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Motivations, experiences and consequences of returns and readmissions policy: revealing and developing effective alternatives



National Summary Report

Experiences, expectations and views of migrants and professionals in the field around RR and alternative policies

Case Study: **Slovenia**

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Project Number: 101094107



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This document provides a concise summary of the key findings of **MORE Project WP5 in Slovenia**. For detailed analysis, evidence, and comprehensive insights, please refer to the full report. The information in this summary should not be considered complete or fully representative of the entire study.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.18223696

Publication date:

September 2025

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Introduction

The WP5 report for Slovenia examines the precarious living conditions, legal uncertainties, and structural challenges faced by migrants in Slovenia, a country functioning primarily as a transit zone due to restrictive migration policies. Irregular migrants in Slovenia often live in precarious conditions marked by fear of deportation, which shapes their daily lives and decisions. Many are housed in asylum centers with limited privacy and strained interpersonal relations due to overcrowding. Access to healthcare is restricted to emergency services, with pro bono clinics filling critical gaps for the uninsured. Substance abuse is prevalent, yet support is insufficient. Although employment is permitted after three months since 2023, exploitation and the threat of deportation remain common. While access to education exists, it is underemphasized. Public officials often lack knowledge of migrants’ rights, and cultural mediators are critically needed.

Migrants maintain connections with family primarily through internet applications, though prolonged separation often alters family dynamics and weakens relationship quality. The Dublin Regulation has caused some to lose contact with loved ones while in transit. In Slovenia, migrants rely heavily on the social networks they manage to build, including friends or distant relatives, yet these are often fragile and insufficient. Securing stable support remains difficult due to legal, economic, and institutional barriers. Although family unity is a fundamental right, in practice it is frequently subordinated to the state’s sovereign control over migration, undermining migrants’ social and emotional stability.

Migrants’ mobility is heavily constrained by their legal status; many asylum seekers are restricted to asylum centers or designated municipalities. The Center for Foreigners imposes severe limitations on freedom, often perceived as equivalent to or worse than incarceration. Such immobility profoundly affects mental health – even individuals who enter physically and psychologically stable frequently leave traumatized and demoralized, perceiving their treatment as unjust. Voluntary returns are increasingly conducted under coercive circumstances, raising serious ethical concerns. Additionally, the punitive practice of transferring individuals from asylum homes to the Center for Foreigners due to alleged “misconduct” exemplifies systemic control rather than protection, exacerbating migrants’ vulnerability and isolation.

Migrants face fragmented rights and protections due to varying legal statuses, including rejected asylum seekers, those with temporary permits, and individuals with Dublin fingerprints. After rejection, access to healthcare is minimal and employment is prohibited. Dublin returns may be appealed in court, but this does not suspend deportation, leaving many in





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prolonged irregularity without access to asylum procedures. Rights and mobility vary by procedural stage, producing legal limbo. Regularisation remains slow. Single mothers struggle to work due to lack of childcare support.

Compliance and resistance among migrants are shaped by complex interactions between structural constraints and individual agency. NGOs and other supporting actors play a crucial role in mediating between the state and migrant populations, yet they operate under significant limitations and political pressure often acting as buffers between the state and migrant populations. Migrants' narratives are often met with suspicion, reinforcing systemic disbelief and disempowerment. While some individuals become passive or self-destructive in response to institutional neglect, others demonstrate resilience, independence, and activism. However, limited legal pathways and persistent precarity can push some into criminalized survival strategies. The implementation of return regimes (RR) reflects political populism and economic interests, operating through automatic procedures justified as neutral administration, notably via Frontex. These mechanisms serve both as deterrents to future migrants and as tools for disciplining existing ones. Their punitive nature contributes to lowering labour market standards, especially for undocumented workers, further embedding exploitation.

The 2024 Intervention Act introduced a limited but important alternative by allowing certain individuals who had received negative asylum decisions to apply for a single residence and work permit, offering a legal pathway to regularization. Another key alternative involves pursuing individual court cases, which can lead to favourable rulings and establish legal precedents applicable to similar cases. This judicial route, although slow and uncertain, provides hope for some migrants. Furthermore, sustained public and political pressure plays a significant role in shaping migration governance, influencing both policy decisions and the implementation of existing laws. Generally, Slovenia serves primarily as a transit country, largely due to the significant obstacles migrants face in obtaining legal status and long-term protection.

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