Slovenia

by Damjan Lajh

Capital:	Ljubljana
Population:	2.1 million
GNI/capita, PPP:	US$28,240

Source: The data above were provided by the World Bank's *World Development Indicators 2014.*

Nations in Transit Ratings and Averaged Scores

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Electoral Process	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	**1.50**
Civil Society	1.75	1.75	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	**2.00**
Independent Media	1.50	1.75	2.00	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	**2.25**
National Democratic Governance	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	**2.00**
Local Democratic Governance	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	**1.50**
Judicial Framework and Independence	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.75	1.75	1.75	1.75	1.75	**1.75**
Corruption	2.00	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.25	2.25	**2.50**
Democracy Score	**1.68**	**1.75**	**1.82**	**1.86**	**1.93**	**1.93**	**1.93**	**1.89**	**1.89**	**1.93**

NOTE: The ratings reflect the consensus of Freedom House, its academic advisers, and the author(s) of this report. The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author(s). The ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest. The Democracy Score is an average of ratings for the categories tracked in a given year.

Executive Summary

Slovenia declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, establishing itself as an internationally recognized state. It joined the United Nations (UN) in 1992, the Council of Europe (CoE) in 1993, and the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 2004. Slovenia adopted the euro as its currency in January 2007 and entered the Schengen Area that December. In July 2010, Slovenia became a full member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

The year 2013 was characterized by further contraction of Slovenia's economic activity and adverse labor market conditions. Although public debt is still well below the EU and eurozone averages, it exceeds 60 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), which is the upper limit set by the Stability and Growth Pact for EU member states.

Slovenia's economic struggles and mounting corruption allegations against the political leadership brought pressure to bear on the government of Prime Minister and Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) leader Janez Janša, whose coalition had been teetering amid public protests over government corruption and austerity measures introduced in 2012. In February, the National Assembly voted to dissolve the Janša government. In March, a new, left-leaning government was sworn in, led by Alenka Bratušek, Slovenia's first female prime minister and the head of the Positive Slovenia party.

Janša himself was subsequently convicted of bribery in the long-running Patria Case. The end of the year was marked by the resignation of the three-member leadership of the Commission for the Prevention of the Corruption (CPC).

National Democratic Governance. Following a no-confidence vote by the parliament, the Janša government dissolved in late February. It was replaced in March by the new, 13-member government of Alenka Bratušek. The Bratušek government continued with measures to consolidate public finances, including some that triggered disagreement among various stakeholders; these included the introduction of a fiscal rule in the constitution, the increase in value added tax (VAT), and the introduction of a property tax. The new government did not bring greater political stability, as it also faced numerous problems and internal divisions. Two ministers resigned from their posts during the year. *Slovenia's national democratic governance rating remains unchanged at 2.00.*

Electoral Process. The only electoral events in 2013 were the replacement elections for the mayor and four city council members in the municipality of Maribor in March. However, the parliament did adopt new referendum legislation, as well as legislation regulating the financing of political parties and the financing of election and referendum campaigns. *Slovenia's rating for electoral process remains unchanged at 1.50.*

Civil Society. Civil society continued to push back actively against austerity measures in 2013: groups and individuals organized a number of activities designed to delay or prevent the introduction of a new property tax; strongly opposed constitutional changes regarding referendums; and raised concerns about the introduction of a fiscal rule in the constitution. The National Assembly finally adopted a law on compensating individuals (known as "the erased") who lack any legal status since Slovenia declared its independence in 1991. Representatives of the group in question were dissatisfied with the law. Public sector unions organized the third general strike of the public sector in Slovenia since September 2010. *Slovenia's rating for civil society remains unchanged at 2.00.*

Independent Media. In May, the Bratušek coalition reversed a 5 percent reduction in state funding to the public broadcaster RTV that had been introduced at the end of 2012. In November, the government prepared new draft legislation on RTV's financing, to be discussed in the National Assembly in 2014. The search for a new buyer for the daily newspaper *Večer*—ongoing since 2009 by order of the state's media competition watchdog—continued in 2013, without success. *Slovenia's rating for independent media remains unchanged at 2.50.*

Local Democratic Governance. Late in the year, the parliament passed a controversial new property tax whose revenues are to be split evenly between the national and municipal governments. The opposition also raised objections to a government proposal on reducing the number of municipalities. In March, replacement elections were held for the mayor and four city council members in the municipality of Maribor. In the first round of the mayoral race, the only non-partisan candidate, Andrej Fištravec, won with 52.73 percent of the votes. *Slovenia's rating for local democratic governance remains unchanged at 1.50.*

Judicial Framework and Independence. Slovenia's large backlog of court cases continued to diminish in 2013. Nonetheless, due to the remaining logjam, the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg ruled against Slovenia in two cases in mid-July and issued a fine in the amount of approximately €11,000. The end of a judicial-efficiency initiative called Project Lukenda resulted in layoffs and raised fears that judicial efficiency would backslide; however, the Bratušek government approved additional judicial funding to compensate for the decreased staff. The year saw several notable abuse-of-power and criminal convictions against politicians and businessmen. *Slovenia's rating for judicial framework and independence remains unchanged at 1.75.*

Corruption. Following an investigation into the finances of the leaders of seven parliamentary parties, the CPC reported in January that the presidents of Slovenia's two main political parties—then prime minister Janša and Positive Slovenia leader Zoran Janković—had systematically violated anticorruption legislation by concealing large, unexplained assets. These allegations and others were the last straw against Janša's unpopular government and contributed directly to the no-confidence vote. In June, Janša himself was sentenced to two years' imprisonment and a fine of €37,000 for accepting a bribe from Finnish defense equipment producer Patria in 2006; however, the ruling was still tied up in appeals at year's end. At the end of the year, the three-member leadership of the CPC resigned in protest against the failure of politicians to react to the commission's warnings. As evidence of corruption in Slovenia's public sector mounts and political figures appear unable or unwilling to address the problem, *Slovenia's rating for corruption declines from 2.25 to 2.50*.

Outlook for 2014. The economic forecast for 2014 is poor, and Slovenia will likely remain in recession. As the Slovenian government wrestles against stagnant growth and rising unemployment, rescuing the weak banking sector will be a priority. The ruling coalition will also work on resolving the internal conflicts and instability that weakened the government in 2013. Slovenia's health and economy ministers, who both resigned in November 2013, will be replaced, as will the leadership of the CPC. Previously stalled anticorruption legislation—a major grievance of the outgoing CPC leaders—will also be on the political agenda. Local elections and elections to the European Parliament will be conducted. Mass protests are forecasted to continue in 2014.

Main Report

National Democratic Governance

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00

Slovenia was hit hard by the global financial crisis of 2008, which crippled exports to European Union (EU) markets and left the country in recession. Once southeastern Europe's most economically successful postcommunist country, Slovenia struggled in 2013 to overcome an ongoing economic crisis compounded by rising public debt and a collapsing banking sector. Gross domestic product (GDP) fell by a further 2 percent in 2013[1] and the possibility of a eurozone bailout loomed for most of the year. Over 65,000 unemployed persons found jobs in 2013—11.5 percent more than in 2012.[2] However, due to greater levels of reporting by first-time jobseekers and persons reaching the end of their short-term employment contracts, the number of people registered as unemployed in 2013 was 8.8 percent higher, on average, than in 2012.[3]

Slovenia's economic problems formed the backdrop to a continuing political crisis. The coalition government led by Janez Janša's Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) had been teetering for some time amid public protests over government corruption and austerity measures introduced in 2012. In January 2013, following an investigation into the finances of the leaders of seven parliamentary parties, the independent Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (CPC) reported that the presidents of the two largest political parties—Prime Minister Janša of SDS and Positive Slovenia (PS) leader and Ljubljana city mayor Zoran Janković—had systematically violated anticorruption legislation by concealing large, unexplained assets.[4]

Janša dismissed the ensuing condemnation and calls for his resignation, prompting three of the smaller parties in his government—the Civic List (DL), the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS), and the conservative Slovenian People's Party (SLS)—to exit the ruling coalition, leaving only SDS and the New Slovenia–Christian Democrats (NSi) party. People also demanded Janković's resignation from the presidency of PS, the country's largest opposition party. Realizing that in the likely event of the Janša government's collapse it would be PS's responsibility to form a new government and that coalition-building would be impossible under his leadership, Janković handed over a "blank" (undated) letter of resignation at the next party congress as a commitment to immediately renounce all his presidential functions and step down permanently from his position whenever the new government was appointed. With this act, Janković signaled his intention to withdraw from national politics, but he remained in local government as the mayor of Ljubljana.

A no-confidence vote in the National Assembly brought down the Janša government on 27 February, by which time Positive Slovenia had selected Janković's replacement, Alenka Bratušek. Lawmakers in the assembly voted 55–33 to name Bratušek as interim prime minister, giving her a mandate to create a new government. Satisfied with Janković's resignation, the Social Democrats (SD), DeSUS, and DL agreed to be part of a new, PS–led coalition that was endorsed by the assembly on 20 March.[5] By law, the provisional government's term is scheduled to end in 2015, but Prime Minister Bratušek promised to hold a confidence vote one year into her term. Upon coming to power, the government immediately reversed two of its predecessor's controversial decisions: it restored the existence of the Ministry of Culture and returned the prosecutor's office to the authority of the Ministry of Justice.

As the economy continued to struggle, the new government pressed forward with measures to consolidate public finances. One important victory was an agreement with Slovenia's public sector unions on austerity measures, as frustration with previous or proposed job and wage cuts had already prompted significant public sector strikes in April 2012 and January 2013. The changes agreed upon in May came into force the next month and included a reduction in base salaries and lower payments for supplementary pension insurance.

Among the more controversial moves made by the new government in the name of fiscal responsibility was the introduction of a provision on public spending—the so-called "Golden Rule," adopted by all eurozone members in March 2012—into the constitution. The Janša government had attempted the same change in 2012 in order to send a signal to international financial markets that Slovenia was taking serious measures to counter the financial crisis; however, the motion was blocked by the opposition, particularly the SD. After lengthy and complex negotiations, the drivers of the initiative finally succeeded in amassing the support of all the groups in parliament, minus the SD—thus exceeding the two-thirds majority required to change the constitution. The fiscal rule will not be enforced until 2015, to avoid excessively rapid or drastic intervention into public finances.

In line with the European Commission's "European Semester" policy recommendations, the Bratušek government also adopted a stability program on fiscal consolidation and national reform programs with policies to promote growth. One key component of these changes was raising the upper level of value-added tax (VAT) from 20 to 22 percent and the lower level from 8.5 to 9.5 percent.[6] The government expects the VAT increase to bring in an additional €250 million annually. However, the measure encountered significant resistance from the political opposition and trade unions. The former argued that a VAT hike would have negative consequences for the economy, while unions complained that it would be especially hard on low-income workers.[7] The VAT increase comes into effect on 1 July 2014.

Another controversial revenue-boosting measure adopted by the National Assembly in 2013 was a new tax on property. Following lengthy discussions and strong resistance from various stakeholders, the new tax was confirmed by 46 members of parliament, with six voting against it.[8] The property tax should be introduced as of

1 January 2014 and will replace the funding local authorities previously received from income tax and in compensation for forest road maintenance costs and state use of local land. For the first three years, all revenues from the new tax will go directly to the state. From then on, only half of the projected €400 million in annual inflows will go to the state and the other half will go to the municipalities.[9] Numerous actors attempted to delay or prevent the introduction of the tax, arguing that it would reduce municipalities' already-limited financial autonomy (see Civil Society section) and disproportionately burden farmers and the middle class. At year's end, the tax had been adopted but was not yet final, having been submitted by the SDS for review by the Constitutional Court.

Political stability eluded the Bratušek government, as corruption allegations, policy disagreements, and interpersonal conflicts persisted. On 20 November, Economy Minister Stanko Stepišnik stepped down amid allegations that he had applied for state subsidies through his ministry for a company that he co-owns.[10] Five days later, Health Minister Tomaž Gantar resigned over healthcare policy disagreements within the ruling coalition, as well as corruption within the healthcare sector.[11] Replacements for the two ministers had not been appointed at year's end; instead, the Ministry of Economy was temporarily taken over by Finance Minister Uroš Čufer, while the Ministry of Health was temporarily led by Foreign Affairs Minister Karl Erjavec. The last demonstration of internal drift occurred towards the end of December, when a motion for ouster was filed against Interior Minister Gregor Virant. Among other criticisms, the opposition accused Virant of advancing "harmful" proposals, including a plan to reduce the number of municipalities, a controversial law on compensation of persons "erased" from the civil registry in 1992, and a possibly unconstitutional agreement with trade unions. Toward the end of the year, the opposition also began preparing an interpellation against Infrastructure Minister Samo Omerzel, alleging dishonest and irresponsible use of public funds.

Prime Minister Bratušek has been adamant that Slovenia will not require a bailout from the Eurozone. At the end of 2013, results from banking stress tests that were conducted for the government and central bank by an independent auditor showed a capital shortfall of eight banks in the amount of €4.7 billion—a massive amount, but less than the €5 billion the Bratušek government had put aside in a reserve.[12]

Electoral Process

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50

The Slovenian government gains its authority through universal and equal suffrage, and the will of the people is expressed in regular free and fair elections conducted by secret ballot. The electoral system has a multiparty base, political parties have equal campaigning opportunities, and the public's choices are free from domination by specific interest groups. With the exception of replacement elections for the mayor of the Municipality of Maribor and for four members of its city council on 17 March (see Local Democratic Governance section), there were no other elections or referendums in 2013. However, the year did see the passage of important legislation affecting the conduct and financing of parties, election campaigns, and referendums.

National referendums have been a regular feature of Slovenian politics since independence. In recent years, frequent referendums have been criticized for deliberately obstructing the legislative process and contributing to political instability.[13] For years, parties in the National Assembly tried in vain to build the two-thirds parliamentary consensus needed to amend constitutional provisions on referendums, but they succeeded in May 2013. Under the new legislation—adopted with 74 votes in favor and none against[14]—a petition for any future referendum will still require 40,000 signatures from voters but it will no longer require the support of the National Council or one-third of parliamentary deputies, as previously. A referendum may reverse legislation if it is voted against by the majority of valid ballots, but only if at least one-fifth of all eligible voters voted against it (previously, only a majority of voters had been required). The 2013 amendments also restrict the range of issues to which a referendum can be applied, excluding tax laws; customs duties and other obligatory duties; laws required for the implementation of the state budget; laws concerning emergency provisions to protect national defense and security or respond to natural disasters; laws on the ratification of international treaties; and laws addressing unconstitutional affairs in human rights and other areas. The intention of these restrictions is to prevent future political blockades, but the wider public still opposed the measure preventing referendums from affecting legislation with fiscal implications (e.g., pension reform).[15]

After almost twenty years of discussion, the National Assembly also introduced radical legislative amendments to regulate the financing of political parties.[16] Under the 1994 Political Parties Act (previously amended in 2000, 2002, 2005, and 2007), political parties can obtain funds from membership fees, individual contributions, property income (not to exceed 20 percent total party income in any given year), and the state budget. New legislation, set to enter into force in January 2014, introduces provisions intended to patch the holes in the old law and provide a stronger guarantee of party finance transparency. The amendments ban all corporate donations[17] and revise the criteria for the allocation of state budget funds to political parties: previously, 10 percent of state funding to parties was split evenly among all parties that had received over 1 percent of the vote and 90 percent was allocated in proportion to their relative electoral performance; now, 25 percent of the funds will be equally allocated between parties with the minimum level of support and 75 percent will be allocated in proportion to their electoral performance. The adjustment should translate into more funding for smaller parties. Up to half of the state funding for political parties will be diverted from the funds previously earmarked for education of members of parliament, administrative and expert assistance for parliamentary groups, and the administration of deputies' offices.

The new legislation also establishes that the annual reports of political parties are to be submitted to the Agency for Public Legal Records and Related

Services (AJPES), rather than to the National Assembly and the Court of Audit, and published on the AJPES website. The amendment specifies that any serious violations of financing regulations will be punishable with a temporary suspension of a party's public funding for a period of six months to one year. The amendment also increases fines for certain types of offenses, and decisions on offenses are now authorized by the District Court in Ljubljana.

Most efforts to reach a two-thirds consensus within the assembly on fundamental changes to electoral process have failed. At the beginning of 2013, Positive Slovenia put forth a proposal to maintain the proportional electoral system while introducing preferential voting and abolishing electoral districts.[18] The abolition of electoral districts was the most controversial element of the proposal, as it could favor larger cities and towns, which would get a majority of the representatives in the parliament. In November, SDS (now the largest opposition party) put forth its own proposal for making Slovenia's government more representative.[19] The proposed constitutional amendment included raising the electoral threshold and introducing a majority voting system, among other changes. For years, SDS has argued that the proportional voting system creates unstable coalitions incapable of reaching consensus on key issues.[20]

Towards the end of 2013, President Pahor convened a meeting with leaders of all the parliamentary parties to negotiate consensus on these and other recently proposed changes to the electoral system.[21] In the ensuing discussion, Pahor proposed to introduce preferential voting; abolish electoral districts; and raise the electoral threshold for entry into parliament to 5 percent from the current 4 percent.[22] His suggestions met with resistance from SLS, SD, and DeSUS. Other parties support the proposal in principle, which could lead to the necessary two-thirds support in the National Assembly. The discussion on amending electoral legislation was ongoing at year's end.

Civil Society

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
1.75	1.75	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00

Slovenia has more civil society and nongovernmental organizations (CSOs and NGOs) per capita than most states.[23] The majority of the country's approximately 24,000 NGOs are organized as associations and work at the local level in the fields of culture, sports, and art, or as fire brigades; others take the form of private foundations and institutes.[24] However, as in the rest of the region, Slovenia's NGOs and CSOs are struggling financially. Social partners, such as employers and trade union organizations, are the most important civil society actors engaged in policymaking, while environmental organizations, university research centers, and various interest groups play an active role where their specific interests are concerned. However, the majority of NGOs do not engage directly with political issues.

Austerity measures introduced in 2012 and 2013 sought to generate savings by reducing state bureaucracy and internal government expenditures; introducing new educational, employment, and healthcare regulations; and trimming down various government-funded policies and programs. In 2012, these measures prompted public sector unions to organize the largest public-sector strike in independent Slovenia's history. On 23 January 2013, public sector workers in Slovenia went on strike in protest of government plans to cut jobs and reduce public sector wages by a further 5 percent (following the 3 percent pay cut in 2012). An estimated 100,000 workers joined the strike from health and social welfare institutions, the police, kindergartens, and schools.[25] They were supported by the Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia, the Slovenian Students' Union, and the School Student Organization of Slovenia. An estimated 15,000 people joined a national demonstration in Ljubljana.

Other measures put forward in 2013 also prompted pushback campaigns from civil society. In response to the proposed introduction of a property tax, activists initiated a petition that collected more than 75,000 signatures. In early November, the organization Civil Society for Fair Slovenia also organized a public debate on the tax in Ljubljana.[26] Although the leaders of all political parties were invited, only opposition party leaders came to the debate, which was attended by several hundred people.

The introduction of a fiscal rule in the constitution was equally controversial. Trade unions, in particular, interpreted the proposed provision as a nail in the coffin of the welfare state, since strict adherence to the eurozone's "Golden Rule" would mean decreasing pensions and public sector wages by 30 percent or social assistance to disadvantaged individuals by 50 percent.[27] Unions demanded that the inclusion of the fiscal rule should be decided upon by citizens via referendum. Activists, trade unions, and other segments of civil society also strongly opposed the proposed constitutional changes regarding referendums, seeing the changes as a potential hindrance to direct democracy. In both cases, opponents of the constitutional amendments organized numerous protests, petitions, and other tactics, but the amendments were nevertheless adopted.

Public frustration with the perceived level of corruption in government was another theme of protests in 2012 and 2013. When the leadership of the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption resigned in late November, a handful of protesters gathered in the center of Ljubljana to support them and draw further attention to the problem of corruption in government. The small rally went largely unnoticed by the public, though it did include a tear gas attack on Mayor Janković, who had to be taken to the emergency room.

The numerous campaign movements of the last two years led indirectly to the establishment of a new party, Solidarity—For a Fair Society, in 2013.[28] The party's three-member presidency presides over a coalition of three major protest movements, as well as a number of smaller CSOs. The party's official objectives are preventing authoritarian modes of government and building solidarity as an alternative to neoliberal ideology.[29]

In keeping with a 2010 ruling (confirmed in 2012) by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), in November 2013 the National Assembly finally adopted a law on state compensation to Slovenia's "erased"—individuals whose names were erased from the civil registry in 1992 because they had failed to apply for citizenship within six months of the country's declaration of independence, rendering them stateless. Under the new law, claimants will be compensated in the amount of €50 each for every month of their statelessness. However, only those currently holding permanent residence or Slovenian citizenship will be eligible for compensation, as the government asserts that people must demonstrate their desire to continue residing in Slovenia in order to prove that the "erasure" robbed them of anything.[30] Those who can show that they applied for citizenship or residency but were denied it will also be compensated. According to the Interior Ministry, around 12,000 of the more than 25,000 "erased" will receive compensation through the new scheme, at an estimated cost of €130 million to the state, paid out in five installments.[31] The ECHR retains the right to approve or reject this plan, a decision it will make in 2014. Some representatives of the "erased" have called for a constitutional review of the plan, which they deem inadequate.

Independent Media

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
1.50	1.75	2.00	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25

Slovenia's constitution and legal system guarantee freedom of the press, and for the most part, the media operate without direct political interference. However, press outlets are sometimes punished or threatened for reporting on controversies and corruption surrounding powerful political figures and parties. The privatization model established in the early 1990s enabled the state to maintain significant ownership of privatized companies through state-controlled funds. In the 2005–07 period, there were controversial changes to media regulations and takeovers of several daily newspapers, the public service radio and television, and the national press agency. In many of these outlets, governing bodies, managers, editors, and reporters were replaced by owners loyal to the political parties in power.[32]

The search for a buyer for the daily newspaper *Večer* ended unsuccessfully in 2013. Since November 2008, the newspaper company Delo has been the majority owner of *Večer*. The Office for the Protection of Competition (AVK) ordered Delo to sell at least 75 percent of its stake in the newspaper in 2009 after discovering excessive concentration in the news and advertising market. In April 2013, yet another sale fell through as interested buyers failed to provide sufficient financial resources for the purchase.[33] Having already failed to meet multiple AVK calls to sell the newspaper, Delo faced a €1,000 fine for missing the July 2013 sale deadline.[34] At the end of 2013, a cooperative purchase of *Večer*, organized by its employees with support from the Slovenian Union of Journalists, was also unsuccessful.[35] The issue of its sale will thus continue in 2014.

In accordance with austerity measures adopted in 2012, funding for public broadcaster Radio-Television Slovenia (RTV) was reduced by 5 percent as of 1 January 2013, despite criticism from Positive Slovenia and other then-opposition party deputies, who insisted that funding for national broadcasting was essential to its survival and should not be cut.[36] Two months after the change of government in March 2013, the new Positive Slovenia–led coalition returned RTV contributions to their previous levels, using changes to the law on the implementation of budgets for 2013 and 2014. Government representatives explained that the reinstatement of RTV contributions to their previous levels after only five months was an integral part of the government's recently signed agreement with public sector unions.[37] The new parliamentary opposition, which sees RTV as an inefficient institution, was highly critical of this aspect of the agreement, emphasizing that an increase in RTV contributions was never under the authority of trade unions (by law, unions are empowered to negotiate the size of salaries, but not their source).[38] At the end of November, the government put forth a draft amendment to the Law on Radio-Television Slovenia intended to fix the level of RTV funding and thus guarantee its long-term financial independence. The draft will be discussed in the National Assembly in 2014.

An incident at the end of 2013 drew attention to journalists' right to protect their sources. When investigators visited the home of Defense Minister Roman Jakič in connection with allegations that he had abused his power as Director of Ljubljana Sport and Leisure Facilities from 2008 to 2012, a *Večer* journalist was already waiting on the scene. The special prosecutor's department invited the journalist for an interview to inquire who had tipped her off. The journalist refused to disclose her source. The episode prompted the Slovenian Association of Journalists to issue an appeal to the police and prosecution to refrain from pressuring journalists into disclosing anonymous sources. Anonymity of sources is part of the official Code of Journalists of Slovenia (adopted in 2002), but it is not specifically protected under the law.[39]

Local Democratic Governance

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50

The main unit of local self-governance in Slovenia is the municipality. In 1994, the Law on New Municipalities established 147 municipalities, but in the years that followed, many of these split into smaller units, creating a total of 212 municipalities in a country with a total population of only 2 million people. The vast majority of these are very small and inadequately staffed, with limited financial resources and autonomy. Indeed, over half of municipalities have fewer than 5,000 inhabitants. The smallest Slovenian municipality has just over 300 inhabitants and the largest—almost 300,000.[40] Based on changes to the constitution in mid-2006, procedures for setting up the size, number, responsibilities, and financing of provinces, as well as other related issues, should be arranged under a special law, which is yet to be established.

Weeks of large protest rallies in Maribor, Slovenia's second-largest city, forced the resignation of Mayor Franc Kangler (SLS) in December 2012. The focus of the protests had been the alleged corruption of Kangler and his political associates. Replacement elections were held in March 2013. The only nonpartisan candidate to run, Andrej Fištravec, won the election with 52.69 percent of the vote. Runner-up Matevž Frangež (SD) received 24.66 percent of votes, while SLS's candidate, Milan Mikl, who had temporarily run the municipality of Maribor after Kangler's resignation, came in third with 6 percent. All other candidates received less than 5 percent of the vote.[41] The protesters who had demanded Kangler's resignation in December had also insisted on the resignation of Maribor's 45-member city council, but only four of its members agreed to step down. Their replacements were elected concurrently with the new mayor on 17 March. After the elections, SD continued to demand the dissolution of the whole city council.

Unlike any previous local election in Slovenia, the March 2013 vote was monitored by members of a local NGO, the Center for Citizenship Education. With the official permission of the Electoral Commission of the Municipality of Maribor, five volunteers made unannounced visits to 43 of Maribor's 114 polling stations.[42] The volunteers recorded numerous minor and eight serious alleged violations of electoral legislation, including unsealed ballot boxes; inadequately marked or wheelchair-inaccessible stations; or failure by some electoral committees to keep minutes at the polls.

Despite the scale of the 2012 protests and evident level of dissatisfaction with the outgoing local elites, voter turnout was just over 32 percent for the mayoral elections, and just under 32 percent voted in the concurrent replacement elections to the city council. Turnout in Maribor's last local elections, in 2010, was over 43 percent.[43]

Although he was elected on a nonpartisan ticket, Fištravec will have to prove to many voters that he is genuinely independent of long-dominant local elites, a concern voiced in postelection protests.[44] The new mayor has already been criticized for appointing cadres from his circle to important positions in local government.

Some of the austerity measures proposed in 2013 directly concern local governments. In addition to clashes within the ruling coalition and pushback from the political opposition and civil society groups, the proposed introduction of a new property tax met with strong resistance from local authorities. Most mayors and other local officials argued that by replacing the payments their administrations had previously received from the state in return for building on local land with a percentage of the proceeds from the new state property tax, the central government was reducing local governing bodies' financial autonomy. Municipalities will also lose the right to create their own local policies on real estate management.

In September, Interior Minister Gregor Virant put forward a controversial proposal on reducing the number of municipalities. The proposal stipulates that municipalities should have no fewer than 5,000 inhabitants, which would reduce the current number of municipalities to 120.[45] All three opposition parties (SDS, SLS, and NSi) stood against Virant's proposal on the grounds that many of the existing municipalities had been created on the basis of referendums, which represent the will of the people. The Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia (SOS) and the Association of Municipalities of Slovenia (ZOS) also opposed the change, citing the same argument. In December, opposition parties filed a motion to oust Virant from his position on the basis of the municipality-consolidation plan, as well as his role in the legislation on compensation for the "erased" and the government's possibly unconstitutional agreement with public sector unions over funding to the state broadcaster.[46]

The Ministry of the Interior also proposed amendments reducing central government funding to municipalities. The proposed legislation would have reduced the allocation of income tax to municipalities from 54 to 50 percent, saving the state an estimated €86 million per year. The proposal, which was rejected before it could come before the National Assembly for debate, estimated that reducing state co-financing of joint municipal administrations from 50 to 30 percent would save an additional €14 million annually.[47]

Judicial Framework and Independence

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.75	1.75	1.75	1.75	1.75	1.75

Slovenia's judicial branch of government consists of the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Court. Judges in all courts may belong to political parties but they may not participate in political party organs. They are elected by the National Assembly after being nominated by an eleven-member Judicial Council consisting of five legal experts chosen by the National Assembly with input from the president and six more selected by their peers with permanent judicial offices. The Constitutional Court is composed of nine judges nominated by the president and elected by the National Assembly; these nine judges elect a president from among their own number for a term of three years.

Until recently, government and judicial authorities largely denied the existence of corruption within Slovenia's judicial system.[48] In 2013, however, a district court judge from Celje was fined and sentenced to five-and-half years in prison for abusing his judicial office and accepting a bribe.[49] Overall, the year was characterized by increased activity on the part of the prosecutor's office, police, and courts, manifested in more charges and convictions against politicians and other influential figures.

Increased zeal in law enforcement did not prevent at least one very public embarrassment where judicial procedure was involved. Having detained "construction baroness" Hilda Tovšak in February on suspicion of bribery and abuse of workers,[50] the special prosecutor's office then proved unable to collect enough evidence to charge Tovšak with the crime in question within the legally permitted timeframe. Despite the existence of numerous ongoing investigations against

Tovšak on accusations of embezzlement, abuse of power, and other serious criminal offenses, the official charges against her had to be reduced to relatively minor counts of bribery. This meant that Tovšak, who had already been in custody for 63 days, was overdue to be released. Before a new indictment could be filed, Tovšak disappeared and remained on the lam for almost a week until she was arrested under an Interpol warrant.[51] Tovšak subsequently took advantage of the alleged mishandling of her case to win restitution from the state in the amount of €16,350. Ljudmila Novak, the president of the New Slovenia party, noted that Tovšak's escape had served Slovenia by "expos[ing] all the mistakes in the judicial system."[52]

Slovenia's judicial system is burdened by a large backlog of cases, though the number of unresolved cases has been declining for several years. In mid-July, the ECHR ruled against Slovenia in two cases, issuing a fine of approximately €11,000 for violation of Articles 6 and 13 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.[53] Article 6 provides the right to a fair trial within a reasonable period of time, while Article 13 provides the right to an effective remedy in domestic courts. One of the cases had spent 9 years at various levels of Slovenia's judicial system, and the other had been unresolved for 13 years.[54]

The judicial backlog continued to decline in 2013, despite deep austerity cuts in funding to the judiciary the previous year. The average time spent on major cases in the courts was reduced by one month in the first half of 2013.[55] The number of pending cases declined by 7.1 percent in the same period, while the number of major unresolved cases decreased by 10.9 percent. The total backlog decreased by 9.1 percent for all matters and by 16.4 percent for major cases.

The termination of Project Lukenda, a judicial efficiency initiative ongoing since 2008, resulted in 250 layoffs at the end of 2012 and raised fears about judicial backlogs worsening again.[56] In mid-2013, however, the government approved new funding for judiciary means, which enabled courts to compensate for staff shortages.

Corruption

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
2.00	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.25	2.25	2.50

Corruption appears less extensive in Slovenia than in most Central European countries, but a series of scandals in the last two years has exposed surprising levels of graft in the political sphere, exacerbating public frustration with austerity measures and fueling antigovernment sentiment. Prompted by the anticorruption mood in the country, Slovenian authorities were somewhat more active in investigating and trying cases of suspected corruption in 2012 and 2013. However, at year's end the leadership of the Commission for Prevention of Corruption (CPC) resigned in protest of the state's inadequate response to persistent corruption in government and the banking and healthcare sectors.

Established in 2004, the CPC is Slovenia's main anticorruption watchdog. Since 2010, its mandate also includes oversight of political lobbying, whistleblower protection, and the integrity of the public sector. The CPC is state funded but it is not subordinate to any other state institution or ministry and does not receive direct instructions from the executive branch or the legislature. The CPC's tripartite leadership—a chief commissioner and two deputies—is appointed by the president of Slovenia following an open recruitment procedure and nomination by a special selection board. The chief commissioner's term of office is six years, while the deputies have a five-year mandate. The chief and deputies can serve up to two terms in office.

Following a yearlong investigation into the finances of the leaders of seven parliamentary parties, the CPC reported in January 2013 that the presidents of Slovenia's two main political parties—then prime minister Janša (SDS) and PS leader and Ljubljana mayor Janković—had systematically violated anticorruption legislation by concealing large, unexplained assets.[57] Janša's personal property was revealed to be out of all proportion to his officially reported sources of income and assets, and it had inexplicably increased by at least €210,000 since 2004. The CPC report also described "distinct corruption risks and suspected abuse of office" in connection with real estate deals in 2005 that had generated €100,000 in profit for Janša.[58] The commission's January report made similar allegations against Janković—€2.4 million in unreported assets and "several financial chain-transactions between the companies owned by Mr. Janković's sons and companies doing multi-million businesses with the city."[59] Some of the accusations against him dealt with funds connected to the construction of the Stožice sports complex in Ljubljana, for which Janković and a number of associates were already under investigation.

Janša and Janković both rejected the findings of the CPC report and maintained their innocence, filing civil suits against the CPC and demanding the suspension of the report. However, these protestations could not forestall the ensuing scandal that led to a no-confidence vote against Janša and Janković's resignation from the presidency of Positive Slovenia. In December 2013, the National Bureau of Investigation brought charges against Janša for the transactions described in the CPC report.[60] The state prosecutor's office was reviewing the case at year's end.

By this time, Janša had also been sentenced to two years' imprisonment and a fine of €37,000 for accepting a substantial kickback from the Finnish defense company Patria in 2006, during his first term as prime minister.[61] Janša appealed the court's July 2013 decision, and the judgment was not yet legally binding.

Published in October, a European Commission study of corruption in the healthcare sectors of the EU found systemic corruption in all 28 member states.[62] The study cited Eurobarometer surveys in which 59 percent of Slovenian respondents agreed that "the giving and taking of bribes, and the abuse of positions of power for personal gain, are widespread among people working in the public health sector." (The average for all EU respondents was 30 percent.) The study also identified weak procurement regulations, abstract legislation, and a lack of monitoring as the major causes of corruption in the field.[63] In Slovenia, the report's publication coincided with the launch of extensive police investigations into suspected white collar crimes—especially bribery—in the healthcare sector. These will continue in 2014.[64]

Against a backdrop of public frustration with the state of the economy and perceived corruption of political and economic leaders, law enforcement stepped up efforts to conclude a few longstanding, high-profile corruption investigations. As a result, Hilda Tovšak and two other business tycoons—Bine Kordež and Dušan Črnigoj—were convicted, sentenced, and jailed in 2013.

Notwithstanding these token successes, the volatile political situation prevented a more systematic government response to the corruption problem. The three leaders of the CPC resigned at the end of November—in protest, they said, of the government's inadequate anticorruption efforts.[65] Above all, the men expressed disappointment at the lack of progress in tackling systemic corruption, the gaps in the banking system, corruption in healthcare, and the ease with which public officials misrepresent their finances. The outgoing leadership of CPC will remain in office until their replacements can be appointed.

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