



Slovenia Fact Sheet on Social Care & Support Services Sector for Persons with Disabilities

Part of a series of Country Fact Sheets available on the EASPD website

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SUBSECTORS OF SOCIAL CARE & SUPPORT SERVICES AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

Early Childhood Intervention

Early intervention services in Slovenia, on the national level, consist of activities for children and adolescents with special education needs (SEN) within two systems – health and education. The health system provides services for children with developmental disabilities in outpatient development clinics and mental health centers until they are 19 years old¹. Children with disabilities use services in outpatient development clinics until they enter primary school, after which they use services in mental health centers, which also cater to persons with mental health diseases. The pre-school education system provides early intervention for children 0-6 years in mainstream and developmental kindergartens that specifically target children with Special Education Needs (SEN) and persons with disabilities²; and in centers for training, work and care³. The share of children with SEN in kindergartens represents 2,2% of the population in school year 2017/18 .

The majority of SEN children go to mainstream kindergartens in regular classes, while some children go to developmental units within mainstream kindergartens. The National Education Institute of the Republic of Slovenia prepares the decision on the placement of a child on the basis of physical, cognitive, emotional, social and health-related needs. No more than two SEN children can be included in a regular class and such classes can be smaller than regular. Classes with an adapted programme for pre-school children include at maximum six SEN children.

Professional support services in mainstream kindergartens for SEN children from 0-6 years old (physical, sensorial, intellectual, learning, psychosocial disabilities, ASD etc.⁴) can include (for up to 2 hours weekly, or 5 hours for children with visual impairments or multiple disabilities weekly at maximum):

- support for overcoming barriers;
- counselling services;
- assistance in learning.

Professional support is given with the purpose of achieving a supported environment for a child, their family, professionals who participate in education and peers of the children with disability. Sign language interpreters for deaf children can also provide interpreting services. Children with physical disabilities, visually impaired children, long-term ill children and children with autism spectrum disorder have the possibility to get services of a learning support assistant.

Besides these activities at national level, other initiatives include:

- Sožitje, NGO for persons with intellectual disabilities, Section for Down syndrome developed an early intervention program for children with intellectual disabilities, providing professional services for the child and family (physiotherapy, logopedic treatment, special pedagogic, etc)⁵.
- Sonček – The Cerebral Palsy Association of Slovenia prepares and implements plans of interventions (pathways) for early intervention for children with cerebral palsy
- Centre IRIS – The Centre for Education, Rehabilitation, Inclusion and Counselling for the Blind and Partially Sighted provides early treatment (through an individual family plan) for visually impaired children⁶, and children with multiple disabilities.

¹20 developmental clinics provide services for over 18.000 children per year (about 900 children per clinic). Waiting lists were about two months and are becoming longer (more than 6 weeks and then additionally 2 – 4 weeks for starting services, according to data from 2015).

²Regular units/classes – children with special needs attend inclusive mainstream education; development units are units only for children with special needs. In Slovenia there are 19 development units in kindergartens for education.

³For this item see section on Employment Support

⁴Placement of Children with Special Needs Act (Zakon o usmerjanju otrok s posebnimi potrebami) defines children with SEN that are eligible for support.

⁵Based on the program “Small Steps” from Sydney University

⁶On the basis of MKF-OM Oregon project and H. C. Gunzburg model



Education Support

In Slovenia, children with special needs are provided services based on the concept of inclusive education. Special needs education, whether in mainstream or specialized units, is provided exclusively as a public service, started from public kindergartens, schools, special schools to centers for training, work and care (institutions). The education of SEN children is financed by public funding – state and local communities. The state provides resources for wages and material costs, municipalities resources for investment costs and higher standard of services.

The Placement of Children with Special Needs Act (2011) constitutes the main regulation of education of children with special needs is regulated. The law defines children with special needs as students with intellectual disabilities, sight, hearing, speech and language disorders, physical disabilities, long-term illnesses, deficits in specific areas of learning, personal and behavioural disturbances and ASD.

Education for SEN children is provided in mainstream or special schools/institutions within primary and secondary education, with the following specialized services available:

- educational programme with adapted implementation and additional professional support (provided in mainstream schools/kindergarens);
- adapted educational programme with equivalent educational standard (provided in mainstream primary schools and secondary schools; and in institutions for the hearing impaired, visually impaired and physically disabled persons);
- adapted educational programme with lower educational standards (provided in special schools);
- a special educational programme for children with moderate, severe and profound intellectual disabilities and other special programs (provided in Centers for training, work and care, under the Ministry of Education) – see more on this in the Long-term Institutional Care and Respite Care sections). The same special educational programme provides all primary schools with an adapted curriculum (children with SEN can go to these schools in their surroundings) and Centres for Education and Rehabilitation of Physically Handicapped Children and Adolescents in Kamnik and Vipava.
- 28 primary schools with adapted programme (special schools) and 21 primary schools with classes with adapted programme in mainstreaming schools are providers of educational programmes in primary education. In school year 2017/2018, some 11.077 primary school children with SEN attended educational programmes in mainstream and 1.687 children in special schools. In the same period, 4.768 adolescents with SEN attended educational programs at secondary level. Children and adolescents, attending adapted programmes may occasionally or permanently be included in mainstream classes, with the purpose to ensure the best interest of the child. The same rule applies for children included in the special programme, to occasionally attend adapted programmes.

Besides programme adaptation (organization and timetable of lessons, length of programmes, methods of teaching and testing, the certificate in adapted educational programme is of equal validity to that attained in mainstream schools), additional services like professional support are also provided to children with special needs (support in overcoming barriers, counselling service and learning assistance). These services can be provided individually or in a group, (also at home, on a weekly basis). The maximum hours of services is five hours per week, among them at least one hour of counselling services. Pupils with visual impairments or multiple disabilities can benefit from up to three hours more of services, primarily at the start of the education process. Professional support is given on the basis of the placement decision. Technical adaptations for the place of learning and aids is provided in the education process. The child can also benefit from an assistant. In school year 2017/2018, there were 470 assistants in primary education, and 50 assistants in secondary education.

The majority of SEN children (90 %) enrol in mainstream programmes.

Employment Support

Employment support is regulated by the Slovenian Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons Act (2004). Existing services, organized at the national level and financed through the Ministry of Labour include: vocational rehabilitation services, supported employment services, employment in companies employing persons with disabilities,

employment in employment centers and social inclusion programs. The service of guidance, care and employment under special conditions is provided in sheltered workshops (VDC) under the Social Care Act.

Vocational rehabilitation services. At the end of 2017, the share of persons with disabilities employed in Slovenia represented 3.88% of all employees. From all employed persons in Slovenia - 856.201, 33.290 were persons with disabilities. Concerning unemployment, persons with disabilities in the same period were significantly overrepresented – of the 85.060 unemployed and registered with the Employment Service, 14.630 were persons with disabilities, constituting 17,2%. The basis for employment support to persons with disability are services of vocational rehabilitation.

The system of vocational rehabilitation is based on a rights-oriented and active approach, with person - centred planning (individual rehabilitation plan) and working on constant improvement. Vocational rehabilitation is a public service and is delivered by a network of 14 providers that together form the Association of Vocational Rehabilitation Providers in the Republic of Slovenia: University rehabilitation institute of the Republic of Slovenia (as a public entity operating on four areas), and 13 private entities, chosen on the basis of public procurement covering the rest of Slovenia. Vocational rehabilitation aims to facilitate persons with disability to gain/ retain/ develop/ change work and consists of fourteen service types, from motivating persons with disability to participate in the labour market, to vocational assessment, guidance and finally to training and supported employment.

The network of vocational rehabilitation service providers for the period 2014-2020 consists of 18 teams dispersed throughout the country on the level of units of Employment Service of Slovenia – the local labour exchange. Two of 18 teams provide services for people with sensorial disabilities; while the rest work with persons with physical, intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, as well as people with ASD. All providers have the obligation to create and maintain a network of employers, where persons with disabilities are trained and/or employed, and they also report yearly on this cooperation. The providers of the mentioned services work with schools to facilitate the transition from school to labour market for persons with disability as part of a European Social Fund-financed programme run by the Association of Vocational Rehabilitation Providers. Services encompass enabling youth with disabilities to acquire competences to enter the labour market and motivating employers to employ young persons with disabilities. One of the major concerns for providers in social services are trends for bureaucratisation (paper work, procedures), instead of working with users of services².

Supported employment services. The state-owned Slovenian Foundation for promoting employment of persons with disabilities funds supported employment services for people working in mainstream employment (public or private employers). Supported employment services can be provided for a maximum of 30 hours per month per person. Support can include expert and technical support, awareness raising or information activities, counselling, training, personal assistance, sign-language interpretation and follow-up support at workplace. Wage subsidies are also possible for person with disability, eligible for supported employment. In 2017, the foundation payed about 1.500 hours of supported services for 141 persons with disability, in total amounting to 163.634 euros.

After 2006, Slovenia has a quota – an obligation for public and private employers that have 20 or more employees to employ 2 – 6 % staff with disabilities depending on the specific sector. Employers that fail to meet the quota pay 70 % of minimum wage to the foundation, for every person with disability not employed, or, can cooperate with companies employing persons with disabilities or employment centers (both entities are social economy enterprises) . If these companies for persons with disabilities or employment centers earn a profit, they are obliged to use it as allowed by the law, for further development of the business or spend it for eligible activities (adapted workplaces, support for employees with disabilities etc).

Employment in companies employing persons with disabilities. Some Slovenian companies have been employing persons with disabilities for over 60 years under specially adapted conditions (for example adapted workplace, training services, mentorship, personal assistance at work, transportation to work etc.). The primary goal of these companies rather than profit is to train and employ persons with disabilities, create new and preserve existing jobs for persons with

²ibid

disabilities. The companies employing persons with disabilities to receive support from the state should employ at least 40% of persons with disabilities. At the end of 2017, 146 companies employed 5.878 persons with disabilities, and about as many persons without disabilities.

Employment centres. Employment centers are legal entities, that started operating after 2004, as non-profit institutes, cooperatives, or limited liability companies. They employ severely disabled persons with lower workability levels, at protected workplaces through a model that can be considered sheltered employment. In the employment centers only persons with disability are employed, together with professional workers. In 2018, there were 62 employment centers in Slovenia.

Social inclusion programs are an important option for persons with disabilities that are finishing vocational rehabilitation services, but do not have necessary work efficiency (below 30 %) for entering sheltered employment in employment centers, and therefore are not able to work. In these cases, persons with disabilities can join the social inclusion program to receive support in this area and development of work skills. Program participants take part in simple tasks and under constant mentorship. In 2017, there were 20 such programs that involved 692 persons with disability. Main providers of social inclusion programs are vocational rehabilitation providers. The Ministry of Labour finances these programs on the basis of public tenders, about 3.3 million euros per year.

The service of guidance, care and employment under special conditions, provided in sheltered workshops – which can be considered as an adapted form of work. Persons with disabilities are included in employment on a daily basis and they live mainly at their homes. Sheltered workshops (VDC) are based on the Act on social care and Act on Social Care of Persons with Mental and Physical Impairments⁸. Guidance, care and employment under special conditions regulates day activities of adult persons with disabilities in these workshops, enabling them to actively participate in social life and working environment in accordance with their abilities. Importantly – participants do not have an employment relationship with these workshops and as such are not covered by Employment Protection Legislation (EPL). The majority of persons with disabilities in sheltered workshops (92,6 %), have intellectual disability, from moderate, severe or profound intellectual disability. Individuals participate in the form of service that is appropriate to their psychological, pedagogical, health and social needs, in line with the type of disability they have.

In 2018, there were 34 sheltered workshops in Slovenia, among them 23 public and 11 private (working according to a concession). Among public providers, five are Centers for training, work and care (CUDV). Sheltered workshops were running in 157 locations in Slovenia in 2015 and included 3.748 persons with disabilities, of which 981 were included 16-hours per day and 496, 24 hours per day. Their budget was 30 million euros or 35,06 euros per person per day. Activities in sheltered workshops are non-profit. Waiting lists for sheltered workshops are one of the main issues: in 2017, 402 persons were waiting to be included, 32 of 34 providers had waiting lists and 50% of applications were registered on waiting lists prior to the year 2014. Sheltered workshops employed in 2015 some 2.150 persons aged 20-68. The average age of a worker was 43, predominantly female (78,6 %), with secondary level education (46,93%).

Day Care

The Ministry of Labour finances 14 long-term programs for persons with mental health problems: seven daily centers, four offices for information and counselling, two telephone counseling programs, one self-advocacy program and one program for persons with mental health problems who hear voices. Some 4.461 persons were included in these programs in 2016. Providers of all these programs are NGOs.

in Slovenia sheltered work can be considered as day care as well. More information on sheltered workshops is in the Employment Support section.

⁸The act came into force in 1983 (valid until 1.1.2019), but the terminology from this act is no longer used in practice.



Living Support

Although Slovenia is among the more institutionalised countries, the social system does include services provided to users at home or in the community. Support for living in the community encompasses possibilities for living in residential groups, getting support in the community, using domestic help services at home or personal assistants, living in foster care, using interpreting services for sign language or communication aids or vehicles. Besides that, a demonstration center organizes counselling services for home and workplace adaptations using information-communication technologies.

Living in residential groups. Persons with disability may choose to live in residential groups as an option for living in independent or group apartments, with transitional or long-term support. These are smaller units for persons with mental health problems, which need permanent or occasional living support. The Ministry of Labour in 2016 financed 8 programs which included 276 persons with disabilities.

Support in the community. The Mental Health Act, adopted in 2008, introduced coordinators in the community for persons with mental health problems, whose role is to help persons who do not require psychiatric treatment but need psychosocial rehabilitation, in daily activities and inclusion on the basis of their individual plan. There were at the time of writing this factsheet in November 2018, 25 such coordinators for mental health working in centers for social work.

Domestic help and personal assistance services and the right to a home care assistant are important services provided at home to persons with disabilities. Domestic help includes domestic social care and mobile help. Domestic care covers various services provided in case of disability or old age and in other cases where domestic help replaces institutional care: services are adjusted to individual needs and can include household assistance – preparation of food, shopping, cleaning, nursing care and assistance with maintaining social contacts. The service can be used for a maximum four hours a day, or 20 hours a week. Mobile assistance is a form of professional help at home for people with intellectual and physical disabilities. It is focused on counselling and therapeutic work, limited to 8 hours per month. At the end of 2016, social care at home was delivered to 226 persons with intellectual disabilities and 222 persons with disabilities, entitled to the right for help and care, and 6 seriously ill children or children with severe disability. These services are primarily intended to persons with disabilities who believe that institutions cannot offer them independent living. In 2016, there were 999 home care assistants employed in the system.

Personal assistance services are provided within programmes that encourage independent living of persons with disabilities and are financed on project basis from various sources. These are largely funded in the framework of the Public Employment Service of Slovenia and Foundation for Financing Humanitarian and Disability Organizations (FIHO) programmes, by the Ministry of Labour and municipalities. Important programmes in this field also include advocacy programmes, funded through FIHO tenders.

Foster care. In September 2017, there were 65 children with disabilities in foster care. Children with disability live in foster care until they are 18 years old, if their living conditions with the primary family are not suitable. While in foster care, children with disabilities attend an appropriate educational programme, mainstream or special programme, in accordance with the decision of the National Education Institute on the placement of a child on the basis of the needs.

Sign language interpretation. The Slovenian Sign Language Act, which entered into force in 2002, grants deaf persons the possibility to use Slovenian sign language as a language of mutual communication and the right to be informed on adapted techniques. Interpreting services in state institutions (for example in schools, courts of justice, social centers etc.) and local self-governance bodies are free of charge for the users. Additionally, a deaf person may exercise the right to a sign language interpreter at his own discretion for up to a maximum of 30 hours per year (for example to go to the bank, shop etc.), while a deaf person with student status may, for reasons of additional education needs, exercise the right to a sign language interpreter for more than 30 hours, but not exceeding 100 hours per year.

Communication and other aids. Another vital set of related services comprises a set of four measures from the Act on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, including communication aids, adapted vehicles, call centers and assistant dogs. These services are financed by the Ministry of Labour and delivered through Administrative Offices. Subsidised communication aids for people with sensory disabilities (impaired vision, hearing or both, impaired speech



and other disabilities) are intended to assist their social inclusion. In 2017, persons with disabilities received 453 communication aids (35 watches for visually impaired, 27 mobile phones, 20 computers, 8 tablets etc). The second measure deals with the reimbursement of the costs of customising vehicles (adapted car) for persons with physical disabilities as drivers or passengers (for example children with special needs, older persons with disabilities). In 2017, 19 vehicles were adapted. The third measure is a call centre for people with impaired hearing, which enables users to access information about public administration and local self-government. The fourth measure, available as of year 2018, is the right to an assistant dog, for persons with severe physical disabilities. For persons with visual impairments, the right to an assistant dog is covered by health insurance.

Demonstration center. Smart home Iris at University Rehabilitation Institute Republic of Slovenia is a demonstration center for assistive technologies and solutions for persons with disabilities (sensorial disabilities, physical disabilities, persons with communication issues) to have maximum functional independence and safety at home. Services encompass counselling and testing trials of equipment.

Long-Term Institutional Care and Respite Care

Long-term institutional and respite care for persons with disabilities in Slovenia is overseen by two public institutions, each described in turn below. The services they provide include accommodation, meals, healthcare and social care.

There are five Centers for Training, Work and Care (CUDV) that provide institutional care for children, youth and adults with disabilities/special needs, as well as education and living skills training for 1.410 persons. Their expenditure in 2015 was slightly above 41 million euros. Education programs at the Centers for Training, Work and Care include those designed for preschool children, children in school age and adults up to the age of 26 (prolonged education due to disability-related reasons). Centers catering to persons with intellectual disabilities (mainly severe), brain injuries or autism are also included in some institutions. All children can take part in special education programs, run by the Ministry of Education. The curriculum is the same as in primary schools with adapted programmes (special schools). The majority of children take part in services offered by the centers on daily basis. Children are placed in Centers for Training, Work and Care are primarily when they are not able to live with their primary family (additional health reasons/more severe disabilities, victims of abuse or poor social situation of the family). Students above 18 years of age are included in the process of preparation for life and work. The purpose of this program is to keep existing skills, develop new ones and enable diverse interests. It also aims to maximize the development of social competences of an individual and engagement with the external social environment. Participants of this program, as well as other eligible residents of the centres can take part in the sheltered workshops.

There are also five special social care institutions for adults with severe intellectual or physical disability, mental health problems, brain injuries and sensorial disabilities. In the year 2017, they served a total of 1.560 persons. Expenditure of these institutions in the same year was close to 31 million euros.

Besides Centers for training, work and care and special social care institutions, persons with disabilities are also accommodated in eight homes for the elderly - 827 persons with disability lived there in 2017 and total expenditure was almost 7 million euros. Some 11,3% of persons with disabilities are paying for the services themselves, in 86,8 % of cases payment is shared among persons with disabilities and municipalities and in 1,8% of cases municipalities cover the full cost.

Leisure and Social-Life Support

The Ministry of Culture through tenders supports projects for social inclusion of persons with disabilities in cultural activities. Every year the ministry co-finances cultural projects for people with vision or hearing impairment and persons with brain injuries, allocating about 170.000 euros per year for this purpose. Through European Social Fund projects the ministry cofinanced in 2016 - 2017 six actions intended for persons with disabilities. The ministry cofinances also infrastructure (physical and information-communication adaptations) in cultural institutions (audiovisual and electronic



materials and web contents, like e-Archive) and books for public libraries, adapted for persons with disabilities. In 2016, a Library for visually impaired was included in the public network of libraries, with co-financing provisioned for a ten-year period.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport co-financed the preparation for 2016 special Olympic games, paraolympic activities⁹ as well as school games and public events for children with special needs. The association for sport for persons with disabilities with Lidl Slovenia runs a projekt "Become a sportsman", intended for promoting sport activities to youth with disabilities, their families, teachers, clubs, etc¹⁰.

NGOs for persons with disabilities in Slovenia run several programs with resources from the Foundation for disability and humanitarian organizations, financed from the Lottery system. In 2017, resources for disability NGOs programs encompassed 11,3 million euros from the lottery, to cover activities nationally or locally, for better social inclusion. Such programs cover activities in education, health, social, cultural, employment, reasonable accommodation, sport activities, personal assistance programs etc.

In 2016 to mid 2017 Slovenia took part in the "EU Disability Card" international project. The disability card enables persons with disabilities to enjoy multiple benefits mainly in the areas of culture, leisure, sport and transport. A total of 500,000 euros was allocated to the project, the majority contributed by the European Commission. The Card is mutually recognised between EU countries participating in the system, on a voluntary basis. In November 2018, 203 Slovenian providers of services and benefits were connected into a network on this basis.

FUTURE TRENDS

In 2017, the Act Regulating the Integrated Early Treatment of Preschool Children with Special Needs was adopted to provide new systemic solutions. The act introduces improved procedures for early intervention. Yet, the act will enter into force in the beginning of January 2019. The act envisions setting up a system of early childhood intervention for special needs children, from birth until they start primary education, as well as support to the families. Early intervention centres will cooperate with kindergartens, social care centres and other institutions that will take care of children and their families. Services will encompass help and support children and families on the basis of an individual plan and multidisciplinary teams:

- health services needed for diagnostics, assessment and health care,
- training of families, counselling and visits in families,
- logopedic services,
- occupational therapy,
- psychosocial help,
- equipment and support in movement and communication,
- support in adapting the environment of the child,
- special pedagogical treatment,
- social care treatment.

A national project for profesional support for children with special needs and their families – (EU cohesion project), is preparing a network linking relevant institutions in health, social and education system and will establish 10 professional centers in the next years, among them a center for children with hearing impairments, center for autism, physically disabled and visually impaired (with 4 million euros allocated towards this end).

⁹Interview with Dane Kastelic, President of the Council for Persons with Disabilities Republic of Slovenia.

¹⁰ibid



In 2017, the National Assembly adopted the long awaited Personal Assistance Act which systemically regulates the right to personal assistance in order to allow persons with long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which prevent the person from fully and effectively participating in all fields of social life, to have equal opportunities, greater independence, activity and equal participation in society. Personal assistance projects will be replaced with solutions from the act from the beginning of 2019.

In 2018, the Act on Social Inclusion for People with Disability was adopted, changing legislation on the basis of a social and human rights approach for persons with disability, positing that they cannot be included in society and independently take care of and provide for themselves without appropriate social and other inclusion services. The act regulates the rights of persons with severe disabilities acquired prior to adult age or during their regular schooling prior to 26 years of age. A key novelty from this act is that from January 2019 social benefits will promote the transition for persons with disabilities from sheltered workshops to the open labour market¹¹. The act also provides for innovative solutions (programs) for independent living and social inclusion from the beginning of 2022, which will mark the beginning of non-profit-run training for independent living, life-long learning and living with support programs.

Processes for deinstitutionalization and long-term care are one of the main issues in Slovenia. The Ministry of Labour prepared a consultation for de-institutionalization in 2016, presenting a study for the deinstitutionalization process. This process is going hand in hand with the development of new long-term care solutions. In last years, the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Health prepared several proposals for acts on long-term care, but so they have yet to be adopted. Main facilities for long-term care now are institutions – special social institutes, centers for training, work and care and homes for the elderly. In February 2018, the Ministry of Health prepared workshops for pilot projects on long-term care. New solutions for long-term care are to be expected within the next years. Expenditure for long-term care represented 1,26 % Slovenian GDP (489 million euros, with last data available for 2015).

CONDUCTED INTERVIEWS

Karl Destovnik, President of the Association of Vocational Rehabilitation Providers in the Republic of Slovenia, deputy president of the Association of Slovenian Training Organisations for Persons with Special Needs and social entrepreneur, Ljubljana, 12 December 2018

Dane Kastelic, President of the Council for Persons with Disabilities Republic of Slovenia and acting president of the National Council of Persons with Disabilities' Organizations of Slovenia, Ljubljana, 13 December 2018

¹¹Interview with Karl Destovnik, President of the Association of Vocational Rehabilitation Providers in the Republic of Slovenia

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This factsheet is prepared as part of the EASPD “Commit” Work Programme 2018.

With the financial support of the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation “EaSI” (2014-2020).

The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Commission.