



Slovenia Report

Miro Hacek, Susanne Pickel,
Frank Bönker (Coordinator)

Sustainable Governance
Indicators 2017

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Executive Summary

Since September 2014, Slovenia has been governed by a center-left coalition led by Prime Minister Miro Cerar and his Modern Center Party (SMC). Despite some differences of opinion and some infighting, the ruling three-party coalition managed to stay together and bring some stability to the country. While it partially regained the public trust it lost in 2015, when trust in government fell to the lowest levels found among citizens across OECD countries, disenchantment with politics and political institutions has remained high.

In 2016, the recovery from the economic recession of 2008-2013 continued. The country's robust economic growth resulted in a decline in unemployment and has helped reduce the fiscal deficit; in August 2016 the number of registered unemployed persons dropped under 100,000 for the first time in last six years. Helped by the favorable short-term economic situation, progress with policy reforms has been slow. The improvement in the fiscal stance has largely stemmed from the recovery of the Slovenian economy and a number of one-off measures such as wage and promotion freezes in the public sector. Although Slovenia features the largest long-term sustainability gap of all EU members, the announced health care reform has been delayed once more. Regarding pensions, the government presented a White Book in March 2016 but has not committed itself to any concrete reform measures yet. The tax reform eventually adopted in summer 2016 has been more modest than initially announced. The promised privatization of Telekom Slovenije, the largest communication company in the country, fell victim to political opposition from within and outside the governing coalition. The same happened with the promised privatization of largest bank NLB, which was postponed until 2017, after the initial public offering (IPO) had been expected to start in the second half of 2016.

The quality of democracy has continued to suffer from widespread corruption. While the Cerar government has continued to implement the Anti-Corruption Action Plan adopted in January 2015, and the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption managed to upgrade its Supervisor web-platform and launch its successor Erar in July 2016, doubts about the political elite's commitment to fight corruption have remained. In the period under review, the efficiency of the judiciary has improved. The referendum on gay couples' rights in

December 2015 has demonstrated the power of direct democracy in Slovenia. While it was the only referendum in the period under review, turnout was sufficient to make the vote binding, forcing the government to withdraw a law providing far-reaching rights for same-sex couples including marriage and the right to adopt a child.

In terms of governance, Slovenia has been characterized by a strong corporatist tradition. The effects of this system on the government's strategic capacity have been ambivalent. As Slovenia's economic problems became more visible and acute, the unions eventually accepted major reforms, giving the Cerar government a chance to capitalize on the support of social partners. However, as economic stability and growth returned, the unions' willingness for further compromise weakened in the most recent period. Partly as a result of this strong corporatist tradition, policymaking in Slovenia has suffered from a lack of strategic planning, limited reliance on independent academic experts, a weak core executive, an increasingly politicized civil service and a largely symbolic use of RIA.

Institutional reforms under the Cerar government have largely been confined to a reshuffling of ministerial portfolios at the beginning of the term and a strengthening of the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy, the public body in charge of coordinating the use of EU funds. In addition, it adopted a strategy for the development of public administration in April 2015 and a separate strategy for the development of local government in September 2016. One of the most important goals of both strategies, whose implementation has yet to start, is to develop closer cooperation between the highly fragmented municipalities in the fields of public services and tourism.

Key Challenges

While the three parties of the governing coalition have not fully recovered from the loss in political trust in 2015 and still score poorly in public opinion polls, the government remains in a relatively favorable political situation. Divided into two right-wing and two left-wing parties rarely able to reach a consensus on goals and interests, the opposition is not effective in blocking legislation. Prime Minister Cerar has demonstrated that his government can, in fact, at times cooperate effectively with the opposition, which is something Slovenian politics has not experienced often in the recent past. As with previous elections, however, the formation of new political forces might

change the political scene before the next parliamentary elections, to be held no later than spring 2018.

In order to regain the lost support for the government and lost public trust in the political institutions in general, the government must strengthen the judiciary's quality and independence and take a tougher stance on corruption. Moreover, the political penetration of the civil service, which has continued under the Cerar government, has to end and the career civil service model reinstated. To counter fears about a weakening of media freedom, the strategy for media regulation presented to the public in summer 2016 should be amended.

While steady economic growth has reduced short-term reform pressures, the need for structural reforms remains strong. Without major pension and health care reforms, the aging of the Slovenian population is likely to result in substantial fiscal pressures in the medium- and short-term. Adopting substantial reforms in these areas, as promised in the Cerar government's coalition agreement, should be a clear policy priority. In order to strengthen the economy, the government should also limit its formal, as well as informal, intervention in state-owned companies and implement its strategy on the privatization of the remaining state-owned enterprises. The government should also stand firm on its resolve to give much more attention to R&I and higher education, two areas which have been neglected for years.

Achieving these goals could be facilitated by a number of changes in the Slovenian policymaking process. The government could make greater use of expert advice, strengthen strategic planning and improve the RIA system. The legislation on multi-annual budgeting should be implemented quickly, and the new Fiscal Council should finally be staffed and provided with adequate expert human resources. Such changes would make it easier for the government to plan and act on a long-term basis, overcome resistance by special interest groups and win public acceptance for much-needed reforms.

Policy Performance

I. Economic Policies

Economy

Economic Policy
Score: 5

The Slovenian economy has been growing robustly since 2014, with an annual GDP growth rate of about 2.5 % in 2016. While Slovenia's export performance has remained strong, the economic recovery has become broader-based as private consumption growth has accelerated thanks to an improving labor market, rising consumer confidence and low energy prices. In addition, public investment in infrastructure projects co-funded by the EU, mostly on the municipal level, have helped to boost growth, and private investment has shown some signs of recovery. However, concerns about the reliability of economic policy have been raised by the limited implementation of the privatization program presented in 2015. Controversies within the governing coalition over the future development of the port of Koper led to the resignation of Marko Jazbec, the head of Slovenian Sovereign Holding (SDH), the public company vested with the management and privatization of state-owned assets. The planned sale of 20 companies, including the country's biggest bank Nova Ljubljanska Bank (NLB), has progressed slowly. Prime minister Cerar called for postponing the sale of NLB in mid-October 2016, citing Brexit and unfavorable conditions on the financial market as the main reasons. Concerns about the independence of the Bank Asset Management Company (BAMC), raised by the dismissal of the bank's leadership in October 2015, were overlain by revelations by the online journal "Pod Črto" that BAMC managers had flaunted executive pay rules.

Citation:

European Commission (2017): Country Report Slovenia 2017 Including an In-Depth Review on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances. SWD(2017) 89 final, Brussels (<https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2017-european-semester-country-report-slovenia-en.pdf>).

Labor Markets

Labor Market
Policy
Score: 6

As a result of the economic recession, unemployment rates in Slovenia rose between 2009 to 2013. In 2013, the employment rate among those aged 20 to 64 fell below the EU average for the first time. Since 2014, the labor market situation has improved. The unemployment rate dropped from 12.3% in September 2015 to 10.4% in September 2016, and in August 2016 the number of registered unemployed persons fell under 100,000 for the first time since 2010. The improvement in labor market performance has been driven largely by the economic recovery. While Slovenia has a tradition of labor market policy that dates back to Yugoslav times and participates in a number of EU-funded programs (i.e., EURES), existing programs have suffered from budget cuts between 2009 and 2014 and are now slowly regaining their lost effectiveness.

Citation:

OECD (2016): Connecting people with jobs. The labour market, activation policies and disadvantaged workers in Slovenia. Paris.

Taxes

Tax Policy
Score: 5

Slovenia's tax system was overhauled in the 2004-2008 term and has changed only gradually since then. Tax revenues have been relatively high in relation to GDP, but have not been sufficient to prevent the emergence of high budget deficits. Tax revenues stem from a broad range of taxes, with a high percentage of about 40% of all tax revenues coming from social insurance contributions. A progressive income tax with rates of 16%, 27%, 41% and, since 2013, 50% provides for some vertical equity. As the thresholds are set rather low, however, the majority of middle class citizens fall into the second highest category. The tax burden for enterprises is below the EU average, but higher than in most other East-Central European countries. Moreover, tax procedures for companies are complex.

The Cerar government had announced comprehensive tax reform for 2016. However, the coalition partners eventually reached common ground on relatively modest changes only, focusing on tax relief for the middle class. From 2017, the tax burden on personal income, including performance and Christmas bonuses, will be reduced, among other things by introducing a new tax bracket and by replacing the 41% tax rate with two rates of 34 and 39%. Contrary to the original plans of the Ministry of Finance, the top income tax rate of 50% will be kept. In order to compensate for the decline in personal income tax revenue, the corporate income tax rate will increase from 17 to 19% in 2017. Business organizations have complained that this rise will add to an already relatively

high tax burden on enterprises. The quarrels over tax reform contributed to the resignation of Finance Minister Dušan Mramor in July 2016.

Citation:

European Commission (2017): Country Report Slovenia 2017 Including an In-Depth Review on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances. SWD(2017) 89 final, Brussels, 25-27 (<https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2017-european-semester-country-report-slovenia-en.pdf>).

Slovenian Business Club (2016): The Call from Business to Withdraw the Mini Tax Reform. Ljubljana (<http://www.slovenianbusinessclub.si/the-call-from-business-to-withdraw-the-mini-tax-reform/>).

Slovenian Times (2016): Mini tax reform finalized, July 12, 2016 (<http://www.sloveniatimes.com/mini-tax-reform-finalised>).

Budgets

Budgetary Policy
Score: 5

The Cerar government succeeded in bringing the fiscal deficit down from 3.4% of GDP in 2014 to 2.9% in 2015 and about 2% in 2016, thus exiting the European Commission's excessive deficit procedure in June 2016. However, the improvement in the fiscal stance has largely stemmed from the recovery of the Slovenian economy and a number of one-off measures such as wage and promotion freezes in the public sector. Given the solid economic growth, trade unions were less cooperative in 2016 and refused the extension of wage restraint in the public sector. Slovenia's structural deficit has remained relatively high, the debt-to-GDP ratio reached more than 80% in 2016 and, according to the European Commission, Slovenia has the largest long-term sustainability gap of all EU member states. In order to stress its commitment to a sustainable budgetary policy, the National Assembly, in line with the EU's Fiscal Compact, enshrined a "debt brake" in the constitution in May 2013. However, the adoption of the corresponding legislation didn't occur until July 2015 and the government and the opposition have not yet agreed upon the three members of the Fiscal Council in charge of supervising fiscal developments, which requires a two-thirds majority in parliament.

Citation:

European Commission (2017): Country Report Slovenia 2017 Including an In-Depth Review on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances. SWD(2017) 89 final, Brussels, 17-25 (<https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2017-european-semester-country-report-slovenia-en.pdf>).

IMF (2017): Republic of Slovenia. Country Report No. 17/125, Washington, D.C. 7-11 (<http://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2017/05/15/Republic-of-Slovenia-2017-Article-IV-Consultation-Press-Release-Staff-Report-and-Statement-44921>).

Slovenia Times (2016): Slovenia yet to appoint Fiscal Council. December 28, 2016 (<http://www.sloveniatimes.com/slovenia-yet-to-appoint-fiscal-council>).

Research and Innovation

R&I Policy

Score: 3

Slovenia's R&I activities have long been of both low quality and quantity. The Cerar government several times promised to prioritize R&I, but in reality placed little emphasis on it. It has failed to increase national funds available for R&I and to raise the share of EU funds devoted to the support of research and development. In some areas of research, EU funds have even declined, as Slovenia has experienced serious administrative difficulties in absorbing funds for R&I. After years of neglect, the Cerar government announced increases in R&I spending when introducing the budgets for 2017 and 2018 to parliament in September 2016.

Citation:

Bučar, M., E. González Verdesoto (2017): RIO Country Report Slovenia 2016. Luxembourg: European Union (<https://rio.jrc.ec.europa.eu/en/country-analysis/Slovenia/country-report>).

Global Financial System

Stabilizing Global

Financial Markets

Score: 4

Compared to most other East-Central European countries, the degree of foreign ownership within the Slovenian financial sector has remained low. Like its predecessors, the Cerar government has not contributed actively to improving the regulation and supervision of international financial markets. Instead, it has focused on addressing financial problems within the Slovenian banking sector by implementing the bad-bank scheme devised by the Janša government. Established in March 2013, the Bank Assets Management Company (BAMC) has taken over non-performing loans in exchange for bonds backed by state guarantees.

II. Social Policies

Education

Education Policy

Score: 7

Slovenia has moved relatively rapidly from the socialist curriculum tradition toward a more flexible organization of education. With a high share of the population aged 25 to 64 having completed at least upper secondary education as well as high ranks in international educational achievement tests, the education system fares relatively well by international comparison. The country's oldest and largest public university, the University of Ljubljana, is regularly ranked among the world's 500 best universities. The most pressing

problems remain the small (but slowly growing) share of pupils enlisted in vocational education, as well as a heavily underfunded tertiary-education system with high dropout rates and massive fictitious enrollment figures. Compared to previous governments, the Cerar government has devoted more attention to education policy. In September 2016, it announced increases in spending on education in 2017 and 2018. However, the adoption of an announced amended higher education act that would, among other things, ease bureaucratic burdens connected with internationalization processes has been heavily delayed.

Citation:

OECD (2016): Education Policy Outlook Slovenia. Paris (www.oecd.org/slovenia/Education-Policy-Outlook-Country-Profile-Slovenia.pdf).

Social Inclusion

Social Inclusion
Policy
Score: 8

Slovenia has a strong tradition of social inclusion, with its Gini coefficient being the lowest among EU member countries. In the past, social policy focused on providing selective benefits to the elderly and to families with children. Since the onset of the economic crisis, however, social disparities have widened. The Fiscal Balance Act, adopted by the Janša government in May 2012, cut several social-benefit programs and reduced the generosity of social benefits for the unemployed. Since then, however, most of these cuts have been reversed. In autumn 2015, the Cerar government launched a new National Housing Program 2015-2025.

Health

Health Policy
Score: 5

The Slovenian health care system is dominated by a compulsory public-insurance scheme. This scheme guarantees universal access to basic health services, but does not cover all costs and treatments. In order to close this gap, citizens can take out additional insurance offered by Vzajemna, a mutual health insurance organization established in 1999, or, since 2006, by two additional commercial insurance companies. The quality of services, which are partly delivered by private providers and are organized locally, is relatively good, and total health spending is well above the OECD average. However, both the compulsory public health insurance scheme and the supplementary health insurance funds have suffered from severe financial problems for some time, resulting in financial problems among the majority of health providers. An internal study by the Ministry of Health at the end of 2015 revealed many irregularities and deficits in the biggest Slovenian hospital, Klinični Center Ljubljana.

Health care reform has featured prominently in the coalition agreement of the Cerar government, which promised to re-expand public scheme coverage and to delineate more clearly between standard and extra services. Despite many calls for reforms both inside and outside the governing coalition, however, the adoption of the announced National Healthcare Resolution Plan has been postponed several times. Doctors started striking in early November after failing to find common ground with the government on pay and workload standards in negotiations that lasted for almost a year.

Citation:

European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (2016): Slovenia: Health System Review 2016. Brussels (www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/312147/HiT-Slovenia_rev3.pdf?ua=1).

Slovenia Times (2016): Slovenian doctors on strike, activities to be stepped up. November 8, 2016 (<http://www.sloveniatimes.com/slovenian-doctors-on-strike-activities-to-be-stepped-up>).

Families

Family Policy
Score: 8

The employment rate among women in Slovenia is above the EU average. At 72.5%, the employment rate of mothers with children under six was among the highest in the EU in 2014. Part-time work is rare among women, but its incidence is growing slowly. The New Parental and Family Benefit Act that came into force in 2014 extended the right to part-time work when having two children from six years of age until the end of first grade of primary school. Reconciling parenting and employment is facilitated by a provision of child-care facilities that exceeds the EU average, and meets the Barcelona targets both for children under three years of age and between three and five years of age. At 105 working days, the maximum duration of maternity leave is near the European average. In addition, each parent has the right to take 130 days of parental leave, part of which is paid.

Citation:

European Commission (2016): Slovenia: A dynamic family policy to improve work-life balance. Brussels (<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1248&langId=en&intPageId=3656>).

Pensions

Pension Policy
Score: 7

Slovenia has a traditional pay-as-you-go (PAYG) pension system with modest pensions, whose intergenerational fairness and financial sustainability in face of an aging society has suffered from a low employment rate for the elderly. A substantial pension reform was adopted in December 2012. This instituted a gradual increase in the full-retirement age to 65 for men and woman, or 60 for workers with at least 40 years of pensionable service. In addition, it introduced incentives for people to continue working after qualifying for official retirement,

and implemented changes to the pension formula that will slow future pension growth. The Cerar government has acknowledged the need for further changes but has been reluctant to come up with detailed reform proposals. In March 2016, the Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities presented a White Book on Pensions with a view to stimulating the debate and preparing the ground for a new reform consensus. The White Book does not contain a concrete reform proposal, but features a comprehensive analysis of the demographic projections and the long-term sustainability of the pension system as well as an outline of the different options.

Citation:

BinNews (2016): Govt backtracks on pension reform, 2nd year running. Pushed to 2018. February 18 (<http://www.biznews.com/sa-investing/2016/02/18/govt-backtracks-on-pension-reform---2nd-year-running-pushed-to-2018/>).

Macjen, B. (2016): Slovenia seeking consensus on pension reform through a White Book on pensions. European Social Policy Network, Flash Report 2016/47, Brussels.

Integration

Integration Policy

Score: 5

The number of foreign residents in Slovenia has dropped dramatically in recent years due to the effects of economic crisis. In 2008, about 85,000 work permits were issued to foreign workers; by 2015, this figure had fallen to only 14,811, and in the first eight months of 2016 only 3,855 work permits were issued. Subsequent governments have made little effort to open up health services, schools and civic life to migrants, offer anti-discrimination support and foster political participation by migrants. In June 2015 the National Assembly adopted new legislation on foreign employment that raised levels of protection of foreign workers working in Slovenia, and as of 1 September 2015, foreign workers receive a unified work and residency permit. They also enjoy improved protections against abuse from employers, a common problem in recent years. The Cerar government reacted to the inflow of almost 500,000 refugees from October 2015 to March 2016 by pushing for the closure of the Western Balkans route. It has also sought to reduce refugee protection by allowing for the rejection of migrants already at border crossings.

Citation:

Migrant Integration Policy Index: Slovenia 2015 (<http://www.mipex.eu/slovenia>).

Safe Living

Safe Living

Conditions

Score: 9

Actual and perceived security risks in Slovenia are very low. Trust in the police is higher than in other East-Central European countries and comparable to EU member states with longer democratic traditions. Slovenia's accession to the

Schengen group in December 2007 has resulted in a substantial professionalization of the Slovenian police force and border control. However, the effectiveness of the police force has suffered from underfunding. A six-month police strike that ended in June 2016 brought substantial increases in wages as well as a commitment by the government to increase future spending on basic police equipment.

Citation:
 European Commission (2016): Standard Eurobarometer 85. Brussels (<http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2130>).

Overseas Security Advisory Council (2016): Crime and Safety Report Slovenia 2016. Washington, D.C. (www.osac.gov/pages/ContentReportDetails.aspx?cid=19676).

Global Inequalities

Global Social Policy
Score: 4

With EU accession in 2004, Slovenia's status changed from donor to recipient of official development assistance. However, Slovenia has not been very active in international efforts to promote equal socioeconomic opportunities in developing countries. The few initiatives that exist are mostly focused on the former Yugoslavia. The prevailing attitude is that Slovenia has its own measure of socioeconomic problems to tackle and that potential Slovenian international influence is negligible. Still, Slovenia's official development assistance comes close to the EU target.

Citation:
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2017): International Development Cooperation of Slovenia. Ljubljana (www.mzz.gov.si/en/foreign_policy_and_international_law/international_development_cooperation_and_humanitarian_assistance/international_development_cooperation_of_slovenia/).

OECD (2016): Development Cooperation Report 2016: The Sustainable Development Goals as Business Opportunities. Paris, 254-257 (www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/development-co-operation-report-2016/slovenia_dcr-2016-38-en).

III. Environmental Policies

Environment

Environmental Policy
Score: 8

Slovenia enjoys extraordinarily rich biodiversity and landscapes due to its location at the junction of several ecological regions. The country's natural endowment has been enhanced by a tradition of close-to-natural forest management and by low-intensity farming. Forests occupy approximately 62% of the total land area, about twice the OECD average.

The key mechanism for defining sustainable development goals and targets has been Slovenia's new Development Strategy 2014-2020. In mid-2015, the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning initiated a comprehensive public debate about the update of the Spatial Planning Development Strategy (for the period until 2050 with a medium-term action plan until 2020), with a comprehensive third round of consultations taking place in March 2016.

Over the last decade, Slovenia has established a comprehensive environmental legislation. It has transposed most EU environmental directives into the 2004 Environmental Protection Act and other national laws. It has introduced risk-based planning of environmental inspections and improved compliance monitoring and enforcement. Several action plans and programs are in planning: decreasing GHG emissions, risk assessment of natural and other disasters, establishing an operational program for drinking water supplies, developing a new biodiversity strategy, and creating a national development program to establish an adequate waste management infrastructure. Another instrument providing support to individuals is the ECO Fund, which creates financial incentives for various energy-efficiency measures and renewable energy schemes.

In parallel with these developments, Slovenia improved the provision of and access to environmental information. Environmental NGOs fulfill an important watchdog role, participate actively in environmental policymaking, and play a role in environmental management – for example, by helping manage nature reserves. However, as in many countries, the legal basis enabling NGOs to challenge government decisions in the courts could be strengthened. While gross expenditure on R&D for environmental purposes has more than tripled in real terms in the last decade, the country's environmental innovation system has produced relatively little output.

It testifies to the quality of environmental policy in Slovenia that the country was declared the world's first "green country" by the Dutch organization "Green Destinations" and that Slovenia's capital Ljubljana was rewarded European Green Capital in 2016.

Citation:

European Environment Agency (2015) The European environment - state and outlook 2015: Slovenia. Copenhagen (<http://www.eea.europa.eu/soer-2015/countries/slovenia>).

Slovenia Times (2016): Slovenia declared world's first green country. September 28, 2016 (<http://www.sloveniatimes.com/slovenia-declared-world-s-first-green-country>).

Global
Environmental
Policy
Score: 6

Global Environmental Protection

More than for most other countries, geography determines the priorities of Slovenia's international environmental relationships, notably with respect to water management and the conservation of biodiversity. Slovenia's commitment to sustainable development on a regional and subregional scale is articulated through various cooperation agreements covering the Alps, the Danube and its tributaries, and the Mediterranean (including the Adriatic). The Dinaric Arc area is an emerging focus of cooperation. Bilateral cooperation between Slovenia and its neighboring countries includes water management agreements with Croatia, Hungary and Italy, and agreements with Austria on spatial planning in border regions. Slovenia has continued to maintain many informal contacts at a professional/ technical level with the countries of the Western Balkans. Compared to these regional activities, Slovenia's contribution to the strengthening of global environmental protection regimes has been modest.

Quality of Democracy

Electoral Processes

Candidacy
Procedures
Score: 10

In Slovenia, the legal provisions on the registration of candidates and parties provide for a fair registration procedure for both national (parliamentary, presidential) and local (mayoral, council) elections. Registration requirements are straightforward and not very demanding. To establish a party, only 200 signatures are needed. The registration requirements for national parliamentary elections favor parties represented in parliament. Unlike non-parliamentary parties or non-party lists, they are not required to collect voter signatures. Candidates for the presidency must document support from at least three members of parliament or 5,000 voters. At local elections, a candidate for mayor and candidate or list of candidates for a municipal council can be proposed either by political parties or by a specified number of voters, which is dependent on the size of a municipality. Candidate lists both for national parliamentary elections and municipal assembly elections must respect a gender quota. On each list of candidates, neither gender should be represented by less than 40% of the total number of candidates on the list.

Media Access
Score: 9

While both the public and private media tend to focus on the bigger political parties, Slovenia's public-media regulatory system and pluralist media environment ensure that all candidates and parties have fair access to the media. The public TV and radio stations are obliged to set aside some airtime for parties to present their messages and their candidates. The establishment of a third public TV channel (mainly covering parliamentary debates) has provided additional airtime for political parties and candidate lists to present their views to the public. In the most recent election campaigns for the European Parliament, the national assembly and local government bodies (all in 2014), newly established political parties were given the opportunity to participate in pre-election debates held by the public broadcaster. Similar rules apply for referendum campaigns. In December 2015, supporters and opponents of the controversial referendum on the definition of marriage had the chance to present their views in the media.

Voting and
Registrations
Rights
Score: 10

The electoral process is largely inclusive at both national and local levels. All adult citizens, including convicted prisoners, can participate in elections, and no cases of voting irregularities have occurred. Voters that will not be in their

place of residence on election day can ask for a special voter's pass that allows voting at any polling station in the country. While there is no general postal vote, Slovenian citizens who live abroad as well as disabled persons unable to make it to the polling station can exercise their voting rights by mail. One Slovenian peculiarity are the special voting rights for the Hungarian and Italian minorities and the Roma population. Members of the Hungarian and Italian minorities can cast an additional vote for a member of parliament representing each minority in the national parliament. In the case of local elections, a similar provision exists for the Roma population in all municipalities with a substantial Roma minority.

Party Financing
Score: 7

According to the Act on Political Parties, parties can be financed by membership fees, donations, estate revenues, the profits of their companies' revenues and public subsidies. If a political party wins at least 1% of all votes in the previous parliamentary elections, it is entitled to financial resources from the national budget: 25% of the total budget amount is divided equally between all eligible parties. The remaining 75% is divided among the parties represented in the National Assembly according to their vote share. In addition, parliamentary party groups can obtain additional support from the national budget for their parliamentarians' education purposes, and for organizational and administrative support. All political parties must prepare annual reports and submit them to the National Assembly. The reports, which are submitted to the Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Public Legal Records and Related Services, must disclose aggregate revenues and expenditures, detail any property owned by the party, and list the origins of all donations that exceed the amount of five times Slovenia's average gross monthly salary. Parties are also required to submit post-electoral reports to the Court of Audit, which holds official responsibility for monitoring party financing. Following many calls to further increase transparency and strengthen the monitoring and sanctioning of party financing, legislation on the issue was finally amended in January 2014, barring donations from private companies and organizations. At local elections, compensation for political parties during the electoral campaign are set autonomously by the local communities.

Popular Decision-Making
Score: 8

Slovenia has a strong tradition of direct democracy. Until a constitutional amendment in May 2013, referendums on all issues could be called by parliament, the National Council (a body representing major interest groups) as well as by citizens themselves. As a result, many referendums were called, and in a number of cases controversial government initiatives were rejected. A May 2013 constitutional amendment, which was adopted by the legislature with an overwhelming majority, kept the relatively low threshold of signatures required for calling a referendum (40,000), but ruled out the calling of referendums by parliament and by the National Council. Moreover, the set of eligible issues was reduced so as to exclude the public budget, taxes, human

rights and international agreements, the majority requirements for the validity of referendums were tightened and the period for which parliament is bound to the results of a referendum was reduced. As a result, the number of referendums has fallen. In the period under review, only one national referendum was initiated. In spring 2015, the movement "It's about children!" started collecting signatures for a referendum on a controversial new law equalizing the rights of same-sex and opposite-sex couples and succeeded in collecting the necessary signatures in just four days. However, the National Assembly stopped the process of collecting signatures, with the ruling coalition and the two center-left opposition parties claiming that the initiative addressed human rights issues and was thus unconstitutional. The decision by the National Assembly was annulled by the Constitutional Court, so that the referendum on the amended Law on Marriage and Family Relations was held on 20 December 2015. Almost two-thirds of the participants voted against the law on same-sex marriage. While voter turnout was below 40%, the number of no votes exceeded the constitutional threshold, i.e., 20% of all registered voters, so that the government was forced to withdraw the law.

Citation:

Krašovec, A. (2015): The 2015 referendum in Slovenia, in: East European Quarterly 43(4), 303-312.

Access to Information

Media Freedom
Score: 7

Slovenia's constitution and legal system guarantee freedom of the press, and the media for the most part operate without direct political interference. The laws regulating public television and radio broadcasting reflect the strong corporatist element of Slovenian political culture. The Council of Radio-Television of Slovenia (Radiotelevizija Slovenija, RTVS) has 29 members, who are appointed by the National Assembly, but proposed by a broad variety of political and social actors. Changes to the rules and procedures in the previous years strengthened the independence of the public media by reducing the scope for discretionary cuts in public funding, and by requiring an absolute rather than relative majority for the election of the director-general of the Council of Radio-Television of Slovenia. An amendment of Article 260 of the Slovenian Criminal Code, which entered into force on October 2015, strengthened media freedom by making clear that an individual disclosing classified information no longer incurs a criminal liability.

In June 2016, the Ministry of Culture presented a draft strategy for media regulation towards 2024, the first ever in Slovenia. In the consultations on this strategy, the latter got a mixed reception. On the one hand, it was applauded for its emphasis on improving the social situation of journalists and the transparency of media ownership. On the other, the proposed changes in the

fee for financing public media and the management structures, as well as various suggestions to strengthen the cooperation of the media, have raised fears about a weakening of media freedom.

Citation:

Petković, B. (2016): Media strategy controversies in Slovenia. South-East European Media Observatory (<http://mediaobservatory.net/radar/media-strategy-controversies-slovenia>).

Media Pluralism
Score: 5

Slovenia currently has about 1,400 different media outlets, including more than 80 radio and 50 television broadcasters (both local and cable operators). However, the public-media market share is still substantial, with Radio-Television of Slovenia (Radiotelevizija Slovenija, RTVS) running seven out of 10 national TV and radio channels (for TV: SLO1, SLO2, SLO3; for radio: Program A, Program Ars, Val 202 and Radio Slovenia International). In February 2016, the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), which has long complained about an alleged media bias, launched its own private news TV station, Nova24TV.

In the print media, some important ownership changes took place. The controversial sale in July 2014 of Večer, the fourth-largest daily newspaper (primarily serving the northeastern part of the country), was followed by the auctioning of Slovenia's biggest newspaper publisher Delo in June 2015. The new owner, the financial management company FMR, has little to no media experience and is run by Stojan Petrič, a business man who is believed to be politically well connected. In early 2016, FMR made the former head of its public relations division, Gregor Knafelec, a man with no journalistic experience, editor-in-chief of Delo. As a result of these changes, sales of Delo newspaper in July 2016 dropped below 30,000 for the first time in decades.

Access to
Government.
Information
Score: 9

Slovenian law guarantees free and quite easy access to official information. Restrictions are few and reasonable (covering mostly national security and secret data issues), and there are effective mechanisms of appeal and oversight enabling citizens to access information. When access to official information is obstructed or denied, the Information Commissioner, an autonomous body that supervises both the protection of personal data as well as access to public information, can be called upon and intervene. In a number of cases, the Information Commissioner has helped citizens and journalists enforce their right of access. The new online application "Supervisor," set up by the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (CPC) as a means of enhancing transparency in the country, has helped the public and the media access some previously restricted financial information. In July 2016 Supervisor was upgraded and integrated into the new web application Erar, also developed by the CPC. The Ministry of Public Administration has developed a publicly available web-based public procurement portal and online statistical tool.

Citation:

European Commission (2016): eGovernment in Slovenia. Luxembourg: European Union (https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ckeditor_files/files/eGovernment%20in%20Slovenia%20-%20February%202016%20-%20v1_00.pdf).

Civil Rights and Political Liberties

Civil Rights
Score: 7

In Slovenia, civil rights are largely respected. Citizens are effectively protected by courts and by independent institutions like the ombudsman against infringements of their rights. Some problems exist with regard to the integrity of the judiciary. By contrast, the duration of court proceedings, which was very long in the past, has been reduced. In February 2016, the president of the Supreme Court announced that judiciary backlogs are no longer a problem, since the average time of the judiciary procedure was reduced in 2015 to little more than seven months.

Citation:

Nova TV (2016), Branko Masleša: Judicial backlogs are not a problem anymore. February 10 (<http://nova24tv.si/slovenija/branko-maslesa-sodni-zaostanki-v-sloveniji-niso-vec-tezava/>).

Political Liberties
Score: 9

In Slovenia, political liberties are constitutionally protected and guaranteed and are respected by government institutions. The rights to assembly and association, for instance, is guaranteed in Article 42 of the Slovenian Constitution and can only be restricted in special cases. The fact that Slovenia has more civil-society organizations per capita than most other countries testifies to the protection of the freedom of association. Infringements on political liberties are rare.

Non-discrimination
Score: 7

Slovenian law guarantees equal rights to all citizens and protects against discrimination based on prescribed criteria. There are also various forms of positive discrimination, including a gender quota in electoral law and special voting rights for the officially recognized national minorities as well as for the Roma population. Despite the legal framework, foreign workers and women are still at times paid somewhat less for the same work than Slovenian and male workers, and there have been cases of discrimination against same-sex couples. Amnesty International and others have criticized the government for not doing enough to counter discrimination toward the Roma. Media rights for minorities other than the Hungarian, Italian and Roma are underdeveloped.

Citation:

Petković, B. (2016): Discriminatory policies of minority protection in Slovenia: unequal access to media. South-East European Media Observatory (<http://mediaobservatory.net/radar/discriminatory-policies-minority-protection-slovenia-unequal-access-media>).

Rule of Law

Legal Certainty
Score: 7

Legal certainty in Slovenia has suffered from contradictory legal provisions and frequent changes in legislation. The number of newly adopted regulations increased from 1,360 in 1991 to almost 19,000, including 800 acts, in 2014. Many crucial laws are amended on a regular basis, and contradictions in legislation are frequently tested in front of the Constitutional Court. The procedures of rule-making are misused or side-stepped by making heavy use of the fast-track legislation procedure. In the first year of Cerar's government (September 2014 to September 2015), 52% of the 156 legislative acts proposed to the National Assembly were subjected to the fast-track legislation procedure. In first half of 2016, 32% of the 47 legislative acts adopted in this period were subjected to the fast-track legislation procedure. In the vast majority of cases, however, government and administration act on the basis of and in accordance with the law, thereby ensuring legal certainty.

Citation:
National Assembly, Research Department (2016): Report on the parliamentary work between 1 January 2016 and 21 July 2016. Ljubljana (www.dz-rs.si).

Judicial Review
Score: 8

While politicians try to influence court decisions and often publicly comment on the performance of particular courts and justices, Slovenian courts act largely independently. Independence is facilitated by the fact that judges enjoy tenure. The Cerar government has preserved the independence of the Prosecutor's Office and strengthened the independence of the judiciary by expanding its funding. In 2014 and 2015, the Constitutional Court has demonstrated its independence by annulling controversial decisions by the governing coalition on the candidacy rights of former Prime Minister Janša and the referendum on same-sex marriages. In 2016, the delay in processing the case against Igor Bavčar, the former CEO of Istrabenz Holding, became a major issue prompting an attack by Minister of Justice Klemenčič on the judiciary in September.

Appointment of
Justices
Score: 8

In Slovenia, both Supreme and Constitutional Court justices are appointed in a cooperative selection process. The Slovenian Constitutional Court is composed of nine justices who are proposed by the president of the republic, and approved by the parliament on the basis of an absolute majority. The justices are appointed for a term of nine years, and choose the president of the Constitutional Court themselves. Supreme Court justices are appointed by parliament by a relative majority of votes based on proposals put forward by the Judicial Council, a body of 11 justices or other legal experts partly appointed by parliament and partly elected by the justices themselves. The Ministry of Justice can only propose candidates for the president of the Supreme Court. Candidates for both courts must meet stringent merit criteria

and show a long and successful career in the judiciary to be eligible for appointment. In July 2016, two new Constitutional Court justices were appointed by the National Assembly, both with an overwhelming majority of votes. Four more will be appointed in 2017, meaning in just 18 months, six out of nine Constitutional Court justices will be replaced.

Corruption
Prevention
Score: 6

Corruption has been publicly perceived as one of the most serious problems in Slovenia since 2011. The incoming Cerar government adopted a detailed new two year anti-corruption action plan in January 2015. In 2016, the number of corruption cases investigated increased, indicating increased attention by and effectiveness of the police. While the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (CPC), the central anti-corruption body, managed to upgrade its Supervisor web-platform and launch its successor Erar in July 2016, it has remained under fire. At the end of February 2016, the OECD working group on Bribery joined domestic critics and criticized the CPC's lack of autonomy and resources, as well as Slovenia's limited implementation of the Anti-Bribery Convention. The failure of parliament to adopt an ethical code for members of parliament and strengthen whistleblower protection has further raised the doubts about the political elite's commitment to fight corruption.

Citation:

OECD Working Group on Bribery (2016): Statement on Slovenia's limited implementation of the Anti-Bribery Convention. February 24 (<http://www.oecd.org/corruption/public-statement-on-slovenia-s-implementation-of-the-anti-bribery-convention-2016.htm>).

Governance

I. Executive Capacity

Strategic Capacity

Strategic Planning
Score: 3

The institutional capacity for strategic planning in Slovenia is rather weak. Capacities for planning in the ministries are limited, and there is no central policy-planning unit in the Government Office. Although, after assuming office, the Cerar government announced that it would expand planning capacities, little progress has been made. In the period of review, the government presented a number of important strategic documents, including the strategies on public administration and local government development, as well as a White Book on pensions.

Scholarly Advice
Score: 4

In Slovenia, the Government Office and the ministries have various advisory bodies that include academic experts. Prime Minister Miro Cerar, an academic himself, strongly relied on academic and practitioners' advice when establishing his party platform, coalition and government program. While the Cerar government has regularly sought external advice, it has often failed to implement it.

Interministerial Coordination

GO Expertise
Score: 4

Slovenia has a strong tradition of departmentalism and collegial cabinets. The Government Office focuses on the legal and technical coherence of draft bills, but lacks the capacity and sectoral expertise to evaluate their policy content, especially since the recruitment of expert staff is limited and often subject to political pressures and political compromise. Prime Minister Cerar has done little to change this situation.

GO Gatekeeping
Score: 6

In Slovenia, the Government Office has the formal power to return draft laws on policy reasons or any other grounds. In practice, however, the gatekeeping role of the Government Office is of limited importance, since most legislative

projects are initially discussed at coalition meetings, generally between the presidents or leadership of the coalition parties, and subsequently undergo a complex process of interministerial coordination.

Line Ministries
Score: 3

The Government Office is not directly and systematically involved in line ministries' preparation of policy proposals. Once the coalition agreement and government program have defined certain projects, full responsibility for drafting bills rests with the line ministries or with inter-ministerial teams. The Government Office is seldom briefed about the state of affairs. If it is, consultation is rather formal and focuses mostly on legal and technical issues.

Cabinet Committees
Score: 8

Cabinet committees play an important role in the preparation of cabinet proposals in Slovenia and settle issues prior to the cabinet meeting. There are three standing cabinet committees: the Committee of State Matters and Public Issues, the Committee of National Economy and the Commission of Administrative and Personnel Matters. In addition, temporary committees are from time to time established for particular tasks. In its first two years in office, the Cerar government established ten of them, including cabinet committees for youth issues, problems of the disabled, migrant issues, student questions and protection against natural disasters.

Ministerial Bureaucracy
Score: 6

In Slovenia, a substantial amount of interministerial coordination is performed by civil servants. Senior civil servants and cabinet members are always heavily involved in the coordination of legislation. However, the effectiveness of this coordination has suffered from the deteriorating quality and increasing politicization of the upper echelons of civil service, especially among high-ranking civil servants. Under the Cerar government, several prominent and experienced high-ranking civil servants were replaced by party loyalists with limited administrative experience and even less expert knowledge.

Informal Coordination
Score: 7

Slovenia's tradition of coalition governments has meant that informal coordination procedures have played a significant role in policy coordination. Under the Cerar government, the leaders of the three coalition parties met frequently, making major decisions at coalition meetings that were often also attended by the ministers and sometimes also by the leaders of parliamentary majority groups and coalition members of parliament. In press conferences and public statements after these meetings, very little information about the decisions made was provided to the public. The dominant role of the party leaders within their parties has also meant that a considerable amount of policy coordination takes place in party bodies.

Evidence-based Instruments

RIA Application
Score: 5

In Slovenia, RIA guidelines have largely been copy and pasted from the European Union. The guidelines call for a detailed analysis of the need for and the purpose of new regulations. In practice, however, RIA quality is very

uneven, and there are no official statistics regarding implemented RIAs. As fast-track legislation is exempt from RIA, RIAs were not performed for at least a third of all new measures passed in the period under review. The government's Public Administration Development Strategy 2015-2020 acknowledged the need for improving RIA but was relatively brief on reforms.

Citation:

Government of the Republic of Slovenia (2015): Public Administration 2020: Public Administration Development Strategy 2015-2020. Ljubljana (http://www.mju.gov.si/fileadmin/mju.gov.si/pageuploads/JAVNA_UPRAVA/Kakovost/Strategija_razvoja_J_U_2015-2020/Strategija_razvoja_ANG_final_web.pdf). OECD (2015): OECD Regulatory Policy Outlook 2015. Country profile Slovenia. Paris (<http://www.oecd.org/gov/regulatory-policy/Slovenia-web.pdf>).

Quality of RIA
Process
Score: 2

The RIA process in Slovenia suffers from a number of weaknesses. First, public participation fails to meet the legal standards. Second, the conducted RIAs are only rarely made public. Third, quality control is limited. RIA oversight is divided among several agencies; however, supervising agencies largely check for formal correctness, without addressing substantive quality.

Sustainability
Check
Score: 2

Slovenia's RIA guidelines provide for relatively far-reaching sustainability checks. However, the specification of assessment criteria and the set of indicators to be used suffer from gaps, and the actual quality of RIA is very uneven. In some cases, there are only vague assessments; in others, comprehensive analytical work is done. The government's Public Administration Development Strategy 2015-2020 has focused on strengthening the assessment of impacts on small and medium-size enterprises ('SME test').

Societal Consultation

Negotiating Public
Support
Score: 5

Slovenia has a strong tradition of corporatism and of government consultation with interest groups more generally. The Cerar government has stuck to this tradition and has discussed part of its legislative initiatives in the Economic and Social Council, the tripartite body for social and economic dialogue. The government managed to reach agreement with the social partners over several cornerstones of its legislative program, including austerity measures in the public sector for 2015 and 2016. In other cases, however, consultations have failed to produce any results, with trade unions complaining that the government does not take their positions or negotiations seriously.

Policy Communication

Coherent
Communication
Score: 5

Ministerial communication with the public has been more coherent under the Cerar government than under its predecessor. Due to the prime minister's inability or unwillingness to control his coalition partners, however, there were

instances of contradictory statements given in short periods of time. In particular, the ministers and parliamentarians from the Democratic Party of Pensioners (DeSUS), the second strongest party of the governing coalition, have sometimes publicly opposed policies proposed or adopted by the coalition.

Implementation

Government
Efficiency
Score: 6

The Cerar government's coalition agreement has been relatively comprehensive and more detailed than those of previous governments. However, many goals and deadlines stated in the agreement have not been met. The announced health care and education reforms have been postponed several times. The tax reform eventually adopted in summer 2016 has been more modest than initially announced. On pensions, the government has so far only come up with a White Book without any concrete reform proposals. As for privatization, the coalition agreement took a cautious approach and remained relatively vague. Given the lack of consensus among the coalition partners about the remaining role of the state, it did not come as a surprise that some privatization decisions led to cracks in the coalition. The promised privatization of Telekom Slovenije, the largest communication company in the country, fell victim to political opposition from within and outside the governing coalition. The same occurred with the promised privatization of Slovenia's largest bank NLB, which was postponed until 2017, after the initial public offering (IPO) had been expected to start in second half of 2016.

Ministerial
Compliance
Score: 6

As head of a coalition government, Prime Minister Cerar primarily relied on frequent coalition meetings of narrow (including only the presidents of coalition parties) or broader composition (including ministers and members of parliament as well) in order to ensure the implementation of the government's program. While five ministers resigned or were removed from the Cerar government in first year in office, with two more ministers and the head of the Government Office departing in the period under review, these changes were only partly due to controversies over the government's course.

Monitoring
Ministries
Score: 5

The weak capacity of the Government Office (GO) and the predominance of coalition governments have limited the GO's role in monitoring line ministries' implementation activities. The GO tends to respect the assignment of ministries in the coalition agreement, and most monitoring takes places in coalition meetings.

Monitoring
Agencies,
Bureaucracies
Score: 4

Following the passage of the 2002 Civil Service Act, which has made it easier for the government to get rid of unwanted personnel, politicization has increased in Slovenia's executive agencies. Despite a rhetorical commitment to depoliticization in public administration in the 2014 coalition agreement, the Cerar government has replaced a number of experienced senior and even some mid-level civil servants with less qualified staff loyal to the coalition parties, and

has filled leading positions in executive agencies with politically loyal personnel. Also, ministerial cabinets are largely filled with politically loyal personnel that usually lack the requisite expertise to carry out its functions and aid the minister. Political and personal ties have prevented the prosecution of misconduct and incompetency.

Task Funding
Score: 3

Municipal governments – the sole tier of subnational self-government in Slovenia – have suffered substantial fiscal difficulties for some time. The Cerar government has focused on bringing down the bureaucratic burdens without reducing the number of municipalities. However, the measures taken have not been very effective, and municipalities have suffered from the government's decision to postpone the re-introduction of the property tax. Government proposals to lower central government transfers have met resistance by the Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia (SOS), the Association of Municipalities of Slovenia (ZOS) and the newly-formed Association of City Municipalities (ZMOS). In September 2015, SOS and ZOS filed a lawsuit to Ljubljana District Court against central government, arguing that the latter has broken an agreement on the amount of central government transfers for 2015. In October 2015, ZMOS filed a complaint to the Constitutional Court arguing that the municipal financing system is not in accordance with the constitution. In December 2015, 144 out of 212 mayors of Slovenian municipalities demanded the resignation of Finance Minister Dušan Mramor because he failed to follow the law regarding proper financing of municipalities. After lengthy negotiations, all three municipal associations and the Cerar government failed to reach an agreement regarding municipality financing for 2017, causing an even deeper divide between both sides.

Constitutional
Discretion
Score: 5

The Slovenian Constitution, the European Charter on Local Government (ratified in 1996) and the Local Government Act give municipalities responsibility for all local public affairs and some autonomy in implementing national legislation. In practice, however, financing constraints and a limited administrative capacity in the larger number of small municipalities limit local autonomy. The Cerar government has started to address this issue through the adoption of the Public Administration Development Strategy in April 2015 and a separate strategy for the development of local government in September 2016. Both strategies aim at fostering closer cooperation between municipalities in the fields of public services and tourism.

Citation:

Government of the Republic of Slovenia (2015): Public Administration 2020: Public Administration Development Strategy 2015-2020. Ljubljana (http://www.mju.gov.si/fileadmin/mju.gov.si/pageuploads/JAVNA_UPRAVA/Kakovost/Strategija_razvoja_J_U_2015-2020/Strategija_razvoja_ANG_final_web.pdf).

Ministry for Public Administration (2016): Strategija razvoja lokalne samouprave do 2020 (Strategy of local government development until 2020). Ljubljana (http://www.mju.gov.si/fileadmin/mju.gov.si/pageuploads/JAVNA_UPRAVA/svlsrp.gov.si/pageuploads/lok-sam-2015/akтуално-ls/strateg-ls/12_SRLS_16.9.2016.pdf).

Rožen, T., M. Haček (2014): Merjenje upravljavске sposobnosti lokalnih samoupravnih skupnosti: primer

slovenskih občin (Measurement of administrative capacity of local governments: case of Slovenian municipalities). Faculty of Social Sciences, Ljubljana.

National Standards
Score: 3

In Slovenia, public-service standards are poorly defined, especially with regard to the independent functions of municipal governments. As every municipality is autonomous in providing such services, their extent and quality differ substantially across the country. Financial controls and inspections are often ineffective due to the lack of resources and staff. Moreover, the monitoring of standards is often highly fragmented. In the case of health care, for instance, the Public Agency for Drugs and Medical Accessories, the National Institute for Health Protection, the Public Health Inspectorate and the Office for Drugs and Pharmaceutical Control all play oversight roles.

Adaptability

Domestic
Adaptability
Score: 6

Upon EU accession, Slovenia developed a complex system for coordinating European affairs, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs serving as the central coordinator. The Cerar government left this system largely unchanged. In order to increase the absorption of EU funds, it created a new ministry without portfolio with responsibility for development, strategic projects and cohesion and changed procedures. As a result, the absorption rate has substantially increased.

Citation:
RTV SLO (2016): Slovenija četrta najboljša pri čerpanju evropskih sredstev (Slovenia fourth best with EU funds absorption rate). January 20 (<http://www.rtvslo.si/gospodarstvo/slovenija-cetrta-najboljsa-pri-crpanju-eu-sredstev/383873>).

International
Coordination
Score: 5

Like its predecessors, Prime Minister Cerar's government was preoccupied with domestic political and economic issues, and paid little attention to improving institutional capacity for shaping and implementing global initiatives. The country's main international focus has been on shaping the European Union's policy toward the western Balkans, where Slovenia sees its strategic interests. In the period under review, the arbitration case on the 25-year long territorial dispute continued between Croatia and Slovenia over the Gulf of Piran. It might be significant not only for Slovenia and Croatia, but also for the broader Western Balkan region, which could use the good practice as a model for solving many unresolved border disputes.

Citation:
Armed Politics (2016): Territorial dispute between Croatia and Slovenia continues. June 30 (<https://www.armedpolitics.com/2671/territorial-dispute-croatia-slovenia-continues/>).

Organizational Reform

Self-monitoring
Score: 4

There is no regular self-monitoring of institutional arrangements In Slovenia. The monitoring that takes place is ad hoc and limited. The annual reports of state organizations are formal and self-congratulatory. Under the Cerar government the number of audits performed by private-sector organizations remained low.

Institutional
Reform
Score: 5

At the beginning of its term, the Cerar government increased the number of ministries from 13 to 16 and changed ministerial portfolios. By establishing separate ministries for public administration, infrastructure and environment/spatial planning, as well as by creating a ministry without a portfolio responsible for development, strategic projects and cohesion, the Cerar government improved its strategic capacity. The strengthening of the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy and the changing procedures associated with the creation of a new ministry for development, strategic projects and cohesion have helped to substantially increase the absorption rate. The government's Public Administration Development Strategy 2015-2020 adopted in April 2015 is relatively brief on institutional reform. However, one goal has been the fostering of closer cooperation between municipalities in the fields of public services and tourism. To address this issue, the Cerar government adopted a strategy for the development of local government in September 2016.

Citation:

Government of the Republic of Slovenia (2015): Public Administration 2020: Public Administration Development Strategy 2015-2020. Ljubljana (http://www.mju.gov.si/fileadmin/mju.gov.si/pageuploads/JAVNA_UPRAVA/Kakovost/Stategija_razvoja_JU_2015-2020/Strategija_razvoja_ANG_final_web.pdf).
 Ministry for Public Administration (2016): Strategija razvoja lokalne samouprave do 2020 (Strategy of local government development until 2020). Ljubljana (http://www.mju.gov.si/fileadmin/mju.gov.si/pageuploads/JAVNA_UPRAVA/svlsrp.gov.si/pageuploads/lok-sam-2015/aktualno-ls/strateg-ls/12_SRLS_16.9.2016.pdf).

II. Executive Accountability

Citizens' Participatory Competence

Policy Knowledge
Score: 4

Slovenian citizens' knowledge of government policymaking is rather limited. While both print and electronic media provide mostly adequate information, certain segments of the population lack media literacy, and a majority of citizens is simply not interested in the details of policymaking. The recurring corruption

and political scandals have led to frustration and disenchantment for a majority of the population. According to a 2016 Eurobarometer survey, only 7% of respondents trusted political parties (EU28 average 15%), and just 16% trusted the national government (EU28 average 27%).

Citation:
 European Commission (2016): Standard Eurobarometer 85 Survey. Brussels
[\(\[http://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2130_85_2_STD85_ENG\]\(http://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2130_85_2_STD85_ENG\)\).](http://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2130_85_2_STD85_ENG)

Legislative Actors' Resources

Parliamentary Resources
 Score: 9

Slovenian members of parliament command sufficient resources to perform their jobs effectively and to monitor government activity. Each member of parliament has a personal budget for education and literature acquisition as well as access to research and data services provided by the Research and Documentation Section. Additional resources are available to parliamentary party groups for organizational and administrative support, and for hiring expert staff. Parliamentary groups must have a minimum of three members of parliament. In the period under review, only four members of parliament did not belong to a parliamentary group.

Obtaining Documents
 Score: 8

In Slovenia, parliamentary committees have the right to ask for almost all government documents, and they can discuss any document in sessions either open or closed to the public. However, the Cerar government, similar to previous governments, sometimes delivered draft bills and other documents at the last minute or with considerable delay, thereby infringing on the work of the committees and obstructing public debate on the proposals.

Summoning Ministers
 Score: 9

The right of parliamentary committees to summon ministers is enshrined in the Rules of Procedure of the Slovenian Parliament. Ministers regularly follow invitations; if they are unable to attend in person, they can also authorize state secretaries to represent them. Ministers are also obliged to answer questions from members of parliament, either in oral or written form, and this obligation is largely respected in practice. In the first seven months of 2016, members of parliament submitted a total of 951 questions and initiatives to members of the government, and only one of those has not been answered within the requested 30-day period.

Summoning Experts
 Score: 9

Parliamentary committees in Slovenia may invite experts or form expert groups in charge of helping to draft legislative proposals. Under the Cerar government, the number of experts invited has increased. Parliamentary committees have launched several public expert discussions on important pieces of legislation.

Task Area Congruence
 Score: 8

The Slovenian parliament has two kinds of working bodies – committees, which normally cover the work of ministries, and commissions, some of them standing, which deal with more specific issues such as the rules of procedure,

the supervision of intelligence and security services or the national minorities. In the 2012–2014 parliamentary term, the task areas of ministries and committees largely matched. Only one committee, the Committee on EU Affairs, lacks a clear ministerial counterpart, and the minister without a portfolio responsible for Slovenes living abroad must answer to a commission. Only two out of about 10 commissions – the Commission for Petitions, Human Rights and Equal Opportunities and the Commission for National Communities – deal with several ministries. Although the number of government ministries has increased under the Cerar government, the structure of parliamentary working bodies has not changed in the new legislative term. As a result, the Committee for Internal Affairs, Public Administration and Local Government and the Committee for Infrastructure, Environment and Spatial Planning now oversee two ministries each.

Audit Office
Score: 9

According to Article 150 of the Slovenian Constitution, the Court of Audit is the supreme auditing authority in all matters of public spending. The Court of Audit is an independent authority accountable exclusively to parliament. The Court of Audit scrutinizes the performance of national and local governments and all legal persons established or owned by them. The chairman and the two vice-chairmen are elected by the parliament for nine years – on the basis of secret ballots – and the office reports regularly and whenever requested to the parliament. The Court of Audit has far-reaching competencies and enjoys a good reputation and high public trust. However, its position is somewhat limited by a lack of both financial and human resources. While it can propose its own budget to the legislature, the ultimate decision regarding the Court's resources rests with parliament.

Ombuds Office
Score: 8

In addition to the parliament's Commission for Petitions, Human Rights and Equal Opportunities, there is an independent ombudsman, who is accountable exclusively to parliament. The ombudsman is elected by parliament for a term of six years and reports regularly to the legislature. The current ombudsman, Vlasta Nussdorfer, was elected in February 2013 with the broadest majority yet seen in the country's short parliamentary history (82 out of 90 votes). She enjoys a good reputation and is quite effective in settling issues. Her annual reports focus on a wide variety of problems, above all problems with the judiciary, administrative issues and issues with limitations on personal freedom. As with previous ombudspersons, however, Nussdorfer's role has been occasionally constrained by the lack of interest from parliament and the inactivity of the ministries.

Media

Media Reporting
Score: 6

In Slovenia, the majority of both electronic and printed mass media fail to provide high-quality information on government decisions and mostly focus on superficial subjects. However, there is a clear distinction to be made between the private and public media here. Whereas the private media, especially private

electronic media, tend to focus on non-political information and infotainment, the public media, especially television and radio broadcasters, put much more emphasis on providing high-quality information about government decisions. They even devote some attention to the debates preceding these decisions. This particularly applies when debates are initiated by the government.

Parties and Interest Associations

Intra-party
Democracy
Score: 4

Slovenian party law leaves political parties with some organizational autonomy. Political parties are very heterogeneously organized, with some organized only on the micro level – that is, in each of the 212 municipalities – and others organized only on the macro level. Access to decision-making processes is normally restricted to party members. Whereas party members have the formal right to participate in decisions, the party leadership controls the candidate lists and the policy agendas. The details of internal party decision-making are not widely known to the public, as most decisions are made behind doors that are firmly shut. In the period under review, a number of members, including members of parliament, left the right-wing Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), led by former Primer Minister Janez Janša, criticizing the lack of intra-party democracy. Similarly, the Initiative for Democratic Socialism, part of the United Left (ZL), experienced strong conflicts between leadership and delegates.

Citation:
Krašovec, A., L. Johannsen (2016): Recent developments in democracy in Slovenia, in: Problems of Post-Communism 63(5-6), 313–322.

Association
Competence
(Business)
Score: 7

In Slovenia, with its strong corporatist tradition, economic-interest associations are very well organized and possess relatively strong analytical capacities. Most economic and social policies are discussed in detail in the Economic and Social Council, a tripartite body. Trade unions and employers' associations do not have their own research institutes, but cooperate with universities and think tanks. Trade unions' analytical capacities have suffered from the fragmentation associated with the coexistence of seven separate union confederations. The biggest business associations managed to stand united against the tax reform proposed by the government in September 2016.

Association
Competence
(Others)
Score: 8

Slovenia's vibrant third sector has been quite active in monitoring government activities. Despite a decline in public funding, most interest associations have considerable policy knowledge, and many can rely on think tanks that involve various experts from the universities and research institutes in their work. Policy proposals developed by interest associations, although not numerous, have been featured prominently in the media.

Address | Contact

Bertelsmann Stiftung
Carl-Bertelsmann-Straße 256
33311 Gütersloh
Germany
Phone +49 5241 81-0

Dr. Daniel Schraad-Tischler
Phone +49 5241 81-81240
daniel.schraad-tischler@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

Dr. Christian Kroll
Phone +49 5241 81-81471
christian.kroll@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

Dr. Christof Schiller
Phone +49 5241 81-81470
christof.schiller@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

Pia Paulini
Phone +49 5241 81-81468
pia.paulini@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de
www.sgi-network.org