



Human Rights Ombudsman  
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## **Input by the Human Rights Ombudsman of the Republic of Slovenia**

to the **Special Rapporteur on the Sale, Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse of Children**

**October 2025**

**The Human Rights Ombudsman of the Republic of Slovenia** (hereafter: *the Ombudsman*) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the call for inputs by the **United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Sale, Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse of Children** for the 61st session of the Human Rights Council (February–March 2026), pursuant to Human Rights Council Resolution 52/26.

The Ombudsman is a constitutional and independent institution mandated to protect and promote human rights in Slovenia, holding **A-status accreditation** in accordance with the Paris Principles. Its mandate includes monitoring, conducting research, providing opinions and recommendations to public authorities, raising awareness, promoting human rights education, and examining complaints by individuals who believe that their human rights or fundamental freedoms have been violated by state or local authorities or public institutions.

The Ombudsman hereby submits general information, observations and insights from its monitoring and casework concerning the protection of children from sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse in Slovenia.

- 1. What are the remaining gaps and obstacles in combatting the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children? What are the challenges that limit the effective implementation and application of existing laws, policies and guidelines to prevent, detect, support and protect child victims and survivors?**

### **Legal and policy framework**

National legislation prohibits sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking of children. However, it does not yet comprehensively address all forms of child sale and technology-facilitated exploitation. While these risks are recognised in national policy documents, implementation, monitoring and interinstitutional coordination remain insufficiently integrated.

### **Institutional coordination and data systems**

Cooperation between law enforcement, prosecution, social services, education, health care and civil society is not yet fully integrated. The absence of a unified national data system limits consistent monitoring, evaluation and coordinated interventions.

Child trafficking, including for sexual purposes, remains an area of concern. Risks are particularly high among foreign nationals and vulnerable groups, such as unaccompanied minors and Roma children. The Ombudsman has noted that coordination between institutions responsible for the identification, assistance and rehabilitation of child victims is not yet consistent, and specialised services for trafficked children are limited. Further efforts are needed to ensure timely identification, child-sensitive procedures and access to long-term support.

### **Barnahus (Children’s House)**

The Ombudsman welcomed the establishment of Barnahus as a multidisciplinary, child-friendly model for handling cases of sexual abuse and supporting victims and witnesses. The number of court-ordered interviews and children receiving assistance has steadily increased since 2022, according to information received from the Children’s House. Research conducted under the Barnahus project in 2020 confirmed the need for greater awareness, early detection and professional training on child sexual abuse.<sup>1</sup>

### **Online sexual exploitation and emerging risks**

According to Spletno oko, over 300 reports of suspected child sexual abuse material were forwarded annually to police in 2023–2024, most hosted abroad. Offences involving minors aged 7–16 continue to rise. New risks include online sexual extortion, financial coercion using intimate images and AI-generated sexual images of minors, underscoring the need for stronger prevention, education and digital-investigation capacities. The Ombudsman continues to highlight the need for regular education of children, parents and professionals on safe internet use and early detection of online grooming.<sup>2</sup>

### **Specialised services and prevention**

Specialised crisis centres for child victims of sexual violence have not yet been established. Access to psychological and therapeutic services remains uneven, particularly outside major cities. Preventive education in schools and professional training on identifying and responding to abuse are not yet systematic.

### **Professional capacities and resources**

There is a shortage of qualified professionals across sectors—psychologists, social workers, prosecutors, judges and digital-forensics experts. Civil society organisations providing prevention and victim-support services rely largely on short-term project funding, affecting sustainability.

### **Implementation challenges**

Technology-related and cross-border offences require advanced investigative tools and enhanced international cooperation. Regional disparities persist in the application of child-protection protocols and in data exchange among responsible institutions.

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<sup>1</sup> Ipsos, Barnahus Slovenia – Quantitative Study on Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (Ljubljana: Council of Europe and Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Slovenia, 2020), available at [https://rm.coe.int/barnahus-slovenia-quantitative-study-on-child-sexual-abuse/1680a7269e?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://rm.coe.int/barnahus-slovenia-quantitative-study-on-child-sexual-abuse/1680a7269e?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>2</sup> Spletno oko, Annual Report 2023–2024 (Ljubljana: Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, 2024), available in Slovenian only at <https://www.spletno-ok.si>.

**2. Are there any trends and emerging threats defining the scope and extent of the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children especially in view of evolving global contexts? How adequate are current systems and strategies in protecting children effectively against such threats?**

Emerging threats are increasingly linked to the online environment, with growing concerns about online grooming, sexual extortion, self-generated sexual content by minors and the circulation of child sexual abuse material. New risks include financial coercion using intimate images and the creation of synthetic sexual images of minors through artificial intelligence.

Vulnerable groups—including children in alternative care, Roma children and unaccompanied minors—remain particularly exposed to online exploitation and trafficking for sexual purposes. The Ombudsman notes that existing mechanisms are adequate for traditional forms of abuse but less effective in addressing complex, technology-facilitated and cross-border exploitation, requiring stronger coordination, prevention and specialised support.

**3. Please provide information on concrete actions, initiatives and programs in engaging with children, youth, child-led and/or youth-led organizations and networks in the fight against the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children. Please explain to what extent such actions, initiatives and programmes inform national policies.**

Slovenia promotes the participation of children and youth in shaping protection measures through institutional, educational and civil-society mechanisms.

The National Programme for Children 2020–2025 and the National Programme for Preventing and Combating Violence in Family and Intimate Partnerships 2024–2029 aim to strengthen participation, prevention and awareness.

The Ombudsman, supported by the Deputy Ombudsman for Children's Rights and the Advocacy of Children's Rights (Zagovorništvo otrok), enables children to express their views in procedures affecting them and integrates these perspectives into recommendations to authorities. The Barnahus provides a multidisciplinary, child-friendly response to cases of sexual abuse and informs institutional improvements.

Children's and youth-led initiatives and NGOs—such as the Children's Parliament, National Youth Council, UNICEF Slovenia, Zveza prijateljev mladine Slovenije, SAFE.si, Logout, Društvo Ključ and the TOM Telephone (a free and anonymous helpline)—implement peer-education, counselling and awareness programmes on sexual abuse, trafficking and online risks. Their findings are reflected in policy planning and international reporting.

**4. How impactful has the mandate of the Special Rapporteur been in contributing to the fight against the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children? What are some positive impacts of your/your Government's engagement with the mandate? What are the gaps in the approach and implementation of the mandate? How can the impact of the mandate be further enhanced in the future?**

The Ombudsman welcomes the Special Rapporteur's contribution to advancing international standards and cooperation in preventing and addressing the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children. The mandate's thematic work and

recommendations provide valuable guidance for national child-protection policies and for strengthening human-rights-based approaches to children's safety and well-being.

**5. How impactful have the roles of child protection actors been?**

Slovenia's child-protection framework involves governmental, independent and non-governmental actors working in complementary roles. Coordination is led by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities through social-work centres, police, judiciary, education and health institutions, under established protocols for responding to child abuse and sexual violence.

The Ombudsman serves as an independent oversight institution, monitoring the performance of authorities in implementing child-protection laws and policies. Through individual complaints, systemic inquiries and recommendations, the Ombudsman strengthens institutional responses and public accountability. The Child Advocacy Service (Zagovorništvo otrok) within the Ombudsman's mandate ensures that children's views are heard and respected in all proceedings affecting them, in line with Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Non-governmental organisations, including TOM telefon, Spletno oko, SAFE.si and other civil-society partners, play an important preventive and support role through counselling, awareness-raising and educational programmes that complement public services and foster active child participation.

**6. How effective have accountability measures been in respective countries? Specifically, how effective have these measures been as it relates to private sector actors, including in technology, travel, and tourism industries? What gaps exist in ensuring accountability of relevant actors?**

The Ombudsman does not exercise supervisory or investigative competence over private sector entities. Within its mandate, the Ombudsman monitors the general framework for the protection of children's rights and cooperates with competent state institutions in promoting accountability and child-safeguarding principles.

Responsibility for regulating and enforcing standards applicable to private actors, including those in the technology, travel and tourism sectors, falls within the competence of law-enforcement and regulatory authorities. At the systemic level, the Ombudsman highlights the need for effective state oversight, preventive measures to ensure safe environments for children, and sustained awareness among private actors whose activities may affect children's rights.

**7. How effective are current regional and international mechanisms in facilitating cross-border cooperation to combat the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children? What forms of collaboration are further needed or should be strengthened?**

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**8. What are the current gaps in data collection and analysis on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children? What are child safeguarding considerations that should guide research and data collection involving child victims and survivors?**

The Ombudsman has repeatedly noted the absence of national, representative surveys that would provide a comprehensive understanding of the prevalence and forms of violence in Slovenia beyond cases reported to law-enforcement or social authorities. The lack of such data limits the ability to assess the scope, causes and consequences of violence and to design evidence-based prevention and protection measures.

The Ombudsman therefore stresses the need for systematic, coordinated research supported by reliable and comparable data to inform policy, evaluate existing measures and ensure accountability. This approach should include data on violence against children as well as other particularly vulnerable groups, such as older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants and members of Roma communities.