Definition: **Slovenia** from *Collins English Dictionary*


Summary Article: **Slovenia**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Country in south-central Europe, bounded north by Austria, east by Hungary, west by Italy, and south by Croatia.

**Government** Slovenia is a multiparty parliamentary democracy. Under its 1991 constitution, it has a two-chamber parliament, comprising the National Assembly and the National Council. The lower house, known as the National Assembly or State Chamber, has 90 members comprising 88 elected for a four-year term under a system of proportional representation with a 4% threshold for representation, and two deputies elected by Hungarian and Italian ethnic minorities. The 40-member State Council is made up of representatives of social, economic, professional, and local interest groups selected for five years, and has veto powers over the National Assembly. The president, popularly elected for a maximum of two five-year terms, has mainly ceremonial powers. The prime minister is drawn from the party or coalition which commands a majority in the national assembly and governs with a council of ministers (cabinet). There is a Supreme Court, comprising judges elected by the National Assembly, and a Constitutional Court, whose judges are nominated by the president and elected by the National Assembly for nine-year terms.

**History** Settled by Slavic Slovenes in the 6th century, the region came under Frankish rule in the mid 8th century and many of the Slavs were subsequently converted to Christianity. It came under Hungarian domination 907–55 and then the Habsburgs from 1335. It formed part of the Austrian crown lands of Carniola, Styria, and Carinthia prior to its incorporation in 1918 into the kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, which became part of Yugoslavia in 1929. Unlike neighbouring Croatia, there were few Slovenian demands for autonomy during the 1930s. During World War II the region was occupied by Germany and Italy; it was made a constituent republic within the Yugoslav Socialist Federal Republic in November 1945. It was the most economically advanced and politically liberal republic within the federation, helping to subsidize the poorer republics.

**Nationalist unrest** From the 1980s there was economic decline and increasing nationalist unrest. In part, this was provoked by rising Serb nationalism within Yugoslavia, following the rise to power, from 1986 in the Serb republic, of Slobodan Milosevic. The leadership of the ruling Slovene League of Communists responded by pressing for greater autonomy within the federation to enable the republic
to pursue a strategy of economic liberalization and political pluralism. In 1989 opposition parties were legalized and a free, multiparty election was held in April 1990. Despite renaming themselves the Party of Democratic Reform (PDR) and adopting a social democratic programme, the communists were convincingly defeated by the six-party Democratic Opposition of Slovenia (DEMOS), a nationalist, centre-right coalition, which campaigned for independence within a year. However, the PDR’s reformist leader, Milan Kucan, was popularly elected state president, renouncing his party membership once installed in office. The new government promoted the formation of a new loose Yugoslav confederation, but this was resisted by Serbia.

Secession from Yugoslavia Slovenia’s voters gave overwhelming (88%) support to independence in a referendum in December 1990 and plans were made for secession. In spring 1991 an independent army, the Slovenian Territorial Defence Force, was established and in May 1991 Slovenia and Croatia both announced that they would secede from the Yugoslav federation on 26 June 1991. The Serb-dominated Yugoslavian army sought to prevent secession and there was a 10-day war with Yugoslavia (27 June to 6 July 1991) in which 67 were killed in clashes around newly established Slovene border posts. The European Community (EC) brokered a ceasefire, based upon a three-month suspension of Slovenia’s declaration of independence and the withdrawal of the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) from the republic. This was successfully implemented as the focus of the JNA’s activity switched to Croatia, with its much larger Serb minority. In December 1991 Slovenia adopted a new constitution. In the same month DEMOS dissolved itself and reverted to independent parties.

Independence recognized The EC (now European Union (EU)) and USA formally recognized Slovenia’s independence in January 1992. A vote of no confidence in the government in April 1992 led to the appointment of Janez Drnovšek as prime minister designate. Slovenia was admitted to the United Nations in May 1992. Assembly elections in December 1992 were won by the centrist Liberal Democrats (LDS) and Christian Democrats (SKD), and the independent Milan Kucan was re-elected president (and was later re-elected again in November 1997). Janez Drnovšek was re-elected prime minister by the national assembly in January 1993. In January 1996 the United List of Social Democrats (ZLSD) withdrew from the governing coalition.

Under Drnovšek, Slovenia joined the IMF in 1993 and undertook economic reforms, including privatization and restructuring its banking system as the economy re-adjusted to develop new export markets in the EU and USA. In June 1996 Slovenia signed an association accord with the EU and applied for full membership. In parliamentary elections November 1996 the Liberal Democrats, led by Prime Minister Drnovšek, fell short of a majority and faced a challenge from an alliance of right-wing parties. However, Drnovšek was able to form a coalition with the conservative Slovenian People’s Party (SLS).

Changing governments Drnovšek briefly lost power in June–October 2000 to a right-wing coalition government of the SLA, SKD, and New Slovenian Christian People’s Party (NSi), with Andrej Bajuk, a banker, becoming prime minister. However, the coalition split over proposals to reform the electoral system and Drnovšek returned to power after the October 2000 elections. He headed a centre-left coalition which continued with the ongoing privatization programme. Drnovšek remained prime minister until December 2002, when he was elected state president and replaced as premier by Anton Rop of the Liberal Democrats.

The October 2004 general elections brought an end to 12 years of centre-left LDS-led governments. In November 2004, Janez Jansa, leader of the centre-right Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS, formerly

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the Social Democratic Party) and a former defence minister, became prime minister at the head of a new four-party coalition government which included the SLS, NSi, and the Democratic Party of Retired People (DeSUS), which pledged to press ahead with privatization and prepare the country for adoption of the euro as its currency.

**NATO and EU membership** In March 2004 Slovenia joined NATO and in September 2003 ended compulsory military service.

On 1 May 2004 Slovenia became a member of the EU. This followed a 2003 referendum in which 90% of voters favoured accession. With a strong economy, low inflation, and economic growth averaging nearly 5% a year between 2004 and 2006, in January 2007 it became the first of the countries which joined the EU in 2004 to adopt the euro as its currency. In December 2007 it acceded to the Schengen accord over border controls.

**New government** Suffering from cancer, from which he died in February 2008, Drnovšek decided not to seek a further term as president and Danilo Türk, a former professor of law and an independent, was elected state president in November 2007. He won 68% of the run-off round vote, defeating Lojze Peterle, the former Christian Democrat prime minister in 1990–92.

The parliamentary elections of September 2008 brought a change of government, with the centre-left Social Democrats (SD), formerly the ZLSD until 2005, led by the 45-year-old Borut Pahor, finishing one seat ahead of the SDS, with 29 of the 90 National Assembly seats, based on a 31% share of the national vote. Pahor became prime minister in November 2008, heading a coalition which included the LDS, DeSUS, and Zares-New Politics. His government pledged to reform the health and pensions system and cut taxes, but faced a difficult economic situation as the global financial crisis of 2008–09 led to a sharp contraction in world trade and markets for Slovenia's exports. In July 2010 Slovenia became a member of the OECD.

**Jansa returns as prime minister** The economic slowdown, with GDP contracting by 8% in 2009, and then the eurozone financial crisis from 2010, forced austerity budget cuts. This led to falling popularity and divisions within the Pahor governing coalition. In the spring and early summer of 2011 DeSUS and Zares left and in June 2011 voters rejected a referendum motion to reform the pension system.

The unpopular Pahor was defeated in a September 2011 assembly vote of no confidence, but later went on to be elected president in December 2012 and re-elected in November 2017.

The general election of December 2011 saw the centre-left Positive Slovenia (PS) party, recently formed by Zoran Janković, the mayor of Ljubljana, surprisingly finish first, with 28 of the 90 seats. But it was Janez Jansa, leader of the second place SDS, who returned as prime minister in February 2012, heading a five-party centre-right coalition.

Jansa's government had a short life. Public opposition to its austerity programme and corruption allegations surrounding Jansa and Janković provoked large protests in November–December 2012 in the capital, Ljubljana, and the second city, Maribor. In March 2013, facing a no-confidence vote and with increasing problems in the banking sector, Jansa resigned as prime minister. Later, in June 2013, he was convicted of corruption and sentenced to two years' imprisonment.

**Bratušek becomes Slovenia's first female prime minister** In March 2013 Alenka Bratušek, who had replaced Janković as leader of the opposition PS, became Slovenia's new, and first female, prime minister, after she formed a centre-left coalition which included the SDS and LMP. In May 2014 Bratušek was elected president, becoming the first woman to hold the top elected post in Slovenia.

In the November 2014 general election the SDS regained its position as the largest party in parliament, with 28 seats, and Janez Jansa once again became prime minister, heading a centre-right coalition which included the DeSUS, SDS-Presidium, and Zares-New Politics. The new government pledged to continue with economic reform, including the implementation of higher taxes and a new pension system.

In December 2015 Jansa's government called snap elections. The SDS and its allies lost their majority and Janez Jansa resigned as prime minister in January 2016, with a new centre-left government formed under the leadership of Robert P Tišler, who served until March 2017. Bratušek then took over as prime minister, heading a centre-left government which included the SDS and DeSUS, and pledged to continue with economic reform.
minister, heading a coalition with the SD, DeSUS, and Civil List (DL). She pledged to break with her predecessor’s austerity policy and give emphasis to growth and jobs. But Slovenia’s financial fragility meant that her room for manoeuvre was limited.

In November 2013 Bratušek won a confidence vote in parliament which gave backing to a package of financial measures to rescue Slovenia’s banks without the need for an international bailout. However, in April 2014 she was replaced as PS leader to by Zoran Jankovič and a month later resigned as prime minister and left the PS to form her own party, the Alliance of Alenka Bratušek.

**New Party of Miro Cerar wins snap general election** A snap general election was held in July 2014 and saw a surge in support for a new centre-left Party of Miro Cerar (SMC), formed in June 2014 by a lawyer and professor, Miro Cerar, untarnished by corruption scandals. The SMC finished first, with 35% of the vote and 36 of the 90 seats. A leftist United Left party also entered the Assembly for the first time, with six seats. Cerar became prime minister in September 2014 with the task of restoring stability to the financial sector and confidence in the political system.

In December 2015, in a referendum called by conservative groups, 64% of the 35% of participating voters rejected legislation that would have given same-sex couples the right to marry.

Between 2015 and 2016 Slovenia was a transit route for people fleeing North Africa and Syria during the Mediterranean refugee and migrant crisis. From October 2015 the government placed restrictions on the numbers of migrants it would allow to pass through the country, and in March 2016 it refused transit to those travelling the Balkan route to northern Europe.

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