

Slovenia Report

Sustainable Governance Indicators 2024

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Executive Summary

From January 2022 to January 2024, Slovenia experienced several significant political events. Regular elections to the National Assembly took place in April 2022, followed by presidential and local elections, as well as three nationwide referendums in the autumn. All these elections met high standards of electoral integrity. The number of parties entering the National Assembly decreased to five, primarily due to tactical voting and a windfall effect.

Dissatisfaction with COVID-19 restrictions and democratic regression under the previous center-right coalition government led by the Slovenian Democratic Party prompted the election of the newly founded Freedom Movement (GS) in 2022. The Freedom Movement received the most support, winning 45.5% of the seats in the Assembly. They formed a center-left majority government with the Social Democrats (SD) and The Left (Levica) on June 1, 2022.

Prime Minister Golob's government pledged numerous reforms and greater involvement of civil society in political decision-making. Despite criticism that Slovenia is governed by an overly left-wing civil society and the perceived tolerance toward the Golob government, significant legislative proposals were supported and adopted. However, of the 122 commitments made by the center-left governing parties to the civil society network, 113 were not fulfilled after the first year in power.

Over the past two years, the social movement, which had criticized the democratic regression during the Janša government, has also been particularly critical of the public health system under the Golob government. The social dialogue in the Economic and Social Council was again interrupted, as it had been under the Janša government.

Key reforms related to the pension system, public sector wages, real estate legislation, tax laws, and education were listed, with healthcare reforms deemed the most urgent. Yet, most of these reforms remained suspended or unaddressed within two years. Some changes, such as replacing supplementary health insurance with compulsory contributions and adopting the long-term care law, were viewed positively. However, challenges persisted in migration policy and other sectors due to labor shortages.

Slovenia experienced catastrophic floods in August 2023, highlighting the need for difficult reform decisions amidst changing fiscal rules. The Golob government also faced challenges with corruption risks and ensuring high integrity among politicians and civil servants. While improvements in media freedom were observed toward the end of 2023, challenges remained in the small media market, characterized by public broadcasters' ownership concentration and poor financial situations.

Although Slovenia has a comprehensive regulatory framework, implementation issues persisted from 2022 to 2024, impacting various sectors, particularly the environment. Nonetheless, measures to address the energy crisis under the Golob government were generally deemed appropriate and relatively well-implemented. The government's pledge to increase official development assistance to 0.33% of gross national income by 2030 remained a significant commitment, with €159.65 million allocated for international development cooperation in 2022, representing 0.29% of GNI.

Key Challenges

Under the Golob government, democratic regression was halted. However, the government faced numerous political challenges in 2023 and early 2024, both internally among coalition partners and externally. Golob and his team, lacking political experience, struggled to handle these issues, leading to a sharp decline in public support and trust, which affected their ability to govern effectively. The government must learn to work through personal differences and disagreements within the ministerial teams and improve its communication strategy.

Recently, the public has observed disagreements within all three coalition parties. Additionally, the resignation or replacement of ministers has resulted in some ministerial posts being filled by less experienced individuals. These circumstances and internal disputes could easily lead to further declines in support for the government's activities and even its collapse. The upcoming elections to the European Parliament will be the next test of the government's support.

Growing ideological polarization mostly prevents cooperation between the coalition and opposition parties, especially the main opposition party, the Slovenian Democratic Party. This polarization often hinders societal reforms.

Urgent reforms in the healthcare and pension systems are needed. The absence of serious reforms in both systems will significantly impact the financial and economic sectors in the medium term due to the aging population and future social policy. The poor results achieved by Slovenian students in international studies on the education system call for a reform of the curricula and underscore the importance and urgency of developing a new national education program. This should be done after serious discussion and with the involvement of experts and relevant stakeholders to decide on the priorities and goals Slovenia wants to achieve with its educational reform.

As the period of loose rules to combat global crises (COVID-19 and energy) has ended, a more restrictive fiscal policy is needed to ensure compliance with budgetary commitments set in the wider environment, especially in the EU and the eurozone. The Golob government has withdrawn several promises and agreements made to employees in various public sectors, even before beginning serious negotiations on reforming the public sector wage system. These developments triggered several strikes in 2023, which the government has managed to control, at least temporarily.

Nevertheless, the doctors' strike at the beginning of January 2024 for higher salaries could again trigger a series of demands and a wave of strikes for higher wages in other areas of the public sector. The same applies to judges and public prosecutors, who seek to have their salaries raised to align with those of the other two branches of the public service, as per the Constitutional Court's decision. Among other influential actors, farmers have also raised clear demands, many of which contradict adopted policies and set targets, even at the EU level, which Slovenia has accepted.

Several important changes should be made in policy design, including greater use of expert advice to strengthen strategic planning, limit the politicization of the public service, and further improve the RIA system. Such changes can contribute to better policy implementation. The government must now focus on realizing the objectives set out in these strategies.

The government should ensure a stable and predictable tax system, as entrepreneurs and employers have requested. Only partial changes have been enacted in the past, but no comprehensive tax reforms have been prepared. This suggests that the government needs to effectively address various interest groups, including powerful ones, to prevent serious obstacles to Slovenia's stability and further development.

Democratic Government

I. Vertical Accountability

Elections

Free and Fair
Political
Competition
Score: 9

In Slovenia, the right to vote is universal and equal. Every citizen aged 18 or older is eligible to vote and run for election, regardless of social, ethnic, economic, or other affiliations. No financial deposit is necessary for registration or candidacy, and citizens are automatically enrolled upon reaching voting age. Slovenia ranked eighth globally in voter registration quality from 2012 to 2022, according to the Electoral Integrity Project (2023).

Political parties and voter groups can nominate candidates for various elections. For the National Assembly, a party may submit lists of candidates in all eight constituencies with the support of at least three National Assembly members or submit a list in a single constituency with backing from at least 100 voters. Alternatively, voters may propose a list in a single constituency with the support of at least 1,000 residents. Objections regarding the nomination process can be raised with the constituency electoral commission, and decisions are subject to review by the state electoral commission. Similar procedures apply to presidential elections.

In municipal elections, candidates for mayor or council members can be nominated by political parties or voters, with the required support contingent on the municipality's size. The law regulates campaign financing for electoral and referendum campaigns, mandating financial transparency through reporting to the Slovenian Agency for Public Law and Related Services, with oversight from the Court of Audit. However, challenges persist, particularly concerning the regulation of third-party campaigning, including foreign entities.

Public broadcasting must provide equal access to all parties and candidate lists for debates and presentations, although non-parliamentary parties often have

limited media access compared to established parties. While television remains a primary source of political information, printed media influence is waning, and online platforms are gaining prominence. Slovenian public television tends to create formats that favor the frontrunners. Media coverage in 2022 faced criticism for political bias, especially following personnel changes in public broadcasting. Nonetheless, media pluralism ensures voters have access to diverse political perspectives.

Free and Fair
Elections
Score: 9

The right to vote in Slovenia is universal and equal. This right extends to people with criminal convictions and, since 2024, to individuals under guardianship due to mental and psychosocial problems. Previously, these individuals faced restrictions based on court rulings regarding their ability to understand the meaning, purpose, and impact of elections, which deprived around 3,000 voters of their right to vote. The law also outlines the conditions under which foreigners have voting rights.

Parliamentary, presidential, and local elections are held regularly. Numerous polling stations throughout the country allow voters easy access without queuing. Voting is organized in hospitals, prisons, and retirement homes via postal voting. Early voting and mobile voting are available for sick and housebound voters. Special polling stations are set up in each of the 88 districts for voters who are outside their residences on election day.

Voters who are temporarily abroad can register to vote by mail, including via consular offices or at diplomatic missions (embassies). Those with permanent residence abroad have similar options for casting their vote. All voters with a registered permanent residence outside the country automatically receive a ballot paper.

Although the Electoral Integrity Project (2023) rated the 2022 Slovenian elections highly for integrity, certain shortcomings concerning voting from abroad were identified. Some complaints were made about the late distribution of ballot papers to voters abroad due to delays in finalizing candidate lists after appeals were lodged with the Supreme Court.

Elections are administered by election authorities at various levels under the direction of the State Election Commission, which is regarded as capable, professional, and impartial by various organizations (e.g., EIP, OSCE) and enjoys public confidence. The election procedures; vote counting; verification of results; and resolution of complaints are conducted transparently, impartially, and appropriately through official procedures. Nevertheless, in 2022, the commission appealed for more staff and financial resources.

Quality of Parties and Candidates

Socially Rooted
Party System
Score: 9

The electoral system is based on proportional representation with a 4% threshold for entry into the National Assembly of the RS (lower house of parliament). Slovenia is divided into eight constituencies, each subdivided into 11 sub-constituencies (districts). In practice, due to the seat distribution model, not every district always has its representative. Representatives of the Hungarian and Italian national minorities compete for a reserved seat, one for each group. The electoral system allows several parties to enter parliament – in practice, between 7 and 9. However, in 2022, only five parties passed the threshold, mainly due to tactical voting favoring the winning party. These parties represent important and diverse interests in society.

As the Manifesto Project shows, the manifestos of political parties differ in length, policy domains and policies addressed, importance, and solutions offered. The manifestos of the parties competing in the 2022 elections were publicly accessible, mainly via the parties' websites. Both libertarian-authoritarian (GAL-TAN) and left-right economic cleavages are evident in the party system. Some parties in this system have significant populist elements. There is also considerable polarization caused by certain political parties (e.g., SDS) that have contributed to the tactical voting of center-left voters to defeat the former ruling party and its government in the 2022 elections. Established parties have developed a territorial organizational structure, although there is an important difference between the established and institutionalized and the new political parties in this respect.

Effective Cross-
Party
Cooperation
Score: 7

Since the 1990s, the ideological profiling between parties and within society in Slovenia has been clear; this also applies to the period before World War II. However, this divergence has increased more recently, partly because certain cleavages continue to overlap. Although the libertarian-authoritarian cleavage was particularly evident in the 1990s, since the first decade of the 21st century, the economic cleavage has also become more significant. This change was mainly a consequence of the disintegration of the Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS) party, which had long been in office and occupied the center. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Drnovšek, the LDS was able to form ideologically mixed coalitions aimed at maintaining political stability.

The Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), initially founded at the end of the 1980s as a center-left social democratic party, transformed into a conservative party at the turn of the 21st century. Since 1993, the party has been led by Janez Janša, a particularly polarizing figure in Slovenian politics. This has been demonstrated several times over the last two decades, as center-left

voters have focused on defeating Janez Janša. A considerable part of the electoral success of new center-left parties is based on this strategy to attract voters.

Despite ideological polarization, there have been instances in the past where decision-makers have managed to overcome these divides. Examples include the declaration of Slovenia's independence, the country's accession to the EU and NATO, and the tough decisions made during the financial and economic crisis, as well as early in the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in the later phases of the pandemic, cooperation became untenable, primarily due to the democratic backsliding under the Janša government (which several democratic watchdog organizations had warned about). More recently, effective cross-party cooperation in addressing the consequences of the catastrophic floods in August 2023 has demonstrated, at least temporarily, that collaboration on critical issues is still possible.

Access to Official Information

Transparent
Government
Score: 9

The Law on Access to Public Information from 2003 guarantees citizens free and easy access to official information, with only a few exceptions for national security and classified data. Citizens can request public information by telephone, email, or in writing. The authorities must decide on the request without delay, but at the latest, within 20 working days. This right is frequently exercised, including by journalists in their role as the fourth estate. These cases attract significant public attention. In 2023, Slovenia finally ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents, having already signed it in 2009.

As an autonomous institution, the Information Commissioner is responsible for guaranteeing citizens and media access to information while ensuring personal data protection. It can use various appeal mechanisms or supervisory powers to guarantee citizens' access. A report published by the commissioner shows that in 2022, 696 complaints were received regarding access to public information, compared to 639 in 2021. The total number of complaints for silence on the part of the concerned institution was slightly lower in 2022 (241) than in 2021 (244). The number of complaints against state authorities decreased in 2022 (283 complaints in 2022 compared to 338 in 2021). However, state authorities remained the largest group of institutions against which the commissioner received the most complaints.

II. Diagonal Accountability

Media Freedom and Pluralism

Free Media
Score: 6

During the third Janša government (2020 – 2022), the Slovenian Press Agency (STA) had a dispute with UKOM, the government’s communications office, over public service tasks and state funding. This conflict was resolved in early 2022 when Igor Kadunc took over the agency and reached an agreement with UKOM, ending a period of uncertainty for the press agency and its employees.

Meanwhile, RTV, the public television and radio broadcaster, faced turmoil with significant staff turnover and appointments favoring individuals close to Janez Janša’s administration. Critical programs and presenters were removed, and editorial changes were made due to their opposition to the government. The former UKOM director, who was responsible for withholding funding for STA, assumed the directorship of RTV in July 2022, while Ksenija Koren, a retired PR advisor in Janša’s cabinet, was appointed chief editor of the country’s nightly national news broadcast on October 2022.

Studio City, a politically critical program, was discontinued in March 2022, raising concerns about censorship ahead of elections. A petition with 40,000 signatures demanded its return, which happened in January 2024 with a new program. RTV employees went on strike in 2023 due to irregularities, violations of the journalists’ code, and management’s influence on news content. The Union of Journalists of Slovenia expressed concern about journalist overwork and burnout, particularly at RTV and newspapers.

After the elections, center-left parties proposed amendments to the law on public radio and television, aiming to reorganize the governance and supervision of RTV. Critics warned of reduced openness and transparency, citing rushed legislative procedures. In a November 2023 referendum, citizens supported the changes, resulting in the appointment of 17 members to the new RTV Council. These members were selected by various organizations and institutions, with six representing RTV Slovenia employees. Zvezdan Martić, a longtime RTV journalist, was elected chairman of the management board.

Print media has suffered from declining circulation numbers and revenues, leading to journalist layoffs. These challenges have been attributed to politically motivated ownership changes. In response to workplace violations, the Whistleblower Act was passed in October 2022 and enforced in February

2023, providing protections for whistleblowers. This legislation aligned Slovenian law with the European Directive, although the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) criticized it as being too broad and exceeding public interest areas.

Pluralism of
Opinions
Score: 6

Media pluralism in Slovenia is governed by the Mass Media Act, which allocates state funds to ensure pluralism, democracy, and freedom of expression. However, the small media market is marked by significant ownership concentration, often with unclear agendas favoring certain parties. Notably, outlets like Nova24TV and publications like Demokracija and Škandal24 tend to support one party (SDS) while criticizing others. Conversely, Necenzurirano.si leans toward center-left parties. Additionally, customer-friendly media are owned by Hungarian investors linked to the government, raising concerns about geopolitical influence.

The European Commission and Media Pluralism Report have highlighted challenges to media freedom, particularly in market plurality, political independence, and social inclusion. The Agency for Communications Networks and Services regulates the electronic communications market but faces criticism for not addressing ownership accumulation, leading to content homogeneity across outlets.

To address these issues, the Ministry of Culture proposed a new media law in December 2023 to enhance transparency in public funding usage, improve ownership disclosure, and bolster media pluralism. The law is slated for parliamentary discussion in April 2024.

Civil Society

Free Civil
Society
Score: 8

Slovenian civil society organizations are vibrant, active, and reasonably well-organized. The Slovenian constitution guarantees citizens the right to peaceful and public assembly, and everyone has the right to freely associate with others. The “Friday protesters,” who regularly gathered in city centers during the SDS government, especially in Ljubljana but also online during the lockdown, continued their protest activities into early 2022. They focused on mobilizing voters for the parliamentary elections in April 2022 and aimed to remove the government that violated civil liberties. The movement successfully mobilized voters for the center-left option, presenting it as an alternative. The last Friday protest occurred on April 22, shortly before the national elections. Following the change of government and a Constitutional Court decision, the Ministry of the Interior lifted the fines imposed on civil society during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

The government of Prime Minister Golob from the Freedom Movement party appeared more open to proposals from civil society. For example, the coalition parties supported legislative proposals from the 8 March Institute and the NGO Legal Network for the Protection of Democracy. The opposition labeled such cooperation as “Slovenia is governed by civil society.” At the same time, civil society was criticized for being too tolerant of the new government, as most of its promises to civil society remained unfulfilled. In the first year of the Golob government, the Voice of the People initiative highlighted that the government had not fulfilled 113 of the 122 promises made to civil society. The NGO CNVOS, which has been monitoring and analyzing how governments comply with the National Assembly’s Resolution on Normative Activity since 2009 – obliging them to hold a public debate of at least 30 days on each new regulation – found that all governments violate this resolution to a similar extent, namely between 60% and 80%.

There were also some other problematic events. During the traditional Pride parade on June 17 in Ljubljana, several homophobic and transphobic acts – such as insults, thefts, the burning of rainbow flags, physical attacks, and threats – were reported on social media. Additionally, President Pirc Musar was criticized for excluding one member of her Youth Advisory Council, Sara Štiglic, because of her civic activism against pro-life activists and their installation. Women’s rights groups particularly criticized the president’s decision.

Effective Civil
Society
Organizations
(Capital and
Labor)
Score: 9

The Slovenian political system is neo-corporatist, providing representation for employers and employees in the Economic and Social Council (ESS), a tripartite body of social partners and the government of the Republic of Slovenia. The ESS addresses issues and measures related to economic and social policy and other matters specific to agreements between the partners. Representatives of employers and employees are also included in the National Council, the second house of Slovenia’s bicameral parliament, which represents social, economic, professional, and local interests. The institution consists of 40 members: four employers, four representatives of employees, and four representatives of farmers, artisans, and independent professionals. Consequently, the organizations of employers and employees are the most institutionalized, professionalized, and supported by expert staff.

Although the trade unions and employer representatives are among the strongest non-state actors, there has been a clear trend toward declining trade union membership in recent years. Trade union membership fell sharply in the first half of the 1990s, even as the number of trade unions in Slovenia increased. Additionally, associations of successful businesspeople outside the

institutionalized employer framework, such as the Slovenian Business Club, are gaining public attention and expressing concerns on various issues, including those outside the business sector.

In 2023, trade unions representing various professional groups in the public sector were notably active. These groups included education professionals, police officers, customs officers, nurses, judicial officials, local government employees, professional firefighters, the army, bus drivers, and more. Many of these unions have threatened or carried out strikes and other protests throughout the year.

The government is currently advocating for joint negotiations with all trade unions as part of the wage system reform. On January 15, 2024, the doctors' union began a general strike, which will continue until a strike agreement is reached or lifted. However, a resolution is not yet in sight. Consequently, work in the public healthcare system is restricted, increasing pressure on the government, even though the majority of the public and civil society do not support the doctors' strike.

Effective Civil
Society
Organizations
(Social Welfare)
Score: 8

Slovenia's Vibrant civil society sector comprising a diverse array of associations. However, it relies primarily on voluntary work and suffers from low levels of professionalization and limited resources. Just over 12,000 people are employed in the non-governmental sector, with more than half of these workers employed in institutes (zavodi), despite institutes making up only 13% of all non-governmental organizations.

In 2021, associations (društva), the most numerous type of non-governmental organization due to the prevalence of local firemen associations, employed 5,178 people. The share of employees in non-governmental organizations was a mere 1.24%, which is extremely low compared to other countries. A 2017 study by Johns Hopkins University found the global average to be 3.3% and the EU average to be 3.67%.

Volunteer work offsets the low level of professionalization. Volunteering has a long and rich tradition in Slovenia, connecting people at both local and national levels. In 2022, the total number of volunteers in voluntary organizations increased. That year, 2,341 volunteer organizations submitted reports on volunteering, with 226,106 volunteers contributing 9,245,305 hours. Most volunteer hours were dedicated to social welfare.

Some traditional civil society organizations active in the welfare field have a long history and a strong local network. Although their work relies heavily on volunteers, the largest organizations also have professional leadership. These

include Karitas Slovenia (founded in 1990), the Red Cross (1944), the Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth (1953), Slovenian Philanthropy (1992), and the Slovenian Association of Pensioners' Associations (1946). Given the tradition of a strong welfare state, the reduction of state services, and decreased budgets for social services, the demand for the services provided by civil society organizations has increased, especially during economic and financial crises.

Effective Civil
Society
Organizations
(Environment)
Score: 8

Several civil society organizations are active in the environmental sector. These organizations are fragmented, each covering different areas of environmental protection, and are often small with few members. Organizations that operate in the public interest can register with the relevant ministry. This status provides better opportunities to receive state funding. Currently, 44 organizations are registered with the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning. These organizations are important actors in environmental protection.

In addition to purely national environmental organizations, there are also national sections of international environmental organizations in Slovenia, such as Green Peace Slovenia. Some national environmental organizations are also well-networked regionally. Alpe Adria Green, which aims for regional integration to solve common ecological problems, has managed to connect all the countries of the former Yugoslavia, Italy, and Slovenia. Balkan River Defense is an organization that campaigns for clean rivers in the Balkans. Other environmental organizations form joint advocacy coalitions, such as Plan B for Slovenia, which has brought together 38 organizations active in sustainable development over the last ten years.

The activities of environmental organizations and other progressive civil society groups gained significant public attention during the so-called "referendum on waters," when the then-government of Prime Minister Janša (SDS) attempted to liberalize legislation to reduce environmental protections. This would have allowed for increased economic activity, particularly construction projects in protected coastal and river areas.

Environmental organizations were also active in 2023, along with local citizen initiatives addressing specific problems. In March 2023, Youth for Climate Justice organized climate protests in Ljubljana and Maribor, urging authorities to take action against the environmental crisis. The construction of a CO₂ sewer in the area of the Ljubljana aquifer sparked several protests. The project, taking place without the appropriate permits, could contaminate drinking water in the event of an accident or earthquake, as the sewer is located in the central part of the Kleče water protection area.

The 8th of March Institute, Eko Anhovo and Dolina Soče associations, and the Danes citizens' initiative submitted more than 6,000 certified signatures to the National Assembly in September 2023 to propose an amendment to the Environmental Protection Act. This initiative arose primarily due to industrial pollution in Anhovo, where residents suffer from significant health problems and premature deaths. One of the aims of the proposed amendment was to ensure that emission standards for waste incineration are the same as those for co-incineration. The amendment made this possible, eliminating the previous disparity where cement plants faced less stringent requirements than incineration plants. The law was passed in 2024.

III. Horizontal Accountability

Independent Supervisory Bodies

Effective Public
Auditing
Score: 9

The Court of Audit, which was established in 1991 and has been operational since 1995, is an independent state body tasked with monitoring and ensuring the transparent and efficient use of public funds in Slovenia. It audits all public institutions that receive public or European funds. Financially independent, it presents a financial plan to the National Assembly, which authorizes funds, making it an autonomous budget user. While mandated to conduct certain audits, no entity can delegate tasks or issue instructions. However, the National Assembly and the government can propose specific audits, with the court selecting at least five proposals from the National Assembly, including two from opposition MPs. Additionally, it can initiate audits based on initiatives from individuals and civil society organizations. The National Assembly appoints the president and two deputies of the court for nine-year terms.

The highly trusted Court of Audit regularly conducts effective and independent audits, prompting remedial actions for identified irregularities. From 2020 to 2022, it faced pressures from both the government and the opposition, including internal conflicts over audit reports, notably regarding the procurement of COVID-19 protective equipment.

During the same government's tenure, Prime Minister Janša initially refused to nominate two Slovenian prosecutors proposed by the Judicial Council to the

EU Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO). After negotiations and EU intervention, the government finally informed the EPPO about the candidates in November 2021, leading to their nomination for a five-year term.

Under Robert Golob's new government, a new president of the Court of Audit was appointed in July 2022, following changes in the deputy president position in 2021. In 2022, the court issued numerous audit reports, summary reports, and post-audit reports covering 94 audited entities. The National Assembly committee overseeing public finances reviews these reports regularly, and the media frequently covers the court's findings.

Effective Data
Protection
Score: 9

The Office of the Information Commissioner, an autonomous institution that also ensures and monitors personal data protection, was established in 2005. The current Information Commissioner has extensive experience in this area, having held office since 2014 (her second term began in 2019) and previously served as deputy commissioner from 2003 – 2008. The commissioner has a five-year mandate and is appointed by the National Assembly on the proposal of the president of the republic.

The funds for the commissioner's work are allocated from the state budget once the National Assembly determines them based on the commissioner's proposal. The institution's functions in data protection include monitoring the implementation of laws regulating the processing and protection of personal data and acting as an appeal body in the event of complaints from individuals about refusals to provide personal data.

Personal data protection is addressed in several other laws, resulting in a wide range of initiatives and complaints from various areas. For example, in 2022, the commissioner received 1,030 requests or initiatives for introducing the inspection procedure and 160 complaints regarding violations of individuals' rights. Additionally, the office received 12 cases of unauthorized disclosure or other unauthorized processing of patients' personal data, dealt with 81 complaints from individuals about breaches of the right to access their data, and received 22 complaints about violations of the right to erasure of their data.

According to the Information Commissioner, she has faced many problems and challenges due to legal confusion in this area. However, the new Law on Personal Data Protection, adopted at the end of 2022, along with other laws and regulations, represents an improvement in Slovenia's regulatory system for better personal data protection.

Decisions and statements by the commissioner regarding personal data protection have often been labeled as rigid positions under pressure from politicians and the media. During the COVID-19 pandemic, government representatives even blamed the commissioner for vaccination problems in Slovenia. Nevertheless, the Information Commissioner proved to be an independent state institution, and the public recognized this.

Two government offices handle data protection, among other responsibilities. The Government Office for Information Security focuses on enhancing information security. Its primary goal is to increase resilience to cyber threats that endanger individuals, businesses, the government, and society. Meanwhile, the Government Office for the Protection of Classified Information handles the classification and protection of sensitive information. It ensures the development and implementation of standards for safeguarding classified information within government agencies, local authorities, public license holders, non-governmental organizations, and commercial companies that manage classified data. The office also grants authorizations for legal entities to access classified information and issues security certificates.

Rule of Law

Effective Judicial
Oversight
Score: 8

Slovenia's judiciary is characterized by a constitutionally guaranteed separation of powers among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, ensuring the application of the principle of checks and balances. Independent courts and the Constitutional Court conduct judicial reviews of legislation and administrative actions. Political actors in Slovenia have generally respected the rule of law as a core value. In practice, however, there are several issues regarding respect for the courts and their decisions.

The Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) and its leader, Janez Janša, faced significant challenges in this regard, especially during their governance from 2020 to 2022. For instance, in 2021, the SDS-led government avoided nominating the delegated prosecutors to the European Public Prosecutor's Office and delayed making payments to the Slovenian Press Agency, despite court rulings. Janša, a three-time prime minister, has been a longtime critic of the Slovenian judiciary and has undermined public trust in the courts with various statements. V-Dem data indicates that the rule of law deteriorated in 2020 and 2021 but improved in 2022.

Following the 2022 parliamentary elections, the ruling coalition led by the Freedom Movement declared its intention to respect judicial independence. In 2022, serious discussions about judicial appointments began, aiming to

strengthen the judiciary's independence from politics. The proposed change suggests that judges should be appointed by the president of the republic rather than the National Assembly. However, organizations of judges and some legal experts have criticized the proposed reform and other planned changes. The Constitutional Court's decisions have been especially difficult for various governments to implement. Both the government and the National Assembly have long been criticized for failing to enforce several of its rulings. In January 2024, judges and prosecutors went on strike to protest the government's failure to raise their salaries to align with those of the other two branches of government, as demanded by the Constitutional Court. The judiciary has had major problems with backlogs, although this has improved in recent years. The 2022 edition of the EU Justice Scoreboard also showed that the public trusts the Slovenian judiciary. For years, those working in the judiciary have complained about inadequate infrastructure and poor working conditions.

Universal Civil
Rights
Score: 8

Civil rights are codified in the constitution and legislation and are generally respected by state institutions. Oversight and advocacy institutions, such as the Human Rights Ombudsman, play a crucial role in upholding these rights. Established by the 1991 constitution, the Human Rights Ombudsman is an independent and autonomous authority widely respected by the public, with the first Ombudsman taking office in 1994. The Ombudsman's annual reports are regularly presented to the National Assembly, and the government prepares responses to his findings, criticisms, and proposals.

The Advocate for the Principle of Equality, established in 2016, is less well known despite its numerous activities. This institution protects against discrimination in both the public and private sectors and, in certain cases, for legal entities. It informs, advises, and represents individuals who believe they have been discriminated against and assesses regulations for discriminatory practices.

V-Dem data indicates that civil liberties are generally highly respected in Slovenia, though there was a decline in 2020 and 2021, as noted by Amnesty International. The situation improved in 2022. Despite the existing legal framework, women still earn less than men for the same work, although Slovenia has one of the lowest gender pay gaps. Discrimination against same-sex couples has occurred, but there have been legal improvements. In 2022, the National Assembly amended legislation to legalize same-sex marriages and adoptions following a Constitutional Court ruling that restricting these rights to heterosexual couples was unconstitutional.

In 2023, after decades of debate and previous refusals to implement the law passed in 2021, the new Long-Term Care Act came into force to address the

inadequate care services for Slovenia's growing elderly population. The Ombudsman's 2022 report was critical, highlighting an increase in the number of cases handled compared to pre-pandemic levels, though fewer than during the pandemic in 2020 and 2021. The report covered a wide range of civil rights issues and noted that Slovenian society is becoming more intolerant and desensitized to others, coinciding with a decline in social standards experienced by most citizens.

Effective
Corruption
Prevention
Score: 7

In general, officeholders who break the law or engage in corruption are investigated. However, the relatively poor performance of various oversight institutions is evident, likely due to certain legal and procedural loopholes in prosecuting abuse of office. In 2023, Eurobarometer found that 38% of respondents in Slovenia believe those caught committing minor corruption offenses are adequately punished, while only 18% believe the same for those caught bribing senior officials. Despite the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption being quite active, it is not as respected today as it was ten years ago. The commission's powers remain relatively limited, with GRECO (Group of States Against Corruption) calling for adequate financial and human resources in 2023. The commission's reports and findings often face public criticism, including from politicians, and are not always respected. The president of the commission believes systemic changes and education in integrity, accountability, and transparency are necessary.

Overall, while there are mechanisms to investigate and address corruption among officeholders, the effectiveness of these efforts is hindered by institutional weaknesses and insufficient resources. The public perception reflects a lack of confidence in the adequacy of punishments for corruption, particularly for higher-level offenses.

The commission's online app, ERAR, continues to provide transparency into transactions of public and state-owned companies but is generally considered inferior to its predecessor, Supervizor. In 2023, a Eurobarometer survey found that 83% of Slovenians believe corruption is widespread, although this is 4% less than in 2022. The Corruption Perception Index shows no progress in the fight against corruption in Slovenia, with the index score at 56 in 2023. The score has fallen below 60 for the previous two years, whereas it was 60 or above from 2015 to 2020. For a decade, the public has viewed corruption as one of Slovenia's biggest problems, especially systemic corruption.

In 2023, the OECD raised concerns about the lack of enforcement of foreign bribery offenses, noting that Slovenia has not prosecuted any foreign bribery cases since joining the Anti-Bribery Convention in 1999. GRECO was also dissatisfied with Slovenia's progress in 2023, finding that only five of the 15

recommendations from the Fifth Round Evaluation Report had been satisfactorily implemented or addressed. Key recommendations, such as developing an integrity plan for the government and promoting awareness of integrity issues, had not been fully implemented.

In 2023, the Slovenian Commission for the Prevention of Corruption addressed high-profile issues, including alleged corruption in the healthcare sector and cases involving politicians, such as a member of parliament, a minister, and Prime Minister Robert Golob. The commission investigated alleged unauthorized pressure from Prime Minister Golob on former Interior Minister Tatjana Bobnar and other Interior Ministry employees. The Law on Whistleblower Protection also came into force in 2023.

The 2013 Law on Political Parties prohibits donations from companies to political parties, while foreign funding has been banned for decades. Annual financial reports submitted by parties to the Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Public Law and Related Services show that parties rely heavily on public funds. Parties receiving at least 1% of votes in the previous parliamentary elections are entitled to state budget funds.

In 2023, the law was amended to allocate 10% of the total party funding budget equally among all eligible parties, with the remaining 90% distributed according to their vote share. This distribution was in place from 2000 – 2013; in the past ten years, the shares were 25% and 75%, respectively. Indirect public party funding includes additional funds for organizational and administrative support. The Court of Audit is required to audit parties' financial reports, but sanctions for breaches of the law are rarely implemented.

Legislature

Sufficient
Legislative
Resources
Score: 9

The National Assembly is adequately resourced. Although the Assembly has its own job classification system, its administration has always employed fewer staff than provided for in the HR allocation plan classification system. In 2022, the Assembly employed around 250 people in its administration.

Although the Assembly had already enjoyed various types of autonomy before 2019, it was legally strengthened by the National Assembly Act. This Act ensures greater coherence between its different forms of autonomy, including administrative, financial, regulatory, and security autonomy. Deputies can rely on the support of the Assembly's administration, the research-documentation division, and, within this division, the research unit. The unit provides expert, objective, and politically neutral support to members of parliament and other

parliamentary actors, such as working bodies, PPGs, and the secretary-general, or on their own initiative.

In the 2018 – 2022 legislature, for example, the Section prepared 157 research requests. As in the previous legislature, most requests came from opposition members of parliament (59), followed by ruling coalition members of parliament (22), while Assembly working bodies requested nine and political groups requested 17 such requests.

The parliamentary groups employ several staff members who have been paid by the Assembly for administrative, organizational, and technical tasks since 1993. Each parliamentary group is entitled to several staff members, with larger groups allocated slightly more staff. During the last parliamentary term, more than 100 people were employed in the political groups.

Each member of the European Parliament also has a personal allowance for their office, which ranges from €500 to 800 per month, and additional entitlements. They also have a budget for education and training. For 2022 and 2023, 90 members of parliament spent around €45,000 per year.

Effective
Legislative
Oversight
Score: 8

Within the scope of their competencies and areas of work, the parliamentary working bodies also directly and indirectly control the government and its ministries. These working bodies can request that the government and other institutions provide all necessary documents and explanations to fulfill this function. The government must supply the requested information and documents unless it is against the law. However, governments have sometimes provided documents only at the last moment or with considerable delay, thereby compromising the Assembly's ability to fulfill its oversight role.

Ministers generally honor the invitations of the National Assembly and the working bodies. If ministers cannot attend a meeting, State Secretaries may be authorized to represent the ministries. Ministers are also obliged to answer questions from members of parliament either orally or in writing, which is largely honored in practice. Additionally, the prime minister must personally answer four questions from members of the National Assembly at each regular parliamentary session. Notably, both Prime Minister Janša and Prime Minister Golob tended to avoid certain meetings of some parliamentary bodies and did not attend despite being invited.

In 2022, 372 questions and initiatives were put forward: eight to the prime minister, the largest number to the government as a whole – 140, followed by the minister of health with 40 questions and initiatives. Twenty-five remained unanswered.

Effective
Legislative
Investigations
Score: 8

The National Assembly may order an investigation into matters of public importance and appoint a commission of inquiry. The constitution, the Law on Parliamentary Investigation, and the Rules of Procedure for Parliamentary Investigation determine its role, status, and powers. Once the inquiry is completed, a commission may draw up a final report and submit it to the Assembly for presentation and discussion at a plenary session.

Commission meetings are generally open to the public, allowing them to exert some form of political and public pressure. A commission can also propose that the Assembly adopt a resolution on the political responsibility of officeholders or request the competent authorities to propose a legislative amendment in a specific area. Several such commissions have been set up in each legislative period since 1992, totaling 38. The highest number of such commissions was in the 2008 – 2011 and 2018 – 2022 legislative periods, each with seven committees of inquiry. Nonetheless, only 12 reports prepared by commissions were adopted by the National Assembly.

From June 2022 to January 2024, three commissions of inquiry were formed; the opposition requested one, which an opposition member of parliament also chairs.

In general, it is common for the opposition to call for establishing such commissions. As many have observed, the outcome rarely has important consequences for the government. The commissions often serve the political agenda and the election campaign. Therefore, many are highly politicized and misused for campaign purposes or discrediting.

Legislative
Capacity for
Guiding Policy
Score: 9

The National Assembly has two types of working bodies – commissions and committees. Some of the commissions are standing bodies, while the committees usually cover the work of ministries. In the 2022 – 2024 period, there were eight commissions. After the 2022 elections, 17 ministries (three without portfolios) were formed, and the Assembly had 13 committees. However, in 2023, while three additional ministries were established, the number of Assembly committees did not increase. This means some committees oversee more than one ministry. This situation is not unusual in Slovenia, even though the number of ministries and committees is relatively similar.

The rules of procedure for the National Assembly stipulate that the leading positions and the majority of seats in the Commission for the Control of Public Finances and the Commission for the Supervision of Intelligence and Security Services are held by members of parliament from opposition parliamentary groups. This is respected. When distributing seats in the individual working bodies, the ratio between governing coalition members and opposition

members is considered. At present, all but one of the commissions are chaired by members of the opposition, while only in two committees does the president come from the opposition. As a rule, each parliamentary group is guaranteed at least one seat on each working body. In Slovenia, at least three members of parliament are required to form a parliamentary group. In the 2022 – 2024 period, almost all committees had 15 seats, some even 17, and in most commissions, there were more than 10. This means participation in working bodies is a considerable burden for parliamentary groups with fewer members.

Governing with Foresight

I. Coordination

Quality of Horizontal Coordination

Effective
Coordination
Mechanisms of
the GO/PMO
Score: 8

The Prime Minister's Office handles the coordination, organization, professional, and administrative tasks for the Prime Minister. Its responsibilities include preparing expert opinions to inform the prime minister's decisions and actions in managing and directing government work, as well as coordinating the ministries in implementing the government's political and administrative measures. The office also oversees the implementation of binding instructions issued by the prime minister to the ministers, which are crucial for the work of individual ministries. Additionally, the office is responsible for interdepartmental cooperation on matters involving multiple ministries.

Structurally, the office consists of nine experts, the Head of the Office, and eight State Secretaries. The State Secretaries are responsible for relations with the National Assembly, European affairs, culture, and international affairs. They also develop dialogue with civil society, coordinate citizens' initiatives, manage intergenerational dialogue and housing policy, oversee strategic communication, and handle the national nuclear program. Women are strongly represented in the current cabinet, alongside three male State Secretaries.

The government operates and makes decisions through regular and correspondence meetings, typically convened by the prime minister on Thursdays. In the prime minister's absence, the deputy prime minister or a minister appointed by the prime minister chairs the meetings. The government also reviews materials finalized in meetings of its working bodies.

As with previous administrations, there are currently three working bodies: the Committee of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for State and Public Affairs, the Committee of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for

Economic Affairs, and the Commission of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Administrative and Personnel Affairs. These working bodies meet weekly and consist of the president, the deputy president, and a sufficient number of members appointed by the government. Decisions are made by a majority vote of the members present.

Each working body issues a brief report on the government material discussed at its meetings. Once a working body has given final consideration to a matter, the decision is issued as a government decision.

The State Administration Act defines the relationship between the government and its ministries. Ministries must follow the political guidelines of the government. The government may instruct a ministry to investigate a particular issue, fulfill a specific task, and report back. However, the Prime Minister's Office is not directly involved in the policies proposed by the ministries, which remain the responsibility of the respective ministries.

Effective
Coordination
Mechanisms
within the
Ministerial
Bureaucracy
Score: 7

The Government Rules of Procedure, adopted in 2001, define cooperation between ministries. The government establishes committees for the preliminary examination of individual matters and interministerial cooperation. The government determines which decisions the ministers on a committee are authorized to make on its behalf. A committee may cease its activities as soon as it has fulfilled its tasks.

The Office of the Government for Legislation ensures that regulations are constitutional and lawful, internally consistent, drafted according to nontechnical rules, understandable to the public, and practical in application. This government service plays a crucial role in coordinating cross-departmental regulations. According to the government's rules of procedure, proposals for general legislation must always be coordinated in advance with the Office of the Government for Legislation.

The General Secretariat of the Government manages the technical aspects and administration of government activities. This body is responsible for organizing meetings of the government, its working bodies, expert councils, and other government entities, as well as monitoring the implementation of the government's decisions and obligations.

Communication among government members occurs via the government information system, which is accessible to government members, the secretary-general, the prime minister's head of office, heads of government services, and their representatives. Decisions on European legislation are made through the EU portal, which is part of the government information system.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs uses its information system for EU matters related to the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union. When EU matters are published on the EU portal, it is assumed that the material has been distributed to all ministries and government departments. The EU portal is also used to inform the National Assembly.

In December 2022 and March 2023, the government adopted the new Digital Public Services Strategy 2030 and the Digital Slovenia 2030 Strategy, respectively. The Office of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Digital Transformation was established by the Janša government as a ministry without a portfolio. Although it remains part of the current government, it was reorganized in January 2023 and assigned to the Ministry of Digital Transformation. This ministry is responsible for providing electronic public administration services and, in May 2023, presented guidelines to public administration bodies for accelerating digital transformation in public administration.

Complementary
Informal
Coordination
Score: 7

Informal communication often occurs away from the public eye, happening daily in person, via emails and telephone conversations, or during various meetings and events. Informal discussions and coffee mornings between party leaders are common practices that influence the dynamics of processes and relationships between participants. The media is informed about such meetings only when a problem arises and a decision is expected from the prime minister.

For instance, during a disagreement within the Social Democratic Party, the party leader met with the prime minister individually, while the minister of justice also met separately with the prime minister. Additionally, a scandal involving the role of the general secretaries of political parties in ministerial duties revealed that the general secretaries of all three coalition parties met weekly to coordinate policy, personnel, and programs.

Quality of Vertical Coordination

Effectively
Setting and
Monitoring
National
(Minimum)
Standards
Score: 8

Slovenia's government is highly centralized, with all major public administrative institutions and ministries located in the capital. Although some institutions, including administrative units, inspectorates, and institutes, have territorial units, there is a clear hierarchy among them. Furthermore, Slovenia does not have regions; the subnational level is represented solely by 212 municipalities with limited competences. The division of responsibilities between the national and local levels can sometimes lead to conflicts,

particularly regarding the funding of local infrastructure such as bridge maintenance or water management licenses.

In recent years, the issue of unequal workloads among administrative units has emerged. Slovenia has 58 administrative units responsible for performing state administration tasks uniformly at the subnational level. These tasks include issuing identity cards, travel documents, and driving licenses, as well as registering residences and vehicles, issuing certificates and permits for public events, weapons, building and use permits, and certificates for checking the conformity of buildings.

The division of administrative units dates back to the previous political system, resulting in significant variations in their size and workload. In 2023, the Ministry of Public Administration proposed an amendment to the Act on State Administration to address these disparities. The amendment allows for transferring local jurisdiction between administrative units if a unit cannot manage a large number of cases within a reasonable time frame. This measure aims to expedite case resolutions and reduce backlogs for service users.

Effective
Multilevel
Cooperation
Score: 7

Slovenia is divided into 212 municipalities. Most of these municipalities are small and understaffed, making it difficult for them to cover all policy areas. Only the larger cities have departments that manage specific policy areas. Additionally, local governments struggle with inadequate funding and often inefficient budget use due to the small size of the municipalities and lack of resource pooling for shared services. Consequently, dissatisfaction between local and national levels often stems from the fee received from the national budget (the so-called “povprečnina”).

Municipalities, however, possess a certain degree of local autonomy. The extent of administrative supervision impacts the independence of local government. From a comparative perspective, Slovenia has the lightest forms of administrative supervision.

In October 2023, the Government Office for Legislation organized a public consultation on establishing the Register of Legal Acts of Local Communities, which representatives of municipalities, associations of municipalities, official gazettes, and other experts attended.

II. Consensus-Building

Recourse to Scientific Knowledge

Harnessing Scientific Knowledge Effectively
Score: 6

The Government Office and the ministries collaborate with non-state actors and experts in various ways. To establish dialogue with civil society organizations and non-governmental professional institutions in specific areas, the government co-establishes working committees and other bodies. The civil society organizations and professional institutions determine their own representatives.

In 2022 and 2023, the government set up several working committees comprising representatives from civil society and academia. In October 2022, the government established the Development Council of the Republic of Slovenia – an expert advisory body focused on scientific research and innovation activities – which includes ministers and representatives from various research institutions. Additionally, the Public Agency for Research and Innovation, along with the ministries, is preparing a call for targeted research projects that address political topics the government needs to tackle. Research institutes and universities are eligible to participate in these tenders.

Involvement of Civil Society in Policy Development

Effective Involvement of Civil Society Organizations (Capital and Labor)
Score: 8

Slovenia’s neo-corporatist system positions business and labor representatives as key non-state actors in the policymaking process. The Economic and Social Council (ESC) institutionalizes the participation of the government, ministries, and business and labor representatives, where these parties discuss policy and consider the interests of both employers and employees. This involvement extends beyond labor legislation.

Coordination between the government and social partners within the ESC framework occurs through ESC meetings, meetings of the ESC college, and gatherings of negotiating groups and expert committees. The ESC college has been active since 2017, alongside the negotiating groups and expert committees.

During Prime Minister Cerar’s term, the ESC held 65 monthly meetings, averaging 1.35 meetings per month, each lasting about 3 hours and 2 minutes. Under Prime Minister Šarec, ESC members participated in 17 meetings,

averaging 0.94 meetings per month, with each meeting lasting about 3 hours and 20 minutes. During Prime Minister Janša’s term, 16 ESC meetings were held until May 2021, averaging 1.10 meetings per month, with each meeting lasting about 5 hours and 6 minutes. After May 2021, the ESC ceased to meet due to the withdrawal of the trade unions. In July 2021, the president of the ESC wrote to council members, urging them to revive social dialogue and warning of the harmful consequences of inaction and lack of coordination.

ESC members met with Acting Prime Minister Golob for the first time on July 15, 2022, more than a year after the last meeting. During this meeting, the prime minister presented the government’s priorities for the 2022 – 2026 term. The ESC held 12 regular meetings until July 2023. However, since then, employers’ organizations, which had repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction and concern about the inadequate tripartite social dialogue over the past year, have withdrawn from the ESC until conditions for genuine tripartite social dialogue are guaranteed. In September 2023, the president of the ESC wrote to council members and the Prime Minister’s Office, urging the revival of social dialogue.

Effective
Involvement of
Civil Society
Organizations
(Social Welfare)
Score: 7

Including civil society organizations in social welfare is not as systematic as including representatives of capital and labor. Instead, representatives of social welfare organizations are often included in government working groups established for specific topics.

In the last two years, several new working groups have been formed. In October 2022, the Working Group for the Preparation of the Strategy in the Field of Migration was established. This was followed in February 2023 by the Committee for Monitoring the Program of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Program of the Fund for Internal Security, and the Program of the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy under the Integrated Border Management Fund. In May 2023, the Working Group for the Preparation of the Strategy in the Field of Integration of Foreigners was set up. Additionally, in April 2023, the Council of the Republic of Slovenia for Children and Family was established as a permanent advisory body to the government. Its members include representatives of non-governmental organizations and professional institutions active in the field of children and families, as well as representatives of the government.

Effective
Involvement of
Civil Society
Organizations
(Environment)
Score: 7

When the government passed and enforced restrictive legislation during the COVID-19 pandemic targeting civil society organizations working for environmental rights, these organizations quickly responded with protests and lobbying activities. Nevertheless, the government succeeded in adopting new criteria for civil society organizations to challenge decisions on environmental

issues. For example, civil society organizations had to have at least 50 active members in the previous two years. As a result, many organizations were excluded from this procedure.

After the elections, when the center-left parties formed a coalition, civil society organizations prepared a law to counteract the previous government's detrimental measures. This law, passed in July 2022, eliminated the impossible conditions for environmental civil society organizations to participate in administrative and judicial proceedings under the Nature Conservation Act.

In June 2023, the government established the Climate Council as the nation's independent scientific advisory body for climate policy. In accordance with the Environmental Protection Act, the government adopted the rules of procedure for the Climate Council in 2022, regulating its functioning, and issued the decree on its establishment in 2023, thus creating the conditions for the first Slovenian scientific advisory body for climate policy.

Members of the Climate Council serve six-year terms and provide scientific advice through expert opinions and recommendations on established and proposed climate policy measures, ensuring their compliance with ratified international treaties and the EU legal order on climate change. Another key task of the council is to participate in developing climate change legislation. In 2023, the council met three times.

Candidates for the Climate Council are independent experts in climate change mitigation and adaptation, representing the natural and technical sciences as well as the social sciences and humanities.

In November 2022, the government established the Interdepartmental Working Group for International Climate Issues, comprising representatives from various ministries. The group's tasks include developing draft positions for international climate negotiations. Representatives of non-governmental organizations are not regularly included in this interdepartmental group. In April 2023, the government established an interministerial working group to support Slovenia's comprehensive strategic project of decarbonization as part of the transition to a circular economy.

Openness of Government

Open
Government
Score: 9

The Ministry of Public Administration established the national open data portal OPSI (Odprti podatki Slovenije) in 2016. The portal provides a single national online point for the publication of open data for the entire public

sector. OPSI was created based on the EU Directive on the reuse of public sector data. In the Open Data Maturity Report 2023, the European Commission ranks Slovenia 14th.

According to the OECD's OURdata Index on Open Government Data, Slovenia remains among the top 10 OECD countries that consistently ensure adequate access to open data. Slovenia has presented a comprehensive approach to open data initiatives and scores well in all areas, from its open data strategy and legal requirements to the publication of high-quality data and engagement with stakeholders inside and outside government to promote the reuse of data.

III. Sensemaking

Preparedness

Capacity for
Strategic
Foresight and
Anticipatory
Innovation
Score: 6

The Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy was founded in 2014. In January 2023, the office was reorganized within the Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development. Among other responsibilities, the ministry coordinates development planning documents with those of the European Union and other international organizations. The Slovenian Development Strategy 2030 was prepared in 2017. Although the government has established a special website for the implementation of the strategy, the last report on development was produced in 2020.

In 2017, the public sector introduced some innovations, such as the interactive Policy Jam workshops. In these workshops, stakeholders worked on predetermined policy topics, attempted to understand the main challenges, and sought possible solutions. However, only two Policy Jams were organized. In October 2021, a global conference was held under the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU. This conference marked the first time that governance in terms of innovation, drafting better laws, and improving the quality of the public sector was discussed.

The government is also supported by two offices: the Institute for Macroeconomic Analysis and Development and the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia. These offices produce data and forecasts essential for the country's various strategy and development processes.

Analytical Competence

Effective
Regulatory
Impact
Assessment
Score: 6

In 2019, the government adopted an Action Plan to improve the process of planning, preparing, adopting, and evaluating the impact of 2019 – 2022 legislation. The plan extends the Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) guide to cover the assessment of non-financial impacts and recommends the introduction of preliminary impact assessments along with a more in-depth analysis of potential social and environmental impacts.

The Court of Audit has published a series of three audit reports entitled “Are we checking the impact of the proposed regulations on society in Slovenia” (RIA 1-2007, RIA 2-2012, RIA 3-2021). The Court of Audit has been continuously auditing the drafting, adoption, and monitoring of regulations since 2004. Its last report was published in 2021, assessing that between May 31, 2012, and June 30, 2018, the government was partially effective in regulating the area of implementing analyses of the impact of regulations on society.

In 2021, the OECD prepared the Regulatory Policy Outlook 2021 for Slovenia. The report assessed that RIA is carried out for all primary laws and some subordinate regulations. The impact assessment requirements for subordinate legislation are less stringent than those for primary laws. The RIA process, especially for subordinate regulations, could be strengthened by introducing a threshold test or proportionality criteria to determine which regulations require in-depth scrutiny.

Effective
Sustainability
Checks
Score: 4

The Development Strategy for Slovenia 2030, adopted in 2017, includes a chapter on implementation and monitoring. It emphasizes the importance of consistently following instructions, monitoring implementation success, addressing deviations, and adapting to new situations and challenges to effectively achieve the set goals.

The strategy acknowledges that implementation has historically been the weakest aspect of development planning. It provides a general framework for implementation, stipulating that it should be based on medium-term planning aligned with the medium-term financial framework. Monitoring the achievement of the strategy’s goals by 2030 or 2050 is planned using the OECD framework for evaluating the agreed measures.

For each development goal, the strategy defines two to three main performance indicators with baselines and target values. These indicators are monitored and analyzed by the Institute for Macroeconomic Analysis and

Development. The sustainability aspect of monitoring the strategy's objectives will determine whether the starting points for development need to change during implementation.

Effective Ex Post
Evaluation
Score: 4

The Resolution on Normative Activity adopted in 2009 mandates the assessment of the impact of public policies. In 2023, the Slovenian Association of Evaluators compiled a list of external government evaluation studies to be conducted between 2019 and June 2023. A similar list was drawn up in 2009. Since then, improvements in the government's evaluation culture have been noted. However, the evaluation culture remains at a very low level. At least two-thirds of the departments did not conduct any external evaluations during the specified period. Furthermore, at least a quarter of them did not understand the concept of external impact evaluation.

The Ministry of Public Administration, responsible for decisions on normative activity that require the evaluation of public policy impact, did not conduct a single external evaluation during the reporting period. The vast majority of evaluations are carried out by research or consultancy organizations, and these evaluation studies are often limited to indicator analyses and compliance checks. The association also observes that the study results are not publicly presented to the evaluation community. Instead, the results are only presented to stakeholders in the problem area, which is inadequate.

Sustainable Policymaking

I. Economic Sustainability

Circular Economy

Circular
Economy Policy
Efforts and
Commitment
Score: 7

In 2018, various stakeholders thoroughly examined the roadmap toward a circular economy in Slovenia before its adoption. Like other nations such as Denmark and Luxembourg, Slovenia introduced a national circular economy policy in 2018, identifying the food system, forest-based value chains, manufacturing, and mobility as key sectors and priority policy areas. In recent years, Slovenian governments have collaborated with EIT Climate-KIC on Deep Demonstrations, a model designed to facilitate a systemic transition to a circular economy. According to the Deep Demonstrations methodology, the first two phases of this transition were completed after 2018.

Further phases of the Deep Action Plan Demonstration are scheduled for implementation up to 2025, involving active participation from various stakeholders, including local communities, businesses, and policymakers. At the end of 2021, the Slovenian government adopted an implementation plan for a comprehensive strategic project aimed at decarbonizing Slovenia through the transition to a circular economy, encompassing the activities of 14 distinct programs. Different ministries oversee the implementation activities corresponding to their respective programs. Additionally, a single ministry or government agency has been designated as the coordinator to ensure the comprehensive and coordinated execution of the plan. By the end of 2022, the government had completed the Comprehensive Strategic Project's first phase and commenced the action plan's second phase.

The initiation of the second phase of the action plan coincides with Slovenia being selected to host the Circular Economy Hotspot 2025. This selection underscores the country's dedication to the principles of a circular economy and its commitment to sustainable development. Furthermore, the activities of the Strategic Research and Innovation Partnership – Networks for the

Transition to a Circular Economy (SRIP – Circular Economy), which unites Slovenian economic entities, educational and research institutions, non-governmental organizations, and other interested parties, highlight the significance of the circular economy for both the state and society.

Nevertheless, a 2023 report by the European Court of Auditors presents a critical assessment of the sector, indicating that the transition within EU member states remains sluggish despite EU measures. These findings suggest that Slovenia made notable progress between 2015 and 2021, as reflected by its circular economy rates relative to other EU member states. Like many EU member states, Slovenia also acknowledged that it would develop a national strategic document on the circular economy by 2022.

Viable Critical Infrastructure

Policy Efforts
and Commitment
to a Resilient
Critical
Infrastructure
Score: 6

Although Slovenia began addressing critical infrastructure protection as early as 2006, comprehensive and systematic regulation was not established until 2017 with the adoption of the Law on Critical Infrastructure. Prior to this, issues related to critical infrastructure were managed through government decisions. The law defines the following sectors as critical infrastructure: energy, transport, food, drinking water supply, health, finance, environmental protection, and information and communication networks and systems. Responsibility for these critical infrastructure sectors falls to specific ministries related to each sector and the Bank of Slovenia, while management of these infrastructures is more varied. Each sector has a designated contact person, and the Ministry of Defence oversees coordination and provides expert guidance in critical infrastructure.

The National Centre for Crisis Management has been established as an internal unit within the Ministry of Defence. Besides the Law on Critical Infrastructure, other relevant documents include the Resolution on National Security and the Slovenian Defence Strategy. Critical infrastructure protection measures are categorized as ongoing activities; additional activities planned and executed by infrastructure operators or owners; and, if necessary, actions taken by the government to ensure security. According to the risk assessment guidelines 2017 – updated in 2019 – critical infrastructure operators must update their risk assessments if new circumstances arise that could significantly impact infrastructure operations, but at least once annually.

As of 2020, Slovenia ranks 67th globally in the Global Cybersecurity Index. While it has demonstrated strengths in legislative measures, it is comparatively weak in technical measures. The Cybersecurity Strategy was adopted in 2016,

and in 2021, the Government Office for Information Security was established as the national authority responsible for information security. Its main task is to enhance resilience against cyber threats that could jeopardize individuals, businesses, the government, and society.

Practice has shown that various state actors and critical infrastructure entities, such as electricity utilities and distribution companies, have been successfully hacked and compromised. These attacks have resulted in the paralysis of government services, theft of personal data, and temporary loss of control over various systems.

Decarbonized Energy System

Policy Efforts
and Commitment
to Achieving a
Decarbonized
Energy System
by 2050
Score: 8

The Slovenian government has adopted several documents addressing energy from renewable sources. The National Action Plan for Renewable Energy initially aimed for renewable sources to constitute at least 25% of total energy consumption by 2020. This target was later increased to 27% by 2030 under a new document adopted by a subsequent government.

In 2023, Slovenia submitted its strategic draft of the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan to the EU, making it one of six countries to submit on time. This plan outlines targets, strategies, and measures for the five dimensions of the Energy Union up to 2030, with a perspective extending to 2040. These dimensions are: 1. Decarbonization, 2. Energy efficiency, 3. Energy security, 4. The internal energy market, and 5. Research, innovation, and competitiveness.

Created in collaboration with various stakeholders, the document includes sectoral target shares of total energy consumption: 41.4% for heating and cooling, 43.3% for electricity, and 20.8% for transport. Additional targets were set for other sectors as well.

Despite Slovenia's comprehensive energy and climate policy measures, policymakers acknowledge the need for improvements and additional actions to achieve the established targets. To address these issues, the Law on the Promotion of the Use of Renewable Energy Sources was adopted in 2021, followed by the Law on the Siting of Plants for the Production of Electricity from Renewable Energy Sources in 2023. According to the International Energy Agency, the carbon intensity of industrial energy consumption in Slovenia decreased from 40.9 to 33.8 gCO₂ per MJ between 1990 and 2020. For instance, final coal consumption for households dropped from 6,022 TJ in

1991 to 1 TJ in 2021, and industry consumption decreased from 5,183 TJ in 1990 to 881 TJ in 2021.

Regarding low-carbon electricity generation, nuclear energy accounts for the largest share, followed by hydropower, with biofuels, solar energy, and wind energy comprising smaller shares. Notably, solar energy surpassed biofuels in 2019 and generated 645 GWh in 2022. Total CO2 emissions decreased by almost 10% between 1990 and 2021, despite significant increases from 1995 to 2013.

Slovenian policymakers, like those in some other European countries, believe nuclear energy can play a crucial role in achieving decarbonization targets. There have been numerous debates about constructing a second unit at the Krško nuclear power plant, with calls for a referendum on the issue. At the beginning of 2024, all parliamentary parties advocated for a referendum on this matter.

Adaptive Labor Markets

Policies
Targeting an
Adaptive Labor
Market
Score: 8

The unemployment rate remained low in 2022 and 2023. Data from the Slovenian Statistical Office for the third quarter of 2023 show the rate was 3.9% and is expected to remain at this level or even lower in 2024 and 2025. Among young people, it was 8.4%. Among those aged 50 – 64 years, 2.9% were unemployed. By gender, slightly more women than men were unemployed, at 4.0% and 3.7%, respectively.

The Employment Service of Slovenia reported on registered unemployment in December 2023: 20% of all registered unemployed were young people, 37.5% were over 50, 43% were long-term unemployed, and 48.6% were women. Active employment policy in Slovenia is diverse. This policy includes a range of measures in the labor market aimed at increasing employment, reducing unemployment, improving the employability of individuals in the labor market, and enhancing the competitiveness and flexibility of employers. Measures under this policy encompass education and training programs.

Under the Labour Market Regulation Act, the ministry can implement additional measures for unemployment benefits in response to significant labor market discrepancies or during times of crisis. These measures aim to maintain a higher number of jobs and prevent transitions to open unemployment, or to facilitate education and training for employment with a new employer.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government under Prime Minister Janša supported the labor market and various economic sectors. Similarly, the government under Prime Minister Golob introduced measures in early 2023 to address the energy crisis, such as short-time work, which helped employers manage the crisis and retain employees. Full-time employees worked 5 – 20 hours less per week under this measure and were considered to be temporarily waiting for work. Compensation for the reduced working hours was set at 80% of the base salary.

The legislation defines various forms of work adapted to actual life circumstances, such as part-time work and remote work, though full-time positions still prevail. Despite underdeveloped regulations and experience, remote work has become widespread in the post-pandemic period, particularly in government administration, public service, and public organizations.

Policies
Targeting an
Inclusive Labor
Market
Score: 8

In addition to active employment policy measures available to young people, several specific measures target unemployed youth. These measures range from the EU Youth Guarantee to various subsidies for employers who hire young or first-time jobseekers. Examples include employment subsidies, tax relief for employing these individuals, reimbursement of contributions for the first job (including for mothers with a child up to 3 years old), and subsidies for “green jobs” (this measure should be broader, as it is aimed at all people and not a single segment of the population).

Young people can also demonstrate their informally acquired knowledge, experience, or competences through formal assessment procedures to validate their qualifications for specific occupations. Upon completing the assessment, they receive a publicly valid certificate (National Vocational Qualification) or a certificate (Basic Qualification). The Employment Service offers to cover the assessment and certification costs as part of obtaining the National Vocational Qualification.

Policies
Targeting Labor
Market Risks
Score: 8

The OECD’s comparative data on financial barriers to returning to work for Slovenia in 2023 shows the result for minimum wage is 87% of earnings, the sixth highest percentage among OECD countries. For the average salary, the result is 67.1%, very close to the OECD average of 69.9%. For 67% of the average wage in Slovenia, the result is 80.1%.

Trade unions in Slovenia continue to be a strong and important player in the institutionalized tripartite social dialogue – the Economic and Social Council. There are some differences between the various governments. Under the Janša government in 2021, the trade unions decided to withdraw from the social dialogue in the council after the government systematically violated the rules

for the council's functioning. Conversely, during the Golob government, this step was taken by the employers' organizations, which accused the government of violating the social dialogue and pointed out their unequal position. Although the unionization rate in Slovenia is still around 20%, all employees, not only union members, can benefit from the agreements that unions have reached with employers or the government.

Regarding social security during unemployment, the basis for calculating financial compensation is the average monthly salary received in the eight months before the month of unemployment. For young people under 30 years of age, this period is five months. The duration of financial compensation depends on the employee's age and insurance period, ranging from 2 to 25 months. Compensation decreases from 80% of the base for three months to 60% for the next nine months and 50% after one year. If, at the end of the financial compensation period, an employee has no more than one year to fulfill the minimum requirements for the old-age pension and is still unemployed, they may be entitled to have their pension and disability insurance contributions paid by the state.

To some extent, the portability of social rights is guaranteed, particularly with pensions. In Slovenia, there is a widow's pension and a family pension, which can be drawn under various conditions. It is also possible to receive a disability pension.

Sustainable Taxation

Policies
Targeting
Adequate Tax
Revenue
Score: 7

Tax revenue comes from a wide range of taxes. Income tax accounts for approximately 40%, with social security contributions at more than 30% and corporate tax at 10%. According to the OECD, this is among the highest in its category. While the average tax wedge for a single employee has increased since 2009 by less than 1%, it remains lower than the pre-2009 levels. Slovenia ranked 14th out of 38 OECD countries in terms of the tax rate in 2022, with a rate of 37.4% compared to the OECD average of 34.0%.

Many employers and economists call for lower income taxes to address investment problems in Slovenia. Others, however, emphasize the need for higher productivity instead of lower taxes. Prime Minister Janša's government responded to the former group by preparing a "mini-tax reform." In contrast, Prime Minister Golob's government announced several higher taxes for 2023. The OECD advocates for changes to the tax system to foster growth by further reducing taxes on labor and increasing taxes on consumption and property.

The tax authorities reported a decline in tax liabilities for 2023, which totaled

€41.4 million, 6.1% less than the previous year. This trend of decreasing tax liabilities has persisted for years. In 2022, the Financial Administration filed 61 criminal charges with the public prosecutor's offices (31 cases, 33.69% less than in 2021) and reported 46 criminal offenses to the police (30 cases, 39.47% less than in 2021). A total of 254 offenders were charged.

In 2022, authorities conducted 471 income tax checks – covering tax on income from employment, other income, capital assets, and undeclared income from employment – identifying an additional €18,815,871 in tax debts. This number of checks is significantly lower than in 2020 (580), when almost twice as much additional tax debt was identified.

The Tax Justice Network reports that the tax shortfall had a significant social impact, equivalent to 6.67% of the healthcare budget and 8.12% of education spending.

Policies
Targeting Tax
Equity
Score: 7

The corporate tax rate is 19% and, according to an OECD report, is one of the lowest in comparison. Prime Minister Golob's government has increased it to 22% for 2024 – 2028. The progressive income tax for individuals with a handful of different rates ensures a certain vertical equity. Since 2023 (Golob government), the highest income tax rate is back to 50% (previously 45%) for those in the highest tax bracket. The general tax-free allowance was increased to €5,000 in 2023, as already provided for in the mini-tax reform of Prime Minister Janša's government. However, this reform had promised that the amount would be €7,500 in 2024, while the current government of Prime Minister Golob has decided that the general tax allowance will remain at €5,000 in 2024.

Policies Aimed at
Minimizing
Compliance
Costs
Score: 6

Tax regulations and procedures are complex for both individuals and companies. Prime Minister Janša's government has already prepared measures to reduce bureaucracy and simplify procedures. In 2023, the Ministry of Finance analyzed the tax system and admitted that the tax rules had become opaque following the introduction of numerous partial changes in recent years – they have made the system less transparent.

Prime Minister Golob's government announced a reform of the tax system in 2022 to address these shortcomings and introduce changes so that those with significantly more pay their taxes fairly. However, in 2023, the reform was still not prepared; at one point, it was even canceled. By the end of 2023, the reform was back on the agenda but not publicly presented. These developments have confused and not contributed to the predictability of the system.

For years, at least the income tax form, the “informative calculation,” has been prepared by the Financial Administration and sent to taxpayers, who can complain if the data is incorrect.

Policies Aimed at
Internalizing
Negative and
Positive
Externalities
Score: 7

As the European Environment Agency (2023) reported, the share of environmental taxes in total tax revenue varies among EU member states. Slovenia is among the countries that have seen the largest decrease (by more than 2%) between 2010 and 2021 – from 9.4% to 7.2%. According to the Slovenian Statistical Office (2023), environmental taxes accounted for 2.86% of GDP in 2022, compared to 3.12% in 2021. In 2022, €1,633 million in environmental taxes were paid in Slovenia, only 0.02% more than in the previous year. Energy taxes accounted for the largest share of environmental taxes (84.1%), followed by transport taxes (12.5%) and taxes on pollution and resources (3.4%). Private households paid 53.4%, and the corporate sector paid 43.1% of environmental taxes (3.5% were paid by non-residents – foreign transit across Slovenian territory).

Taxpayers in Slovenia can apply for a reduction in the tax base of up to 100% of the sum of investments in research and development during a certain period, up to a maximum of the amount of the tax base.

Sustainable Budgeting

Sustainable
Budgeting
Policies
Score: 7

Under external pressure during the financial and fiscal crises, the “fiscal rule” was incorporated into the constitution by the National Assembly. The rule states that the revenue and expenditure of the state budget must be balanced in the medium term without borrowing, or that revenue must exceed expenditure. Based on these obligations, the Fiscal Council was also established as an autonomous state authority to oversee fiscal policy management. A temporary deviation from this principle is permitted when exceptional circumstances affect the state.

In recent years, there have been several such circumstances – the global COVID-19 crisis was followed by the energy crisis, and in August 2023, catastrophic floods in Slovenia represented an exceptional macroeconomic and fiscal shock that will require various recovery measures in the future. The decline in the debt ratio from 79.6% in 2020 is expected to be somewhat more gradual than in the previous two years, with an expected decline in GDP of just under four percentage points in 2023 and 2024, while the debt ratio is expected to reach 66.6% of GDP by the end of 2024.

As the Fiscal Council critically assessed in October 2023, the draft budget documents indicated a deterioration in the budget situation and a continuation of the pro-cyclical expansionary fiscal policy. The council warned that, as has been the case for many years, the budget documents once again ignore important and growing long-term challenges, which pose an even greater risk to fiscal sustainability.

In response, the government asserted that Slovenia is below average in terms of public debt-to-GDP in the EU and the eurozone. Furthermore, according to the government, Slovenia is reducing public debt-to-GDP faster than the EU and eurozone average.

Public finances include the state budget, municipal budgets, the pension insurance fund, and the health insurance fund. The state budget is the largest, accounting for 48.4% of the total expenditure of all four public financial budgets, followed by the Pension and Disability Insurance Institute of Slovenia (ZPIZ) with 27.1% and the Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia (ZZZS) with 14.2%.

The municipal budgets account for 10.3% in comparison. The OECD has called for several structural reforms, with one of the most necessary being the pension system reform, as Slovenia has the highest projected increase in pension expenditure due to an aging population. The constitution stipulates that all revenue and expenditure to finance public spending must be included in the state budget. The general government deficit has fallen from 4.6% of GDP in 2021 to 3.0% in 2022; it is expected to be 3.7% in 2023.

Sustainability-oriented Research and Innovation

Research and
Innovation Policy
Score: 6

According to Eurostat, gross domestic expenditure on research and development (R&D) as a percentage of GDP in Slovenia was 2.11% in 2022. Considering that R&D expenditure in eight EU member states was less than 1% of GDP in 2022, Slovenia's performance appears favorable. However, several countries, including Slovenia, saw significant declines in R&D intensity compared to 2012, with Slovenia experiencing a decrease of 0.30 percentage points.

The data on gross domestic expenditure on R&D by sector in 2022 (as a percentage of GDP) indicates that the Slovenian business enterprise sector invested the most at 1.4%. This was followed by the government sector at 0.33% and the higher education sector at 0.27%, while the private nonprofit

sector made almost no investments. This pattern is similar to other EU countries and closely aligns with the EU average across all sectors.

In terms of gross domestic expenditure on R&D in Slovenia by source in 2021, the business enterprise sector accounted for 48.7%, compared to the EU average of 57.7%. The government contributed 24.3% (EU average: 30.3%), the higher education sector accounted for 0.5% (EU average: 1.2%), and the rest of the world contributed 26.4% (EU average: 9.7%).

Slovenia is also above the EU average in the number of researchers per 1,000 employed persons in 2021, with 10.51 researchers compared to the EU average of 9.34. Although Slovenia lagged in 2000 with 4.74 researchers compared to the EU average of 5.09, there has been an almost continuous increase in this respect over the last two decades.

Overall, the data presents a relatively good or improving picture for Slovenia in 2022.

Nevertheless, some more critical views persist. For example, the Joint Innovation Index shows that Slovenia is still one of the moderate innovators. The EU's innovation performance improved from 2014 – 2021, while it deteriorated in Slovenia until 2020 and only showed improvement in 2021. During 2018 – 2022, the share of companies engaged in innovation activities in manufacturing and selected services was 55.2% (the ratio between the number of companies with innovation activities and all companies).

Recently, more ambitious targets have been set. Several important legal acts have been adopted to achieve these goals, such as the Law on Scientific Research and Innovation Activities (2021) and the Resolution on the Slovenian Scientific Research and Innovation Strategy 2030 (2022). The latter is the most important strategic document in this area and is closely linked to several other strategic documents. It forms the basis for formulating policy measures for social, economic, sustainable development, and societal challenges.

The Resolution defines the ministries and sectors responsible for implementation and their reporting obligations to the government and the National Assembly. Concurrently, the Development Council of Slovenia also monitors activities in this area. Regular evaluations must include experts from abroad, and some action plans have already been adopted.

For many research organizations, EU funds for research and innovation remain the most important source of funding, as they cannot obtain funding from

national sources for their research. Additionally, there is a general lack of resources in certain areas (e.g., social sciences and humanities).

Stable Global Financial System

Global Financial
Policies
Score: 8

Bank of Slovenia data shows that non-performing loans (as a percentage of the gross book value of loans and advances) stood at 0.97% in Slovenia in November 2023. This marks a significant and continuous decline since June 2015. CEIC data indicates that the ratio of non-performing loans in Slovenia was 0.7% in October 2023 – the same as in the previous month – and thus at a record low. The all-time high of 18.1% was recorded in November 2013.

Slovenia's foreign exchange reserves were measured at USD 909.7 million in November 2023. The country's domestic credit reached \$37.7 billion in July 2023, and household debt in Slovenia reached \$18.5 billion in June 2023, equivalent to 28.1% of the country's nominal GDP.

In 2007, Slovenia joined the eurozone, demonstrating its commitment to adhering to broader fiscal policy rules and agreements. The country has effectively implemented the eurozone's agreements and regulations.

The Development Strategy of Slovenia 2030, adopted in 2017, clearly articulates the nation's awareness of its dependence on its ability to respond and adapt to global trends and challenges. It underscores the increasing importance of cooperation and connections at global, European, and national levels, as well as cross-border cooperation.

Slovenia is a member of several significant institutions, such as the IMF, and actively participates in various interrelated mechanisms to coordinate common EU positions on IMF issues. These activities occur within the framework of multiple (sub)committees and working groups at the EU and ECB levels. By contributing its share of the regular (quota) and extraordinary or temporary resources (BBA), Slovenia helps ensure the stability of the global financial system that the IMF aims to achieve. Slovenia has been involved in the FTP mechanism since 1998.

II. Social Sustainability

Sustainable Education System

Policies
Targeting Quality
Education
Score: 7

Some indicators in the Slovenian education system demonstrate positive performance, with an 8% increase in spending between 2020 and 2021. A notable proportion of young Slovenians engage in education and training, with over two-thirds of those aged 18 to 24 still enrolled. Additionally, 38% of bachelor's students have professional backgrounds, although they lack direct access to most academic programs. Slovenia also boasts high rates of upper secondary education completion, with only 6% of young men and 3% of young women not achieving this milestone.

However, staffing shortages in the education system present significant challenges. These shortages are particularly acute in kindergartens and primary and secondary schools, impacting the quality of education provided. Despite these challenges, ample opportunities for lifelong learning exist, especially for adults in small and medium-sized enterprises.

Despite these strengths, recent international surveys have revealed declining educational metrics. Deteriorating scores in reading literacy, civic education, and overall student achievement were reported in PIRLS 2021, ICCS 2022, and PISA 2022. A key reason for the decline is most likely the long closure of schools (118 days) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additionally, Slovenian students reported significantly poorer quality of relationships with teachers, with an above-average proportion feeling disconnected from the school environment and experiencing low levels of support from math teachers. The ICCS 2022 survey indicated below-average ratings for the openness of classroom discussions and the student-teacher relationship. Furthermore, the PIRLS survey highlighted concerns about fourth-graders' well-being, with over a quarter reporting feeling tired or hungry in the morning before school.

These challenges underscore the urgency of ongoing curriculum reforms, with experts advocating for increased educational prioritization and investment as part of the National Education Program preparation.

Policies
Targeting
Equitable Access
to Education
Score: 9

The Slovenian education system is based on the principle of accessibility. All levels of education – primary, secondary, and tertiary – are part of the public education system. Primary education is accessible to all inhabitants thanks to a large network of primary schools. This network is supplemented by branch schools, ensuring that all children can attend a school as close as possible to their residence.

All children have the right to a primary school education under the same conditions. Parents can choose whether their child should be educated in a public or private primary school or at home. Together with the municipality, the schools organize free transport for students who reside more than 4 km from the school. Regardless of the distance from the primary school, pupils in Year 1 and other grades are entitled to free transport if the relevant road traffic prevention authority determines that their safety is at risk on the way to school.

The school organizes childcare for students waiting for transport home. A textbook fund is set up at schools from which students can borrow textbooks and materials they need for lessons.

In June 2023, the National Assembly adopted amendments to the Law on Elementary School and the Law on School Nutrition. The amendments will ensure free lunch for all students by 2027, and a higher ceiling for lunch subsidies will come into force at the start of the 2024 school year, meaning more children will receive free lunch.

The proportion of children enrolled in kindergarten is gradually increasing. In the 2022 – 2023 school year, almost 82% of all children in the 1 – 5 age group were enrolled in Slovenian kindergartens, a 7% increase from the 2012 – 2013 school year. Parents who enroll two children in kindergarten simultaneously are exempt from paying for the younger child. Additionally, parents are exempt from paying kindergarten fees for the third and each additional child from the same family, regardless of whether they are enrolled in kindergarten at the same time as their siblings.

Sustainable Institutions Supporting Basic Human Needs

Policies
Targeting Equal
Access to
Essential Services
and Basic Income
Support
Score: 9

Slovenia demonstrates a strong commitment to social inclusion, with its low-income inequality highlighted by a Gini coefficient in December 2022. Slovenia ranked second lowest among EU member states. This achievement is primarily attributed to low wage inequality, progressive income taxation, and robust redistribution through social transfers. In 2021, only 5% of the working population aged 18 and over were at risk of poverty, which is below the EU

average. While overall social exclusion risk levels remain among the EU’s lowest, certain vulnerable groups, such as children from less educated backgrounds and single-person households, face higher risks compared to the EU average.

Regarding well-being indicators, Slovenia performs admirably, with an average net disposable household income per capita of €23,500 annually and an average annual income of €38,500. The employment rate is commendably high, with 71% of individuals aged 15 to 64 in paid employment. Despite this, Slovenia faces challenges such as a higher-than-average loss of earnings for unemployed individuals compared to the OECD average. Efforts to address employment challenges include robust career counseling services, particularly targeting youth.

The housing situation in Slovenia is relatively favorable, with households spending an average of 19% of their adjusted gross disposable income on housing, below the OECD average. Dwellings typically offer 1.6 rooms per person, and nearly all have private access to a flush toilet. However, recent property price surges have hindered housing access for young families and students. Nonetheless, Slovenia boasts a strong social network, with 95% of its citizens having built connections exceeding the OECD average, providing crucial support systems during times of need.

Policies
Targeting Quality
of Essential
Services and
Basic Income
Support
Score: 8

As in other EU countries, the largest share of social protection expenditure in Slovenia is dedicated to old age, sickness, and healthcare. However, spending on unemployment increased significantly in 2020. Slovenian legislation does not offer a national definition of essential services. Additionally, there is no definition of low-income people regarding access to water, sanitation, and public transport. Specific measures aimed at facilitating low-income individuals’ access to water and sanitation services are also lacking. Cash social assistance and income support do not include provisions to cover water and sanitation costs. About 8.4% of Slovenians reported having difficulty affording regular use of public transport.

The Energy Act ensures that low-income customers have the right to an uninterrupted basic supply of electricity, natural gas, and heat. Necessary electricity is provided as a benefit in kind, while an essential supply of natural gas or district heating means that disconnection is merely postponed during critical supply periods. The energy efficiency program for low-income households was introduced as part of the National Energy Efficiency Plan 2014 – 2020 (adopted in 2015) with the goal of reducing the energy consumption of families experiencing energy poverty. Experts have warned

that overly complex administrative procedures for financial support can discourage low-income households from applying for reduced energy bills.

In recent years, households have faced a sharp rise in energy costs, especially in some municipalities. The citizens of the municipality of Velenje received 30% to 50% higher heating bills in 2023. Due to unstable market conditions and the sharp rise in electricity prices, the government has capped the maximum permitted electricity prices. From 1 September 2022 to 31 December 2024, the government limited the maximum electricity prices for household customers, including apartment buildings, through the Regulation on the Electricity Price Determination Decree. In addition, an energy subsidy for the poorest households, a subsidy for families with children, and a subsidy for pensioners were granted in 2022.

Low-income users are entitled to social assistance or income supplements in digital and financial services. They pay a reduced rate for a universal service: €10.72 (the regular price is €14). Low-income users with disabilities are entitled to a 50% discount on connection to a public communications network at a fixed location and a 50% discount on a monthly subscription to publicly accessible telephone services at a fixed location.

Sustainable Health System

Policies
Targeting Health
System
Resilience
Score: 5

The Slovenian healthcare system, while publicly available to all, faces significant challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing corruption, and increasing privatization. These issues have led to shortages of healthcare professionals and prolonged waiting times for essential services. Despite attempts at reform, such as emergency measures in 2022, waiting times have continued to grow.

In 2021, unmet medical needs rose notably due to increased waiting times, particularly for dental care and primary healthcare services. By May 2023, a concerning 81% of patients awaiting initial examinations exceeded permitted wait times, and 63% waited over 14 days for therapeutic-diagnostic procedures. Civil society initiatives criticized the government's handling of the crisis, leading to the health minister's resignation in July 2023.

To address issues like long waiting times and a shortage of personal GPs, the government replaced supplementary health insurance with a compulsory health contribution in January 2024. Despite being the highest-paid civil servants, doctors went on strike that same month, demanding better salaries and the implementation of previously agreed-upon agreements with the

ministry. Critics argue that the healthcare system's inefficiencies, compounded by doctors working in private facilities, contribute to the shortage.

In terms of long-term care, the Janša government passed the Long-Term Care Act, although its implementation faced delays. The revised law, effective from January 2024, aims to address these challenges. However, Slovenia still trails behind OECD averages in healthcare resilience indicators, with healthcare spending and hospital beds per capita falling below the OECD average. Nonetheless, life expectancy in Slovenia remains relatively high at almost 82 years.

Policies
Targeting High-
Quality
Healthcare
Score: 7

Slovenia has several prevention programs. These programs begin with preventive monitoring of pregnant women and extend to newborn screening, healthcare for infants and children, healthcare for adolescents, and healthcare for students, athletes, and adults. For adults, national programs for the primary prevention of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, depression, risky alcohol consumption, and smoking are conducted by referral clinics. Screening programs for cervical cancer, breast cancer, and colorectal cancer – including the ZORA, DORA, and SVIT programs – are also available.

The primary objectives of these screening programs are to reduce the incidence of disease, lower the incidence of serious complications, decrease mortality rates, and increase the chances of complete curability.

The “This is Me” program is Slovenia’s largest web portal for youth counseling, offering young people anonymous public access to problem-solving support.

The mortality rate avoidable through public health and prevention measures increased in 2020 at a rate similar to the EU average and remained above it. Most preventable deaths are related to the prevalence of unhealthy lifestyles. The decline in the pre-pandemic mortality rate was linked to the strengthening of primary-level prevention measures, addressing smoking, alcoholism, healthy eating, and physical activity, as well as screening programs and counseling.

The mortality rate from curable causes decreased in Slovenia in 2020, indicating effective healthcare regarding treatment. Most deaths are due to heart disease, colon and rectal cancer, followed by stroke and breast cancer.

Policies
Targeting
Equitable Access
To Healthcare
Score: 5

Structurally and administratively, public healthcare institutions in Slovenia remain much the same as they were in 1991. The Slovenian healthcare system faces serious challenges that call for reform. In recent years, Slovenia's population has aged, while significant progress has been made in medicine. The aging population requires the healthcare system to adapt in order to improve its accessibility and efficiency. Although the number of health workers is increasing, there is still a personnel shortage. Consequently – and perhaps also due to the inadequate financing model of some services – waiting periods in many areas are unacceptably long, preventing equal access to health services for all. Those who can afford it visit private clinics, where doctors from public institutions work in the afternoon. Due to their high workload, these personnel are exhausted.

Patients' needs for healthcare services in Slovenia are substantial, and the healthcare system does not provide optimal options for choosing a personal physician, dentist, or gynecologist due to a shortage of doctors and medical staff in primary healthcare. Healthcare activities are carried out across Slovenia, with accessibility to healthcare services varying throughout the country. Emergency centers are overburdened by accessibility problems at the primary level. At the same time, the operation of these emergency centers is not uniform. Reforming the healthcare system and strengthening public healthcare are imperative.

In 2020, according to the indicator of expected healthy years of life at birth, Slovenia exceeded the EU average. On the regional level, the indicator reveals significant differences. Men in the coastal Karst region can expect the longest life without disabilities at birth, while men in the Podravja region can expect the shortest. Women in the Gorenjska region can expect to lead the longest healthy lives, while women in the Pomurje region can expect the shortest.

Compared to previous years, the gap in unmet needs between the population's first and fifth income levels increased in 2021. The main reason for unmet needs in Slovenia is the long waiting times, whereas in most EU member states, the reason is financial. This disparity is related to the broad basket of rights in Slovenia, which is partly covered by compulsory health insurance and partly by supplementary health insurance (though since January 2024, it has shifted to single insurance). However, access to many services remains limited.

Policy Efforts
and Commitment
to Achieving
Gender Equality
Score: 8

Gender Equality

The Slovenian constitution prohibits gender discrimination and assigns responsibility for promoting gender equality at the ministerial level. The Department for Equal Opportunities, established in 2012, oversees gender equality initiatives, succeeding the Government Office for Equal Opportunities. In 2016, an independent body, the Advocate of the Principle of Equality, was formed to champion equal treatment, supported by the Commission for Petitions, Human Rights, and Equal Opportunities.

A pivotal legal instrument for gender equality is the 2002 Act on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, which mandates gender mainstreaming in government planning. Ministries appoint coordinators for equal opportunities who are tasked with implementation. In 2023, a resolution on the National Program for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men until 2030 was enacted, with a ministry working group launched under the motto “Instead of flowers – action!”

Slovenia ranked below the EU average in the Gender Equality Index for 2021 and 2022, with the decline attributed to disparities in health, knowledge, and economic strength. Gender segregation persists in education and the labor market, with fewer women in management roles and disparities in caregiving responsibilities. Alarmingly, up to 13 women were murdered by partners in 2022, around 200,000 lacked a chosen gynecologist, and there was a 25% pay gap in health and social care.

The new resolution aims for equal participation of women and men across public and private spheres, targeting employment, education, health, and social status. It addresses femicide prevention and violence against women and supports vulnerable groups like older women, disabled women, and Roma women. Measures include promoting female entrepreneurship, encouraging women in military and police roles, and implementing family-friendly policies to balance professional and personal lives.

Strong Families

Family Policies
Score: 9

Slovenian inhabitants have a good work-life balance, with only 6% of Slovenians working long hours and similar amounts of time devoted to personal care and leisure. The share of employed women is high: 68% compared to 74% of men. Mothers are likely to return to their jobs once the baby reaches 11 months of age.

Maternity leave lasts 15 weeks: 4 weeks before the birth and 11 weeks after. Paternity leave lasts 15 days and must be taken before the child reaches 3 years of age. In 2022, roughly 93% of fathers took up to 15 days of paternity leave, with around half opting to take more than 15 days. A same-sex partner can also take paternity leave.

In addition to maternity and paternity leave, parental leave promotes the division of childcare. Each parent is entitled to 160 days of parental leave, with up to 100 days transferable to the other parent. Biological, adoptive, and foster parents have the right to parental leave, and one parent must begin this leave immediately after maternity leave. Up to 60 non-transferable days per parent may be taken any time until the child reaches 8 years of age. Most mothers take advantage of their entire parental leave allocation or a significant portion of it, while very few do not take any leave.

Despite full compensation for earnings during leave, fathers' low participation may be attributed to traditional family roles. A strong network of public and private preschools – supported by concessions – enables parents to return to work once the child reaches the age of one. In the 2022–2023 school year, nearly 82% of children aged 1–5 were enrolled in Slovenian kindergartens. Financial incentives for parents with more than one child also contribute to increased participation in the labor market. Parents with two children enrolled in kindergarten simultaneously are exempt from paying for the younger child. In addition, parents are exempt from kindergarten fees for the third and every subsequent child from the same family, regardless of whether they are enrolled in kindergarten at the same time as their siblings.

Insured persons are entitled to take leave to care of a family member (spouse and children) who has fallen ill. Generally, seven working days of leave may be taken per family for each episode of illness. Absence from work is significantly higher among women, and the gender gap is increasing year after year. This is due to the full employment of women, who more often take care of children and the poorly regulated long-term care system.

Depending on the family's income class, a parent can receive a child allowance as a supplementary benefit for supporting, raising, and educating a child. For income taxpayers, the tax base can be reduced by a special allowance to maintain family members – children.

Sustainable Pension System

Policies Aimed at
Old-Age Poverty
Prevention
Score: 7

Certain population groups in Slovenia are still more at risk of poverty than the EU average, particularly single-person households, pensioners (including those aged 65 and over), and people with a low level of education. Besides adults with a low level of education, the unemployed, single-person households, people with various forms of disability, tenants, immigrants, and other vulnerable groups face heightened risks. Among these, pensioners, especially older women, have seen their living conditions deteriorate the most in recent years, and their situation remains worse than the EU average.

Due to rising inflation, pension organizations called for an extraordinary adjustment to pensions starting in early 2023. The government agreed to increase part of the benefits by 1.8% for the last two months of 2023, with a further 8.2% increase scheduled for January 2024. A regular pension adjustment will follow in February 2024, based on the increase in the average monthly gross wage (60%) and the average increase in consumer goods prices (40%). Additionally, in 2023, pensioners received a Christmas bonus for the first time. The bonus amount depends on the pensioner's annual allowance, which is based on their pension.

Policies
Targeting
Intergenerational
Equity
Score: 7

Since 2012, the full retirement age in Slovenia has been 65, or 60 for employees with at least 40 years of pensionable service. Incentives are provided for people who continue to work after the official retirement age. Despite having one of the highest labor force participation rates in the 20–64 age group, Slovenia still has one of the lowest participation rates among older individuals (60–64). In the second quarter of 2022, the labor force participation rate for the 60–64 age group was 36.5% (EU: 72.1%). Activity in this age group is increasing due to the high demand for labor and later retirement prompted by pension legislation, which has enhanced incentives to remain in the workforce longer. In Slovenia, income-related pensions are calculated based on earnings from only 24 years of employment.

At the end of 2023, the Minister of Labour, Family, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities emphasized that pension reform will be a key project for the ministry in 2024. The initial plans have already been prepared, and the social partners and key departments are familiar with them. The reform aims to ensure the sustainability of the pension system. The government seeks to address the issue of providing adequate pensions and maintaining a sustainable system in an aging society.

Sustainable Inclusion of Migrants

Integration Policy
Score: 6

Over the past five years, integration policy in Slovenia has improved in several areas, including the labor market, education, political participation, and anti-discrimination. Non-EU immigrants with legal status in Slovenia experience a reasonably favorable integration policy. However, the Slovenian approach to integration can be characterized as “equality on paper” only. While immigrants enjoy basic rights and long-term security, they do not have equal opportunities.

The policy is unfavorable to migrant labor and their families, with non-EU workers facing barriers to equal access, particularly in non-regulated private jobs. After five years in Slovenia, most non-EU migrants can benefit from permanent residence security. However, the path to citizenship is long, and dual citizenship is not permitted. Some applicants have access to a sufficient number of free courses and study guides to achieve an A2 level in the Slovenian language. For example, international students can attend a Slovenian language course. Most regular basic-income immigrants can easily return to their families. Even with a slightly more favorable family reunification policy, transnational families in Slovenia still have a somewhat uncertain status, as the procedure is discretionary. All pupils with a migrant background have a basic right to access compulsory education and receive support. However, migrant families and schools continue to receive little support to promote the social integration of migrant pupils. Migrants also face challenges in gaining full access to the healthcare system. Long-term resident migrants have the right to vote in local elections. However, non-EU citizens cannot be members of a political party and cannot stand in elections.

Slovenia is expected to face a shortage of a quarter of a million workers in the coming years. One solution to this issue is the recruitment of foreign labor. In 2023, there were already 128,000 foreign workers in Slovenia, accounting for more than 14% of all employed individuals. The business community has long pointed out that the procedures for hiring foreigners are too lengthy and complicated.

In April 2023, the government simplified these procedures by amending the Aliens Act, removing administrative obstacles and speeding up the issuance and delivery of residence permits and registration certificates. Additionally, they extended free Slovene language courses to all categories of foreigners.

To secure a highly qualified labor force, the government plans to draft a law on development jobs and a law on Slovenia’s attractiveness to attract future global talent.

Management of Development Cooperation by Partner Country
Score: 7

Effective Capacity-Building for Global Poverty Reduction

International development cooperation is a central aspect of Slovenia’s foreign policy. It aims to foster balanced global development, eradicate poverty, and promote sustainable progress. The primary focus is on the Western Balkans, the European Neighbourhood, and Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly the least developed countries, with Ukraine newly added to this list last year.

Key action areas include promoting peaceful, inclusive societies; good governance; gender equality; quality education; and combating climate change through sustainable resource management. Slovenia aligns its efforts with the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as outlined in its Slovenian Development Strategy 2030 and related resolutions and acts adopted in 2017 and 2018.

The ministry began developing specific frameworks for various areas, recognizing the need for more precise guidelines. Updated guidelines for NGO cooperation were issued in May 2023, with gender equality guidelines following in June. Draft guidelines on environmental protection are underway, with plans for private sector cooperation guidelines in 2024.

The Directorate for International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid, established in 2022, oversees these efforts, comprising two sectors: one for policy and one for implementation. Slovenia aims to increase official development assistance to 0.33% of GNI by 2030. In 2022, it allocated €159.65 million for international development cooperation, which is equivalent to 0.29% of GNI.

III. Environmental Sustainability

Effective Climate Action

Policy Efforts and Commitment to Achieving Climate Neutrality by 2050
Score: 7

Over the last two decades, Slovenia has developed comprehensive environmental legislation, largely by incorporating numerous EU directives into a series of legal documents. The umbrella Law on Environmental Protection, first enacted in 2004, has been amended multiple times, with a new version adopted in 2022. This law incorporates principles of sustainable

development and the circular economy and aligns with the country's 2030 Development Strategy, adopted by the government in December 2017.

Several other environmental regulations, mostly decrees and resolutions, address issues such as waste management, air quality, the use of fluorinated greenhouse gases and ozone-depleting substances, and activities requiring an environmental impact assessment. Slovenia has also adopted the EU Emissions Trading System and the goal of climate neutrality.

In 2020, the government adopted the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan, with a new draft submitted to the EU in 2023. This strategic document sets ambitious targets for the period up to 2030, with a view to 2040. These targets include a 36% reduction in total greenhouse gas emissions, a 20% reduction in the non-ETS sector (five percentage points higher than Slovenia's previous commitment), and an improvement in energy efficiency of at least 35%, exceeding the EU target.

Despite the robust legal framework, many non-governmental organizations in Slovenia acknowledge that its implementation has been poor and point to a lack of ambition in various sectors. Consequently, at the end of 2023, the government organized a public discussion on the draft Climate Law. This law aims to provide solutions for meeting international treaty objectives, including those of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement. The responsible ministry stated that the proposed law would offer a comprehensive framework for more effective climate policy implementation, aiming to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 at the latest.

Various data indicate that despite the comprehensive legal framework, Slovenia needs to improve the implementation of these legal documents to ensure greater efficiency. The Youth for Climate Justice movement, which carried out a series of actions in 2022 and 2023, has also called for this improvement. According to the Climate Change Performance Index, Slovenia ranked 41st in the 2023 assessment, with a score of 53.57, compared to the EU average of 64.71, placing Slovenia among the low-performing countries.

Slovenia ranks very low in terms of its overall level of greenhouse gas emissions. However, at the same time, it also ranks very low in terms of establishing an operational national climate policy, meeting the 2030 renewable energy targets (including hydropower), the 2030 greenhouse gas emissions target, and reducing its per capita energy consumption. The difficulty of achieving the targets set for the coming years is underscored by several protest actions against planned government activities. For example,

farmers have protested, arguing that the environmental legislation was prepared by radical environmental groups disconnected from farmers' realities.

Effective Environmental Health Protection

Policy Efforts
and Commitment
to Minimizing
Environmental
Health Risks
Score: 7

In Slovenia, environmental legislation aims to prevent pollution and related risks through the Law on Environmental Protection and various other legal acts addressing air quality and pollution prevention. These include the Decree on Ambient Air Quality, the Rules on the Assessment of Ambient Air Quality, the Decree on Arsenic, Cadmium, Mercury, Nickel, and Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons in Ambient Air, and the Decree on the Emission of Substances into the Atmosphere from Stationary Sources of Pollution.

Despite these regulations, the European Environment Agency estimates that in 2021, 1,190 premature deaths were attributable to PM2.5 air pollution, compared to 1,800 such deaths in 2015. Additionally, 160 premature deaths were linked to NO2 pollution and 140 to O3 pollution. The data indicate that Slovenia has shown declining trends in SO2 emissions and met its reduction commitments for PM2.5 and SO2 in 2020 and 2021. However, PM10 pollution remains a problem in some parts of the country.

Air pollution has been a public concern for years, with several prolonged public cases. For over a decade, residents and non-governmental organizations, especially Eco Circle, have fought against local and national administrations and the transnational company Lafarge in the Trbovlje region over the incineration of hazardous waste.

In recent years, the largest cement plant in Anhovo, owned by the Saloni company, has been criticized for endangering the local population's health through air pollution. In 2022, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment visited Anhovo and stated that the Slovenian government must prioritize measures to improve air quality in this and other known air pollution hotspots, refusing to approve activities that increase pollution.

In early January 2024, a non-governmental organization prepared an amendment to the Environmental Protection Act, proposing to align the standards for co-incineration of waste with those for incineration, addressing the issue in Anhovo. Doctors from the Slovenian Medical Association's working group on monitoring, warning, and raising awareness of the dangers of a polluted environment for health have supported this proposed amendment.

A few years ago, a publicized protest action along the Soča River, “Za naravo ob Sočo!,” warned of polluted drinking water due to the release of carcinogenic hexavalent chromium from a wastewater treatment plant operated by the Swiss company Eternit in Anhovo.

Effective Ecosystem and Biodiversity Preservation

Policy Efforts
and Commitment
to Preserving
Ecosystems and
Protecting
Biodiversity
Score: 8

Since the turn of the century, Slovenia has comprehensively regulated the environmental sector through legislation. The Law on Nature Conservation, passed in 1999 and amended several times, outlines measures for conserving biodiversity and protecting natural values. This includes managing gene banks, which consist of controlled or bred populations or parts of animals and plants – such as seeds, gametes, and other biological material – to conserve species or their gene pools.

A significant aspect of the law is the establishment of the Natura 2000 area, which accounts for about 37% of Slovenia’s territory. Within Slovenia’s less than 21,000 km², more than 10% of all Natura 2000 EU species can be found. Natura 2000 sites are present in almost every Slovenian municipality (204 out of 212), and nearly 6% of the population lives within these sites. Additionally, 70% of Natura 2000 sites are forests, and just over 20% are agricultural areas.

The Natura 2000 Management Program (2015–2020) was developed in 2015. The National Environmental Protection Program, covering measures up to 2008, has been updated, with the latest program extending to 2030. The Animal Protection Act, initially passed by the National Assembly in 1999, was amended in 2023. Both Natura 2000 and the Animal Welfare Act were central issues in major farmers’ protests in the spring of 2023. Farmers demanded that new environmental requirements not exceed the actual potential of agriculture and called for a reduction in Natura 2000 areas.

Slovenia’s primary organization for nature conservation is the Institute for Nature Conservation, founded in 1999. It has seven regional units, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the entire country.

Despite the extensive legal framework and activities of the main conservation organization, results have been mixed. In the biodiversity and habitat category of the Environmental Performance Index, Slovenia ranks 12th out of nearly 200 countries, with a score of 84.50 on a 100-point scale. Some indicators show very good results; for example, Slovenia ranks first among more than 40 countries for the protection of terrestrial biomes. However, other results are less favorable. In the Biodiversity Habitat Index, Slovenia is ranked 104th, and

in the Species Habitat Index, it is ranked 94th, showing significant deterioration over the last ten years.

Effective Contributions to Global Environmental Protection

Policy Efforts
and Commitment
to a Global
Environmental
Policy
Score: 8

Slovenia has signed and ratified many multilateral environmental agreements, reflecting its strong commitment to environmental protection. This commitment is highlighted in the 2022 Environmental Implementation Review, where the EU Commission found Slovenia to have among the fewest violations in 2020, with six cases. Luxembourg had the least with one case, while Spain topped the list with 21 cases.

Slovenia’s dedication to sustainable development at regional and subregional levels is demonstrated through various cooperation agreements covering the Alps, the Danube and its tributaries, and the Mediterranean, including the Adriatic. The central organization for nature conservation, the Institute for Nature Conservation in Slovenia, participates in numerous national and international projects, usually EU-funded, focused on improving nature conservation.

Slovenia’s commitment to environmental protection on a global scale is further evidenced by the Slovenian Council for Sustainable Development and Environmental Protection’s membership in the Global Network of National Councils for Sustainable Development. This membership aims to strengthen and improve the work of national entities to ensure sustainable development.

However, despite these efforts, Slovenia’s contribution to bolstering global environmental protection regimes has been modest.

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