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PRESS RELEASE

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Austria and Slovenia Become the First European Member States to Initiate Information Exchange in the EESSI System

EESSI (Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information) is an IT system that helps social security institutions across EU Member States, EEA States and the Swiss Confederation exchange information more rapidly and securely as required by EU legislation¹, which requires closer and more efficient cooperation between many social security institutions. The goal is to make administrative procedures faster and easier and to speed up payments and enforcement of various social benefits, as well as to combat fraud. The EESSI system ensures fully electronic exchange of information, eliminating the deficiencies of the previous paper-based exchanges. Furthermore, the EESSI system provides improved reliability of the exchanged information and uniform exchange procedures. The latter is ensured by the determined business use cases (BUCs), which have been agreed at both the inter-institutional and inter-state levels. BUCs ensure information exchange transparency or a unified understanding of procedures by providing a standard approach and consistency plan in the electronic exchange of information. In individual BUCs, the EESSI exchange of information is implemented using structured electronic documents (SEDs). An SED is an electronic form used by officials to enter information that is the subject of exchange. SEDs are translated into all EU official languages, and they have a uniform and pre-determined form. In this way, they enable every official to implement processes in the EESSI system and know exactly which information is exchanged in a certain SED and the purpose of exchanging such information.

Pursuant to the framework legislation in the field of healthcare and health insurance in the Republic of Slovenia and, after accession to the European Union, also pursuant to the European legislation in the field of social security, the **Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia** (hereinafter: "ZZZS") is the competent body for ensuring the rights of Slovenian insured persons during their stay or residence abroad and of foreign insured persons during their stay or residence in Slovenia in accordance with Slovenian and European healthcare and health insurance legislation, respectively. In the EESSI system, the ZZZS is competent and responsible for the implementation of BUCs for the following five main sectors and two sub-sectors:

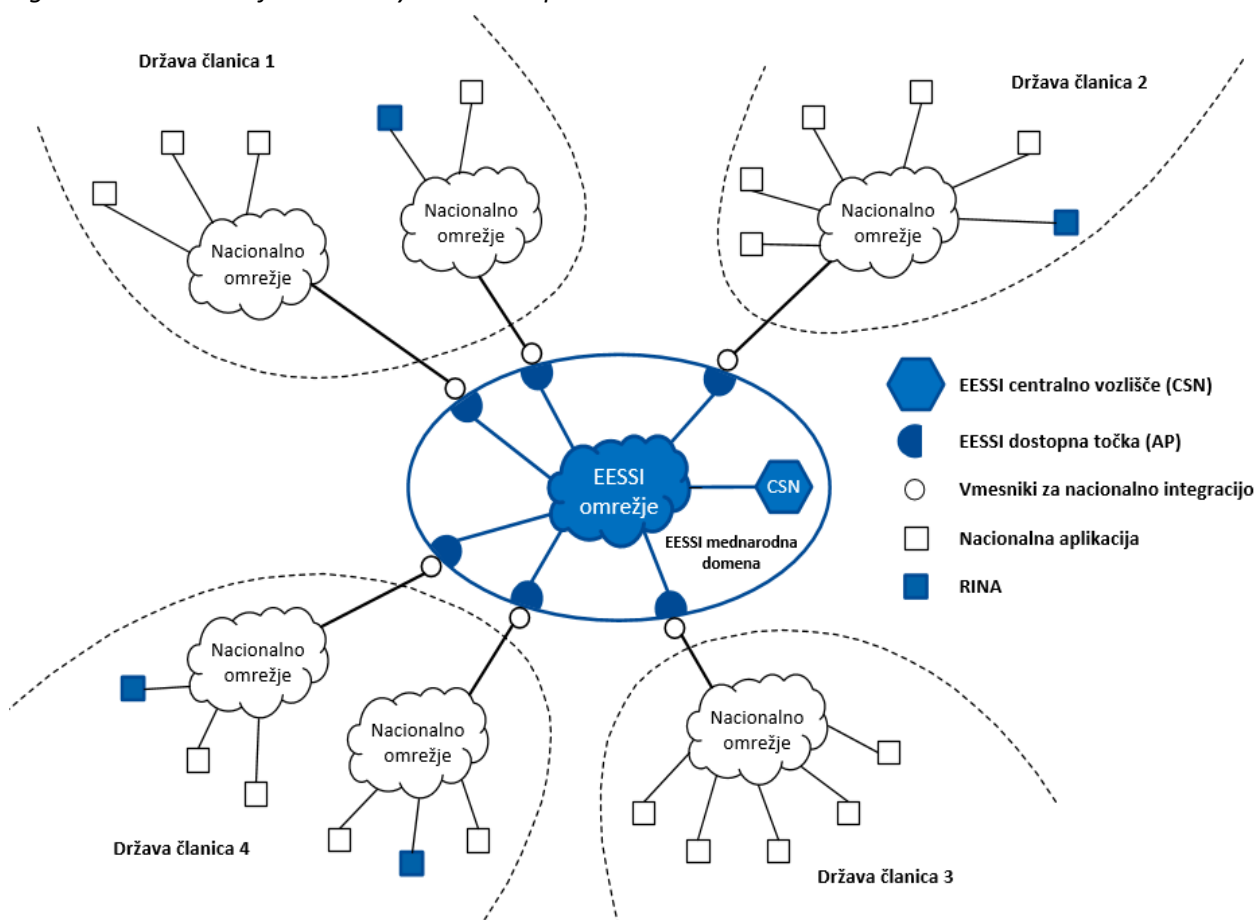
- Accidents at Work and Occupational Diseases,
- Legislation Applicable,
- Recovery,
- Sickness,
- Horizontal Processes,
- Horizontal Sub-processes, and
- Administrative Sub-processes.

The ZZZS, together with Austria, is the first EU institution to start the EESSI exchanges this year, namely in the Legislation Applicable sector (LA_BUC). This represents a great achievement for both Member States and is a result of the efforts invested by the EESSI project members in both Member States; thanks to their knowledge and

¹ Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the coordination of social security systems, and Regulation (EC) No 987/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 September 2009 laying down the procedure for implementing Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 on the coordination of social security systems.

experience, the EESSI exchanges have now been successfully implemented. The implementation of the electronic exchange of SEDs was carried out in close cooperation with representatives of **Hauptverband der Österreichischen Sozialversicherungsträger**, which coordinates the involvement of Austrian institutions in the EESSI system. The cooperation started at the beginning of 2018. In March 2018, both parties agreed on the procedure implementation and IT solution preparations at the joint meeting held in Ljubljana. Later in 2018, document exchanges and IT solution upgrades were tested and identified certain deficiencies in the IT solutions provided by the European Commission, which both institutions duly reported to the European Commission. This has helped establish and improve the IT solutions, thereby making it easier for other Member State institutions to join. **On 31 January 2019, we established the regular exchange of electronic documents in LA_BUC_02 and LA_BUC_04 procedures in the Legislation Applicable sector.** These are two of the most frequent procedures, as it is expected that the ZZS will annually exchange over 80,000 electronic documents with institutions in other Member States, approximately 30,000 of which are with Austria. Later this year, preparations for implementing document exchanges in other sectors were held; in March, the second working meeting between representatives of both institutions was held in Ljubljana. **At the end of May this year, we started exchanging documents with Austria on two other procedures in the Legislation Applicable sector, followed in early July by the majority of procedures in the Sickness, Accidents at Work and Occupational Diseases, Recovery, Horizontal Processes, and Administrative and Horizontal Sub-Processes sectors.**

Figure 1. The EESSI information system concept.



- Država članica = Member state
- Nacionalno omrežje = National Network
- EESSI omrežje = EESSI Backbone Network
- EESSI mednarodna domena = EESSI International Domaine
- EESSI centralno vozlišče (CSN) = EESSI Central Service Node (CSN)
- EESSI dostopna točka (AP) = EESSI Access Point (AP)

Vmesniki za nacionalno integracijo = API for national application integration

Nacionalna aplikacija = National Application

RINA = Reference Implementation for National Application

Figure 2. In the period between 31 January and 15 July 2019, the ZZS transmitted 6,853 LA_BUC sector issues to Austria via the EESSI system – presentation by days.



The two-year transitional period in which Member States had to adapt their information systems and operational systems to the EESSI system ended on 3 July 2019. On the same day, the ZZS started exchanging BUCs in all sectors with all other “EESSI ready” Member States. **All Member States are expected to become “EESSI ready” by the end of this year, which is when it is expected that the ZZS will fully implement electronic exchanges in the EESSI system.**

By implementing regular electronic data exchanges of LA procedures between Austria and Slovenia, we have ensured the following key advantages and benefits:

- **1: Termination of paper-based information exchanges when sending PD A1 hardcopies to foreign institutions, and related costs**

Paper-based transmission of copies of A1 portable documents (PD A1) in cases of posting workers to other EU Member States and EEA States is terminated for the postings, pursuant to Article 12 of Regulation (EC) No. 883/2004, to those Member States which have declared themselves as recipients of such notifications (one copy per PD A1). In cases persons simultaneously pursuing an activity for the same employer in more than one Member State, pursuant to Article 13 (international road transport drivers, fitters, installation and other activities), hardcopies of PD A1 were previously sent to all the involved Member States which, in practice, meant as many as 31 copies per PD A1. By terminating paper-based information exchanges, we will eliminate the costs related to document copy preparation as well as the costs of sending such copies through the postal system. In 2018, the ZZS issued approximately 86,000 A1 forms pursuant to Article 12, and more than 42,000 A1 forms pursuant to Article 13. The greatest number of hardcopies pursuant to Article 13 were issued for road transport drivers (approximately 20,000 issued A1 forms), whereby for such workers all Member States are typically suggested as the Member State of posting, accounting for more than 500,000 copies a year for drivers alone.

- **2: Faster procedures**

Compared to the previous exchange of extensive paper-based documentation, this represents great time savings and faster receipt of the feedback needed to continue or finalise procedures.

- **3: Predetermined procedures**

Better predictability of counterparty actions assist an official in preparing further steps of a procedure.

The implementation of the above-mentioned information exchanges between Austria and Slovenia represents substantial operational rationalisation and better implementation of LA procedures, increasing the quality of benefits in kind provided to insured persons and improving services for Austrian citizens when they stay or reside in Slovenia and Slovenian citizens in when they stay or reside in Austria.

HEALTH INSURANCE

INSTITUTE OF SLOVENIA