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Centre of International Relations, University of

1. Future of the EU

Great majority for a parliamentary ratification of the Lisbon Treaty

Slovenian government

For the Slovenian government, the Lisbon Treaty represents a successful closure of a process which began with the fall of the Berlin Wall and continued with the big-bang enlargement of the EU in 2004, in which Slovenia also played part. Signing of the Lisbon Treaty also ended a period of uncertainty which appeared due to the two negative referenda results in the spring of 2005. The new Treaty brings higher integration of the EU, raises the efficiency of its functioning and brings the Union closer to its citizens. The Lisbon Treaty includes almost all the novelties of the non-ratified Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe.

Due to co-decision by European Parliament and the Council, the Treaty increases the democratic principles of the Union. National parliaments are to be included much more intensively into the legislative procedure with higher authorities. The Charter of fundamental rights is to become legally binding which enables the citizens to profit from an understandable catalogue of fundamental rights. The possibility of a citizens' petition is pointed out as a positive way of direct people's participation. A second contribution of the Treaty is therefore to making the functioning of the EU more transparent and understandable.

A third positive aspect of the Lisbon Treaty is making the EU more efficient by qualified majority decision-making in the greater part of the issues dealt with in the Council. As the number of the EU parliamentarians will shrink, Slovenia will nevertheless receive an additional parliamentary seat (making 8 MEPs altogether).

Slovenia was a part of the group of 16 member states who gave a Declaration on the symbols of the EU, exposing that the present EU flag, EU anthem and Europe Day shall remain symbols of a common affiliation of the citizens to the EU.

Slovenia has set for its goal to try and ratify the Lisbon Treaty as soon as possible (rather among the first), provisionally in January 2008.¹ Eventually, the National Parliament ratified the Lisbon Treaty with 74 MPs (out of 90) voting in support and 6 MPs (from the Slovenian National Party and from *Lipa* . until recently also part of the Slovenian National Party) voting against on 29 January 2008.² However, the Slovenian National Party has . after a turndown of a referendum possibility on the ratification made by the Parliament . already demanded for a subsequent legislative referendum on the issue.³

Slovenian Parliamentary Political Parties

In the wake of the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in the Slovenian National Parliament, the attitudes of parliamentary political parties in Slovenia appeared in the media. The following is the summary of those attitudes:

- Slovenian Democratic Party (*Slovenska demokratska stranka* . SDS) (coalition party)
MP Jožef Jerovšek, who presides over the Parliamentary Committee for Foreign Policy, believes that Slovenian ratification during the Slovenian EU Presidency is a smart move. This is supposed to be in the Slovenian strategic interest, since this would encourage other member states to ratify the treaty.

¹ Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia (2008), Lizbonska pogodba [Lisbon Treaty], available at http://www.mzz.gov.si/si/zunanija_politika/evropska_unija/lizbonska_pogodba/ (12 January 2008).

² RTV SLO (29 January 2008), Lizbonski pogodbi visoka podpora [High Support to the Lisbon Treaty], available at: http://www.rtvsl.si/modload.php?&c_mod=rnews&op=sections&func=read&c_menu=16&c_id=163745&tokens=lizbonska+pogodba (30 January 2008).

³ RTV SLO (30 January 2008), SNS vztraja pri referendumu [SNS sticks to the referendum], available at: http://www.rtvsl.si/modload.php?&c_mod=rnews&op=sections&func=read&c_menu=1&c_id=163889&tokens=lizbonska+pogodba (30 January 2008).

no-speed EUq whereby the big member states would stall the
therefore bring positive effects especially to small states.

Liberal Democratic Party (*Liberalna Demokracija Slovenije* . LDS) (opposition party)
The President of LDS Katarina Kresal declared that LDS MPs will support the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty since they believe it strengthens the role of the EU as a global political and economic actor, which is to contribute to a unified image of the EU in the international community. The new Treaty also means a step forward in the institutional development of the EU. LDS proposes for Slovenia to take opportunity from the EU Presidency and encourage other member states to engage themselves to provisional timeframes for the ratification of the Treaty.

- Social Democrats (*Socialni Demokrati* . SD) (opposition party)

SD also welcomes the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. The Head of the Parliamentary Group Miran Potrč said that the ratification is only the final stage of the process which began with the Convention on the Future of Europe in 2001. Since the National Parliament already ratified the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (on 1 February 2005), which represents the majority of the new Lisbon (Reform) Treaty text, the ratification should not be questionable. Besides, he adds, at this stage it would be hard to amend or modify anything. Potrč also exposed that the new Treaty brings more influence for Slovenia in terms of decision-making in the EU institutions and one additional MEP. SD also believes the ratification should be a priority of the Slovenian Presidency and that Slovenian ratification would encourage other member states to come closer to a positive decision on the ratification.

- New Slovenia (*Nova Slovenija* . NSi) and Slovenian People's Party (*Slovenska ljudska stranka* . SLS) (both coalition parties)

NSi MP and President of the Parliamentary Committee for EU Affairs Anton Kokalj declared that NSi made a public initiative to the Government and the Parliament to make Slovenia the first to ratify the Treaty. The reason for this should mainly be of a symbolic nature, due to the ratification process being one of the Slovenian Presidency's priorities. Slovenia should act as a model. According to the Head of the SLS Parliamentary Group Jakob Prešern, SLS shares this position.⁴

- Slovenian National Party (*Slovenska nacionalna stranka* . SNS) (opposition party)

SNS believes the Lisbon Treaty should be subjected to a referendum. It made a proposal for a referendum question for support of the Lisbon Treaty (the question was formulated very straight forward: "*Ali ste za to, da Republika Slovenija ratificira Lizbonsko pogodbo, ki spreminja Pogodbo o Evropski uniji in Pogodbo o ustanovitvi Evropske skupnosti?*" . Do you support Slovenian ratification of the Lisbon Treaty which modifies Treaty on the European Union and Treaty establishing the European Community?). The proposal was turned down in the National Parliament, just prior to the vote on the ratification of the Treaty on 29 January 2008. SNS believes the Treaty will bring some changes to the 'rules of the game' upon which people in Slovenia live and should therefore be subject to a referendum.

The President of SNS Zmago Jelinčič, MP explained his party's decision to call for a referendum saying that it is impossible to explain the 271 pages of the document to the people in such a short time and for this reason the ratification process in Slovenia is too hasty.⁵

2. Western Balkans – Enlargement

Western Balkan countries a top priority of Slovenian EU Presidency

Slovenian attitude towards the integration of countries of the Western Balkans into the EU is predominantly positive. In its annual declaration on guidelines for the work of the Republic of Slovenia

⁴ RTV SLO (13 December 2007), Hitra ratifikacija pogodbe: Da ali ne? Kaj menijo poslanske skupine o ratifikaciji Lizbonske pogodbe [Fast ratification of the Treaty: Yes or no? Opinions of the Parliamentary Groups on the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty], available at: http://www.rtv slo.si/modload.php?&c_mod=rnews&op=sections&func=read&c_menu=16&c_id=159953&tokens=reformna+pogodba (13 January 2008).

⁵ RTV SLO (2008), Ovir za lizbonski referendum ni. SNS mora predlog dopolniti [There are no limitations for Lisbon referendum. SNS needs to amend the proposal], Ljubljana, 22 January 2008, available at: http://www.rtv slo.si/modload.php?&c_mod=rnews&op=sections&func=read&c_menu=1&c_id=163209&tokens=reformna+pogodba (22 January 2008).

Slovenian Parliament declared that Slovenia will strive to maintain the enlargement perspective is the most important since the enlargement perspective is the most important for the integration of the countries of the Western Balkans and their integration into the EU. The declaration stresses that the countries of the Western Balkans have a clear European perspective and Slovenia will endeavour for their early accession to the EU on the basis of the Thessaloniki agenda and the strict fulfilment of the accession criteria. More specifically, it pledged Slovenia's support for reform process in Macedonia, in order for this country to receive a date of the beginning of accession negotiations as soon as possible. The declaration also states that specific attention will be paid to a European perspective of Serbia, since Serbia is crucial for stability and progress in the region. Slovenia's support for Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina is also mentioned.

Slovenian Government's stance on the Western Balkans is consistent with the principles and goals stated in the declaration. At the time of publishing of the reports in the beginning of November, Slovenia was already fully preparing to take over the Presidency of the EU in the first half of 2008 and it was well known that progress in the Western Balkans countries' integration into the EU is to be one of the main priorities of the Slovenian Presidency. Slovenian Foreign Minister also visited Belgrade, Skopje and Priztina in late October, pledging Slovenia's support in endeavours of Serbia and Macedonia to meet the criteria as well as in retaining the momentum for enlargement during its Presidency. Prior to Foreign Minister's visit to Belgrade, Skopje and Priztina, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement presenting the principles and goals of Slovenian policy towards Western Balkans.⁷ The statement stresses the importance of Serbia for stability in South Eastern Europe and declares Slovenia's support for an accelerated accession process for Serbia, it pledges support for the region's economic progress and progress towards integration into the EU in general. In relation to Kosovo it states that the existing plans for the solution of the status of Kosovo would benefit from a special concern paid to the rights of minorities.⁸ Support for Macedonia's progress towards the beginning of accession negotiations has also been expressed in Prime Minister Janzica's letter to the members of European Council at the end of September 2007,⁹ Slovenian Government hopes for the date of the beginning of accession negotiations with Macedonia to be set during its Presidency in the first half of 2008.¹⁰

The annual progress reports as such did not arouse larger debate. Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed its satisfaction over the progress made by countries of the Western Balkans in their integration to the EU and stressed its satisfaction over the confirmation of the European perspective for these countries given in the report. Bigger importance was given to the issue of Croatia's implementation of the Adriatic ecological and fisheries zone for the countries of the EU, which is an issue in bilateral Slovenian-Croatian relations.¹¹ To Slovenia's satisfaction, the report on Croatia calls for the issue of the non-application of the ecological and fishing protection zone in the Adriatic to EU member states to be resolved.

It is worth mentioning that the main political actors, primarily Prime Minister Janzica and Foreign Minister Rupel, stressed on numerous occasions¹² the necessity for a revival of a Thessaloniki agenda, paired with strict fulfilment of all the enlargement criteria.

⁶ Deklaracija o usmeritvah za delovanje Republike Slovenije v institucijah Evropske unije v obdobju januar 2007 . junij 2008 (DeUDIEU0708) [Declaration on the directions for activities of the Republic of Slovenia in the EU institutions in the period 2007 . June 2008], adopted by the National Parliament of the Republic of Slovenia on 27 March 2007, Uradni list RS 31/2007 of 6 April 2007.

⁷ Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs prior to Foreign Minister's Rupel visit to Belgrade, Skopje and Priztina, 23 October 2007, available at: [http://www.mzz.gov.si/index.php?id=13&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=23633&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=](http://www.mzz.gov.si/index.php?id=13&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=23633&tx_ttnews[backPid]=) (22 January 2008).

⁸ Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs prior to Foreign Minister's Rupel visit to Belgrade, Skopje and Priztina, 23 October 2007, available at: [http://www.mzz.gov.si/index.php?id=13&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=23633&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=](http://www.mzz.gov.si/index.php?id=13&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=23633&tx_ttnews[backPid]=) (22 January 2008).

⁹ STA (30 September 2007), Jutranji list o Janzevem pismu Barroso: Srbiji im prej status kandidatke EU [Jutranji list on Janzica's letter to Barroso: Early candidate status for Serbia].

¹⁰ STA (19 November 2007), EU/2008: Slovenija za Zahodni Balkan in Evropsko pogodbo [Slovenija for Western Balkans and European treaty].

¹¹ STA/Ministry of Foreign Affairs (30 November 2007), Eye on Slovenia: Slovenia and Western Balkans, No 22, available at: http://www.mzz.gov.si/fileadmin/pageuploads/Novinarsko_sredisce/sta/BiltenSTA_nov2007eng.pdf (22 January 2008).

¹² Foreign Minister Rupel at the meeting with Austrian diplomats in Vienna on 3 September 2007, STA (3 September 2007), Rupel na Dunaju o izzivih slovenskega predsedovanja EU; Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs prior to Foreign Minister's Rupel visit to Belgrade, Skopje and Priztina, 23 October 2007, available at: [http://www.mzz.gov.si/index.php?id=13&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=23633&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=](http://www.mzz.gov.si/index.php?id=13&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=23633&tx_ttnews[backPid]=) (22 January 2008); Prime Minister Janzica in a letter to the members of European Council at the end of September, STA (30 September 2007), Jutranji list o Janzevem pismu Barroso: Srbiji im prej status kandidatke EU [Jutranji list on Janzica's letter to Barroso: Early candidate status for Serbia]; Prime Minister Janzica in Ostrava on 10 December 2007, STA (10 December 2007), Evropa mora povzeti pobudo glede Kosova [Europe must take the initiative on Kosovo].

Slovenia's position on the future of Kosovo is shaped by three factors: historical closeness to Kosovo, geographic closeness and economic ties with Serbia, and the role as a country holding the rotating Presidency of the EU in the first half of 2008. Each of these factors has a specific effect on Slovenian attitude. The first shapes the Slovenian stance towards a pro-independence bloc, which resulted in a tacit support for the Ahtisaari plan (though with improvements regarding the protection of minorities).¹³ The second suggests reservation and strong support for Serbia's EU perspective, which has been confirmed in Prime Minister's letter to the members of European Council,¹⁴ as well as declared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁵ The third gives it a hideaway in its neutral role, placing all efforts on keeping the united European position on the matter, which has been called upon by Prime Minister and Foreign Minister on numerous occasions.¹⁶

In a letter to members of European Council in late September, Prime Minister Janza stressed the importance of a united European stance over the issue of the status of Kosovo, but he also called for a fast-track procedure for Serbia's membership in the EU, more precisely, he suggested de-coupling of the Kosovo issue from Serbia's EU perspective and a candidate status given to it (provided Serbia meets the criteria) in the first half of 2008.¹⁷

There are two additional elements regarding the Kosovo issue: Slovenia's aptness to play a more decisive role and a fairly new element of a European or global solution. The first is a common element in a discourse of Kosovo in Slovenia. Allegedly Slovenia, i.e. its policy-makers, possesses knowledge on the subject that justifies hopes laid upon it to contribute to the solution of the problem. Foreign Minister Rupel commented on an occasion that he notices a shortage on understating of a problem, shortage on knowledge of history.¹⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs established a high-profiled Centre for European Perspective to justify Slovenia's knowledge and readiness to contribute. Whereas Slovenia can undoubtedly contribute on numerous issues and policy developments in the candidate and potential candidate countries, deeper knowledge on a political issue with such a heavy weight as the one of resolving the Kosovo status is particularly difficult to combine with the non-biased role of the country holding the Presidency.

Slovenian foreign policy is to a large extent European oriented and with preparations on the Presidency it is only natural that Prime Minister Janza stressed that in his view Europe should take the lead regarding Kosovo issue and make a step forward. He proposed that the EU should prepare a timeline according to which this question would be in the process of solution also during the Slovenian EU Presidency.¹⁹

The new Slovenian President, Dr. Danilo Türk, however, a former high ranking diplomat in the United Nations, brought a broader perspective into the Slovenian (European) foreign policy. After being a Slovenian Ambassador to the United Nations, while he also held the Chair of the Security Council, he served as Deputy Secretary General for Political Affairs in the cabinet of Kofi Annan. Dr. Türk entered the office in late December. In a conversation on the current foreign policy issues in the beginning of January (thus only a fortnight after taking up the office), he presented his views on Slovenia's aptness and the European task. Dr. Türk's view is that Slovenia does not have special competence to propose solutions for Kosovo due to its geographical and historical proximity to the area. One has to understand the issue of Kosovo as a global question, he explained. And the resolution of the status of Kosovo should not be understood as a solution to all trouble in the region. He explained that while

¹³ Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs prior to Foreign Minister's Rupel visit to Belgrade, Skopje and Priztina, 23 October 2007, available at: [http://www.mzz.gov.si/index.php?id=13&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=23633&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=](http://www.mzz.gov.si/index.php?id=13&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=23633&tx_ttnews[backPid]=) (22 January 2008).

¹⁴ STA (30 September 2007), Jutranji list o Janzevem pismu Barrosu: Srbiji im prej status kandidatke EU [Jutranji list on Janza's letter to Barroso: Early candidate status for Serbia].

¹⁵ Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs prior to Foreign Minister's Rupel visit to Belgrade, Skopje and Priztina, 23 October 2007, available at: [http://www.mzz.gov.si/index.php?id=13&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=23633&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=](http://www.mzz.gov.si/index.php?id=13&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=23633&tx_ttnews[backPid]=) (22 January 2008).

¹⁶ Press reported the endeavour for a united stance after Foreign Minister Rupel's visits to Portugal in September, Berlin in November, etc. Foreign Minister also stressed the work on keeping the EU position together in a speech at the EPSCA Pre-Presidency conference on 3 October 2007 in Ljubljana.

¹⁷ STA (2 October 2007), Bruselj pozdravlja namere Slovenije za spodbudo Balkanu [Brussels welcomed Slovenia's intentions for incentives for Western Balkans].

¹⁸ STA (20 December 2007), Rupel: Naze geslo je Si.nergija za Evropo [Rupel: Our motto is Si.nergy for Europe].

¹⁹ STA (10 December 2007), Janza: Evropa mora prevzeti pobudo glede Kosova [Janza: Europe must take the initiative regarding Kosovo].

considered the Kosovo question as one of the big world issues which Palestinian or Korean questions. He concluded that more efforts integration in Europe and he also stressed that Europe in the recent history does not dispose of models sophisticated enough to integrate Islamic element into its cultural-social mainstream. Here, we could learn more from the models, developed in the former Yugoslavia, he proposed.²⁰

3. European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and Russia ENP almost absent from political and public debates

ENP is to a large extent absent from a political or public debate and all one can find are government or National Parliament declarative statements on the future of relations between the EU and the countries east and south of it. Relations with the Western Balkans absorb all the attention in Slovenia as far as neighbouring countries are concerned, with a small niche left for Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Therefore, the following is an outline of the formal government position regarding the ENP (in line with the annual declaration of the National Parliament on the work of Slovenia in the institutions of the EU),²¹ with additional observations on Sarkozy's idea on the Mediterranean Union and the Euro-Mediterranean University, which is to be established on the Slovenian coast.

Key regions/countries for ENP

Slovenia is in favour of further strengthening of the ENP as a whole (the Mediterranean region and the Eastern Europe and South Caucasus) and will aim at its further consolidation within a single and coherent policy framework. Since multilateral cooperation in the Mediterranean part of the ENP is more developed, Slovenia is in favour of increased regional cooperation in the Eastern ENP region as well.²²

New enhanced agreement with Ukraine

Slovenia supports ongoing negotiation with Ukraine on new enhanced agreement and welcomes its closure and signing as soon as possible.

Start of negotiations on new partnership agreement with Russia

Slovenia supports the efforts to start negotiations for the **new comprehensive framework agreement** to succeed the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement as soon as possible. The relations between Russia and Poland regarding the trade of meat and plant products are normalising. Positive expectations exist that the mandate for negotiations on a new Partnership and Co-operation Agreement could be confirmed during Slovenian Presidency.

Nordic dimension of ENP and Baltic cooperation

When talking about the ENP the term Mediterranean and Eastern ENP region is commonly used. Nevertheless, Nordic dimension (in the sense of cooperation of Nordic States) and Baltic cooperation can improve cooperation between the EU and individual ENP partners as well as it can strengthen relations within the regions. Slovenia is in favour of cooperation which contributes to deeper economic integration within the ENP and fosters people-to-people contacts.

Black Sea Synergy / Black Sea cooperation

²⁰ RTV SLO (9 January 2008), Türk: Za Kosovo nismo pristojnejzi, Slovenski predsednik o zunanji politiki [Türk: We do not have special competence for Kosovo, Slovenian President of the Republic on Foreign Policy], available at: http://www.rtvsllo.si/modload.php?&c_mod=rnews&op=sections&func=read&c_menu=16&c_id=162109 (13 January 2008).

²¹ Deklaracija o usmeritvah za delovanje Republike Slovenije v institucijah Evropske unije v obdobju januar 2007 . junij 2008 (DeUDIEU0708) [Declaration on the directions for activities of the Republic of Slovenia in the EU institutions in the period 2007 . June 2008], adopted by the National Parliament of the Republic of Slovenia on 27 March 2007, Uradni list RS 31/2007 of 6 April 2007.

²² Answers to all the questions under the title of the ENP were provided by Mr Matej Marn, Head of the Division for EU Affairs at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia, document no. ZEU-77/2008, 5 February 2008 (contact person Ms. Monika Suza).

tion offers big potential and challenges in some crucial sectors
it, migration and security. Therefore, the state very much
regional cooperation initiative for Black Sea Synergy. Since
the above mentioned fields of possible cooperation are incorporated within the priority development
and enhancement goals of the Republic of Slovenia, the state pays much attention to the region.
Slovenia is convinced that enhanced regional cooperation . the goal of the synergy . can contribute to
the process of solving long-existing disputes in the region, especially under condition of more intense
EU engagement. Increased inter-state trust can lead to faster national reforms in the states of the
region. Black Sea Synergy represents also a possibility of ENP development in the East as it involves
all five Eastern ENP countries and centres on the same issues as the ENP (migration, transport,
energy, economic cooperation).

Potential impact of Sarkozy's project 'Mediterranean Union' on ENP

Since there has been no official presentation of the Mediterranean Union initiative, an official position
of the Republic of Slovenia towards this issue has not yet been constituted. Nevertheless, it is worth to
mention that in July 2007 Slovenia organized an informal meeting of Mediterranean EU member states
at its coastal town of Portorož. The participating states were Foreign Ministers of Bulgaria, Cyprus, France,
Greece, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and the host debated on the issue of the Mediterranean
Union. At this meeting Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel declared that the idea of the
Mediterranean Union is directed to alignment of states with similar problems and inspirations and
which could gather within this kind of union with a common ground and action. He underlined that the
states gathered at the Portorož meeting represent important if not the most important member states
of the EU. At the same time, he rejected allegations that the French proposal is presented as a
consolation prize for Turkey's rejection of the EU membership.²³

Biggest challenges from ENP regions . East and South (immigration, security, energy, etc)

At the moment, in Slovenian opinion the biggest challenges for the ENP regions are the issues of
further economic integration, mobility issues, sectoral reforms and modernisation and the role of the
EU in conflict prevention and resolution.

Probable impact of new provisions of Lisbon Treaty on external relations and ENP

The potential influence on the ENP is seen in the newly formed function of the EU Foreign Minister, as
it will unify the current roles of the EU Commissioner for External Relations and ENP and the High
Representative for CFSP.

Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP)

An important dimension of the EMP is intercultural dialogue. Year 2008 has been declared as the year
of the intercultural dialogue, launched at the ceremony taking place in Ljubljana on 8th of January
2008. Within this context, the Slovenian Government deems of high importance the establishment of
the Euro-Mediterranean University with a seat in Slovenia and appreciates the help from all Euro-
Mediterranean Partner countries. The Government has established a University Centre for Euro-
Mediterranean Studies, responsible for further activities which are to lead to the establishment of the
University.²⁴

4. Budget Review Debate has yet to begin

In light of extensive preparation of Slovenia's government to take on the rotating Presidency in the first
half of 2008, the budget review . while not being among the priorities . hardly attracted any public

²³ RTV SLO/STA (2007), Na Obali o sredozemski uniji [At the Coast on the Mediterranean Union], Radio-Television Slovenia,
Slovenian Press Agency, Portorož, 5 July, available at:
http://www.rtvlo.si/modload.php?&c_mod=rnews&op=sections&func=read&c_menu=16&c_id=146308&tokens=sredozemska+unija
(6 July 2007).

²⁴ Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia, Evromediterransko partnerstvo (EMP) [Euro-Mediterranean
Partnership], available at: http://www.mzz.gov.si/si/zunanja_politika/evropska_unija/evromediterransko_partnerstvo_emp/ (12
January 2008). Further information on the Centre can be found at the website: <http://www.emuni.si/>.

representatives, civil society activities or media coverage. The budget Reform Task Force was convened in November 2006. The task force led by Professor Mitja Turk consisted of individuals from both the government and the academic sphere involved in various aspects of EU financing. Its mandate was to prepare an analytical basis for budget reform and to define possible reform scenarios on both the expenditure and revenue sides of the EU budget. The open structure of the task force and an open mandate calling for an analysis of dilemmas and preparation of possible financial scenarios was a leading light for the activities that resulted in the report titled "EU Budget Review: An Opportunity for a thorough reform or minor adjustments".²⁵ The publication of the report has not spurred any wider debate, but the Government office for European Affairs is planning to structure and lead the debate in the coming months. The discussion in the small expert community, however, is vivid, and mostly taken up by the mentioned report.

Positions on EU spending and EU resources

As already mentioned above, it is not possible to provide Slovenia's positions on these issues. All these issues are raised in the above mentioned expert report, which nevertheless will serve as a basis of a wider debate which is yet to follow. The report, however, does not take any definite position on these issues, but presents an analysis and a number of possible scenarios for future financing of the EU budget, its expenditures, including a possibility of a correction mechanism and an introduction of an EU tax.

5. Current issues and discourses in your country

Presidential elections, governmental disturbances, EU Presidency

Presidential Elections

The attention in internal affairs in the second half of 2007 was turned to the Presidential elections. Professor Dr. Danilo Türk was elected as third President of the Republic since Slovenia's independence. Initially, there had been 13 presidential candidates, eventually only seven candidates remained (besides Danilo Türk also Lojze Peterle, Mitja Gaspari, Zmago Jelinčič, Darko Krajnc, Elena Pečarič and Monika Piberl) (one of the candidates resigned his candidature since the only purpose of his campaign was actually to make a film titled *Gola resnica* - Naked Truth to expose the faultiness in the electoral process in Slovenia). The first part of the campaign (which began already almost a year ago) seemed uninteresting as Lojze Peterle, MEP of the European People's Party, was perceived far in the lead. Since Dr. Türk was a newcomer to the domestic political scene previously acting in the UN system as Slovenian Ambassador, it was estimated that a well known former finance minister and previous Governor of the Bank of Slovenia, who also lead Slovenia on the path to Euro, Mitja Gaspari, would be going to the second round together with Mr Peterle. However, Mr Gaspari lost to Professor Türk by a very narrow margin of less than 4.000 votes (out of 1.005.595 people who voted). The final result of the elections in the second round was 31,97 per cent for Peterle and 68,03 per cent for Professor Türk.²⁶

There have been quite a few surprises in the campaign and also in the final outcome. Mr Peterle received an unconvincingly poor result already in the first round (28,73 per cent) after being held a favourite since the beginning of the campaign. After the elections, in his public statements Mr Peterle claimed that he was too closely associated with the governmental policy (he received official support by the government during the campaign). The government at the time had low public support and the Prime Minister Janša even proposed a vote of confidence in the Parliament immediately following the elections (see below under Governmental disturbances).

The third big surprise was a high percentage of votes (19,16 per cent) received by an extreme right winged (nationalist) candidate Zmago Jelinčič, President of the Slovenian National Party, who, in the

²⁵ An executive summary in English is available on the homepage of the Government's office for European Affairs, http://www.svez.gov.si/fileadmin/svez.gov.si/pageuploads/docs/pregled_proracuna_EU/POVZETEK-ANGL-CELOTA-NTC-ALT.pdf.

²⁶ Data taken from the Voting Commission of the Republic of Slovenia, Elections of the President 2007, available in English at: <http://www.volitve.gov.si/vp2007/en/index.html> (25 January 2008).

ized for his use of hostile language especially regarding the
issues.²⁷

During the summer of 2007 three Ministers have been replaced, namely the Minister for Health Andrej Bru an, Minister for Transport Janez Boš i and Minister for Higher Education, Science and Technology Jure Zupan.²⁸

In November the result of the Presidential elections caused another disruption. The government-supported candidate, Mr Peterle, received only one third of all votes in the second round of elections, which the government understood as a public vote of non-confidence in its policy and even proposed a vote on confidence in the Parliament. Governing coalition and Prime Minister stayed in position with 51 votes for and 33 against the support to the government in the vote of confidence (out of 90 seats in the Parliament).²⁹ The debate was heated, calculating the odds for a technical government or for Mr Pahor, MEP, President of the Slovenian Democrats, the opposition party with the biggest support in the polls, to be given a mandate to form a government. However, the opposition was very much opposed to changes in the government. Their arguments (as well as those of the coalition itself) rested on the belief that it would be unwise to change government at the time when Slovenia takes on the role of the Presidency of the EU, as well as that they (opposition) wants to be given a mandate by the parliamentary elections.

High inflation

Slovenia has the highest inflation rate within the Eurozone. Average yearly inflation rate in the Eurozone for 2007 was 3,1 per cent but it amounted to 5,7 per cent in Slovenia.³⁰ However, experts claim that introduction of Euro is not the cause of this high inflation rate. This was pointed out also by the European Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs Joaquim Almunia.³¹ Nevertheless, the prices of some basic food commodities have risen even up to 30 per cent and workers within the public and private sector trade unions have demanded higher salaries and have threatened with a general strike. The latter was scheduled for 31 January 2008 and eventually cancelled on 25 January as the agreement for a 3,4 percent raise of the (occupation-specific) minimum wage was stroke between the government and the trade unions.

Presidency of the EU

Slovenia assumed the Presidency of the EU as the first of the new member states, who acceded to the EU in 2004. A common, 18-month programme of the Presidency was prepared by a so called Ąriq three successive countries holding the Presidency (Germany, Portugal, Slovenia), in cooperation with the General Secretariat of the Council.³²

Priorities of the Slovenian Presidency are:

1. The future of the Union and timely entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty
2. Successful launching of the new Lisbon Strategy cycle
3. A step forward in addressing climate-energy issues

²⁷ RTV SLO (3 January 2008), 2007: Sledi leta v Sloveniji [2007: Traces of the year in Slovenia], available at: http://www.rtv slo.si/modload.php?&c_mod=rnews&op=sections&func=read&c_menu=1&c_id=159859&tokens=predsedni%C5%A1ke+volitve+slovenija (13 January 2008).

²⁸ RTV SLO (3 January 2008), 2007: Sledi leta v Sloveniji [2007: Traces of the year in Slovenia], available at: http://www.rtv slo.si/modload.php?&c_mod=rnews&op=sections&func=read&c_menu=1&c_id=159859&tokens=predsedni%C5%A1ke+volitve+slovenija (13 January 2008).

²⁹ RTV SLO/STA (19 November 2007), Vlada po pri akovanjih prejela zaupnico [As expected, the Government received a confidence vote], available at: http://www.rtv slo.si/modload.php?&c_mod=rnews&op=sections&func=read&c_menu=1&c_id=157780&tokens=slovenija+vlada (25 January 2008).

³⁰ RTV SLO (14 December 2007), Slovenija z najvizjo inflacijo v evrobmo ju, EU: Najvizja inflacija od uvedbe evra [Slovenia with the highest inflation in the eurozone: the highest inflation after the introduction of Euro], available at: http://www.rtv slo.si/modload.php?&c_mod=rnews&op=sections&func=read&c_menu=16&c_id=160052&tokens=inflacija+sloveni ja (25 January 2008).

³¹ RTV SLO (4 December 2007), Inflacija ni povezana z evrom [Inflation is not connected to Euro], available at: http://www.rtv slo.si/modload.php?&c_mod=rnews&op=sections&func=read&c_menu=16&c_id=159115&tokens=inflacija+sloveni ja (25 January 2007).

³² Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia, Predsedovanje Slovenije EU [Slovenian Presidency of the EU], available at: http://www.mzz.gov.si/si/zunanja_politika/evropska_unija/predsedovanje_slovenije_eu/ (12 January 2008).

erspective of the Western Balkans
cultures, beliefs and traditions in the context of the European

The Slovenian Presidency Programme **Si**.nergy for Europe is available online in English:
<http://www.eu2008.si/si/>.

Relations with Croatia

Slovenia and Croatia have not been able to resolve their open border issues. Slowly an arbitration option was on the table. Slovenia proposed that the issue of border between the two states should be solved by Court of Conciliation and Arbitration established within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Croatia proposed the border issue to be submitted to the International Court of Maritime Law in Hamburg. A compromise was proposed to be the International Court of Justice in The Hague; however this solution again remains unconfirmed despite approval in principle made by Prime Ministers of both countries at Bled on 26 August 2007. Three other issues remain open . debts to Croatian bank-account holders of the *Ljubljanska banka*, disposal of nuclear waste and payment for the energy supplied to Croatia from a co-owned Nuclear Power Plant in Krzko, Slovenia; and Croatian self-proclaimed Ecological-Fishery Zone (EFZ) in the Adriatic Sea . ,³⁴ of which the latter has been the source of most debate in the last few months.³⁵ The EFZ was scheduled to come into effect on 1 January 2008 (and it came into effect on that day), but it was understood, following the meeting of State-Secretaries of Italy, Croatia and Slovenia on 4 June 2004 in Brussels, that it would not be applied to the member states of the EU.³⁶ This understanding was also mentioned by Commissioner Rehn as part of Croatia's obligations in fulfilling the criteria to begin accession negotiations.³⁷ Croatian Prime Minister Sanader expressed his belief that the implementation of EFZ will not affect Croatia's accession negotiations to the EU. However, after the threat to freeze some of the EU accession negotiation chapters in second half of January 2008 (whereby Croatia did not close any in 2007), Croatian Prime Minister Sanader has admitted there has come to a halt in this process and called for further talks on the EFZ issue with Slovenia, Italy and the European Commission.³⁸

³³ Slovensko Predsedstvo EU 2008: Program in prednostne naloge Slovenskega Predsedstva [Programme and priorities of the Slovenian Presidency], available at: http://www.eu2008.si/en/The_Council_Presidency/Priorities_Programmes/index.html? (25 January 2008).

³⁴ For the history of the open issues, see Roter, Petra and Ana Bojinovi (2005), Croatia and the European Union: a troubled relationship, *Mediterranean Politics* 10(3), pp. 447. 54.

³⁵ RTV SLO (3 January 2008), 2007: Sledi leta v Sloveniji [2007: Traces of the year in Slovenia], available at: http://www.rtvlo.si/modload.php?&c_mod=rnews&op=sections&func=read&c_menu=1&c_id=159859&tokens=predsedni%C5%A1ke+volitve+slovenija (13 January 2008).

³⁶ RTV SLO/STA (11 January 2008), "Hrvazka mora razveljaviti ERC", Sanader: Uveljavitev cone ne bo ovirala pogajanj, available at: http://www.rtvlo.si/modload.php?&c_mod=rnews&op=sections&func=read&c_menu=16&c_id=162278 (13 January 2008).

³⁷ Government's EU Gateway (6 December 2007), EU, Hrvazka in ekološko-ribolovna cona [EU, Croatia and Ecological-Fishery Zone]; available at: <http://evropa.gov.si/novice/7356/> (25 January 2008).

³⁸ RTV SLO (Zagreb, 23 January 2008), Sanader pozval k pogovorom o ERC-ju [Sanader called to further talks on the EFZ], available at: http://www.rtvlo.si/modload.php?&c_mod=rnews&op=sections&func=read&c_menu=16&c_id=163320 (25 January 2008).