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REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA  
MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

Building a Europe  
for and with children



## Project Launch Conference

**13 February 2024**

Rikli Balance Hotel, Cankarjeva cesta 4,  
4260 Bled, Slovenia

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

**23SI08**

The project is co-funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument, and co-funded and implemented by the Council of Europe, in cooperation with the European Commission, Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM).

## Context

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

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

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

The project is co-funded by the **European Union** and the **Council of Europe** and is implemented by the Council of Europe’s Children’s Rights Division in close co-operation with the **Slovenian Ministry of Justice** from **1 September 2023 to 28 February 2026**.

**The project is divided in two outcomes:**

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

## State of play of the Project

A three-month inception phase was carried out prior to the implementation of the project outputs and activities. Following the kick-off meeting held on 26 September 2023, the Council of Europe, with the support of the Ministry of Justice of Slovenia, organised a series of bilateral consultations with the project stakeholders to take stock of the project’s starting point. The purpose of these bilateral consultations was to assess the legal, institutional and policy gaps in ensuring the best interest of the child in civil proceedings, to explore how this framework and current practices could be improved or reformed to reduce the delays and the backlog of cases involving children, and finally to identify the needs of training and capacity building. These consultations took place in Ljubljana from 15 to 16 November as part of a fact-finding mission.

The results of these consultations and research are included in the project’s inception report, which was endorsed by the Inter-ministerial working group and will be presented at the launch conference.

The project launch conference, which take place on 13 February 2024, will bring together the beneficiary authorities, DG REFORM, the Council of Europe, the members of the Advisory Group and other national stakeholders who will work with the project, including NGOs, academia and civil society. The conference will be an opportunity to promote the European standards in this field, to share the objectives of the project with a wider audience, as well as to present the results of the inception report and the forthcoming activities.

Programme	
9:30-10:00	<b>Registration and welcome of participants</b> <i>Welcome coffee</i>
10:00-10:30	<b>Welcoming remarks</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Dr. Igor Šoltes, State Secretary, Ministry of Justice of Slovenia,</i></li> <li>• <i>Jerneja Jug Jerše, Head of the European Commission Representation in Slovenia</i></li> <li>• <i>Zara Gasparyan, Head of Cooperation Projects Unit, Children's Rights Division, Council of Europe</i></li> </ul>
10:30-11:00	<b>Keynote speeches</b>
	<p><i>Moderator: Zara Gasparyan, Head of Cooperation Projects Unit, Children's Rights Division, Council of Europe</i></p> <p><b>What is the European context for ensuring the best interests of the child in civil court proceedings?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Daja Wenke, Independent Researcher and Policy Analyst, Rights of the Child - Implementation of International Standards</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Q&amp;A session</b></p>
11:00-11:15	<i>Coffee break</i>
11:15-12:00	<b>A coordinated response to ensure the best interests of the child in civil court proceedings in Slovenia</b>
	<p><i>Moderator: Zara Gasparyan, Head of Cooperation Projects Unit, Children's Rights Division, Council of Europe</i></p> <p><b>Project impact and dynamics of the implementation of the project in Slovenia</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mija Cankar, Secretary in Civil law Directorate, Ministry of Justice</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Presentation of the findings of the Inception Report</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Frederique Privat de Fortunie, Senior Project manager, Children's Rights Division, Council of Europe</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Q&amp;A session</b></p>
12:00-12:30	<b>Closing Remarks</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mag. Andrej del Fabro, Head of the Child-friendly Criminal Justice Department, Ministry of Justice</i></li> <li>• <i>Paola Gaffurini, Project Manager, REFORM B.2, DGREFORM, European Commission</i></li> <li>• <i>Zaruhi Gasparyan, Head of Cooperation Projects Unit, Children's Rights Division, Council of Europe</i></li> </ul>
12:30-14:00	<i>Buffet Lunch</i>

