

Danica Fink-Hafner and Damjan Lajh

**The 2008
Slovenian EU Presidency:
A New Synergy for Europe?**
A Midterm Report

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PREFACE

The Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies, SIEPS, bi-annually publishes a report on the incumbent presidency of the EU, focusing on the agenda, domestic factors and the country's specific relation to the European integration process.

Slovenia is the first post-socialist Member State to hold the presidency of the European Union. As a small and relatively recently democratized country it has faced specific challenges in managing this task, such as the lack of an experienced administration and government. The Slovenian Presidency has, *inter alia*, been devoted to the ratification process of the Lisbon Treaty, the development of the European Research Area as initiated by the Ljubljana process, energy and climate change and the situation in the Western Balkans, including the question of the independence of Kosovo as well as the actual management of Kosovo as it is in effect administered by the EU.

SIEPS conducts and promotes research and analysis of European policy issues within the disciplines of political science, law and economics. SIEPS strives to act as a link between the academic world and policy-makers at various levels.

Stockholm, May 2008
Jörgen Hettne
Acting Director, SIEPS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
1 INTRODUCTION	8
2 SLOVENIA AND THE EU	12
2.1 The disintegration of socialist Yugoslavia and the democratic transition in Slovenia	12
2.2 Slovenia's accession to the EU	15
2.3 Political parties' standpoints and public opinion on the EU	22
3 ORGANISATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE SLOVENIAN PRESIDENCY	26
3.1 Co-ordination of EU affairs in Slovenia	26
3.2 Organisational preparations and holding the EU Presidency	34
3.3 The training of civil servants and recruiting of additional cadre	40
3.4 Co-operation with civil society	43
4 MAIN TOPICS OF THE SLOVENIAN PRESIDENCY	44
4.1 The future of the EU: Successful ratification of the Lisbon Treaty ..	45
4.2 The new Lisbon Strategy cycle	46
4.3 Energy-Climate package	49
4.4 Enlargement and the European Perspective on the Western Balkans	50
4.5 Intercultural Dialogue	57
4.6 Other issues	58
5 CONCLUSIONS	61
SAMMANFATTNING	65
FURTHER READING	67

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Slovenian Presidency of the EU represents a symbolic peak in the country's social and political transformation that started in the 1980s. For a country like Slovenia, which for a long time lived within the borders of several multinational states along with other predominant nations and has been a relatively "good pupil" in the Europeanisation process, holding the EU Presidency has meant a qualitative challenge to the mainstream collective psychology of such a small nation. Despite this, Slovenia's Presidency has been welcomed at home just like all the other broadly supported EU-related Slovenian projects since the beginning of the 1990s.

The Slovenian executive has faced many domestic and external challenges. The most important ones have included 1) the demanding task for its young diplomacy of "jumping from zero hour" to leadership in Presidency-related co-ordination as well as international activity; 2) the inexperienced government – with the exception of the long-serving Minister of Foreign Affairs; 3) the lack of European cadre; 4) domestic presidential (2007) and parliamentary elections (due in autumn 2008); 5) the challenge of providing a constructive response to certain prejudices and doubts about the first post-socialist and first Slavic country holding the Presidency and its ability to handle this exposed and important position at the EU level as well as in global international relations; 6) presiding over the EU where several major countries traditionally maintain a significant influence and 7) carefully balancing its official statements and actions related to the Western Balkans (the former Yugoslav region Slovenia used to belong to) in order to remain faithful to its policy of maintaining good relations with all parts of former Yugoslavia and at the same time clearly positioning itself as the country holding the EU Presidency regarding issues of conflict (especially Kosovo).

While Slovenia did have a national programme for its Presidency, it is also true that it harmonised it to a large extent with two other inter-related agendas: a) the "inherited" Council of the EU agenda and b) the common 18-month programme of the first presiding trio – Germany, Portugal and Slovenia. Due to the above-mentioned major challenges and the fact that it was the last country in the first "presiding trio" started by Germany, Slovenia established a "*playing it safe*" ambition: to run EU policy-making processes *smoothly and in a problem-free way*. Slovenia opted for a strategy of making the Presidency a "national project", but subordinated to the EU political processes. Since it set aside the fostering of its higher profile (establishing Slovenia's identity on the EU scene), it probably deserves criticism for "being shy". However, it probably also deserves praise that it

now, at the halfway point of the Presidency, seems to have acted responsibly and has been relatively successful in managing the agenda. So far it also seems that it has been fulfilling the “genuine” Slovenian priority within the framework of the European perspective on the Western Balkans. With its insight into the former Yugoslav region and thanks to the sensitive activities that have not been competing for the spotlight, Slovenia has contributed to fairly smooth and non-violent developments – especially as regards the relations between Kosovo and Serbia. Providing that no significant unexpected events take place within the EU or in the world beyond the influence of Slovenia and providing that Slovenia’s professional organisational work continues, it is reasonable to expect that Slovenia’s Presidency will conclude with some moderate progresses in several areas such as: 1) good progress in the ratification process of the Lisbon Treaty, 2) the new partnership in developing the European Research Area initiated by the Ljubljana Process, 3) the agreement reached on basic principles and the time frame of the energy and climate change package, as well as 4) some positive results in the Western Balkans region, including positive shifts in resolving the “status of Kosovo” and the expected signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Bosnia-Herzegovina, although probably not with any major historical milestones. At the end of its six-month term, an EU-US Summit will be held in June in Slovenia and it is expected to take a step or two forwards with respect to the US’ visa-waiver programme for EU member states.

As the last presiding country within the first “trio”, Slovenia mainly took on the fairly “traditional role” of a small country holding the EU presidency – managing “a good presidency” for the EU. With a continuation of the professional organisation of Presidency-related activities, by the end of its term, Slovenia will be expected to have fulfilled its Presidency ambitions as well as being listed among other small EU countries, which have already managed “a good Presidency”.

1 INTRODUCTION

Slovenia has been an extremely dynamic society during the last 25 years. The deep social changes it has experienced not only involved the economic and political transition from the socialist system to a capitalist economy and a liberal democracy, but also the creation of an independent state. Favourable socio-economic characteristics closely linked to the Slovenian economy's integration with the economy in EU member states (especially Germany) already in socialist times (Slovenia was a former socialist Yugoslav republic with the biggest share of all the republics of exports to the West) went hand in hand with the gradual change of the political system. Slovenia as a new state was also fortunate to have been relatively quickly and very successfully integrated into the world system. After earning EU membership in the first wave of EU enlargement (following a wave of transitions to democracy in former socialist countries at the turn from the 1980s to the 1990s) it became the first former socialist country and first Slavic country to hold the EU Presidency (in the first half of 2008). In a way this position symbolically represents the peak of social developments in Slovenia in the last few decades (as estimated by the philosopher Tine Hribar¹), which demands the formulation of Slovenia's project for a new developmental cycle in future decades.

The EU Presidency has presented some big challenges to Slovenia, especially its executive branch of power. The following eight challenges should be pointed out – with four emerging from Slovenia's internal characteristics and four being related to Slovenia's positioning in the international relations sphere.

Domestically generated challenges include:

- a) As a new state Slovenia had to establish its diplomacy from scratch as even in the context of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia diplomacy Slovenians were underrepresented and there was even a lack of Slovenian diplomatic cadre educated and involved in diplomatic socialisation before 1991. The first contacts between Slovenia and the European Communities were established with the help of just the few diplomats working in Brussels within the framework of (at that time still) the Yugoslav diplomatic representation.
- b) While Slovenia is still developing its public administration so as to be compatible with European policy-making and policy implementation institutions and processes, the Slovenian public administration (like other

¹ Interview on TV Slovenia 1, Sunday, 6 April 2008, at 21.30.

institutions in Slovenia) has been encountering a lack of European cadre even for the purposes of fully taking part in ordinary EU policy-making. For the efficient implementation of the role of the Presidency, even more cadre were needed and they had to be additionally prepared for the Presidency alongside the full mobilisation of the human resources already available in the period prior to the Presidency as well as for the actual period of presiding.

- c) In a young democracy still developing relations between various branches of power and a persisting communist–anti-communist cleavage have been additional factors in defining the relationship between the national opposition and government during the Presidency. On one hand, the independent Slovenia has had a tradition of political agreements not to politicise EU matters. On the other hand, the opposition could not give up its role of a critic and controller of the government during the time when the government was very busy leading and co-ordinating EU matters in the role of the Presidency. The answer to this dilemma has been searched for in the context of heated domestic political competition. Most of 2007 was marked by campaigning for the presidential elections (the first round held in October 2007 and the second round held in November 2007) and, since the beginning of 2008, campaigning for the national elections (to be held in September or October 2008 – by the time of writing this midterm report they had not yet been officially called) has already informally started.
- d) It was an inexperienced government which had to take care of both governing Slovenia and chairing the EU. The Slovenian Democratic Party gained the prime ministerial post for the first time in autumn 2004 and only two small additional governmental parties (the Democratic Party of Pensioners and the Slovenian People's Party) had any significant experience as coalition partners in the centre-left governments led by the Liberal Democracy of Slovenia. Although the Foreign Ministry is still led by long-term Minister Dimitrij Rupel, the fulfilment of the high expectations in the domestic and international (especially EU) arena has been a demanding and complicated job for the government.

Among the international relations challenges the following should be stressed:

- a) As the first former socialist country and first Slavic country to hold the Presidency, it has to constructively respond to certain prejudices and doubts about such a country's capability to deal with this exposed and important position at the EU level and in global international relations. Expressed prejudices even included an interpretation that an institutional

innovation of three partner countries for an 18-month Presidency period had been invented in order to control any damage one inexperienced country from the Central and Eastern European region could create in this important position.

- b) As a candidate state, Slovenia (like other candidates for the 2004 EU enlargement) had been used to the position of being “a good pupil” responding successfully to guidelines and monitoring by EU actors. Unlike this adaptive role, full EU membership status involves taking part in EU policy-making in a more pro-active way. This is especially true when holding the Presidency. Although to a certain extent a pro-active (especially governmental) style can be noticed in the planning of Slovenia’s EU Presidency in 2008, for Slovenia this leadership role has been a challenge with historical symbolic meaning.
- c) As a small country that was only recently (re)integrated into Western Europe, Slovenia has faced the challenge of the leading and co-ordinating role of the Presidency where several bigger countries traditionally maintain a significant influence – especially Germany (who had the Presidency just before the Portuguese and Slovenian ones) and France (the Presidency immediately after the Slovenian one). Among the challenges there have been the notion that it was Germany which heavily influenced the agenda of the 18-month period of collaboration between Portugal, Germany and Slovenia and the notion that in some aspects (especially the EU’s international role in parts of the world where Slovenia does not have its own diplomatic representative institutions) France will take over the main role even before the official start to its Presidency of the EU.
- d) Especially when it comes to EU policy vis-à-vis countries in the Western Balkans Slovenia wears several hats. 1) It has to co-ordinate EU policy in line with already defined principles (e.g. prescribed pre-conditions for signing Stabilisation and Accession Agreements). 2) As a country on the EU’s external border (like other countries with similar border positions) it is inclined towards future EU enlargement, first of all with its closest neighbour - Croatia. 3) As a socialist republic of former Yugoslavia it has special historical and current links with other former Yugoslav republics including both some conflictive issues involved in the succession agreement processes and special relations based on historical sentiments of formerly having lived together in the common federal state. Due to conflicts among other former Yugoslav political-territorial units (during the Slovenian Presidency this is especially true of the issue of Kosovo’s independence), Slovenia has been in

a position where it has had to carefully balance its official statements and actions related to the Western Balkans in order to remain faithful to its policy of good relations with all parts of former Yugoslavia and at the same time clearly position itself regarding the conflictive issues (e.g. the recognition of Kosovo as an independent state).

Due to the mentioned major challenges Slovenia has established a “*playing it safe*” ambition: to run EU policy-making processes *smoothly and in a problem-free way*.²

In the report we first present two sections on some of Slovenia’s idiosyncrasies relevant to understanding Slovenia’s positioning within European integration processes and on its organisation for the purposes of the EU Presidency. In the section on the main priorities of Slovenia’s Presidency a midterm overview is presented. In the concluding part, a preliminary midterm evaluation of the main aspects of Slovenia’s Presidency is summarised.

² See <http://www.euractiv.com/en/future-eu/slovenian-presidency-brief/article-169164>

2 SLOVENIA AND THE EU

2.1 The disintegration of socialist Yugoslavia and the democratic transition in Slovenia

Slovenia is a relatively young state, having proclaimed its independence in 1991. In the period from the end of the 1980s to the start of the 1990s, Slovenia underwent many parallel transformations – it changed its economic and political system, became an independent state (its independence was declared on 25 June 1991) and established itself as an internationally recognised state (recognised by the EC on 15 January 1992). Having favourable socio-economic preconditions and relatively open borders to the West already during socialist times the necessary multiple transitions went gradually, relatively smoothly and without radical cuts in the welfare state.³ Still, even without the challenge of *Europeanisation*, it would have faced the need to: a) develop modern political institutions while grappling with the socialist tradition of pre-modern structures and practices subordinated to the monopoly of a single ruling party; and b) develop completely new institutions for functions previously based in Belgrade – the political centre of former federal Yugoslavia (especially for defence and foreign affairs).

Historically, Slovenia has always been made up by a distinct ethnic group within a much larger nation-state, particularly during the Habsburg Empire, as part of Yugoslavia, or during the Italian, German and Hungarian occupations of WW II. As such, it has also always been oriented to the West. The creation of the independent Slovenian state in 1991 was the last step in a long process of nation-building which intensified in the 19th century simultaneously and (nearly) parallel to similar processes in other countries of Western and Central Europe. Up to the 19th century, Slovenian national identity had primarily been built on the basis of the development of a distinct national culture which often necessitated resistance to outside forces, especially *Germanisation*.

By the time of independence in 1991, Slovenians had spent more than 70 years in the multinational state of Yugoslavia (which literally means “the land of the southern Slavs”), including the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (in 1929 renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and often called the “first Yugoslavia”) and in the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (the “second Yugoslavia”, 1946–1991). A strong resistance movement developed in April 1941 in response to the German, Italian and

³ See Fink-Hafner, D., and Robbins, J. R. (eds.), *Making a New Nation: the Formation of Slovenia* (Aldershot, Hunts, England and Brookfield, Vermont, USA: Dartmouth, 1997).

Table 2.1: Slovenia – basic facts

Surface Area:	20,273 km ²
The two main cities	Ljubljana – capital of Slovenia with 266,941 inhabitants on 31 December 2005: http://www.stat.si/letopis/2006/31_06/31-02-06.htm?jezik=si and Maribor (111073 inhabitants – population on 31 December 2005: http://www.stat.si/letopis/2006/31_06/31-02-06.htm?jezik=si)
Population	2,011,614 (2006): http://www.stat.si/doc/pub/PSP/00-PS-912-0705.pdf population by ethnic affiliation (according to the 2002 census): total 196,4036 (100%); 163,1363 / 83.06% declared they were Slovenians; the biggest shares of other ethnic affiliation: two officially recognised ethnic minorities with one MP in the National Assembly each (Italians: 2,258; 0.11% and Hungarians: 6,243; 0.32%); Roma – an officially recognised ethnic minority on the local level with representatives in local councils in some local communities (3,246; 0.17%), Serbs (38,964; 1.98%), Croats (35,642; 1.81%); Bosniaks (21,542; 1.10%)
GDP per capita	GDP in current prices per capita in 2005: EUR 13,807 (GDP in purchasing power parity per capita: 79.8% of the EU-25) (Slo figures 2006:72)
share of people living below the poverty line	12,1 % in 2004 in Slovenia; EU average at that time 16% (source: Statistical Office of Slovenia at: http://www.stat.si/novica_prikazi.aspx?id=708)
share of people unemployed	ILO unemployment rate in 2005: 5.8% (Slo figures 2006:31)
share of people with a university education	7.9% (Slo figures 2006:24)
share of illiterate people	0.03% (Level of literacy 99.7%: CIA the World Fact Book at: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/si.html#Intro)
Constitutional system	parliamentary
Electoral system	proportional
Government composition	coalition governments

Source: <http://www.stat.si/doc/pub/PSP/00-PS-912-0705.pdf>

Hungarian occupations, in which different political groups were active. After 1943, the Communist Party completely took over both leadership of the resistance movement and the creation of the Slovenian state in the liberated territory. A Slovenian army was created although it co-operated closely with the Partisans in other parts of Yugoslavia. The second Yugoslavia was created after the Second World War with a one-party political system headed by Josip Broz Tito.

Living in the framework of the two Yugoslavias gave Slovenians some space to develop economically and culturally, particularly through protection against Germanisation from the north. The constituent republics of the SFRY were allowed some aspects of political autonomy within the federal socialist system such as the creation of indigenous social, educational and cultural policies, but all other key policy areas such as the economy, social development, political system, foreign and defence policy were controlled by the federal government in Belgrade led by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia.

The SFRY was not only a multinational state but also a state that embodied extremely different levels of economic, social and political development, different modes of production and different stages in the process of nation-building. It also included three major religions and cultures: Catholic, Orthodox (which was predominant), and Islamic. Slovenia was then (and still is) predominately Catholic. Slovenia was the most developed part of former SFRY in terms of indicators such as the level of industrialisation, the proportion of agricultural workers in the population, the level of literacy (virtually 100 per cent) and the share of so-called “third” and “fourth” sectors in the nation’s economic structure. Since it was difficult to manage such a complex social, economic, religious, cultural and ethnic structure, the federal state was kept together through a dictatorship in the First Yugoslavia (after 1929) and an authoritarian system during the Second Yugoslavia (after the Second World War).

The decentralisation, self-management and autonomy of republics and provinces during the Second Yugoslavia were a continually evolving attempt to adapt the socialist political system to the particular socio-economic and cultural circumstances. These tendencies peaked in the passing of a new Constitution in 1974. In economic and ideological terms, the 1974 Constitution represented a continuation of the socialist economy, social ownership, self-management and the leading role of the League of Communists. But, at the same time, the Yugoslav republics (Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia) gained more political autonomy – that is, greater recognition as states. After the death of the charismatic Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito in 1980 and other influential politicians from the old generation, and in the context of growing economic crises, conflicts over the unresolved problems again erupted.

The key problems involved managing different societies within one multinational state, and the growing political conflicts between different parts of former Yugoslavia that were unequally ready for change in the economic and political systems. The reason is that the multiple transitions in Slovenia

had been much more similar to the transitions in other Central European countries than in other parts of former Yugoslavia.⁴ While in Slovenia by the end of the 1980s economic developments as well as political pluralisation and political cultural changes had brought about broad support for a change in the political and economic system, the political elites in other parts of former Yugoslavia were not even ready to accept Slovenia's proposal to reform the multinational Yugoslavia into an "asymmetrical federation" allowing the Slovenian republic to change the economic and political system and still remain within the common multinational state.

The political elite of the Slovenian republic, being in conflict with the Slovenian opposition that was demanding a political system change, opted for its (re)gaining of legitimacy within the republic. In 1989, amendments to the Constitution of Slovenia were approved within the old institutions that introduced a multi-party system, a liberal economy and the full sovereignty of the Republic of Slovenia. Due to a deadlock in the search for a formula to maintain a common Yugoslav state, growing pressure from the political opposition and public opinion survey results turning into support for the independent state, the old Slovenian political elite held referenda where the majority of all voters supported independence. The official declaration of independence was shortly followed by a military intervention. A short intervention by the Yugoslav Army, called the "Ten Day War", ensued in Slovenia in June and July 1991 that ended with the help of mediation by EU negotiators. After the beginning of July 1991, Slovenia was not involved in the Yugoslav war and did not suffer any substantial material damage due to the "Ten Day War". According to many indicators Slovenia was one of the best, if not the best, evaluated countries in the accession period before the 2004 EU enlargement wave.⁵

2.2 Slovenia's accession to the EU

Alongside the establishment of independent statehood, Slovenia has also been pursuing integration with the West as expressed through full membership of the EU. Slovenia, as part of former Yugoslavia and a non-member

⁴ See e.g. Fink-Hafner, D. and Haček, M. (eds.), *Demokratski prehodi I. Slovenija v primerjavi s srednjeevropskimi post-socialističnimi državami* (Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede, 2000); Fink-Hafner, D. and Haček, M. (eds.), *Demokratski prehodi II. Slovenija v primerjavi iz drugimi nekdanjimi jugoslovanskimi republikami* (Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede, 2001); Ramet, S. P., *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the War in for Kosovo*, 3rd ed. with a foreword by Ivo Banac (Westview Press, Boulder – Colorado, USA and Cumnor Hill-Oxford, UK, 1999); Riegler, H. (ed.), *Transformation processes in the Yugoslav successor states between marginalization and European integration* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2000).

⁵ Fink-Hafner, D., Dilemmas in Managing the Expanding EU: The EU and Applicant-States' Point of View, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 6/5 (1999), 783–801

of the Eastern Bloc, held a special status and relations with the EC earlier than any other socialist country. Economic and social interactions with the EC and its member states were part of Slovenian life even in socialist times, particularly after Yugoslavia signed a special agreement with the EC in 1970. Europeanisation as “practical” integration with the EC (especially economic) was closely linked to the processes of liberalisation of the economy, society and politics as well as the processes of democratic transition and creation of an independent state in the late 1980s and early 1990s. At the beginning of the 1990s, Europeanisation became a kind of substitute for the old ideology,⁶ while EU membership turned out to be a strategic goal of Slovenian foreign policy even before Slovenia’s formal independence. In accordance with the Basis of Slovenian Foreign Policy adopted in March 1991, membership of the EU was declared “an important step forward in the creation of a democratic, stable, strong, economically successful and well-organised country”. Moreover, the reformed former Slovenian League of Communists had adapted to civil society’s demands at the end of the 1980s so much that it chose the slogan “*Europe Now!*” for its party manifesto prepared for the first free elections held in April 1990.⁷

Slovenia’s road to the EU formally lasted about ten years. The first diplomatic relations between Slovenia and the then EC were established on 13 April 1992, but the process of building institutional relations began with the “Co-operation Agreement” in April 1993, which primarily emphasised trade relations.⁸ Based on this agreement, exploratory discussions between Slovenia and the EC/EU began regarding the signing of the Europe Agreement. Because one EU member state, Italy, objected to the prohibition on the purchase of real estate by non-Slovenian citizens that was then included in Slovenia’s Constitution, negotiations on the Europe Agreement were postponed several times. Italy succeeded in winning the argument that Slovenia’s property legislation was out of step with the European legislation, and the EU thus required a change to the Slovenian Constitution. As a consequence, Slovenia was forced to accept a compromise⁹ under which it was obliged to modify¹⁰ Article 68 of its Constitution.¹¹ The Europe Agree-

⁶ See Fink-Hafner, D., and Lajh, D., *Managing Europe from Home: the Europeanisation of the Slovenian Core Executive*, op. cit.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Fink-Hafner, D., Dilemmas in Managing the Expanding EU: The EU and Applicant-States’ Point of View, op. cit.

⁹ Known as the ‘Spanish Compromise’.

¹⁰ The Slovenian National Assembly amended Article 68 of the Constitution on 13 July 1997.

¹¹ Brinar, I., and Svetličič, M., Enlargement of the European Union: the Case of Slovenia, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 6/5 (1999), 802–821

ment was finally signed on 10 June 1996, when Slovenia also formally applied for full EU membership. The Slovenian National Assembly ratified the Europe Agreement on 15 July 1997 and simultaneously decided that any final decision on EU membership should be made by referendum.¹² The accession negotiations were officially opened on 31 March 1998 and completed in mid-December 2002.

The first year of full membership in the EU was politically exceptional for Slovenia as the *first elections to the European parliament* held in June 2004, while a few months later, in October, there were also the national parliamentary elections. The campaign for the first elections to the EP was more or less very formal and did not offer voters any surprising events. The campaign thus failed to generate any significant interests regarding EU topics and was mostly overshadowed by domestic political issues. In addition, the campaign was marked by a lack of any “real” Eurosceptic parties. The only two parties that were not in favour of full membership (they called themselves “Eurorealist” rather than Eurosceptic parties) – the Slovenian National Party and the Democratic Party of Slovenia – together received just 5.3 per cent of votes.¹³

Elections to the EP were held on the basis of a specific law which was first adopted in October 2002 and modified in February 2004. This law is distinctive from the legislation that governs national parliamentary elections since it: 1) also allows to vote or to be a candidate at EP elections EU citizens who have permanent residence in the Republic of Slovenia and fulfil other conditions to become a voter or a candidate at national parliamentary elections; and 2) introduces a so-called gender quota determining that a certain list of candidates cannot comprise less than 40 per cent of representatives of each gender and at least one representative of each gender must be put in the top half of the list; since Slovenia has seven seats in the EP this provision meant one of the top three positions.¹⁴

¹² Fink-Hafner, D. and Lajh, D., *Managing Europe from Home: the Europeanisation of the Slovenian Core Executive*, op. cit.

¹³ Lajh, D. and Krašovec, A., Referendum o ulasku Slovenije u Europsku Uniju: međunarodni komparativni pogled, *Politička misao*, 44/3 (2007), 45–65.

¹⁴ See Krašovec, A., Lajh, D., and Kustec-Lipicer, S., The European Union and Party Politics in Slovenia: an Apparent or Real Impact?, in Lewis, P. G., and Mansfeldova, Z. (eds.), *The European Union and party politics in Central and Eastern Europe* (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 169–189.

Table 2.2: Key dates concerning Slovenia's international recognition and relations between the EC/EU and Slovenia

1988–1990	Amendments to the Slovenian constitution of 1974 gradually introducing a new economic and political system and at the end also the precedence of Slovenian law over federal law.
April 1990	Election of a non-communist government.
25 June 1991	The Slovenian National Assembly proclaimed the 'Declaration of Independence and the Basic Constitutional Charter on the autonomy and independence of the Republic of Slovenia'.
October 1991	The last Yugoslav People's Army troops left Slovenia.
23 December 1991	The new 'Slovenian Constitution' was adopted.
15 January 1992	The European Union officially recognised the Republic of Slovenia.
13 April 1992	Diplomatic relations between the Republic of Slovenia and the EC/EU were established.
1992	Slovenia's admission to the OSCE.
May 1992	Slovenia's admission to the United Nations.
5 April 1993	'Co-operation Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Slovenia' was signed. The 'Co-operation Agreement' was supplemented by the 'Joint Declaration on Political Dialogue', a 'Financial Protocol' and a 'Transport Agreement'.
1 September 1993	The 'Co-operation Agreement' came into force.
7 December 1993	Pursuant to the 'Co-operation Agreement', the Republic of Slovenia and EC/EU began explorative discussions on signing the 'Europe Agreement'. In this period, the first serious problems emerged, including the matter of real-estate ownership (problems relating to Italy).
1995	Slovenia's admission to the World Trade Organisation (WTO).
15 March 1995	Negotiations began to sign the 'Europe Agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and their Member States, acting within the framework of the European Union, of the one part, and the Republic of Slovenia, of the other part'.
19 May 1995	Negotiations to sign the 'Europe Agreement' were concluded.
10 June 1996	The 'Europe Agreement' was signed. On the very same day Slovenia formally applied for EC/EU membership.
11 November 1996	'Interim Agreement on trade and trade-related matters between the European Community, the European Coal and Steel Community and the European Atomic Energy Community, of the one part, and the Republic of Slovenia of the other part' was signed. The 'Interim Agreement' was in force from 18 May 1997 until the 'Europe Agreement' came into effect on 1 February 1999.
3 July 1997	Leaders of Slovenian parliamentary political parties signed a special agreement on co-operation during Slovenia's accession to the EC/EU.

Table 2.2 continued

13 July 1997	The Slovenian National Assembly amended Article 68 of the Constitution as required by the EC/EU (the so-called 'real-estate clause') as a pre-condition for signing the 'Europe Agreement'.
15 July 1997	Ratification of the 'Europe Agreement' in the Slovenian National Assembly.
16 July 1997	The European Commission set out its opinion on Slovenia's EC/EU membership application in Agenda 2000.
September 1997	The Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the 'Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia for Integration into the European Union'.
December 1997	The Luxembourg European Council endorsed the Accession Partnership as a new instrument which was a key feature of the enhanced pre-accession strategy – preparation for full membership.
31 March 1998	The accession negotiations were officially opened .
April 1998	The Slovenian National Assembly decided on priority proceedings of European legislation to accelerate the process of adopting the acquis.
1 February 1999	The 'Europe Agreement' came into force – the delay being due to the slow ratification procedures of member states.
May 1999	The Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted 'The Republic of Slovenia's National Programme for Adoption of the Acquis by the end of 2002'.
November 2002	Slovenia was invited to join NATO.
13 December 2002	Negotiations on the Republic of Slovenia's accession to the EU were completed.
23 March 2003	The referendum on Slovenia's accession to the EU (89.6% in favour; 60.4% turnout).
March 2004	Slovenia became the first transition country to graduate from borrower status to donor partner status at the World Bank.
29 March 2004	Slovenia became a full member of NATO.
1 May 2004	Formal start of Slovenia's full-membership period in the EU.
13 June 2004	First elections to the European Parliament.
2005	Slovenia took over the OSCE Presidency.
1 January 2007	Slovenia (as the first post-socialist country to do so) joined the Euro zone.
Night 20/21 December 2007	Slovenia became part of the Schengen zone together with eight other EU 2004 member states and Switzerland.
1 January 2008	Slovenia starts to hold the EU Presidency.

The unexpected winner of the EP elections became (at the time) the “oppositional” New Slovenia with 23.6 per cent of votes. More unexpected was the result of the Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (which was then the biggest Slovenian parliamentary party) since the majority of public opinion polls had forecast its victory. The biggest disappointment of this election was the extremely low turnout of just 28.3 per cent, which for Slovenia is a negative record since the first democratic parliamentary and presidential elections in 1990.¹⁵ It is interesting that the opposition parliamentary parties received a higher share of votes (56.9 per cent) than the governmental parliamentary parties (36.0 per cent). This result was: 1) a serious wake up call for the governmental parties (especially the biggest one, the Liberal Democracy of Slovenia) concerning the national parliamentary elections that followed in October 2004; and 2) an indication of greater shifts in the sharing of power between the main political parties after October’s election. This indeed also happened as the national parliamentary elections in October 2004 brought the first radical ideological change in power after a relatively long period (12 years with only a six-month interruption in 2000) of governments led by the centre-left Liberal Democracy of Slovenia. The biggest parliamentary party – the Slovenian Democratic Party – led by Janez Janša gained parliamentary support for the centre-right coalition government which has also remained unchanged during the Presidency (at the time of writing this midterm report).

At the beginning of 2005, the first “European” task for the new government was *ratification of the EU Constitutional Treaty*. Slovenian parliamentary political parties had consistently and unanimously rejected the option of holding a referendum on this issue. They believed such a referendum was not necessary since Slovenian citizens had expressed their opinion about Slovenian membership in the EU already two years before when the EU accession referendum was supported by a large majority (almost 90 per cent) of citizens. At the beginning of January 2005 the government thus prepared the Act on Ratification of the EU Constitution Treaty, which had to be adopted in the National Assembly by a two-thirds majority of all deputies. On 1 February 2005, Slovenia as the third country (following Lithuania and Hungary), ratified the document. Ratification in the National Assembly was a mere formality and occurred without any broader public debate on the importance of the document for Slovenia. Voting against the ratification were just four deputies from the “Euro-realist” Slovenian National Party. Their main approach was that there was no need for the government to be hasty with the ratification. In their opin-

¹⁵ Ibid.

ion, it was smarter to wait with ratification until those states that had announced they would hold referendums on this issue had actually held those referendums. As well, they argued that broader public debate should be ensured before ratification, something which some other oppositional deputies had also called for but they nevertheless supported the ratification.¹⁶

On 1 January 2007, the *Slovenian currency tolar was replaced by the euro*. Clearly introduction of the euro in Slovenia as the first new EU member state to do so was an extremely important step not only for the country but also for the whole EU. It is probably not surprising that Slovenia was the first of the new EU member states to adopt the euro. Besides Slovenia having in place the most favourable economic conditions it should also be mentioned that most Slovenian citizens were already familiar with the euro well before it became their national currency. According to Eurobarometer research conducted in September 2006 (Flash Eurobarometer 191), Slovenians were those who were most familiar with euro cash since 95 per cent had already seen euro banknotes (against the average of 77 per cent for the then ten new member states) and 93 per cent had already seen euro coins (against the average of 70 per cent). Similarly, many had already used euro banknotes (80 per cent) or euro coins (77 per cent).

Slovenia's plan for the euro changeover was based on the so-called "Big-bang" scenario. In line with this scenario euro banknotes and coins were introduced on the same day as the day of adopting the euro – 1 January 2007. The period of dual circulation, during which both the Slovenian tolar and the euro were legal tender was extended from 1 to 14 January 2007, after which date the euro became the sole legal tender. At the official ceremony to introduce the euro, Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša emphasised that adopting the euro was a big step for Slovenia and a small step for the European Monetary Union. The German Chancellor and at the same time Chairman of the EU Angela Merkel added that this Slovenian step should especially be seen as an incentive for other new EU member states.¹⁷ However, despite the many favourable conditions that the introduction of the euro brought to Slovenia it should also be mentioned that recently the country has been confronted with the first problems as inflation has been rising rapidly and in 2007 it was the highest in the euro area.

At the end of December 2007 Slovenia also *entered the Schengen zone*. Initially, it was foreseen that the external border with Croatia would be estab-

¹⁶ Lajh, D., and Krašovec, A., Slowenien, in Weidenfeld, W., Wessels, W., and Algieri, F. (eds.), *Jahrbuch der Europäischen Integration 2005* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2006), 393–396.

¹⁷ Lajh, D., and Krašovec, A., Slowenien, in Weidenfeld, W., Wessels, W., and Algieri, F. (eds.), *Jahrbuch der Europäischen Integration 2007* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2008), 395–396.

lished in early 2007. However, due to delays in upgrading the Schengen Information System (SIS II) this did not happen. Following this delay, expansion of Schengen area to new member states started on 21 December 2007 when the first controls on land and sea borders were abolished, and was finished at the end of March 2008 when EU member states abolished border controls at airports as well.

In January 2008, Slovenia's new test of its maturity on the European stage started when Slovenia took the helm of the EU as the first of the 12 new EU member states to do so.

2.3 Political parties' standpoints and public opinion on the EU

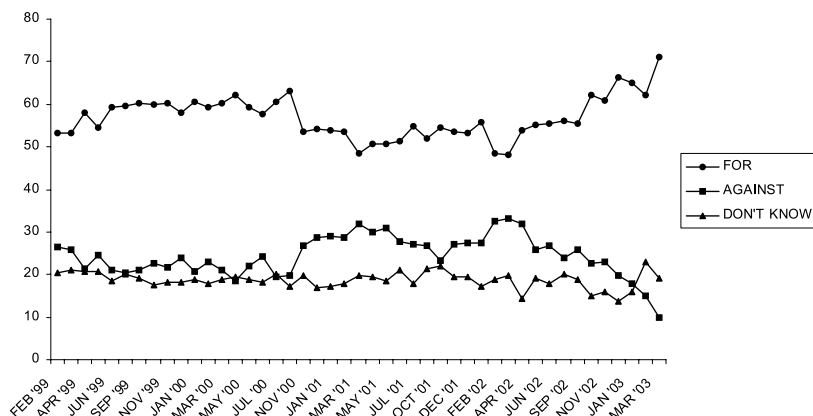
The whole EU accession period in Slovenia was marked by a broad consensus amongst the political elite on the process of joining the EU. There was a general consensus amongst all relevant Slovenian political parties that Slovenia should become an EU member state. With the exception of one parliamentary political party, namely the Slovenian National Party,¹⁸ no other parliamentary political party publicly opposed this. Moreover, as early as 1997 practically all parliamentary parties – again with the exception of the Slovenian National Party – and the representatives of the Hungarian and Italian minorities, despite their other differences and conflicts, decided to sign an Agreement on Co-operation in the Accession Process with the EU. However, in this period, although to a very small extent, public Euroscepticism slowly began to emerge. This was connected with the already mentioned negotiations on the European Agreement, especially when the issue of foreigners' ownership of real estate came into question.¹⁹ In this way some parties, especially the newly emerged (non-parliamentary) New Party and already mentioned Slovenian National Party, tried to take advantage of the gap between the EU-supportive politics of practically all parliamentary parties and the growing negative public opinion when Slovenia's accession to the EU was in question. Some minor efforts to mobilise electorate on this had been seen in both parties already in 1996, but the question became more salient in the next few years and especially at the 2000 parliamentary elections.²⁰ However, they were neither very

¹⁸ The Slovenian National Party won 3.2 per cent of the votes in the 1996 parliamentary elections, 4.4 per cent in those of 2000, 5.02 per cent in the first elections to the European Parliament in 2004, and 6.3 per cent in the 2004 parliamentary elections.

¹⁹ Fink-Hafner, D., and Lajh, D., *Managing Europe from Home: the Europeanisation of the Slovenian Core Executive*, op. cit.

²⁰ Lajh, D., and Krašovec, A., Post-Yugoslav Region between Democratisation and Europeanisation of Party Politics: Experiences from Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, *Politics in Central Europe*, 3, 1/2 (2007), 71–91.

Illustration 2.1: Trend of public opinion support for European integration, February 1999 to March 2003



Source: Politbarometer, at <http://evropa.gov.si>, accessed on 15 April 2004. (The question: 'If the EU accession referendum were to be held this Sunday, how would you vote?')

extremist nor successful. Although the Slovenian National Party even softened its position and described it as “Eurorealist”, both parties together attracted only 5.0 percent of the total vote (the first one received just 0.6 per cent while the second one won 4.4 per cent). If we try to find an explanation for their poor electoral result we can think about the marginality of the question of EU accession to voters and parties, and therefore also for electoral competition.²¹

*The EU referendum*²² finally demonstrated the lack of serious opposition in Slovenia to accession. The strongest and most prominent opponent of membership, the Slovenian National Party, had already criticised the government at various stages of the accession negotiations and warned of the potential traps and dangers of EU membership. But the party was quite silent in the last few weeks before the referendum. In the opinion of party leader Jelinčič, there are two key reasons for this. First, journalists stopped giving it publicity and the party was no longer invited to take part in TV debates. Second, the party’s very limited budget meant it was impossible

²¹ Krašovec, A., Lajh, D., and Kustec-Lipicer, S., *The European Union and Party Politics in Slovenia: an Apparent or Real Impact?*, op. cit.

²² The EU accession referendum was conducted simultaneously with NATO accession referendum.

Table 2.3: Results of the 2003 EU accession referendum in Slovenia

	EU accession referendum	
	Total	%
Registered voters	1 613 272	100.0
Votes cast	975 015	60.4
Invalid votes	4 884	0.5
Valid votes	974 558	99.5
Yes	869 171	89.6
No	100 503	10.4

Source: Republic Electoral Commission, at <http://www.rvk.si/referendum/eu-nato/eng/index.html>, accessed on 15 February 2004

for it to run an independently financed campaign.²³ Similarly unexpectedly, the non-parliamentary New Party was also completely silent during the referendum campaign. This related to personnel and organisational changes within the party after the turn of the century, although the party was somewhat more visible in the NATO referendum campaign. In fact, all those in the party who stayed even a little Eurosceptic gave up and directed their attention to the NATO referendum²⁴ where it was felt there was more chance of winning.²⁵ At the EU referendum it was expected the majority would support EU accession and this indeed happened – almost 90 percent of voters supported EU membership (see Table 2.3).

According to a *Eurobarometer survey*²⁶ conducted in autumn 2007, Slovenia appears to be a unique EU member country among the EU-27, where more respondents estimated they felt informed enough about EU matters (50 percent) than those saying they were poorly informed (47 percent).²⁷ With these figures Slovenia is on top of the EU-27 survey results. 65 percent also trust EU institutions (Slovenia is in third place in the EU regarding

²³ See Krašovec, A., and Lajh, D., The Slovenian EU Accession Referendum: a Cat-and-Mouse Game, *West European Politics*, 27/4 (2004), 603–623.

²⁴ This was also one of the most prominent impacts of NATO referendum on EU accession referendum – the latter was almost completely in the shadow of the former.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Standard Eurobarometer 68 – Autumn 2007. National Report – Slovenia. European Commission. Version in the Slovenian language, at http://ec.europa.eu/slovenija/pdf/2008/eb68_-_porocilo_za_slovenijo_-_final-read_only.doc

²⁷ This self-estimation was proved by a test case showing that Slovenians are among the above-average informed EU citizens, at http://www.rtvsllo.si/modload.php?&c_mod=news&op=sections&func=read&c_menu=16&c_id=164483&rss=1

the frequency of this response). According to the same survey, 56 per cent of Slovenians believe that Slovenia's membership of the EU is positive compared with the 58 per cent recorded in the previous Eurobarometer research, while only 6 per cent regard it as negative. 86 percent of those surveyed believed that Slovenian Presidency of the EU is good for Slovenia. Taking everything into account, 71 per cent of Slovenians feel that their country has benefited from being an EU member so EU membership is considered to have a positive effect on the country's economy and security.

In addition, another Eurobarometer survey²⁸ conducted in January and February 2007 found that 95 per cent of Slovenians assessed the introduction of the single currency/euro as having been successful. Even when in January 2008 Prime Minister Janez Janša blamed introduction of the euro for the fast growing inflation in 2007²⁹, in the Slovenian public the prevailing opinion was that it was the Slovenian government which was to be blamed for it relatively late and insufficient control of inflation, allowing some monopolists (especially in the field of trade) to raise food prices above a reasonable level. The Slovenian national public opinion survey Politbarometer conducted in February 2008 shows persisting high levels of trust in the euro (like that previously seen for the Slovenian national currency *tolar*) – the highest proportions of trust were expressed in the President of the Republic (3.97), the Bank of Slovenia (3.52), the euro (3.47) and the mass media (3.19).³⁰

²⁸ Flash Eurobarometer 205 – General public survey after introduction of the euro in Slovenia. Summary. Fieldwork: January–February 2007. Report: March 2007. The Gallup Organization, Hungary

²⁹ “Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša said Monday the euro's launch in the small Alpine state had contributed to a surge in inflation in the country.” EUBusiness, 7.1.2008, at <http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/1199712736.43/>

³⁰ The ranking was done on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means that the surveyed “trusts the least” and 5 means “trusts the most”. Politbarometer 2/2008, Ljubljana, 19.2.2008, Center za raziskovanje javnega mnenja in množičnih komunikacij, Fakulteta za družbene vede Univerze v Ljubljani.

3 ORGANISATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE SLOVENIAN PRESIDENCY

3.1 Co-ordination of EU affairs in Slovenia

The co-ordination of EU affairs in Slovenia started to develop in *response to needs* emerging in the integration process. Shortly after Slovenia attained its independence and began establishing institutional relations with the EC/EU, it was clear that the co-ordination of EU affairs was unsatisfactory. In fact, at the very beginning it was even impossible to talk about any special co-ordination of EU affairs. All matters related to Slovenia's integration with the EC/EU happened more or less spontaneously. There were some attempts to establish co-ordination for managing EU business, and many meetings at various levels of seniority, role and membership were convened. But these meetings were mostly lengthy and inefficient, devoid of any strategic orientations and clearly defined goals. The many leftovers of the socialist administrative culture and already re-established structures held back processes involving the Slovenian executive's institutional adaptation, hence the mentality of the old system that "co-ordination is neither necessary nor desired" impeded the formation of any more effective co-ordination. Each ministry worked in its own field and did not feel any requirement to co-operate with other ministries. Therefore, a system was emerging that did not correspond to the needs of effective communication with Brussels, and mostly derived from traditional patterns of the Slovenian state administration's operations. The first adaptations did not bring about any radical changes; particular ministries simply gained some new functions and responsibilities.³¹ What was developing was a relatively dispersed and decentralised system of co-ordinating European affairs.

At the *end of 1997, just a few months before the official start of accession negotiations* with the EU, a key "turning point" in the co-ordination of EU affairs happened. In December 1997 a special independent office was established – the Government Office for European Affairs (hereinafter: GOEA), which had been led by a minister without portfolio. The GOEA thus gained responsibility for the management and co-ordination of the whole process of Slovenia's accession to the EU. Parallel to the GOEA, the Negotiating Team of the Republic of Slovenia for Accession to the EU was also formed, as were 31 Working Groups for preparing negotiating positions for accession to the EU.³² In this way, incremental institutional adjust-

³¹ Fink-Hafner, D., and Lajh, D., *Proces evropeizacije in prilagajanje političnih ustanov na nacionalni ravni* (Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede, 2005).

³² Ibid.

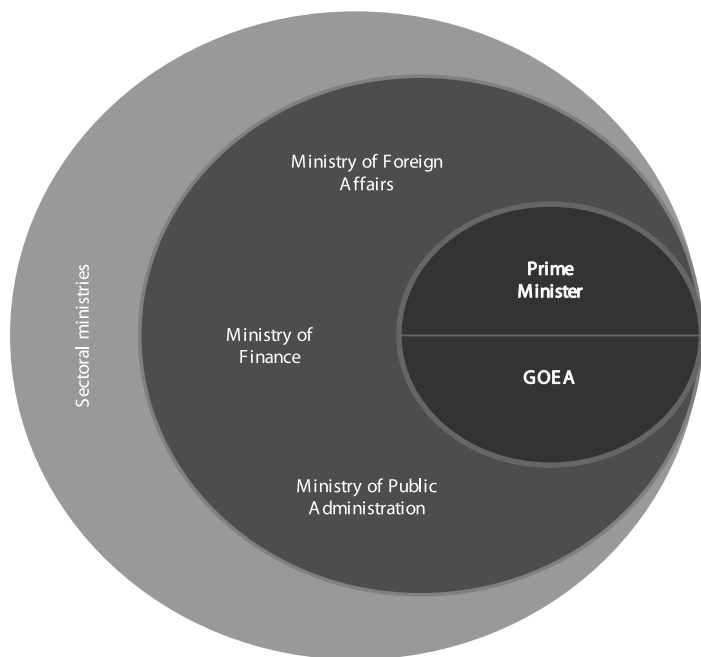
ments were supplemented with radical change – the establishment of a central and independent office for managing EU business. With that decision, the previous (informal) central co-ordination role of the Foreign Ministry was in fact abolished. This radical change was based on the perception of the key political players (i.e. the Council of Ministers) that EU matters should not be dealt with in the same way as traditional diplomatic matters.³³ This radical change also represented a partial shift from the dispersed and decentralised system *towards a centralised system of EU co-ordination, as well as the outset of tendencies from foreign affairs towards systemic internalisation* when managing EU business. We can argue that the establishment of the GOEA to some extent also meant a shift in direction towards a more centralised model of managing European affairs. However, despite the formally crucial role assigned to the GOEA in managing EU issues, we believe that in practice a relatively polycentric model developed. Namely, there have been various departments with different tasks while the line ministries have remained the “lead ministries” relative to the articulation of national positions on particular (sectoral) EU issues. The informal contacts in vertical as well as horizontal communications have significantly rectified the (to some extent) rigid and inefficient formal channels and ways of communicating.

The change in power following the parliamentary elections in October 2004 brought about the abolition of a special European ministerial post in the GOEA despite strong protests from the opposition (especially the Liberal Democracy of Slovenia). At the same time, there were relevant some governmental tendencies towards the abolition of the whole GOEA, but at the end it has been maintained as a special office within the cabinet of the Prime Minister. As a result, instead of a Minister a State Secretary was nominated. With these changes, the concentration of the co-ordination of EU affairs even *strengthened the Prime Minister's* role (a prime-minister led model). In this respect, we can hardly speak about a radical change to the initial model of co-ordinating EU affairs following the change in government.

Following the mentioned developments in the co-ordination of EU affairs and some Scandinavian examples (especially Finland), the Slovenian core executive on EU matters was gradually established. According to Illustration 3.1 the overall co-ordination of EU business in Slovenia falls within

³³ Lajh, D., and Fink-Hafner, D., Institucionalno prilagajanje slovenske izvršne oblasti povezovanju Slovenije z ES/EU: mednarodno primerjalni pogled, *Teorija in praksa*, 39/6 (2002), 970–999.

Illustration 3.1: The Slovenian Core Executive on EU matters



Source: Fink-Hafner, D., and Lajh, D., *Proces evropeizacije in prilagajanje političnih ustanov na nacionalni ravni* (Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede, 2005).

the competence of the Prime Minister (strategic goals) and the Government Office for European Affairs (technical co-ordination). The Slovenian Prime Minister leads, directs and co-ordinates the work and is responsible for the functioning of the whole government. Therefore, he is in charge of co-ordination at the highest level. The Government Office for European Affairs carries out various relevant tasks within the ministerial (horizontal) co-ordination of relations with the EU.

The second instance for EU co-ordination concerns in a particular policy domain is composed of the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance, and Public Administration. They are all involved in a huge number of key decisions, while within their departments they have well-established units devoted to the EU. Based on its diplomatic network (including the Slovenia Permanent Representation in Brussels), the Foreign Ministry has mostly

taken care of vertical co-ordination between Ljubljana and Brussels. The Finance Ministry has had extensive responsibilities in the fields of financial and budgetary provisions, financial control, taxation and EMU. The Ministry of Public Administration³⁴ is responsible for the development and adjustment of Slovenia's public administration, including the training of officials concerning EU-related topics.

Permanent representation: While the vertical co-ordination of European matters during the negotiation stage formally involved the circulation of information between Ljubljana and Brussels in both directions (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – the Slovenian Mission – the Brussels arena – the Slovenian mission – the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), this was significantly complemented by the many direct and informal contacts between the Slovenian mission and EU institutions on one side, and other sectoral departments in Ljubljana on the other. Since in the accession stage the Mission represented the central crossroads or focal point of the communication and circulation of information and documents between the Slovenian capital and the Brussels arena,³⁵ the prescribed formal communication via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had to be amended by informal contacts by telephone and via e-mail (the intensity varied in different periods, but at least several times a day) in order to be efficient.³⁶ Therefore, from the Mission's point of view we can talk about the practice of pluralistic working contacts which softened the rigidity of the formal system and enabled relatively prompt responses to EU demands. At the time of our "accession research" that also encompassed the vertical co-ordination, the Mission of the Republic of Slovenia to the EC at that time was not merely a "post office". Namely, it also searched for new information on its own, the Mission warned Ljubljana of important events and trends in the Brussels arena, described alternative actions by Slovenian actors and suggested possible political opinions on European matters. At that time, it was expected that the Mission would probably gain more decision-making autonomy due to pressures stemming from the EU's institutional way of decision-making – comitology (involving high demands for member states' opinions, statements on a host of issues debated in many decision-making bodies on a daily basis) in the full EU-membership context.

³⁴ Before its establishment in 2005 these tasks fell within the Interior Ministry, especially its Office for the Organisation and Development of the Public Administration.

³⁵ The Mission was also informed by Commission officials about their direct contacts with Ljubljana (copies of e-mails are sent to the Mission).

³⁶ See Fink-Hafner, D. and Lajh, D., *Managing Europe from Home: the Europeanisation of the Slovenian Core Executive*, op. cit.

Although in the circumstances of full EU membership the Mission of the Republic of Slovenia to the EC (which was reorganised to become the Permanent Representation) lost its status as the focal point of the general national co-ordination of EU affairs, it maintained a key role in informing and notifying the executive based in the Slovenian capital about current and anticipated future EU policy developments. According to the statutory rules of procedure of the government of Slovenia it is obliged to send all information received from EU institutions to Ljubljana. Where the head of the Permanent Representation (or its deputy or a member of the Slovenian government) estimates during negotiations in the Brussels arena that the representation of Slovenian positions created in Ljubljana is not in favour of the Republic of Slovenia, he is obliged to propose a change in the position to the competent ministry or governmental office and to inform the government about that. If this is impossible due to time pressure or other limitations they may decide that it is in the interest of the Republic of Slovenia that they support or be against the adoption of an EU document or not give any clear response. When there is enough time they may note that the position represented should be approved by the competent organ. Due to the lack of empirical research it is impossible to evaluate the practical role and impact of the Permanent Representation on the content and efficiency of the national co-ordination system for Slovenia's participation in EU policy-making.

National parliament: Especially in the accession period to the EU Slovenia was quite special compared to other candidate states with its *stress on Parliament's role* in managing EU affairs. Discussion and approval of negotiating positions by the National Assembly also made the process transparent in terms of the control and (co)decisions of the legislative in relation to the executive. As a result of the political elite's broad consensus, to some extent the process of Europeanisation has also provided Slovenia's political system with a completely new value: the outstanding circulation of information and overall relationship with regard to EU accession between the executive and the National Assembly's working bodies. These assessments only involve co-ordination matters and not contents (for example, the quality of bills proposed by the government). But this was still a real curiosity for the Slovenian system in the pre-accession period since relationships and especially information flows between the National Assembly and executive have traditionally been unsatisfactory. However, the first practical experiences in the full membership period have shown at least a temporary decline of transparency concerning the co-ordination of EU affairs, especially with respect to relations between the executive and the national parliament compared with the accession period. Most likely

this is the result of the partial import of the EU democratic deficit.³⁷ Although on a daily basis it seems that it is the executive (in fact, the GOEA) that defines priorities (selects issues for the national agenda), some of Slovenia's guiding priorities are still adopted annually in the form of a declaration by the National Assembly on the basis of a governmental proposal.³⁸ While the first two declarations (for 2004 and 2005)³⁹ were relatively short (nine pages for 2004 and five pages for 2005), the draft of the latest one (for the period January 2007 to June 2008) included nine pages of a declaration on Slovenia's national priorities and 42 more pages on work priorities in the Council in the same period, which were agreed among the trio presidencies of the EU in the period January 2007 to June 2008 (Germany, Portugal and Slovenia).⁴⁰

Transparency and the role of civil society: One of the main principles leading the architecture of the pre-accession model of the co-ordination of EU affairs was the principle of transparency. It not only involved an important role of the national parliament, but also the public presentation of materials related to the EU accession negotiations on the web (including all of Slovenia's negotiation positions) and the openness of governmental actors (especially the GOEA's officials) to revealing information to the interested.

Although the Europeanisation process can be seen as elite-led (involving co-operation between parties in government and oppositional parties), in Slovenia it also involved civil society actors. Even in the negotiating structures Slovenia's corporatist tradition was visible.⁴¹ Besides the presence of experts and representatives of employers and employees in the 31 working groups within the Negotiation Team, we can talk about the practical role of

³⁷ Grabbe, H., How does Europeanisation Affect CEE Governance? Conditionality, Diffusion and Diversity, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 8/6 (2001), 1013–1031.

³⁸ In line with the Act on Co-operation between the National Assembly and government on EU Affairs, the National Assembly discusses the situation in the EU and the position of Slovenia therein at least once a year. The GOEA prepares the draft government document in co-operation with ministries and government offices responsible for specific policy areas, which is introduced at a plenary session of the National Assembly on behalf of the Prime Minister. The parliament adopts positions on political orientations for the activity of the Republic of Slovenia in EU institutions in the upcoming period.

³⁹ The mentioned documents are available at the Internet address of the GOEA (<http://www.svez.gov.si>): Slovenia's priorities in the European Union Affairs in 2004, April 2004; Declaration on Activities of the Republic of Slovenia in the Institutions of the European Union in 2005; Predlog deklaracije o usmeritvah za delovanje Republike Slovenije v institucijah EU v obdobju januar 2007–junij 2006, januar 2007.

⁴⁰ Its proposal includes 14 chapters within which many specific policy priorities are stated.

⁴¹ The corporatist tradition in Slovenian territory has long roots dating back to the Habsburg Empire. It even persisted in the institutional arrangements of “the political system of self-management socialism” and was revived in the political system established on the basis of the 1991 Constitution.

civil society in preparing the negotiating positions (unlike in some other accession countries – especially Estonia).⁴² This was also possible due to public presentations of the negotiating positions (special presentations to specific interested publics, target groups such as non-governmental organisations and full presentations on the Internet), which opened up extra opportunities for civil society activities.

Preliminary research has shown that the adoption of the 2002 Statutory Rules, which formally empowered parliament's working bodies, has not brought about any significant changes in interest groups' influence on policy-making processes in general.⁴³ Still, it is probably now much more difficult for interest groups to influence decision-making on European Union matters *via* the parliamentary route. This is not only because of the various opportunity structures and resources available in various policy sectors but also due to practical time pressures. Namely, they have led to the sending out of invitations for parliamentary working bodies' meetings as well as relevant documentation on EU matters at relatively short notice.⁴⁴ At the same time, some interviews in June 2006 showed that, in practice, the secrecy of the parliamentary working body for European affairs as well as its closed attitude to civil society interests are preventing interest groups from being informed and active within its framework – unlike in the accession stage.

⁴² See Fink-Hafner, D., Europeanisation of the core executive in the transition from the circumstances of EU accession to full EU membership. Paper presented at the *European Union Studies Association Conference: 2005 (9th), March 31-April 2, 2005: Biennial Conference*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, at http://aei.pitt.edu/3041/01/Europeanis_paper_ZDA05popr.pdf

⁴³ Fink-Hafner, D., and Krašovec, A., Is consultation everything? The influence of interest groups on parliamentary working bodies in Slovenia, *Sociologicky časopis*, 41/3 (2005), 401–421.

⁴⁴ According to the Statutory Rules (as amended in 2004), paragraph 154e, for example, stipulates that “representatives of an expert community, of civil society, of the economy and associations whose work is linked to the content of the discussed matters” may be invited to attend regarding specific items on the working body agenda and may present their opinions to the Committee of European Affairs' meetings. Slovenian Members of the European Parliament may also participate in the working body's discussion, but not in decision-making. Meetings of this parliamentary working body are supposed to be called at least seven days in advance but, in urgent cases, shorter notice is acceptable. Especially in the latter cases it is very difficult for specialised bodies and the upper chamber of the Slovenian parliament – the National Council – to react quickly enough to be able to provide the Committee of European Affairs with their special input. Specialised parliamentary working bodies and the National Council are expected to inform the Committee of European Affairs of their proposed amendments to a Slovenian negotiating position two days before the Committee of European Affairs meets. It is for the Committee of European Affairs to decide whether or not to accept these proposed amendments. Where the Committee of European Affairs is not informed of such proposed amendments, this is regarded as equivalent to there not being any.

Similarly, the EU-related information flow from the executive toward civil society actors is quite limited in comparison to the accession stage. In fact, in the current stage of its development the EU portal only allows the executive and the legislature to have full access to all information published on the Internet.⁴⁵ In spite of the possibility defined in the governmental statutory rules that the government collaborates with various professional associations and interest groups when preparing Slovenian positions there is no clearly determined pattern obliging the involvement of interest groups in EU decision-making at the domestic executive level. According to some preliminary interviews, especially employers' interest groups are also missing the interest of governmental representatives in Ljubljana and Brussels to communicate with them. In some of the preliminary interviews, they link this phenomenon to the perception that the new centre-right government (in general) does not take the social partnership as seriously as the previous centre-left governments did. Those interest groups which were already Europeanised in the accession stage are now provided with information, warnings and proposals from their European counterparts and try to get access to domestic decision-makers. Their estimation is that in general civil society is much more respected in policy-making at the EU level than in Slovenia.

European cadre: Already during the accession negotiations, the big institutional adaptations were accompanied by a process of the domestic enculturation of EU affairs. In the process of the increasing involvement of national institutions in EU matters the socialisation of an ever growing proportion of governmental officials and experts involved in Slovenia's managing European affairs also took place. It should be stressed that although the accession period was not characterised by a policy of having an island of better paid EU cadre as in the case of Hungary, they did have a special status of being depoliticised. This meant it was their expertise that mattered and that party politics did not intrude in that cadre section. Therefore, although the politicisation of the public administration in general has been a problem in Slovenia,⁴⁶ the Slovenian EU cadre was exempted from it to an important extent during the EU accession stage. Currently, two conflicting perceptions of the level of EU cadre politicisation may be

⁴⁵ According to information published by the Government Office for European Affairs in June 2006 as well as in February 2007, limited access to the information at the EU portal on the web site is supposed to be made available to the general public by mid-2007.

⁴⁶ Haček, M., *Politika birokracije* (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2005); Krašovec, A., and Kovačič, M., Ministers and the Role of Civil Servants in Cabinet Decision-Making, in Blondel, J., Müller-Rommel, F., Malová, D., Fettelschoss, K., Krašovec, A., Kovačič, M., *Governing New European Democracies* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 136–148.

found. While in government the estimation is that EU knowledgeable experts have remained part of the EU cadre even after the change in government,⁴⁷ non-governmental actors tend to perceive a drastic change in the executive cadre due to the ideological shift in government – with many of them now being (as noted in some interviews in June 2006) “new, young and inexperienced”. Without more thorough research also taking into account: a) the rapid growth of the need for EU cadre facing all EU newcomers, including Slovenia;⁴⁸ and b) the shift of EU cadre from Ljubljana to Brussels it is impossible to fully estimate the validity of the two theses. What seems to be beyond doubt is that some of the problems of the main Slovenian cadre are: a) a continuing problem of a lack of interpreters; b) the shift of the best EU cadre from Ljubljana to Brussels for the needs of the Slovenian EU Presidency; and c) solving the EU cadre problem in Ljubljana after sending the best national EU cadre to Brussels⁴⁹ for the limited time of the Presidency.

3.2 Organisational preparations and holding the EU Presidency

For the new and small member state the EU Presidency is certainly a large organisational, logistical, financial and personnel challenge. This is the reason the Slovenian government started with organisational preparations⁵⁰ to hold the EU Presidency already at the beginning of January 2005. For this purpose (see Illustration 3.2), the government established the “Core Working Group for the EU Presidency” (hereinafter: the Core Working Group) which has been led by the Prime Minister, while its members have been the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Public Administration and the State Secretary for European Affairs. The primary task of the Core Working Group was to ensure the harmonised

⁴⁷ According to the estimation in June 2006 there were about 40 government employees in Slovenia working on EU matters only on a daily basis (interviews at the GOEA, June 2006).

⁴⁸ There is a fast growing need for Slovenian EU cadre. For example, in June 2006 the GOEA in Ljubljana (excluding the sub-unit for translating EU documents) consisted of a little over 100 employees (on 1 January 1998 there were 16, by the end of December 1998 46, by the end of December 1999 69 and by 31 March 2002 79; employees from the translation sub-unit are not included in these figures, their number grew from 1 in January 1998 to 38 by 31 December 2000) and the Permanent Representation (former Mission of the Republic of Slovenia to the European Communities) grew from about 15 in 2003 to almost 90 in 2006 (sources: interviews in spring 2003 in Brussels and in spring 2006 in Ljubljana).

⁴⁹ The GOEA stated very clearly in its document on Slovenia's preparations for the EU Presidency that the best cadre has to be devoted to the Presidency, while ministries are allowed to restrictively employ their replacements for the limited period of time (see *Priprave Slovenije na predsedovanje Evropski uniji*, GOEA, Ljubljana, 29 July 2005).

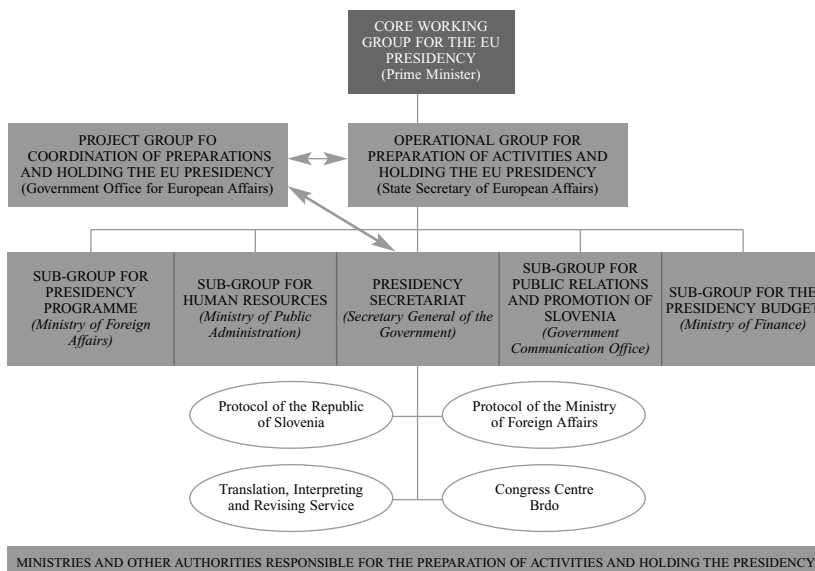
⁵⁰ See *Priprave Slovenije na predsedovanje Evropski uniji*, GOEA, 29 July 2005.

management of the EU Presidency project, to formulate general political directions and priorities of the Presidency, and to monitor the course of preparations to hold the EU Presidency. For the operational management of preparations and holding the EU Presidency, the Core Working Group established the “Operational Group for the Preparation of Activities and Holding the EU Presidency” (hereinafter: the Operational Group). This group has been led by the State Secretary for European Affairs and has been composed of representatives of individual ministries and other governmental offices that have been included in preparations for holding the EU Presidency. This Operational Group has been co-ordinating, directing and monitoring the work of individual sub-groups, ministries and other organs. The work of Operational Group has been (technically) supported by “Project Group for Co-ordination of Preparations and Holding the EU Presidency” (hereinafter: Project Group), located within the GOEA. The Project Group was established: 1) as support for the State Secretary for European Affairs in the course of co-ordinating the work and monitoring the EU Presidency project; as well 2) as a central focal point for communication with other member states included in the current Presidency-trio (Germany and Portugal) as well as the next member state to hold the EU Presidency – France. To implement five individual specific tasks, the Core Working Group established five specific sub-groups: the Presidency Programme Sub-group, the Human Resources Sub-group, the Presidency Secretariat (mostly dealing with logistical aspects of organisation), the Public Relations and Promotion of Slovenia Sub-group, and the Presidency Budget Sub-group. In the work of all sub-groups, the Permanent Representation in Brussels has been consistently and actively included.

Due to the complexity of operational management of the processes of preparations and holding the EU Presidency, the government decided on the *project approach*. At a session on 28 July 2005, the government adopted the document “Preparations to hold the EU Presidency” – a kind of project task which defined the basic framework of the state administration’ activities in the period of preparing to hold the Presidency. With this document, the established organisational structure and project tasks of individual sub-groups were formally confirmed, as was the timeline of the process of preparations.

Beside the already described role of the *Permanent Representation* in managing EU affairs, it has evolved to meet some special needs related to Slovenia’s Presidency. What is especially noticeable from the available documents is that, besides its role in the co-ordination of EU affairs, it has gained an additional important educative role. Namely, it takes care of

Illustration 3.2: Organisational structure for the preparation of activities and holding of the Presidency



Source: *Poročilo o pripravi na predsedovanje Slovenije Svetu EU v prvi polovici leta 2008*, Government Office for European Affairs, Ljubljana, 16 November 2007.

co-ordinating and organising seminars on EU matters as well as the language-learning of the new Slovenian EU cadre and the Permanent Representation's employees in the framework of preparations for the Slovenian EU Presidency. It was growing very fast⁵¹ so as to reach the final total planned number of 170 by July 2007.⁵² Out of these, 121 new employees are planned for the restricted time needed to prepare the Presidency and to work during the Presidency and after that they are expected to return to Slovenia.⁵³ For the needs of holding the EU Presidency, Slovenia also rented in Brussels 12 apartments that are earmarked for Slovenian representatives participating in meetings, events and other official obligations.⁵⁴

⁵¹ In September 2006 the total number of employees at the Permanent Representation was 88 (See *Poročilo o napredku pri pripravi na predsedovanje Slovenije Svetu EU v prvi polovici leta 2008 – obdobje april 2006 – oktober 2006*, GOEA, Ljubljana, November 2006, p. 14).

⁵² See *Poročilo o napredku pri pripravi na predsedovanje Slovenije Svetu EU v prvi polovici leta 2008 – obdobje april 2006 – oktober 2006*, GOEA, Ljubljana, November 2006

⁵³ Sklep Vlade Republike Slovenije o dodatnih zaposlitvah za določen čas, Ljubljana, 6.10.2005

⁵⁴ See <http://evropa.gov.si/novice/17800/>

Another important aspect of holding the Presidency is the establishment of a *web portal* to promptly inform the public about various events, developments and achievements. In the course of preparing the web portal and its contents, as well as the training of the team responsible for supporting the work of the portal, Slovenian officials closely co-operated with the German Foreign Ministry where, at the time of the German EU Presidency, editorship of the German web portal operated. Namely, Slovenia uses the same computer software for the web portal as Germany did during its Presidency in the first half of 2007. The web portal of the Slovenian EU Presidency (<http://www.eu2008.si/si/index.html>) started to operate at the end of December 2007.

In accordance with the *Budget Memorandum*, Slovenia has allocated EUR 62 million for holding the EU Presidency. The allocations for the EU Presidency were envisaged in the supplementary budgets for 2005 (EUR 0.15 million) and 2006 (EUR 5.5 million). The fund disbursement, provided for by a budget amendment for 2007, amounts to EUR 22.6 million while the total sum for 2008 amounts to EUR 33.7 million (see Table 3.1).

All in all, Slovenian organisational preparations to hold the Presidency were largely based on the pre-established structure for managing EU affairs (see Illustration 3.3). The organisational structure for holding the Presidency has not changed radically compared to the previously established model of EU co-ordination in the Slovenian executive. The most visible change in small administrations (like the Slovenian one) is especially the drastically increased volume of work in individual ministries that consequently demanded the training of officials as well as the relatively extensive additional (temporary) employment of personnel (see sub-chapter 3.3).

In the period of organisational preparations to hold the Presidency, 13 meetings of the Core Working Group, 21 meetings of the Operational Group, 33 co-ordination meetings of the sub-groups, and over 100 meetings at the level of individual sub-groups were conducted.⁵⁵

Party politics: As noted earlier, the process of accession to the EU was defined as a Slovenian national project and marked by strong co-operation among all relevant political parties. In the full-membership period parties started to at least occasionally perceive the EU decision-making arena as an additional field for political competition. Slovenia's Presidency was marked by a mixture of former political party behaviour in relation to EU matters.

⁵⁵ See: http://www.kpv.gov.si/index.php?id=230&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=2424&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D, accessed on 25 March 2008.

Table 3.1: Estimated expenditures of the Slovenian EU Presidency

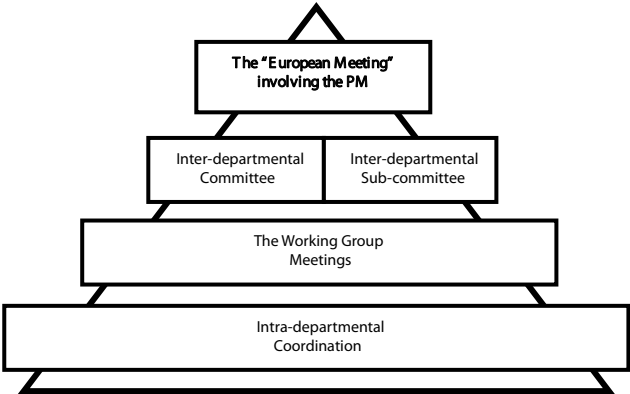
	2005 (in EUR mill.)	2006 (in EUR mill.)	2007 (in EUR mill.)	2008 (in EUR mill.)
Cadre				
– additional employment in Ljubljana	0.15	0.3	3.2	2.0
– additional employment in Brussels (Permanent Representation)	0	0.6	6.0	4.0
– additional employment in other diplomacy-consulate representations	0	0	0.9	1.7
– rewards	0	0	1.8	2.9
– education	0	0.2	1.3	0.2
Logistics				
– expenses of events (preparation of events, events in Slovenia, events with third countries, multilateral events, two European Councils)	0	0	4.1	17.4
– technical equipment and conference facilities	0	3.4	1.4	0.8
Public relations and promotion	0	0.3	2.2	3.1
Material expenses	0	0.7	1.7	1.6
ALTOGETHER	0.15	5.5	22.6	33.7

Source: Poročilo o pripravi na predsedovanje Slovenije Svetu EU v prvi polovici leta 2008, Government Office for European Affairs, Ljubljana, 16 November 2007.

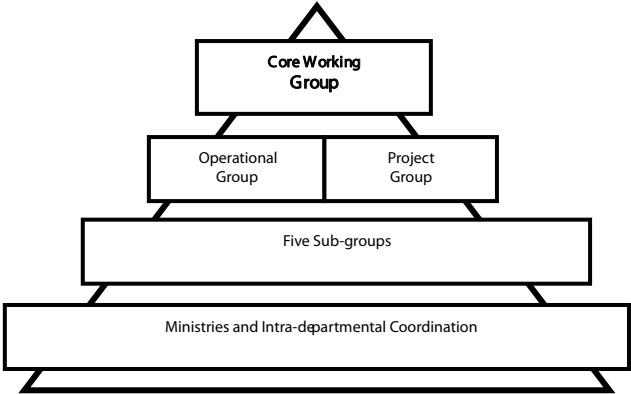
On 17 May 2007, majority parliamentary parties signed an “Agreement on the co-operation of political parties, the group of unconnected deputies and representatives of national minorities in the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia for the successful implementation of the preparation and presidency of the EU”. This agreement, based on the earlier “Agreement on Co-operation in the Accession Process with the EU” signed in 1997, was prepared on the initiative of the Slovenian Prime Minister with the intention that in the period of the Slovenian EU Presidency all signatories would consider more demanding obligations of the government. As a result, the agreement was informally known as an “agreement on ‘non-attacking’ the government in the period of holding the EU Presidency”. A decision concerning the agreement was met with a relatively positive response from the majority of parties. With the exception of the oppositional Liberal Democracy of Slovenia and the Slovenian National Party, all other parliamentary parties (including the biggest oppositional party, the

Illustration 3.3: The co-ordination pyramids of the inter-ministerial coordination of EU affairs in the periods of accession to the EU and holding the EU Presidency

a) Accession co-ordination pyramid



b) Presidency co-ordination pyramid



Social Democrats) signed the agreement. Representatives of the Liberal Democracy of Slovenia and the Slovenian National Party shared the opinion that such an agreement was not acceptable and that during the EU Presidency creative co-operation between parties would be possible without a formal signature on a special agreement. Since domestic party competition became heated in the framework of the 2007 presidential election campaign and the centre-right cluster of parties (the majority of parties in

government) suffered a big symbolic loss after the second round of presidential elections on 11 November 2007, this agreement (in fact its vague implementation) became an important argument in a motion for a vote of confidence initiated by the current Prime Minister Janez Janša. PM Janša criticised the opposition for (in his estimation) deliberately exhausting the government coalition in the period just before Slovenian EU Presidency. In this respect, PM Janša claimed that some opposition parties had been breaking the aforementioned agreement. In addition, the PM also criticised the work of the smallest governmental and at the same time parliamentary party DeSUS (Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia) which in many cases – according to PM Janša – voted against governmental proposals. Janša did that in spite of the fact that the ruling coalition has a comfortable majority in the National Assembly. Although the PM in fact won the vote of confidence in the National Assembly, with the same support of all of his coalition partners as at the beginning of the current coalition term (October 2004), but expressed dissatisfaction that the opposition did not support him, especially due to the imminent Slovenian EU Presidency, and that it put the aforementioned Agreement into question. While the Agreement was formally not abolished, even after the successful vote of confidence in the National Assembly it remains unclear whether it is valid or not. Since informal election campaigning for the 2008 national elections started already at the beginning of 2008, “a political pact of non-attacking” does not seem to have retained any practical power.

3.3 The training of civil servants and recruiting of additional cadre

For a small member state like Slovenia holding the EU Presidency is particularly challenging from the viewpoint of human resources. Although preparations and holding the Presidency have mostly been based on the existing human resources of the state administration, additional human resources were engaged, mainly as a substitute for civil servants who are fully engaged in running the Presidency, and to carry out accompanying activities, particularly with regard to logistics. The Slovenian government approved an employment plan for holding the Slovenian Presidency at its session in October 2005. In accordance with this plan, 310 additional temporary posts were approved (see Table 3.2). In individual cases experts not working in the state administration were temporarily engaged on a full-time or part-time basis. Following the example of similar smaller member states (Ireland, the Netherlands, Austria, Luxembourg), Slovenia decided that a strong team would work at the Permanent Representation in Brussels where 170 civil servants are posted (including 121 additional posts during

Table 3.2: Additional temporary posts during preparations for and holding of the Slovenian EU Presidency

Ministries, bodies, offices...	Allowed number of additional temporary posts by years			
	2005	2006	2007	altogether (working in 2008)
For purposes of the Presidency				
GOEA		1	1	2
Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development			2	2
Government Office for Local Self-government and Regional Policy			1	1
Ministry of Finance			3	3
Ministry of Foreign Affairs		8	12	20
Ministry of Justice		4	4	8
Ministry of the Economy		5	5	10
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food		10	11	21
Ministry of Transport		4	4	8
Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning		4	4	8
Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs		1	2	3
Ministry of Health		4	4	8
Ministry Higher Education, Science and Technology			1	1
Ministry of Education and Sport		1		1
Ministry of Culture			1	1
Ministry of the Interior		3	2	5
Altogether	0	45	57	102
For common tasks				
Secretariat-General of the Government of the RS			1	1
Government Communication Office		1	5	6
Protocol of the Republic of Slovenia		7	8	15
GOEA	5	0	1	6
Ministry of Foreign Affairs		5	5	10
Ministry of Public Administration	2	9	8	19
Altogether	7	22	28	57
Permanent Representation in Brussels		36	85	121
Other representations of the Republic of Slovenia abroad			30	30
ALTOGETHER	7	103	200	310

Source: Government of the Republic of Slovenia Decrees No. 10002-5/2005/27, Ljubljana, 6 October 2005.

the Presidency), while expert teams at the ministries in Slovenia would offer support. According to the “Report on Preparations to Hold the EU Presidency” prepared by the GOEA in mid-November 2007, the project of the Presidency includes 2,101 civil servants (1,931 of them work in the capital Ljubljana while 170 are at the Permanent Representation in Brussels), 174 external experts and 251 students. Among the 2,101 civil servants, a little less than half of them (1,001) cover co-ordination, organisation and logistic tasks, while the others work in various expert fields (content-related tasks).

Another significant part of the preparations to hold the Presidency are the various programmes of training and education of human resources – existing civil servants as well as new cadre. At the central level, for the organisation and implementation of training programmes the Administrative Academy as part of the Ministry of Public Administration was responsible. In the period from May 2006 to the end of October 2007, the Administrative Academy conducted altogether 263 one-day seminars or one- to three-day workshops which were attended by 5,889 participants.⁵⁶

National Assembly: In spite of the mentioned annual adoption of parliamentary guidelines for the executive’s activities in the field of EU matters, preliminary research⁵⁷ has shown that the national parliament does not even practice all of the formally possible ways for its involvement in managing EU matters in Slovenia. For the time of holding the Presidency, the National Assembly has established a special web page which offers information about events held in the National Assembly during the Slovenian Presidency.⁵⁸ However, during the first months of the Slovenian Presidency, besides various events⁵⁹ and occasional reporting to the National Assembly on behalf of the executive, no visible role of the parliament was noticeable at the time of writing this midterm report. The only exception was a midterm debate in parliament where especially the opposition parties’ representatives criticised the government for not being ambitious enough and for

⁵⁶ See *Poročilo o pripravi na predsedovanje Slovenije Svetu EU v prvi polovici leta 2008*, Government Office for European Affairs, Ljubljana, 16 November 2007

⁵⁷ See Fink-Hafner, D., *In the search for a balance between transparency and efficiency: national co-ordination of EU policy in Slovenia*, research report (Ljubljana: University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences, Centre for Political Science Research in collaboration with Birkbeck, University of London, 2007); Košič, M., *Evropeizacija nacionalnih parlamentov – izkušnja Državnega zbora Republike Slovenije*, Master thesis, mentor: Danica Fink-Hafner (Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, 2008)

⁵⁸ At an extraordinary session of the National Assembly held on 20 December 2007, Prime Minister Janša presented the Programme of Slovenia’s Presidency to the deputies, at <http://www.kpv.gov.si/nc/en/splosno/cns/news/article/1914/2395/>

⁵⁹ See the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia: Slovenia’s Presidency of the Council of the EU, at <http://www.dz-rs.si/predsedovanje/index.php?id=69>

several “incidents”, especially the public revelation of a “not-for-public” document – minutes of a meeting between Slovenian and US diplomatic representatives published in one daily newspaper in Slovenia and one newspaper in Serbia.⁶⁰ Conflicts between journalists and the government are further arising over the government’s EU-Presidency-related-material relate to media freedom in Slovenia.⁶¹

3.4 Co-operation with civil society

To encourage efficient, interactive and transparent co-operation between the Slovenian government and (primarily) Slovenian non-governmental organizations (hereinafter: NGOs), a special “Agreement between the Government Communication Office and the web portal ‘Predsedovanje.si’ about communication before and during the Slovenian Presidency of the EU” was signed.⁶² In this way, Slovenian (as well as foreign) NGOs have the opportunity to participate in the Slovenian EU Presidency through the web portal www.predsedovanje.si. The agreement binds both sides to encourage the efficient, interactive and transparent informing and consulting of public administration bodies with NGOs. The agreement especially obliges the Government Communication Office to motivate the respective public administration bodies to use the web portal ‘Predsedovanje.si’ for regular information-sharing with NGOs about activities and events during the Presidency, to engage in e-dialogue with them about different events, and to provide sufficient time for consultations, the availability of documents and replies to comments received.

The agreement defines two ways of involving NGOs in the Slovenian EU Presidency: information and consultation. The first way, the intention to share information, is to notify NGOs about all activities and events organised during the Presidency and to pose questions about current affairs connected with the Presidency. The second way, consultation, refers to NGOs being interactively involved with the help of so-called e-participation tools. For this reason, a special on-line forum⁶³ including moderated e-discussions and e-consultations, as well as a system of e-petitions, e-surveys and e-actions has been established. In this respect, the viewpoints of NGOs are forwarded to the relevant ministries and other public administration bodies.

⁶⁰ See E-Delo: Slovensko predsedovanje je blamaža, 28.1.2008, at http://www.delo.si/index.php?sv_path=41,35,267789&src=rp

⁶¹ For more sources on conflicts and debates regarding media freedom in Slovenia, see: <http://www.peticijazopercenzuro.com/?cenzura=10>, 16.3.2008; <http://www.peticijazopercenzuro.com/?cenzura=2>, 16.3.2008; http://www.novinar.com/info/podatki_drustvo_eng.php, 16.3.2008

⁶² See http://www.predsedovanje.si/files/dogovor_predsedovanje-ukom.pdf

⁶³ See http://www.predsedovanje.si/index.php?option=com_fireboard&Itemid=53&lang=en

4 MAIN TOPICS OF THE SLOVENIAN PRESIDENCY

The priorities of the Slovenian EU Presidency were chiefly determined in the 18-month programme which was presented for the first time by the three following presidencies – German, Portuguese and Slovenian – and by the inherited agenda of the Council of the EU. The central issues of the German, Portugal and Slovenian trio's programme were determined to be the continuation of the EU reform and constitutional process, implementation of the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Employment, further progress towards completion of the European area of freedom, security and justice, and enhancement of the EU's external role in the areas of security, development and economic relations.⁶⁴ Following these starting points, Slovenia decided on five main priority areas, including: 1) the future of the EU and the timely entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty; 2) the successful launch of the new Lisbon Strategy cycle; 3) climate and energy issues; 4) strengthening the European perspective on the Western Balkans; and 5) Intercultural Dialogue.⁶⁵ The first half of its mandate puts the renewed Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs along with climate change and energy as well as the stability of financial markets in the spotlight. These issues also dominated the spring summit of the European Council in mid-March 2008.⁶⁶

This report covers those areas of EU activities that were given priority by the Slovenian EU Presidency. Other issues, particularly those falling within the foreign affairs field, are intentionally left out. The fact is that Slovenia's main concern has been to successfully conduct the project of the Presidency from the organisational point of view coupled with a "*playing it safe*" ambition. As a small country, with young and inexperienced diplomatic cadre, a weak diplomatic network in third countries, and which was only recently (re)integrated into Western Europe, Slovenia has encountered certain influences of bigger countries – Germany (which heavily influenced the agenda of the trio's 18-month programme) and France as the next presiding country (especially in those areas where Slovenia does not

⁶⁴ See the *18-month Program of the German, Portuguese and Slovenian Presidencies*, Council of the EU, Brussels, 21.12.2006 (17079/06 POLGEN 125) at <http://www.eu2008.si/includes/Downloads/misc/trio/trioenglish.pdf>

⁶⁵ See the Slovenian Presidency of the EU, *Si.nergy for Europe*, Presidency Programme, 1 January to 30 June 2008, at http://www.eu2008.si/includes/Downloads/misc/program/Programme_en.pdf

⁶⁶ See the *Presidency Conclusions, Brussels European Council 13/14.3.2008* (7652/08), at http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Council_Conclusions/March/0314ECpresidency_conclusions

have its own diplomatic representations).⁶⁷ Concerning the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the Slovenian EU Presidency's activities mostly started/ended with statements on various issues.⁶⁸

Hence, the emphasis in the report is put on issues linked to the European perspective on the Western Balkans, namely the topic that supposed to be the “genuine” Slovenian priority due to its geographical position and its various historical, institutional and socio-cultural links with that region. The report includes developments up to 20 April 2008 and so covers about half of the Slovenian mandate.

4.1 The future of the EU: successful ratification of the Lisbon Treaty

The German and Portuguese presidencies were able to arrange the signing of the Lisbon Treaty by EU leaders of member states on 13 December 2007 in Lisbon. The first breakthrough on the way to Lisbon was the Berlin Declaration,⁶⁹ containing the agreement in principle that the EU should obtain a new foundation – the treaty. After an agreement on the mandate for an intergovernmental conference at the 2007 June European Council,⁷⁰ the Portuguese Presidency continued the successful work of the German Presidency. In the period of the Slovenian Presidency, the process entered into the ratification phase which could be, given the 2005 (negative) experience with the Constitutional Treaty, the most sensitive stage in the process of adopting the Treaty. The EU's common aim is that the Treaty would enter into force on 1 January 2009 or at the latest before the next elections to the European Parliament in 2009.

In mid-January 2008, at the beginning of the Slovenian Presidency, Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša at a plenary session of the European Parliament⁷¹ called the Lisbon Treaty the first political priority of the EU.

⁶⁷ About Turkish concerns regarding potential France's influence over the Slovenian Presidency, see Turkish Daily News, 21.1.2008, at <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=94168>

⁶⁸ See the *Slovenian EU Presidency, CFSP Statements*, at http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/index.html

⁶⁹ See the *Declaration on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the signature of the Treaties of Rome* (Berlin Declaration), 25.3.2007, at http://www.eu2007.de/de/News/download_docs/Maerz/0324-RAA/English.pdf

⁷⁰ See the *Presidency Conclusions, Brussels European Council 21/22.6.2007* (11177/1/07 REV 1), at http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/94932.pdf

⁷¹ See the *Address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia and the President of the European Council Janez Janša at the Plenary Session of the European Parliament*, 16.1.2008, at http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Speeches_Interviews/January/0116PVvEP.html

He particularly expressed his recognition of the personal commitment of German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Portuguese Prime Minister José Sócrates to this issue. Slovenian State Secretary for European Affairs, Janez Lenarčič, noted⁷² that the “Presidency is aware that the ratification procedures fall within the sovereign responsibility of each individual member state, but at the same time wishes that the ratification procedures are carried out smoothly and without complications”. In this respect, during its Presidency Slovenia has tried to be a positive example by ratifying the text in the National Assembly at an early stage, on 29 January 2008 becoming the second EU member state (after Hungary) to do so. Among the 90 deputies of the National Assembly, 74 deputies voted for ratification while six⁷³ were against it.⁷⁴

4.2 The new Lisbon Strategy cycle

The Lisbon Strategy was renewed in 2005 to focus on higher and stable economic growth and the creation of more and better jobs. In this respect, it should represent a significant contribution to the EU’s solid economic performance. A new three-year cycle of the Lisbon Strategy began in 2008, lending renewed impetus to implement the reforms and respond to recent challenges. In this cycle, the Lisbon Strategy should continue to focus on the four priority areas identified at the 2006 Spring European Council:⁷⁵ 1) building an innovative and creative knowledge-based society, 2) creating the conditions for a competitive and dynamic business environment; 3) developing human capital and addressing demographic challenges to ensure greater participation in the labour market; and 4) responding to energy and environmental challenges. Although Slovenia was supposed to work on the EU Council’s adoption of the integrated guidelines for growth and employment (2008-2010), managing both national programmes of reform as well as taking into account certain major national economies within the EU, it was unfortunately not invited to the informal meeting

⁷² See the *Report on the Treaty of Lisbon – statement by State Secretary for European Affairs Janez Lenarčič on behalf of the EU Council*, 20.2.2008, at http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Speeches_Interviews/February/0220SVEZ_Lenarcic_EP.html

⁷³ Against ratification were members of the deputies groups “Slovenian National Party” and “Lipa”.

⁷⁴ See the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia, at <http://www.dz-rs.si/index.php?id=98#1189>; RTV SLO, at http://www.rtv slo.si/modload.php?&c_mod=rnews&op=sections&func=read&c_menu=16&c_id=163745

⁷⁵ See the *Presidency Conclusions, Brussels European Council 23/24.3.2006* 7775/1/06 CONCL 1), at <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=DOC/06/1&format=PDF&aged=1&language>

held in January 2008 in the UK involving representatives from the UK, France, Germany and the President of the EC.

In general, during its Presidency Slovenia has sought to balance the need for stability of the programme framework, the Integrated Guidelines and the Community Lisbon Programme with the need to respond to new challenges and identified shortcomings.⁷⁶ One of the key goals of the Slovenian Presidency has been to promote more and better *investment in research and development*. With a view to achieving greater synergies of research capacities and halting the brain drain, it is necessary to press ahead with the establishment of an open European Research Area.⁷⁷ At the informal meeting of the Competitiveness Council, the Slovenian Minister for Higher Education, Science and Technology, Mojca Kucler-Dolinar, commented that Europe had as yet not fully exploited its research potential – its human resources, institutions and, in particular, the operational synergy between them. Given that the European Research Area can only be created in partnership between the member states and the European Commission, the Slovenian Presidency invited member states' ministers to build a *partnership* and show commitment to developing the European Research Area.⁷⁸ As the main features of the vision for a European Research Area, the member states' ministers highlighted the mobility of researchers and attractive careers for them enabled by the '*fifth freedom*', modern universities and research organisations ensuring global excellence as well as a co-ordinated strategy for international co-operation in the area of science and technology.⁷⁹ In the spirit of partnership, the member states' ministers also proposed specific management methods to enable the European Research Area to be developed quickly and efficiently. In this respect, member states endeavoured to intensively exchange examples of good practice, create new models and apply them in national research policies in line with the open method of co-ordination.⁸⁰ As a result of the informal meeting of the Competitiveness Council, and to achieve the new partnership, the so-called '*Ljubljana Process*' was launched in mid-April. The new partnership initiated by the Ljubljana Process shall be reflected in the work of future EU Council presidencies, in particular the French, Czech

⁷⁶ See "*Si.nergy for Europe*", op. cit.

⁷⁷ See "*Si.nergy for Europe*", op. cit.

⁷⁸ See http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/April/0415MVZT_COMPET.html

⁷⁹ See the *Draft summary by the Presidency*, Informal Meeting of Ministers for Competitiveness (Research), Brdo, 15.4.2008, at http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/download_docs/April/0414_COMPET/070Summary_Research.pdf

⁸⁰ As was also called for by the spring 2008 European Council.

and Swedish Presidencies, while the Slovenian Presidency will present a summary of the debate as the basis of the conclusions of the formal meeting of the Competitiveness Council in May.

Given their innovative potential and dynamic and flexible approach, the Slovenian Presidency believes *small and medium-sized enterprises* (SMEs) are one of the chief engines of economic growth and competitiveness in Europe. In this respect, the Slovenian Presidency has focused primarily on the access of start-up companies to sources of finance, and on cluster policy, which is particularly important in terms of SMEs' ability to access research infrastructure. In order to reinforce the EU's SME policy and to allow SMEs to operate more effectively in the Single Market, the Spring European Council as one of the actions that have immediate importance identified the swift examination by the Council of the upcoming *Small Business Act* initiative, setting out an integrated approach across the SMEs' life cycle in line with the *Better Regulation* and *Think Small First* principles and intended to further strengthen SMEs' growth and competitiveness.⁸¹ This initiative was also one of the topics for discussion at the Informal Meeting of Ministers for Competitiveness in mid-April. The EU member states' ministers agreed that there are not enough growing and innovative enterprises in Europe, with the main reasons being the high risks, difficulties in retaining exclusive rights to use innovations and the lack of access to finance. The main conclusion was, to avoid these obstacles, that the adoption of the Small Business Act planned⁸² for June 2008 is necessary.⁸³

In a speech at the 4th Joint Parliamentary Meeting on the Lisbon Strategy, the Slovenian Minister for Development Žiga Turk presented *how Slovenia has tackled reforms to implement the Lisbon Strategy*. He pointed out that in 2005 Slovenia adopted the *Development Strategy of Slovenia* and, with the renewed impetus of the Lisbon Strategy, copied it into the *National Reform Programme*. In this context, the government in 2006 prepared a programme of economic and social reforms with 67 points. Among the achievements, he especially exposed implementation of the tax reform,⁸⁴ modernisation of the labour market, reduction of the time needed to set up a business, improvement of the enterprise environment, e-government, and implementation of the "Bologna process" in the higher education system.⁸⁵

⁸¹ See the *Presidency Conclusions, Brussels European Council 13/14.3.2008*, op. cit.

⁸² See European Commission, Enterprise and Industry, at: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/sba_en.htm

⁸³ See the Slovenian EU Presidency, Informal Meeting of Ministers for Competitiveness, 16.4.2008, at http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/April/0416MG_COMPET.html

⁸⁴ The recent tax reform was, however, strongly criticised by the opposition.

4.3 Energy-Climate package

On 23 January 2008 the European Commission put forward a far-reaching “Climate action and renewable energy package”.⁸⁶ In accordance with this proposal, the EU will be committed to reducing its overall emissions to at least 20 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020, and to be ready to scale up this reduction to as much as 30 per cent under a new global climate change agreement if other developed countries make comparable efforts. It also set itself the target of increasing the share of renewables in energy use to 20 per cent by 2020. Also central to the strategy is the strengthening and expansion of the Emissions Trading System, the EU’s key tool for cutting emissions cost-effectively. Emissions from sectors covered by the system shall be cut by 21 per cent by 2020 compared with levels in 2005. Emissions from sectors not included in the Emissions Trading System – such as transport, housing, agriculture and waste – shall be cut by 10 per cent of 2005 levels by 2020. National renewable energy targets are proposed for each member state which shall contribute to achieving the emissions reductions as well as to increasing the EU’s energy independence. These include a minimum 10 per cent share for bio fuels in petrol and diesel by 2020. Finally, the package also seeks to promote the development and safe use of carbon capture and storage, a suite of technologies that allows the carbon dioxide emitted by industrial processes to be captured and stored underground where it cannot contribute to global warming.

Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša estimated that the agreement reached on basic principles and the timeframe of the energy and climate change package is probably the most high-profile achievement of the Spring European Council.⁸⁷ In this respect, first the EU leaders pledged to reach an agreement by the end of 2008, thereby enabling the timely adoption of the package, which should take place before the end of the current

⁸⁵ See the Speech of Žiga Turk, Minister for Development of the Republic of Slovenia, at the 4th Joint Parliamentary Meeting on the Lisbon Strategy, 12.2.2008, at http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Speeches_Interviews/February/0212SVR_Turk_EP.html

⁸⁶ See the *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – 20 20 by 2020 - Europe’s climate change opportunity (COM(2008) 30 final)*, Brussels, 23.1.2008, at [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0030:FIN:EN:PDF; Commission Staff Working Document, Impact Assessment, Document accompanying the Package of Implementation measures for the EU’s objectives on climate change and renewable energy for 2020 \(SEC\(2008\) 85/3\), Brussels, 23.1.2008, at http://ec.europa.eu/energy/climate_actions/doc/2008_res_ia_en.pdf](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0030:FIN:EN:PDF; Commission Staff Working Document, Impact Assessment, Document accompanying the Package of Implementation measures for the EU’s objectives on climate change and renewable energy for 2020 (SEC(2008) 85/3), Brussels, 23.1.2008, at http://ec.europa.eu/energy/climate_actions/doc/2008_res_ia_en.pdf)

⁸⁷ Address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia and the President of the European Council Janez Janša at the Extraordinary Plenary Session of the European Parliament, 26.3.2008, at http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Speeches_Interviews/March/0326KPV_PV_EP_.html

term of the European Parliament. Second, the EU leaders also confirmed three fundamental principles that will guide them in the distribution of tasks and goals between the member states: economic efficiency and cost-effectiveness, solidarity and fairness, and transparency. In addition, the European Council highlighted the member states' different starting points, circumstances and potential as well as achievements accomplished, and respect for the need for sustainable economic growth across the Community with all sectors contributing.⁸⁸

However, the Commission's proposal did not convince environmental NGOs. The European Environmental Bureau called the EU's greenhouse-gas reduction target "unacceptably weak" and the energy policy proposals "unconvincing and potentially even damaging, particularly regarding bio-fuels and nuclear power". The Bureau said that the package "lacks teeth". The WWF made a similar comment that the EU's energy revolution is "still a distant dream", while Friends of the Earth Europe described the package as "good news for the dirty energy industry, bad news for people and the planet".⁸⁹ Similar scepticism has been expressed by Slovenian environmental NGOs, especially Focus, noting that according to the proposal the EU member states and industry shall deliver less climate action than we need by aiming for an inadequate emissions cut of 20 per cent (instead 30 per cent) by 2020.⁹⁰

4.4 Enlargement and the European Perspective on the Western Balkans

The stability of the Western Balkans⁹¹ is very important for the security and prosperity of the entire EU. Following the objectives endorsed by the European Council in Santa Maria da Feira in June 2000⁹² and confirmed by the EU-Western Balkans Summit in Thessaloniki in June 2003,⁹³ all countries of the Western Balkans have the prospect of future EU membership. The European Council in June 2005⁹⁴ clearly re-confirmed these

⁸⁸ See the *Presidency Conclusions, Brussels European Council 13/14.3.2008*, op. cit.

⁸⁹ See *EurActiv*, 17.3.2008, at <http://www.euractiv.com/en/energy/energy-climate-change-integrated-eu-policy/article-160957>

⁹⁰ See Focus – društvo za sonaraven razvoj, 23.1.2008, at <http://www.focus.si/index.php?node=27&id=463>

⁹¹ A region including former Yugoslav republics (with the exception of Slovenia) and Albania.

⁹² See the *Presidency Conclusions, Santa Maria da Feira European Council 19/20.6.2000*, at http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/00200-r1.en0.htm

⁹³ See the *EU-Western Balkans Summit Declaration*, Thessaloniki, 21.6.2003 (10229/03), at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/enlargement_process/accesion_process/how_does_a_country_join_the_eu/sap/thessaloniki_summit_en.htm

⁹⁴ See the *Presidency Conclusions, Brussels European Council 16/17.6.2005* (10255/1/05 REV1), at http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/85349.pdf

existing commitments, as did the European Council in December 2007⁹⁵ by reaffirming that “the future of the Western Balkans lies within the EU”.

In recent years, Western Balkan countries have generally made good progress. However, taking the principle of differentiation and an individual approach into account, the countries of the Western Balkans have so far achieved different levels of progress. Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (hereinafter: FYROM) have been granted the status of *candidate countries*, whereas the others hold the status of *potential candidate countries*: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo (still under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244).

In its programme, the Slovenian Presidency stated that it will aim to strengthen the European perspective regarding the Western Balkan countries. The following main goals were determined: refreshment of the Thessaloniki agenda and completion of the network of Stabilisation and Association Agreements. The Presidency paid special attention to Kosovo, claiming that expectations of the EU’s key role in Kosovo are justified and the Presidency will, while trying to maintain a high level of EU unity, actively encourage efforts to bring about a solution that will ensure the long-term stability of the Western Balkans.⁹⁶ As we already noted concerning the Western Balkans countries, due to conflicts among other former Yugoslav political-territorial units (during the Slovenian Presidency especially the issue of Kosovo’s independence) Slovenia has been in a position where it has had to carefully balance out its official statements and actions related to the Western Balkans in order to remain faithful to its policy of good relations with all parts of former Yugoslavia and at the same time clearly position itself regarding the conflictive issues (e.g. the recognition of Kosovo as an independent state). During the Slovenian Presidency, dialogues on visa liberalisation were launched with Serbia on 31 January, with the FYROM on 20 February, with Montenegro on 21 February, and with Albania on 7 March. At the Gymnich meeting on 28/29 March the EU Foreign Ministers called for the earliest possible formulation of roadmaps defining realistic criteria for the introduction of a visa-free regime for countries in the region.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ See the *Presidency Conclusions, Brussels European Council 14.12.2007* (16616/1/07 REV1), at http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/97669.pdf

⁹⁶ See “*Si.nergy for Europe*”, op. cit.

⁹⁷ See the *Address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia Dimitrij Rupel to the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) of the European Parliament - Briefing on the Conclusions of the Gymnich Meeting, 1.4.2008*, at http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Speeches_Interviews/April/0401GAERC_AFET_Rupel.html

The status of *Kosovo* clearly mostly marked the start of the Slovenian Presidency. From the organisational point of view, this issue first triggered an affair involving the public revelation of some parts of the minutes of talks between Slovenian and American diplomats in the Slovenian newspaper “Dnevnik” on 25 January 2008.⁹⁸ The article entitled “Slovenia receives a secret list of demands for its EU Council Presidency from the US” published parts of documents containing the latest information, statements and assessments of diplomats that were not intended for the public, but were to be the basis for direction and political decisions taken by Slovenia. Although with some exceptions this diplomatic awkwardness did not attract significant attention abroad it did spark controversial debates in Slovenia.⁹⁹

Kosovo was undoubtedly a unique case within socialist Yugoslavia given the non-Slavic origin of the majority of its population (Albanians) and its traditionalist social structure. Due to repressive Serbian nationalism, the Albanians in Kosovo nevertheless fought vigorously for democratic change in the former Yugoslav Federation. After 1974, its status was made practically equal to that of other Yugoslav republics but at the end of the 1980s Slobodan Milošević withdrew its autonomous status. Moreover, in 1999 he occupied it with military forces and the international community had to step in to protect it on humanitarian grounds. Since 1999, Kosovo has been under the administration of the UN which, in accordance with Resolution 1244, has proceeded to manage it for nine years. As a result, Serbia has not had effective authority there. Given these facts, the Slovenian Presidency has been continuously supporting the argument that Kosovo is a genuinely unique case and as such it does not call into question the validity of the principle of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states.¹⁰⁰

On 17 February 2008 the Kosovo Assembly adopted a resolution declaring Kosovo to be independent. On the next day, the General Affairs and External Relations Council adopted the conclusion that the “member states will decide, in accordance with national practice and international law, on their relations with Kosovo”.¹⁰¹ Although not all EU member states have

⁹⁸ On the same day, a similar text appeared in the Belgrade newspaper *Politika*.

⁹⁹ See the *Statement by Slovenian diplomats*, 28.1.2008, at http://www.mzz.gov.si/index.php?id=13&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=23990&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=

¹⁰⁰ See the *Address of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia, dr. Dimitrij Rupel – Statement on behalf of the EU Council at the Plenary session of the European Parliament on Kosovo*, at http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Speeches_Interviews/February/0220MZZ_Rupel_EP.html

¹⁰¹ See the *Council Conclusions on Kosovo* (2851st External Relations Council meeting), Brussels, 18.2.2008, at http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Council_Conclusions/February/0218_GAERC5.pdf

recognised the independent Kosovo, the EU did decide and implement its activities in Kosovo. Due to wide economic interests in Serbia, Slovenia recognised Kosovo in the “second wave” as the 15th country to do so using its normal, relatively complicated procedure, involving the National Assembly.

Although the Slovenian Presidency supported a careful approach in order to avoid violence and bloodshed as far as possible, the declaration of independence still led to some limited violence in Kosovo and Serbia. In the Serbian capital Belgrade many mass demonstrations were organised. The violence included attacks against foreign diplomatic missions in Belgrade, and the first targets were Slovenian and US embassies. The Slovenian Presidency strongly condemned these attacks and urged the Serbian authorities to restore order and ensure the security of diplomatic missions according to the Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations and to respect previous commitments to refrain from any activities or statements which might endanger the security situation and to ensure the safety and security of EU citizens and their property.¹⁰²

The Slovenian Presidency advocated that the *Serbian EU perspective* must be separated from the issue of Kosovo. At the Gymnich meeting held on 28 and 29 March 2008, EU Foreign Ministers debated the possibility to grant Serbia status as candidate country. Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel argued many times that Serbia should sign a pre-membership pact as soon as possible. But the Commission and other EU members (especially the Netherlands) objected to signing any agreement until Serbia co-operates fully with the UN war crimes tribunal and extradites former war criminals such as Ratko Mladic, the former Bosnian Serb military commander wanted on genocide charges.¹⁰³ According to Prime Minister Janša, the Slovenian position was that signing an agreement would be a positive measure to encourage Serbia, but added a note that the agreement could only start being implemented when Serbia co-operates with the Hague tribunal and when all the EU members ratified the agreement.¹⁰⁴ The Slovenian position seems to have been persuasive enough as its proposal for a compromise was accepted by EU foreign ministers¹⁰⁵ and a Stabilization and Associa-

¹⁰² CFSP Statements, EU Presidency statement on the situation in Serbia, 22.2.2008, at http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/February/0222MZZ_Serbia.html

¹⁰³ See EurActiv, 9.1.2008, at <http://www.euractiv.com/en/future-eu/slovenia-outlines-demanding-eu-presidency-programme/article-169420>

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Prime Minister Janez Janša, Vroči stol, TVS 1, 7.4.2008

¹⁰⁵ A compromise was reached with Belgium and the Netherlands who were demanding more action from Serbia regarding capturing fugitive war crimes suspects Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic.

tion Agreement (SAA) was signed by the EU representatives and the Serbian Vice Minister Božidar Delić (with the Serbian President Boris Tadić present) on 29 April 2008 in Luxemburg. EU Member States are only expected to ratify the agreement when they have been reassured that Belgrade is fully collaborating with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and only then will Serbia be granted economic benefits. Still, the Slovenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Dimitrij Rupel stressed that signing the agreement is a signal to the Serbian people and to Serbian politics that Serbia's European future is in their hands¹⁰⁶ (parliamentary elections where Serbian voters are expected to choose between pro-EU political parties and anti-EU political parties are scheduled for 11 May 2008).

As stated by the Slovenian Foreign Minister, Serbia needs to free itself from the burdens of its past, of the fears and ghosts of the Milošević regime.¹⁰⁷ Future EU-Serbia relations largely depend on the will not only of the present political leadership but even more so on that of the next one who will be in power after the May election. In February's presidential elections, pro-European candidate Boris Tadić was re-elected for his second term in office and defeated radical candidate Tomislav Nikolić. The Slovenian Presidency expressed its confidence that the re-election of President Tadić will accelerate Serbia's progress on the road towards the EU, including the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement.¹⁰⁸

Special attention to the European perspective on the Western Balkans was paid at the Gymnich meeting of EU Foreign Ministers. At the meeting, all Western Balkan countries were represented, including Serbian Foreign Minister Jeremić and Kosovo's Prime Minister Thaçi. However, the Serbian Foreign Minister and Kosovo's Prime Minister did not meet since the Serbian representative left Slovenia before the arrival of Kosovo's Prime Minister. In public, the impression was left that the Slovenian Presidency had planned to organise a meeting between the Serbian and Kosovo representatives but the Slovenian Foreign Minister Rupel rejected such sugges-

¹⁰⁶ See RTV Slovenia, 29.4.2008, at http://www.rtvsllo.si/modload.php?&c_mod=rnews&op=sections&func=read&c_menu=16&c_id=171854&rss=1

¹⁰⁷ See the *Address of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia, Dr. Dimitrij Rupel – Statement on behalf of the EU Council at the Plenary session of the European Parliament on Kosovo*, at http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Speeches_Interviews/February/0220MZZ_Rupel_EP.html

¹⁰⁸ See the *Statement by the Presidency of the European Union on Presidential elections in Serbia*, 3.2.2008, at http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/February/0203PV_Tadic.html

tions and argued that they had wished for exactly the opposite, especially to avoid any incidents.

Of all countries of the Western Balkans, *Croatia has the most prospects of membership*. Croatia has opened 16 chapters out of 35, two of which have been provisionally closed. At the discussion on the Progress Report of Croatia Slovenian State-Secretary for European Affairs Janez Lenarčič indicated further tasks where Croatia has to achieve more considerable progress and underlined judicial and administrative reforms, the fight against corruption, economic reforms, minority rights, the return of refugees and full co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia. He also especially noted that it is essential for Croatia to continue its efforts regarding good neighbourly relations, primarily including endeavours to find a satisfactory solution to open bilateral issues with neighbouring countries.¹⁰⁹ At this point, the Slovenian State-Secretary had in mind the open bilateral questions between Slovenia and Croatia. One such very controversial issue (also being “Europeanised”) has been the *Ecological and Fisheries Protection Zone* that Croatia with a unilateral declaration and enforcement applied to the EU member states (notably Slovenia and Italy), irrespective of the agreement of 4 June 2004.¹¹⁰ Since this issue has seriously endangered Croatian progress towards the EU,¹¹¹ at the beginning of March the Croatian Parliament reached a decision about the temporary suspension (freezing up) of the Zone. The Croatian Prime Minister declared that Croatia has not renounced the Zone but only temporarily suspended its enforcement. Given other open bilateral questions between Slovenia and Croatia, especially the border issue, in an interview with Slovenian national television broadcaster Prime Minister Janša did not exclude the possibility of Slovenia’s veto against Croatian accession in the event the Slovenian-Croatian border issue is not resolved or is on a good path to finding a compromise. However, the majority (including Croatian Prime Minister Sanader) understood this statement as being a pre-electoral one since in autumn 2008 parliamentary elections will be held in Slovenia.

¹⁰⁹ See the Debate on the Progress Reports of Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Statement by State Secretary Janez Lenarčič on behalf of the EU Council, 9.4.2008, at: http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Speeches_Interviews/April/0409SVEZhrFYRM.html

¹¹⁰ On that, Italy, Croatia and the European Commission reached an agreement under which the Croatian Ecological and Fisheries Zone would not apply to the EU member states.

¹¹¹ See e.g. Council Conclusions on enlargement: Croatian Ecological and Fisheries Protection Zone (2850th General Affairs Council meeting), Brussels, 18.2.2008, at: http://www.eu2008.si/si/News_and_Documents/Council_Conclusions/February/0218_GAERC.pdf

At the start of the Slovenian Presidency, Prime Minister Janez Janša expressed the opinion that Kosovo is not the biggest problem of the Western Balkans; it is *Bosnia-Herzegovina*.¹¹² The main reason for this is the complicated constitutional structure of the state as a result of the Dayton Agreement, and the consequently still unresolved multi-ethnic question. The Slovenian Presidency stands on the position that Bosnia-Herzegovina's future within the EU is only possible as a unified, integrated and functioning multi-ethnic state. As for Bosnia-Herzegovina, implementation of the police reform had for a long time remained a nonnegotiable precondition for signing the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. On 17 April 2008, the law on police reform by the Parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina was finally adopted.¹¹³ The agreement on police reform is a crucial step for Bosnia-Herzegovina which shall simultaneously encourage all political forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina to make use of the current momentum and to vigorously continue with the implementation of other inevitable priorities on the reform agenda. Slovenian Defence Minister Karl Erjavec, also taking into account the current uncertain security situation in the region especially after the declaration of Kosovo's independence, stated that the EU must retain an adequate military presence in Bosnia-Herzegovina as long as necessary.¹¹⁴

Finally, the *FYROM* is the only country which has had candidate status since 2005 but which has not yet started accession negotiations. Since the establishment of an independent state, the FYROM has been embroiled in a naming dispute with Greece. This dispute recently reached the peak when the FYROM did not receive an invitation to join NATO. The Slovenian Presidency expressed regret about this situation, especially considering that the country has made every effort to obtain the invitation. At the same time, the Slovenian Presidency called on all political leaders in the FYROM to preserve the consensus reached on the country's European and Euro-Atlantic future.¹¹⁵ As for the reason why Slovenia did not take a firm position regarding the Greek-FYROM naming dispute, Prime

¹¹² See Slovenija – doma v Evropi, 7.1.2008 at <http://evropa.gov.si/novice/18336/>

¹¹³ See EurActiv, 17.4.2008, at <http://www.euractiv.com/en/enlargement/vote-police-reform-brings-bosnia-closer-eu/article-171719>

¹¹⁴ See the *Speech by the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Slovenia: European Security and Defence Policy*, 7.4.2008, at http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Speeches_Interviews/April/0407MO_EVOP_Erjavec.html

¹¹⁵ See the Debate on the Progress Reports of Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Statement by State Secretary Janez Lenarčič on behalf of the EU Council, 9.4.2008, at http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Speeches_Interviews/April/0409SVEZhrFYRM.html

Minister Janša said “as Slovenia has acknowledged the arguments of each of the two sides, it did not want to take one side”.¹¹⁶

4.5 Intercultural Dialogue

2008 has been declared the *European Year of Intercultural Dialogue*.¹¹⁷ Co-operation between cultures and religions is also one of the priorities of the Slovenian EU Presidency, with special attention being given to the issues of intercultural dialogue and interfaith co-operation in the Western Balkan region. In fact, the Slovenian Presidency officially even started with the international conference “*Intercultural Dialogue as the Fundamental Value of the EU*” that was held on 7 and 8 January in Ljubljana, while the evening ceremony, held at the Gallus hall of Cankarjev dom, marked the official launch of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue at the Community level.

In Slovenia, the co-ordinator of the Year of Intercultural Dialogue is the Ministry of Culture, assisted by the *National Co-ordination Body for the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue*. This body is a trans-sectoral working group, including representatives of the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education and Sport, Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth, the GOEA and the Government Communication Office. The body prepared a “National strategy for the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue”¹¹⁸ as a strategic document for the implementation of activities within this project.

The Slovenian Presidency understands intercultural dialogue as the basis for long-term EU action rather than a unique event.¹¹⁹ In this respect, and as a contribution to the development of higher education in the Mediterranean basin, Slovenia is planning to establish a *Euro-Mediterranean university*¹²⁰ in Piran¹²¹ as a concrete form of intercultural dialogue. According to Slovenian official politics, the main reason for establishing such an international education and research institution is the “need for the convergence

¹¹⁶ Interview with Prime Minister Janez Janša, Vroči stol, TVS 1, 7.4.2008

¹¹⁷ Decision No. 1983/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006, at http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/l_412/l_41220061230en00440050.pdf

¹¹⁸ See http://www.mk.gov.si/fileadmin/mk.gov.si/pageuploads/min_eng/intercultural_Dialogue/National_Strategy_for_implementing_EYID_Slovenia.doc

¹¹⁹ See “*Si.nergy for Europe*”, op. cit.

¹²⁰ It is expected that the Euro-Mediterranean University will primarily be a postgraduate and research institution focused on Mediterranean themes.

¹²¹ Piran is a small town on the Slovenian coast.

of European, Islamic and other cultures by drawing inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of the Euro-Mediterranean area". Hence, it is expected that the newly established university will not be just a "course-provider" but also a meeting point for all stakeholders involved in the process. State-Secretary for Education and the head of the project group for a Euro-Mediterranean University, Dušan Lesjak, and a member of both the Slovenian National Assembly and the parliamentary delegation to the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, Aurelio Juri, pointed out¹²² that such a university would internationalise Slovenia's higher education as well as the region in general. In their opinion, this would promote Slovenia abroad, benefit the local economy and contribute to the better inclusion of the Slovenian Istria in the Euro-Mediterranean area.

The project has already received important academic support from the 2007 Alexandria Declaration of the 4th Euromed Permanent University Forum, as well as increasing political support from, for example, the 2007 Cairo Declaration of the first Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Higher Education and Scientific Research, and recently from the Conclusions of the 9th Euro-Mediterranean Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs adopted on 6 November 2007 in Lisbon.¹²³ It is expected the official ceremony for signing the Founding Act of the Euro-Mediterranean University will be held in May 2008.¹²⁴ As the first activities in 2008, the organisation of a postgraduate summer school¹²⁵ providing some courses from accredited programmes of partner universities is planned, along with the co-organisation of an international conference on intercultural dialogue to be held in Barcelona in November 2008.¹²⁶

4.6 Other issues

During the first half of the Slovenian Presidency, one of the most controversial issues was the discussion about the *Mediterranean Union*. This initiative, aimed at upgrading the EU's relations with its neighbours in North Africa and the Middle East, was launched by the French President

¹²² See *Slovenian Officials Promote Euro-Mediterranean University*, Government Communication Office, Maribor, 19.7.2007, at <http://www.ukom.gov.si/eng/slovenia/publications/slovenia-news/5138/5148/>

¹²³ See e.g. Center EMUNI, *Towards a new international University*, at <http://www2.emuni.si/en/strani/40/Towards-a-new-international-university>

¹²⁴ See the Ministry of Culture, *European Year of Intercultural Dialogue*, at http://www.mk.gov.si/en/european_year_of_intercultural_dialogue_2008/national_projects/other/

¹²⁵ See <http://www.emuni.si/en/strani/43/Summer-school.html>

¹²⁶ See <http://www.emuni.si/en/strani/50/Conferences.html>

Nicolas Sarkozy, originally as part of his electoral campaign. Since, according to Sarkozy's original proposal, the Union would only have included those EU Member States which border on to the Mediterranean, while all other Member States would have been silent observers, Germany in particular was strongly opposed to such an idea. German Chancellor Angela Merkel supported the French initiative in general, but at the same time she added that the offer "has to be made to all other European countries".¹²⁷ The Slovenian Presidency shared the opinion of Germany and expressed its doubts over the Mediterranean Union project, especially due to the fear that it might lead to a split within the EU between Mediterranean and non-Mediterranean countries.¹²⁸ To this end, the Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel was keen to point out at the Olive Group meeting, which took place in mid-January in Cyprus and where EU representatives agreed on a proposal, that all EU Member States should be involved. In this respect, the Slovenian EU Presidency awaited France's preparation of the relevant materials for discussion.¹²⁹

At the 2008 Spring European Council Summit, EU leaders gave the green light to a compromise to create a "Union for the Mediterranean":

*"The European Council approved the principle of a Union for the Mediterranean which will include the Member States of the EU and the non-EU Mediterranean coastal states. It invited the Commission to present to the Council the necessary proposals for defining the modalities of what will be called 'Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean' with a view to the Summit which will take place in Paris on 13 July 2008."*¹³⁰

After the Summit, the Slovenian PM Janez Janša said the EU has to make an effort to ensure that it does what is needed so that this project can see the light of day, and while he was speaking about the future of the Barcelona Process, he added: *"It is not a question of burying it, of starting from scratch. It's just about bringing it up to date. Times have changed, we have to adapt."*¹³¹

¹²⁷ EurActiv, 13.12.2007, at <http://www.euractiv.com/en/future-eu/sarkozy-mediterranean-union-plans-irk-merkel/article-169080>

¹²⁸ EurActiv, 31.1.2008, at <http://www.euractiv.com/en/future-eu/france-tones-eu-presidency-rhetoric/article-170004>

¹²⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia, 22.1.2008, at <http://www.mzz.gov.si/nc/en/tools/news/cns/news/article/3247/23952/>

¹³⁰ See the *Presidency Conclusions, Brussels European Council 13/14.3.2008*, op. cit.

¹³¹ EurActiv, 14.3.2008, at <http://www.euractiv.com/en/enlargement/summit-approves-union-mediterranean/article-170976>

Concerning foreign policy, especially in the second part of the Slovenian Presidency a number of summits have been held. In the beginning of March, the Slovenian Foreign Minister Rupel chaired a ministerial *EU-US Troika meeting*. At the meeting, special attention was paid to the situation in the Western Balkans, especially Kosovo, and to preparations for the EU-US Summit to be held in Slovenia in June. According to Rupel, the forthcoming Summit should be a demonstration of unity in transatlantic cooperation between the EU and USA, sending out a clear message regarding the shared responsibility of resolving global challenges, especially concerning climate change, energy issues and regional issues, including, above all, the Western Balkans and the Middle East peace process.¹³² On 23 April the 17th *EU-Japan Summit* was held in Tokyo, where a very broad consensus was reached on a number of issues, with special emphasis on three areas: the global fight against climate change, the promotion of international peace and security, and the commitment to achieving greater prosperity and quality of life.¹³³ At the end of April, the Slovenian Foreign Minister Rupel headed a ministerial *EU Troika-Russia meeting* in Luxembourg. Minister Rupel underlined the importance of the meeting bearing in mind that it formed part of the preparations for the EU-Russian Federation Summit to be held in Hanti Mansiisk in June, which will also be the first opportunity for a meeting with the new Russian President Medvedev. At the EU-Russian Federation Summit the real focus is supposed to be on breaking the deadlock regarding renewing the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.¹³⁴

¹³² See Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008, 6.3.2008, at http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/March/0306EU_Trojka_ZDA.html

¹³³ See Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008, 23.4.2008, at http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/April/0423KPV_EU-Japonska.html

¹³⁴ See Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008, 29.4.2008, at http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/April/0429GAERC_EU-Rusija.html

5 CONCLUSIONS

Slovenia has been one of the most – if not the most – Euro-enthusiastic of the new EU Member States that joined the EU in 2004. Although initially it was the economic elite, public-opinion leaders and political elite which developed strong support for Slovenia's integration with the EU, a significant majority of voters did support integration and recently Slovenian citizens have constituted some of the most EU-supportive electorates in the EU. The majority of the Slovenian parliamentary parties signed an "Agreement on the co-operation of political parties, the group of unconnected deputies and representatives of national minorities in the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia for successful implementation of the preparation of and presidency over the EU", informally known as the "agreement on 'non-attacking' the government in the period of holding the EU Presidency". Since the informal election campaigning for the 2008 national elections started already at the beginning of 2008 "a political pact of non-attacking" does not seem to have kept any other practical power but the opposition's self-limitations in terms of not proceeding officially in line with several informally demanded ministerial interpellations.

The following organisational features characterised the Slovenian Presidency:

- systematic preparations for the EU Presidency since January 2005;
- organisational preparations were largely based on a pre-established structure for managing EU affairs – the organisational structure for holding the Presidency has not changed radically compared to the previously established model of EU co-ordination in the Slovenian executive;
- a larger share of the administration was involved in EU Presidency activities than in bigger countries¹³⁵ (the Slovenian Government approved an employment plan for holding the Slovenian Presidency at its session in October 2005. In accordance with the plan, 310 additional temporary posts were approved. Training for the additional EU cadre was organised);
- in accordance with the *Budget Memorandum*, Slovenia has allocated EUR 62 million for holding the EU Presidency;
- to encourage efficient, interactive and transparent co-operation between the Slovenian Government and non-governmental organisations, a special "Agreement between the Government Communication Office and

¹³⁵ Interview with State-Secretary for European Affairs Lenarčič, at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WGe91nXya1o>

Web Portal ‘Predsedovanje.si’ about communication before and during the Slovenian Presidency of the EU” was signed.

As a relatively young state with quite recent foreign affairs and diplomatic experience, during the EU Presidency it seems to have put the efficient co-ordination and maximal mobilisation of its resources on the top of its priorities. Although this may be estimated as a realistic goal, especially in the domestic arena representatives of the Slovenian government were criticised for not developing more ambitious goals and activities – in particular more assertiveness in agenda-setting (i.e. putting forward “Slovenian” initiatives which could historically mark the Slovenian Presidency) and a more visible role as a co-ordinator and persuader in specific issues during its Presidency.

While Slovenia did have its national programme for its Presidency it is also true that it harmonised it to a large extent with two other inter-related agendas (as expected at the EU level): a) the “inherited Council of the EU agenda and b) the common 18-month programme of the first presiding trio – Germany, Portugal and Slovenia. Slovenia decided on five main priority areas: 1) the future of the EU and the timely entering into force of the Lisbon Treaty; 2) the successful launching of the new Lisbon Strategy cycle; 3) climate and energy issues; 4) the strengthening of the European perspective on the Western Balkans; and 5) Intercultural Dialogue.

Among the most visible achievements by the Presidency midterm have been the following ones:

- Slovenia set a positive example by ratifying the Lisbon Treaty in the National Assembly at an early stage, on 29 January 2008, becoming the second EU Member State (after Hungary) to do so (among the 90 deputies of the National Assembly, 74 voted for, while six were against ratification);
- to achieve a new partnership for the European Research Area, the so-called *Ljubljana Process* was launched in mid-April;
- according to the Slovenian PM Janša, the reaching of an agreement on basic principles and the time frame concerning the energy and climate change package was probably the most high-profile achievement of the 2008 Spring European Council;
- the valuable input to and successful participation in managing the situation in the Western Balkans was strongly marked by the issue of the status of *Kosovo* right from the beginning of the Slovenian Presidency. While Slovenia recognised Kosovo in the “second wave” as the 15th

country (it did so using its normal, relatively complicated procedure, involving the National Assembly) it has also been heavily involved in carefully balancing EU policy vis-à-vis Serbia to both maintain its peaceful conflict-solving role in the region as well as allowing an autonomous maturation of pro-European sentiments within Serbia;

- as a contribution to the development of higher education in the Mediterranean basin, Slovenia is planning to establish a *Euro-Mediterranean university* in Piran as a concrete form of intercultural dialogue;
- in the Slovenian PM Janša's opinion, the 2008 Spring European Council was very successful, with 36 specific decisions being made.

For Slovenia as a relatively “good pupil” in the Europeanisation process, presiding over the EU has meant a qualitative challenge to the mainstream collective psychology of a small nation. In the Slovenian case, it is a historically developed psychology of being a “follower” of bigger and more influential nations. In the context of preparations for the Presidency and while playing a leading role, Slovenian actors had to develop more self-confidence and re-socialise to an important extent. In that sense, it is understandable that after three months of the Slovenian EU Presidency the Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel estimated that the period of the EU Presidency represents the new Slovenian spring. He compared the “achievements in the foreign policy area with the period of Slovenia's democratisation and independence, only now Slovenia has changed its role: less than two decades ago it was the subject of the ‘Spring’, whereas now it is directing and co-ordinating it”.¹³⁶ In this respect, Milan Jazbec sees the development of the Slovenian diplomacy as a shift “from zero hour to the EU Presidency”.¹³⁷

To conclude, a general impression on the Slovenian Presidency which seems to have prevailed up till the midterm point is, as one insider put it: “A star pupil playing it safe in the EU”.¹³⁸ Unlike some more recent EU

¹³⁶ See the *Press Conference with Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel summing up the first half of the Slovenian EU Presidency*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ljubljana, 2.4.2008, at <http://www.mzz.gov.si/nc/en/tools/news/cns/news/article/3247/24265/>

¹³⁷ See Jazbec, M., *Slovenska diplomacija od ure nič do predsedovanja EU*, in Haček, M., and Zajc, D., *Slovenija v evropski družbi znanja in razvoja* (Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede, 2007), 131–145.

¹³⁸ »A star pupil playing it safe in the EU: An inside view of the first Slovenian EU Council«, available at Notre Europe, at <http://www.notre-europe.eu/en/axes/european-democracy-in-action/works/publication/a-star-pupil-playing-it-safe-in-the-eu-an-inside-view-of-the-first-slovenian-eu-council/>. Full report by Manja Klemenčič, *Varna igra odlične učenke v EU*, at: http://www.notre-europe.eu/uploads/tx_publication/Etud61-MKlemencic-SlovenianPresidency-si.pdf

newcomers, Slovenia opted for a strategy of having the Presidency as a “national project”, but subordinated to the EU political processes. As it left aside the fostering of its higher profile (establishing Slovenia’s identity on the EU scene) it probably deserves criticism for »being shy«. Still it seems to have acted responsibly and has been relatively successful in managing the agenda (largely inherited and co-determined in the framework of the recently started “*trio*” system). This confirms both compliments made, for example, by José Manuel Barroso (“the Slovenian Presidency has been very professional”) or Graham Watson (“the Slovenian government has been well-prepared”), as well as somewhat more reserved statements by Krause who expressed surprise that Slovenia has been most insecure in an area that foreign observers had believed it would have been the strongest (the Kosovo and Serbia issue).¹³⁹ Still, experts in the Western Balkans region would probably agree that familiarity with that region’s peculiarities should bring about very sensitive and extremely careful external (also EU) interference. By the Presidency midterm, Slovenia seems to have proved that it is capable of coordinating EU Western Balkan policy wisely.

The general midterm evaluation of Slovenia’s Presidency could probably be summarized by saying that (as the last presiding country within the first “trio”) Slovenia took on the fairly “traditional role” of a small country holding the EU presidency – managing “a good presidency” for the EU. With a continuation of the professional organisation of Presidency-related activities, by the end of its term Slovenia, will be expected to have fulfilled its Presidency ambitions as well as being listed among other small EU countries, which have already managed “a good Presidency”, although to a certain extent overshadowed by major EU members (especially by being placed in the middle between Germany starting the first “trio” and France following Slovenia and starting the second “trio”). In spite of some prejudices, Slovenia’s Presidency has so far given good grounds for an understanding that new EU Member States are “normal” EU actors.

¹³⁹ Statements in a broadcast EUROPA.SI, TVS 1, 11.4.2008, at http://www.rtvsllo.si/modload.php?&c_mod=rplayer&id=ava2.13382477

SAMMANFATTNING

Det slovenska EU-ordförandeskapet innebär en höjdpunkt på den sociala och politiska omdaning som påbörjades i början 1980-talet. Slovenien som nation har under lång tid levt inom ramen för mångnationella statsbildningar där andra nationer dominerat och har sedan EU-medlemskapet varit en ”duktig elev” i europeiseringsprocessen. Detta medför att ordförandeskapet utgör en utmaning för det nationella kollektiva medvetandet. Dock har ordförandeskapet, liksom övriga EU-relaterade projekt, mottagits väl och haft stort stöd på hemmaplan.

Den slovenska regeringen har mött stora utmaningar såväl i inrikespolitiken som i utrikespolitiken. En ung diplomatisk kår har haft att hantera både koordinering som hör till ordförandeskapet samt övrig internationell aktivitet. Till de främsta utmaningarna hör: 1) att med undantag för en erfaren utrikesminister har man en oerfaren regering (det största koalitions-partiet har besatt statsministerposten för första gången); 2) frånvaron av en europeisk tjänstemannakår; 3) presidentval (2007) och parlamentsval (hösten 2008); 4) att ge ett konstruktivt svar på den farhåga som vissa utomstående haft kring de nya medlemsstaternas förmåga att leda unionen; 5) att leda en union där vissa stora medlemsstater alltjämt har ett stort inflytande; 6) att noggrant balansera alla uttalanden och handlingar relaterade till situationen på Västra Balkan eftersom man eftersträvar goda relationer till alla länder med vilka man ingick i en tidigare statsbildning (Jugoslavien) och samtidigt kunna vara klar och tydlig i sitt agerande i rollen som ordförande för EU. Detta gäller särskilt situationen i Kosovo.

Även om Slovenien har ett nationellt program för ordförandeskapet har detta påverkats starkt av två andra sinsemellan beroende dagordningar: 1) den ”ärvda” rådsagendan för EU och 2) det gemensamma 18-månadersprogrammet för den första trion ordförandeskap (Tyskland, Portugal och Slovenien). Genom dessa utmaningar samt att Slovenien var sist i trion har man valt en tämligen försiktig ambitionsgrad för sitt ordförandeskap: att först och främst sköta det smidigt och problemfritt. Slovenien valde att göra ordförandeskapet till ett nationellt projekt men underordnat den gemensamma dagordningen. Eftersom man åsidosatte att sätta en genuint slovensk prägel kan nog ordförandeskapet kritiserats för att ha varit lite blygt. Men, så här halvvägs in i perioden, förtjänar ordförandeskapet också beröm för att man hanterat EU's dagordning på ett ansvarsfullt och relativt framgångsrikt sätt. Hittills har man uppfyllt den för Slovenien viktiga prioriteringen av ett europeiskt perspektiv på Västra Balkan. Med insikter om förhållandena i denna region och ett försiktigt agerande har ordförandeskapet bidragit till en relativt smidig och fredlig utveckling, i synnerhet i rela-

tionerna mellan Kosovo och Serbien. Om inget oförutsätt händer i världen och om den slovenska organisationen fortsätter att arbeta professionellt kan vi förvänta oss framsteg inom områden som; 1) ratificeringsprocessen av Lissabonfördraget; 2) det nya partnerskapet inom European Research Area som initierats av Ljubljana-processen; 3) avtalet om de grundläggande principerna och tidsramen för energi- och klimatförändringspaketet; och 4) vissa positiva resultat i att lösa frågan om Kosovos status samt det förväntade undertecknandet av ett Stabiliserings- och Associationsavtal med Bosnien-Hercegovina. Ett toppmöte mellan EU och USA kommer att hållas i juni och förväntas göra framsteg när det gäller USA's visumtvång för EU-medborgare.

Som det sista ordförandeskapet i den första trion intog Slovenien en roll som är brukligt för mindre medlemsstater, nämligen rollen som en ”god ordförande” för EU. Om den professionella organiseringen står sig fram till slutet kommer det slovenska ordförandeskapet både ha fullföljt sina egna ambitioner samt kunna läggas till listan av små medlemsstater som fungerat som just ”goda ordförande”.

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