

International Steering Committee for the Process of Deinstitutionalization in Slovenia

Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia for Deinstitutionalization in Social Protection for the period 2024-2034 (StaDI 2024–2034)

Introduction

In accordance with the *Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia for Deinstitutionalization in Social Care for the period 2024–2034* (hereinafter: **StaDI 2024–2034**), the Ministry of Solidarity-Based Future established the International Steering Committee in December 2024. The Committee was formed to provide professional support to the deinstitutionalization process and to ensure international oversight of key processes, documents, and results arising from the transformation of institutional care.

The task of the International Steering Committee is to monitor the implementation of StaDI 2024–2034 and ensure the efficient use of funds allocated for deinstitutionalization. In carrying out this role, the Committee provides independent expert advice to stakeholders involved in deinstitutionalization and guidance in the transition from institutional care to community-based support. Its objective is to contribute to improving the quality of life of users and to advancing and safeguarding their human rights.

The International Steering Committee performs its tasks in accordance with international human rights documents and standards that promote equality and rights for persons with disabilities, including the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989)¹, the *Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities* (1993)², the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2006)³, the *Common European Guidelines on the Transition from Institutional to*

¹ Convention on the Rights of the Child. (1989). Adopted 20 November 1989 by the United Nations General Assembly; entered into force 2 September 1990. <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention>

² Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. (1993). United Nations. <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/gadocs/standardrules.pdf>

³ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2006). Adopted 13 December 2006 by the United Nations General Assembly; entered into force 3 May 2008. <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

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Opening doors for
equal rights.

Community-Based Care (2012)⁴, *General Comment No. 5 on Article 19 of the CRPD* (2017)⁵, and *StaDI 2024–2034*⁶. The Committee ensures that its recommendations are aligned with internationally recognised best practices in deinstitutionalization.

Members of the International Steering Committee act independently and autonomously. The Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Social Welfare (hereinafter: IRSSV) provides coordination support within the European project *Centre for Deinstitutionalization Steering*. IRSSV ensures the regular organisation of Committee meetings, held at least four times per year, with two meetings taking place in person. The in-person meetings follow a five-day programme focused on providing direct support to stakeholders involved in the deinstitutionalization process in accordance with *StaDI 2024–2034*.

The members of the International Steering Committee perform their work independently and autonomously. The Social Protection Institute of the Republic of (hereinafter: **IRSSV**) provides coordination support and facilitates the Committee's activities within the European project *Centre for Deinstitutionalisation Steering*. IRSSV ensures the regular organisation of Committee meetings, which take place at least four times per year, of which two are held in person. The in-person meetings follow a five-day programme dedicated to providing direct support to stakeholders involved in deinstitutionalisation in accordance with *StaDI 2024–2034*.

Members of the International Steering Committee

The international Steering Committee includes six experts, among whom are:

- **Jan Pfeiffer**, one of the leading experts and advocates of mental health reform and deinstitutionalization in the Czech Republic and across Europe. Dr. Pfeiffer has been involved in projects transforming care for people with disabilities in many European countries. He is also the founder of the European Expert Group on Deinstitutionalization and one of the authors of the European Guidelines on Deinstitutionalization. He has been a member of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Committee against Torture and Ill-Treatment of the Council of Europe.

⁴ Common European Guidelines on the Transition from Institutional to Community-Based Care. (2012). European Expert Group on the transition from institutional to community-based care (EEG). <https://deinstitutionalisation.com/eeg-publications/>

⁵ General Comment No. 5 on Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2017). Adopted 29 August 2017 by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=4&DocTypeID=11

⁶ *StaDI 2024–2034 – Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia for Deinstitutionalization in Social Care (2024–2034)*. (2024). Government of the Republic of Slovenia. [Strategija-RS-za-deinstitucionalizacijo-v-socialnem-varstvu-za-obdobje-2024-2034.pdf](https://www.gov.si/assets/strategija-rs-za-deinstitucionalizacijo-v-socialnem-varstvu-za-obdobje-2024-2034.pdf) (gov.si)

- **Nic Crosby**, currently leading the development of intensive, personalized support for people in the most complex life situations in the United Kingdom. He has years of experience providing user-centred support based on personal planning and individual financing. He has practical experience both in working with adults in complex life situations and in the early intervention of children and young people.
- **Dragica Fojan** has over 26 years of experience in social welfare, including 20 years in leadership positions. She has worked in both the non-governmental and public sectors as the director of VDC Koper, coordinator of the regional service for domestic violence cases, and as president of the council during the pilot deinstitutionalization project at the Kras Home. She has extensive experience in multidisciplinary cooperation, planning and implementing community programs, and introducing new working methods. She is well-versed in social welfare legislation, program networks, and public institution management.
- **Assist. Matej Vinko**, MD, specialist in public health, focuses on mental health epidemiology. He is the head of the Mental Health Centre at the National Institute of Public Health (NIJZ), head of the National Mental Health Program 2018-2028, and an assistant professor at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Ljubljana. He is a specialist in public mental health and has extensive experience in management, organization, and planning of mental health prevention. He is the editor-in-chief of the Public Health journal, participates in the establishment and monitoring of mental health centres across Slovenia, and leads various awareness campaigns in the field of mental health.
- **Emir Okanović** is the President of the Sonček Federation, the first president with a disability, with advocacy experience for an inclusive society. He is also a member of the Council for People with Disabilities of the Republic of Slovenia. He participates in training external collaborators and partially covers international activities. In his career, he has been active in various projects, trainings, and conferences. As a user, he has significant experience with life in institutions and outside them. He actively contributes to shaping policies and strategies for people with disabilities through the Council for People with Disabilities of Slovenia. He works in the disability enterprise Skrbovin'ca, where he is employed as a promoter-informer and unit leader.
- **Sam Smith** is the founder and executive director of the non-profit organization C-Change Scotland, which supports people with disabilities in living independently and integrating into the community. In Scotland, she played a key role in closing large institutions such as Lennox Castle Hospital, one of the largest institutions for people with learning difficulties in the UK. Her work focused on transitioning users from institutional care to community-based services, advocating for tailored services that respect autonomy and individual rights. She has made a significant contribution to the development of policies supporting independent living and social justice for people with disabilities.

Activities of the International Steering Committee

In 2025, the members of the International Steering Committee visited Slovenia twice: from 24 to 28 March and from 29 September to 3 October.

The first study visit took place between 24 and 28 March 2025. During this visit, the members met with the Social Care Institution Hrastovec, several non-governmental organisations, the Ministry of Solidarity-Based Future, and IRSSV. After the field visit, the International Steering Committee prepared a set of recommendations, which are available on the IRSSV DI website ([link](#)).

During the second study visit, held between 29 September and 3 October 2025, the members met with non-governmental organisations (Ozara Slovenija and Zavod RISA), social care institutions (CUDV Draga, Hrastovec Institute), healthcare institutions (the Adult Mental Health Centre Logatec and the University Psychiatric Clinic Ljubljana – Polje), the Centre for Social Work Ljubljana, representatives of parents of persons with disabilities, and the Municipality of Radlje ob Dravi. The visit concluded with a meeting at the Ministry of Solidarity-Based Future.