

FINAL PROGRAMME REPORT

FM14-21

Slovenia

Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship

Programme short name	SI-EDUCATION
Programme Operator	Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development - Slovenia (SI)
Host Programme Area	PA03 Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeships and Youth Entrepreneurship
Financial Mechanisms	EEA Grants, Norway Grants
Programme grant in EUR	€ 13,350,000.00
Programme co-financing in EUR	€ 2,355,882.36
Final incurred amount in EUR	€ 14,617,118.29
Final incurred rate %	93.07 %

PROGRAMME RESULTS

Programme Objective: Enhanced human capital and knowledge base

Eligible expenditure: € 15,705,882.36 Amount incurred: € 14,617,118.29

Issues the programme aimed to address

The Education Programme addressed structural weaknesses in Slovenia's education and skills development systems that limited employability, competitiveness, and social inclusion. During the 2014–2021 period, Slovenia faced persistently high youth unemployment rates, a significant NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) population, and growing skills mismatches due to rapid technological change, digitalisation, and evolving labour market needs. These issues were especially pronounced in rural and economically disadvantaged regions.

The lack of accessible lifelong learning opportunities and outdated teaching practices further hindered efforts to prepare students and adults for emerging sectors, particularly those linked to the green and digital transitions. Vulnerable groups, such as NEET youth, faced systemic barriers to education and training, contributing to cycles of unemployment and social exclusion.

The programme also targeted institutional gaps in modern teaching approaches and educator skills. There was a need to modernise curricula, integrate digital tools, and develop innovative learning environments, while improving cooperation between education providers, employers, and policymakers to align training with labour market demands. The COVID-19 pandemic intensified these challenges, highlighting digital divides in education, disrupting in-person learning, and worsening inequalities for disadvantaged students.

To address these issues, the programme supported a total of 24 projects, including 2 pre-defined initiatives (BlendVET and Barnahus). These initiatives enhanced vocational education through blended learning models, developed innovative curricula in areas such as digital literacy and social-emotional skills, and engaged NEET youth through targeted programmes. They also promoted inclusive education, with a focus on equal access for disadvantaged groups.

The programme's alignment with Slovenia's Development Strategy 2030 and EU education and employment policies was crucial. It reinforced national goals of improving human capital, fostering innovation, and enhancing labour market participation. By supporting systemic reforms in teaching practices, building institutional capacity, and providing targeted

interventions for vulnerable groups, the programme addressed key social and economic challenges.

These interventions not only modernised Slovenia's education system but also created pathways to employment and social mobility, reducing disparities and contributing to a more skilled, adaptable workforce capable of meeting future economic and societal needs.

Programme contribution to overall objectives

The Education Programme made a substantial contribution to the EEA and Norway Grants' objectives by reducing social and economic disparities through improved education and employability, as well as by strengthening bilateral cooperation to modernise Slovenia's education system.

The programme targeted persistent issues, such as high NEET rates, skills mismatches, and limited access to quality education, particularly in disadvantaged regions. Through 24 projects, it reached over 1,000 disadvantaged beneficiaries and trained more than 1,400 educators and other professional staff.

Projects like PreseNEETi se engaged NEET youth through mentorship and vocational pathways, while BlendVET piloted blended learning models in vocational schools, increasing flexibility for students and integrating digital skills. Initiatives focusing on inclusive education addressed barriers for marginalised groups, ensuring equal access to learning and training.

These interventions improved employability and labour market alignment, reducing socio-economic disparities by equipping young people and vulnerable groups with skills demanded by the economy. By focusing on inclusion and regional outreach, the programme addressed gaps in rural and underserved areas, complementing national and EU strategies for human capital development.

Bilateral partnerships enriched the programme's quality and impact, with 22 of 24 projects collaborating with donor state institutions, mainly from Norway. Exchanges of expertise introduced innovative teaching methodologies and policy models. For example, the digi.komp project integrated Norwegian digital competence frameworks into Slovenian schools, while Talent Lab leveraged bilateral knowledge on youth engagement strategies.

Study visits, joint curriculum development, and workshops built institutional links between Slovenian and donor state entities, enabling long-term collaboration. These partnerships fostered mutual learning and created networks for future cooperation under EU programmes such as Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe.

By addressing educational inequalities and embedding bilateral expertise, the programme not only reduced disparities but also modernised Slovenia's education system. It demonstrated that combining local ownership with donor state knowledge creates lasting systemic improvements, directly contributing to Slovenia's alignment with European education and employment priorities while strengthening international partnerships.

Sustainability

The sustainability of the Education Programme's results is ensured through institutional integration, capacity building, and lasting bilateral partnerships.

Many programme outputs have been embedded within Slovenia's education system and policy frameworks. For example, blended learning models piloted under BlendVET are now used across vocational schools. Similarly, inclusive education practices and digital teaching tools developed through bilateral cooperation have been adopted at the school and institutional level.

Capacity building was a cornerstone of sustainability. Over 1,400 educators and trainers gained new pedagogical skills, digital competences, and tools for inclusive education, ensuring that knowledge continues to be applied in classrooms and training centres. Number of intellectual outputs—generated by the institutional cooperation—remain in use and provide replicable models for future initiatives.

Bilateral partnerships further reinforce sustainability. Collaboration with donor state institutions established long-term networks for joint research, curriculum development, and professional exchanges. Initiatives such as digi.komp continue to influence digitalisation in education through ongoing cooperation with Norwegian partners, while expertise gained through Barnahus contributes to systemic child protection improvements.

In addition, the programme promoted inclusive and modern learning environments, building broad stakeholder support. Its alignment with Slovenia's Development Strategy 2030 and EU education priorities ensures that results feed into ongoing reforms and funding frameworks, such as Erasmus+ and ESF+.

By embedding results into education policy, strengthening institutional competences, and maintaining bilateral networks, the programme created a strong foundation for lasting improvements in educational quality, employability, and social inclusion well beyond the grant period.

Outcome 1: Improved institutional cooperation at all levels of education (formal and informal)

Amount incurred: € 5,913,620.58

Results

The focus of the outcome was on the promotion of institutional cooperation at all levels of formal and informal education, with an emphasis on the development of skills and competencies for work and life in the 21st century.

In total, eleven projects with total grant more than 6 million EUR were implemented under the outcome and focused mostly on improving different competencies of educational staff to improve education and training of different target groups on different levels and in different fields of education, developing new methodologies, models, training and learning practices to

be used on different levels and fields of education and also on improving different competencies of students on different levels of education.

In terms of output level results, all projects contributed to the results of both outputs.

Projects were successful in achieving the results of outputs “Knowledge and good practices shared on advancing skills and competencies in education”, particularly in the field of the number of peer learning activities carried out and the number of participants in peer learning, where specific indicator targets were significantly surpassed.

A total of 166 peer learning activities were carried out within the framework of the projects, with a total of 4859 participants. In addition, the projects provided training for more than 340 professional staff.

The **EMPOWER FOR 21 project** identified the need for innovative teaching methods to develop 21st-century competencies in health professionals. Led by the University Clinical Centre Maribor, the project was primarily aimed at enhancing education in healthcare, while also applying to other professional fields. The project implemented a series of educational workshops and developed resources aimed at enhancing communication, leadership, and mental health competencies among healthcare professionals and students. The project organised workshops on critical thinking, communication, digital communication, and mental health, which were designed to provide participants with practical skills relevant to their professional environments.

Another good example is the **Digi.comp project**. Its primary focus was on educators, mentors, and individuals who pass on digital knowledge to others. The project developed 39 innovative workshops and approaches tailored to meet a wide range of participant needs, from basic digital literacy to the advanced use of technological tools. Over 100 workshops were held, engaging more than 500 participants from various institutions, associations, and organisations, including over 100 teachers.

The projects were also very successful in reaching the output of “New teaching and learning practices for work and life developed”, where the target values of the indicators were significantly surpassed.

163 staff were trained to provide training for educators on the use of teaching models and method and more than 800 staff members participated in developing and testing teaching models.

A good example is the **Green Penguin project**. The primary goal was to develop a new methodology, incorporating innovative practices and didactic tools for teaching and learning, specifically in the fields of environmental and digital literacy for primary school teachers and students. Another crucial objective was to train a critical mass of multipliers, including teachers and other professional staff, to effectively implement the developed teaching methods in practice. A new digital didactic platform for CO2 monitoring of schools was developed with the Green Penguin gamification ([the Green Penguin platform](#)). Within the platform, 20 didactic resources, methods and materials have been developed for teaching and learning about environmental issues and ways to reduce CO2. Seven primary schools have been involved in testing and using the Green Penguin platform. 20 teachers were trained to transfer their knowledge on how to use the platform to other colleagues and schools. A key focus was on

educating and training teachers and other stakeholders, who served as primary multipliers, to expand the use of the Green Penguin platform.

As an example, the **VIS A VIS project** focused on the field of autism, especially on a better understanding of children, adolescents and students with autism in the educational process. Since the goal of education is to produce a person qualified for work who gets a job after completing the education, the project also focused on an adapted way of employing people with autism. The main goal was to set up an effective model of support for employees in education and in the field of the national employment agency, as well as employers. With this model, the project wanted to improve institutional cooperation at all levels of education and employment, which would lead to better conditions for learning and the employability of persons with autism. One of the most important results is the extensive manual, entitled [Support for persons with autism](#). The manual is available in the Slovenian language. It is intended for educational staff across the entire vertical, from toddlers to students at university. It also includes a chapter for employers. On the practical level, the project also intervened in the field of employment. A young person with autism was selected and prepared for a new job. Through lectures, workshops and counselling, a selected employer was prepared for the pilot employment of a person with autism, which lasted for 13 months. The workplace was adapted specifically for this person with autism, and a mentor was assigned to him to introduce work, provide support and ensure the plan of support services was properly implemented. A person with autism gained new knowledge and work skills and progressed in terms of work efficiency.

In terms of outcome level, altogether 144 intellectual outputs were generated by institutional cooperation, and more than 90 institutions are using new teaching methods and strategies. Another important indicator at the outcome level is the one related to the "Share of cooperating education and training institutions applying new teaching and learning practices". Based on the project reports, 59 out of 65 cooperating education and training institutions apply new teaching and learning practices, which means that the programme's target value of the indicator "Share of cooperating education and training institutions applying new teaching and learning practices" was exceeded. The target value of the level of satisfaction with institutional cooperation is also exceeded. The projects contributed to this outcome by fostering collaboration between various educational institutions and other stakeholders, including ministries, schools, universities and companies. Training sessions brought together teachers from different fields, but also administrative staff and representatives from companies and other institutions, improving communication and mutual understanding between different levels of the educational system.

A good example is the **RESPO-VI project**, which achieved significant results in enhancing STEM students' (STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) competencies using the RESPO-VI application and targeted training programmes. The project fostered improved intersectoral and bilateral cooperation among higher education (HE) institutions, companies, and NGOs in implementing digital solutions for tracking student competency development.

All indicator targets under this outcome were achieved as planned or exceeded in most cases. This was also the conclusion of the independent evaluation of the programme.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

The Education programme encountered several key challenges during its implementation. One of the primary difficulties was the limited timeframe for project execution, which constrained the ability to fully embed innovative practices and systemic reforms into the education system. While many projects successfully piloted new approaches, extending their impact and institutionalising these practices will require continued investment and policy support beyond the funding period.

The COVID-19 pandemic posed another major challenge, disrupting mobility, delaying activities, and limiting opportunities for face-to-face cooperation and training. Projects had to quickly adapt to online delivery methods, which, while effective in maintaining continuity, also highlighted digital divides and varying levels of preparedness across schools and institutions. Nonetheless, this shift accelerated the use of digital tools and strengthened virtual collaboration, providing a valuable lesson in resilience and flexibility.

Monitoring and evaluation findings confirmed that, despite these challenges, programme outcomes were successfully achieved and, in many cases, exceeded. Factors contributing to this success included early and active stakeholder engagement, which ensured strong local ownership of projects, and the establishment of robust bilateral partnerships, which provided access to expertise and innovative practices from donor states.

Key lessons learned include the need for longer implementation periods to enable sustainable educational reform and sufficient time for the integration of project results into institutional and policy frameworks. Greater alignment between project objectives and national education strategies would also strengthen the long-term impact and scalability of outcomes.

Bilateral cooperation emerged as a major driver of innovation and quality improvement. Exchanges with donor state institutions introduced new pedagogical approaches and governance models that enhanced project effectiveness. This experience demonstrated that educational initiatives are most impactful when they combine local ownership with international expertise and are designed to continue beyond the initial funding period.

Overall, the programme highlighted the importance of flexible implementation, strategic alignment with national priorities, and sustained bilateral cooperation as critical elements for ensuring long-term improvements in education, employability, and social inclusion.

Outcome 2: Improved skills and competencies of staff and students involved in blended learning

Amount incurred: € 1,583,748.03

Results

Outcome 2 focused on achieving “Improved skills and competencies of staff and students involved in blended learning”. Under this outcome, one pre-defined project was implemented. More than €1,6 million in funds have been allocated to the project. The Blended learning in vocational education and training project – BlendVET, focused on vocational education and training, where blended learning is a particular challenge for the development of professional competences for students. The objective of the project BlendVET was to improve teaching and

learning practices in blended learning and the exchange of knowledge and good practice with institutions from donor countries. The project was implemented by a consortium of 11 partners, including 3 partners from Norway and 2 from Iceland.

In terms of output level results, the project had three work sections that were interconnected. First, work with school principals and school managers was done on the preparation of school strategies and methods of introducing combined education. In the second part, the focus was on the development of pedagogical and digital competences of teachers and students. The teachers prepared the lesson plans and implemented them in the classroom. The implementation of the lessons was evaluated, and recommendations were prepared for further work. At the end, the school teams developed a set of video and digital learning materials.

Within the project, project partners created 4 intellectual outputs, one of which is the Strategic Model of Introduction of Blended Learning in Vocational Education.

The project also focused on developing [interactive learning materials](#), including videos, augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) and learning games. These materials were designed to provide students with a more dynamic and engaging learning experience. Partner schools and eight additional Slovenian schools have gained access to digital technology and applications for creating and utilising interactive 360° videos, as well as virtual and augmented reality learning materials.

71 members of staff were trained in blended learning methods. 266 students were involved in blended learning. All educational staff and students involved in blended learning demonstrate improved skills and competencies. Cooperating schools received ICT equipment for blended learning.

Within the project partnership, which also brings together five project partners from Donor States, i.e., three from Norway and two from Iceland, very efficient bilateral cooperation was established. Three study visits were carried out, involving a total of 83 staff members from Slovenia, Iceland and Norway. For example, in April 2023, Slovenian project partners hosted partners from Norway and Iceland on a three-day study visit, where they visited three partner schools. A conference on Digital and Innovative was held as part of the study visit. Partners from Slovenia, Norway and Iceland presented to the Slovenian public the possibilities of introducing blended learning in the learning process and didactic-pedagogical approaches that are being tested through combining traditional face-to-face teaching in classroom-based settings with online learning.

In terms of outcome results, 15 institutions are using intellectual outputs created within the project, and 7 institutions have implemented a satisfactory strategic framework for offering blended learning. All 7 Slovene partner schools have prepared their own strategy and action plan for the implementation of blended learning. Another important indicator is related to the quality of institutional cooperation. Based on the questionnaire on the level of satisfaction with the quality of institutional cooperation, which was completed by all 11 project partners, it was found that the level of satisfaction with such cooperation was very high, with a value of 4.6 (out of 5).

All indicator targets under this outcome were achieved as planned or exceeded in some cases. This was also the conclusion of the independent evaluation of the programme.

With a strong commitment to improving the quality of vocational education and training, the BlendVET project holds the potential to significantly impact the future of VET, equipping learners with the essential skills and competencies required for success in the rapidly evolving job market.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Under outcome 1, we have already mentioned the challenges faced during the programme's implementation, which relate to the programme as a whole and are mainly linked to the limited timeframe for project execution, as well as challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Otherwise, we did not face any significant issues in the context of the outcome and the implementation of the pre-defined project.

Given that the project involved 11 partners, the preparation and subsequent management of such a complex project was a significant challenge. The partnership consisted of seven partners from Slovenia, three from Norway and two from Iceland. Despite this challenge, the project was a success because the partners worked well together and had regular, well-planned meetings every month and often online meetings every week. All partners also acted with responsibility and commitment.

Key lessons learned include the need for longer implementation periods to enable sufficient time for the integration of project results into institutional and policy frameworks.

Bilateral cooperation emerged as a major driver of innovation and quality improvement. Exchanges with donor state institutions introduced new pedagogical approaches and governance models that enhanced project effectiveness. This experience demonstrated that educational initiatives are most impactful when they combine local ownership with international expertise and are designed to continue beyond the initial funding period.

Overall, the programme highlighted the importance of flexible implementation, strategic alignment with national priorities, and sustained bilateral cooperation as critical elements for ensuring long-term improvements in education, employability, and social inclusion.

Outcome 3: Education and social environment to support disadvantaged groups improved

Amount incurred: € 3,156,982.12

Results

Under the outcome «Education and social environment to support disadvantaged groups improved», seven projects contributing to education and the social climate for disadvantaged groups have been implemented with a total grant of 3.2 million EUR. These projects have driven the development of innovative solutions to empower young people, reduce unemployment, and foster entrepreneurial and social competencies. The collaborative efforts of the participating organisations and project partners have created lasting positive impacts that will continue to support youth and contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society.

The goal of the output “Support to youth provided” was to improve employment prospects and outcomes of young people in the areas with an underdeveloped support environment. The focus of project activities was on increasing the quality of support services by improving the skills and knowledge of counsellors and mentors working with young people in less dynamic environments, such as smaller towns and rural areas. Under this output, six projects were implemented.

In terms of output results, contracted projects cumulatively developed 14 new or upgraded services, trained more than 400 mentors or counsellors and provided 137 networking, trainings or advisory activities for the young.

The project activities of the [KOR-NET](#) project were based on cooperation between youth organisations, the business world, and educational institutions, which helped to establish the Virtual Youth Incubator of Carinthia and 13 youth workstations across the region. Workshops, camps, seminars and events were organised to develop soft skills and entrepreneurial competencies.

Within the [NEKSTEP](#) project, more than 350 young people took part in the career orientation workshops, preparing themselves for the job market. Special attention was placed on young people considering entrepreneurship, with more than 180 young people taking part in entrepreneurship workshops. A special added value of the project was the training workshops for mentors and counsellors who work with young people, since they have a key role in offering support to young people choosing their career path. The project included refresher training for 50 mentors and counsellors

A key part of the [PoMP](#) project was the PoMP Academy, which provided teachers and mentors from primary and secondary schools with practical tools, methodologies, and training modules for teaching entrepreneurship. The Academy delivered 20 hours of specialised training to 75 teachers from 37 schools. The project led to the implementation of 20 pilot entrepreneurship workshops across the country, involving 379 pupils and 38 teachers. The goal of this training was to enhance the employability and self-employability of young people, while also increasing the competitiveness and flexibility of the workforce.

The aim of Output "Support services for the NEET" was to implement projects that would upgrade existing services or develop new services designed to support NEETs at the local or regional level. Focus was also on developing the skills and knowledge needed by support organisations and their staff for effective outreach, identification, engagement, motivation and activation of NEETs on the ground.

The main objective of the **PreseNEETi se** project was the empowerment and social activation of NEETs (young people aged 15 to 29 who are not in education, employment, or training), contributing to the creation of a supportive and services for NEETs as well as to an improved educational and social environment aimed at supporting disadvantaged groups. A particular focus of the project was on the older age group between 25 and 29 years. The project conducted a detailed analysis of the NEET population in Slovenia and Norway and designed a tailored programme of empowerment and social activation, which included educational workshops, career and psychosocial counselling, and soft skills training. The programme supported 30 NEETs, while 40 mentors participated in a workshop on the innovative mentoring framework created during the project. Mentors were involved in a two-tier mentoring scheme (innovative element of the project). A set of training modules for working with NEETs was also

developed, along with a publication that provided key recommendations, presented during consultations with policymakers.

In terms of outcome level, altogether more than 3,230 young people were included in workshops, trainings or other advisory activities. Another important indicator at the outcome level is the one related to the "Share of involved service providers who declare improved skills". Based on the surveys conducted by the project promoters, with a total of more than 150 respondents, this share was 98,65%, which means that the programme target was exceeded.

Overall, the outcome »Education and social environment to support disadvantaged groups improved« was successfully achieved. This is evidenced by the high quality of completed projects. These projects have driven the development of innovative solutions to empower young people, reduce unemployment, and foster entrepreneurial and social competencies. The collaborative efforts of the participating organisations and project partners have created lasting positive impacts that will continue to support youth and contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

One of the primary difficulties was the limited timeframe for project execution, which constrained the ability to fully embed innovative practices and systemic reforms into the system. While many projects successfully piloted new approaches, extending their impact and institutionalising these practices will require continued investment and policy support beyond the funding period.

The COVID-19 pandemic posed another major challenge, disrupting mobility, delaying activities, and limiting opportunities for face-to-face cooperation and training. Projects had to quickly adapt to online delivery methods, which, while effective in maintaining continuity, also highlighted digital divides and varying levels of preparedness across schools and institutions. Nonetheless, this shift accelerated the use of digital tools and strengthened virtual collaboration, providing a valuable lesson in resilience and flexibility.

Monitoring and evaluation findings confirmed that, despite these challenges, programme outcomes were successfully achieved and, in many cases, exceeded. Factors contributing to this success included early and active stakeholder engagement, which ensured strong local ownership of projects, and the establishment of robust bilateral partnerships, which provided access to expertise and innovative practices from donor states.

Key lessons learned include the need for longer implementation periods to enable sufficient time for the integration of project results into institutional and policy frameworks.

Bilateral cooperation emerged as a major driver of innovation and quality improvement. Exchanges with donor state institutions introduced new pedagogical approaches and governance models that enhanced project effectiveness. This experience demonstrated that educational initiatives are most impactful when they combine local ownership with international expertise and are designed to continue beyond the initial funding period.

Overall, the programme highlighted the importance of flexible implementation, strategic alignment with national priorities, and sustained bilateral cooperation as critical elements for ensuring long-term improvements in education, employability, and social inclusion.

Outcome 4: Improved work-life balance (WLB)

Amount incurred: € 1,865,895.06

Results

The focus of the »Improved work-life balance" outcome was on enhancing the balance between professional and private life for individuals. This was achieved by improving local services and by supporting the development of an organisational culture that promotes reconciliation between work and family life and advocates gender equality.

Three projects were implemented under the Output 4.1: "Local systems established supporting WLB", and one project was related to the Output 4.2: "Organisational culture of work-life balance and gender equality generated".

In the scope of Output 4.1, projects helped to strengthen cooperation between different actors at a local level, facilitate the development of the required knowledge and skills, and implement practical solutions that ensure a better balance between the professional and private dimensions of individuals' lives.

In terms of output level results, all 3 projects together improved or introduced 13 new or upgraded services, products, or tools at the local level and trained 351 professional staff (such as coordinators, mentors, informal carers, animators). As part of the **Balanced project**, the project team has created and published the innovative program connecting creativity and psycho-social content, aiming to strengthen the work-life competencies within the organisations. 4 organisations took part in the innovative program. They trained 30 mentors and connected them into the network. The network of local organisations was launched by the initial meeting, followed by two public events/conferences and two educational workshops about communication skills. Additionally, high-quality childcare was provided, incorporating sustainable education. Within the **IMRO project**, 31 educational trainings were conducted, which included initial training for volunteers, healthcare education for informal caregivers, experiential workshops for working informal caregivers, education for underage informal caregivers, and project team training. Throughout, 277 individuals were included in the training (members of the general and professional public, interest groups, beneficiaries of the day centre model, and company employees). The **TERA project** tackled the challenges of balancing work and private life in rural environments. Through in-house trainings, 44 mentors were prepared to implement the TERA program across the country, reaching 324 participants.

The objective of Output 4.2 was to raise awareness and improve understanding of the importance of work-life balance and gender equality policies in public and private sector organisations, as well as the benefits these policies bring to these organisations.

The PROMETHEUS project addressed the transfer and implementation of good practices to improve work-life balance, focusing on the training and education of employees and managers. The project aimed to establish an organisational structure and culture based on gender equality within organisations.

The project's main goal was to empower employees working from home or on location with reliable measures adapted to different job levels within the participating companies, to facilitate the coordination of professional and private life. The project aimed to raise awareness of work-life balance solutions and improve the management competencies needed to foster gender equality. It also sought to reduce gender stereotypes that contribute to an unequal division of care responsibilities

In detail, more than 800 participants took part in awareness-raising and capacity-building activities in organisations, 4 measures have been taken in the organisations, such as tools, guidelines, etc., to improve work-life balance and gender equality, and 5 actors use gender equality or work-life balance policy instruments. The beneficiaries were employees and managers in the selected companies, with a focus on improving work-life balance and promoting gender equality.

One of the results of the project was also an online platform where employees can find strategies for achieving a harmonious work-life balance. The [online platform PROMETHEUS](#) provides information on work-life balance to employees on one hand and to management in organisations on the other, namely by identifying the starting point of each individual, with a set of actions to encourage progress, and with training modules.

As related to the outcome indicator, **93.65 %** participants declared improved understanding of WLB and gender policies. The analysis was based on completed questionnaires from 1118 participants across the four projects.

A total of 34 institutions involved in projects use gender equality or work-life balance policy instruments. Thus, an integrated training programme to facilitate work-life balance and gender equality was implemented in all five companies of the project PROMETEJ consortium. All participating companies actively use the knowledge they have acquired, as well as gender equality and work-life balance policy instruments. Within the project **IMRO**, the "Compassionate Company" Certificate and its pilot testing were developed. The certificate addresses the needs of working men and women, who are caring for elderly, terminally ill, or chronically ill family members. It raises awareness and provides solutions within companies through educational programmes and tailored measures. Throughout the project, two pilot tests in selected Slovenian companies were conducted and completed, including educational programmes for company decision-makers and the adoption of measures for balancing professional and private life.

Overall, Outcome 4, »Improved work-life balance«, was successfully achieved. This is evidenced by the high quality of completed projects, which together met all the outcome and outputs indicators targets. This was also the conclusion of the independent evaluation of the programme.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Under outcome 1, we have already mentioned the challenges we faced during the programme's implementation, which relate to the programme as a whole and are mainly linked to the limited timeframe for project execution, as well as challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. While many projects successfully piloted new approaches, extending their impact and institutionalising these practices, projects will also require continued investment and policy support beyond the funding period. Monitoring and evaluation findings confirmed that, despite these challenges, programme outcomes were successfully achieved and, in many cases, exceeded. Factors contributing to this success included early and active stakeholder engagement, which ensured strong local ownership of projects, and the establishment of robust bilateral partnerships, which provided access to expertise and innovative practices from donor states.

Key lessons learned include the need for longer implementation periods to enable sufficient time for the integration of project results into institutional and policy frameworks.

Bilateral cooperation emerged as a major driver of innovation and quality improvement. Exchanges with donor state institutions introduced new approaches and governance models that enhanced project effectiveness. This experience demonstrated that project initiatives are most impactful when they combine local ownership with international expertise and are designed to continue beyond the initial funding period.

Overall, the programme highlighted the importance of flexible implementation, strategic alignment with national priorities, and sustained bilateral cooperation as critical elements for ensuring long-term improvements in work-life balance for employed women and men.

Outcome 5: Improved skills for good governance and cooperation in the provision of child victim services

Amount incurred: € 1,422,973.34

Results

Outcome 5 addressed the improvement of good governance and cooperation skills in the provision of child victim services. Under this outcome, one pre-defined project was implemented. More than €1,5 million in funds have been allocated to the project.

The general goal of the project was to provide child-friendly justice in accordance with EU directives and to improve interagency cooperation in processes and procedures concerning the treatment of abused children according to the Barnahus model.

In terms of output-level results, the **first Children's House in Slovenia** was established, where children are interviewed once to gather evidence, in child-friendly premises with crisis support and psychosocial counsellors always available. The premises were renovated and furnished in 2022. The Icelandic Barnahus was the model that provided inspiration and guidance in the creation of the Slovenian counterpart.

The premises of the Children's House in Ljubljana were officially opened on 27 May 2022. The event received a lot of media attention, partly due to the presence of high-level guests.

As trained professionals are a prerequisite for adequate treatment in the Barnahus Children's House, the project has implemented **16 training programmes**. Various groups of professionals were trained in different locations, both in Slovenia and abroad. The training included forensic interviewing, crisis support and psychosocial support, and other professional areas. Within the framework of these programmes, the project has trained a total of **671 professionals** to better deal with abused children, including 350 professionals from the Centre for Social Work, 250 school counsellors and dozens of judges, prosecutors and lawyers.

An important part of the project also included activities aimed at raising awareness among the relevant institutions, target groups, and the public about the problem and the availability of assistance for children, witnesses, and victims of crime. For example, in November 2023, an expert conference was held to raise awareness about the inclusion of children in the Children's House, in which both domestic and foreign experts participated, and the event was also reported in the media.

Three awareness-raising campaigns were also carried out, reaching more than 100,000 people. Information leaflets were produced for the users of the Children's House – specifically for children, parents and courts. To raise awareness about the Children's House and the project, various promotional materials were also produced.

Overall, all indicator targets under this output were achieved as planned or exceeded in some cases.

In terms of outcome-level results, a total of **102 children** were treated in Children's House during the project implementation. During the interview, contact between the child victim and the perpetrator, who enters from another location, is prevented. At the Children's House, the child is interviewed by a specially trained professional, and the entire staff is always there to make the child feel as comfortable as possible.

Another important result at the outcome level is related to the professional staff who declared improved skills and competencies. Surveys were carried out among the participants at the end of the training programs, which were held in different locations, to determine whether they had learned anything new and improved their competencies during the training. Most participants, **90%, reported an improvement in their knowledge after the training.**

Overall, Outcome 5, »Improved skills for good governance and cooperation in the provision of child victim services«, was successfully achieved, which is shown by both quantitative and qualitative indicators. The Children's House has a legal basis for the Barnahus model of holistic treatment of children, which ensures the sustainability of the project's results. The latter already have and will always have wider social implications. Not only is there a greater awareness of child sexual abuse, but a key social impact of this project is that the subject is no longer taboo in society. The project ensures that child victims receive the most appropriate treatment, thereby preventing or at least reducing the trauma, while also ensuring that children are not re-victimised.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Under outcome 1, we have already mentioned the challenges we faced during the programme's implementation, which relate to the programme as a whole, and are mainly linked to the limited timeframe for project execution, as well as challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the start of the implementation of the pre-defined project, we faced minor delays in certain project activities, as a newly established institution had to be brought into the partnership after the project had already begun. Namely, Child Protection in Criminal Proceedings and Comprehensive Treatment of Children in the Children's House Act came into force approximately two months after the start of the pre-defined project Children's House/Barnahus. The act stipulates that the comprehensive treatment of juvenile victims and witnesses is a public service provided by the state. This public service is provided in a special public institution called the Children's House. Since some activities regarding the establishment of the new legal entity were taking more time than anticipated (Covid-19, changes within the project promoters' organisation and bureaucratic delays), some project-related activities, especially the pilot operation of the Barnahus, took longer than planned. In response, the Programme Operator extended the duration of the project.

Certain challenges in the project's final report were also reported by the project promoter (the Ministry of Justice). During the implementation of the project, the most significant challenge has been the length of the Ministry's public procurement procedures, which were taking far too long. However, as the project promoter delegated the execution of these contracts to another service within the Ministry, there were often communication gaps. Consequently, the result (the execution of the contract) was not the best possible.

Key lessons learned include the need for longer implementation periods, which would allow sufficient time for project implementation.

Bilateral Outcome: Enhanced collaboration between the Slovene and Donor States institutions involved in the programme

Results

The Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills – HK-dir and the National Agency for International Education Affairs – AIBA from Liechtenstein participated in the programme as Donor Programme Partners (DPPs). Both DPPs played an important and active role in both the project selection and project implementation phases. DPP members participated in the Selection Committee meetings and, thanks to their knowledge and expertise, made a significant contribution to the selection of the best projects. Moreover, the DPP and the PO strengthened bilateral relations through several meetings, including the Cooperation Committee meetings. These meetings were an excellent opportunity to discuss open issues regarding the implementation of the programme and to exchange experience and opinion.

Bilateral partnerships were also strongly encouraged in the Call for Proposals. This was achieved by actively encouraging applicants to include bilateral partners from donor states in their projects, and by awarding additional project points to those projects that included bilateral partners.

Thus, **22** (21 projects selected under the Call for Proposals and one pre-defined project) **of the 24 projects** in the programme were implemented in cooperation with a donor project partner from Donor States. The experience of the Project Promoters with the Donor Project Partners has generally been positive.

The involvement of the Donor Project Partners in the projects was primarily in the transfer of new practices and broadening of horizons, study visits, and they were an important source of feedback, assisted in organisation and provided feedback on the work.

Overall, the average level of satisfaction with the partnerships was 6.48 out of 7, which is very high. Many projects reported that the partnership added value in terms of specific expertise. Donor Project Partners played a critical role in transferring knowledge and good practices. The Donor Project Partners contributed specialised knowledge, innovative solutions, and practices that were not readily available to Slovenian beneficiaries. Without this contribution, projects might have been less effective or required greater effort to source expertise locally. This was especially true for learning specific methods from their experience. Study visits to Donor States' institutions provided Slovenian project partners with direct insight into educational methods, which proved invaluable for implementation in the local context.

Very efficient project-level bilateral cooperation can be found under the project Blended Learning in Vocational Education and Training (BlendVET), which brings together five project partners from Donor States, i.e., three from Norway and two from Iceland. The partners from Iceland and Norway contributed their expertise and extensive experience both in regular meetings and in the development of intellectual outputs. Through their commitment, they contributed to the overall success of the project. In April 2024, project partners visited several partners and other educational institutions in [Iceland](#).

The inclusion of a Donor Project Partner, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology - Faculty of Humanities (NTNU), was crucial for the success of the "Talent Lab" project. It brought valuable expertise, enhanced credibility and visibility, provided essential training and capacity building, facilitated networking and collaboration, and ensured the sustainability and scalability of the project outcomes. The main bilateral-level results include improved knowledge, enhanced understanding and valuable experiences gained through the exchange of good practices during 2 study visits in Norway and Slovenia. Based on this, institutions gained valuable insights into the educational system and the economic and demographic situation of both countries and consequently strengthened their competencies. The bilateral partnership not only enriched the project with innovative approaches and global perspectives but also laid a strong foundation for the continuous support and development of youth employment initiatives in the Pomurje region.

Projects also reported a high level of trust (6.72 out of 7) between partners. This shows that partners were able to work collaboratively. In some cases, this indicates that the partnership may remain sustainable beyond the duration of the programme.

The IMRO project greatly benefited from the involvement of a Donor Project Partner, who contributed valuable knowledge, skills, and expertise to the project implementation, especially in the development of the "Compassionate Company" certificate and in preparing the study on two developed models of integrated care for the elderly. The donor partner brought an international perspective, providing a broader understanding of challenges and solutions on a global scale. This was particularly evident at the project's final dissemination conference,

where the Donor Project Partner presented statistical data from Norway highlighting the need for a more organised approach to informal caregiving. Both the Slovenian and Norwegian partners plan to continue their bilateral collaboration. They are actively working together and communicating regularly to ensure the project's sustainability.

Overall, the bilateral outcome was achieved. This is demonstrated by the high quality of bilateral cooperation in most of the projects, which collectively achieved all the targeted outcome and output indicators. Projects improved bilateral relations between Slovenia and the Donor countries, fostering knowledge exchange and establishing lasting partnerships, which project partners noted as a foundation for future collaborations.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

In the context of bilateral cooperation, no major challenges were encountered during the programme's implementation. However, COVID-19 restrictions initially affected the development of strong working relationships with the Donor Programme Partner and potential Donor Project Partners early in the programme implementation period. Programme Partners faced greater difficulty meeting in person for Cooperation Committee meetings and other events, which partially impacted the planned announcement of the open call. In response to these circumstances, the Programme Operator decided to move a significant number of meetings and workshops to the Teams platform. While this approach proved useful for advancing the programme, it was less effective than fostering face-to-face relationships with partners.

Due to the constraints mentioned above, it was not possible to organise a live matchmaking seminar at the time of launching the call for proposals to connect potential Slovenian partners with partners from the donor states. In response, the Programme operator created a Facebook group to facilitate the identification of project partners from Slovenia and the donor countries. Additionally, the DPP provided active support in identifying potential project partners for Slovenian beneficiaries and participated actively in the online workshop for beneficiaries held after the publication of the Call for Proposals.

According to the evaluation report, while many projects highlighted the role of the Donor Project Partners, some also encountered challenges in cooperation. First, the involvement of a Donor Project Partner was considered necessary; it was perceived as essential for successful project selection. Second, in some cases, the Donor Project Partners did not necessarily fulfil their responsibilities in the projects. Issues included unresponsiveness, inactivity during project implementation, and limited adaptability to the specific needs of Slovenian project partners. Some also noted a perception of dominance by the Donor Project Partners and a lack of in-depth understanding of the projects when providing feedback. Although many projects achieved positive outcomes, the limited engagement of some DPPs reduced the potential benefits of collaboration. Additional challenges were observed in administration, particularly regarding reporting practices. Some DPPs were unfamiliar with the programme's reporting rules and occasionally submitted reports in their preferred formats.

In one case, the partnership with a partner from Norway was a bit problematic; the Programme Operator has therefore requested the assistance and support of a DPP to resolve the outstanding issues within this project. After the DPP's intervention, the cooperation continued, and the project was completed.

IRREGULARITIES

Case Id	Reporting level	Nature of irregularity	Case opened	Status	Estimated final input to the FMO for cases not closed	Decision	Amount of financial correction
IR 33	SI-EDUCATION	Error in the financial report	26/08/2020	Closed	-	Irregularity remedied. No further action needed. Amount linked to irregularity paid back/deducted from the payment.	€ 2,963.00
IR 302	SI-EDUCATION-0001	Deviation from public procurement rules/principles	20/02/2024	Closed	-	Project grant amount reduced. Amount linked to irregularity paid back/deducted from the payment.	€ 6,896.05
IR 406	SI-EDUCATION-0014	Deviation from the project contract	28/11/2024	Ongoing	04.2025	-	€ 9,101.28

SUMMARY OF PROJECTS

		Number of projects contracted	Number of projects completed	Project grant contracted (EEA/Norway Grant + national co-financing)	Project grant incurred (EEA/Norway Grant + national co-financing)	Project Eligible Expenditure contracted (Includes project co-financing)	Project Eligible Expenditure incurred (Includes project co-financing)
Outcome 1: Improved institutional cooperation at all levels of education (formal and informal)	Pre-defined	0	0	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00
	Contracted through open calls	11	11	€ 6,063,861.90	€ 5,913,620.58	€ 6,025,818.39	€ 6,023,734.60
	Contracted through small grants scheme	0	0	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00
	Total Outcome 1	11	11	€ 6,063,861.90	€ 5,913,620.58	€ 6,025,818.39	€ 6,023,734.60
Outcome 2: Improved skills and competencies of staff and students involved in blended learning	Pre-defined	1	1	€ 1,607,844.00	€ 1,583,748.03	€ 1,583,748.03	€ 1,583,748.03
	Contracted through open calls	0	0	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00
	Contracted through small grants scheme	0	0	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00
	Total Outcome 2	1	1	€ 1,607,844.00	€ 1,583,748.03	€ 1,583,748.03	€ 1,583,748.03
Outcome 3: Education and social environment to support disadvantaged groups improved	Pre-defined	0	0	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00
	Contracted through open calls	7	7	€ 3,235,293.99	€ 3,156,982.12	€ 3,156,982.12	€ 3,156,982.12
	Contracted through small grants scheme	0	0	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00
	Total Outcome 3	7	7	€ 3,235,293.99	€ 3,156,982.12	€ 3,156,982.12	€ 3,156,982.12
Outcome 4: Improved work-life balance (WLB)	Pre-defined	0	0	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00
	Contracted through open calls	4	4	€ 1,997,261.01	€ 1,865,895.06	€ 1,872,406.35	€ 1,865,895.06
	Contracted through small grants scheme	0	0	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00
	Total Outcome 4	4	4	€ 1,997,261.01	€ 1,865,895.06	€ 1,872,406.35	€ 1,865,895.06
Outcome 5: Improved skills for good governance and cooperation in the provision of child victim services	Pre-defined	1	1	€ 1,563,588.00	€ 1,422,973.34	€ 1,422,973.34	€ 1,422,973.34
	Contracted through open calls	0	0	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00
	Contracted through small grants scheme	0	0	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00
	Total Outcome 5	1	1	€ 1,563,588.00	€ 1,422,973.34	€ 1,422,973.34	€ 1,422,973.34
Total programme costs (Excluding programme management costs)		24	24	€ 14,467,848.90	€ 13,943,219.13	€ 14,061,928.23	€ 14,053,333.15

FINAL BALANCE

Overview of programme expenditure

Programme area (PA)	Budget Heading	EEA Grants	Norway Grants	Total grant	Programme eligible expenditure	EEA Grants contribution incurred	Norway Grants contribution incurred	Total grant contribution incurred	Programme co-financing incurred	Total eligible expenditure incurred
PA03	Programme management	€ 116,666.00	€ 933,334.00	€ 1,050,000.00	€ 1,235,294.12	€ 63,645.67	€ 509,168.62	€ 572,814.29	€ 101,084.87	€ 673,899.16
PA03	Outcome 1: Improved institutional cooperation at all levels of education (formal and informal) (Norway Grants)	-	€ 5,154,283.00	€ 5,154,283.00	€ 6,063,862.35	-	€ 5,026,577.49	€ 5,026,577.49	€ 887,043.09	€ 5,913,620.58
PA03	Outcome 2: Improved skills and competencies of staff and students involved in blended learning (EEA Grants)	€ 1,366,667.00	-	€ 1,366,667.00	€ 1,607,843.53	€ 1,346,185.83	-	€ 1,346,185.83	€ 237,562.20	€ 1,583,748.03
PA03	Outcome 3: Education and social environment to support disadvantaged groups improved (Norway Grants)	-	€ 2,750,000.00	€ 2,750,000.00	€ 3,235,294.12	-	€ 2,683,434.80	€ 2,683,434.80	€ 473,547.32	€ 3,156,982.12

PA04	Outcome 4: Improved work-life balance (WLB) (Norway Grants)	-	€ 1,700,000.00	€ 1,700,000.00	€ 2,000,000.00	-	€ 1,586,010.80	€ 1,586,010.80	€ 279,884.26	€ 1,865,895.06
PA16	Outcome 5: Improved skills for good governance and cooperation in the provision of child victim services (Norway Grants)	-	€ 1,329,050.00	€ 1,329,050.00	€ 1,563,588.24	-	€ 1,209,527.34	€ 1,209,527.34	€ 213,446.00	€ 1,422,973.34
	Total	€	€	€	€	€	€	€	€	€
		1,483,333.00	11,866,667.00	13,350,000.00	15,705,882.36	1,409,831.50	11,014,719.05	12,424,550.55	2,192,567.74	14,617,118.29

Description of budget spending

Programme management

During the programme implementation, the funds under programme management were used to carry out the tasks of the Programme Operator. The costs of implementing the programme included employee-related expenses, travel costs, the organisation of events and workshops, fees for external experts (e.g., external experts for project application quality assessment), equipment costs, and other administrative costs. Due to a combination of circumstances (including difficulties in recruiting personnel, the impact of COVID-19, and the non-implementation of the Small Grants Scheme), a significant proportion of the allocated funds remained unused. A large share of the funds had been earmarked for employee salaries. During the programme's implementation, the Programme Operator was understaffed for the majority of the period (due to resignations of employees, challenges or delays in additional recruitment). Additional staff were only recruited in 2023 and 2024, which resulted in lower-than-planned expenditure. Many activities during the pandemic restrictions were conducted online, which further contributed to the underutilisation of funds (e.g., organisation of the kick-off event, workshops for applicants, and participation of the Programme Operator in Cooperation Committee meetings, etc.). Furthermore, a portion of the programme management funds was assigned to the Small Grants Scheme Fund Operator, however, following the Fund Operator's withdrawal from the implementation of the scheme, most of the funds earmarked for the management of the scheme remained unused.

Outcome 1: Improved institutional cooperation at all levels of education (formal and informal) (Norway Grants)

Within the framework of the outcome, funds were disbursed for eligible expenditures in accordance with the co-financing rate to 11 projects that were implemented within the given outcome. The realisation of disbursements amounted to more than 97% of the total available funds.

Outcome 2: Improved skills and competencies of staff and students involved in blended learning (EEA Grants)

Within the framework of the outcome, funds were disbursed for eligible expenditures in accordance with the co-financing rate to the pre-defined project. The realisation of disbursements amounted to more than 98% of the total available funds.

Outcome 3: Education and social environment to support disadvantaged groups improved (Norway Grants)

Within the framework of the outcome, funds were disbursed for eligible expenditures in accordance with the co-financing rate to 7 projects that were implemented within the given outcome. The realisation of disbursements amounted to more than 97% of the total available funds.

Outcome 4: Improved work-life balance (WLB) (Norway Grants)

Within the framework of the outcome, funds were disbursed for eligible expenditures in accordance with the co-financing rate to 4 projects that were implemented within the given outcome. The realisation of disbursements amounted to more than 93% of the total available funds. One project has a realisation rate of less than 85%, due to lower spending by one partner and a reduced grant rate resulting from the State Aid rules.

Outcome 5: Improved skills for good governance and cooperation in the provision of child victim services (Norway Grants)

Within the framework of the outcome, funds were disbursed for eligible expenditures in accordance with the co-financing rate to the pre-defined project. The realisation of disbursements amounted to more than 91% of the total available funds. The project promoter – the Ministry of Justice had some challenges with the length of the Ministry's public procurement procedures, which were taking far too long. As the project promoter delegated the execution of these contracts to another service within the Ministry, there were often communication gaps. Consequently, the result (the execution of the contract) was not the best possible. As a result, some expenditures were declared ineligible, or irregularities were identified by the Audit Authority.

Calculation of the final balance

	EEA Grants	Norway Grants	Total
Total reported eligible expenditure of the programme			
Total eligible expenditure incurred	€ 1,658,625.29	€ 12,958,493.00	€ 14,617,118.29
(-) Total (national) programme co-financing incurred (15.00 % rate)	€ 248,793.79	€ 1,943,773.95	€ 2,192,567.74
(=) Total grant contribution incurred (85.00 % grant rate)	€ 1,409,831.50	€ 11,014,719.05	€ 12,424,550.55
Amounts to be deducted from the total grant contribution¹			
(-) Total advance and interim payments to the programme from the Donors	€ 1,437,809.72	€ 11,502,476.76	€ 12,940,286.48
(-) Any co-financing from sources other than the Donors/national ²	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00
(-) Total interest earned reported	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00
Final balance			
(=) Final balance payable to the Programme Operator	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00
(=) Final balance payable to the Donors	€ 27,978.22	€ 487,757.71	€ 515,735.93

¹ Any funds reimbursed from Project Promoters to the Programme Operator, not paid to other projects or reimbursed to the FMO (ref. Article 9.4.1(b)(iv) of the Regulation should be reported as negative adjustments in the Financial report for the last reporting period (Annex 1). In this case, such funds will be subtracted from the "Total eligible expenditure incurred" of the programme.

² For example, financing from EU structural funds or other EU sources, from the Swiss contribution, etc. This row includes only the financing incurred during the programme eligibility period.