

**FOLLOW-UP TO THE
SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL
ASSEMBLY ON CHILDREN,
“A World Fit for Children”
(Information)**

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I. INTRODUCTION

At the Special session of the UN General Assembly on children in May 2002, Heads of State and Government and representatives of States adopted "A World Fit for Children" document, including a Declaration, Progress Report and Action Plan for the protection and development of children and youth in the 21st century. Declaration, Action Plan and the Convention on the Rights of the Child form a favourable basis for carrying out quality national development programmes. Needless to say, programmes in individual countries should be adjusted to the countries' specific characteristics and should take into account the available financial resources, different social and political circumstances and various cultural, religious and social traditions. The goals should also be feasible and measurable as well as included into acts and other legislative documents, the administrative practice and the national and local policies and programmes.

Slovenia failed to draft such a national development programme in the 1990s as the period coincided with the country struggling to assert its independence, meaning that other development areas and subjects held priority. Drafting the Programme goes back several years, when the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs commissioned thematic research papers in order to gain suitable expert positions for specific areas. The document was first included into the ministry's programme of activities in 2003 and 2004, when the government of the Republic of Slovenia tasked the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs (the Ministry), the Council for Children and the Slovenian UNICEF Committee to coordinate the project. The draft set the basic programming areas of the Programme, with a group of three to five experts appointed to each of the areas in order to produce their respective proposals. Expert discussions were held on individual chapters in order to gather the largest possible number of expert opinions from various fields. The assigned bodies were tasked with selecting their own group of people (a group of between 10 to 15 experts was proposed). With the aid of the group they were to consolidate the materials, prepare the final drafts of individual chapters, and put forth the assignments and the timeframes for carrying out development guidelines. A meeting was held for each area at the Ministry in 2004 with experts and representatives of various ministries commenting on the drafts.

Content-wise, all the relevant areas of children's lives are included in the Programme, especially those where unsolved or new issues that the young face in the modern society have been detected. The Programme includes supplementary qualitative and quantitative goals alongside development guidelines and activities that are essential for meeting the set objectives. The Programme tries to touch on regulatory, administrative-systemic and programming levels in individual chapters alongside a tangible implementation of children's rights in practice. Our priority was focused on those guidelines and activities that constitute a change, amendment or present new solutions to the already existing activities of national and other services in the field of child care. Each of the programming areas includes the goals and strategies for their implementation. It also sets the main development challenges, connected with the situation of children and youth in the Republic of Slovenia, ascertains the level of development of individual comprehensive programming areas in which Slovenia is entering the diverse European integration, and defines the basic strategic aims for improving the position of children and youth by 2016.

The Programme is the first document, after the 1993-adopted Resolution on Family Policy in the Republic of Slovenia, filling the gap in the area of integration of children, youth and family as a whole. Its implementation will only be successful if it is carried out with the broadest possible cooperation of various social agents and, at least on the level of elementary definitions, strives towards achieving as broad a consensus as possible and linking key institutions.

The document (Programme for Children and Youth 2006-2016) was prepared by the Ministries and Government Offices in co-operation with stakeholders and representatives of civil society; their proposals were taken into account subject to financial estimates for implementation of individual measures. The objectives were set based on the consensus of institutions responsible for the implementation of measures; within the selected priorities and depending on available funding these objectives anticipate gradual improvement of the status of children and youth.

II. National activities aiming to implement the goals of the World Fit for Children

The Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the Programme for Children and Youth 2006-2016 at its 91st regular session on 5 October 2006. The Programme is not the direct answer of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia to the recommendation of the 27th Special Session of the UN General Assembly to member states to adopt national action plans, it represents the basis on which the national action plan is to be developed.

Through the Programme for Children and Youth the Government of the Republic of Slovenia aims at bringing together various players in order to attain the basic objective - to improve the quality of life for children and youth in Slovenia, namely:

- The highest possible level of health care and health.
- Quality family life and human relations.
- Increased level of education and improved employability.
- Protection of children and youth from the pitfalls of poverty, all forms of violence and risk behaviour.
- Guaranteed suitable housing and a safe place to play and socialise alongside quality cultural and free-time activities.

In line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the programme deals with children from birth up to the age of 18. It addresses childhood (defined as from birth until 14 years of age) that includes pre-school and primary school periods as well as adolescence that covers secondary school youth, aged between 15 and 19 years.

It is based on the common efforts of the Slovene society for and with children and on the following principles:

- children are entitled to special family care and aid and the state is bound to recognize and ensure the right of every child to a life that corresponds to the child's physical, intellectual, mental, personal and social development;
- the best interests of the child must become the final objective and the subject of an increased social/state interest and the guideline for activities in all areas of living and working with children;
- every child has the right to life, personal and social security, growth and healthy development;
- all children are born free and equal regarding their dignity and rights;
- every child has the right to equal access and open/equal opportunities for inclusion into suitable education programmes;
- social inclusion means ensuring equal access to quality services in various fields of life thus guaranteeing safety and unimpeded growth and development for children and youth.
- children need to be protected from all forms of violence, neglect, abuse and from being exposed to arbitrary or illegal interference in their private lives, family, home or correspondence. Physical punishment or degradation is an unacceptable method of treating a child and unsuitable as a method of upbringing.
- children must be listened to and allowed to participate. Therefore we must respect the right to their own opinion and taking part in all issues that impact them, allowing for their age and level of maturity.
- one or both parents or others responsible for children have the chief obligation to ensure living conditions necessary for child's development, in line with their abilities or financial status.
- a consensus on integral, proactive and continuous policy towards children must be agreed upon on the national or local level. The same consensus must be arrived at for youth and needs to involve cooperation of state institutions, civil society, individuals, families, children and youth. All the involved must take part, including families, kindergartens, social services, health care facilities, cultural organisations, local communities and non-governmental

- organizations. Their partnership and cooperation and the formation of integral networks and programmes are essential in effectively carrying out the policy.
- to monitor and evaluate the progress in meeting the objectives and drafting regular reports necessitates an increase in statistical capabilities for systematic collection and processing of data. This will in turn enable the detection of needs and issues that require urgent attention.

The Programme consist on ten following programming areas: health policy, family policy, educational policy, social policy, special social care policy, policy of protection from neglect, violence and abuse, illegal drugs protection policy, free time activities policy, spatial policy and cultural policy. The proposed strategies to meet the objectives of the document are mainly planned as components of carrying out policies, programmes and strategies of individual players. The essence of the Programme is to achieve harmonisation in the activities of all players in order to maximise the profit for children and youth. At the same time the programme ensures the transparency of priority objectives and the means necessary to achieve them.

1. Protection of health of children and youth is of particular importance because health and healthy lifestyle of children and adolescents leads to healthier adulthood. **Health policy** includes not only goals to achieve the best possible health of children and youth but also education on healthy life's styles, improvement of mental health of children and youth and the involvement of youth in creating, implementing and evaluating health programmes. The priority goals of the health policy are: to create conditions for achieving the highest possible level of health for children and youth, to improve mental health in all periods of childhood and adolescence, to prevent the frequency cases of death in children and youth and to ensure quality health care for pregnant women and unborn children and quality health care for children and youth.
2. Living in his/her own family is of particular importance for physical and mental growth and development of a child. Family enables the child to develop into a free, independent and moral person. Special attention paid by the Government to the family is reflected in the Constitution, legislation and other regulations as well as in policies and their implementation. The priority goals of **family policy** are: to create conditions for family life, to adopt the necessary measures to protect vulnerable members in cases of violence in the family and, continuous implementation of family support programmes.
3. Ensure equal possibilities for education and improve its accessibility is one of the main indicator of justice in the field of education. To achieve this goal we wish to offer several different quality education programmes on different levels of the education system, guarantee the possibility of inclusion in kindergartens and schools, ensure systemic, programming and regulative conditions for successful integration of children with special needs, ensure systemic conditions for a more successful inclusion (especially regarding children from socially vulnerable groups) into education systems, offer various forms and possibilities of education (development of different educational programmes, guarantee transition between programmes, etc), as well as guarantee quality education of children for mutual tolerance, reduction of inequalities in the society, respect for diversity and human rights education policy, implement lifelong learning on all educational levels.
4. In the area of **social policy** we wish foremost to achieve better efficiency in supporting and helping children and their families, ensure a quality life and development to children within the framework of the primary social network, reduce poverty and social exclusion of children and families in which such children live, create and ensure that effective measures are taken to find a suitable solution, ensure sufficient welfare benefits that will in the future be aimed at the most vulnerable groups of children, ensure measures for reducing the drop-out in secondary schools and increase the number of available positions in all education programmes, improve the enrolment of the unemployed youth in vocation and education programmes.

5. In the absence of additional special and diversified measures and activities and if no changes in the views come about, **children with special needs** will remain discriminated, excluded from community life and will not be able to enjoy all the rights guaranteed to children of the same age. For this reason the special social care policy includes the following priority goals: to create equal opportunities for their greatest possible independence in everyday environment, to achieve an improvement of their social position and ensure their social inclusion, especially of Roma children, to ensure unaccompanied children and youth to exercise all their rights, to create conditions where these children will gain experience, knowledge and get an opportunity to change their behaviour patterns and thus integrate into peer and broader environment.
6. Violence, abuse and neglect are an every day reality of many Slovenian children. **The policy of protection from neglect, violence and abuse** include the following priority goals: prevention of all forms of violence against children and place victim protection as one of the state's priority tasks, improving the legal care and protection of children, who were the victims of sexual abuse with better suited and, especially, expedient solutions in penal and private law, ensuring expert (specialist) training of all experts who are working with children who have experienced violence (social care, police, justice, health, education, non-governmental sector).
7. In Slovenia we are still facing the problem of the use of drugs among children and adolescents. **Policy of protection against illegal drugs** includes the following priority goals: education of young on the consequences of use of all types of drugs (including the legal ones) and consequently a reduction in the demand and disruption of the supply of drugs, achieving a harmonisation of various activities in the area of prevention and protection from harmful consequences of drug use and dealing with addiction with the aim of connecting, cooperating and establishing a stable network of programmes dealing with drugs, ensure a greater number of quality programmes of addiction treatment that will be accessible, connected, stem from actual needs, guarantee comprehensive treatment and will be development oriented and evaluated.
8. Free time does not only imply more freedom in choosing activities and relations but also reduced control and, indeed, active involvement in activities requiring creativity, stressing personal characteristics and contributing towards creating free time culture. **Free time activities policy includes** the following priority goals: provide the highest extent of possibilities of quality free time experiences for all groups of children and youth, draft and adopt systemic solutions for the functioning of non-profitable organizations that aim their programmes or parts thereof at enriching the offer of free-time activities, guarantee employment, education and training of tutors, animators and youth workers that will take part in free time activities, ensure systemic solutions for co-funding programming costs, investment costs and payments for facilities where free-time activities take place, ensure that in media production, targeted on children and youth, the public is informed in a suitable manner on the possibilities of quality and non-commercial free-time activities, on activities of groups and organizations for children and youth and on promotion of free-time activities, special stress will be placed on developing free-time activities for children and youth with special needs, socially threatened children and youth, children of immigrants and refugees, unaccompanied children and children from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds.
9. The fundamental goal of **spatial policy** is to achieve new spatial and zoning plans, which should consider the plurality of needs of children and youth and join strategies, initiatives and resources and include the needs of children and youth into spatial planning in the sense of comprehensive spatial planning that has to be defined on the national level.
10. **Culture policy** includes the following aims: providing equal opportunities of social, cultural, artistic, psychological, entertainment and free-time activities for all children and youth ensure

suitable stimulation for reading culture on all levels, informing and participation of children and youth.

The Programme also includes **International Aid and Cooperation**. Slovenia is following the gradual implementation of the internationally set objective of the developed countries to increase the development funds meant for the least developed countries and to alleviate poverty throughout the world, especially for children. To achieve the UN's recommended goal of contributing 0.7% of the GDP for such programmes is also the long term goal of the Republic of Slovenia.

The programme for children and youth shall be implemented in accordance with the planned **funds foreseen to be required for the financial implementation of the Programme (for 2006, 2007 and estimates of the funding required for the 2008-2016 period)** for each of the planned programme activities or tasks.

On the basis of the Programme, the Government has already adopted specific activities with the view to ensuring the adoption, **in 2006, of all measures required for the protection of vulnerable family members in case of family violence** – realisation amounting to EUR 10,432.32. **Smooth implementation of the family support programmes** in 2006 – realisation amounting to EUR 275,413.12 and the programme **creating conditions for family life** in 2006 – EUR 17,526.29.

In general, Slovenia pays a particular attention to and provides support for children. In 2002, children and youth were allocated 3.6 % of GDP in various forms of social transfers. The percentage share of resources for them remained at roughly the same level ever since 1997 even though the size of generation decreased in that period. If, in addition, expenditure of general government and of local self-government for services intended for children and youth is taken into account, as well as tax savings resulting from tax relief related to this population, children and youth were allocated 7.2 % of GDP in 2002.

III. MONITORING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH 2006-2016

In Slovenia, as well as in many other countries, there exist large quantities of data that are relevant for the analysis of the status of children. However, the definition of a child as a unit of observation varies across different social contexts. The characteristic feature of all of them is that they deal with children in the context of other systems, from the point of view of family, of professional interests, institutions such as school or kindergarten etc. Various institutions which are directly or indirectly connected with children collect these data, each from the aspect of its own discipline.

An objective of Slovenia is to increase its national statistical capacity for collecting, analysing, and categorising data disaggregated by gender, age and other relevant varying indicators. Currently, a selection of indicators is being prepared with a view to facilitating regular monitoring of the progress made in achieving objectives and implementation of activities for the benefit of children as they are set out in the Programme for children and youth 2006-2016.

In 2004, Slovenia set up a "Child Observatory" within the national Social Protection Institute. For this reason, Decision amending Decision establishing Social Protection Institute was adopted at the 77th regular session on 3 June 2004 which set up a new unit within the Social Protection Institute, namely the Child Observatory. At a regular session on **20 June 2004, the Slovenian Government adopted an assent to amending the Statute of the Social Protection Institute** to the effect that within the Institute a **special unit for analysis and development – Child Observatory** – be set up with the task of monitoring the status of children in Slovenia and a specialised database for monitoring the status and well-being of children be established. In 2004 (on 1 September 2004), funds amounting to some SIT 11 million (cca. 61.000 USD) were reallocated within the Social Protection Institute for the needs of the Child Observatory.

In 2005, the Child Observatory drafted Situational Analysis of the Status of Children and Youth in Slovenia which addressed this issue in a comprehensive way and offered an assessment of changes that had occurred in the period marked by the economic transition process and consequences for the social development stemming from it.

IV. BACKGROUND FOR THE DRAFTING THE PROGRAMME FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH 2006-2016 WITH RESPECT TO INTERNATIONAL LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES BY 2015

1) Promotion of healthy life-style among children and mothers

Because of their vulnerability, children and youth are a priority group in any modern society. Physical, mental and social health of children and youth is an important indicator of social, legal, health, and economic status of a country, its cultural maturity, humanity and justice.

In Slovenia, 310 doctors were engaged in health care of children and youth at primary level, out of whom 97 % work in out-patient departments for pre-school and school children health care and only 3 % are GPs in out-patient departments in 2002.

In-patient health care of children and youth, provided in 12 hospital departments and related specialised out-patient wards, is carried out by 115 pediatricians and 21 residents in pediatrics. Owing to the age structure of this group, posts of 33 pediatricians will need successors over the first decade.

In Slovenia, children and youth encounter health problems connected with maturational changes and development and with life-style which impact on their physical, mental and social health. Progress in medicine has made possible survival of many infants born at low weight or suffering innate anomalies, an acute or chronic disease or severe injuries. In addition to such diseases and ailments, young generation suffers also from "new illnesses" which include unhealthy use of leisure time, eating disorders and lack of physical activities, drug abuse and other forms of addiction, risky sexual behaviour, mental health disorders and disturbed well-being, which, in turn, are manifested in poor learning achievements, difficulties in communication in the peer-to-peer situation, with parents and other adults, poor self-concept, depression, suicidality etc.

As they are growing older, youth's leisure time activities are increasingly unhealthy and uncreative (gadding around, night parties, risky driving, etc). Boys more often than girls engage in driving at high speeds, they play computer games and gaming machines. As regards physical activities and sports, results of a vast survey show that less than one half of children in the 11-13-15 age bracket are physically active one hour or more a day, which is a cause for concern.

Healthy dietary habits decline with age: their daily diet does not include a sufficient number of meals, nor enough fruit and vegetables and at the same time it is too high in fat and includes too many sweets and sweetened soft drinks; only 40 % of children and youth start their day with a breakfast.

In Slovenia, the most commonly used drug is alcohol and its prevalent use by youth is supported by the positive attitude towards alcohol of mainstream society. As much as one third of the interviewed has had their first drink of alcohol at the age of 11. Abstainers from alcohol accounted for only 8.3 % and abstainers from tobacco for 33 % among the fifteen-year-olds in the period surveyed (1995-2003).

The sexual behaviour of youth is often risky for health, with younger ones taking more risk and having less knowledge. The average age at first sexual intercourse was 14.4 years for girls and 14.3 years for boys. Only slightly over one-half of the 15-year-olds reported using contraception during their last sexual intercourse (studies carried out among secondary school youth – 1996).

Injuries and intoxications, with traffic accidents and suicides as most prevalent among them, are the most common causes of death, hospitalisation and first visits to out-patient wards in the context of medical care administered to youth in Slovenia. The leading causes of the total of deaths in the 1-19-

year-age group (173 deaths per year) are injuries and intoxications, of which traffic accidents account for more than one half. A large number of completed suicides among young persons and estimates that there are several times that number of attempted suicides, are an indicator which must not be overlooked, and the data on the rate of clinical depression amounting to 20.5 % in male secondary school goers and to 41.5 % in female secondary school goers should be given due consideration.

Good results, e.g. low newborn mortality (3.8 deaths per 1000 live births), high percentage of immunisation coverage, in particular among school goers (97 % coverage of the immunisation scheme) and, in addition to that, a high percentage of children and youth who undergo a systematic check-up in most localities and timely treatment in specialist out-patient departments and hospitals wards have been made possible thanks to out-patient services at primary level of public health care, and adequately trained physicians to work with young people (period 1987-2002).

On the basis of the measures adopted aiming towards reducing maternal mortality rate, the latter has decreased as well. Preliminary data for 2001 and 2002 show that maternal mortality rate in Slovenia was significantly reduced. The 5-year average mortality rate for the period 1998-2002 amounts to 12.5 deaths per 100 000 live births.

Financial quality of life of children and youth in Slovenia

Economic circumstances of children and youth in Slovenia fully reflect the status of the household in which they live, sharing its well-being with other members. Data show an above-average share of households with children in the average income brackets in 1998 and 2002. In 2002, the income from employment was the most important income source of households and represented – together with the income from self employment – 65.4% of income of all households and as much as 80.9% of income of households with children up to 21 years of age.

Compared with previous years, the importance of child allowances for households with children has increased significantly after 1999. In 2002, child allowances received by households with children up to 21 years of age represented 4% of total income. The importance of child allowance grew particularly in poorer households (in three lower decile groups) where it ranged from 5.0% to 7.9% of total income in 2002 (in 1998 from 3.0% to 5.8% of income). Furthermore, the weight of other family allowances in the income structure of households with children grew significantly (to 2%); this is attributable to the Parental Protection and Family Income Act, adopted in November 2001.

The relative poverty rate is at the same time the indicator of income inequality. Household incomes are compared with the reference poverty threshold defined as a percentage of average income or its mean value in income distribution (median income). Aforementioned poverty rate, was in 1998 likely higher than in 1993 for every person, including children up to 18 (Stropnik and Stanovnik). Children living in poor households are a particularly vulnerable group. 13.9% of total population and 16.7% of children up to 18 years of age lived in poverty in 1998 (Source: Situation analysis of the status of children and youth in Slovenia, September 2005).

In the period from 1998 to 2002, a very positive shift occurred: on average, the poverty rate of individuals decreased by 2.1 percentage points: from 14.0% to 11.9%. An even stronger decrease in poverty rate was noted among individuals living in households with children up to 21 years of age (by 2.4 percentage points), in particular among children (by 2.8 percentage points).

Poverty alleviation is mainly influenced by social benefits. Data confirm that their impact grew stronger in the period from 1998 to 2002 compared to previous years as a consequence of legislative amendments and their impact on the level of allowances and the number of their recipients. Under the assumption that there are no social benefits, the 1998 poverty rate of all individuals in Slovenia would be 5.8 percentage points higher than the poverty rate with all income taken into account, while in 2002, this rate would be 6.9 percentage points or 58% higher. The impact of social benefits to persons in households with children up to 21 years of age was above average. If no social benefits were provided, the poverty rate of households with children would increase by 7.9 percentage points in 1998 and by whole 10 percentage points in 2002.

2) Provision of quality education

In the area of **pre-school education**, the share of children – in particularly those of the 3 to 6 age group – attending preschool facilities could as yet not be measured up to the share in European countries with highly developed preschool education system. In order to move towards attaining such share, the offer of programmes, in particular half-day and shorter, must be more diverse; in addition, a higher level of synchronization with parents' life-pace must be achieved, for example by providing afternoon or evening programmes. It is therefore necessary to take account of characteristics and diversities in environment and adjust to its specific needs.

In the area of **compulsory education**, equal in length to the duration of general primary education, changes pursue the principle of motivation and respect for differences while ensuring equal opportunities. On the one hand, this was meant to surpass unitarism and, on the other hand, to reduce social differences resulting from unequal educational opportunities. A nine-year primary school brings about certain new features not known previously in such a form; it is therefore necessary to monitor their effects and decide to amend or correct individual system solutions on the bases of expert findings. It is particularly necessary to monitor the effects of: types of differentiation introduced to the system (mostly partial external differentiation), teaching of elective subjects and external assessment of knowledge at the end of each three-year cycle. We may not overlook the fact that the network of schools is under a considerable pressure, which may be attributed to the unfavourable demographic and other typical post-industrial trends. Consequently, this raises a question on how to ensure access to primary school as close to child's home as possible in the future.

Almost a whole primary school generation continues its education in **secondary education** and the share of young people with secondary education among those aged 22 years has reached nearly 90-percent. Secondary education is characterised by two structural differences: on the one hand, the enrolment to four-year schools – in particular to *gimnazija* (grammar school) – is on the rise, on the other hand, the imbalance between provided and demanded individual programmes is noted; in the structure of provided vocational and technical education we have drawn attention to a particular problem, i.e. the current offer of programmes is based on occupations in excess demand. As regards technical and vocational secondary schools, we may establish that the current structure of technical and vocational education is very flexible, but in practice formal educational paths are not always appropriately used, some are also poorly developed as regards the offer of programmes (vocational course) and therefore not visible. Transitions between educational paths and schools are rare and therefore the current system, despite its flexibility, does not contribute much to increase the efficiency of education or to reduce school drop-out or to achieve the aim that every young person should leave the education system with appropriate vocational qualification. School drop-out remains one of the key issues of secondary education, even though new school legislation and content-related renovation of curricula introduced various forms of education and an elaborated model of individualisation and differentiation that is expected to ensure vertical and horizontal transitions while providing a variety of forms and types of education. However, official data show a rather varying trend in school drop-out, but due to different measures a downward trend has been seen over the last years and the share of Slovenian secondary-school students who leave education early is lower than in the EU Member States (6%-10%). The key aim of different measures is to virtually eliminate school drop-out in vocational education by 2010.

In 2004 44, 8% young people with secondary education continue its education in **higher education**. Linking of higher education with vocational education and training provided young (and adults) the enhanced possibilities for moving between educational levels and attaining a higher level of education, which was also supported by extending the network of vocational colleges. In 2004, the integral financing of study activities in higher education was introduced, aiming at attaining positive relation between financing, quality and study results. Currently, the programmes are harmonised with the Bologna process requirements, which will consequently improve their international comparability. In 1999, co-financing of post-graduate study was introduced and by the academic year 2003/04 the number of students enrolled in post-graduate programmes grew by 134%. With a view to enhancing quality of programmes, business sector and other users should be invited to participate in developing applicable knowledge to be acquired through post-graduate study.

In the area of **social transfers**, the state follows the principle of social justice and solidarity in subsidising school meals, transport to school for pupils and secondary-school students, borrowing of textbooks from textbook funds and attendance at open-air schools.

For children and youth who attend pre-school facilities, institutions and schools, organised nutrition within a mass catering system is a predominant pattern of daily nutrition; funds for subsidising school meals of pupils, secondary-school students and apprentices increased by 45.3% in 2004. However, we have to draw attention to the fact that nutrition in secondary schools is not sufficiently well organized, therefore premises and other conditions required to organize provision of meals in secondary schools will have to be improved.

There are considerable differences between schools regarding the carrying out of open-air school. On average, schools organize 3.2 such activities (from min. 0 to max. 18), therefore it would be necessary to obtain data on the number of pupils within each class that attend open-air school/-s and the reasons why some pupils attend whilst others do not.

The state also subsidises the purchase of textbooks; in 1993, the decision was taken to gradually introduce school textbook funds with the aim to enable parents to purchase or borrow required textbooks for a school year at one-third of market price of new textbooks. The option to be considered is how the state can gradually introduce subsidies to parents for buying workbooks or textbook kits.

3) Combating HIV/AIDS

All Slovenian residents may take a free HIV test that is equally accessible to both genders. Once a week, an outpatient clinic operates within the Hospital for Infectious Diseases in Ljubljana offering anonymous and free testing to all. The AIDS prevention programme was adopted (1995), and in 2005 the Republic of Slovenia made a donation to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria founded at the UN initiative.

Slovenia is one of the few countries with a relatively low number of HIV infected persons, i.e. less than one per 1,000 inhabitants. According to the IPH data, 25 persons (23 men and 2 women) where disease had not yet developed were identified in the period from 1 January to 20 November 2006. By 20 November 2006, 28 new HIV infections were registered (31 in the same period in 2005). The disease developed in 5 persons, all men. Three AIDS patients were first diagnosed as HIV positive. Three patients became infected by the intercourse with men, one by injecting drugs, while one patient could not be placed in any risk group. No AIDS patient died by 20 November. Since 1986, when the first AIDS death case was registered, 1987 was the only year when no death occurred. Regardless of the increasing number of HIV infected persons, recent decline in AIDS incidence and death among the AIDS patients is supposed to reflect good accessibility of high-quality medical treatment, including a highly active anti-retrovirus treatment. The total of 130 cases were registered from 1986, when the first two AIDS cases were identified, to 20 November 2006. The notifiable incidence rate ranged from 0.5 to 8 cases per million inhabitants. The total 130 registered cases included 128 adults (113 male and 15 female patients) **and two children, a boy and a girl.**

The number of HIV infected persons in Slovenia is certainly much higher than indicated by the number of registered cases. The foreseen number is a few hundred, which is less than one person in 1000 inhabitants. The group most affected is that of men having sexual intercourse with men. According to the available data, the rapid spread of infection has not yet occurred in Slovenia among injecting drug users and their sexual partners.

4) Protection against Abuse, Exploitation and Violence

The official statistics in the last 10 years reveals the increasing number of reported offences against children. A special increase has been noted in the number of reported cases of sexual abuse of minors

under 15. However, it would be too hasty to conclude that this fact reflects increased violence against children in Slovenia. Historic analyses of childhood reveal that children in the past were much more exposed to violence than today, and that such violence was socially acceptable. However, especially after the Second World War the social attitude towards childhood changed along with the introduction of fundamental human rights. Expert workers learn how to identify the indications of abuse and the impact of abuse on the development of a child. Institutions competent for treating children begin to cooperate. Media bring individual shattering stories. Public discussions on violence against children become more frequent. Thus the society becomes sensitive to violence against children. The increased number of reported cases of child abuse is therefore the result of this raised sensitivity of expert and lay public. We may say that the growing trend of reporting different forms of abuse is a good sign.

Nevertheless, the bodies of repression should act as supplementary to the social protection bodies, whose role in the comprehensive and long-term care for the development and benefits of children is of primary importance. The court in the criminal procedure may punish the perpetrator, but it cannot place a child as the victim of abuse into another family and offer him or her the much-needed psychosocial assistance. This is the task of Social Work Centres, with many non-governmental organisations being active in this area, too. Besides the implementation of their own statutory authorisations for the adoption of measures in protecting the benefits of children, the role of Social Work Centres should be the integration of different organisations and institutions treating abused children (such as e.g. non-governmental organisations, schools, health institutions). Namely, child abuse requires the cooperation of all expert organisations active in the area of detection or treatment of child abuse. This necessary involves teamwork; the state should create conditions for effective and expert operation of multidisciplinary teams. The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs attempted to develop guidelines for the teamwork, whose content is but guiding and non-binding. Furthermore, the lack of professional work protocols of both social work centres and other organisations addressing child abuse is always underlined as a particularly crucial issue at the numerous expert meetings of social workers.

Non-governmental organisations have an important supplementary role in the field of providing assistance to abused children. They began to be established in late 1980's, their number and influence on the changed operation of governmental bodies having been on the increase in the last decade.

So far Slovenia has not encountered the child trafficking problem (Slovenia has an active government-appointed **Interdepartmental Working Group** for the fight against trafficking in persons: http://www.vlada.si/activities/projects/fight_trafficking_in_persons/). The Slovenian public awareness of the seriousness of this problem is accordingly low. The data reveal that the detected victims of child trafficking in Slovenia were always minor girls, the purpose of trafficking being sexual abuse. Other forms of child trafficking (begging, forced labour and other) were not detected.

V. CONCLUSION

The efforts of the Republic of Slovenia for the implementation of the document "**A World Fit for Children**", adopted at the special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations in May 2002, which includes the Declaration, the Progress Report and the Action Plan (programme of activities) for the protection and development of children and youth in 21st century, were based especially on the programme objectives bringing feasible changes and amendments as regards the situation of children and the development of their potentials, or on the analysis of the situation and the proposed measures for the improvement of the present situation of children in the Republic of Slovenia.

Although the process of the preparation of the national programme in the Republic of Slovenia was limited by the three-year period, the programme was adopted on the basis of the discussion in expert circles and in broader public. To ensure the implementation of the programme, it shall be followed by action plans of individual ministries whose preparation shall be undertaken by competent ministries in 2007.

Not least, Slovenia is an active participant in many international organisations with the aim of improving the situation of children in the national and international communities. In 2005, the Republic of Slovenia hosted the "**Regional UN consultation on violence against children for Europe and Central Asia,**" which took place from 5 to 7 July 2005 in Ljubljana. Adopted at the meeting was the final document of the regional consultation *Ljubljana conclusions – act now to stop violence against children*. Discussions at the Regional UN consultation on violence against children, which is the last of the nine consultations having taken in different parts of the world, represent the contribution of Europe and Central Asia to the elaboration of an in-depth global UN study on violence against children.

In the framework of the one-year chairmanship of the Human Security Network, which the Republic of Slovenia assumed at the ministerial meeting in Bangkok on 2 June 2006, a special attention is devoted to topics such as violence against children and children affected by armed conflicts. Thus it hosted the conference "**Prevention of violence against children and human security' from 30 November to 2 December 2006 at Brdo pri Kranju**". The conference consisted of two parts. In the first part Professor Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, independent expert of the UN Secretary-General for the preparation of the Study on Violence against Children, presented the study. The presentation was followed by the discussion on the implementation of the recommendations of the Study at the national and global levels. The second part consisted of the traditional annual conference of the foundation "Together" with the partner organisations from the Western Balkan, North Caucasus, Iraq and Slovenia. This part addressed the topics related with the problems of children affected by armed conflicts and post-conflict circumstances. A special guest speaker in this part was Tonderai Chikuhwa from the Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflicts.

Furthermore, Slovenia is an active participant in programmes and projects of the Council of Europe in the field of family and children, which includes the preparation of the new Council of Europe recommendations on "Positive Parenting" representing a special contribution of the Council of Europe "Building a Europe for and with children« in the area of non-violent methods of bringing up children in the family and society, binding on the heads of member states at the Third Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe in Warsaw in 2005.