

## Liberal Democracy in Slovenia

### *From Seventh Heaven to the Lobby of Hell in Only Two Decades?*

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For the last twenty-five years, some of the most prominent international organizations (Freedom House, Transparency International, the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), Amnesty International, and the Human Development Report) have repeatedly characterized Slovenia as a champion among Yugoslav successor states for its development of liberal democracy.

Nevertheless, aspects in many areas of Slovene democratic and economic life have changed or worsened in the last several years, while signs of stagnation have also been recorded in other areas. It therefore appears to be an appropriate time to assess Slovenia's progress in developing a liberal democratic system, focusing in particular on characteristics of the party arena, the costs of transformation of its economic system, problems of corruption, and the young republic's record in establishing independent media and in protecting ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities.

## Political Transformation

At the end of May 1988, at a time when Slovenia was still part of the Socialist Federated Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), the Military Council of the Ljubljana District of the

Yugoslav National Army (JNA) had three Slovenian journalists and one army sergeant arrested and put on trial. The charge brought against them was that they had published secret documents showing that the JNA had been preparing to arrest a number of liberals in Slovenia and put an end to efforts to democratize the republic. The army magnified the offense to Slovenian public opinion by conducting the trial in Serbo-Croatian, even though it was being held in Ljubljana, Slovenia's capital. The trial galvanized Slovenes, with crowds of 10,000 to 12,000 gathering in protest in downtown Ljubljana day after day for the duration of the trial. In this context, an extralegal Committee for the Protection of Human Rights emerged; the Slovenian communist authorities made contact with this committee and declared their full agreement with the views and aims of the committee.<sup>1</sup> On 27 July 1988, the four accused – among whom was the future defense minister and eventual prime minister, Janez Janša – were found guilty and sentenced to prison terms ranging from five months to four years. An opinion poll conducted at the time revealed that 63 per cent of Slovenes wanted to see their republic secede from the SFRY. Subsequently, in the wake of the trial, various political parties were formed in Slovenia, including the Slovenian Peasant Union, the Social Democratic Alliance of Slovenia, the Slovenian Democratic Union, the Slovenian Christian Socialist Movement, and the Green Party.<sup>2</sup> Some of these would later be renamed; for example, the Slovenian Peasant Union is now the Slovenian People's Party (SLS) and the Christian Socialists later called themselves Christian Democrats. Additional parties continued to appear on the Slovenian political landscape.

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<sup>1</sup> For discussion and details, see Sabrina P. Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State-Building and Legitimation, 1918–2005* (Washington D.C. and Bloomington: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Indiana University Press, 2006), pp. 314–315.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 316.

By 1989, the SFRY was clearly moribund. Slobodan Milošević, head of the Serbian branch of the ruling League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY), pressed for an extraordinary party congress to be convened, but when it finally met in January 1990, the Slovenian and Croatian delegates were unable to obtain a serious hearing for their proposals and walked out in protest. That spelled the end of the LCY. Already in September 1989, the Slovenian parliament had adopted a series of amendments asserting that Slovenia was a sovereign republic and affirming “that only the Slovenian parliament itself could authorise the declaration of a state of emergency in Slovenia, or the movement of Yugoslav military forces into the republic.”<sup>3</sup> Subsequently, on 27 December 1989, the parliament adopted legislation legalizing political pluralism and spelling out new regulations for elections.

The first multi-party elections in Slovenia in half a century took place in April 1990, with roughly twenty political parties in contention. Milan Kučan, the erstwhile head of the Slovenian branch of the LCY, was elected president of Slovenia. Seven non-communist parties formed a coalition – “Demos” – and swept to victory, with control of 127 of the 240 seats in the parliament, constituted by three chambers. Lojze Peterle of the Christian Democratic Party, one of the parties in the Demos coalition, became prime minister (see [Box 10.1](#)). During Peterle’s term in office, the SFRY sank ever deeper into crisis. In October 1990, the governments of Slovenia and Croatia proposed that the SFRY be transformed into a confederation. However, Borisav Jović, who was serving at the time as president of the collective presidency, declined to pass the Slovenian-Croatian proposal for confederalization on to the Assembly SFRY, with the result that it was never discussed seriously, except to some extent in the press. During the early months

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<sup>3</sup> Sabrina P. Ramet, “Slovenia’s Road to Democracy,” in *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 5 (1993), p. 871.

of 1991, a series of summit meetings involving the presidents of the SFRY's six constituent republics were held, but failed to reach any agreement. Finally, on 25 June 1991, Slovenia and Croatia declared their disassociation from the SFRY and embarked on an independent path.<sup>4</sup>

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Begin Box 10.1

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## Box 10.1 Prime ministers of the Republic of Slovenia since 1990

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Lojze Peterle (Christian Democrat), 16 May 1990–14 May 1992

Janez Drnovšek (Liberal Democracy), 14 May 1992–7 June 2000

Andrej Bajuk (New Slovenia/Slovenian People's Party), 7 June–30 November 2000

Janez Drnovšek (Liberal Democracy), 30 November 2000–19 December 2002

Anton Rop (Liberal Democracy), 19 December 2002–3 December 2004

Janez Janša (Slovenian Democratic Party), 3 December 2004–21 November 2008

Borut Pahor (Social Democrat), 21 November 2008–10 February 2012

Janez Janša (Slovenian Democratic Party), 10 February 2012–20 March 2013

Alenka Bratušek (Positive Slovenia), 20 March 2013–18 September 2014

Miro Cerar (Party of Miro Cerar; in 2015 renamed the Party of the Modern Centre), since 18 September 2014

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<sup>4</sup> For more details, see Sabrina P. Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the Fall of Milošević*, 4th edn. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2002), pp. 61–62.

## End Box 10.1

Controversies about privatization, abortion, religious instruction in state schools, and government supervision of the media undermined Peterle's position; Peterle was ousted by a rearranged coalition of parties in April 1992 and Janez Drnovšek, at one time Slovenia's representative on the Yugoslav collective presidency and now head of the Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS), became prime minister. Except for a few months in 2000, Drnovšek remained at the helm until 2002, when he left the prime minister's office to become president of Slovenia. His LDS colleague, Anton Rop, succeeded him in office and held the reins of power for only two years; then, in December 2004, Janez Janša, head of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS, previously known as the Social Democratic Party of Slovenia), came to power at the head of a coalition with New Slovenia, the Slovenian People's Party, and the Democratic Party of Pensioners (DeSUS). During Janša's first term as prime minister, 2004–2008, a controversial law on the media was passed, but efforts to revise the law under Janša's successor, Borut Pahor (leader of the Social Democrats, formerly known as the Associated List of Social Democrats), ran aground. (See below for a more extended discussion of the Slovenian media.)

Janša returned to the prime minister's office in February 2012 but was forced out in March 2013. His successor was Alenka Bratušek, a relatively inexperienced politician. Her cabinet focused attention on public finance and the banking sector, but provoked controversy by hiking taxes.<sup>5</sup> In April 2014, she lost a battle to head the Positive Slovenia party to Zoran Janković, the mayor of Ljubljana and founding father of

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<sup>5</sup> *Slovenia Times* (4 May 2014), at [www.sloveniatimes.com/bratusek-govt-out-of-office-after-only-13-months](http://www.sloveniatimes.com/bratusek-govt-out-of-office-after-only-13-months) (accessed on 12 November 2014).

Positive Slovenia; this induced her to resign the following month. Elections were held in July 2014 and, in a result which surprised some, the Party of Miro Cerar, which had been formed barely a month earlier, won a plurality of seats in the parliament. By the end of August, Cerar, a former academic and expert on constitutional law, had been sworn in as prime minister, at the head of a three-party coalition which included also DeSUS and the Social Democrats (SD).<sup>6</sup>

## Inter-Party Competition

Sharp divisions between parties and within society have erupted in relation to several government policies over the past two decades. These issues have included a referendum in 2001 on the treatment of fecundity and method of fertilization with biomedical help; a referendum on the family law in 2012, which was supposed to guarantee more rights to homosexuals; a law on denationalization, according to which (also) the Catholic Church was entitled to restitution of expropriated property (including feudal property); and praise of the Home Guard and its battle against the communist-led Partisans during World War Two, which, at the same time, amounted to collaboration with occupation forces. This praise of the Home Guard had the aim of diminishing the importance of the resistance forces during World War Two on the part of some of the most prominent Slovenian politicians and leaders, including then Prime Minister Janez Janša, leader of the Slovenian Democratic Party.

On the other hand, for a decade, the cleavage around economic issues had been less profound. Due to Slovenia's approach to economic transition, which was quite

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<sup>6</sup> *Slovenia Times* (19 September 2014), at [www.sloveniatimes.com/slovenia-with-new-government](http://www.sloveniatimes.com/slovenia-with-new-government) (accessed on 10 November 2014).

specific in the context of other post-socialist European countries because it was gradual, and the clear expectations of the population to preserve the welfare state as well as low tolerance on income inequality among Slovenes,<sup>7</sup> all parliamentary parties advocated similar, social-democratic socio-economic policies until the 2004 elections.<sup>8</sup> In 2004, two things happened and contributed to an intensification of the economic left-right cleavage: first, the LDS, which, since 1992, had been trying to introduce a liberal-market economy while simultaneously preserving the welfare state as well as social cohesion, lost the elections, as already mentioned, to Janša's SDS. Second, the Slovene Democratic Party made a final turn into the conservative party camp.

Based on these cleavages, some mainstream parties have usually been perceived as center-left (for example, the SD, the LDS, and DeSUS) and some as center-right (for example, the SLS, the SDS, and the New Slovenia party (NSi)). Therefore, there has been, at times, what appeared to be "only" bipolar party competition. Prime Minister Janez Drnovšek, who for a decade was a leader of the LDS and had served as the prime minister for ten years, formed ideologically heterogeneous coalitions,<sup>9</sup> aiming to overcome ideological bi-polarization in Slovenia. In Slovenia, only Janša's first

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<sup>7</sup> Brana Malnar, "Trendi neenakosti v Sloveniji med statistiko in javnim mnenjem" in *Teorija in praksa*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (2011), pp.951–967.

<sup>8</sup> Miroslav Stanojević and Alenka Krašovec, "Slovenia: Social Pacts and Political Exchange," in Sabina Avdagić, Martin Rhodes and Jelle Visser (eds.), *Social Pacts In Europe: Emergence, Evolution, and Institutionalization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 232–256; Danica Fink-Hafner, "Značilnosti razvoja strankarskega sistema v Sloveniji," in Janko Prunk and Tomaž Deželan (eds.), *Dvajset let slovenske države*, (Maribor: Aristej, 2012), pp. 193–213.

<sup>9</sup> As Fink-Hafner has observed, since 2002 there has not been an important politician in Slovenia who would be positioned in the so-called metric center and would act as a link between different party poles as Drnovšek did in the first decade of Slovenian democracy. See Fink-Hafner, "Značilnosti razvoja."

government (2004–2008) survived the entire four-year legislative term in its initial composition. Nonetheless, it was not until after 2008 that real instability of governments occurred, since governments' disintegration led to two early elections. Moreover, both the 2011 and 2014 elections were characterized by the victory of new parties: Positive Slovenia and the Party of Miro Cerar, respectively, while two other new parties also recorded good results (the Civic List and the United Left coalition).

Since, in 1997, all parliamentary parties (except for the Slovenian National Party) decided to overcome their differences and conflicts and signed the Agreement on Co-operation in the EU Accession Process, one can conclude that the European Union issues held particular significance for national politics but little significance for party politics.<sup>10</sup> Among the parliamentary parties, only the Slovenian National Party tried to capitalize on reservations about joining the EU in the 2000 elections and it had little electoral success. During the 2014 elections, the United Left criticized some developments in the EU, but its fire was directed more at the policies of austerity than at the EU as such.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Alenka Krašovec and Damjan Lajh, "The European Union: A Joker of Just an Ordinary Playing Card for Slovenian Political Parties?" in *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (2009), pp. 491–512.

<sup>11</sup> Tim Haughton and Alenka Krašovec, "Are European elections ever about Europe?", in *The Washington post* (23 May 2014), at [www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/05/23/european-parliamentary-elections-slovenia/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/05/23/european-parliamentary-elections-slovenia/) (accessed on 15 February 2016).

# Economic Reforms, Privatization Processes, and the Welfare State

At the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, Slovenia faced many economic problems. At the end of the 1980s, sharp economic and inter-national conflicts in Yugoslavia had led to illegal takeovers of Slovenia's companies and a blockade of goods produced in Slovenia (particularly in Serbia). The declaration of independence in 1991, together with the war in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, destroyed the larger part of the Yugoslav market (which was also Slovenia's former internal market). Slovenia had traditionally maintained a rather strong export orientation (with 8.5 per cent of the population in Yugoslavia, Slovenia was responsible for up to 24 per cent of Yugoslavia's total exports, while Slovenia's exports on the convertible (Western) markets amounted to 35 per cent of the total Yugoslav export to these markets). At the beginning of the 1990s, Slovenia experienced an economic depression as measured by several "hard" economic data: Industrial production sank by 10 per cent in 1990, an additional 12 per cent in 1991, and 13 per cent in 1992; the GDP went down by 9 per cent in 1991 and an additional 6 per cent in 1992; unemployment jumped from 44,000 unemployed people in 1991 to 130,000 in 1993 (a 14 per cent rate of unemployment), while the number of retired persons doubled (a decision to enable people close to retirement to retire under favorable conditions was part of a political decision to keep levels of unemployment relatively low); the inflation rate in 1991 was 117 per cent, and in 1992, 200 per cent.<sup>12</sup>

To counter such poor economic conditions, the main political actors needed to reach a consensus on how to combat the depression. This happened in the form of a social pact,

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<sup>12</sup> [Ivo Mencinger](#), "Slovenija med zlomom socializma in krizo kapitalizma," in Prunk and Deželan (ed.), *Dvajset let slovenske države*, pp. 68, 72.

which was signed by employers' organizations, trade unions, and the government in 1994. With the pact, a clear political and economic exchange between these actors was achieved. Such political exchanges, seen until 2009, and after a "break" of several years again in 2015 for a period of two years, were unique to Slovenia among the post-socialist countries.<sup>13</sup> Slovenia opted for a method of privatization that ran counter to the advice given by international experts. Slovenian privatization strongly supported internal buy-offs where all key players – the state, workers, and managers – were included in a redistribution of the former social property. For a decade, this privatization strategy consolidated the role of the state and insiders (managers, workers) as owners. (For some demographic and economic data, see [Box 10.2](#).)

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### Begin Box 10.2

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## Box 10.2 Basic facts about Slovenia

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Area: 20,273 sq. km.

Population (July 2014): 1,988,292

Capital city: Ljubljana, with a population in June 2013 of 282,994

Ethnic groups (2002 census): Slovenes 83.1%, Serbs 2%, Croats 1.8%, Bosniaks 1.1%, other or unspecified (including Roma) 12%

Percentage of the population speaking Slovenian as their principal language:

91.1%

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<sup>13</sup> Stanojević and Krašovec, "Slovenia: Social Pacts and Political Exchange."

Membership of religious organizations (2002 census): Catholic 57.8%, Muslim 2.4%, Orthodox 2.3%, other Christian 0.9%, unaffiliated 3.5%, none 10.1%, other or unspecified 23%

Literacy: 99.7%

GDP per capita (2013): US \$27,400

Labor force (2009): agriculture 2.2%, industry 35%, services 62.8%

### End Box 10.2

In the period between 1993 and 2004, Slovenia experienced economic recovery and even some economic prosperity. As Mencinger has suggested, at 4 per cent, economic growth in the period was satisfactory and Slovenia experienced very moderate public debt at the time.<sup>14</sup> The unemployment rate was slowly diminishing along with inflation and the economy was balanced in many respects. The period between 2004 and 2008 was Slovenia's best, as measured by several economic hard data indicators: economic growth reached 6.8 per cent and unemployment in 2008 was 6.7 per cent. However, foreign debt increased rapidly (from 8 per cent in 2004 to 35 per cent in 2008), which indicated that economic growth in this period was based on foreign savings.<sup>15</sup>

Janša's and SDS's led center-right government coalition (2004–2008) prepared a package of socio-economic reforms, including a radical tax reform with the introduction of the flat-rate tax, further flexibilization of the labor market, trade union marginalization, and welfare state privatization, including the health and education systems (via concession and the transfer of money from the state budget to private

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<sup>14</sup> Mencinger, "Slovenija med zlomom socializma in krizo kapitalizma," p. 72.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

organizations).<sup>16</sup> Trade unions and the public vehemently opposed these reforms and some of the announced proposals were not implemented. Nonetheless, it was this government that started some important changes in the welfare state because the idea of the “privatization of social risks” was at the heart of the reforms.<sup>17</sup> Even though many of the planned reforms were only partially implemented due to public resistance, the welfare state has started to slowly lose its social democratic conception (and has been approaching the conservative corporate conception of the welfare state). This government triggered reforms that the previous governments had been introducing very slowly and cautiously.<sup>18</sup> The greatest increase in the risk-of-poverty rate (from 11.5 per cent in 2007 to 12.3 per cent in 2008) was recorded during the year in which Slovenia experienced an economic boom and the Slovenian media were publishing lists of the wealthiest people in the country.<sup>19</sup> Changes to the Social Assistance Act introduced in 2007 made cash benefits less accessible.

Soon after the elections of 2004, the center-right government announced that it would take a second step in the privatization process because of the excessively large, (in)direct presence of the state in companies. In addition, some top managers of

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<sup>16</sup> See Alenka Krašovec and Tim Haughton, “Europe and the Parliamentary Elections in Slovenia, December 2011,” *EPERN Election briefing* No. 69 (2012);

[www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/research/europeanpartieselectionsreferendumsnetwork/epern-electionbriefings](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/research/europeanpartieselectionsreferendumsnetwork/epern-electionbriefings) (last accessed on 17 February 2016); Janko Prunk, “Politično življenje v samostojni Sloveniji,” in Prunk and Deželan (eds.), *Dvajset let slovenske države*, pp. 17–56; and Miroslav Stanojević, “The Rise and Decline of Slovenian Corporatism: Local and European Factors,” in *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 64, No. 5 (2012), pp. 857–877.

<sup>17</sup> Zinka Kolarič, “Dvajset let postopnega spreminjanja slovenske socialne države,” in Prunk and Deželan (eds.), *Dvajset let slovenske države*, p. 295.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 295.

<sup>19</sup> Vesna Leskošek and Srečo Dragoš, “Social Inequality and Poverty in Slovenia – Policies and Consequences,” in *Družboslovne razprave*, Vol. 30, No. 76 (2014), p. 42.

economically successful, still partly state-owned companies were replaced – in many cases by people who did not meet or barely fulfilled any merit criteria; therefore, people started to talk about “cadre tsunami.”<sup>20</sup> In such a situation, many managers felt that the best option for them was to become owners of the companies they managed. A massive wave of managerial buy-outs of the best Slovenian companies followed. These buy-outs were all based on loans that generally burdened the companies themselves and therefore the workers in these companies.<sup>21</sup> Such privatization was initially not accepted by the public. The negative attitude toward *tycoons* culminated during the economic and fiscal crisis when it became clear that this form of privatization completely exhausted companies and created harmful consequences for the Slovenian banking-system, which ultimately had to be saved by taxpayers in 2013.

Although several economists prior to the 2008 autumn parliamentary elections had warned about the crisis, it was only in the first half of 2009 that Slovenia began to feel the economic and financial crisis, provoked by the global credit crunch. In 2009, the GDP dropped by 7.9 per cent and later continued to record negative trends. In 2014, low growth was recorded. Some large and (formerly) well-respected companies were forced to close in 2009 or the following years, causing thousands of workers to lose their jobs. Unemployment rose from 6.7 per cent in 2008 to 12 per cent at the end of 2011 and 13.1 per cent in 2013, but declined to 10.5 per cent by October 2016. Moreover, as noted in the introduction to this volume, the percentage of people living below the poverty line edged upwards from 12.9 per cent in 2004 to 13.6 per cent in 2012 and to

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<sup>20</sup> Danica Fink-Hafner, “Slovenia,” in *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 45, No. 7–8 (2006), p. 1263.

<sup>21</sup> Mencinger, “Slovenija med zlomom socializma in krizo kapitalizma,” p. 75; and Stanojević, “The Rise and Decline of Slovenian Corporatism,” p. 863.

14.5 per cent in 2014. Considering the fact that in the past, Slovenia had experienced low levels of budget deficits and public debt, the developments that have occurred in the post-2008 period have been dramatic. In 2008, the budget deficit was 1.9 per cent; in 2009, it was 6.3 per cent, in 2012, it was 4.0 per cent, and in 2013, it jumped to 14.7 per cent (the infusion of taxpayers' money in the banking system as a single event contributed 10.3 per cent to a budget deficit). In 2015 the budget deficit was cut to below 3.0 per cent and, by 2016, it stood at just 2.2 per cent of the GDP. Public debt was 22.1 per cent of the GDP in 2008, but rose dramatically to 54.4 per cent by 2012 and to 82 per cent in 2015. Slovenia appeared to be on the brink of needing a Eurozone bailout on several occasions in 2012 and 2013.

The center-left government led by Borut Pahor, leader of the SD, in the period between 2008 and 2011 was obviously unable to deal with the crisis. Pahor later also admitted that his government had underestimated the depth and length of the crisis. His government decided first to guarantee social protection through several measures – such as subsidies for shorter working time, raising the minimum wage, and social transfers – but consequently public debt and the budget deficit grew rapidly. The government was heavily criticized for being too slow in making decisions and for introducing inappropriate measures to respond to the crisis.<sup>22</sup>

Amid these poor economic conditions and the growing dissatisfaction of the people, Janša's second center-right government was formed. The winner of the 2011 elections, Zoran Janković (leader of Positive Slovenia – List of Zoran Janković), was unable to form a coalition. Instead, after the elections, it was Janša and his SDS who were able to form a coalition at the beginning of 2012. Janša's government prepared

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<sup>22</sup> [Krašovec and Haughton, "Europe and the Parliamentary Elections in Slovenia," December 2011.](#)

radical austerity measures, advocated by support from the various international organizations. However, the government again faced considerable social discontent as it insisted on making many decisions unilaterally, including significant downsizing of the welfare state – which is still considered by the majority of the public to be something that is worth fighting for – and trying to introduce the “slim state” concept. Not surprisingly, most of the cuts in 2012 targeted the public sector, which the government claimed was oversized, even though only 5.5 per cent of the active working population was employed in the public sector in Slovenia in 2012, compared to the 7.1 per cent EU average and the OECD country average of 14.5 per cent.<sup>23</sup> In the last several years of the crisis and the measures to handle it, it seems that the middle stratum has been affected the most by the governments’ different measures and this can have an effect on the prospects for democratic development and the modernization of society in the future.

Despite an attempt, particularly of the both center-right governments to introduce lower welfare state assurances and consequently some higher social inequality, in Slovenia inequality has been relatively stable and low;<sup>24</sup> in the 2000s, Slovenia was even the most equal among the OECD countries, with a Gini coefficient of 24, and in 2010 the Slovenian Gini coefficient was the lowest of the European countries.<sup>25</sup> However, in 2014 it was already 25. There have also been relatively large

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<sup>23</sup> Damjan Lajh, “Slovenia,” in Sylvana Habdank-Kolaczowska (ed.), *Nations in Transit 2013: Democratization from Central Europe to Eurasia* (New York, Washington: Freedom House, Lanham Rowman and Littlefield, 2013), p. 536.

<sup>24</sup> Vehovar is far more critical on this topic. He agrees that income inequality is low in Slovenia, but the problem is that incomes are concentrated close to the at-risk-of-poverty level. See Urban Vehovar, “Slovenija, arhipelag obmodernosti,” in Janko Prunk and Tomaž Deželan (ed.), *Dvajset let slovenske države* (Maribor: Aristej, 2012), pp. 81–111.

<sup>25</sup> Maša Filipović Hrast and Miroljub Ignjatović, “Slovenia: An Equal Society Despite the Transition,” in Brian Nolan (ed.), *Changing Inequalities and Societal Impacts in Rich*

differences across statistical regions in Slovenia regarding poverty and unemployment rates. The most vulnerable areas in this regard have been the eastern and southern parts of Slovenia, while among the specific groups most vulnerable have been lone parents, the elderly, and the unemployed. The austerity measures adopted by different governments during the last several years in order to reduce public debt have seriously affected many, especially those dependent on social security benefits and other kinds of assistance.<sup>26</sup>

Under the EU's economic and political pressures, the center-left coalition government led by Bratušek (Positive Slovenia) in 2013, prepared a list of fifteen respected companies to be privatized, among them Telekom Slovenia and Airport Ljubljana. In 2014, fierce critics of privatization exposed the fact that Germany or its individual Bundesländer were becoming owners of Slovenian companies from the privatization list. Some critics state that selling companies to German Bundesländer cannot be treated as privatization, but rather simply as selling (good) companies. Privatization was one of the most important issues in the 2014 election campaign.

## Is Corruption a Problem or Not?

The word "corruption" in the 1990s was not part of the political and public agenda in Slovenia; it was rarely mentioned and in general, corruption was not acknowledged as a problem. The situation changed at the turn of the century and since then this word has become an integral part of Slovenian political life. During the last two years of the LDS's

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*Countries: Thirty Countries Experiences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 594.

<sup>26</sup> Filipovič Hrast and Ignjatović, "Slovenia: An Equal Society Despite the Transition," p. 613.

power (2002 to 2004), that party was increasingly portrayed by the opposition as a party connected to corruption and clientelism and, just before the 2004 elections, accusations from opposition parties about corruption and clientelism in the LDS reached a peak.<sup>27</sup> Transparency International rankings (Corruption Perception Index, or CPI) and World Bank indicators presented a very favorable picture in terms of the scope of corruption for almost a decade in the new millennium. On the other hand, many scholarly works and reports written in the period between 2000 and 2008 painted a different picture. The reasons for such differences include the diversity of methodologies used as well as the approaches adopted by researchers, which varied between individualist or systemic approaches.<sup>28</sup> For a long time, public opinion polls in Slovenia, together with Transparency International's CPI and the World Bank, focused on an individualist approach and petty corruption, while some other researchers concentrated on a criminal state-capture problem or the problem of systemic corruption. Systemic corruption has been regularly exposed as a real problem in Slovenia. However, it was first acknowledged publicly and officially only at the beginning of 2011, when the newly appointed president of the Anti-Corruption Commission, Goran Klemenčič, stated that Slovenia was a very corrupt state, bedeviled with systemic corruption in which up to 47 per cent of detected corruption has been connected with public tenders. In 2011, twelve out of thirteen indicators of systemic

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<sup>27</sup> Alenka Krašovec and Simona Kustec Lipicer, "Europe and the Parliamentary Elections in Slovenia. October 2004." *EPERN Election briefing No. 18* (2004); [www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=epern-election-briefing-no-18.pdf&site=266](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=epern-election-briefing-no-18.pdf&site=266) (last accessed on 17 February 2016).

<sup>28</sup> Alenka Krašovec, Lars Johannsen, Karin Hilme Pedersen and Tomaž Deželan, "Nevarnost sistemske korupcije v Sloveniji: spodbude in ovire," in *Revija za kriminalistiko in kriminologijo*, Vol. 65, No. 3 (2014), pp. 207–220.

corruption were found in Slovenia.<sup>29</sup> Looking back at this development, it is not a surprise that Slovenia adopted the Law on Prevention of Corruption only in 2003 and that 2004 saw the country's first anti-corruption strategy when the non-governmental Commission for the Prevention of Corruption began to operate. The Commission very quickly found itself under several kinds of pressure. During the term of Janša's first center-right government (2004 to 2008), the Commission came under several direct and indirect attacks (e.g., the government proposed and the parliament passed a law according to which the independent anti-corruption commission should be replaced by the parliamentary commission, but the Constitutional Court abandoned it and in 2008 the parliament approved the lowest budget in its history). The Commission experienced financial problems for a while, but its finances improved under Pahor's center-left government and in 2010, by the Law on Integrity and Prevention of Corruption, which empowered the Commission further. Especially under its leader, Klemenčič, the Commission managed to establish itself as an effective enforcer of the Law as well as a confident watchdog of public employees.<sup>30</sup> The biggest political storms were provoked by the Commission's assessment in 2012 and 2013 that some of the Maribor mayor's activities were corrupt and exhibited clientelistic and cronyist patterns of behavior. The Commission took an even stronger stance in January 2013 when it announced the findings of a year-long investigation into the holders of the highest political offices who were also heads of seven parliamentary parties. This investigation was in relation to asset declaration and financial disclosure laws. The Commission's investigation

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<sup>29</sup> Komisija za preprečevanje korupcije, "Ocena stanja korupcije v Republiki Sloveniji 2011"; [www.kpk-rs.si/sl/korupcija-integriteta-in-etika/analize-raziskave-in-statistika/ocena-stanja-korupcije-2011](http://www.kpk-rs.si/sl/korupcija-integriteta-in-etika/analize-raziskave-in-statistika/ocena-stanja-korupcije-2011) (last accessed on 17 February 2016).

<sup>30</sup> Lajh, "Slovenia," p. 546.

revealed that Prime Minister Janša and the mayor of Ljubljana, Janković, had systematically and repeatedly violated the law by failing to properly report their assets to the Commission. In addition, in the case of Prime Minister Janša, the Commission's investigation uncovered private expenses and use of funds amounting to at least 200,000 EUR, which came from an unknown source; this exceeded his official income and savings. Furthermore, the Commission concluded that there was evidence that the purchase of one of the prime minister's properties was indirectly co-funded by a construction firm with a major government contract.

In the case of Janković, the Commission's investigation uncovered a systemic failure to report his full assets – a total of 2.4 million EUR during six years in office – as well as transactions involving the shares of different companies. Furthermore, the Commission uncovered several financial chain-transactions between the companies owned by Janković's sons and companies doing multi-million-euro business with the city. Parts of these funds were transferred to the private account of the mayor. Janša and Janković both denied their guilt and launched law suits against the Commission, though the administrative court later rejected these suits.<sup>31</sup> As a result of the Commission's findings, Janković froze his position as party leader. In spring 2014, his desire to take back the party leadership not only provoked a split in the party but also ultimately led to the aforementioned collapse of the Bratušek government and early elections. On the other hand, after the Commission's report, Janša did not resign as prime minister or party leader, nor did he demand a vote of confidence in the National Assembly.

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<sup>31</sup> In 2015, the Supreme Court annulled both reports due to procedural errors (the Commission had not sent the draft reports to Janša and Janković and thereby offer their opinions on the draft reports) and the Commission had to remove the reports from its webpage. However, the Commission later issued the reports, but gave both politicians formally a chance to give an opinion to draft reports.

However, because of this report, the government started to disintegrate at the end of January 2013 and by a constructive vote of no confidence, a new (Bratušek) government was formed.

In the last several years, some examples of the exploitation of personal networks and political connections in order to gain privileges as well as strange deals between public-office holders and private companies have been exposed. However, these irregularities have ended with trials only in some cases. Therefore, it is easy to see how two different rules of law (one for “ordinary” and the other for “privileged” people) were in effect.

The most prominent and long-lasting scandal, however, which has cast a shadow over Slovenian politics since 2008, is the Patria affair, which involved alleged bribes paid by a Finnish defense contractor for the purchase of armored personnel carriers. This scandal reached its first peak during the electoral campaign of 2008, just three weeks before elections, when the Finnish public television network YLE broadcast a report implicating several Slovenian civil servants and politicians, including Prime Minister Janša in corrupt dealings. The scandal reached its second peak in 2013, when Janša was found guilty of having taken bribes from a Finnish defense contractor during his 2004–2008 term in office. In April 2014, the verdict was upheld by the Higher Court (Court of Appeal) and Janša (together with two other persons) was sent to prison for two years. But the Constitutional Court unanimously repealed the guilty verdicts against Janša in April 2015 and ordered a retrial at the Local Court under a new judge. In September 2015, a judge decided that the Patria case fell under the statute of limitations. Given all these circumstances, it is not surprising that, in 2011, 74 per cent of Slovenes in the Eurobarometer survey (the biggest share of all respondents in the

EU) evaluated the level of corruption as increasing in the last three years.<sup>32</sup> The same public opinion poll revealed that 47 per cent of Slovenian respondents considered corruption to be the most important problem in the country's national security.<sup>33</sup> As revealed by Eurobarometer in 2011, Slovenes have the most negative opinion on the corruptibility of national politicians among EU citizens: 83 per cent of respondents estimated that corruption was widespread among politicians, while on average, 57 per cent of respondents in the EU believed the same.<sup>34</sup> The extent of the problem of corruption was illustrated by the minister of health in 2013, who, in his resignation statement, openly admitted that corruption is a very big problem, not only in the healthcare system but in Slovenia as a whole.

To fight corruption more efficiently, in 2012 the Anti-Corruption Commission prepared several changes to legislation which would further empower the Commission. As the Commission found out, a parliamentary alliance crossed party lines against the proposed changes. The leadership of the Commission resigned at the end of 2013 as a sign of protest against the government's inadequate anticorruption efforts. A new leadership of the Commission was appointed in spring 2014, but only after several complications. An unknown lawyer, Boris Štefanec, who a day prior to his appointment was still a member of Positive Slovenia, was appointed the new president of the Commission. Due to this "baggage," both of the two new deputy leaders resigned. Soon after the new Commission finally started working, the leadership engaged in several

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<sup>32</sup> Special Eurobarometer 374: "Corruption Report 2012," p. 39, at [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_374\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_374_en.pdf) (last accessed on 1 February 2016).

<sup>33</sup> Komisija za preprečevanje korupcije, "Ocena stanja" (2013), p. 13, at [https://www.kpk-rs.si/upload/t\\_datoteke/Ocena\\_stanja\\_korupcije\\_v\\_RS.pdf](https://www.kpk-rs.si/upload/t_datoteke/Ocena_stanja_korupcije_v_RS.pdf) (last accessed on 17 February 2016).

<sup>34</sup> "Corruption Report 2012," p. 49.

internal disputes which continued also in 2015. As was frequently observed, since mid-2014, the Commission's reputation as an effective, trustworthy, independent watchdog institution has faded.

## Political Participation, Elections, and Satisfaction with Democracy

As in many other countries, in Slovenia, voter turnout on parliamentary elections has declined over the last two decades. It reached the lowest turnout on parliamentary elections in 2014, with only 51 per cent of eligible citizens voting. Nevertheless, election participation has still been the main form of political participation in Slovenia, and a tendency towards individualization of participation was revealed.<sup>35</sup> Even so, some mass unconventional participation has occasionally been recorded (for example, the 1992 general strike, the 2005 mass protest against Janša's government reform measures, the 2007 general strike of the public sector, and the largest strike of the public sector in 2012), with the most outstanding protests at the end of 2012 and beginning of 2013 triggered by the revelation of Maribor mayor's corrupt activities.

The previously described developments in the period between 2004 and 2008, together with disappointment over ineffective government during 2008–2011, the evidently corrupt activities and misuse of public funds on the part of different politicians, and a perceived lack of responsiveness from politicians, radically reduced trust in political institutions and satisfaction with democracy. Vehovar refers to the

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<sup>35</sup> Danica Fink-Hafner and Samo Kropivnik, "Politična udeležba v posocializmu: med deformirano modernostjo, novo modernizacijo in postmodernostjo," in *Družboslovne razprave*, Vol. 22, No. 51 (2006), pp. 55–72.

collapse of trust in democratic institutions.<sup>36</sup> These issues at the end of 2012 and beginning of 2013 led to a significant wave of protests.<sup>37</sup> Enormous public protests for the first time in the history of independent Slovenia escalated into violent clashes with the police. Protesters, supported by 75 per cent of the population,<sup>38</sup> were concerned with corrupt politicians and the unethical way in which politics in general has been conducted. The protesters therefore demanded the establishment of a new political elite, with greater inclusion of people in authority and the return of the kidnapped state to its citizens.<sup>39</sup> As discovered by Toš and his collaborators,<sup>40</sup> satisfaction with democracy has been slowly declining ever since the beginning of the 1990s. In January 2013, however, only 7 per cent of the population was satisfied with the status of democracy in Slovenia. Several other institutions during the last several years were also recorded as enjoying very low levels of trust, including the Church.<sup>41</sup> Among these

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<sup>36</sup> Vehovar, "Slovenija, arhipelag obmodernosti," p. 90.

<sup>37</sup> For more details, see Marko Bucik, "Slovenia in Turmoil," 4 February 2013, at [www.opendemocracy.net/marko-bucik/slovenia-in-turmoil](http://www.opendemocracy.net/marko-bucik/slovenia-in-turmoil) (accessed on 16 February 2016).

<sup>38</sup> Politbarometer, 1/2013, at [www.ip-rs.si/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Pdf/razno/politbarometer\\_1-2013.pdf](http://www.ip-rs.si/fileadmin/user_upload/Pdf/razno/politbarometer_1-2013.pdf) (last accessed on 17 February 2016).

<sup>39</sup> Alenka Krašovec, "BTI 2014: Slovenia Country Report" (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 2014), at [www.bti-project.org/fileadmin/Inhalte/reports/2014/pdf/BTI%202014%20Slovenia.pdf](http://www.bti-project.org/fileadmin/Inhalte/reports/2014/pdf/BTI%202014%20Slovenia.pdf) (last accessed on 17 February 2016).

<sup>40</sup> See Niko Toš et al., *Vrednote v prehodu II: Slovensko javno mnenje 1990–1999* (Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede, 1999); Niko Toš et al., *Vrednote v prehodu III: Slovensko javno mnenje 1990–1999* (Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede, 2004); Niko Toš et al., *Vrednote v prehodu IV: Slovensko javno mnenje 1990–1999* (Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede, 2009); and Niko Toš et al., *Vrednote v prehodu V: Slovensko javno mnenje 1990–1999* (Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede, 2012).

<sup>41</sup> Marjan Smrke, "The Impact of the 'Holy Crash' on Trust in the Church in Slovenia," in *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (2014), p. 128. In 2011, only 24.6%

institutions, political parties fared the worst (while in 2005, 11 per cent of voters still trusted parties, this share was only 1 per cent in 2013).<sup>42</sup>

When discussing the 2014 elections, at least three additional points must be mentioned, since they also represent novelty in democratic life in Slovenia. First, just a few weeks before elections, the leader of the opposition SDS, Janša, was incarcerated after being found guilty in the Patria affair. The SDS's electoral campaign was organized almost exclusively around the (supposed) injustice inflicted on its leader by the Higher Court's verdict. Furthermore, Janša's supporters saw the court's verdict as politically motivated and he was characterized by his supporters as a political prisoner. The SDS managed to mobilize its supporters and organized public gatherings and protests in front of the Supreme Court in the center of Ljubljana, which would pass judgment on his request for the protection of legality (in fall 2014, the request was rejected). Second, such developments and the party's poor results in the election (20.7 per cent) provoked the SDS to claim that the elections had not been free and fair and, therefore, not legitimate, which was the first time any Slovenian party had made such a claim in more than twenty years of independence. Third, although Janša was already in prison, he ran as a candidate in the elections and was elected. For more than a month, he also attended

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of the population expressed either "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in the Church, which was the lowest level of trust ever in the Church in the post-independence era. This was obviously connected with the Church's active involvement in the second step of privatization schemes; for this reason, the Church was frequently described as an important Slovenian *tycoon* and was held responsible for almost one-third of bad debts in Slovenia. Pope Francis acknowledged the wrong-doings of the Maribor diocese and in 2013, several of the highest clergymen were forced to resign from their positions. Some commentators described this as a "beheading" of the Church. It was not until the fall of 2014 that the Vatican established a new leadership for the Church in Slovenia.

<sup>42</sup> See Politbarometer, 9/2005, at [www.cjm.si/sites/cjm.si/files/old\\_pb/pb09\\_05.pdf](http://www.cjm.si/sites/cjm.si/files/old_pb/pb09_05.pdf) (last accessed on 17 February 2016); and Politbarometer 1/2013.

parliamentary sessions, but after many heated debates and despite various legal stances and interpretations, in October 2014 the parliament decided to terminate Janša's mandate. According to the Law on Members of the National Assembly, for MPs sentenced to more than six months on an unsuspended prison sentence, the mandate terminates unless the National Assembly decides differently. In December 2014, the Constitutional Court issued a temporary injunction against Janša's two-year prison sentence until it made a final decision on his appeal against the conviction. As a result, Janša was released from prison and he returned to the National Assembly.<sup>43</sup>

If voters on the national level decided to pin their hopes on new political figures who had not tarnished their reputation with corrupt activities, several months later there was a very different story in the local elections. Specifically, several elected mayors or mayors who entered the second round of elections (for example, mayors of Maribor – where the mayor whose behavior triggered protest which spread around Slovenia entered the second round – Ljubljana, Koper, Trebnje, Radenci) have been under investigation due to different (alleged) wrong-doings. Some of them have even been legally convicted. This came as a surprise due to the otherwise intense anticorruption mood of the people as well as calls for assuring more ethics in politics. On the other hand, the good results of non-party candidates and lists of candidates did not come as a surprise. In fact, such candidates and lists of candidates were becoming increasingly successful since 1994.<sup>44</sup> In 1994, these candidates received 9.5 per cent of all votes and at the 2006 elections, 21.4 per cent of all votes. The local elections in 2010

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<sup>43</sup> *Slovenia Times* (23 April 2015), at [www.sloveniatimes.com/patria-scandal-from-plans-to-equip-army-to-verdicts-and-retrial](http://www.sloveniatimes.com/patria-scandal-from-plans-to-equip-army-to-verdicts-and-retrial) (accessed on 17 February 2016).

<sup>44</sup> **Simona Kukovič** and **Miro Haček**, "Non-Partisan Candidates and Lists at Slovenian Local Elections, 1994–2010," in *World Political Science Review*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2011), p. 13.

saw good results for non-party candidates and lists of candidates, since they received 22.0 per cent of all votes for mayors and members of municipal councils. This trend continued in the 2014 local elections, since non-party candidates and lists of candidates received one-third all of votes and more than half of all elected mayors ran as independent candidates.

## The State of the Media

As Robert Dahl has emphasized,<sup>45</sup> a democracy requires the existence of an informed public. Where people are uninformed about the issues at hand or about the candidates and parties, they may support candidates or parties that espouse policies harmful to sections of the population, including potentially themselves. And to have an informed public, the presence of independent media is indispensable. In parts of Central and Southeastern Europe, independent media began to appear in the 1980s; in Slovenia, the chief vehicle for independent journalist at that time was the weekly news magazine *Mladina*, which has continued to maintain its integrity and uphold professional standards. This was a time when the state discontinued subsidies to most newspapers, seemingly setting them free. But the end of state subsidies ushered in the commercialization of the media, which in turn stimulated journalists to engage in pseudo-investigative reporting, in order to boost sales of their newspapers. The result was that journalists became all too ready to prepare reports based on unconfirmed

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<sup>45</sup> See Derek Bok, *The Trouble with Government* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 211; also Robert Dahl, *On Democracy*, 2nd edn. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2015).

information from interested sources. This in turn encouraged tendencies to sensationalism and tabloidization in certain media outlets.<sup>46</sup>

Privatization was part of this process. But until 1994, there was no new legislation regulating the media. This meant that socialist-era legislation, which made no provision for either the privatization of existing media or the establishment of (new) private media, remained in force. In this state of legal limbo, new media nonetheless emerged, and broadcasting licenses and broadcast frequencies were assigned, even though there was no legal basis for such assignments. As Hrvatin and Milosavljević have pointed out, “[i]t was not by chance that the Mass Media Act, which specified methods and terms under which a broadcasting license could be granted, was passed only one day after the last important broadcasting license was awarded (to TV3).”<sup>47</sup> Privatization of the print media was arranged in such a way as to allow journalists to have a vote in the management of the newspapers where they worked. At the influential daily newspaper *Delo*, for example, 20 per cent of shares were distributed among past and current employees, while an additional 22 per cent of shares were offered for sale to the paper’s editors and journalists.<sup>48</sup> Instead of keeping their shares, however, most of the small stockholders sold them, with the result that, by 2004, various large corporations

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<sup>46</sup> Sonja Merljak Zdovc and Melita Poler Kovačič, “The Paradox of Slovenia: Investigative Journalism during Socialism and Democracy,” in *Journalism*, Vol. 8, No. 5 (2007), pp. 522–525.

<sup>47</sup> Sandra B. Hrvatin and Marko Milosavljević, *Media Policy in Slovenia in the 1990s: Regulation, privatization, concentration, and commercialization of the media* (Ljubljana: Peace Institute, 2001), p. 15.

<sup>48</sup> Sabrina F. Ramet and Roman Kuhar, “Ownership and Political Influence in the Post-Socialist Mediascape: The Case of Slovenia,” in *Südosteuropa*, Vol. 60 (2012), No. 1, p. 16.

controlled anywhere from 25 per cent to 51 per cent of the stock in Slovenia's newspapers.

The privatization of the Slovenian media became politicized when power-holders arranged for their friends to purchase shares at set prices, without inviting offers from the broader public.<sup>49</sup> In exchange for granting privileged access to acquiring ownership, political elites gained influence over editorial appointments and policies at certain media. In what is perhaps the best-known example, in 2005 then-Prime Minister Janez Janša arranged for Boško Šrot, principal shareholder in the Laško Brewery, who already held a deciding share of the stock in *Delo*, to be able to purchase shares in the Mercator company, a large retail chain; in exchange, Janša was to gain control of editorial and managerial appointments as well as editorial policy at *Delo*.<sup>50</sup>

During his first term as prime minister, Janša also pushed through a new law on the media (in October 2005). This law replaced legislation passed in 2001 and expanded the program council of Radio-Television Slovenia from twenty-five to twenty-nine members; more significantly, where the parliament had previously appointed only five of the council's members, that body would now appoint twenty-one of its twenty-nine members.<sup>51</sup> The Journalists' Association of Slovenia condemned the law, which it claimed restricted media freedom. Moreover, by 2006, Prime Minister Janša enjoyed clear influence not only over *Delo* and Radio-Television Slovenia, but also over the

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>50</sup> Boris Vezjak, professor of philosophy at the University of Maribor, in an interview with Sabrina Ramet, Maribor, 13 April 2010. See also "Adrijana Starina Kosem in Boško Šrot," in *Mladina* (Ljubljana), 25 November 2011, at [www.mladina.si/106981/adrijana-starina-kosem-in-bosko-srot-danes/](http://www.mladina.si/106981/adrijana-starina-kosem-in-bosko-srot-danes/) (last accessed on 14 November 2014).

<sup>51</sup> "Journalisten: 'Medienfreiheit in Slowenien angeschlagen'," in *Der Standard* (Vienna), 12 May 2006, at <http://derstandard.at/druck/?id=2432962> (last accessed on 14 November 2014).

nationalized STA news agency. In this context, two journalists – Matej Šurc and Blaž Zgaga – defiantly drew up a protest against censorship and pressure on journalists, and began to circulate it among their colleagues in the media. Eventually, the protest was signed by 571 Slovenian journalists, roughly one in every four newsmen in the country.<sup>52</sup>

After Borut Pahor assumed the office of prime minister in 2008, an effort was made to amend the law on Radio-Television Slovenia. The draft law would have ensured that any editorial appointments would have to be approved by at least 65 per cent of the journalists employed at the station. The bill was approved by the parliament in October 2010, but when it was submitted to a public referendum, only 14.78 per cent of eligible voters turned out to vote, and a large majority (72.33 per cent) voted against the measure.<sup>53</sup> *Delo* mourned this result, commenting that now “[t]here will be no need for politicians to keep their hands out of the public broadcaster.”<sup>54</sup>

In the print media, advertisers – among whom state-owned companies have been major players – can make the difference between solvency and insolvency for a media outlet. In such circumstances, an unwritten rule is well understood: journalists should write articles which please those purchasing ads, and avoid subjects displeasing to advertisers. While the majority of journalists have come to practice self-censorship when necessary, others have preferred to take risks. For wayward journalists,

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<sup>52</sup> “Petition against Censorship and Political Pressures on Journalists in Slovenia, 10 September 2007,” posted at [www2.mirovni-institut.si/eng\\_html/news/PETITION.rtf](http://www2.mirovni-institut.si/eng_html/news/PETITION.rtf) (accessed on 15 November 2014); also Matej Šurc, RTV Slovenia journalist, in an interview with Sabrina Ramet, Ljubljana, 23 June 2008.

<sup>53</sup> Ramet and Kuhar, “Ownership and Political Influence,” pp. 26–27.

<sup>54</sup> As quoted in “Politicians Able to keep Meddling in Broadcaster, *Delo* Says,” in *STA* (13 December 2010), at [www.sta.si/vest.php?s=a&id=1585506](http://www.sta.si/vest.php?s=a&id=1585506) (last accessed on 14 November 2014).

reductions in salary, dismissal or transfer to another job, or threats of nonrenewal of contracts have served as disciplinary measures.<sup>55</sup> Those willing to play by the “rules” are expected to participate in the production of advertorials – “a hybrid between advertisement and editorial.”<sup>56</sup>

Freedom House, which offers annual estimates of the relative independence of the media – alongside other measures of democratization – in post-socialist countries, assigned the Slovenian media a relatively high score of 1.50 in 2005 (presumably before the new law took effect that year). Beginning in 2006, that score declined every year for three years in a row, settling in at a less impressive 2.25 for the years 2008–2014.<sup>57</sup> As of 2014, Reporters Without Borders ranked Slovenia in 34th place in terms of media freedom, behind fellow post-socialist countries Estonia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, and Lithuania (and in 2015 it dropped yet another place).<sup>58</sup>

In May 2015, the leader of SDS, Janša, told a gathering of party seniors that it was necessary to have a “normal media structure” in Slovenia and announced the establishment of a new media house, Nova 24TV, with the support of the SDS.<sup>59</sup> This

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<sup>55</sup> Karmen Erjavec and Melita Poler Kovačič, “Relations with the media: Who are the main actors in an advertorial production process in Slovenia?,” in *Journalism*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2010), p. 94.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>57</sup> Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2014 – Slovenia*, at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2014/slovenia#.VGaBePnF-0I> (accessed on 14 November 2014).

<sup>58</sup> “World Press Freedom Index 2014,” *Reporters Without Borders*, at <http://rsf.org/index2014/en-index2014.php> (accessed on 14 November 2014); *Reporters Without Borders*, at <https://index.rsf.org/#/> (accessed on 16 February 2016).

<sup>59</sup> *MMC RTVSLO* (30. May 2015) “Janša: Podpora SDS-a novi medijski hiši,” at [www.rtv slo.si/slovenija/jansa-podpora-sds-a-novi-medijski-hisi/366354](http://www.rtv slo.si/slovenija/jansa-podpora-sds-a-novi-medijski-hisi/366354) (accessed on 16 February 2016).

media house indeed was established and its director was none other than the former secretary of SDS's parliamentary party group, while its management body included also some politicians close to SDS. Among the members of the management body was the prominent clergyman in the hierarchy of the Slovene Catholic Church, Ivan Štuhec. As a political analyst has revealed, this media house will be politically profiled but will not be the party's official media house.<sup>60</sup>

## Human Rights and Intolerance

During the era of Socialist Yugoslavia, Slovenes considered themselves champions in the protection of human rights. Although in general, Slovenia adequately respects human rights, several cases have cast a shadow on this self-image. Slovenia has ratified most international agreements regarding the protection of minorities and has been trying to portray its minority protection regime as exemplary. However, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe and Slovenian Ombudsman have repeatedly warned about gaps between the legal framework and the de facto situation, as well as the unequal treatment of minorities.

There are no significant ethnic divisions in Slovenia, due to the relative homogeneity of the population (more than 80 per cent of the population is Slovenian). Nevertheless, some minorities exist and are usually divided into two groups of minorities: the traditional/historic and the modern national minorities. The first group includes the Italian, Hungarian, and to some degree the Roma communities, while the second includes people who identify themselves as members of nations of former

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<sup>60</sup> STA (7 July 2015) "Ustanovljena Nova 24, ki bo sledila vrednotam evropske desnice desnice," at [www.zurnal24.si/ustanovljena-nova-24-ki-bo-sledila-vrednotam-evropske-desnice-clanek-252963](http://www.zurnal24.si/ustanovljena-nova-24-ki-bo-sledila-vrednotam-evropske-desnice-clanek-252963) (accessed on 16 February 2016).

Yugoslavia.<sup>61</sup> The constitutionally recognized division between autochthonous and non-autochthonous minorities is the line which separates one group and its rights and legal protection from the other.<sup>62</sup> Since passage of the Yugoslav constitution in 1974, the status of an autochthonous minority has been granted to the Italian and Hungarian minorities: in the 2002 census, 2,258 people identified themselves as members of the Italian minority, while 6,243 people identified themselves as members of the Hungarian minority. Both have constitutionally assured political and cultural rights at the local and national level – the constitution assures their representation in the national parliament (each has one reserved seat) and in several municipal councils. There are also a lot of Serbs, Bosniaks, Croats, and other people from other Yugoslav successor states in Slovenia (altogether around 200,000). They are not granted any special status, but are organized according to civil society principles and in the form of religious groups. Under pressure from the Council of Europe and the Slovenian Ombudsman, parties in 2011 managed to pass the Declaration on the Situation of National Communities from the Former Yugoslavia, which formally expressed the willingness of the Slovenian state to formally regulate the collective rights of these groups; however, no progress has been made since.

*The Roma.* In the 2002 census, 3,246 people declared themselves to be members of the Roma population, although some NGOs have suggested that the actual number is between 7,000 and 12,000. The population has deserved some special political attention and status at the local level. The 1991 constitution provides the Roma community in

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<sup>61</sup> Miran Komac and Dean Zagorac, *Varstvo manjšin: Uvodna pojasnila in dokumenti*. (Ljubljana: Inštitut za narodnostna vprašanja, 2002).

<sup>62</sup> Tomaž Deželan, *Citizenship in Slovenia: The Regime of a Nationalising or Europeanising State?* Working Paper 2011/16. (Edinburgh: The University of Edinburgh, School of Law, 2011), p. 23.

Slovenia with a special status and requires that the government regulate this status with special legislation. Special protection and rights for the Roma community were initially provided in sector-specific acts and the umbrella law, which integrally regulates the position of the community, its organization, and funding, was not adopted until 2007.<sup>63</sup> In particular, since 2002, the Law on Self-Government ensures that in those municipalities where the Roma population is autochthonous, the Roma population has reserved seats on local councils (in twenty municipalities out of 212). At the beginning, some municipalities did not want to implement this legal obligation, claiming that the Roma population is not autochthonous. The biggest resistance in this regard was recorded in Grosuplje (in the Dolenjska region) and only after several interventions of the Constitutional Court did the municipality decide to respect this right of the Roma population. As Ramet and Lajh have reported, the Ombudsman and various NGOs warned that Roma living in Slovenia face numerous problems including high unemployment (more than 90 per cent in some areas), a lack of running water, poor sanitation, a lack of electricity, and a lack of sewers or waste removal services.<sup>64</sup> Although some Roma-oriented policies have been adopted, implementation has been inadequate.<sup>65</sup> In recent years, Slovenia has introduced various programs for the Roma community, aimed at raising educational levels and improving professional qualifications. More positive results have been recorded in the Pomurje region, where the level of integration of the Roma population into the general population is much higher than in the Dolenjska region. In the Dolenjska region, there had been several

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>64</sup> Sabrina P. Ramet and Damjan Lajh, "Slovenia" in Jeannette Goehring (ed.), *Nations in Transit 2008 : Democratization from Central Europe to Eurasia* (New York, Washington, Budapest: Freedom House, 2008), p. 543.

<sup>65</sup> Deželan, "Citizenship in Slovenia."

cases of high tension between the local Roma population and the non-Roma population, including a bomb attack on the Romani school assistant. The biggest and most exposed tension was recorded at the end of 2006, when there was a collective outburst among villagers in Ambrus concerning the Roma family Strojan. Residents accused the Strojan family of criminal acts, including vandalism of private property. The community's anger peaked after a fight between a member of the Strojan family and a villager (who had to be hospitalized). The villagers demanded that the family be removed immediately. They also criticized the state for not assuming its law enforcement duties over the previous decade. Both sides threatened the use of violence. According to Teršek, the state responded unconvincingly, overstepping the limits of legality and constitutionality.<sup>66</sup> Just before Christmas 2006, authorities dismantled the Strojans' illegal residence without giving them time to pack their belongings. When President Drnovšek, who strongly supported the rights of the Roma family, wanted to visit the family, the villagers prevented his arrival and the delivery of mobile homes sent by the president. In the end, the Roma family was removed from the village by police and relocated, at the demand of the villagers.

Janša's center-right government also allowed the segregation of pupils on the basis of ethnicity in a primary school in the Dolenjska region.<sup>67</sup> At the time, in the popular television program *Piramida*, the leader of the parliamentary Slovenian National Party (SNS), Zmago Jelinčič, employed hate speech against the Roma but received the support of 73 per cent of viewers, revealing an intolerant, populist,

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<sup>66</sup> Andraž Teršek, "Slovenia," in Jeannette Goehring (ed.), *Nations in Transit 2007: Democratization from Central Europe to Eurasia* (New York, Washington, Budapest: Freedom House, 2007), p. 659.

<sup>67</sup> Deželan, "Citizenship in Slovenia," p. 26.

nationalist, and emotional side of Slovenia's general public<sup>68</sup> rather than a concern for resolving social problems or discrimination.<sup>69</sup>

*The Erased.* The case of the “erased” involves roughly 30,000 natives of other Yugoslav republics according to Matevž Krivic, or 18,305 according to the Ministry of the Interior,<sup>70</sup> who had been citizens of the SFRY and permanent residents of Slovenia but failed to file applications for Slovenian citizenship and/or did not acquire new residence permits within the short period of time (altogether eight months) permitted after Slovenia formally declared its independence. Subsequently, these individuals were erased from the registry of permanent residents in 1992 and were subjected to a systematic destruction of their identification papers by the state; this prevented them, among other things, from having access to health care, employment, and unemployment benefits, which was a road to poverty. While sometimes the number of the “erased” was disputed, the debates were mainly staged around (1) whether the government had violated their human rights in erasing them; (2) whether their rights of citizenship should be restored by fiat, or by instituting new procedures, or not at all; and (3) whether those who failed to meet the deadline to register were somehow to blame for

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<sup>68</sup> According to public opinion polls, the level of xenophobia in Slovenia in two decades decreased, although the Roma population is still the least desired ethnic group. See Andre Kirbiš, Serge Flere and Marina Tavčar Krajnc, “Netolerantnost v Sloveniji in Evropi: Primerjalna in longitudinalna analiza,” in *Družboslovne razprave*, Vol. 28, No. 70 (2012), pp. 27–50.

<sup>69</sup> Teršek, “Slovenia,” p. 669. For further discussion, see Alenka Kuhelj, “Rise of Xenophobic Nationalism in Europe: A Case of Slovenia,” in *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 44, Issue 4 (December 2011), especially pp. 280–281.

<sup>70</sup> Vlasta Jalušič and Jasminka Dedić, “(The) Erasure – Mass Human Rights Violation and Denial of Responsibility: The Case of Independent Slovenia,” in *Human Rights Review*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (March 2008), pp. 95–96.

their situation.<sup>71</sup> After more than a decade of ignorance and unwillingness by the political elite to resolve this human rights violation,<sup>72</sup> in 2010, the first step in a discussion of the rights of the “erased,” which had been at the top of the agenda for several years, was finally concluded. This happened despite the center-right opposition’s desperate attempts to call for a referendum – a request which was ultimately denied by the Constitutional Court.<sup>73</sup> In fact, all political elites are responsible for the problem. The attitude of the center-left political actors during all these years can be described for the most part as an unwillingness to take any risks to solve the problem simply because center-right parties had used it efficiently in mobilizing the population in several elections.<sup>74</sup> The second, and final, formal step in solving the problem of the “erased” was made in 2012, when, in an effort to stay in line with a 2010 ruling (confirmed in 2012) by the European Court of the Human Rights, the government decided to assure state compensation to each rightful claimant in the amount of 50 EUR for every month of his statelessness. If the claimant were to evaluate such compensation as being too low, s/he would be entitled to bring a case to the court.

*Sexual Minorities.* While Slovenia was for a long time the most progressive republic in terms of the rights of homosexuals in Socialist Yugoslavia, and at the end of the 1980s in the wave of new social movements indeed kept step with developed European countries with the demand for legal equality of homosexual partnerships with heterosexual ones in terms of adoption of the law on registered same-sex couples, today Slovenia records worse results than, for example, Croatia and Montenegro, and it is in

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<sup>71</sup> Ramet and Lajh, “Slovenia,” p. 543.

<sup>72</sup> Tomaž Deželan, “In the Name of the Nation or/and Europe? Determinants of the Slovenian Citizenship Regime,” in *Citizenship Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 3–4 (2012), p. 419.

<sup>73</sup> Deželan, “Citizenship in Slovenia,” p. 17.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

this regard close to Serbia.<sup>75</sup> It is true that the first Law on the Registration of a Same-Sex Civil Partnerships was prepared in 1998, but it was the center-right government which managed to pass it in 2005 -- something the center-left governments had failed to do in more than ten years in power.<sup>76</sup> Though legalizing same-sex partnerships, the law does not ensure the same rights (that is, social security, health care, pension security, inheritance, and so forth) accorded to heterosexual couples, nor does it give same-sex couples the right to marry; therefore gay and lesbian groups were at the time dissatisfied, claiming that the law merely perpetuated discrimination. The center-left Pahor's government tried to make a step forward, and in 2009 prepared a new draft Family Law. The proposed law included two solutions that attracted widespread discussion as well as resistance in some parts of society: (1) marriage is a lifelong community of two persons of the same or opposite sex; and (2) two same-sex partners may adopt a child. Some people, especially members of the non-parliamentary New Slovenia declared that, were such solutions to be adopted, they would demand a referendum. In the heated political circumstances, and so as to avoid another potential referendum, in 2011 the government decided to prepare a modified proposal whereby marriage would be defined as a lifelong community of a man and a woman, while allowing that two same-sex partners might adopt a child only if one of the partners is the child's biological parent. The law was passed in the parliament but the atmosphere was heated and there were demands for a referendum anyway. Only the Constitutional

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<sup>75</sup> See, ILGA (2013) [www.ilga-europe.org/home/publications/reports\\_and\\_other\\_materials/rainbow\\_europe](http://www.ilga-europe.org/home/publications/reports_and_other_materials/rainbow_europe) (accessed on 16 February 2016).

<sup>76</sup> Roman Kuhar, "Homosexuality as a Litmus Test of Democracy and Postmodern Value Orientations," in Sabrina P. Ramet and Danica Fink-Hafner (eds.), *Democratic Transition in Slovenia: Value transformation, education, and media* (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 2006), p. 251.

Court was authorized to stop it, but it decided to allow it. A referendum was eventually held in 2012 and the law was rejected by 54.5 per cent of those taking part (the turnout was just 30 per cent). Only in 2014 did the center-left government announce that another attempt would be made in this regard. In March 2015, amendments to the Family Law were passed, triggering huge dissatisfaction among more conservative persons in Slovenia due to its redefinition of marriage. As a result of this law, marriage is no longer defined as a union between man and woman but rather as a union between two consenting adults. Moreover, this small change also grants same-sex couples the right to adopt children: in the ensuing polemics, this provided the main target of attack. A group of 40,000 citizens demanded that a referendum be held on the amendments, but the majority in the National Assembly refused to act on this demand on the grounds that it would violate a constitutional provision which prohibits popular votes on human rights.<sup>77</sup> But the Constitutional Court, by a narrow majority (5–4), in October 2015 allowed a referendum to be held.<sup>78</sup> On 20 December, after a very heated and often intolerant campaign, the amendments were voted down; more than 394,000 people or 63.5 per cent voted against them, while turnout was only 36 per cent. In the campaign

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<sup>77</sup> Although for more than two decades Slovenia followed the “liberal” approach to the regulation of referendums (40,000 voters, one-third of MPs, and the National Council (the upper house of the parliament) could demand to hold a referendum), since 2013 a referendum can be held only if 40,000 voters demand it. Referendums may not be held concerning laws regarding: the implementation of the state budget; emergency provisions for national defense and security or natural disaster response; the ratification of international treaties; and violations of the constitution in human rights and other areas. Additionally, a referendum may reverse legislation if is voted against by the majority of valid ballots, but only if at least one-fifth of all eligible voters vote in that way.

<sup>78</sup> *Slovenia Times* (22 October 2015), at [www.sloveniatimes.com/constitutional-court-allows-gay-marriage-referendum](http://www.sloveniatimes.com/constitutional-court-allows-gay-marriage-referendum) (accessed on 15 February 2016).

thirty-nine parties, associations, movements, and individuals participated. All the parliamentary parties participated, while the government supported the law but did not participate in the campaign.<sup>79</sup> Nevertheless, two campaign camps were clearly visible: a camp against the amendments under the slogan “Children are at Stake,” and a camp in favor of the amendments under the slogan “It’s Time for Yes.”

In discussing the rights of homosexuals in Slovenia, it is necessary to mention the attitude of the Catholic Church in that area. Here, Smrke and Hafner-Fink found that, on the individual level, religiosity is correlated with intolerance toward homosexuals (more religious people are less tolerant).<sup>80</sup> As Kuhar writes, the Catholic Church in the first and a half decade of Slovenia’s independence several times used the opportunity to reiterate its disagreement with homosexuality and the rights of homosexuals.<sup>81</sup> Even more, in 2011 and 2012 the Church was an active opponent of the Family Law. When the civil initiative “For Family and the Rights of Children” organized a “Family Day” in Ljubljana, advocating the traditional family comprised of father, mother, and children, representatives of the Catholic and Evangelical Church participated in the event. The Catholic Church was very active in the 2015 referendum, and Pope Francis clearly acknowledged this.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> *Irish Times* (21 December 2015), at [www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/slovenia-rejects-same-sex-marriages-in-referendum-1.2473602](http://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/slovenia-rejects-same-sex-marriages-in-referendum-1.2473602) (accessed on 15 February 2016).

<sup>80</sup> Marjan Smrke and Mitja Hafner-Fink, “(Ne)religioznost in socialna distance do izbranih družbenih manjšin v postsocialistični Evropi,” in *Teorija in praksa*, Vol. 45; No. 3–4 (2008), pp. 285–300.

<sup>81</sup> Kuhar, “Homosexuality as a Litmus Test of Democracy,” pp. 233, 241–245, 255, 267–268, 274–275.

<sup>82</sup> *New York Times* (21 December 2015), at [www.nytimes.com/2015/12/22/world/europe/slovenians-deliver-major-setback-to-same-sex-marriage-in-vote.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/22/world/europe/slovenians-deliver-major-setback-to-same-sex-marriage-in-vote.html) (accessed on 15 February 2016).

In the last two decades intolerance toward homosexuals has been displayed in several incidents, and probably the most explosive one happened in 2009, just a day before the traditional Gay Pride Parade in Ljubljana. On that day, several people threw torches into a bar where gays and lesbians were meeting. In contrast to a similar attack in 2007, the media widely covered the 2009 attack, and the minister of internal affairs joined the Gay Pride Parade the following day to demonstrate her support for the rights of gays and lesbians. The police acted quickly to find the persons responsible for the attack, and the perpetrators were convicted and sent to prison. But in fall 2014 the conviction was overturned due to the police not following established procedure during the investigation proceedings.

The first really big media coverage of LGBT rights came in 2002 when Sestre (the Sisters), a group of men in drag, won the national competition to represent Slovenia at the Eurosong 2002 contest. A huge massive discourse about gays and lesbians occupied the public sphere for months, revealing also the pressures of the Church on the Public TV which organized the national contest. Eventually even the European Parliament pointed out that the rights of sexual minorities are an important part of human rights, which themselves are an important part of the EU membership criteria.

From the point of view of public opinion, in the two decades of Slovenian democratic life it is hardly possible to observe any particular decrease in intolerance toward homosexuals and other sexual minorities. However, the highest levels of intolerance were recorded in the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s: in 1992, 42.8 per cent of people expressed intolerance toward homosexuals, while later almost continuously these levels were between 67 per cent and 55 per cent, and in 2008 the

level of intolerance reached 40 per cent,<sup>83</sup> which overall indicates the traditional and nonliberal values of Slovenian society. Even when outward signs suggest tolerance, below the surface homophobia remains a factor and “bursts out every time that the heteronormative majority feels threatened, for example when gays and lesbians ask for recognition by demanding equal legal rights for their partnerships and families.”<sup>84</sup> The result is a norm of privatization of homosexuality, keeping same-sex relations private and out of the public eye.

*Gender Equality.* Generally, when speaking about human rights, the question of gender equality has been regularly addressed. According to different indexes, for example, the Gender Inequality Index (United Nations Development Programme) and the Gender Gap Index (World Economic Forum), Slovenia has generally recorded relatively favorable rankings and performed the best among Yugoslav successor states. In Slovenia, formal gender equality has not been a problem, yet some gaps between the formally defined situation and the actual practice can be observed. This is, for example, exposed in wage differences for the same working positions. Women are, on average, better educated than men – in the last several years, the male/female ratio for enrolment was 1.45 in tertiary education and 1.01 in secondary education. However, the male/female ratio in wage equality was 0.64 while those at risk of poverty in the same year was almost 3 per cent higher among women than among men. In the fields of economic/labor participation, health, and education, problems have not been as visible as they are in political participation, or, more precisely, in the number of women in

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<sup>83</sup> Kirbiš, Flere, and avčar Krajnc, “Netolerantnost v Sloveniji in Evropi,” p. 39.

<sup>84</sup> Roman Kuhar and Alenka Švab, “The Interplay between Hatred and Political Correctness: the privatisation of Homosexuality in Slovenia,” in *Southeastern Europe*, Vol. 37 (2013), p. 22.

elected political bodies. In the first two decades of independence, there was a stable but small share of women MPs (around 13 per cent), but this changed with the 2011 elections when, for the first time, a significant number of women were elected. This was repeated in the 2014 elections (one-third of MPs are currently women). Whether or not this development is a consequence of the gender quota introduced for parliamentary elections in 2008 (and for the EP elections in 2004 and local elections in 2006) still needs to be researched. Specifically, in both elections, the majority of women were elected in the victorious new parties, which were established just before elections and in the campaign “played” their leaders’ cards exclusively. A breakthrough was achieved in the 2014 local elections as well, since 31 per cent of all elected local councilors were women. On the other hand, the considerable under-representation of women has continued when we speak about elected mayors (only 7 per cent of them are women).<sup>85</sup> In 1992, the government established an Office for Women’s Policy (later renamed the Office for Equal Opportunity). Slovenia was the only ex-socialist country in Eastern Europe to establish such an office, but it was later merged into the Ministry for Work, Family, and Social Affairs before finally being abolished in 2012.<sup>86</sup> As elsewhere in the region, the dominant Church has advocated conservative values where women are concerned; other conservatives have reinforced the Catholic Church’s stance in

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<sup>85</sup> See Angela Murko Pleš, Metka Roksančič and Tanja S. Pleš, “Vpliv sistema spolnih kvot na vključevanje načela enakosti spolov pri političnem odločanju na lokalni ravni: Primerjalna analiza kandidiranja in volilnih izidov žensk na lokalnih volitvah od leta 2002 do 2014” (Ljubljana: Ženski lobi Slovenije, 2015); [www.mirovni-institut.si/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/analizaOPENNfinal\\_primerjalna\\_analiza\\_volitev2002\\_2014.pdf](http://www.mirovni-institut.si/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/analizaOPENNfinal_primerjalna_analiza_volitev2002_2014.pdf).

<sup>86</sup> See Ana Kralj and Tanja Renar, “Slovenia: From ‘State Feminism’ to Back Vocals,” in Christine M. Hassenstab and Sabrina P. Ramet (eds.), *Gender (In)equality and Gender Politics in Southeastern Europe: A question of justice* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

Slovenia, by construing women, in the first place, as “mothers who should ensure the biological survival and progress of the nation.”<sup>87</sup> In spite of such views, the Slovenian parliament adopted an Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act in June 2002.

## Conclusion

In April 2004, Slovenia was admitted to NATO. The following month, Slovenia was admitted to the EU, indicating that the European Commission was satisfied that this country had met the minimal requirements set out in the Copenhagen Criteria (see the Introduction to this volume) and that it was respecting the standards set in the *acquis communautaire*. With these two accomplishments, Slovenia had realized two milestones its post-communist leaders had set at the outset of their independent path. But “joining Europe” – as the expression has it – has its complications. As Irena Brinar and Marjan Svetličič have warned, integration may impact domestic politics in one way

in the case of countries with a long tradition of professional institutions ... [and in another way] in those without it. Slovenia is certainly one of those countries in the process of building such institutions. Therefore, the outcome is much less predictable. Policies are not always implemented in new institutions in the way expected by the policy-makers. “Changing the way the society and its particular sectors function requires an adjustment of the dominant political culture as well. This, however, is a far longer and more complex process than the mere

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<sup>87</sup> As quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 49.

establishment of new institutions." It is also far longer than the process of pre-accession to the EU.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Irena Brinar and Marjan Svetličič, "Enlargement of the European Union: the case of Slovenia," in *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 6, No. 5 (December 1999), pp. 817–818, quoting from Danica Fink-Hafner, "Problems of the Incompatibility of National and European Union Political Structures and Policy Styles," in Danica Fink-Hafner and Terry Cox (eds.), *Into Europe? Perspectives from Britain and Slovenia* (Ljubljana: Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Ljubljana, 1996), p. 386.