, including between the reporting of facts and the interview.

27. There are no set deadlines for pre-trial investigation by the police or prosecutor, other than the statute of limitations. However, the Police have an informal deadline of 1 month in case of violence against children. If an investigation has not been completed after a month a report is sent to the District State Prosecutor's office. Investigation by the investigative judge must be completed within 6 months.³⁵ In terms of judicial proceedings, the Judex+ project report³⁶ reports that the information about the duration of the judicial procedure ranges between 6 months to 5 years depending on the complexity of the case.
28. When detecting domestic violence, including sexual violence, all authorities are obliged to notify a social work centre within twenty-four hours of being informed of the circumstances of the child. In cases of direct risk, when the victim is in need of prompt protection, all authorities are obliged to inform the social work centres or the police immediately by telephone. The Social Work Centres are furthermore obliged to provide feedback on the initial steps taken to the body that notified the centre of suspected violence within five days.³⁷
29. The establishment of Barnahus and its procedure for referral and case management set out in annex 1 to the National Guidelines has the potential to reduce and prevent undue delay in the areas of child protection, criminal and judicial investigation, health, including mental health, assessment and treatment. The main reason for this is the reduction in the amount of hearings of the child and the fact that all relevant professionals may be present during the interview and in interagency planning and follow-up meetings. Waiting times for therapy can currently in some cases be up to a year due to lack of adequate staff resources.³⁸ Additional resources from the Barnahus can help address the waiting times for victims and witnesses that are referred to Barnahus.
30. The National Guidelines make explicit reference to **child safeguarding** (3.4.7). Child safeguarding here refers to protecting children from harm while enjoying the services in the Barnahus and when in contact with all staff and other adults and children in Barnahus. Child safeguarding policies typically include a clear commitment and procedures to protecting children, including a code of conduct and reporting mechanisms if a staff member or other person suspects abuse by a staff member in the Barnahus. Policies also include mechanisms for vetting persons who come to work in Barnahus.

4. Target Group (Paragraph 4 of the National Guidelines)

31. Paragraph 4 of the National Guidelines defines the Barnahus target groups.
32. The **primary target group** of Barnahus will, at an initial stage, include children, aged 0-18 years, who are suspected victims and/or witnesses of criminal offences of Sexual violence and Sexual exploitation, as defined in Criminal Code Articles 170 – 176 (Paragraph 4.1).
33. **Sexual violence** is defined in the Domestic Violence Prevention Act (Article 3, paragraph 4): “Sexual violence involves actions of a sexual nature without the victim's consent, to which the victim is

³⁵ Criminal Procedure Act, Article 185.

³⁶ In the project different “stakeholders” that take part in investigating and juridical proceedings of sexual abuse were interviewed in two focus groups, altogether the two focus groups included: 1 Supreme Court prosecutor, 1 prosecutor, 1 juvenile judge, 2 social workers, 4 criminal police officers, 5 NGO representatives. Both were conducted in May 2016.

³⁷ Rules on cooperation between the police and other authorities in the detection and prevention of domestic violence (2010) provide time limits for reporting suspected cases of domestic violence to social work centres.

³⁸ Remark by participant in the Field Research meeting on Therapeutic assistance (16 May 2018).

forced or does not understand their meaning owing to the victim's stage of development, threats to use sexual violence and publication of material of a sexual nature relating to the victim."

34. The Criminal Code includes specific criminal offences of sexual abuse against children: Article 173 (Sexual assault on a person younger than fifteen years), Article 173.a (Recruiting persons under fifteen years of age for sexual purposes), Article 174: Violation of sexual integrity with abuse of position/power/authority, Article 175: Exploitation through prostitution, Article 176: Display, production, possession and distribution of pornographic material, Article 195: Incest.
35. The Domestic Violence Prevention Act (2008, 2016) Article 4, paragraph 1 states: "A family member who is a minor (hereinafter referred to as a child) enjoys special protection against violence." The Rules on cooperation between the police and other authorities in the detection and prevention of domestic violence (2010) which in Article 3 states: "The term child in these Rules applies to a person under the age of 18 years of age." The Criminal Code defines "child" in the context of criminal responsibility in Article 21 to a person under 14 years of age.
36. The decision to limit the criminal offences to sexual violence and sexual exploitation was made to ensure a strategic and realistic approach to piloting the first Barnahus in Slovenia. The key purpose of this approach is to manage the case referrals to the Barnahus during its first years of operation, with a view to expanding the target group in the longer term. This will allow the first Barnahus to develop and cement competence and practice in line with international, European and national law and guidance, including the Barnahus Quality Standards.
37. The Barnahus Quality Standard 3³⁹ promotes an inclusive and broad target group, which includes all children who are victims and/or witnesses of crime involving all forms of violence. International experts from Barnahus in Iceland, Norway and Sweden have confirmed that it is helpful to take a step-by-step approach to fulfilling the standard in Slovenia, if resources are limited so that the Barnahus can pursue a stable development towards a broader target group. This approach has been taken by other Barnahus in Europe, including for example Barnahus Iceland.
38. There is scope to expand the target group in the longer term, to children 0-18 years who are suspected victims and/or witnesses of all forms of violence that constitute criminal offences according to the Criminal Code, with a view to adopt Barnahus Quality Standard 3. The target group may also expand to include children under the age of criminal responsibility who are suspected perpetrators of all forms of violence set out in the Criminal Code, if relevant. The expansion of the target group can be carried out through a step-by-step approach, which involves adding further criminal offenses of violence to the target group of the first Barnahus once another Barnahus is established. The exact details and timing of this approach will be defined by the lead agency for Barnahus as a result of the evaluation envisaged in the Roadmap.
39. The **secondary target group** includes close non-offending family such as parents/care-givers and siblings (Paragraph 4.2). This group should be offered continuous information, counselling and crisis support. The definition draws on Article 11 of the Lanzarote Convention and includes close relatives, families or anyone in whose care the child is placed. However, it is important to note that the support from Barnahus is not meant to benefit all parents and family members in the broad sense but those who, because of their close relationship with the child, may be directly affected. The primary goal of the counselling and crisis support to parents/care-givers is to enable them to provide the child, and potential siblings, with adequate support and assistance throughout the judicial procedure and beyond.

³⁹ "3.1 The Barnahus target group includes all children who are victims and/or witnesses of crime involving all forms of violence. [...] 3.2 Special effort is made to reach all child victims and witnesses regardless of form of violence." (Lind Haldorsson, Olivia, Barnahus Quality Standards: Guidance for Multidisciplinary and Interagency Response to Child Victims and Witnesses of Violence (2017)).

40. The Barnahus only includes cases which were first reported to the competent authorities and where a decision is made to hear the child in the context of a criminal investigation (Paragraph 4.3). This means that it is only children who will undergo a forensic interview who are referred to Barnahus. All children, regardless of the outcome of the forensic interview, are offered the same multidisciplinary and comprehensive response in Barnahus. In some countries, the Barnahus also carries out exploratory interviews in so-called “grey cases”, for example when there is a strong suspicion but disclosure is ambiguous, when the alleged offender is under the age of criminal responsibility and when a child makes a disclosure but refuses to name the alleged offender. It is not envisaged that the Barnahus in Slovenia will carry out such exploratory interviews, at least not in its first years of operation. The lead agency for Barnahus may consider this option in the context of discussions on the expansion of the Barnahus target group.
41. The **uptake area for the Barnahus** is the whole of Republic of Slovenia, which means that all children residing in Slovenia can be referred to Barnahus (Paragraph 4.4).
42. The Interdisciplinary Working Party and the international experts note that the uptake area for the Barnahus is large. Barnahus in Iceland, Norway and Sweden confirm that once the Barnahus became operational and known, the case reported and referred to Barnahus increased. This may pose constraints on the Barnahus resources and the ability to deal with case load in a timely manner, which in turn is a risk to the key principles of Barnahus to prevent undue delay and offering all children access to Barnahus. The risk of case overload is mitigated by the decision to limit the target group to sexual violence and sexual exploitation. As noted above, it also is envisaged under the Roadmap that a strategy will be developed to establish Barnahus in more locations in Slovenia.

5. Organisation (Paragraph 5 of the National Guidelines)

43. Paragraph 5 of the National Guidelines sets out the organisational structure of Barnahus in Slovenia.
44. The Ministry of Justice is the **lead agency for Barnahus** (Paragraph 5.2.2) and will act as the representative of the juridical person (Republic of Slovenia) for Barnahus during an inception period, after which the Barnahus will be registered and operate as an independent legal person (Paragraph 5.1). The inception period will last until measures have been taken to register the Barnahus as a legal person by decision and action of the Ministry of Justice.
45. The Barnahus will be governed by a **Barnahus Steering Group** (Paragraph 5.2), which gathers 1 representative from each of the implementing partner and the Barnahus coordinator (Paragraph 5.2.1). The representatives will be nominated by the respective agencies and convened to a first meeting once the National Guidelines have been approved. The Ministry of Justice, as the lead agency, is in charge of overseeing this process and of determining the exact timing of the nominations and the first meeting. Each implementing agency is responsible for its own procedure to nominate the most relevant representative to the Steering Group.
46. The Steering Group ensures that the activities of Barnahus are implemented in accordance with the National Guidelines and monitors the activities and the financial situation of Barnahus (Paragraph 5.2.3). The joint responsibility to govern the Barnahus is meant to ensure accountability, transparency, sustainability and ownership and to contribute to innovation, development and interagency exchange at a high managerial level. The respective agency representatives only can take decisions in line with the decision-making mandate and authority of their role in their respective agencies. Each agency should therefore ensure that their representative, and potential replacements, have adequate authority to take relevant decisions on behalf of the agency (Paragraphs 5.2.4 and 5.2.5). The Steering Group meets bi-monthly.

Additional meetings can be convened by the Steering group chair if there is a need. All members of the Steering Group can request to the Chair that an extra meeting is convened (Paragraph 5.2.6).

47. The Barnahus will host a team of permanent staff members with full employee benefits and permanent contracts, **the Barnahus Team** (Paragraph 5.3). Paragraph 5.3 of the National Guidelines envisages the recruitment of, at a minimum, 1 full-time Barnahus Coordinator, whose role includes 50% management and coordination and 50% therapy and forensic interviews; 2 full-time staff members carrying out therapy and forensic interviews; 1 full-time receptionist/team assistant who will welcome visitors and clients to the Barnahus and assist the team in administrative matters; and 1 part-time IT technician who will support the team in technical matters, including ensuring high quality and transmission of forensic interviews and other maintenance. The wording “at least” is meant to indicate that the staff members specified in paragraph 5.3 are a minimum requirement. The paragraph does not impose any restrictions to recruit additional staff, for example to respond to increasing numbers of case referrals. The Ministry of Justice, in consultation with the Steering Group, will decide if further recruitment is to be made.
48. Consultations with national and international experts confirm that it is not required to have a particular education or background (e.g. police, clinical psychologist, therapist, social worker) to be recruited for the positions in Barnahus which involve carrying out forensic interviews and therapy. For example, in Norway and Sweden, it is a specifically trained police officer who interviews the child and in Iceland the interviews are carried out by Barnahus’ mental health professionals with an educational background in child development. The key requirements include personal suitability, specialisation through specific training, certification and subsequently regular practice. All staff working as forensic interviewers will be required to undergo training and obtain certification before they take up a position in Barnahus. The Roadmap envisages putting certification for these positions in place before the recruitment of the staff. Legal provisions that allow mental health staff to practice in Barnahus will be introduced in existing law to enable Barnahus staff to provide therapy in Barnahus.
49. The lead agency is responsible for recruitment and employment contracts for the Barnahus staff (Paragraph 5.3.3) taking the consideration of the Steering Group in consideration. The Steering Group involvement may for example include adopting job descriptions, salary levels and supporting vetting and interviews. The Steering Group decides what form of involvement it will have in recruitment when a decision to recruit staff is taken. The National Guidelines paragraph 5.3.3 also states that all recruitment must take specific child safeguarding precautions into account, including carrying out necessary checks of disciplinary and criminal records. Paragraph 5.3.3 does not exclude regular vetting, for example as part of staff supervision, which is dealt with in paragraphs 5.3.5 and 11.
50. A key responsibility of the Barnahus team is to ensure that the multidisciplinary and interagency collaboration runs smoothly so that the Barnahus fulfils its key purpose of facilitating and coordinating the parallel criminal investigation and child protection investigation. This includes organising, facilitating and convening case planning meetings, the Steering Group and the Working Group meetings. The Roadmap envisages the development of a series of protocols to facilitate coordination, case management and meetings to establish a structured and organised approach to coordination. There are number of other Barnahus in Europe that have developed similar documents, which can serve as inspiration, including most Barnahus in Sweden.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ See for example: Lind Haldorsson, Olviia, Barnahus Quality Standards: Guidance for Multidisciplinary and Interagency Response to Child Victims and Witnesses of Violence (2017).

51. The Barnahus team shall also engage in exchange of case specific information in the best interests of the child, and in accordance with national law and guidelines (Paragraph 5.3.4.1). The paragraph is formulated in this way to emphasise that information sharing is restricted to only sharing information that is necessary to for the case (case specific) and in the best interests of the child. Interagency information exchange and joint case management are often shaped by restrictions from sharing information in national law and professional codes (data protection, confidentiality). There is therefore an emphasis on respecting national law and guidelines. Some countries have taken law or policy action to enable exchange of information in Barnahus. For example, Denmark has adopted a law that enables exchange of information and one centre in the Netherlands has adopted a privacy protocol.⁴¹ This is further discussed under section 11 of this explanatory note.
52. Another key responsibility of the Barnahus team is to carry out forensic interviews (Paragraph 5.3.4.2). The guidelines stipulate that Barnahus will host three staff members who are specifically trained to carry out forensic interviews following nationally and internationally recognised interview protocols. These staff members may potentially also observe forensic interviews and participate in the activities in the observation room during forensic interviews when relevant and if consistent with Article 178 of the Criminal Procedure Act, which stipulates the parties that may observe and interview (see section 7 below for further details). All reasonable efforts will be made to hold joint interviews with the full presence of the interagency team in Barnahus to eliminate any unnecessary interview duplication that may result in trauma to the child. More details on the procedure and practice of forensic interviews are set out in paragraph 7 of the National Guidelines, discussed in more detail below in section 7.
53. It is envisaged that the Barnahus team will carry out short-term crisis support and therapy. The therapy carried out in Barnahus is governed by Slovenian legislation on providing therapeutic interventions to children. Legal provisions that allow mental health staff to practice in Barnahus will be introduced in existing law that governs provision of mental health services to enable Barnahus staff to provide therapy in Barnahus.
54. The legal basis for crisis centres, including the Social Assistance Act, the Domestic Violence Prevention Act and the Rules on the Standards and Norms of Social Services may provide a legal basis for crisis interventions. The Roadmap envisages a mapping of the legal basis for providing crisis support and therapy in Barnahus, including a potential expansion of the Barnahus role in mid- and long-term therapy, including through mobile services.
55. The National Guidelines place great emphasis on ensuring flow of information, continuous development of competence and excellent interagency collaboration. Ensuring team information and support is therefore an important aspect of the team's role (Paragraph 5.3.4.4). This involves ensuring that all the necessary procedures to facilitate interagency collaboration are made available, used and known by all staff members and those who come to work in Barnahus. To ensure that the Barnahus is up to date with latest developments in relevant areas, such as child psychology and forensic interviews the team will engage in gathering and sharing recent research and data. Training is an integral part of the team's continuous development of competence. Several Barnahus confirm that training together as a team is key to ensuring strong teams that work well together. The National Guidelines therefore specifically requires interagency training, for example through study visits, training days in Barnahus with invited lecturers and trainers or enrolment in external training. Also see section 11 of this explanatory note.
56. Outreach work, including maintaining external relations and carrying out competence building can serve as an important prevention measure and improve the response to suspected child abuse. The Barnahus team carries an important responsibility to contribute to information sharing and

⁴¹ See Ibid.

awareness raising about Barnahus and the role it plays, and more broadly about sexual violence against children (Paragraph 5.3.4.5). The Barnahus shall ensure that there are ongoing relations and involvement with all relevant actors that play a role in the prevention, detection and awareness raising of violence against children, including but not limited to Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Association of Centres for Social work, municipalities, NGOs, professional networks, universities, Human Rights Ombudsman. The networking role extends to European and international actors that play a similar role, including Barnahus in Europe and Child Advocacy Centers in the US and beyond.

57. As noted above, the Barnahus will employ a **Barnahus Coordinator** (Paragraph 5.4) as a permanent employee. The Coordinator is the Barnahus team leader and carries the managerial responsibility for the activities and financial situation of Barnahus, including reporting to the Steering Group and drafting an activity based budget (Paragraph 5.4). The activity reports can be prepared with the support of the other team members, in particular the team assistant, and the Working Group. The financial report and budget can be prepared with the support of the financial department in the lead agency.
58. The Coordinator is also responsible for the coordination of day-to-day activities in the Barnahus, including child safeguarding, discussed above. To support the coordination and implementation activities in an effective and child-friendly manner it is envisaged that the Coordinator, in close collaboration with Working Group, develops, updates, monitors and disseminates guidelines and routines in Barnahus. The Roadmap proposes a series of guidelines and protocols to guide the work in Barnahus. The Coordinator is furthermore responsible for the outreach work described above, including liaison with key external actors.
59. In order to ensure that there is a collaborative approach to continuously developing the effectiveness and quality of the interagency collaboration in the Barnahus, the Barnahus Guidelines envisage a **Barnahus Working Group** (Paragraph 5.5), consisting of representatives from all involved agencies and the Barnahus Team. The representatives of the Working Group should have an operational role in Barnahus, so that they are well aware of, and closely engaged in the work of the Barnahus and understand constraints and potential opportunities. The role of the Working Group is to focus on the organisation of the day to day activities, guidelines and routines and to build mutual trust and respect between the professionals who work in Barnahus. The Coordinator chairs the Working Group.

6. Tasks and Commitments of the respective implementing partners (Paragraph 6 of the National Guidelines)

60. Paragraph 6 of the National Guidelines describe the tasks and commitments of the Barnahus implementing partners.
61. The key role of each implementing party is to govern the Barnahus through its participation in the Steering Group (see section 5 above) and to ensure that its agency allocates staff who contribute to the activities and collaboration in Barnahus in its respective area of competence. They also contribute to information sharing and awareness raising about Barnahus and to data collection, evaluation and follow-up of Barnahus activities in their role as Steering Group members.
62. The staff members who are allocated from the implementing partners' agencies are not part of the permanent team in Barnahus, but come to Barnahus to perform their duties. They operate in

Barnahus within their regular mandates and in conformity with their respective legal and policy basis as well as rules on cooperation between agencies.⁴²

63. The implementing partners must ensure that all staff that come to Barnahus to carry out their duties contribute to the high professional standards set in terms of interagency coordination and collaboration, child friendliness, competence and specialisation (e.g. Paragraph 6.2), also discussed under sections 5 and 11 of this explanatory note. All staff who come to practice in Barnahus must contribute to ensuring that all children who come to Barnahus are welcomed and well attended to. The staff members participate in joint interagency training and contribute to the development of the work in Barnahus through their participation in Barnahus Working Group meetings (also see section 5 of this explanatory note).
64. Paragraph 6 furthermore stipulates that the staff who come to practice in Barnahus to the greatest extent possible participate in Barnahus interagency planning meetings and share case specific information in the best interests of the child and according to national law and guidelines (see section 10 below). Experience in Barnahus and similar services show that this is a crucial element of the work in Barnahus, since it enables the team to develop a coordinated response for each child on the basis of the specific situation, characteristics and needs of the child. The members of the interagency team may potentially, taking Article 178 of the Criminal Procedure Act into account, also observe forensic interview and participate in the activities in the observation room during forensic interviews (for further details see section 7 below). All reasonable efforts will be made to hold joint interviews with the full presence of the interagency team in Barnahus to eliminate any unnecessary interview duplication that may result in trauma to the child.
65. **The Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities** (Paragraph 6.4) is responsible for ensuring that the relevant local social work centre allocates staff for cases examined in Barnahus to carry out interagency child protection assessments in line with what is described under section 3 in this explanatory note (Paragraph 3.1). The staff member who comes to carry out this work is the staff member assigned by the local social work centre to the child victim's or witness' case. The same staff member also accompanies the child and a support person or a non-offending parent/care-giver to the Barnahus. The assessments are carried out taking into account the information shared in interagency meetings and during the forensic interviews. The consultations and research has not identified any obstacles in law or policy for social work centres to practice in this way in Barnahus. The social work is governed by the same legal basis and rules in Barnahus as in the social work centres or crisis centres, set out in the Social Assistance Act and the Rules on the Standards and Norms of Social Services.
66. **The Ministry of Health** (Paragraph 6.5) is responsible for ensuring that the relevant local hospital or clinic will allocate a doctor to carry out medical, and where relevant, a gynaecological evaluation and treatment in Barnahus, unless in urgent cases which require immediate emergency care. Forensic medical examination will not be carried out in the Barnahus, due to restrictions in legislation. Medical staff will be invited to join interagency meetings to share case specific information as relevant. It is envisaged in the longer term that the Barnahus also will host forensic medical examinations by a team of forensic medical doctors, specifically trained and certified in child-friendly forensic medical examinations. These doctors will be called in to Barnahus to perform forensic medical examinations according to national accredited rules and procedures. The Roadmap recommends that the tasks and commitment of the Ministry of Health in terms of providing forensic medical examinations are reviewed in the context of the evaluation of

⁴² This includes Rules on cooperation between the police and other authorities in the detection and prevention of domestic violence (2010) and Rules on the organisation and work of multidisciplinary teams and regional services and on the activities of social work centres in dealing with domestic violence (2009; 2017).

Barnahus. The development of action and roles in this area should be done in consultation with the Institute for Forensic Medicine and Dentistry and the National Forensic Laboratory (NFL).

67. **The Ministry of Interior** (Paragraph 6.6) is responsible for ensuring that the relevant police district allocates staff for cases examined in Barnahus to carry out the criminal investigation (6.5). The police normally observe the forensic interviews for the purposes of carrying out a criminal investigation, however, specifically trained and certified police can potentially, where previously agreed, carry out child-friendly forensic interviews following nationally and internationally recognised protocols for child interviews in case the Barnahus forensic interviewers are unavailable (see section 7 for further details on Forensic Interviews).
68. **The State Prosecutor Office** (Paragraph 6.7) is responsible for ensuring that a prosecutor is allocated for cases examined in Barnahus to lead the criminal investigation and to observe the interview in accordance with national legislation. The Prosecutor can, if allowed by the judge, ask questions during the interview via the professional carrying out the forensic interview.
69. **The Supreme Court** (Paragraph 6.8) oversees that the relevant Court appoints a judge for cases examined in Barnahus to lead and observe the forensic interview in Barnahus, including monitoring quality and content of interview. The judge can ask questions during the interview via the professional carrying out the forensic interview with the help of an earpiece. The judge also decides if a second interview is necessary and approve further questions to the child. Cases are referred to Barnahus by a judge.

7. Forensic Interviews (Paragraph 7 of the National Guidelines)

70. Paragraph 7 of the National Guidelines describe key elements relevant to the forensic interview in Barnahus.
71. The primary role of the Barnahus is to facilitate and carry out forensic interviews with the primary target group defined in paragraph 4.1 of the National Guidelines.

Notes on Slovenian legislation – forensic interview

The role and procedure of Barnahus in relation to forensic interviews fully conforms with the Criminal Procedure Act obligation to take into account the vulnerability of underage persons in criminal proceedings in Article 240, paragraph 4, which states that “A person under age, especially if that person has suffered damage from the criminal offence at issue, must be examined considerably to avoid producing harmful effect on his state of mind. If necessary, a pedagogue or some other expert should be called to assist in the examination of a minor.” Draft amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act, which were approved by the Government in 2017, further strengthened the position of children’s procedural rights, but were not ratified in Parliament.

Article 178 of the Criminal Procedure Act determines which parties may be present during the acts of investigation, including for example the interrogation of the accused or the examination of a witness. This Article does not provide for a clear-cut legal basis to allow the members of the interagency team to observe the forensic interview with the child victim/witness beyond the public prosecutor. The Roadmap recommends that the applicability of Article 178(8) and the question regarding the presence of the full interagency team during the forensic interview is further explored.

Article 178(4) also allows the accused and his counsel to attend the examination of a witness. However, according to Article 178(8) the judge may involve a “scientific institution” during acts of investigation, which may allow professionals at the Barnahus to observe the interview and engage in the activities in the observation room upon the request of the judge.

72. The National Guidelines specify key elements that need to be considered in relation to forensic interviews. Most of these elements have been commented on elsewhere in this explanatory note, for example the role of the prosecutor and the judge (see section 6 above and the procedure set out in Annex 1 of the National Guidelines).
73. The National Guidelines stipulate that the Barnahus convenes an interagency meeting before the interview to discuss the case, the special characteristics and potential needs of the child before the forensic interview is carried out. Staff share case specific information in the best interests of the child, respecting law, procedures and professional codes of conduct (see for example section 10 below). This is essential to prepare the interview so that it is adapted to the child to avoid re-traumatisation or traumatisation and to ensure that as much relevant information as possible can be collected (Paragraph 7.10). It also conforms with the Act Amending the Police Tasks and Powers, which stipulates in Article 19 para 2, that the age, physical and mental development, sensitivity and possible other characteristics that can be observed, must be taken into account in procedures which involve children. Interpretation should be offered if necessary, taking into account child safeguarding requirements and quality standards (Paragraph 7.11). Forensic interviewers should be trained how to use the interpreter during the interview and it is good practice to allow a second interpreter to check the interpretation to ensure accuracy.
74. The forensic interviews are routinely carried out by one single professional from the Barnahus team (Paragraph 7.4). The judge is in charge of the interview and can, through technical equipment pose questions to the child via the interviewer (Paragraphs 7.1 and 7.3). The judge may also allow that questions from parties, who according to existing law⁴³ are allowed to observe the interview, are posed to the child via the interviewer.
75. The members of the multidisciplinary team may, in accordance with Article 178 of the Criminal Procedure Act, observe the forensic interview and participate in the activities in the observation room during forensic interviews. If presence is not possible in spite of reasonable effort, the team member is committed to watching a recording of the interview afterwards. The Roadmap recommends that the applicability of Article 178(8) and the question regarding the presence of the full interagency team during the forensic interview is further explored.
76. There are substantial requirements on the forensic interviewer, who must have undergone specific training and certification in child forensic interviews and the use of interview protocols (Paragraphs 7.5 and 7.6). The Roadmap envisages review of the legal basis for training and certification to ensure that there is a solid legal obligation to support the training and certification requirements set out in the National Guidelines.
77. Paragraph 7.6 recommends the use of interview protocols, such as the NICHD protocol (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development <http://nichdprotocol.com/>) and the NCAC protocol (National Children's Advocacy Center <http://nationalcac.org/>), for all forensic interviews. The NICHD and NCAC are two internationally recognised protocols for forensic interviews with children that are commonly used in Barnahus, Child Advocacy Centres and similar services, including for example, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. There is substantial research evidencing the effectiveness of these protocols⁴⁴.
78. Forensic interviews will only be carried out in special child-friendly rooms in the Barnahus (Paragraph 7.7). As noted above, the criteria for safe rooms in Slovenia may here be of relevance. Interview rooms should be equipped with a camera and a sound system, which allows high quality recording and live observation of the forensic interview, conforming with the standards set out in

⁴³ Criminal Procedure Act, Article 178 (7).

⁴⁴ See for example Research by the NICHD in <http://nichdprotocol.com/peer-reviewed-research/>

the Criminal Procedure Act Article 244a and Article 331 as well as the 2010-2011 Recommendation on the use of safe rooms for interviews⁴⁵ (Paragraph 7.9). The National Guidelines propose that the original recording should be stored in a safe location with restricted access by the lead agency. Copies of the recording are distributed to relevant parties determined by the judge, for example to the police, the prosecutor and the defence lawyer.

79. Truth-seeking and equality of arms are important principles that guide the forensic interviews in Barnahus. In Slovenia, the defendant has a right “to face the witness if their testimony does not match the relevant facts” (Criminal Procedure Act Article 229). However, the Criminal Procedure Act Article 178 (4) also states that the accused may not be present during the examination of witnesses younger than 15 who are victims of criminal offences defined under Article 65 of the Criminal Procedure Act.
80. As noted above, the judge determines how many interviews will be held and what questions to pose to the child. It is, however, recommended that the number of interviews is limited to the absolute minimum necessary for the investigation, which should routinely consist of one interview (Paragraph 7.8). However, if a second interview is requested, for example to ensure the rights of the defendant, it is recommended that it be confined to additional questions and not include a repetition of questions from the first interview. If a second/further interviews is/are carried out, it is recommended that it/they should, to the greatest extent possible and if in the best interest of the child, be conducted by the same professional who conducted the first interview. This is currently practice in many Barnahus across Europe, including in Iceland, Norway and Sweden.
81. After the forensic interview has been conducted, the Barnahus convenes a follow up interagency meeting to ensure that there is an interagency plan on how to follow up with the child, including potential action on child protection, crisis support and therapy (Paragraph 7.13).

8. Finance and Budget (Paragraph 8 of the National Guidelines)

82. Paragraph 8 of the National Guidelines describes the main principles that guide financing and budgeting of Barnahus in Slovenia.
83. Sound budgeting, adequate resources and well established responsibilities for resource allocation are prerequisites for the establishment and successful and sustainable operation of Barnahus in Slovenia.
84. The National Guidelines include a list of items for the Barnahus budget (Paragraph 8.1), which aims to support the development of a sound, activity-based budget that fully enables the operation of Barnahus according to the Barnahus operational framework and staffing set out in the National Guidelines.
85. The National Guidelines also provide guidance on resource allocation (Paragraph 8.2), based on the principle that the core funding for the operational costs, including the Barnahus staff, is allocated from relevant national budget lines, approved by the Ministry of Finance, to ensure financial sustainability.
86. The budgeting is also based on the principle that each agency involved in Barnahus, such as the Police, Prosecutor’s Office, Social Work Centres, hospitals, is responsible for covering the costs for its respective staff coming to work in Barnahus, including their professional supervision, training and development, as well as costs incurred as a consequence of the work carried out by its respective staff.

⁴⁵ <http://www.mp.gov.si/fileadmin/mp.gov.si/pageuploads/mp.gov.si/PDF/PDF/priporocila/>

87. The National Guidelines also open up a possibility for Barnahus to seek additional funds from private, corporate and international donors for co-financing, funding and donations to cover e.g. potential pilot(s), equipment, training and capacity building and networking. Private, corporate or international funds for Barnahus should in no way have implications on the way that Barnahus carries out its services.

9. Venue (Paragraph 9 of the National Guidelines)

88. Paragraph 9 of the National Guidelines sets out key requirements for the Barnahus venue in Slovenia.
89. Providing a safe, neutral and child-friendly environment helps reduce anxiety and prevent traumatisation and/or re-traumatisation. It will help children disclose, which is fundamental to ensure the safety and protection of the child, to determine the need for physical and mental recovery and to facilitate a successful criminal investigation and judicial process.
90. Slovenia has taken steps to put in place law and policy requirements connected to the venue in which children are heard. The Ministry of Justice issued 2010-2011 Recommendation on the use of safe rooms for interviews of children, including guidance for the interior of the room (including interview room, toilet, waiting room), equipment, furniture (natural materials, bright colours and adapted to children), toys, which are selected according to child's needs and stored in boxes (Recommendations, pp. 13–14).⁴⁶
91. The Criminal Procedure Act makes it possible to use safe rooms for interviews of children. A recent draft amendment to the Criminal Procedure Act, prepared in accordance with EU Directive on Victim's Rights (2012/29/EU)⁴⁷, includes an obligation to provide especially adapted rooms for interviews of children under the age of 15, unless there are justifiable reasons why the interview should not take place in such a room. This needs to be justified by the Court (Article 240 of the Criminal Procedure Act). This also applies when a court expert interviews the victim or witness. The new law has not yet been passed so this obligation has not entered into force. However, as noted above, the existing procedure allows the use of especially adapted premises and no other legal or policy requirements that hinder the use of a child-friendly venue have been identified.
92. The requirements set out in paragraphs 9.1-9.3, which draw on the Barnahus Quality Standard 4⁴⁸, and respect current policy and (draft) law (see above) will guide the choice of the location and structure of the building as well as potential refurbishing. This will ensure non-discriminatory

⁴⁶ <http://www.mp.gov.si/fileadmin/mp.gov.si/pageuploads/mp.gov.si/PDF/PDF/priporocila/>

⁴⁷ See also Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on child-friendly justice.

⁴⁸ Lind Haldorsson, Olivia, Barnahus Quality Standards: Guidance for Multidisciplinary and Interagency Response to Child Victims and Witnesses of Violence (2017): "4.1 Place and Accessibility: The Barnahus premises are preferably situated in a detached building located in an environment familiar to children, for example, a residential area. The premises should be accessible by public transport. The premises are accessible, including for children with disabilities and/or special needs.

4.2 Interior Environment: Furnishing and material are child and family-friendly and age-appropriate, especially in the waiting rooms. The premises are physically safe for children at all ages and developmental stages, including for children with disabilities and/or special needs.

4.3 Privacy: There are separate, soundproof and private areas available to ensure privacy.

4.4 Preventing contact with the suspected perpetrator: The Barnahus is set up so that contact between victim and alleged offender is avoided at all times.

4.5 Interview room: The Barnahus provides for live observation of interviews in a room other than the interview room for the interagency team". .

access to the Barnahus and that the environment is safe and appropriate for all children, including children with disabilities and/or special needs.

93. Paragraphs 9.4-9.6 seek to ensure the best possible environment to gather forensic evidence, both in terms of the child's disclosure and potential forensic medical examinations and to assist the child through medical interventions and therapy. This is crucial in terms of fulfilling children's rights to assistance, support and health, set out in the Lanzarote Convention, the EU Directives on Victim's Rights (2012/29/EU) and Child Sexual Abuse (2011/92/EU).
94. The Roadmap envisages a formulation of building specifications in the mid-longer term to establish further details on the building which hosts Barnahus. This has for example been done in Norway.
95. As noted above in section 4, the uptake area covers the whole of Slovenia. Consultations in the Interdisciplinary Working Party and with international experts confirm that the location of the first Barnahus should be central to avoid discrimination on the basis of place of residence.
96. Contact with the suspected perpetrator in the context of criminal investigation and judicial proceedings may cause severe stress in the child victim/witness and potentially cause (re)-traumatisation and hinder disclosure. The National Guidelines takes into account EU law (the EU Directives on Victim's Rights (2012/29/EU), Recital 30, and on Child Sexual Abuse (2011/92/EU) Article 31.1), which state that contact between the victim and the offender should be avoided (10.2.6) and draws on the draft amendment to the Criminal Procedure Act, Article 264.a (in reference to court experts) that the victim must be enabled to avoid unwanted contact with a suspected or accused person unless the contact is necessary for the successful execution of pre-trial or trial proceedings (Article 65, paragraph 5 of the Criminal Procedure Act).
97. As noted above, the National Guidelines places emphasis on children's right to participation (paragraph 3.4.2). Paragraph 9.2.7 stipulates that the views and ideas of children and their non-offending care-givers on the venue should be sought regularly to ensure that the venue meets children's needs and requirements. Experience in other countries show that children's views can provide invaluable insights on the environment, process, and interventions in Barnahus and contribute to that the Barnahus operates and is set up in a way that is child-friendly and appropriate to children's needs.

10. Documentation, Data Protection and Privacy (Paragraph 10 of the National Guidelines)

98. Paragraph 10 of the National Guidelines describes procedures for documentation, data protection and ensuring privacy at Barnahus in Slovenia.
99. Documentation, data protection and privacy are of cross-cutting relevance to most of the activities in Barnahus. It is therefore integrated as a concern in many different places in the National Guidelines and this explanatory note. Paragraph 10, which refers to documentation, data protection and privacy, reiterates some of the key concerns touched upon in other parts of the National Guidelines, including for example ensuring that children's privacy is protected and that all agencies practice according to the rules and regulation that governs the agency they represent.
100. Paragraph 10.1 stipulates that each agency that sends staff to work in Barnahus will continue to carry out their responsibilities according to the agency requirements for its particular documentation, including for example keeping medical journals, child protection and social welfare journals etc. Barnahus staff will document interagency meetings and share minutes with the participating agencies (paragraph 10.2). The minutes should be kept brief and to the point so that they are accessible and easy to comprehend. The lead agency assumes responsibility for safe

storage of all case specific data and documentation so that the clients' privacy and data is protected according to national legislation (paragraph 10.4).

101. Interagency information sharing, documentation and information management are shaped by, and sometimes constrained by, national law and organisational procedures. In Slovenia, personal data may be processed exceptionally in the public sector when necessary for the exercise of the legal powers, duties or obligations of the public sector, provided that such processing does not interfere with the legitimate interest of the individual to whom personal data relate.⁴⁹ A key requirement in the National Guidelines is set out in paragraph 10.2, which stipulates that each agency must assume responsibility that its staff upholds these laws and potential agency specific requirements. The National Guidelines specifically state that information exchange must be in the best interests of the child.
102. The Roadmap envisages an analysis of potential legal constraints that may prevent exchange of information between agencies in Barnahus and recommendations for legal reform or tools, such as a national protocol for exchanging information in Barnahus. A national protocol for exchanging information in the best interests of the child has been developed in the Netherlands to enable professionals in Barnahus and similar services to exchange case specific information.⁵⁰

Notes on relevant Slovenian legislation – data protection

There is no specific legal basis for exchange of information in relation to cases of child sexual violence. However, the Domestic Violence Prevention Act enable interagency collaboration, including information exchange in cases of domestic violence, including sexual violence. Article 29 of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act, concerning the application of the Act governing personal data protection, refers to Article 9 of the Personal Data Protection Act above, stating that “in processing personal data contained in databases and in protecting the privacy of an individual’s information, the provisions of the Act governing personal data protection shall be applied, unless otherwise provided by this Act for specific cases.” This legal basis can potentially be applied in Barnahus at least in cases related to domestic sexual violence.

The Rules on cooperation between the police and other authorities in the detection and prevention of domestic violence (2010) enables exchange of information between the police and the Social work centres through its Article 5, however, it is restricted to notifying social work centres of cases where the child is a victim of domestic violence, or lives in an environment where there is domestic violence and is therefore not applicable in terms of sharing information in the context of interagency meetings in Barnahus.

Article 7 of the Rules on the organisation and work of multidisciplinary teams and regional services and on the activities of social work centres in dealing with domestic violence, states that there can be exchange of information between members of the multidisciplinary team: “in order to clarify the circumstances necessary for the protection and assistance of the victim by telephone, e-mail and at the meetings convened by the Social work centres”. This may also be applicable in the

⁴⁹ Personal Data Protection Act in Article 9 states:

1) Personal data in the public sector may be processed if the processing of personal data and personal data being processed is determined by law. The law may stipulate that certain personal data are processed solely on the basis of the personal consent of the individual.

4) Notwithstanding the first paragraph of this article, personal data may be processed exceptionally in the public sector which are necessary for the exercise of the legal powers, duties or obligations of the public sector, provided that such processing does not interfere with the legitimate interest of the individual to whom personal data relate.

⁵⁰ Lind Haldorsson, Olivia, Barnahus Quality Standards. Guidance for Multidisciplinary and Interagency Response to Child Victims and Witnesses of Violence (2017), pp. 71-72.

context of Barnahus in terms of establishing potential protection and assistance needs of the child in cases of domestic sexual violence at least.

11. Competence, Training, Supervision (Paragraph 11 of the National Guidelines)

103. Paragraph 11 sets out requirements for competence building, training and supervision of staff that operates in Barnahus in Slovenia.
104. Barnahus aims to provide highly professional and competent response to each child who comes to Barnahus for an interview, medical examination and assistance, including therapy. Training and certification are therefore cross-cutting requirements across the National Guidelines, which place great emphasis on highly qualified and competent staff across disciplines.
105. Both individual training specific to the respective disciplines represented in Barnahus and training in interagency collaboration and cross-cutting topics is envisaged. Training in forensic interviews and medical forensic examination is foreseen as a key aspect of preparation in the Roadmap. Other training topics may include for example, child development; understanding child abuse and neglect; child-friendly, trauma sensitive approach in conducting clinical and forensic assessments; providing different forms of evidence based trauma focused treatment; understanding of the legal context and requirements; identifying risk factors and supporting families at risk with the aim of preventing re-traumatisation and supporting non-offending parents.
106. Paragraph 11.2 clearly sets out that the Barnahus only will use the services of certified forensic interviewers and forensic medical doctors. The National Guidelines also envisage that a procedure is put in place for certification of forensic interviewers, therapists and forensic medical doctors, with the Ministry of Justice assuming responsibility for ensuring certification of forensic interviewers and the Ministry of Health for certification of forensic medical doctors and therapists.
107. The legal and policy basis as well as the potential process towards putting certification in place will be explored in the context of the Roadmap. Vetting, completed training and personal skills are essential components in certification. The Roadmap also envisages review of training requirements in Slovenian law to ensure that there is a solid legal obligation to support the training requirements set out in the National Guidelines.

Notes on Slovenian legislation – training requirements of professionals

There is currently no legal basis for training of professionals working in multidisciplinary teams that deal with child sexual violence specifically. However, the training requirements are in line with existing obligations, set out in for example the Domestic Violence Prevention Act, which includes offences concerning sexual violence. The Act includes training requirements for professional staff in authorities and organizations who “perform tasks in the field of violence”. Article 10 provides that these professionals “shall, as part of their lifelong learning, self-improvement and training regularly educate themselves concerning particularly the prevention and detection of acts of violence, enforcement, judging and execution of sanctions for such acts of violence, equality between men and women, the needs and rights of victims and prevention of secondary victimisation...”. Article 10 also includes training requirements for judges and state prosecutors who deal occupationally with victims of perpetrators of violence. They shall “as part of their lifelong learning, self-improvement and training, be bound to educate themselves” regularly in the fields referred to in the Domestic Violence Prevention Act.

The Rules on cooperation between the police and other authorities in the detection and prevention of domestic violence (2010), Article 12 define on-going training requirement for police officers and criminal investigators dealing with cases of domestic violence. These include: (1)

Police officers and criminal investigators involved in preventing and investigating crimes in the field of domestic violence must regularly be trained at least three days a year; (2) Police officers and criminal investigators who occasionally deal with cases of domestic violence must be trained at least one day a year.

108. The National Guidelines provide for an important role of Barnahus as a competence centre responsible for continuous awareness-raising and competence building of professionals who are in regular contact with children in their work (Paragraph 11.4). As noted above in section 5, outreach work, including maintaining external relations and carrying out competence building can serve as important prevention measures and increase response to suspected child abuse. For example, it can contribute towards raising the awareness of signs of abuse and increase knowledge of how to respond among professionals who work with children. It can also contribute to building a culture which openly displays that violence against children is not acceptable and break the silence around child sexual violence. This may address underreporting and ensure that more children are provided assistance and access to justice.

12. Evaluation (Paragraph 12 of the National Guidelines)

109. Paragraph 12 covers evaluation of Barnahus in Slovenia.

110. The National Guidelines propose a first evaluation after two years of operation (12.1) and thereafter every 3 years (12.2) to ensure effectiveness and quality of the Barnahus operation. Evaluation provides important opportunities to ensure that the operation of Barnahus is consistent with the National Guidelines, professional standards and procedure. It can also provide an important opportunity to guarantee that the National Guidelines conform to national and international law, policy and procedure.

111. The Ministry of Justice will, together with the Steering Group, appoint an external evaluator, with relevant competence, who will develop an evaluation framework and carry out the evaluation. The evaluation should involve a broad range of stakeholders, including children and their caregivers, and should aim to identify concrete proposals for adjusting and improving the Barnahus based on the findings of the evaluation. The evaluation findings should also inform potential review of the National Guidelines.

112. The findings and recommendations of the evaluation should form the basis for potential reform or development of the National Guidelines, protocols, procedures and inform a plan for expanding the Barnahus in Slovenia.

113. The evaluation can be broadened to identify barriers, obstacles, gaps or opportunities in law, policy and procedures that have had a substantial impact on the Barnahus ways of working and possibility to practice according to the Barnahus Quality Standards.

114. The Roadmap proposes a process for evaluation.

Barnahus (Children's House) is a leading model in Europe for a coordinated child-friendly, interagency and multi-disciplinary state response towards child sexual abuse. The purpose of Barnahus is to coordinate and facilitate parallel criminal and child welfare investigations and to provide support services for child victims and witnesses of sexual abuse.

This publication contains a series of guiding principles for authorities and professionals to support the establishment and sustainable operation of Barnahus in Slovenia.

The guidelines were developed in the framework of the joint European Union-Council of Europe project "Barnahus/Children's House" (2018) implemented in close collaboration with the Ministry of Justice of Slovenia.

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. The Parliamentary Assembly, consisting of representatives from the 47 national parliaments, provides a forum for debate and proposals on Europe's social and political issues. Many Council of Europe conventions originate from the Assembly, including the European Convention on Human Rights.

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