



On 1 May 2004 Slovenia became a member of the European Union.

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Slovenia in the world

Slovenia's membership of international organisations and regional initiatives

United Nations (**UN**), 1992
 Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (**OSCE**), 1992
 Central European Initiative (**CEI**), 1992
 World Health Organisation (**WHO**), 1992
 International Labour Organisation (**ILO**), 1992
 United Nations Children's Fund (**UNICEF**), 1992
 Council of Europe (**CE**), 1993
 International Monetary Fund (**IMF**), 1993
 International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (**IBRD**), 1993
 Food and Agriculture Organization (**FAO**), 1993
 World Trade Organisation (**WTO**), 1995
 Central European Free Trade Association (**CEFTA**), 1996
 Quadrilateral Initiative, 1996
 Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (**SECI**), 1997
 Human Security Network, 1998
 Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, 1999
 Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (**AII**), 2000
 Regional Partnership, 2001
 North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (**NATO**), 2004
 European Union (**EU**), 2004

The basic goals of Slovenia's foreign policy

On 25 June 1991 Slovenia became a state in its own right. After the new state was founded the big challenge ahead was still to be accomplished: Slovenia needed to gain international recognition and establish itself as a player on the world stage. One of the first important goals of Slovenian foreign policy was to join the international organizations and alliances, such as the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union, NATO, and many other international arrangements. Slovenia not only

quickly became a member of such international groupings, but has already presided over several of them (OSCE Presidency in 2005). On 16 May 2007 the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) invited Slovenia to start the process of its accession to the OECD.

An important aspect of a successful state is also its relationship with its neighbours. Slovenia maintains open and friendly relations with Austria, Italy, Hungary and Croatia. It also pays special attention to the position of the Hungarian and Italian minorities in Slovenia and to the Slovenian minorities living in neighbouring countries.

Slovenia co-operates with its neighbours via quadripartite projects and initiatives; it also works alongside other Central European states within the Central European Initiative (CEI) and Regional Partnership and contributes to the stabilisation of South Eastern Europe within the Stability Pact.

Membership in the European Union

Geographically, historically and culturally, Slovenia has always been a European country. But the post Second World War ideological divide between communist and non-communist Europe created a wall that would only disintegrate with the fall of communism. However, throughout the tumultuous 20th century, Slovenes maintained their political, economic, and above all, human contacts with the non-communist parts of Europe that were gradually moving towards closer integration. Following that, it was only a matter of practical arrangements before the newly independent Slovenia could join the EU and end its political and ideological separation from Europe.

It is not surprising that after independence the new Slovenian Government recognised EU membership as one of the country's immediate priorities. The Europe Agreement, signed in 1996, came into force on 1 February 1999. Membership negotiations began in March 1998 and were concluded in December 2002.



United in the European Union.

On 23 March 2003 a referendum on accession to the EU was held in Slovenia. The turnout at the referendum was 60.4%, and 89.6% of votes cast were in favour of accession. The Accession Treaty was signed in Athens on 16 April 2003, and on 28 January 2004 it was ratified by the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia. Slovenia, together with Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland and Slovakia became a member of the European Union on 1 May 2004.



Celebrating the EU membership.

Besides the historical urgency, there were also many practical reasons for such eagerness to join the Union. Slovenia expected important economic benefits, such as macro-economic stability, lower inflation, speedier restructuring and modernisation of companies, a stable and more efficient economic environment, a boost in foreign investments, better opportunities to access new technologies and knowledge, and greater consumer choice.

In the political sense EU membership meant greater security and stability for a small country, as well as a stronger position in the international community, enabling it to take part in European policy making and formulating Europe's future image. Another important aspect of EU membership was the expectation of greater recognition, better opportunities in education, training and employment throughout the EU, and cultural enrichment.

On 1 January 2007 Slovenia became the 13th member of the Eurozone (the first in the 2004 enlargement wave).

Although the Slovenes were fond of their colourful 'tolar', they have quickly grown accustomed to the euro. After all, they were familiar with it from doing business and travelling in the established Eurozone members.

The only remaining aspect of Slovenia's EU project remains joining the Schengen area. Once the borders with Italy, Austria and Hungary are done away with, the final physical barrier with the rest of the EU will disappear.

Slovenes in EU institutions

Slovenia has 4 of the 345 votes in the European Council, and since the elections of 13 June 2004, it has had 7 of a total of 732 representatives at the EU Parliament.

Janez Potočnik became Slovenia's first European Commissioner, and is responsible for science and research. There are numerous other Slovenes working at EU institutions, many of them in senior positions, including Verica Trstenjak, Advocate-General at the Court of Justice of the European Communities in Luxembourg, Marko Ilešič as a judge at the Court of Justice of the European Communities in Luxembourg and many others.

Slovenia's EU Presidency in the first half of 2008

On 1 January 2008 Slovenia will assume the Presidency of the Council of the European Union for a period of six months. Slovenia will be the first of the new EU member states to be entrusted with such a responsibility.

The EU Presidency is a very demanding national project in terms of content, organisation and allocation of funds. It requires the cooperation of the entire state administration, as well as the Slovenian economy, science, culture and civil society. Appropriate organisational arrangements within the Slovenian Government and in society at large have been made. Together with the countries presiding before Slovenia, Germany and Portugal, a joint 18-month EU Presidency Programme has been drawn up. The Trio system, which has been implemented for the first time, has proved highly effective.

The priority areas of Slovenia's EU Presidency include cooperation in determining the future organisation of European institutions and reaching consensus regarding the European Constitution. Slovenia will also focus on the further enlargement of the EU and its Neighbourhood Policy, since it wishes the countries of the Western Balkans to follow their European perspective. The process of integration of this region into European organisations is a high priority of Slovenia's EU Presidency. In this respect – also beyond the Presidency framework – the recently established Centre for European Perspective, which provides Slovenia's assistance to all countries seeking to join Euro-Atlantic organisations, will be of great assistance.

The focus on issues connected with a new Amending Treaty, enlargement and energy security should be appropriately balanced with the promotion of inter-denominational and inter-cultural dialogue. Having been part of the multinational states in the previous century Slovenia has considerable experience in this area.

The question of inter-cultural dialogue is not only a matter of culture in the strict sense of the word. It is also a matter of ethnic, cultural, religious, historical and political issues. Dialogue, a flow of information and education must be developed. The Lisbon Strategy will be another priority during Slovenia's EU Presidency, since its new 3-year cycle will begin in 2008.



Soldiers of the Slovenian Armed Forces.

Slovenia has been actively participating in international peacekeeping operations since 1997.



These are some of the main areas Slovenia will be working on during its Presidency. But since the global political stage is unpredictable, the country's priorities will not be finalised until the end of 2007.

Slovenia's participation in NATO and EU operations

Slovenia became a NATO member on 29 March 2004, just over a month before it joined the EU. Since then, Slovenia has become an active player in the European and international security and defence system. Slovenia is taking part in all the missions led by the alliance, with the exception of the Active Endeavour maritime operation. Its most important contribution is in Kosovo, where a 600-strong battalion was assigned its own area of responsibility. Slovenia is also planning to increase its contribution to the mission in Afghanistan in 2007, it is participating in NATO command in Sarajevo, and training security forces in Iraq. The country is also committed to taking part in all rotations of the NATO Response Force until 2011, predominantly with a chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defence unit. The percentage of GDP allocated for defence spending is expected to rise from the planned 1.65% in 2007 to 2% by 2009, and maintain the same level until 2012.

Since 1997 almost 2,440 Slovenian troops have participated in NATO operations in the Western Balkans region. With the stabilisation of security conditions, in particular in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and with the EU's takeover of the leadership of the peacekeeping mission at the end of 2004, Slovenia gradually withdrew troops from the country in 2005, and strengthened its presence in Kosovo and Afghanistan. In 2005 the Slovenian Armed Forces were included in the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) – both NATO undertakings – and in the EU-led EUFOR, and UNTSO in the Middle East, a UN operation.

An active member of the UN

Slovenia became a member of the United Nations on 22 May 1992. With membership of this universal international organisation, it gained the opportunity to directly express its policy on key issues facing the international community and to affirm itself politically as a subject of international law.

In 1996, Slovenia joined the East European elective group, and in October 1997 it became a non-permanent member of the Security Council for a period of two years. During this time it also twice presided over the Security Council. On 17 May 2007 the Republic of Slovenia was elected to the UN Human Rights Council for the period between June 2007 and June 2010.

Human Security Network

Slovenia is also an active member of an informal group of countries that was formed in 1998 to work towards resolving outstanding humanitarian issues directly affecting security. Slovenia was invited into the group in 1998 on the occasion of the UN General Assembly Session, and presided over the group in 2006/2007. The HSN's functioning is based on cooperation with like-minded countries and international and non-governmental organisations in carrying out activities and launching initiatives aimed at consolidating and encouraging political and legal mechanisms relating to security.

International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance

In 1998, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia founded the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance (ITF) as a non-profit, humanitarian organisation, with the initial mission of raising donor funds and organising demining activities, as well as the rehabilitation of mine victims in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Later, other mine-affected countries in South Eastern Europe (Albania, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) were included, and the Fund began to widen its activities to include Cyprus, Afghanistan and the Trans-Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia). The ITF's vision is to free the countries of South Eastern Europe from the impact of mines by the end of 2009 and to actively contribute to resolving this problem in other mine-affected regions.

The ITF has carried out over 1,650 action projects and cleared over 73 million square metres of mine-polluted areas in South Eastern Europe and another 2 million square meters in Trans-Caucasus. The Fund has also contributed to the physical rehabilitation of over 927 mine victims, which is roughly 15 per cent of all surviving victims in South Eastern Europe.



Over 82 thousand children and adults from mine-affected communities directly participated in programmes to raise awareness of the mine problem. The ITF has educated over 700 experts in the field of humanitarian demining, rehabilitation and mine action management, and supported the activities of national mine action centres in all the mine-affected countries of South Eastern Europe.

The Slovenian Government is therefore justifiably proud of this endeavour, and grateful to over 100 donors, including 27 states, the European Commission and the UNDP, numerous local communities, organisations, companies, and individuals who have entrusted over \$215.3 million to the ITF since 1998 and made its work possible.

Membership of the Council of Europe

Slovenia became a full member of the Council of Europe on 14 May 1993. Its participation in the Council of Europe activities takes place at inter-governmental, parliamentary and local levels. Slovenia's permanent representative in the Council of Europe regularly takes part in sessions of the Committee of Ministers' Deputies, and the Foreign Minister or his deputy participates in sessions of the Committee of Ministers.

Representatives of Slovenian ministries and government offices are involved in the working bodies of the Council of Europe, dealing with various issues, such as human rights, the judiciary, health, policies relating to the family, young people and children, social care, media, sport, culture, education and local government. A judge from Slovenia works at the European Court of Human Rights, founded in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights.

Slovenia plays an active part in the North-South Centre which, within a Central European context, encourages participation between north and south, as well as in the Central European Development Bank, which provides loans for social projects.

Environmental protection

In November 2005, the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the new National Environment Protection Programme (NEPP) for the period up to 2012, whose main objective is the general improvement of the environment and

Narcissi on Mt Golica.



the quality of life, and the protection of natural sources. It is a starting point for the environmental dimension of Slovenia's Development Strategy, determining the vision of Slovenia's future, and giving the orientation and measures for its realisation.

The basic aim of the environmental protection policy is to ensure sustainable development. In the environmental field this means the organisation of the economy, infrastructure, settlement, and way of life in view of the carrying capacity of the environment and natural resources, and the promotion of the integration of environmental issues with other sectorial policies in line with the principle of integration.

The basic aims of the NEPP in particular fields are:

- Setting out climatic change as an important challenge in the years ahead, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, thus contributing to the long-term stabilisation of the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, as well as reducing the emission of substances causing ozone layer degradation.
- Protecting and preserving all natural systems, habitats, free-living animal and plant species, with the aim of preventing the loss of biotic diversity, genetic variety and further soil degradation.
- Contributing to the high quality of life and social welfare of citizens by ensuring an environment in which the level of pollution does not harmfully affect people's health and by encouraging sustainable development in cities, and above all ensuring the measures for establishing good water quality.
- Handling waste and using renewable and non-renewable natural resources that enable sustainable production and consumption, contribute to reducing environmental pollution and energy use so that the latter does not exceed the environment's carrying capacity.

The NEPP also determines the principle agents in the field of environmental protection: central government and local authorities, contractors to the government and local environmental protection public utilities, NGOs and the business sector. The orientation and priority tasks are also determined in the field of international activities with a view to making environmental protection demands part of foreign policy and development cooperation, effectively fulfilling and enforcing international contracts relating to the environment, and accelerating cross-border cooperation with neighbouring countries and regions.



In the forests, covering almost 58% of the Slovenia territory, a wide variety of vegetation and wildlife has been preserved.



www.mzz.gov.si

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

www.eu2008.si

Slovenian EU Presidency
The website will be launched on
January 1, 2008

www.mors.si

Ministry of Defence

www.itf-fund.si

International Trust Fund for
Demining and Mine Victims
Assistance

www.mop.gov.si

Ministry of the Environment and
Spatial Planning

www.europa.eu

Gateway to the European Union