



# Weekly Briefing

**Slovenia Political briefing:  
Politics developments in 2018  
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The year 2018 in Slovenian politics will be marked mostly by the two elections that will take place in early summer and in autumn. Parliamentary elections will most probably be called for in early June and, in addition, local elections will take place on November 18.

### **Background: Slovenian electoral system and related issues**

According to the National Assembly Election Act of 1992, voting is a universal and equally given right, with passive and active voting right of every citizen over 18 years old. Two national minorities in Slovenia, Italian and Hungarian additionally elect two members of the parliament, one representing each. General parliamentary elections are called by the president of Slovenia.

Candidates are proposed by either political parties or voters, but the procedures for the two differ. Political parties select candidates and then decide on a list of candidates. These lists differ for each electoral unit and can be approved in set by three parliament members or in each electoral unit separately, with at least 50 signatures of voters from that electoral unit. There is also a gender representation regulation: none of the genders can have less than 35% of the whole number of candidates in each candidate list. If candidates are not selected by political parties, the procedure is comparably more difficult, since an independent list of candidates need to have the support of at least one thousand voters from the respective electoral unit.

Slovenia consists of eight electoral units; each consists of 11 districts, of which each contributes one deputy. The Hungarian and Italian minority are ascribed two additional electoral units to select one minority deputy each. The threshold for the parliament is 4% and the political parties that achieve that, are then appointed a number of seats by a combination of two level system of apportioning the seats on the level of electoral unit and on the national level, with an additional modification which gives certain priority to the candidates who got a high proportion of votes in their respective electoral units.

This corrected proportional representation system is one of the crucial factors for the type of political life that Slovenia has been displaying every since its establishment. The result of such a selection procedure (even with modifications such as the parliamentary threshold) is that parliament seats are usually divided among a considerable number of political parties, some of which could also be represented by a very small number of parliament members. This result usually makes the forming of the government much more difficult and the process itself considerably longer. It does, however, enable the small political parties to play a very important role in formation of the government, but also in political life in general. The negative part of this is that also radical or extremist political parties have a chance of political survival and can even become part of governments if they help the government secure the parliament majority. The alternative to the proportional representation, the majority election system, is less complex and provides more transparency, as the voters directly know who their vote will finally elect, without re-allocations of the proportional system. It, however, greatly favors the big political parties, and the smaller representative factions are given less voice and are much less important in decision-making politics.

Slovenian political parties are divided on this issue ever since the debate was first brought up in the December 1996 referendum. The Slovenian Democratic Party proposed the change towards the majority election system, and two other alternative proposals followed, with none of them getting adequate support, although even the results were later questioned and brought to constitutional court. The form of the current system was confirmed by a constitutional decision in 2000. This issue was revived in 2017, when the National Council again appealed to the constitutional court to assess the constitutional correctness of the electoral system. Apart from the allegedly nontransparent proportional system they also questioned the unequal division of the electoral units that do not give the same importance to an individual vote in different electoral units. Whatever the decision of the constitutional court, most

probably the 2018 elections will still be organized according to the current regulation.

### **Parliamentary elections 2018 and possible outcomes**

The current number of political parties which plan to participate in the summer elections is already quite long, and they might be accompanied by several new ones. The main big parties will most probably all compete for seats:

#### *Government parties:*

- Modern Centre Party (SMC): the centre political party and the main government party of Prime Minister Miro Cerar (previously called Miro Cerar Party) received 34,49% and 36 seats in the 2014 elections. Today, the polls estimate at least a 20% drop, with some poll results going even below 7%. The main task for SMC will be to present the government as efficient and benevolent, which will be the main focus in the last months of the mandate with making potentially likeable political decisions and leaving the more radical shifts for the next government (e.g. reform of the pensions system etc.).
- Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS): a government party in each of the Slovenian governments since 1996, often famously the deciding element in both constituting and fall of the coalitions. They received 10,18% and 10 seats in 2014 elections. The current polls estimate a similar result of around 10% with perhaps a slight drop. This might change, however, with the very active political presence that their president, also Minister of Foreign Affairs, Karel Erjavec, tries to portray in the border dispute with Croatia.
- Social Democrats (SD): left-wing political party that supported the newly elected president, Borut Pahor, got a fairly low result of 5,98% at the previous elections. The popularity of SD grew lately to around 20%, partly due to their advocacy of social security and welfare distribution and partly to a considerable popularity of their president, Dejan Židan, who also played an active role in issues such as advocating the exclusive Slovenian right to the geographically specific “teran” wine etc.

### *Opposition parties:*

- Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS): biggest right wing opposition party with a fairly constant ratio of support in the previous elections. In 2014, they came second after SMC with 20,71% and 21 seats. In latest polls they mostly reach above 20%, even up to 25%, but the result might change in the light of a recent scandal when the newspapers found information that SDS got an illegal loan from a dubious source in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- The Left: the left wing political party participated in 2014 elections as a coalition United Left which was later reformulated into a political party. They got 5,97% and 6 seats but refused the option of joining the government coalition. Recently their support grew slightly, being mostly around 10%, but occasionally going even as high as 15%.
- New Slovenia – Christian Democrats (NSi): the traditional Christian democrat right wing party got 5,59% and 5 seats in 2014. It is recently profiling itself against the SDS and as the alternative to the biggest right wing party, but this is not (yet) reflected in the polls, for they still range around 7%.
- Party of Alenka Bratušek (ZAB): a fraction of the previously strong Positive Slovenia party it only got a bare minimum of 4,38 % and 4 seats in the 2014 elections. According to polls the ZAB will not make it over the parliamentary threshold in 2018 elections.

On top of this, some new political parties were formed between 2014 and today, both on the left-centre and on the right side of the political spectrum. On the right several alternatives, but also possible coalition allies of SDS appeared, most notably the right wing Movement For Children and Families, a coalition with right wing environmentalists of the former SDS parliament member Andrej Čuš and the New People's Party of the former mayor of Maribor, Franc Kangler. As of today, only the Movement for Children and Families made it to the opinion polls and with below 3% of support it does not seem that these will provide a serious challenge (or a possible coalition partner) to the established right wing parties. On the centre-left two interesting phenomena started. Marjan

Šarec, also a presidential candidate (coming second only to the winning Pahor), established a political party and the polls identify it as a potential »party of new faces«, a journalist term for the common phenomenon of the electoral victory of newly established parties in the previous elections. Currently for Šarec the polls show a very high support of around 15%. The other potential new political party could be the newly established anti-corruption party of a former SMC member of parliament, Bojan Dobovšek, the so-called Good state party.

The biggest challenge, however, will be for any of the potential winners, whether that will be SDS, Marjan Šarec Party or perhaps SD, to constitute a government. Several parties have already publicly proclaimed that they will refuse the coalition offer of the SDS, so the right wing government would be a challenge to form. The left wing, where the votes will be very fragmented, will on the other hand probably find it harder to get the election majority.