

Practices of cooperation, coordination

Slovenia

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Media and Information Literacy project (*Medijska in informacijska pismenosti – MiPi*)

One of the most promising examples of horizontal cooperation amongst different human rights structures is the [Media and Information Literacy project](#) (*Medijska in informacijska pismenosti – MiPi*), managed by the Agency for Communication Networks and Services of the Republic of Slovenia (*Agencija za komunikacijska omrežja in storitve Republike Slovenije - AKOS*). MiPi covers the themes of media literacy, information literacy, internet safety, children and the media, and inappropriate content (like cyberbullying or online sexual abuse) with [the aim of](#) 'raising awareness among the general public about the importance of critical and informed use of media content and information technologies.' To communicate its message with the relevant audience, the MiPi project publishes thematic reports, recommendations, information leaflets, and news articles that cover the themes MiPi hopes to address. The MiPi project is particularly interesting from the perspective of interactions and cooperation amongst different human rights structures as it brings together horizontally many [different project partners](#). Working on MiPi as statutory bodies are AKOS, the Information Commissioner, the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (*Statistični urad Republike Slovenije*), and the Ombudsman for the Rights of Viewers and Listeners of RTV Slovenia. Also participating are administrative bodies, such as the Slovenian Computer Emergency Response Team (*Nacionalni odzivni center za kibernetsko varnost SI-CERT*), and civil society organisations and structures, many of which are funded through public funds by the competent ministries: the Association of Consumers of Slovenia (*Zveza potrošnikov Slovenije*), the Web Eye Hotline (*Spletno oko*), the Awareness Center Safe.si (*Točka osveščanja Safe.si*), the TOM Telefon Helpline (*Telefon za otroke in mladostnike*), LOGOUT: Centre for Digital Wellbeing (*LOGOUT: Center pomoči pri prekomerni rabi interneta*), or the Media.Literacy.si project (*Medijska.pismenost.si*). The MiPi project also includes elements of vertical cooperation amongst human rights mechanisms and structures: not only are many of the aforementioned partners also financed through EU funds, but the MiPi project is also partnered with international civil society organisations, such as the European Association for Viewers Interests (EAVI).

Human Rights Ombudsman (*Varuh človekovih pravic*)

Another example of positive structured cooperation and embeddedness into national and international human rights structures is the Human Rights Ombudsman (*Varuh človekovih pravic*). Domestically, the Ombudsman is entangled with the executive and the legislative branch, independent statutory human rights bodies, and the civil society. This is reflected in the pluralist makeup of the [Human Rights Ombudsman](#)

[Council](#), which is the Ombudsman's consultative body. It consults the Ombudsman on matters within its competence and is composed of 16 members. Following a public competition, the Ombudsman appoints seven representatives of civil society and three representatives of science who are experts in the field of protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, whereby no more than two representatives of civil society and no more than one representative of science may be appointed from among persons who did not apply to the public competition. Upon a proposal of the relevant authority, the Ombudsman also appoints two representatives of the Government and one representative of the Advocate of the Principle of Equality, the Information Commissioner, the National Assembly, and the National Council from among their respective employees who are not officials and are experts in the field of the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.¹ Through the Council, these stakeholders advise and structurally interact with the Ombudsman directly. Inversely, the Ombudsman closes the feedback loop by affecting new human rights policies or working towards changes of existing human rights policies through exercising its mandate and its competencies, be it in cooperation with state authorities or the civil society. The Ombudsman also cooperates with civil society in implementing the activities of the National Preventive Mechanism, as set out in national legislation.² Internationally, the Ombudsman is an [active member of many organisations](#), such as the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI), the Association of Mediterranean Ombudsmen (AOM), the Children's Rights Ombudsmen Network in South-East Europe (CRONSEE), the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC), the National Preventive Mechanisms for South-East Europe (SEE NPM), the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), and the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI). This structural embeddedness of the Ombudsman is largely a consequence of the existence of (and the Ombudsman's continuous attempts to adhere to) specific international standards on NHRIs and Ombudspersons. Most notable are Principles Relating to the Status of National Human Rights Institutions ('the Paris Principles') that require the independence of NHRI, their multifaceted pluralist makeup and functioning, and their cooperation with the three branches of government, the civil society, and other international human rights

¹ Slovenia, [Human Rights Ombudsman Act](#) (*Zakon o varuhu človekovih pravic*), 20 December 1993 and subsequent modifications, Art. 50a.

² Slovenia, [Act of Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#) (*Zakon o ratifikaciji Opcijskega protokola h Konvenciji proti mučenju in drugim krutim, nečloveškim ali poniževalnim kaznim ali ravnanju*), Art. 5.

bodies.³ Also influential are the ‘Venice Principles’⁴ of the Venice Commission, which the Ombudsman has referred to recently when advocating for statutory changes that would bring the statutory framework governing the Ombudsman more in line with these international and European standards.⁵

Multistakeholder cooperation in tackling a pressing societal issue – hate speech

The third example of positive practice of cooperation and synergies is multistakeholder cooperation in tackling a pressing societal issue – hate speech encompassing hateful comments and other types of derogatory verbal attacks on political opponents, active members of civil society, and “fake” social media accounts. In the last decade, hate speech online has been discussed by various actors, e.g. academics, politicians, journalists, CSOs, and from multiple perspectives, e.g. legal and computer science perspectives. This intertwining net of perspectives on how to tackle hateful comments online was reflected in the establishment of the Strategic Council for the Prevention of Hate Speech (*Strateški svet za preprečevanje sovražnega govora*) in March 2023.⁶ The Prime Minister established⁷ the Council with relevant remit, as its key tasks were to monitor hate speech in Slovenia and at the EU level and to propose actions to prevent it; to advise on the development of policies, changes to regulations and other measures that will contribute to more effective prevention of hate speech; and to contribute to the development of proposals for systemic changes and a model for a network of campaigns and training at both regional and national level. At its inception, a crucial message was sent to the public, i.e. that in Slovenia hate speech very often

³ United Nations (UN), General Assembly, Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions (The Paris Principles), GA Resolution 48/134 of 20 December 1993.

⁴ Council of Europe, European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission), Principles on the protection and promotion of the ombudsman institution, CDL-AD(2019)005.

⁵ Slovenia, Human rights ombudsman, [30 years after the adoption of the human rights ombudsman act it is time for the act to be updated according to international standards](#), press release, 20 December 2023.

⁶ The Cabinet of the Prime Minister (*Kabinet predsednika Vlade RS*). Strategic Council for the Prevention of Hate Speech ([Strateški svet za preprečevanje sovražnega govora](#)), Accessed on 26 February 2024.

⁷ Slovenia, Act establishing and appointing members of the Strategic Council for the Prevention of Hate Speech ([Akt o ustanovitvi in imenovanju članov Strateškega sveta za preprečevanje sovražnega govora](#)), no. 013-7/2023/7, 17 March 2023.

stems from the elected representatives of the people and other public figures and not from the “ordinary” people.⁸ The membership of the Strategic Council was selected carefully to include active and vocal members of civil society organisations, legal experts, researchers with expertise in media regulation, and relevant governmental bodies, e.g. several ministries and the Advocate of the Principle of Equality. The Strategic Council produced several reports on various aspects of hate speech and issued final recommendations for preventing hate speech.⁹ The latter includes 57 Slovenia-specific recommendations and corresponding responsible bodies, e.g. the Ministry of Digital Transformation, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Justice.

⁸ The analysis of the totality of 10-years of Twitter posts in Slovenia revealed the political parties' role in the steep rise of hateful fake accounts. See Evkoski, B.; Mozetič, I.; Ljubešić, N.; Kralj Novak, P. (2020). Evolution of political polarization on Slovenian Twitter. In: Benito, R. M. (ed.). Complex networks 2020, pp. 343-345.

⁹ Slovenia, Strategic Council for the Prevention of Hate Speech (*Strateški svet za preprečevanje sovražnega govora*), Recommendations to prevent hate speech ([*Priporočila za preprečevanje sovražnega govora*](#)), no date.