

Analysis of Policy Debate on the European Future of Turkey and Ukraine in Four Central European States

REPORT ON SLOVENIA

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Key points

- In Slovenia, debating the issue of Turkey and Ukraine becoming future EU member states is primarily a response to the EU agenda and no independent societal interest in these two national groups has been identified. The basis for the Slovenian position on Turkey are the EU decisions (e.g. resolution of the European Council from December 2004); the same applies to Ukraine.
- Almost no public debate exists on these topics and a general conviction is that, as a small state, Slovenia has little real influence on the EU developments. The absence of the debate is also due to Slovenia's principled stance of supporting further EU enlargement.
- The issue of Turkey, let alone the question of Ukraine, has not come up in electoral campaigns. The Slovenian electorate has so far not demanded any answers or positions on these two issues.
- Media coverage of further enlargement to include Turkey is mostly factual, without much analysis or commentary. The debate about the prospect of a future Ukrainian EU membership is not present, as Ukraine is not a candidate country.
- It is the Western Balkans and especially Croatia that are at the top of the Slovenian foreign policy agenda, also reflected in heightened interest of the Slovenian media and civil society for its southern neighbour.
- Slovenia's official stance towards both Turkey and Ukraine is positive and in favour of further enlargement of the European Union.
- The official position is reflected in generally favourable public opinion.

Officially named Republic of Slovenia, this parliamentary democracy has been independent since 1991 and has a population of two million. Located at the northeastern peak of the Adriatic, Slovenia's neighbouring states are Italy, Austria, Hungary and Croatia. The latter remains outside of the European Union for the time being, making Slovenia's southern border EU's external boundary.

The experience of communism, albeit a softer Yugoslav version of workers' 'self-management', connects Slovenia with Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and the rest of the Central-Eastern Europe. Yet the unique relation to the South Slavs (e.g. Croatians and Serbians) needs to be pointed out. After the fall of Austria-Hungary in 1918, the Slovenians, Croatians and Serbians were joined in a political entity that became known as the land of the South Slavs, Yugoslavia. After the Second World War, Slovenia became one of the socialist republics of Yugoslavia (1945-1991). It was never a part of the Warsaw Pact and carries no significant historical collective memory of resentment or affinity towards the former Soviet Union.

Introduction

In Slovenia, the debate on Turkey and Ukraine, what little there is, is a response to the EU agenda. There is no domestic Slovenian significance that would involve either of the two states. Neither the Turks nor the Ukrainians represent recognisable national groups in Slovenia, and this research has found no evidence that would suggest independent societal interest in these two national groups.

Slovenia's official stance towards both Turkey and Ukraine is positive and in favour of further enlargement of the European Union. The official position of Slovenia is that every state that fulfils all the obligations and conditions set by the EU can become a future member. This principled support for future enlargement is another factor contributing to the lack of significant interest in the issue.

Slovenia supports Turkey on its path of becoming a part of the EU and is open to the prospect of one day maybe integrating Ukraine, provided all the necessary conditions are

met. Almost no public debate, however, exists on these topics and a general conviction is shared by the main stakeholders that Slovenia has little influence on the EU developments.

For more than a decade, centre-left governments determined Slovenia's foreign policy. With the October 2004 parliamentary elections, the Slovenian Democrats (SDS) overturned the long-term ruling of the Liberal Democrats (LDS). Notwithstanding the change in office, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is again Dimitrij Rupel, who changed party affiliation (from LDS to SDS) shortly before the autumn elections. He participated in the formation and implementation of foreign policy in different periods and remembers how it has initially focused on international recognition of the new state, and that it seemed almost impossible fifteen years ago that Slovenia would ever become involved in "making European policy decisions about non-European states".¹ This old sentiment of Slovenia being too small and insignificant to decide about its own, let alone about other states' future, seems to remain one of the reasons for the low Slovenian public involvement in the EU enlargement debate.

Slovenian Public Opinion

The 2002 census shows Slovenia is a highly ethnically homogeneous state, with 83 percent of the population declaring themselves Slovenians. The two officially recognised national minorities, Italians and Hungarians, are considered as indigenous to Slovenia's territory. The Roma community has special rights as well. Other national groups living on Slovenia's territory include predominantly former Yugoslavs: Croatians, Serbians, Muslims, with some Albanians, Macedonians and Montenegrins. Slovenia has no Turkish or Ukrainian minority, almost no immigrants from these two states, whereas no Slovenian minority exists in these two countries either. The last census shows that only 259 Turks (0.01 %) and 470 Ukrainians (0.02 % of the entire population) live in Slovenia.² This makes the inter-state relations between Slovenia and Turkey or Ukraine unburdened by the question of indigenous or migrant minority populations' rights.

The latest (December 2005) Eurobarometer results of measuring public opinion in the EU place Slovenia (together with Greece) at the highest level of support for further enlargement. Whereas the EU-25 average support is at 49 percent, Slovenia shows a 74 percent support, a

¹ Dimitrij Rupel, 'Po zmagi: ...Slovenska zunanja politika po članstvu v EU in NATO' ('Slovenian Foreign Policy after the Membership in the EU and NATO'), Delo, 30 April 2005.

² Source: Statistični urad Republike Slovenije, Popis prebivalstva, gospodinjstev in stanovanj 2002.

5 percent decrease from the poll published in July 2005.³ This not only puts Slovenia high above the percentage of supporters in the 'old' member states (EU-15), where the average is only 44 percent, but also above the medium for new member states (NMS), where 69 percent is the average share of support for further enlargement.

The December 2005 Eurobarometer data for Slovenia reveal that 49 percent of respondents support Turkey's membership, with 45 percent in opposition. This puts Turkey on a par with Albania where the Slovenian support for its EU membership is even lower (48 percent in favour), with the matching 45 percent against its membership. Support for Ukraine in Slovenia is higher. 66 percent are in favour of its EU membership and 27 percent oppose it. Unfortunately, no further data is available on Slovenian public opinion on Ukraine.

Three additional sources however exist for Turkey. They support the Eurobarometer findings about Slovenia's support for further enlargement, yet show no detailed Slovenian attitudes towards Turkey in particular. In March 2005, newspaper *Delo* reported about a public opinion poll, where the majority of respondents supported the inclusion of Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia and Turkey. The highest was the opposition to Croatia (34 percent against its EU membership), then Turkey (25 percent against), followed by between 15 and 17 percent opposing Bulgaria and Romania's membership.⁴ At the end of April 2005, another poll asking about the support for the EU enlargement to Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia and Turkey, showed that 62 percent of the respondents answered favourably, 17 percent opposed, 18 percent opted for the reply 'yes, but only some of these states'.⁵ Since the share of supporters is below the general support for further enlargement suggested by the latest Eurobarometer results, one could speculate that the selection of possible future member states plays a significant role. Whereas Slovenians would be more than happy to admit Switzerland and Norway to the EU (93 and 92 percent respectively are in favour), Turkey is less desired.

A glimpse into the Slovenian public opinion on Turkey was further provided by a Slovenian Public Opinion poll from June 2004, conducted right after the European Parliament elections. A question was posed about trusting members of different nations. 28 states were included in

³ Source: Standard Eurobarometer 64 / Autumn 2005, European Commission, available at http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb64/eb64_first_en.pdf; and Standard Eurobarometer 63 / Spring 2005, European Commission, available at http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb63.4_en_first.pdf

⁴ Grega Repovž, 'Najboljši sosedi Madžari, najslabši Hrvati' ('Hungarians the Best, Croatians the Worst Neighbours'), *Delo*, 1 March 2005.

⁵ These results were revealed on the Slovenian Radiotelevision daily news and I thank Ms. Ilinka Todorovski of the RTVS for kindly allowing me to republish these results (source: telephone poll performed by Cati, Ljubljana, April 2005).

the research, EU-25 plus Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey.⁶ No question was posed regarding Ukraine. The results show that 17.7 percent of Slovenian respondents trust the Turks, yet as much as 57.2 percent do not. These results show a different picture from the more positive data of Eurobarometer. Several hypotheses may be posed as to what the possible reasons for such a discrepancy might be. The varying percentages in the case of Turkey could be the result of insufficient information and the absence of public debate on its future EU membership. While the Slovenians are keen to discuss the developments in the coterminous states, especially Croatia, their interest also stretches to the Yugoslav successor states (i.e. the Western Balkans). Yet Turkey and Ukraine have so far not spurred much interest in Slovenia. The fact that the polling agencies do not include Ukraine or the Ukrainians suggests not only the absence of public interest in this country but also the conviction of the experts that it is not (yet) on the EU's political agenda.

To sum up, the Slovenians are largely in support of further EU enlargement. Public opinion polls on the specific question of integrating either Turkey or Ukraine, alas, are very few. While the 2005 Eurobarometer results paint a picture of a positive, if somewhat hesitant Slovenian stance towards Turkey, the 2004 Slovenian Public Opinion poll data showed that the distance towards the Turks is quite significant. Regarding Ukraine, there is even less data. Ukraine was not included in the recent Slovenian opinion polls, and the only results available are from the last two Eurobarometer surveys (July and December 2005), where more Slovenians opted for Ukraine's membership in the EU than that of Turkey. As a former communist country, Ukraine shares with Slovenia the experience of being a part of a multinational entity. Besides the fact that both states were in a position of a political power minority in relation to the 'big brother' (Russians in the case of Ukraine and Serbians in the case of Yugoslavia), both nations also share the Slavic cultural identity. It may be suggested that these elements of comparison between Ukraine and Slovenia could perhaps explain the Slovenian affinity towards this country. It is understandably more powerful than any attempt at searching for similarities with Turkey.

Although not directly represented in the membership debate, deep-rooted images of the Turks and recently formed stereotypes of the Ukrainians have coloured the discourse. While not bearing much influence on how the Slovenians perceive the contemporary modern Turkish state, it is nonetheless a significant fact that 'the Turks' are connected to the

⁶ The highest percent of trust goes to Slovenia; Sweden is in second place with 62.9 %, and the Netherlands in third with 58.2 %. The lowest percent of trust goes to Bulgaria (17.6 %), then Turkey (17.7 %), and Romania (20.6 %). The highest percent of distrust goes to Turkey (57.2 %), Italy (55 %) and Bulgaria (52.7 %). Source: SJM 04/1 (N=1002), Ljubljana: FDV CJMMK, 2004.

stereotype which draws from history. Perpetuated in the Slovenian cultural heritage through arts, poetry and literature, the image of 'the Turk' is usually a negative and violent one. It is an evil character of the 15th, 16th and 17th century warrior who attacked the local population. Even though the Slovenians are well aware of the difference between today's Turkey and this centuries-old image, a potential for evoking such a stereotype should be noted.

If at all present, the stereotype about the Ukrainians in Slovenia has largely to do with the reports about illegal immigration and prostitution. There have been a few instances, especially in the tabloid press, of equating the Ukrainian female migrants with strippers or prostitutes. Due to some instances of trafficking that did in fact include Ukrainian women forced to work as prostitutes in Slovenia, a more general pejorative stereotype of 'Ukrainians' (always female) was formed. It is not a very strong or prevalent stereotype; nevertheless, its effect on a more general perception of Ukraine as an under-developed, corrupt and poor country should not be underestimated. The fact that the popular press resorts to such stereotypes may indicate their wider public acceptance, but the prejudice about the Ukrainians is not strong nor is it being held and promoted by any nationalistic or right wing group in Slovenia. It could therefore be mainly a product of the growing media thirst for sensationalism.

Slovenia's Foreign Policy

Slovenia's government, president, foreign ministry, and parliamentary parties all speak in favour of further EU enlargement. The overall stance is that any candidate country should be given the opportunity to join if it follows the EU rules and fulfils all the obligations. In short, "enlargement should stay on the agenda,"⁷ and "Slovenia firmly believes that further enlargement is necessary".⁸ Moreover, Slovenian foreign minister and chairman in office of the OSCE in 2005 Dimitrij Rupel keeps mentioning Ukraine as a possible candidate country with a strong European perspective. He emphasises, though, that Ukraine is in a different category as Turkey who has been waiting at the European gates for four decades. Whereas the former is not even a candidate state yet, the latter has the longest history of waiting for the admission.

⁷ A statement taken from the speech that foreign minister Rupel gave on 3 June 2005 in Zagreb at the Bertelsmann Stiftung Conference 'Southeast Europe on the Way into the European Union' (available at <http://www.sigov.si/mzz/govori/05060301.html>).

⁸ State Secretary Dr. Božo Cerar at the CEI Ministerial Meeting in the Slovak Republic on 27 May 2005 (available at <http://www.sigov.si/mzz/govori/05052701.html>).

Provided that Turkey fulfils all the necessary accession criteria, "a clear European perspective, including EU membership ... is of strategic significance for a wider European future, for its long-term security. The question of Turkey is also linked to the question of a dialogue of cultures," maintains minister Rupel, adding that "European identity will grow stronger in the wake of religious diversity, and ethnic heterogeneity".⁹

Bilateral relations between Slovenia and both Turkey and Ukraine are good. In November 2003 Viktor Yanukovych (then Prime Minister) visited Slovenia. Minister Rupel took part in President Yushchenko's ceremonial oath on 23 January 2005, after already visiting Ukraine earlier in January on his first official visit as the head of OSCE. Former foreign minister Ivo Vajgl met Turkey's foreign minister Abdullah Gül on 1 December 2004, while Yasar Yakis of the Turkish parliamentary Committee for European Integration visited Slovenia in February 2004. In November 2004 President Drnovšek met the first Ukrainian resident ambassador to Slovenia Mr. Ivan M. Hnatyshyn. This was an opportunity for the President of the Republic to state that "Slovenia will speak for a successful integration of Ukraine into the European processes".¹⁰ A month later, in December 2004, the President was hosting Mr. Abdullah Gül, Turkey's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Much attention was paid to the EU-Turkey relations and Slovenia's President emphasised that Slovenia supported Turkey's aspirations. However, despite the good inter-state relations, neither Turkey nor Ukraine plays a role of Slovenia's foreign policy priority.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' priorities in 2005 are ensuring that Slovenia's chairmanship of the OSCE and the subsequent handover are a success, preparations for Slovenia's EU presidency, assistance in the integration of Western Balkan countries in Euro-Atlantic associations, resolving the status of Kosovo, and strengthening dialogue with neighbouring countries and the United States.¹¹

Slovenia's foreign policy is in line with the EU, as recently reiterated by Foreign Minister Rupel: "Slovenian policy has to be and definitely is in line with the EU policy"¹² while integrating the Western Balkans into the EU as soon as possible is a priority. It is the Western Balkans and especially Croatia that are at the top of the Slovenian foreign policy agenda. In a

⁹ Address at the European Economic Summit in Warsaw on 28 April 2004, speech titled 'The Shape of the New European Union: The European Dream' (available at <http://www.sigov.si/mzz/eng/speeches/varsava.html>).

¹⁰ Press release 'President Dr. Drnovšek Received Credentials from the Ambassador of Ukraine', Ljubljana, 5 November 2004, available at <http://www.up-rs.si/up-rs/uprs-ang.nsf/dokumentiweb/>

¹¹ <http://www.vlada.si/hadlani> accessed on 17 August 2005.

¹² Dimitrij Rupel, 'Po zmagi'.

recent speech the head of the OSCE task force stated his strong support for Croatia's EU entry.¹³

Still, the Slovenian foreign minister poses the crucial question: "Will we manage to connect across the inner borders of Europe to Turkey and Ukraine, taking with us also the Balkans? ... Will we be able to understand and accept the fact that we will border on Iraq, Russia, the Caucasus, Maghreb and the Middle East?"¹⁴ It is encouraging that the Slovenian foreign minister concludes that public diplomacy, citizenship participation and open public discussion are of utmost importance in resolving these new questions and tasks posed before the European Union.

According to critics, however, Slovenia's foreign policy is in trouble. The foreign minister of the oppositional 'shadow government' has recently voiced his concerns over foreign policy, calling on the government to pay it more attention.¹⁵ It has been argued that Slovenia was too busy with presiding over the OSCE, sidelining its own foreign policy. "This year our number one foreign policy priority is of course presiding over the OSCE," stated the foreign minister in January 2005.¹⁶ As Slovenia is to preside over the EU together with Germany and Portugal in 2008, preparations for its presidency are also well under way. In fact, from the first day in office the new government has been busy with preparing for the presidency. "This is one of the greatest Slovenia's challenges after the independence and entering the EU and NATO. We take this challenge very seriously," the Prime Minister stated.¹⁷ Whereas one would expect the Slovenian political elite to be busy with forming a visible, well-rounded and prominent foreign policy that will no doubt be needed, even expected from Slovenia, the critics warn that so far this has not been the case. In fact, the Slovenian roundtable on Turkey and Ukraine brought forth a strong argument that Slovenia has no foreign policy position of its own. Regarding Turkey, it simply follows the EU directives. The 'non-position' on the question of Ukraine is a part of the wider 'non-position' of Slovenia's foreign policy on any kind of strategic question, it has been argued. Tied to the EU, Slovenia waits until all the options are 'on the table', and then decides on the one that has the strongest support, maintained an international relations and foreign policy expert.¹⁸

¹³ Speech of Dr. Boris Frlec at the Congress of the German Association for East European Studies in Berlin, 30 July 2005 (<http://www.sigov.si/mzz/govori/05080103.html>).

¹⁴ Rupel, 'Po zmagi'.

¹⁵ 'Vlada v senci zaskrbljena' ('Shadow Government Worried'), Delo, 10 May 2005.

¹⁶ Dimitrij Rupel's statement at the 11th Consultation Meeting of the Slovenian Diplomacy, Brdo by Kranj, 4 January 2005 (available at <http://www.sigov.si/mzz/govori/05010401.html>).

¹⁷ Prime minister at a press conference on 21 December 2004, available at [http://193.2.236.95/mma-upv.nsf/OC/0412211808292/\\$file/dato3_tiskovna_21_12_2004_48a.doc](http://193.2.236.95/mma-upv.nsf/OC/0412211808292/$file/dato3_tiskovna_21_12_2004_48a.doc)

¹⁸ The Peace Institute organised a Forum titled *Turkey and Ukraine in the European Union?* on 14 November 2005 in Ljubljana.

Government

After the October 2004 elections, the Slovenian government is led by the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), who won the popular vote. The government coalition includes also the New Slovenia party (NSi), Slovenian People's Party (SLS) and the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS). Together they hold 49 out of 90 seats in the National Assembly, where their strongest opposition comes from the former governmental party the Liberal Democrats (LDS) and Social Democrats (SD). A turn to the 'right' and nationalism has been expected from the new government and prophesied by the Slovenian and foreign media, but Slovenia has so far retained an overall positive stance towards further EU enlargement. Slovenia's Prime Minister Janez Janša endorsed the beginning of accession negotiations with Turkey in December 2004, though he was even more enthusiastic about supporting Croatia. He also stated his support for the launch of accession negotiations in October 2005.

All official governmental statements and documents support further EU enlargement, including Turkey, however Prime Minister Janša has stated that Turkey has yet to fulfil all the political conditions for entering the EU. He also expressed concerns regarding the respect for human rights in Turkey and emphasised that almost no public discussion has been present in Slovenia regarding the beginning of accession negotiations with Turkey. Janša further remarked that it is hard to say anything about the Slovenian public opinion in this matter, especially because public debate on this issue is absent due to Slovenia's principled stance of supporting further EU enlargement.¹⁹ As the government was still fairly 'fresh' when the decisions on Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Croatia were being taken in Brussels, forming an opinion on Turkey was one of the first priority tasks for the new Slovenian political representation. Janša reported that these "historical decisions" were finalised only a week before the European Council summit.

The government website confirms that neither Turkey nor Ukraine play a significant role in Slovenia's foreign policy.²⁰ Apart from short reports about bilateral visits from or to Ukraine, this state is not mentioned, nor does it feature in any of the Prime Minister's speeches on the possible future EU enlargement. It is clear that Slovenia does not consider Ukraine a relevant

¹⁹ Janez Janša, National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia, 4th extraordinary session, 3 December 2004, http://www.gov.si/dz/si/aktualno/spremljanje_sej/dobesedni_zapisi_sej/dobesedni_zapisi_sej.html

²⁰ The special EU section of the website concentrates on Slovenia's upcoming EU presidency, on adopting the euro, on European constitution and on Slovenia as a EU member state. There is no specifically Slovenian link to EU enlargement or any mention of Slovenia's official stance towards possible future member states.

candidate until such time when its membership status may be more seriously debated. Janša occasionally reports on the status of Turkey. When speaking of Turkey in December 2004, the Prime Minister made sure to mention that he is endorsing the beginning of negotiations. Yet he added that Turkey would need to fulfil the same obligations for membership as all other candidate states. "The condition Turkey needs to fulfil in order to commence *open-ended negotiations*, is signing the Ankara Agreement and recognising Cyprus." (The wording 'open-ended' is highlighted in order to let Janša's scepticism show.) He also stated: "The decisions of the summit are historical but only time will tell if they are also good."²¹ At a Ljubljana press conference that followed his visit to Brussels, he thus summarised the debate on enlargement:

"The question of opening negotiations with Turkey has been primarily a political question that has polarised public opinion in some member states. Generally speaking we could say that it has divided the EU more than any other dilemma in a long time. And it will remain a delicate question in all the next ten years of negotiations. That is if they reach a closing at all, because I think the end of the negotiations is now, for the first time in history, an open process that will not necessarily end with Turkey's full membership."²²

At the same press conference, the government's decision to actively support Croatia's EU bid without reservations was reiterated. Slovenia's official standpoint was proclaiming the need to support the beginning of negotiations with Croatia. "It is in the interest of Slovenia that Croatia begins negotiations" said the Prime Minister in a recent interview.²³ Slovenia's policy is to act in firm support of Croatian EU perspective, for this is in Slovenia's "strategic interest". Conversely, the EU's decision about Turkey is seen as being "in line with the resolutions of the European Council from December 2004, which have all along represented the basis for the Slovenian position on this issue".²⁴

The President of the Republic

As Slovenia is a parliamentary democracy, the role of the president is more ceremonial. However, both the former president Milan Kučan and the current president Janez Drnovšek are well-respected and influential people. The level of public trust in the President is

²¹ Janez Janša quoted on the official governmental site for public relations, 17 December 2004 (<http://www.uvi.si/slo/koledar/arhiv/2004/12/>).

²² Prime Minister at a press conference on 21 December 2004, available at [http://193.2.236.95/mma-upv.nsf/OC/0412211808292/\\$file/dato3_tiskovna_21_12_2004_48a.doc](http://193.2.236.95/mma-upv.nsf/OC/0412211808292/$file/dato3_tiskovna_21_12_2004_48a.doc)

²³ Interview with Janez Janša in *Žurnal* published on 22 September 2005.

²⁴ Janez Janša's statement made about the beginning of the negotiations with Turkey and Croatia, quoted on 4 October 2005 (www.gov.si).

significant.²⁵ The fact that Drnovšek supports further EU enlargement and is in favour of Turkey becoming a member, is therefore important and could potentially influence the positive public stance towards this state. He has also always been stressing the friendly relations between Slovenia and Ukraine. Already in 2003 the President said that "Slovenia welcomes Ukrainian endeavours for its integration into Euro-Atlantic structures", offering the benefit of Slovenian experience to the Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma.²⁶ Speaking on the future of the EU in January 2004, Drnovšek reaffirmed that continued enlargement of the EU remained an important issue. While noting that a certain amount of "enlargement fatigue" was noticeable in the EU, he expressed his anticipation that "Bulgaria and Romania will be EU members," as will be Croatia and Turkey. "Furthermore a clear European future must be offered to other countries of South Eastern and Eastern Europe".²⁷

Drnovšek recognises the importance of the question of Turkey's membership. As the most topical of the various enlargement issues, this is "not merely a question of enlarging the EU to include one new member, it is a question with a larger dimension: can we ... establish coexistence with a predominantly Muslim country? Were this to succeed in the EU, this would be very significant for future relations between Western civilisation and Islam in general."²⁸ At the end of 2004, he reaffirmed his position in a radio interview where he listed the supportive and opposing arguments about Turkey's accession, concluding with a positive stance that integrating Turkey is a very important project. He again noted that the EU is in a difficult situation, giving credit to both opponents and proponents of Turkey's membership. He also reiterated that a successful integration of Turkey would mean a balanced relationship with the Islamic world and moderate Islam.²⁹ He restated his position in an interview for *Večer* on 31 December 2004, where he said that including Turkey into the EU is such a big and important goal that it is worth the try. After the launch of accession negotiations in October 2005, Drnovšek again confirmed and welcomed the EU decision, saying that the "EU was wise to open the door for Turkey".³⁰

²⁵ In June 2005, the President of the Republic was in the first place among 20 institutions (including the EU, NATO, UN) with a 59 % support and 13 % opposition, while in September 2005 his support was 60 % (12 % of respondents did not trust him). Source: Politbarometer 6/05 and Politbarometer 9/05, Ljubljana: CJJMK.

²⁶ Press release 'President Drnovšek Concludes his Participation at the Meeting of Central European Presidents', Salzburg, 23 May 2003, available at <http://www.up-rs.si/up-rs/uprs-ang.nsf/dokumentiweb/>

²⁷ Drnovšek's speech on the future of EU at Davos, Switzerland, 23 January 2004, available at <http://www.up-rs.si/up-rs/uprs-ang.nsf/dokumentiweb/>

²⁸ 'Speech by President Drnovšek at the Opening of the Meeting of European Liberals in Ljubljana', Ljubljana, 7 September 2004, available at <http://www.up-rs.si/up-rs/uprs-ang.nsf/dokumentiweb/>

²⁹ Bojan Veselinovič, Talk with the President of the Republic, Radio Slovenia, 17 December 2004, available at [http://www.up-rs.si/up-rs/uprs.nsf/...](http://www.up-rs.si/up-rs/uprs.nsf/)

³⁰ 'Address by the President of the Republic of Slovenia Dr Janez Drnovšek at the 12th Meeting of Presidents of Central European States in Zagreb', Zagreb, 14 October 2005, available at <http://www.up-rs.si/up-rs/uprs-ang.nsf/>

Though the debate on Turkey has not affected the Slovenian public, it is important that the President has spoken on the issue. Drnovšek's ability to make a stand for Turkey's EU membership while at the same time always giving credit to the opposing arguments makes his position and his public statements more credible. It also leaves enough room for the people to decide for themselves, while being offered the opportunity to at least acquaint themselves with the most prominent pros and cons that stir up public debate in other EU member states. Drnovšek has also closely followed the events in Ukraine and called an informal consultation meeting on the Ukrainian situation in December 2004. He invited a few experts, a journalist and the former and current foreign minister.

In line with the general Slovenia's official stance toward enlargement, Drnovšek also has often stated that Slovenia will continue its endeavours for the integration of Southeastern Europe.³¹ Hence, while commending the EU for opening the accession negotiations with Turkey and Croatia in October 2005, he noted that "a line of other candidates exists, especially those from Southeastern Europe".³² The term 'Southeastern Europe', used interchangeably with the 'Western Balkans' in the Slovenian political discourse, is most often equated with the former Yugoslav states and thus connected to the shared political history of living within a common Yugoslav state. It is not specified as only referring to Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia-Montenegro and Macedonia, although Albania is seldom mentioned.

Political Parties

Most of the important events in Slovenia's foreign policy happened before the October 2004 elections, namely the EU and NATO entry, as well as quite a few internal Slovenian affairs. The election campaign was therefore more of a competition of personalities than a contest of different arguments. All of the interviewed politicians, including the MEPs, confirmed that the issue of Turkey, let alone the question of Ukraine, did not come up in the campaign. They also reaffirmed that their Slovenian electorate had so far not demanded any answers or positions on these two issues. This is reflected in the visible absence of any mention of the issue in political parties' programmes. Even the question of future EU enlargement is more often than not absent or defined in vague terms only stating a principled support for further enlargement to all states that fulfil the necessary criteria (without specifying any).

³¹ See, for example, Dr. Drnovšek's Address to the Foreign Diplomatic Corps, Brdo by Kranj, 2 February 2005, available at <http://www.up-rs.si/up-rs/uprs-ang.nsf/dokumentiweb/>

³² Public announcement made by President Drnovšek on 19 October 2005 (www.up-rs.si).

Out of the 7 Slovenian MEPs, 4 belong to the EPP-ED, 2 to ALDE and 1 to PES. 2 EPP members signed the secret ballot proposal. Both Liberal Democrats' MEPs (ALDE) voted in favour of opening negotiations with Turkey, as did the Social Democrats' leader (PES). It is not known how the remaining two Slovenian EPP MEPs voted, though it has been suggested that one was supportive and the other opposing. Seven political parties were elected to the Slovenian parliament in the October 2004 elections. The government is a coalition of four parties (SDS, NSi, SLS and DeSUS).

Slovenian Democrats (SDS)

The strongest party in the parliament is the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS – *Slovenska demokratska stranka*), with 2 MEPs in the EPP. Alas, the SDS political programme has no defined foreign policy regarding further EU enlargement. Only a general statement about the need to “actively support the endeavours for fulfilling the European perspective of states” and “an entry into the European Union also for the Southeastern European states (Western Balkans) in order to conclude the historic process of European unification and enlargement as soon as possible”.³³ The SDS supports the beginning of negotiations with Turkey, while being aware of the doubts some member states and certain EP parties have in this regard.³⁴

The president of the parliamentary Committee for Foreign Policy is a SDS MP. He claims that the Committee often discusses issues of further EU enlargement, especially since it is supposed to examine the European Council proposals and help the government in reaching its decisions. He states that the Slovenian MPs are actively involved in the Committee debates, where the question of Turkey often comes up.³⁵ Since the Committee sessions are closed to the public, it is impossible to know how these debates develop, who the possible opponents or proponents to Turkey's EU membership are. According to the president, the discussion about Turkey is usually not a direct debate on this country but “comes up in Committee's discussions”. He maintains that debates are predominantly strategic in nature as the MPs think politically and discuss how to behave towards Turkey which is an important economic partner, trying to see how Slovenia could benefit from Turkey's EU membership. The Committee had at least two specific country-focused sessions; on 10 December 2004 on Turkey and on 28 January 2005 on Ukraine, but both were closed to the public.

³³ SDS political programme, 4 May 2005, available at http://www.sds.si/index.php?page=program&menu=menu_o_stranki

³⁴ Matija Stepišnik, 'Evropa ne ve: se Turčije boji ali si jo želi' ('Europe Does Not Know Whether to Fear or Want Turkey'), *Večer*, 8 October 2004.

³⁵ Interview with Jožef Jerovšek, president, Committee for Foreign Policy, 13 July 2005.

Despite the fact that an official position on Turkey, as well as on Ukraine, is absent from the SDS party programme, the SDS has the same stance as the government. Since it is the biggest and most influential party in the parliament, this was expected. Jerovšek remembers the issue of Turkey being discussed even before the SDS became the governmental party in October 2004. The SDS sees the question of Turkey's European perspective as a necessary step towards the stabilisation and democratisation in the area. It is also seen as the best warranty for Slovenia's position in this region.³⁶ The belief is that the promise of accession induces necessary reforms, democratisation and stabilisation.

This SDS member is convinced that Ukraine is a part of Europe and reports that his party is equally inclined to support both Turkey and Ukraine, seeing no reason why the EU should not expand to include Ukraine. He, however, states that this will not happen any time soon, due to the EU's recent inner crisis.³⁷

While Jerovšek claims that no dissenting voices exist within the SDS, their MEP representative Dr. Mihael Brejc is openly more sceptical. It is necessary to understand his stance in the wider framework of his home party affiliation to the SDS, which – as a governmental party representing the official Slovenia's position – is in favour of Turkey's EU membership; and his EP affiliation with the most Turkey-sceptic EPP party group. He notes his concerns regarding the limits to further EU enlargement: "Personally, I believe that EU enlargement has its existential limits and will not be able to continue unrestricted."³⁸ Though he claims there has not been enough discussion on issues of further enlargement, he does not think the debate on Turkey and Ukraine is needed in Slovenia.³⁹ He signed the secret ballot proposal when the European Parliament voted on the beginning of negotiations with Turkey in December 2004. Brejc maintains that his party supports the opening of negotiations with Turkey, yet points out the need to be aware of the open-end to negotiations and warns against creating illusions. He claims the reason for his decision about Turkey were human rights violations. He therefore voted for a privileged status of Turkey until it meets the Copenhagen criteria.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Brejc's contribution to the Parliament Magazine, 9 May 2005, p. 25.

³⁹ Interview with Dr. Mihael Brejc, MEP (EPP-ED), 2 September 2005.

Liberal Democrats (LDS)

LDS was the ruling party up until the October 2004 elections that forced it into opposition. It fully supports Turkey's entry into the European Union and opposes all suggestions to organise referenda on Turkey's entry (e.g. France). The president of the intra-party LDS Committee for Foreign Affairs has noted that the negotiations may be interrupted at any time if Turkey violates human rights, while the end result of the negotiations is entirely open. Yet he also pointed out that the EU has certain obligations toward Turkey that need to be fulfilled.⁴⁰

As the biggest opposition party (23 out of 90 seats), the LDS has formed a shadow government where several ministers are public intellectuals and experts. Leading the foreign affairs is a professor from the Faculty of Social Sciences (University of Ljubljana) Bojko Bučar, while a former diplomat and now president of the Slovenian International Relations Society Jožef Kunič is in charge of defence issues. They have both been heard occasionally participating in the public debate with substantive pro and con arguments regarding Turkey's EU prospects. Kunič wrote an analysis of Turkey's current situation in the light of its EU accession negotiations and is of a belief that its EU membership would be beneficial to small states such as Slovenia because of the power shift within the EU that inclusion of such a big and populous country would have on its shape. He claims that the inclusion of Ukraine would have the same effect.⁴¹

The LDS party programme does not specifically address further EU enlargement. The LDS declares: "We will actively participate in all the projects that await the EU, especially concerning the EU's further enlargement and in forming its new neighbourhood policy towards the states of Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean."⁴² A special interest in the Western Balkans can also be detected. "The region of Western Balkans is Slovenia's natural hinterland."⁴³ "Cooperation with the states of Southeastern Europe is of particular importance for Slovenia."⁴⁴

The LDS has two MEPs, both affiliated with the ALDE group. Jelko Kacin has been by far the most vocal of the 7 Slovenian MEPs, both in regard to Turkey and Ukraine. When speaking

⁴⁰ Matija Stepišnik, 'Evropa ne ve: se Turčije boji ali si jo želi'.

⁴¹ Dr. Jožef Kunič's participation at the Peace Institute's Forum on the topic of *Turkey and Ukraine in the European Union?*, Ljubljana, 14 November 2005.

⁴² The LDS party programme 'Together we are Changing Slovenia' from 2 September 2004, p. 102, available at <http://www.lids.si/party.cp2?uid=3804&linkid=15>

⁴³ LDS, 'Evropski in mednarodni horizonti Slovenije' ('European and International Slovenian Horizons'), http://www.lids.si/article_f.cp2?uid=2824 accessed on 27 May 2005.

⁴⁴ LDS, 'Za odprto in pluralistično kulturno politiko' ('For an Open and Plural Cultural Policy'), http://www.lids.si/article_f.cp2?uid=2811 accessed on 27 May 2005.

about Bulgaria's progress towards accession, he stated his support also for Turkey.⁴⁵ He also said: "Turkey must move forward to democracy and into Europe and there is no other possibility. I support the enlargement of the European Union and the Europeanisation of Turkey."⁴⁶ He also spoke favourably about Ukraine: "After the recent events in Ukraine it has become evident that Europe is definitely larger than many people had previously believed it to be. (...) Ukraine has contributed greatly to democracy and peace. (...) Now she deserves to be rewarded."⁴⁷ His enthusiasm about the Ukrainian progress has also come across in his February 2005 speech in the EP.⁴⁸

Other Political Parties

The New Slovenia (NSi) party supports further EU enlargement and points out that the European perspective can help "the democratic standards in Turkey, while the EU will also gain a lot".⁴⁹ Proclaiming itself a Christian People's Party, the NSi policy document includes the following statement: "Central to New Slovenia's cultural values is an emphasis on Slovenia's cultural identity and consciousness of its historical origins in European Christian and Enlightenment cultures." One could therefore expect an opposition to a country with a majority Muslim population and the NSi does admit the problem of Islam can represent an important hindrance. Yet it should not pose a real problem if mutual respect and consideration are applied, says a prominent member.⁵⁰ The NSi is a determined advocate of a "realistic EU enlargement process", seeing its specific task in helping the Western Balkans and particularly Croatia.⁵¹

The Slovenian People's Party (SLS) had "no reservations regarding the beginning of negotiations".⁵² It supports a common EU foreign policy. No specific stance towards Turkey or Ukraine has been expressed, the SLS party programme however states that the "SLS supports universal political and economic cooperation with the Russian Federation".⁵³

⁴⁵ Kacin's contribution to the European Parliamentary debate on 15 December 2004 titled 'Bulgaria's Progress Towards Accession' can be found at <http://www2.europarl.eu.int/>

⁴⁶ Kacin's contribution to the European Parliamentary debate on 13 December 2004 titled 'Turkey's Progress Towards Accession' available at <http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/>

⁴⁷ Kacin's contribution to the European Parliamentary debate on 1 December 2004 titled 'Situation in Ukraine' available at <http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/>

⁴⁸ Kacin's contribution to the European Parliamentary debate on 23 February 2005 titled 'Elections in Moldova' can be found at <http://www2.europarl.eu.int/>

⁴⁹ Stepišnik, 'Evropa ne ve: se Turčije boji ali si jo želi'.

⁵⁰ Interview with Mr. Alojz Sok, NSi, President of the Committee for Agriculture, Forestry and Food, 6 July 2005.

⁵¹ The NSi party programme available at <http://volitve.nsi.si/staticne/program>

⁵² Stepišnik, 'Evropa ne ve: se Turčije boji ali si jo želi'.

⁵³ The SLS party programme available at <http://www.sls.si/documents/index.asp?IDD=68>

Together with the SDS, both the NSi and the SLS are affiliated with the EPP. All three parties are in the governing coalition.

The oppositional Social Democrats (SD) do not cover foreign policy matters in their manifesto, though they "in principle support the enlargement to Turkey" but want to see the EU "politically consolidated" first, making the final adoption of the constitution a priority. The SD president and a PES MEP Borut Pahor argues that "Europe is aware of Turkey being a 'special case' ... so the EU doors are opening but it is not clear when they will close".⁵⁴ Despite his support for Turkey's membership: "I believe the European Commission made a good decision," Pahor openly speaks about his concerns. He is worried that support for Turkey may affect the EU's inner consolidation processes, which he sees as a priority.⁵⁵ He confesses that the SD acts in a much more cautious way about further EU enlargement than a year ago, predominantly due to "the current political circumstances of the EU's stalemate, even crisis". The SD is also "not thinking ambitiously about Ukraine", opting for "special agreements about cooperation with the EU", rather than "burdening the EU public with the political dimension of membership, especially in the time of ratifying the constitution."⁵⁶

While the role of the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS) is entirely absent from the debate on Turkey and Ukraine (an *ad hoc* poll among the political parties did not even include their stance on Turkey⁵⁷), the position of the populist and nationalistic Slovenian National Party (SNS) is very distinctive. On the one hand, their leader Zmago Jelinčič Plemeniti informs us that numerous questions are being raised within his party, especially regarding the limits of Europe, but also of Kurdish autonomy within Turkey and regarding human rights. He is of opinion that enlargement weakens the EU.⁵⁸ His party colleague Bogdan Barovič, on the other hand, has made it clear that the SNS "absolutely does not oppose the further EU enlargement".⁵⁹ He criticised the decision of the Slovenian government to make the negotiations with Croatia a priority, claiming that Slovenia's position should be one of "supporting negotiations with all the states which fulfil the conditions".⁶⁰ Mentioning Turkey several times, he however spoke more generally about the enlargement. Still, he did

⁵⁴ Stepišnik, 'Evropa ne ve: se Turčije boji ali si jo želi'.

⁵⁵ Interview with Borut Pahor, PES MEP and the president of Social Democrats, 12 August 2005.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Stepišnik, 'Evropa ne ve: se Turčije boji ali si jo želi'.

⁵⁸ The SNS party representatives continuously ignored requests for an interview despite agreeing to participate in this project. Mr. Jelinčič's stance that is here referred to is taken from the above mentioned *ad hoc* poll in Stepišnik, 'Evropa ne ve: se Turčije boji ali si jo želi'.

⁵⁹ National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia, 8th extraordinary session, 22 April 2005, http://www.gov.si/dz/si/aktualno/spremljanje_sej/dobesedni_zapisi_sej/dobesedni_zapisi_sej.html

⁶⁰ National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia, 4th session, 29 March 2005, http://www.gov.si/dz/si/aktualno/spremljanje_sej/dobesedni_zapisi_sej/dobesedni_zapisi_sej.html

say: "We in the Slovenian National Party will not oppose".⁶¹ As pointed out by the Turkish Ambassador in Slovenia, the nationalist parties in Central-Eastern Europe are "dead against the Turkish membership in the EU, with one very big exception, Jelinčič here".⁶² A Turkish-Slovenian inter-parliamentary friendship group has recently been set up and the chairman is Bogdan Barovič of the SNS, while 3 more SNS MPs, including Jelinčič, are members.⁶³

Analysis of extra-parliamentary parties has shown that only the Party of Slovenian Youth (SMS) has a detailed and serious foreign policy programme. Neither Turkey nor Ukraine are mentioned, the SMS supports inclusion of "the rest of the Eastern European states" into the EU "as soon as possible".⁶⁴ Eight extra-parliamentary parties have been identified and examined, only the SMS including the question of further EU enlargement into their programme. Judging by the nationalist stance of some of the extra-parliamentary parties, one could conditionally infer that a potential for opposition to Turkey or Ukraine's membership might form in their midst. Yet such a conclusion would be too far-fetched at this stage. It is also safe to assume that they have very limited public support, and hardly any influence on setting the public agenda.

The Slovenian EU Commissioner Janez Potočnik, understandably, made quite a few statements regarding the EU perspective of both Turkey and Ukraine. As the Commission's standpoint is that the question of Ukraine entering the European Union is not on the agenda, such attitude is reflected in Potočnik's statements. In January 2005, he did acknowledge the need to take a fresh look at "our relationship with Ukraine as a key neighbour and partner of the European Union". Still, he settled for the European Neighbourhood Policy.⁶⁵ Regarding Turkey, he stated it is "one of the serious candidates".⁶⁶ I am hesitant to award his position much attention, since he speaks as a EU Commissioner and not as a representative of Slovenia.⁶⁷

⁶¹ 8th extraordinary session.

⁶² Interview with His Excellency Mr. Balkan Kizildeli, Embassy of Turkey, 3 August 2005.

⁶³ The SNS has altogether 7 seats in the parliament.

⁶⁴ The detailed SMS party programme from 2004 available at http://www.sms.si/razno/sms_program_2004.doc

⁶⁵ Potočnik's contribution to the European Parliamentary debate titled 'Results of Ukraine Elections', 13 January 2005, available at <http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/>

⁶⁶ 'Potočnik in the U.S. on Slovenia Entering the EU', Dnevnik, 18 January 2004.

⁶⁷ The analysis has also not found any older statements made by Potočnik on Turkey or Ukraine before he became a commissioner.

Public Debate in the Media and Civil Society

In Slovenia, public debate on the European future of either Turkey or Ukraine is limited to the politicians and the media. Civil society seems to be a disinterested bystander. The public debate on Turkey and Ukraine remains a non-issue in Slovenia, thus posing no immediate requirement of the NGOs and civil society groups to take a public stand of either support or opposition to their potential EU membership. This was confirmed by their visible absence from the participation in the national Forum/roundtable on Turkey and Ukraine's possible future EU membership organised by the Peace Institute in November 2005 in Ljubljana.

The Slovenian Catholic Church has not announced its official stance towards Turkey as a possible future EU member-state. The current head of the Church in Slovenia appears to be significantly more subdued than his predecessor who had stirred up numerous public controversies and had been highly critical of the former government. It would therefore appear that the Church is hesitant to form an opinion that would run counter to the official state policy supporting further EU enlargement, including Turkey. This is especially probable since the new archbishop has been heard commending the new government, which is of a more conservative and right wing persuasion than the former LDS-led political elite.⁶⁸ It has been suggested, in line with this argument, that the Church may fear two conflicting developments. On the one hand, it is fairly reasonable to assume that the Vatican under Benedict XVI is against Turkey becoming a member (judging by cardinal Ratzinger's stance before he became the new pope). Obviously, the Church has to look at the Vatican for guidance. On the other hand, though, the official position towards Turkey in Slovenia is favourable. Slovenia has one of the highest percentage of public support for further enlargement and public opinion polls show that even Turkey, usually at the very tail of such 'popularity' lists, has its share of supporters. This puts the Church in between two different positions and until such time when an official announcement is called for, its representatives will rather avoid taking part in the discussion.⁶⁹ A strong objection from the Church, however, is hardly to be expected. At the end of 2004, the Council of European Bishops Conferences, including the Slovenian delegation, voiced no objections or 'religious reservations' to Turkey's entry.

The Slovenian Catholic Church has not stated its position on Ukraine's possible future EU membership either. Judging by the statement of the Vatican Foreign Minister Giovanni Lajolo,

⁶⁸ See the archbishop Alojz Uran's speech in Brezje on 15 August 2005. Available at www.rkc.si/aktualno/?id=1556

⁶⁹ When approaching the Slovenian Bishop's Conference in order to arrange an interview with the archbishop, my request was met with stern rejection.

the position of the Vatican towards Ukraine is much more open and welcoming than towards Turkey. The Minister has been quoted saying that Ukraine undoubtedly belongs to Europe.⁷⁰

If the public debate about Turkey ever becomes dominated by the question of religion, then maybe parallels could be drawn with the recent Slovenian controversy surrounding the building of a mosque.⁷¹ Yet I have to emphasise this is only a very conditional assumption, since most of the Muslims in Slovenia are from Bosnia-Herzegovina. A 'Muslim' is therefore a category that has almost nothing to do with Turkey. Still, for the sake of speculation, if the issue of Islam was to take root in the Slovenian public debate, then the same groups and individuals voicing their rejection of a mosque could be expected to raise their opposition towards Turkey. The same type of arguments would also be expected to prevail (e.g. 'battling' for Christian values in need of protection from the supposedly fundamentalist and backward Islam and so on). However, I do not wish to pay too much attention to this line of reasoning, especially because the question of Islam has so far remained associated with the 'mosque debate' and no attempt has been made to cross over to a discussion of the future EU enlargement to Turkey.

The Media⁷²

Analysis of the media concentrates on the three main Slovenian dailies: *Delo*, *Dnevnik* and *Večer*.⁷³ Media coverage of further enlargement to include Turkey has been mostly factual, without much analysis or commentary. The debate about the prospect of a future Ukrainian EU membership is not present in Slovenia, as Ukraine is not a candidate country. The media coverage in the case of Ukraine intensified with the period of Ukrainian presidential elections and the so-called Orange Revolution. The reporting on Turkey increases whenever the focus turns to Turkey either in the EU institutions or in one of the bigger EU member states,

⁷⁰ 'Vatikan: Turčija bo morala dokazati, ali spada v Evropo' ('Vatican: Turkey Will Need to Prove if it Belongs to Europe'), *Dnevnik*, 3 January 2005.

⁷¹ Even though over 40,000 Muslims live in Slovenia, they have no mosque. Long-term attempts to build one in Ljubljana have so far not been realised and the Muslim community has been facing growingly intolerant nationalistic opposition. The opposing arguments included an aesthetic fear of violation of the Ljubljana skyline or warned that a mosque would become a meeting place for future terrorists, unmasking the Slovenian ethnocentrism and xenophobic fear of the 'Other'.

⁷² The most widely read *Slovenske novice* was excluded, for it gravitates towards the tabloid part of the journalism spectrum. *Finance* was surveyed for any relevant articles but in the end excluded because it is a specialised business newspaper. Out of the three potentially relevant weekly magazines, only *Mladina* is available on-line and was included in the analysis. Radio broadcasts could not be followed due to time limit and limited budget for the research. Television, however, is probably the most accessible and widespread medium hence every effort has been made to include it in the research.

⁷³ Since the article archive of the *Večer* newspaper is not freely available, my research was limited to selected articles published between the year 2000 and 31 May 2005 (I thank Ms. Svete of the *Večer* newspaper for allowing me limited free access).

particularly Germany, Austria or France, or when 'attention grabbing' events (e.g. bomb attacks, human rights violations, bird flu) take place in Turkey itself.

One important issue needs to be pointed out; the 'problem' with foreign correspondents. Even the public Slovenian Radiotelevision (RTVS) has no correspondents in either Turkey or Ukraine. It is a significant deficiency that should be noted in this report. Whereas the media make every attempt to provide balanced and all-inclusive information to the public, the fact that no Slovenian reporter is stationed in either Ankara, Istanbul or Kyiv is no small matter. As the international news editor of the public RTVS put it: "There is nobody in Turkey who would need to earn a pay check". Had there been reporters in Turkey and Ukraine, media coverage of these two states would no doubt have increased. Alas, for the time being, "where there is nobody, only 'outstanding' events spur the attention of journalists and then somebody from Ljubljana gets to cover the issue".⁷⁴ In the case of Ukraine's Orange Revolution, the RTVS foreign correspondent from Moscow was sent to Kyiv to cover the events. In the case of Turkey, it is either a Brussels correspondent that reports on its progress and its EU accession negotiations, or the 'closest' correspondent from Belgrade. Most often it is somebody from the News and Current Affairs (based in Ljubljana) that compiles information and produces a report.

Newspapers suffer from the same disease. *Večer* has no foreign correspondents and its foreign affairs editor sends a journalist out to location only when something especially newsworthy occurs. *Dnevnik* relies on its Brussels correspondent for both Turkey and Ukraine-related news or asks an expert to write a commentary on Ukraine. *Delo*, too, is dependent on its correspondents from either Brussels or Moscow. All three Slovenian dailies rely heavily on press agencies, either the Slovenian Press Agency STA (*Slovenska tiskovna agencija*) or foreign press agencies, predominantly just summarising or copying their reports. The few articles that are signed show the journalists are mostly correspondents from Brussels or Strasbourg; and either Vienna or Berlin in the case of Turkey, or Moscow, maybe Warsaw, in the case of Ukraine.

Dnevnik

In 2005, only a handful of signed articles appeared on Turkey in *Dnevnik*; general commentaries on EU's enlargement and reports on Turkey written by a correspondent from Athens. No commentary was included and no parallels drawn to Slovenia's stance toward accession negotiations. All the remaining articles were simply STA reports. The situation was

⁷⁴ Interview with Igor Jurič, journalist and News and Current Affairs editor, Radiotelevision Slovenia, 18 August 2005.

better in December 2004, when an expert analysis and a commentary appeared in press, and an interview with Italian MEP Emma Bonino (involved with Turkey's EU negotiations) was published. A couple of commentaries were also published in October and November, after the publication of the European Commission report on Turkey. One rather negative commentary was published in May 2004, but the rest were predominantly 'neutral' reports. When the accession negotiations were opened with Turkey and Croatia in October 2005, most of the media attention and political commentary was awarded to Croatia. Turkey was debated in terms of wider 'EU relevant' issues, not through the perspective of the 'Slovenian national interests'.

In connection to Ukraine an article appeared on Yulia Timoshenko in February 2005, three general commentaries in January 2005, while more than a dozen commentaries appeared in *Dnevnik* in December and November 2004, when the media coverage of Ukraine was at its highest. The rest were reports about Ukraine's new president's diplomatic activity, his visits to Brussels and EU member states. No attempt was made to include the Slovenian perspective on the possible EU membership of Ukraine.

Večer

The examined *Večer* articles published between the years 2000 and 2005 show similar results to the ones described above. Reports on Turkey are mostly summaries of developments in other EU countries, such as Germany. The few exceptions that do not settle for a repetition of press agencies' reports are usually examples of providing a neutral list of pro and con arguments for Turkey's EU membership. One very positive article about Turkey was published in September 2004, a travelogue. In December 2004, the issue of Turkey was more topical due to the EU summit and *Večer* published an interview with a foreign expert who was supportive of Turkey's entry. Moreover, an interview with the Turkish ambassador appeared in press just two days afterwards. Two very positive articles were published at the end of 2004, calling for the inclusion of Turkey into the European Union.

Only slightly over 20 articles on Ukraine for the period of five years (2000-2005) were available for the analysis. The most recent reports were about the official EU's 'reserved' position towards Ukraine and about Brussels refusing to discuss Ukraine's EU membership. Reports on Yushchenko's visit to Brussels of course appeared, as did notes on several expressions of support for Ukraine, but no commentary or attempt to relate the issue to Slovenia and its foreign policy interests was published.

Delo

Though the situation was not much better in the *Delo* newspaper, the issue of Turkey's accession negotiations has been more closely followed, as have the events surrounding Ukraine's elections and the consequent Orange Revolution. Several commentaries were published. In the case of Ukraine, in 2005 Javier Solana and an observer of the international OSCE mission provided their impressions and views on Ukraine. In December 2004, a commentary by Janusz Bugajski, Director of the Programme for Eastern Europe at Washington's Centre for Strategic and International Studies appeared. The issue of Ukraine's possible EU membership was not discussed, apart from Mr. Bugajski who stated the need to offer Ukraine a real possibility of membership. Already in May 2004, an article by Yulia Tymoshenko was published, the only example of highlighting the question of Ukraine's EU membership. The rest of the commentaries were written either by a correspondent from Warsaw or Moscow; hence concentrating on either the Polish-Ukrainian or the Russian-Ukrainian relations, all just factual reports without commentary. The absence of analysis is significant and confirms the lack of Slovenian interest for the issue of Ukraine's EU prospects. Nothing was published on the Slovenian-Ukrainian relations, let alone on Slovenia's stance towards Ukraine's possible EU membership. The Slovenian foreign correspondent from Moscow contributed a couple of in-depth political commentaries of significant value. Discussing the problematic political situation and looming crisis, the Moscow correspondent wrote a couple of commentaries on Ukraine also in 2003 and back in 2001.

As in the case of Ukraine, the majority of *Delo* articles on Turkey are again just reports copied from foreign press agencies. As already mentioned above, they mostly report on developments taking place in Germany, Austria and France, or summarize the relevant EU developments and decisions. Still, a few commentaries or analyses were published on Turkey. In 2005, among the articles providing the 'background information' on this state a couple of interviews appeared. The vice-president of the Armenian parliament spoke on the need to recognise the genocide, and the Turkish ambassador in Slovenia was interviewed, followed by two letters to the editor that opposed Turkey's EU membership.

An important report on the state of the current Slovenian affairs appeared in March 2005, when the parliamentary committees were deciding on accepting a declaration about the direction for the functioning of Slovenia in the EU institutions. The article succinctly summed up the main conclusions of the present national report; "there was almost no discussion ... even the government does not take these parliamentary debates too seriously, for nobody attempted to explain their significance to the MPs," the journalist reported. "Only the

Committee for Agriculture witnessed some discussion on Slovenia's future involvement in the EU affairs".⁷⁵ This was due to Mr. Sok, the Committee's president who emphasises the need for Slovenia's firm stance regarding Turkey entering the EU. Rather than engaging in the debate on Turkey, the rest of the MPs were quick to note that the negotiations with Turkey have not yet begun. Similarly, the question of Ukraine is considered to be distant because it is not even a candidate country yet.

The most prolific time for political commentary was, as expected, December 2004. There was a pro-Turkey article focusing on President Erdoğan. Published right before the EU summit, a very optimistic and positive contribution by the former foreign minister of Greece Jorgos A. Papandreu appeared. In order to provide a balanced picture, the former French president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's article from the Italian *Repubblica* was reprinted. In October 2004, an interview appeared with the former president of the EU Commission Jacques Santer, who did not see Turkey as a full member, while there was also an interview with the Director of the Institute for Foreign Affairs at the Bilkent University in Ankara. Terry Davis, Head of the Council of Europe was also interviewed and stated his support for the Turkish accession.

In short, a consistent stream of articles on Turkey has been published in Slovenian newspapers, most notably in *Delo*. Interviews with prominent foreign politicians and experts, who either supported Turkey's accession or listed their arguments of opposition, prevailed over genuine editorials. Most commentaries merely recounted the differing arguments in order to provide an informative summary of the EU debate on this country. Reports on Ukraine were concentrated around the time of its presidential elections and the Orange Revolution and again escalated in January 2006 because of the so-called 'gas war' between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Yet these reports omitted any debate on possible future EU membership for Ukraine. Showing similar disinterest, the media coverage of the October 2005 launch of the accession negotiations focused primarily on Croatia, while the commentaries on Turkey went along the line of summarising the debate in other EU states, leaving out the 'Slovenian perspective'.

⁷⁵ Jože Poglajen, 'Bolj učna ura kot vsebinska razprava' ('More a Lesson than a Content Debate'), *Delo*, 5 March 2005.

Supporting and Opposing Arguments

Since the most important conclusion of this research is that the Slovenian public debate on either Turkey or Ukraine becoming EU member states is almost non-existent, the task of identifying a public opposition to their accession is difficult. As stated above, the official stance of Slovenia is that every state that fulfils all the obligations and conditions set by the EU can become a future member. Slovenia supports Turkey on its path of becoming a part of the EU and is open to the prospect of one day maybe integrating Ukraine, provided all the necessary conditions are met. The public debate on these two states' possible accession, however, is limited to politicians and few experts, and has not (yet) become a matter of general public interest. Occasionally, a political commentary appears in the media and the question of Turkey's EU membership is briefly discussed. While it is customary on such occasions to provide both pros and cons of the potential Turkish membership, no open public opposition to the Turkish accession has so far appeared. Ukraine remains on the fringes of public debate, a subject of almost no controversy especially because it is not yet a candidate country and its membership in the EU is therefore only a distant possibility. Certain members of the Slovenian political elite have voiced their support for the post-Orange Revolution Ukraine. An ALDE MEP has spoken in its favour, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and former head of the OSCE is keen to help, and the President of the Republic has also been known to express his support.

This section is based on the analysis of government documents, parliamentary debates, public speeches, party statements, official press releases, interviews and numerous newspaper articles published in the Slovenian newspapers from the year 2000 onwards, with a focus on the years 2004 and 2005. The investigation of the expert and public debate yields the following main lines of argumentation in support or opposition to Turkey and Ukraine as potential EU member states.

- **TURKEY**

Arguments in Favour of Turkey's EU Membership

It seems that in Slovenia the 'big picture' reasoning prevails; the most prominent argument for Turkey's accession is its geopolitical and strategic position. Its inclusion into the European Union would mean a warranty for peace in Europe, and stability and democratisation in the

region. One commentary pointed out that the decision to start the accession negotiations with Turkey could have a positive influence on the political developments in southern Caucasus. A normalisation of the Turkish-Armenian relations would result in easier conflict resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh situation. Such arguments reflect a desire to appease conflicts and reveal hopes that Turkey's EU membership would have a positive influence on the currently 'problematic' areas in its neighbourhood.

The next strong argument in favour of Turkey's EU membership consists of economic benefits. In line with particular 'Slovenian national interests', proponents of the idea claim that Turkey's membership would warrant Slovenia's position in the region in terms of business. While not the main trading partner for Slovenia, the goods exchange between the two states has been continuously rising and has been reported at about 340,000 USD for 2004.⁷⁶ The main import and export goods are automobiles. Another positive element of Turkey's EU membership for Slovenia would be an increase in maritime traffic between the two states that already cooperate well in this field. The above-mentioned exchange of cars brings significant business to the Slovenian *Luka Koper* port. It has also been suggested that including Turkey into the EU would result in building roads and railways across the Balkans in order to improve the connections. This would imply the help of the EU funds, and Slovenian construction companies would be able to participate in a part of the construction project as contractors.

Turkey's size is also listed as a plus; it is a strong and big state that has a powerful army and represents a large market. It is therefore good that Turkey is a sizeable country in at least two respects: because of its military power and the security its membership can bring to the EU; and on account of the potential economic benefits for the rest of the EU member states. Including Turkey into the EU would help Slovenian business in reaching the markets in Central Asia and the Middle East. As Turkey already represents a popular tourist destination for many Slovenians, its membership would in addition bring benefits to tourism in both states.

Turkey's accession is also supported on account of its contribution to the fight against terrorism and the fundamentalist Islam. The EU should be safer if Turkey becomes a

⁷⁶ Slovenia's exports to Turkey moved from ranking on the 25th to the 17th place, while imports from Turkey also increased, moving Turkey from the 28th to the 20th place in the last four years. All the data from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, 20 July 2005, available at www.gzs.si/Nivo3.asp?ID=7406&IDpm=6075

member, argues one prominent Slovenian expert.⁷⁷ In terms of culture certain experts argue that Turkey's EU membership would provide a bridge between the 'West' and Islam. Slovenia's President has been heard reiterating this point on several occasions. Experts have pointed out that Turkey belongs to Europe and has a long tradition of membership in the "joint European civilisational body".⁷⁸ Accepting Turkey among the EU states would further mean the beginning of actual coexistence and peace 'between civilisations'. In short, Turkey's membership would contribute to the so-called dialogue of cultures.

Most importantly, it has been argued that including a big state like Turkey would be beneficial to smaller member states because of the shift in decision-making power from the big 'old' member states to a more even spread among the new members. This would "bring a fresh wind into the EU and strengthen the significance of the new members".⁷⁹

Arguments Against Turkey's EU Membership

The most commonly voiced concern regarding the prospect of Turkey entering the EU relates to the question of European borders. Even the proponents of Turkey's membership have often pointed out that the EU is in crisis and it is therefore its priority to consolidate. The question of further enlargement has become more complicated, and a debate about the future shape of the EU is necessary. The need to discuss the question of the EU's will for further enlargement is also brought forward in Slovenia. Those few sceptical voices that could conditionally represent a feeble Slovenian opposition to Turkey's membership have all exposed the issue of limits to the future EU enlargement. Only one comment has openly argued that enlargement weakens the European Union.⁸⁰ The rest of the individual opposing voices were either lonesome letters to the editor or one-time 'special guest' appearances by Turkey sceptics from other EU states (e.g. France and Germany).

As expected, the problematic question of human rights and liberties has been raised, and the fact that Turkey has not yet fulfilled all of its political conditions was mentioned. In addition, the issue of the Kurdish minority has been referred to, as has the Cyprus conundrum. None of the above stated issues is used as a Slovenian argument against Turkey entering the EU, these are rather questions listed as current problematic points. In general, the sentiment

⁷⁷ Jožef Kunič, 'Bo članstvo Turčije v EU koristilo manjšim članicam?' (Will Turkey's membership in the EU be beneficial to smaller member states?), Dnevnik, 3 November 2004.

⁷⁸ Primož Šterbenc, 'Turčija končno v Evropski uniji?' ('Turkey finally in the EU?'), Dnevnik, 24 December 2004.

⁷⁹ Jožef Kunič, 'Bo članstvo Turčije v EU koristilo manjšim članicam?'

⁸⁰ The Slovenian National Party president Zmago Jelinčič Plemeniti quoted in Stepišnik, 'Evropa ne ve: se Turčije boji ali si jo želi'.

seems to be neutral and in the position of 'giving Turkey a chance' to remedy its maladies and fulfil all the obligations.

The pressing concern regarding the agricultural payments and future financial perspective is visible, as Turkey would inevitably represent a big competitor for the EU funds. The question of finances is very significant since Turkey is a less developed and extensively agricultural country. Its membership would not only drain the EU funds for agriculture but represent a problem for financing the EU in general. This is becoming an urgent question. The experts also worry about safeguarding the environment, since Turkey's agriculture and industry is claimed to be less environmentally friendly.

Among the counterarguments, Turkey's supposed cultural and religious differences have also been pointed out. Yet rather than taking a position of opposing Turkey's entry on grounds of religion, these arguments are only mentioned, listed as possible 'problems', as examples of what the debate in other states has so far brought forth. Hence, when somebody says that "according to a classical and conventional view of things, Turkey is not entirely a European state," this is not expressed as a (personal) view but as a summation of 'the debate' in general. The same goes for the demographic argument, which has not received much attention in Slovenia, but has appeared both as an opposing and as a supportive reason for including this populous state.

- **UKRAINE**

Arguments in Favour of Ukraine's EU Membership

The issue of Ukraine possibly becoming a EU member state is not debated in Slovenia. The commentators usually discuss its international relations with neighbouring states, i.e. the Russian Federation and Poland. Some of the Slovenian media have foreign correspondents in Moscow and Warsaw, thus making the reporting on Russian-Ukrainian and Polish-Ukrainian relations more accessible. Ukraine's post-Orange Revolution political transition is also occasionally discussed, yet no debate about the specific Slovenian interests has so far been included in the limited discussion that there is about this country.

Ukraine is generally seen as a prospective market for Slovenian economy. Growing from mere 10,900 to almost 180,000 USD between 1992 and 2004, the trading between Slovenia and

Ukraine is on the rise. Slovenia exports two or three times as much as it imports from Ukraine, and no doubt the business-people would like to see the continuation of this trend, as Ukraine's EU membership would mean an easier flow of goods. It has been mentioned that Ukraine is more important for the Slovenian interests than Turkey. Its abundance of raw materials is of interest to the less fortunate Slovenia, which for instance imports many Ukrainian steel products.

Ukraine is also believed to be closer to Slovenia (and in turn to the EU) in terms of the mentality of its people. While in regard to Turkey the opposition often claims that the majority of its territory lies outside of Europe, there is little or no dispute over Ukraine lying within the European geographical boundaries.

A generalised argument stressed by the current Slovenian Minister of Foreign Affairs is his belief that the European states have a joint destiny and common perspective, alongside many shared cultural elements. Ukraine is therefore "definitely worth a good thinking over". Ukrainians are also a Slavic nation which connects them to Slovenians, as the example of the Forum for Slavic Cultures testifies, in which both countries are active participants. There is also a belief that the world between (North) America, Canada, the EU and the Russian Federation somehow "belongs together". The Slovenian foreign minister hence thinks that it is quite logical that the Europeans "look towards the east, too".⁸¹

Arguments Against Ukraine's EU Membership

Compared to Turkey and its long wait in front of the EU door, Ukraine is in a different situation altogether. Not yet even a candidate country, the Slovenians pay it little attention. Only one possible opposing view was identified and it relates to the fact that the EU already has enough problems at the moment. Bringing forth the question of Ukraine's membership would thus additionally burden the EU public in the current situation of crisis.

Economy and agriculture are additional issues underlying potential opposition to Ukraine's EU membership. Certain Slovenian companies might consider moving their production to Ukraine in search of cheaper labour force. Financial gains for only a minority of businessmen would not be reflected in the Slovenian public that might oppose the inclusion of yet another competitive labour force market. Moreover, Ukraine's famously fertile soil would cause serious concerns among the Slovenian farmers.

⁸¹ Interview with Dr. Dimitrij Rupel, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chair of the OSCE, 26 July 2005.

Conclusions

In Slovenia, the majority of the interviewed stakeholders agree that opening up and intensifying a public debate on the question of Turkey or Ukraine's EU membership is needed and would indeed be welcomed. A member of the governmental coalition party even stated that it is up to the coalition parties to start leading this debate in Slovenia. This goes in line with the need to form a stronger and more recognisable Slovenian foreign policy.

However, there seems to be a gap between these statements and the actual public involvement in the debate. Representatives of the political parties were not active participants in the Forum organised for the purpose of publicly debating the issue of Turkey and Ukraine's potential EU membership. The official stance of supporting further enlargement could therefore be complemented with more prominent political efforts to engage the Slovenian public in the debate. For now, there is a discrepancy between the 'ivory tower' of the political decision making on the one hand, and the Slovenian public which does not get involved in the debate on the other.

Apart from a few politicians who, for the time being, remain the most prominent stakeholders in the debate on the future EU enlargement, the media follow suit with political analysis and commentary, occasionally involving Turkey, rarely Ukraine, but most often discussing the EU perspective of the Western Balkans, predominantly Slovenia's southern neighbour, Croatia. A couple of public meetings and roundtable discussions have also been organised to discuss Turkey's EU perspective. These events were limited to the experts such as university professors or members of various institutions interested in Turkey 'professionally'. Though the level of public debate on the future EU membership of Turkey and Ukraine is low, the expert discussion is positive. The same goes for the official position of the Slovenian government. Having said that, the Turkish and the Ukrainian ambassadors in Slovenia have every reason to feel at ease. Considering that Slovenia has a positive attitude towards further enlargement and Turkey, the Turkish ambassador finds it difficult to answer the question of whether there is enough of public debate.⁸² In a way it is reasonable not to want to push the debate further when a position is already favourable.

The same logic could be applied to Ukraine; considering the Slovenian stance towards Turkey is favourable, Ukraine can count on the same, if not greater, support. Judging by the public opinion results that reveal strong support for future EU enlargement, and the fact that

⁸² Interview with His Excellency Mr. Balkan Kizildeli, Embassy of Turkey, 3 August 2005.

Ukraine scores better marks than Turkey, Slovenia will also most probably not organise referenda, and its official position supports Ukraine on its path of 'Europeanisation'.

There is a problem that Slovenia shares with other small EU states, especially new members. Feeling secure in their neutral position of playing the role of a bystander, these states miss out on having more of an effect on bigger states (e.g. France, Germany, the UK). If the smaller states do not speak out, especially on major issues such as the future EU enlargement, they cannot expect to have their voice heard.

Slovenia has a position only about Croatia – "that is all Slovenia cares about".⁸³ And then there is a general view that any country that fulfils the conditions can enter the EU. One important suggestion would therefore be to emphasise the importance of realising that these issues involve us all. We should all get more involved as citizens and regular people. This debate should not remain restricted to the politicians and foreign policy; it needs to become a part of Slovenia's domestic policy in general as well.⁸⁴

⁸³ Milan Brglez's participation at the Peace Institute's Forum on the topic of *Turkey and Ukraine in the European Union?*, Ljubljana, 14 November 2005.

⁸⁴ Interview with Mr. Alojz Sok, NSi, and with Borut Pahor, PES MEP and the president of Social Democrats.