



COUNTRY REPORT (SLOVENIA)



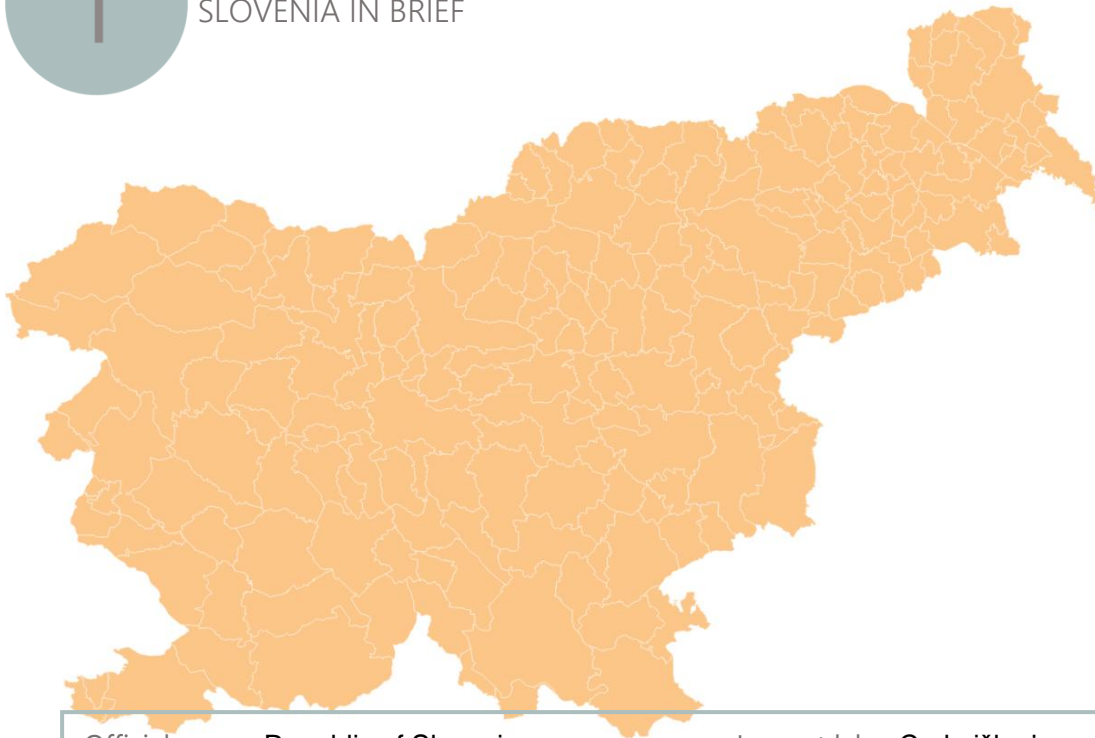
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SLOVENIA IN BRIEF



Official name: Republic of Slovenia

Capital city: Ljubljana

Other major cities: Maribor, Celje, Kranj, Velenje, Koper, Novo mesto, Ptuj, Nova Gorica, Murska Sobota, Jesenice, Trbovlje

Language: Slovenian (Italian and Hungarian in ethnically mixed regions)

Currency: Euro

Political system: a democratic republic based on the principle of separation of powers into the legislative, executive and judicial branches; the highest legislative authority is the National Assembly

Population: 2,076,595 (October 2018)

Highest peak: Triglav (2,864 m)

Largest lake: Cerčniško jezero (26 km² - largest intermittent lake in Europe)

Longest river: Sava (221 km)

Longest underground cave: Postojnska jama (19.5 km) – otherwise more than 10.000 caves and are home to the world's largest cave animal – *proteus anguinus* or the "human fish"

Largest protected nature site: Triglavski narodni park (83,982 ha)

Average population age: 43.3 years (October 2018)

Our pride: the exceptional quality of its drinking water.

LOCATION

Slovenia is a small European country that stretches over an area of 20.273 km² between the Alps, the Adriatic Sea, the Dinaric Alps - Karst and the Pannonia Plain. The great diversity of the Slovenian landscape is matched by its well-preserved natural environment; more than half of Slovenia is forested - most heavily forested countries in EU are Finland, Sweden and Slovenia. Slovenia shares land borders with Austria at 318 km, Italy at 280 km, Hungary at 102 km, and Croatia at 670 km, total border length of 1 370 km. The coastline extends over 46.6 km. The capital of Slovenia is Ljubljana.

POPULATION

At the start of 2019, the population for Slovenia stood at 2 080 908. Population density was at 102.7 people per square kilometre. The population breakdown by ethnicity was 93.36 % Slovenian; 0.03 % members of the Hungarian and 0.11 % Italian recognised national communities, the rest was attributed to others. The census of 2002 recorded every sixth person in

Slovenia (16.5 %) to be member of a different ethnic group: nearly 0.17 % Roma; 5.67 % former Yugoslavians, 0.04 % EU residents, and 10.58 % as other. According to statistical records on citizenship, the population stood in 2019 at 6.64 % foreign citizens (5.13 % from the former Yugoslavia, 0.99 % of the EU, and 0,51 % from other countries).

The official languages are Slovenian, and Italian and Hungarian in ethnically mixed areas inhabited by the Italian and Hungarian national communities.

BRIEF HISTORY

For almost one thousand years the Slovenes practiced a form of democracy where the Slovene farmers were ruled by the Duke, but had a say in how they were governed. Slovenia was ruled by the Habsburg Empire from the 1300s until after World War I in 1918. However, despite being part of the Habsburg Empire, Slovenia was able to maintain its unique culture, language and its own identity.

Slovenia became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in 1918, which later became the country of Yugoslavia. After World War II, Yugoslavia became a communist country led by Josip Broz Tito. After Tito died in 1980, Slovenia began to implement democracy and declared independence from Yugoslavia on 25th of June 1991, after more than 88% of the electorate voted for a sovereign and independent Slovenia on 23rd of December 1991. Slovenia is still a stable democracy and plays a large role in world events despite its small size. In 2004 Slovenia joined the European Union, and the currency is EURO since 2007.

POLITICAL SYSTEM

Slovenia is a **parliamentary democratic republic** with a proportional electoral system. In Slovenia power is vested in the people. All adult citizens of the Republic of Slovenia have the right to vote for representatives of the people in general, multi-party and free elections every 4 years. Power is divided into the legislative, executive and judicial branches. The holder of the legislative branch is the parliament, headed which consists of the National Assembly (88 representatives of political parties and two representatives of the Italian and Hungarian national communities) and the National Council (40 members). Executive power is vested in the Government (composed of the Prime Minister and 14 Ministers) and judicial power is separated from both the legislative and the executive powers.

The President of the Republic - as the commander-in-chief of the country's defence forces, represents and defends the interests of the Republic of Slovenia in relation to other nations. The President is elected by citizens in direct elections for a term of five years.

Slovenia has **212 municipalities**, of which 11 have the status of urban municipalities. Municipalities are an equal partner of the State and are managed by three independent bodies — the mayor, the municipal council and the monitoring committee. The mayor and the municipal council members are elected by the people in municipal elections every four years, while the monitoring committee is appointed by municipal councillors.

ECONOMY

The economy of Slovenia is developed and the country enjoys a high level of prosperity and stability as well as above average GDP per capita by purchasing power parity at 83% of the EU28 average in 2015. Nominal GDP in 2018 is 42.534 billion EUR, nominal GDP per capita (GDP/pc) in 2018 is EUR 21.267 in 2019 is 23.165.

The highest GDP/pc is in central Slovenia, where the capital city Ljubljana is located, which is part of the Western Slovenia statistical region, which has a higher GDP/pc than eastern Slovenia. In January 2007 it became the first member to have both joined the European Union and adopted the euro since the currency's creation in 1999 and it has been a member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development since 2010.

Slovenia has a highly educated workforce, well-developed infrastructure, and is situated at a major transport crossroad. The level of foreign direct investment is one of the lowest but has been steadily rising in the last few years.

The Slovenian economy has been severely hurt by the European economic crisis, which occurred in the late 2000s. In 2009 the Slovenian GDP per capita shrank by -7.9%. After a slow recovery

from the 2009 recession thanks to exports, the economy of Slovenia again slid into recession in the last quarter of 2011. After 2013 GDP per capita began rising again.

Almost two thirds of the working population are employed in services.

Slovenia's trade is orientated towards other EU countries, mainly Germany, Austria, Italy, and France. This is the result of a wholesale reorientation of trade toward the West and the growing markets of central and eastern Europe in the face of the collapse of its Yugoslav markets. Slovenia's economy is highly dependent on foreign trade.

SOCIETY

Approximately 50 per cent of the people reside in urban areas and 30 per cent in towns with more than 10,000 inhabitants, whilst the rest live in nearly 6,000 smaller towns and villages. The municipalities of Ljubljana (265,881, 2002 Census), Maribor (110,668), Kranj (51,225), Celje (48,081) and Koper-Capodistria (47,539) are Slovenia's five largest urban settlements.

The population density currently stands at 98.7 inhabitants per square kilometre, a figure much lower than in the majority of other European states. People have mainly settled the river valleys and transport routes, where long ago Slovene towns began to emerge, whilst the mountainous and forested areas remain unpopulated.

Slovenia's population is slowly declining, and the country has the lowest birth rate both in Europe and the world, although the figure of 18,932 live births in 2006 was the highest in the past decade. The average number of people per household is decreasing (in the last census in 2002 it was only 2.8) and the number of marriages is also falling, whilst the average age of mothers having their first child is increasing - in 2006 it was 28 years. In the 2002 Census almost a half of families with children (49 per cent) had only one child. In 2004 the life expectancy for men was 73.48 years and 81.08 for women, which is approximately three years longer than in the mid-1990s. People living in Slovenia have good education and employment opportunities and are well educated by all the usual indicators.

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CHILD AND FAMILY POLICY IN SLOVENIA



Slovenia takes a holistic and inclusive approach to family policy, thus including in it all types of family set-ups and domestic communities of two adults. The policy respects the plurality of family set-ups and the different needs arising therefrom, the autonomy of the family and the individuality of its members, help ensure children's rights in the family and in a broader context and give priority to the protection and quality of life of families and children. Slovenia pays special attention to the care of children and their protection and work with concern for their best interests.

NUMBER OF FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN IN SLOVENIA

The number of households has increased since 1 January 2011 proportionally to the population growth (by 7,000). In 2015, the average household size was 2.47 members.

On 1 January 2015 an average Slovenian family had 1.16 children (1.56 children if we take into account only families with children; they represent three quarters of all families).

Families with only one child prevailed (53%), followed by families with two children (36%). Families with many children are very rare (there were only 78 families with 8 or more children, which is 13 more than four years ago).

On average, most children (1.68) lived in married couple families, but their average age (18.3 years) exceeded the age of majority. The youngest children (9.9 years) lived in consensual union couple families, whereas the oldest, having on average 22.2 years, lived in lone mother families and those aged 21.2 years in lone father families.

Every third family consists of at least one child participating in education aged 0-5 years (preschool) or 6-14 years (elementary school) or 15-18 years (upper secondary school). The number of such families is presented in the infographic. The average number of children in such families is slightly higher (1.68) than the national average; 1.87 in married couple families.

In the scope of the 2015 Register-based Census SURS derived for the first time the data on same-sex families. There were 81 same-sex families, of which 64 without children and 17 with children.

Infographic: Families by age of children, Slovenia, 1 January 2015

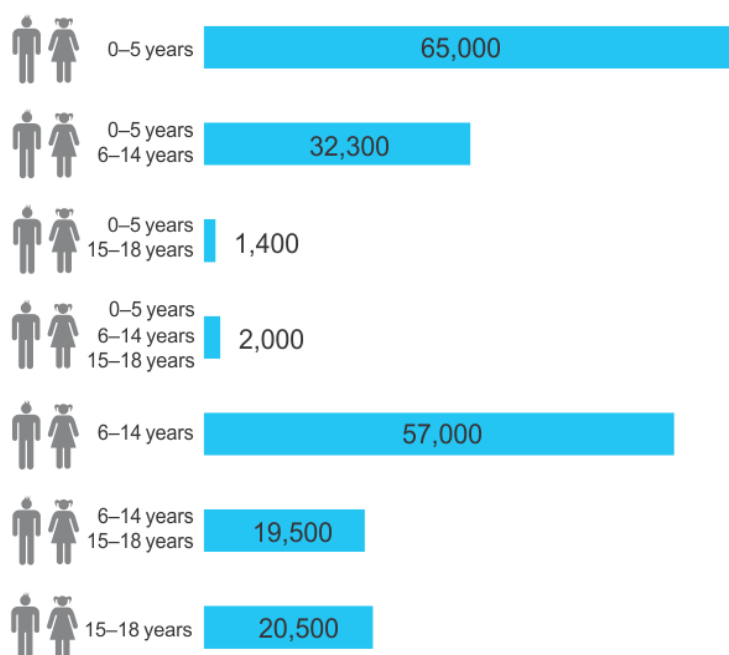


Table 1: Families by type and average number of children, Slovenia, 1 January

	Families			Average number of children in families with children	
	2011	2015	change to %	2011	2015
Total	567,347	576,177	1.6	1.56	1.56
Married couple, no children	125,489	131,245	4.6	-	-
Married couple with children	237,422	224,290	-5.5	1.69	1.68
Mother with children	119,706	116,295	-2.8	1.35	1.36
Father with children	23,423	26,844	14.6	1.29	1.31
Unmarried couple, no children	12,185	15,575	27.8	-	-
Unmarried couple with children	49,122	61,847	25.9	1.59	1.60
Same-sex partnership without children	...	64	...	-	-
Same-sex partnership with children	...	17	1.18

FAMILY LEAVES AND BENEFITS

Maternity leave starts 28 days before the scheduled date of delivery and lasts 105 days. After maternity leave, parental leave takes place for another 260 days and is intended for a mother or a father for his / her full or partial absence from work. A part of parental leave, up to a maximum of 75 days, can be transferred and used by either parent until the child finishes the first elementary school grade. The amount of parental benefit is equal to 100% of the basis and may not be more than 2.5 times the amount of the average monthly wage. More flexible forms of work, including the right to breastfeeding breaks, also contribute to facilitating the reconciliation of professional and family obligations.

Since the maintenance of children is a considerable financial challenge, parents are assisted in various ways to provide for their children. The childbirth grant is a one-off cash benefit intended for the purchase of children's necessities; parental allowance is paid to parents who have no parental protection insurance; child benefit is an income supplement to help parents provide for the maintenance, upbringing and education of their children. Parents of a child in need of special care and protection receive a special childcare allowance, with some of them being entitled to partial payment for loss of income and additional relief. Large families, i.e. those with at least three children, are also entitled to various types of allowances and relief.

Parents of children enrolled in public preschool institutions, private preschool institutions with concessions and private preschool institutions financed from municipal budgets may apply for reduced payment of kindergarten fees.

NATIONAL CONTEXT AND AN OVERVIEW OF KEY DOCUMENTS IN THE FIELD OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

In Slovenia, policies and practices affecting early childhood overlap different ministries and fields. As part of the implementation of early childhood policies, several laws and key strategic documents have been adopted and drawn up in the past decade. These are in the fields of health, social, education and family policy.

In the **field of Education**, Slovenia has developed an **integrated system** (a single structure organisation). Early childhood education and care for all children from the ages of one to six or up until they begin primary school. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport has been responsible for Early Childhood Education and care since 1993. The state has authority over the national policy, financial, legal background and outline of the programme. There are two laws that

are responsible for regulating pre-school education, **the Kindergarten Act and the Act on Organisation and Financing of Education.**

Local communities establish public kindergartens according to the needs of their constituents. Early Childhood Care programs are financed by public funds, donations, kindergarten fees paid by parents, founder investments as well as grants and other sources. Public pre-schools are co-financed by the local municipalities and parents, depending on their income class. This ranges from (0%- 77% of the full price of the program); and covers the difference of the full price. The payment of kindergartens also varies, depending on the number of children enrolled. The Kindergarten Act (article 20) gives priority to children from vulnerable social groups, children with special needs and children from families in a precarious situation in the admission and enrolment in kindergarten.

Pre-school education isn't compulsory, and parents decide whether their child attends kindergarten. These services are offered by either public or private (without concessions) kindergartens. When necessary, the network of public kindergartens is complemented by private kindergartens that have a concession. Depending on the needs of parents, children and in agreement with local municipalities, kindergartens can adopt various programs. They can have full day, half-day or even shorter programs. In the 2018/19 school year newer and shorter programs, (240 hours/year, which are funded by the state, were introduced. These programs are aimed and designed for children who haven't attended kindergarten and are in their final pre-school year before starting the compulsory primary-school program. Kindergartens have to apply to the Ministry to obtain extra funds for this program. The time spent in kindergarten is divided into two periods; the first is for children aged 1-3 and the second from 3- up until entering primary school. Education specialists working in public and private kindergartens with a concession have to follow the guidelines, goals and principals of the **Curriculum for Kindergartens**, 1999, which is a basic program setup to justify pre-school education as part of the educational system.

A regulated care system has also been developed for pre-school children at home which includes a small part of children. Pre-school education can also be organised at the home of an educator or assistant educator who are employed in either a public or a private kindergarten. A private educator has to meet the same conditions as any education specialist in a public kindergarten and has to register their services at the Ministry of Education. Nannies or guardians who aren't qualified to teach a pre-school education program may also offer care services but they may only look after the children. These nannies also have to register with the ministry responsible for education. The maximum number of children that they may care for at home is 6. However, they can also register for **individual care at the child's family home.** The numbers of registered guardians of pre-school children at home is increasing every year due to the difficulty to provide enough vacancies at public kindergartens.

In line with European trends and guidelines, the participation of children in pre-school education care programs in Slovenia is also increasing. Data shows that the number of children in kindergartens has increased by a quarter over the last decade: from 71,124 (2009/10) to 87,708 (2019/20). The percentage of children aged between 1 and 5 who were enrolled in early childhood education and education in kindergartens in the 2019/20 school year, of all children of that age, is 82.7 %. According to the European benchmark, at least 95% of children between the age of 4 and entering school should be involved in the institutional pre-school education program by the end of 2020. It is clear that Slovenia hasn't achieved this goal, but has come very close to achieving it. In the school year 2019/20, 94.1% of children of this age were registered, 6 percent higher than ten years ago.

966 kindergartens and their units were involved in providing pre-school education, 851 public and 115 private schools. The vast majority of children attended public kindergartens (94.3 %).

In the **field of health the rules for implementing health care at primary level have been established**, which provides quality preventive health care for new-borns, infants, children up until the age of 6, school children and youth up to 19 years of age. Health education is also provided for children, adolescents and parents, including school for future parents. These regulations also apply to socially disadvantaged groups. Even though the health status of the general population has significantly improved in recent decades, there still exist **inequalities within certain socio-economic groups** and people in higher socio-economic groups improving their health status at a far greater pace. That is why by upgrading the preventive health care

program for children and adolescents **special care is paid to vulnerable target groups as well as the development of good practices and effective cross sector collaboration.** The prime objectives for the development of paediatric care at primary level in European countries are to ensure the quality of health care as well as aiming to reduce disparities and eliminating inequalities in the health care system. The main strategic document, **Resolution on the National Health Care Plan 2016-2025 “Together for a Healthy Society”** in delineating key goals in the field of preschool and school health care, states that there is a need to update prevention programs in order to ensure access to quality treatment for vulnerable groups and reduce inequalities in the health care system. Effective inter-government coordinated measures, policies and reforms will need to be adopted and implemented to achieve the above-mentioned objectives. Health in all policies is a concept that still has to be implemented in Slovenia. The key strategic document for the development of the social protection system is the, **“Resolution of the National Social Protection Program” (2013-2020)**, which defines the basic starting points for the development of goals and strategies in the progression of social protection and welfare. It also defines the public service network, monitoring, public services provided, public service programs as well as how they are put in practice and the people responsible for these programs on all levels. In the broad spectrum of the social services, various services are available to families aimed at preventing social problems and hindrances (Social first aid, family home assistance, institutional care, improved measure to better reconcile the private and professional sphere of life). The social welfare system includes protection policies but it also has a function to coordinate all policies that affect the social position of people. Increased social inclusion of all parts of the population can be achieved by using a more integrated and enhanced policy across different fields of expertise.

FAMILY POLICY in Slovenia is based on an integrated and inclusive approach, which means that it includes all types of families. The policy takes into account the plurality of family forms and makes the protection and quality of life for families and children its priority. It is important that we address the issue of the position of children within the framework of family policy holistically and at the same time include it as an integral part of other important areas.

The basic goals and measures in the field of **family policy in the period 2018-2028 “A family-friendly society”**, which defines key goals that will further increase the quality of family life, ensure the protection and well-being of families, children in particular as well as improving the socio-economic status of families. The reform **emphasizes that necessary measures and changes in many priority areas can only be achieved through cross sector cooperation and integration.**

Special protection of the family is defined in the **Family Code**, which has been drawn up mainly for the benefit of children. The protection of families and children is also provided for in a number of other laws such as (the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act and the Ombudsman Act). In comparison to other countries, **Slovenia has very good family policies**, it must continue to work on an inclusive approach and pursue the goal of making sure that families have a better quality of life and more protective policies for families, especially for children. In this context, a more focused shift is needed in the **transfer to more support services for children and families.**

The basic goals and measures in the field of children’s rights, the well-being and quality of life of children are addressed in the recently adopted Children’s **Program 2020-2025** that is in line with international documents as well as the research state documents concerning children and the specific aspects of children’s needs and the quality of life in Slovenia. Using this document, the State will strive to raise the level of child welfare, ensure equal opportunities and basic rights for all children. It will also help strengthen their protection, improve the opportunities for more inclusion and the participation of children. In order to best implement these measures and achieve their goals discussed in this program, all relevant departments need to strive for a more **synchronised inter-ministerial sense of cooperation and networking. Only in this way will they ensure greater protection and benefits for all children.**

