

## Fifteen years of the independent Republic of Slovenia

In December 1991 the independent Republic of Slovenia adopted its constitution, which is based on the rights of free citizens. In its general provisions, the constitution defines Slovenia as a democratic republic, governed by the rule of law, and a social state.

The adoption of the constitution formally ended the former communist system. To some members of Demos and outsiders, this and international recognition provided the basis for the argument that Demos had done its job and could be dissolved. In December 1992 at new elections under a new, more democratic law, the strongest force in the single chamber parliament became the Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS) led by Dr Janez Drnovšek with 23 per cent of the vote, which balanced the Slovenian political arena by forming a coalition with one left-wing (reformed communists) and one right-wing party (Christian Democrats).

With a similar coalition the LDS was able to govern for twelve years, with only one interruption in the second half of 2000. It managed to establish a liberal political culture by passing numerous fundamental laws, for example with regard to education, and to carry out a social and economic transition into a social market economy with private initiative. In comparison with other post-communist countries it managed to prevent excessive social differentiation. The economic sector, even though still largely owned by the state, successfully adapted to the world market and recorded significant growth. In 2004 Slovenia joined the EU, with considerable popular support, and NATO.

At the parliamentary elections in the autumn of 2004 the Slovenian Democratic Party won and formed a centre-right government, headed by the leader of the Slovenian Democratic Party Janez Janša, with New Slovenia - Christian People's Party, the Slovenian People's Party and the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia as coalition partners. The government is continuing a successful economic policy with 5 per cent economic growth and reforms of the tax and salary systems. It succeeded in meeting the Maastricht criteria and Slovenia joined the Eurozone (the first transition country to do so) on 1 January 2007.



On 25 June 1991 the people of Slovenia celebrated the declaration of an independent state, following an 88.2 % plebiscite vote in 1990.

## Political system

**President of the Republic:** Dr Danilo Türk since 2007

**Prime Minister:** Janez Janša (SDS) since 2004

**Government:** Prime Minister, 15 ministers, 2 ministers without portfolio

**National Assembly:** 90 deputies (88 elected representatives of the parliamentary parties and one representative each from the Italian and Hungarian national communities).

**National Council:** 40 elected representatives of employers, employees, farmers, tradesmen and the self-employed, as well as from the non-economic sector and local interest groups.

The Republic of Slovenia is a parliamentary representative democratic republic, which came into existence after the disintegration of Yugoslavia. As a political entity within Yugoslavia, Slovenia had different constitutional statuses, from being part of a unitary state in the aftermath of the Second World War to having a status strongly resembling a confederal unit, based on the 1974 constitution. In 1989, amendments were made to the Slovenian constitution, followed by further amendments in 1990, which provided the legal basis for the first multi-party elections in 1990 and the passage into a multiparty system.

The present Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia was adopted on 23 December 1991, following the results of the plebiscite on the sovereignty and independence of Slovenia on 23 December 1990, when Slovenes overwhelmingly voted for independence.

## The Constitution

Under the Constitution, Slovenia is a democratic republic and a social state governed by law. The state's authority is based on the principle of the separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers, with a parliamentary system of government. Power is held by the people and they exercise this power directly (through referendums and popular initiatives) and through elections. The highest legislative authority is the National Assembly (90 deputies), which has the right to enact laws.

According to the Constitution, "Slovenia is a state of all its citizens and is founded on the permanent and inalienable right of the Slovenian nation to self-determination". It lays the foundations for the legal system, which is based on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, on the principle of a legal and socially just state, on a parliamentary form of state authority, and on the separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers. The Constitution also contains special rights for the Hungarian, Italian and Roma ethnic communities. The Constitution, as the state's supreme law, can be amended following a proposal made by twenty National Assembly deputies, by the Government, or by at least 30,000 voters. Such proposals are decided by the National Assembly with a two-thirds majority vote of deputies, and a two-thirds majority vote is needed for the passage of amendments to the Constitution. The National Assembly is required to submit a proposed constitutional amendment to a referendum, if so required by at least 30 deputies.

## The electoral system of the Republic of Slovenia

The deputies of the National Assembly, with the exception of the two representatives of minorities, are elected by means of proportional representation, with a four per cent electoral threshold required at the national level. The country is divided into eight territorial constituencies, each represented by eleven elected deputies. For the elections of the representatives of the Italian and Hungarian ethnic communities, two special constituencies are formed, one for each minority. The deputies representing the minorities are elected on the basis of the majority principle. A special right to vote in these constituencies is accorded solely to members of the indigenous minorities. Members of the National Council who represent social, economic, professional and local interests are elected indirectly.

The President of the Republic and Mayors are elected in direct elections on the basis of an absolute majority. The candidate who receives a majority of valid votes cast is elected President. If no candidate receives an outright majority in the first round of voting, there is a second round for the two candidates who received the most votes in the first round.

According to the Constitution, the right to vote is universal and equal. Every citizen who has attained the age of eighteen years has the right to vote and stand for office. Voting is not compulsory and abstention is not sanctioned. In 1992, the turnout in the legislative elections was 85.6%, followed by 73.7% in 1996, 70.14% in 2000, and 60.6% in 2004. The voting trends correspond to those in most Western democracies, with the number of voters declining with each successive election. The greatest number of citizens takes part in legislative elections, and the smallest number in elections to local authorities.

## The National Assembly

Slovenia is a parliamentary democratic republic. The bicameral Slovenian Parliament is composed of the National Assembly and the National Council. The specific social structure and historical development of Slovenia have prompted the creation of a bicameral system comprising the representation of political parties in the National Assembly and the representation of organised social interests and local authorities in the State Council. The Slovenian Parliament is characterized by an asymmetric duality, as the Constitution does not accord equal powers to both chambers.

The National Assembly is composed of ninety deputies, with one representative of each of the Hungarian and Italian minorities. The deputies are elected for a four-year term; they represent all the people of Slovenia and are "not bound by any instructions" (Article 82 of the Constitution).

If a deputy becomes a minister, a seat in the National Assembly becomes available to the candidate with the most votes among those members of the same party who had originally not qualified for the National Assembly.

The National Assembly exercises legislative, voting and monitoring functions. As a legislative authority, it enacts

France Cukljati, President of the National Assembly since 22 October 2004.



## Parties in the Slovenian National Assembly elected on 3 October 2004

- Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS): 29 seats
- Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS): 23 seats
- Social Democrats (SD): 10 seats
- New Slovenia - Christian People's Party (NSi): 9 seats
- Slovenian People's Party (SLS): 7 seats
- Slovenian National Party (SNS): 6 seats
- Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS): 4 seats
- 1 representative each of the Hungarian and Italian national communities



The parliament building on Šubičeva Street in Ljubljana houses the National Assembly and the National Council of the Republic of Slovenia.

## The largest political parties in Slovenia:

**SDS**

Slovenian Democratic Party  
(SDS, leader Janez Janša)

**LDS**  
LIBERALNA DEMOKRACIJA  
SLOVENIJE

Liberal Democracy of Slovenia  
(LDS, leader Katarina Kresal)

**SD**

Social Democrats  
(SD, leader Borut Pahor)

**N.Si**  
Nova Slovenija  
Narodna stranka

New Slovenia - Christian People's Party  
(NSi, leader Andrej Bajuk)

**SLS**  
Slovenska ljudska stranka

Slovenian People's Party  
(SLS, leader Bojan Šrot)

**DeSUS**

Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia  
(DeSUS, leader Karl Erjavec)

**SNS**  
Slovenska  
nacionalna stranka

Slovenian National Party  
(SNS, leader Zmago Jelinčič Plemeniti)

constitutional amendments, laws, national programmes, resolutions, etc. It also creates its own internal rules, ratifies the state budget and treaties, and calls referendums.

As a voting body, it elects the Prime Minister and other ministers, the President of the National Assembly and up to three Vice-Presidents. On the proposal of the President of the Republic, it also elects judges to the Constitutional Court, the Governor of the Bank of Slovenia, the Ombudsman, etc. Compared to other bicameral systems, the voting power of the Slovenian lower house is exercised over a wider range of issues.

The monitoring function of the National Assembly includes the setting up of parliamentary enquiries, votes of no confidence in the government or ministers, and constitutional proceedings against the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister or ministers in the Constitutional Court. In order to maintain the stable functioning of the executive branch, a so-called 'constructive vote of no confidence' has been introduced, which means that a government can only be ejected when a new one has been elected. The National Assembly acts through committees, which perform tasks typical of permanent parliamentary bodies; and through commissions established for special tasks. Deputy groups also operate within the National Assembly. They must consist of a minimum of three members and enjoy special rights in the activities of the National Assembly.

## The National Council

The National Council is unusual among the political systems of Western democracies, as its composition reflects the principle of corporate representation. It consists of forty members, twenty-two of whom represent local authorities; four represent employers and another four represent employees; two represent farmers; crafts and trades, universities and higher education institutions, researchers, health care, social security, culture and sports, and independent professions each have one representative. The Councillors serve a term of five years.

The National Council may propose laws to the National Assembly, and has an advisory role. It may demand that the National Assembly review decisions on legislation prior to its promulgation (suspensive veto). It also may demand the

commissioning of a parliamentary inquiry, which, along with its right to suspensive veto, enables important corrective measures for the functioning of a democratic system.

## The President of the Republic

The President of the Republic represents the Republic of Slovenia and is the commander-in-chief of its armed forces. The President calls the legislative elections, promulgates laws, proposes a candidate for Prime Minister to the National Assembly following talks with the leaders of deputy groups, proposes candidates for judges of the Constitutional Court and members of the Court of Audit, appoints and recalls ambassadors, accepts the credentials of foreign diplomats, grants clemencies, etc.

The President has no influence over the composition of the government, which is the task of the Prime Minister and the National Assembly. The President of the Republic may dissolve the National Assembly, if, after two successive proposals of a candidate (the second proposal may come from the National Assembly), it fails to appoint a Prime Minister. Should the National Assembly be unable to convene due to a state of emergency or war, the President may, on the proposal of the government, issue decrees, which have the force of law.

The President of the Republic is elected for a five-year term in direct, general elections by secret ballot. The candidate receiving a majority of the valid votes cast is elected President of the Republic. If no candidate receives an outright, the top leading candidates compete in a runoff election. A President may serve a maximum of two consecutive terms. Since the office of Vice-President does not exist in the Slovenian political system, in the event of the prolonged absence of the President, the President of the National Assembly temporarily performs the duties of the President.



Dr Danilo Türk, President of the Republic of Slovenia, elected on 11 November 2007.

### Presidents of the Republic of Slovenia

	Terms of Office
Milan Kučan	1992 - 2002
Dr Janez Drnovšek	2002 -2007
Dr Danilo Türk	since 2007

## The Government

The Government of the Republic of Slovenia is a body with executive power and the highest body of the state administration. It determines, guides, and coordinates the implementation of state policies in accordance with the Constitution and with laws and other general acts passed by the National Assembly.

As the highest body of the state administration, it passes regulations and adopts legal, political, economic, financial, organisational and similar measures for regulating areas within the state's jurisdiction. Its function in the area of legislative initiatives includes proposing laws to be passed by the National Assembly, the state budget, national programmes and other acts with which political directions for individual areas within the state's competence are determined. With regard to the EU, the Government represents the Republic of Slovenia and makes submissions to EU institutions.

The Government functions as a cabinet led by a Prime Minister. It consists of the Prime Minister and ministers. Ministers head ministries and determine political guidelines for their operation. The number of ministers is not determined in advance, and every government coalition decides on the number according to its needs and political goals.

Government session.



The current Government of Slovenia led by the Prime Minister Janez Janša (elected on 9 November 2004) has 18 members – the Prime Minister and 15 ministers who lead the following ministries: Ministry of Finance; Ministry of the Economy; Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology; Ministry of Health; Ministry of the Interior; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Public Administration; Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs; Ministry of Transport; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food; Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning; Ministry of Culture; Ministry of Education and Sport and Ministry of Defence. There are also two ministers without portfolio, responsible for regional development and local self-government and for coordination and monitoring of the implementation of Slovenia's Development Strategy and the economic and social reforms.

The present Government was appointed on 3 December 2004. It was formed on the basis of a coalition agreement signed on 23 November 2004 between the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), New Slovenia - Christian People's Party (NSi), Slovenian People's Party (SLS) and the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS).

The Prime Minister-elect is proposed to the National Assembly by the President of the Republic after discussions with representatives of the parliamentary deputy groups. If his proposal is not elected in the first ballot, the President can nominate the same candidate again or a new one, while the Prime Minister-elect can also be proposed by deputy groups or at least ten deputies. The Prime Minister-elect then puts forward nominations to the Government, and ministerial candidates are required to present themselves to the relevant Committees in the National Assembly, which then vote on their suitability. The National Assembly then approves the ministers with a simple majority.



Janez Janša, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia since 9 November 2004.

#### The Prime Ministers of the Republic of Slovenia

	Terms of Office
Lojze Peterle (SKD)	1990 - 1992
Dr Janez Drnovšek (LDS)	1992 - 2000
Dr Andrej Bajuk (SLS+SKD Slovenian People's Party)	2000
Dr Janez Drnovšek (LDS)	2000 - 2002
Anton Rop (LDS)	2002 - 2004
Janez Janša (SDS)	since 2004

## The judicial system

The judicial system is the third branch of government. The task of the judiciary is to decide on the rights and duties of citizens, and charges brought against them. All courts in the Republic of Slovenia are regular courts, and act in accordance with the principles of constitutionality, independence and the rule of law.

The unified system of courts consists of courts with general and specialised jurisdiction. Courts with general jurisdiction include 44 district, 11 regional, and 4 higher courts, and the Supreme Court, while specialised courts comprise 4 labour courts and a social court (they rule on labour-related and social insurance disputes), and the Administrative Court, which provides legal protection in administrative affairs and has the status of a higher court.

The state prosecution holds a special place in the justice system, as it is an independent state authority, but part of the executive branch of power. The General State Prosecutor is appointed by the National Assembly.

## The Constitutional Court

The Constitutional Court is the highest body of judicial authority with regard to the protection of constitutionality, legality, human rights and basic freedoms. It may act as a negative legislature and abrogate an act or part of an act. Constitutional Judges are appointed by the National Assembly following the proposal of the President of the Republic. Nine judges are elected for a period of nine years, with no possibility of a further term. The office of a constitutional judge and judges of specialised and general courts is incompatible with other offices in state bodies.



The judges of the Constitutional Court.

## Local self-government

Slovenia has a long tradition of regionalism and local self-government. The Local Self-Government Act stipulates that a municipality is the basic self-governing local community, with at least 5,000 inhabitants; an urban municipality has at least 20,000 inhabitants. The National Assembly decides on the boundary of a municipality on the basis of a non-binding referendum of the inhabitants, usually acting in accordance with the outcome.

Following the last referendum in April 2006, there are now 210 municipalities in Slovenia. Among other things, municipalities have the authority to manage the municipality's assets, facilitate conditions for economic development, plan spatial development, create conditions for building dwellings, manage local public services, establish primary and nursery schools, and build and maintain local roads.

The authorities of a municipality comprise a mayor, a municipal council and a supervisory committee, with the municipal council being the highest decision-making body. The mayor, who is a directly elected official, represents and acts on behalf of the municipality, and presides over the municipal or city council. The supervisory committee supervises the disposal of municipal property and public expenditure. The constitutional changes of June 2006 introduced provinces to the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia. The provinces' tasks will include economic, social and cultural development, spatial development and environmental protection, traffic and transport links within the province, and providing public utilities of provincial significance.

## Court of Audit

The Court of Audit is the highest body for supervising state accounts, the state budget and all public spending. The organisation and powers of the Court of Audit are provided by law. It is independent in the performance of its duties and bound by the Constitution and relevant legislation. Its members are appointed by the National Assembly at the proposal of the President of the Republic.

## Bank of Slovenia

The Bank of Slovenia is the central bank of the Republic of Slovenia. It was established in June 1991 within the package of legislation for independence. One of its first tasks was overseeing the transition to a new currency, the Slovenian



Slovenian euro coins.

tolar (SIT), which was the legal tender until January 2007, when Slovenia adopted the euro and became the 13th member of Eurozone. Even prior to the adoption of the euro the Bank's primary task was maintaining the stability of prices. By managing monetary and foreign exchange policies it ensured a stable rate, the liquidity of the banking system and the requirements for currency withdrawal. The function of the Bank of Slovenia changed with the introduction of the euro and membership of the Eurozone. Since that day the Bank uses the Statute of the European System of Central Banks (ESCB) and of the European Central Bank (ECB) in carrying out its role. Its key tasks as a member of the ESCB are to define and implement Eurozone monetary policy, to conduct foreign exchange operations, to hold and manage the official foreign reserves of Member States, and to promote the smooth operation of payment systems. The national central banks operate as an intermediary between the Community's monetary policy and national economic policies. The Bank is an independent institution under public law, owned by the state. It has managerial and financial autonomy, which means the members of its operational bodies are not bound to any decision made by any government bodies, or even turn to them for guidance or advice.

## Human Rights Ombudsman

Under the Constitution, the Republic of Slovenia has an Ombudsman whose responsibility is the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in relation to state authorities, local authorities, and persons in public office. The Ombudsman is proposed by the President of the Republic and elected by the National Assembly with a two-thirds majority vote for a period of six years, and the possibility of another term. A two-thirds majority vote gives the Ombudsman the necessary legitimacy imperative for his/her work. The Ombudsman reports to the National Assembly annually. The annual reports have become an important reflection of the situation regarding basic human rights and freedoms in Slovenia. The law allows the Ombudsman or anyone else to initiate proceedings against violations of human rights.

## The Information Commissioner

Information Commissioner is an autonomous and independent body, established on 31 December 2005 with the Information Commissioner Act, which supervises the protection of

personal data and the access to public information. The Commissioner is appointed by the National Assembly at the proposal of the President of the Republic.

## Interest groups and social partners

Slovenia has a rich tradition of people organising themselves into interest groups. Today there are over 18,000 different organisations and associations registered in Slovenia, most of them for sports, culture and fire fighting. Some interests are represented in particular: either within the scope of functional representation in the National Assembly or the scope of social partnership. Within the scope of social partnership the interests of employers and employees are particularly organised. Only representative unions are included in negotiations between the employers and the state. At the government level there is an Economic and Social Council of Slovenia, comprised of five representatives from the government, employers, and employees, respectively. In Council meetings and negotiations the members advance their views on social, economic and budgetary policies, particularly dealing with issues such as social agreements, social rights and compulsory insurance, employment problems, prices and taxes, the wages system, wages policy, employee co-management etc. It has mainly informal powers, as it is not a part of the formal institution structure of the RS. Decisions are reached through consensus; each representative group must then implement the decisions. The Council has greatly contributed to the enhancement of the social-economic development of Slovenian society.

## The Slovenian Armed Forces

With democratic changes and the independence of Slovenia, the Territorial Defence Forces of Slovenia were transformed into the Slovenian Armed Forces (SAF). The SAF's most important duties include the defence of the Republic of Slovenia, fulfilling international defence, military and other commitments taken on by the Republic of Slovenia, cooperating in tasks related to protection, salvage and aid, and in peace-keeping and humanitarian missions. Until 2002, the SAF was a conscript force, but it is now being transformed into a professional force. The process will be concluded in 2010. During this time, Slovenia will establish a professional army with a voluntary reserve. The reasons for this are changes in the international situation and the need for a smaller, but better equipped and trained professional army.



<b>www.vlada.si</b>	The Government of the Republic of Slovenia
<b>www.ukom.gov.si</b>	Government Communication Office
<b>www.dz-rs.si</b>	National Assembly
<b>www.ds-rs.si</b>	The National Council
<b>www.us-rs.si/en</b>	The Constitutional Court
<b>www.bsi.si</b>	Bank of Slovenia
<b>www.rs-rs.si</b>	Court of Audit
<b>www.varuh-rs.si</b>	Human Rights Ombudsman
<b>www.ip-rs.si</b>	Information Commissioner



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

# 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