



**Organising for EU Enlargement**

A challenge for member states and candidate countries

**MANAGING EUROPE FROM HOME**

The Europeanisation of the Slovenian Core Executive

OEUE PHASE I

Occasional Paper 6.1 – 09.03

Danica Fink-Hafner  
Damjan Lajh

University of Ljubljana



FIFTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME



Dublin European Institute  
A Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence



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MANAGING EUROPE FROM HOME:  
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## **ORGANISING FOR EU ENLARGEMENT:**

### Challenge for the Member States and the Candidate Countries

The Dublin European Institute, University College Dublin,<sup>1</sup> was awarded, in 2001, a research contract under the EU's Fifth Framework Programme<sup>2</sup> to carry out a comparative study of the impact of the EU on the structures and processes of public policy in six small countries: **Ireland, Greece, Finland, Estonia, Hungary** and **Slovenia**. The Project's partnership, under the direction of Professor Brigid Laffan, Dublin European Institute, University College Dublin<sup>3</sup>, includes: Professor Dr. Wolfgang Drechsler, University of Tartu; Professor Teija Tiilkainen, University of Helsinki; Professor Calliope Spanou, University of Athens; Professor Attila Ágh, Budapest University of Economic Sciences and Public Administration; and Professor Danica Fink-Hafner, University of Ljubljana.

The aim of the research project was to deepen our understanding of the processes of Europeanisation in a number of the existing member states and some of the candidate states.

The research project encompassed the following three objectives:

- The conduct of research which offers immediate policy relevance to key stakeholders in the enlarging Union;
- The conduct comparative, theoretical and empirical research on the management of EU public policy making in three existing member states – Ireland, Greece and Finland – and three candidate states – Estonia, Hungary and Slovenia;
- The shedding light on the capacity of smaller states to adjust and to adapt to the increasing demands of Europeanisation on their systems of public policy-making and thus to identify the barriers to effective, efficient and accountable management of EU business.

### **Research Strategy**

The research design consisted of two phases and within each phase, two levels of analysis. **Phase I** analysed the management of EU business at the macro level of the core executive and was complemented by a micro case study of a recent policy negotiation using decision analysis. **Phase II** of the research broadened the analytical focus to encompass other levels of government – the EU and sub-state – through multi-levelled governance. Here attention was centred upon the emergence of policy networks and the interaction between public actors and the wider civil society in specific, discrete policy sectors.

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<sup>1</sup> National University of Ireland, Dublin (University College Dublin).

<sup>2</sup> European Commission, Community Research Fifth Framework Programme (Socio-Economic Research)

<sup>3</sup> This project forms part of the Governance Research Programme, Institute for the Study of Social Change, University College Dublin, [www.ucd.ie/issc/](http://www.ucd.ie/issc/) and [www.ucd.ie/govern/intex.htm](http://www.ucd.ie/govern/intex.htm).

### **Methodology**

The study employed two specific methodologies: historical institutionalism and rational institutionalism in a new and innovative fashion. The use of combined perspectives provided a theoretically innovative and new approach to the study of the Europeanisation process. Both approaches could be used as they were applied to different elements of the empirical research.

### **Academic and Policy Implications**

This study's findings provide insight into the manner in which diverse state traditions, institutions and political and administrative cultures influence national adaptation to EU governance and how the interface between national policy processes and the Brussels arena is managed. It is expected that these findings will assist those making and managing policy, thus facilitating adjustments to the changing European Union while also contributing to the growing academic debate on Europeanisation.

At various stages during the course of this project the research findings and analysis were presented to a range of stakeholders and academics to facilitate feedback and enhance the analytical process. Further details about the Organising for EU Enlargement (OEUE) project are available on the project web site [www.oeue.net](http://www.oeue.net), along with i) the Project Report, ii) the OEUE Occasional Papers and iii) a selection of papers by the research partners which draw on various aspects their project research.

## **AUTHORS**

### **Professor Danica Fink-Hafner**

Professor Danica Fink-Hafner is based in the Faculty of Social Sciences in Ljubljana and is head of the Faculty's Centre for Political Research and of Masters studies in policy analysis (European aspects). She has held visiting positions at the Public Policy Institute, University of Warwick and the Department of Government, University of Strathclyde. EU public policy making, policy networks formed in the multi-level environment and 'Europeanisation' in the new EU member states feature among her areas of interest. Professor Fink-Hafner's has published in the Journal of Communist Studies, the Canadian Slavonic Papers and the Journal of European Public Policy. Her recent publications include; co-editor with Terry Cox "Into Europe? Perspectives in Slovenia", Znanstvena knjiznica FDV (1997); "Politične stranke" [*Political Parties*], Faculty of Social Sciences, Ljubljana (2001); co-editor with Damjan Lajh, "Analiza politik" [*Policy Analysis*], Faculty of Social Sciences, Ljubljana (2002); co-author with Damjan Lajh "Institucionalno prilagajanje slovenske izvršilne oblasti povezovanju Slovenije z ES/EU: mednarodno primerjalni pogled" [*Institutional Adjustment of the Slovenian Executive Power in the Context of Slovenian Cooperation with EC/EU: International Comparative View*], Teorija in praksa, 39(6), 970-99 (2002); co-author with Damjan Lajh "Managing Europe from Home: the Europeanisation of the Slovenian Core Executive", Faculty of Social Sciences, Ljubljana (2003); "Evropske stranke in strankarski sistem na ravni Evropske unije" [*European Parties and Party System at the EU Level*], Faculty of Social Sciences, Ljubljana (2004).

### **Damjan Lajh**

Damjan Lajh is a postgraduate at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana. National core executive structures, the EU and its enlargement, and implementation of the EU structural policy feature among his areas of research. Damjan Lajh's recent publications include "Stability Pact: Slovenia – NGO's", Peace Institute, Ljubljana (2001); co-author with Danica Fink Hafner "Managing Europe from Home: the Europeanisation of the Slovenian Core Executive", Faculty of Social Sciences, Ljubljana (2003); co-author with Danica Fink Hafner "Institucionalno prilagajanje slovenske izvršilne oblasti povezovanju Slovenije z ES/EU: mednarodno primerjalni pogled" [*Institutional Adjustment of the Slovenian Executive Power in the Context of Slovenian Cooperation with EC/EU: International Comparative View*], Teorija in praksa, 39(6), 970-99 (2002); co-author with Alenka Krašovec "The Slovenian EU Accession Referendum: A Cat-and-Mouse Game", West European Politics, 27(4), 603-23 (2004).



**ABSTRACT**

The Europeanisation of the Slovene core executive went hand in hand with state building following independence in 1991. The strong consensus of the political elite about joining the EU ensured that this goal was accorded the highest priority by the political and administrative levels. The domestic system reacted to progressive engagement with the EU by establishing a *Government Office for European Affairs* under the auspices of the prime minister. This represented a shift towards a centralised system of EU coordination and was buttressed by a system of working groups and inter-departmental committees to manage accession negotiations. The Slovene negotiating style can be characterised by its relatively high level of formalisation and transparency. Unlike the other candidate countries, the Slovene parliament played an important role in the accession process. The biggest challenge facing Slovenia post-membership is to ensure that it overcomes the 'personnel deficit' highlighted in this paper.



## **INTRODUCTION**

On 13 December 2002 the Republic of Slovenia closed another chapter in its short history of independence. At the European Council Summit meeting in Copenhagen, Slovenia completed its negotiations on joining the EU.<sup>4</sup> The 'accession path' to the EU had (formally) lasted for almost five years. Although this path was occasionally difficult, it was generally understood that Slovenia's future lay in the EU. The accession negotiations 'demanded' that Slovenia (as a candidate-country) undertake large-scale institutional adaptation. Slovenia had to develop the structures and processes to manage the vertical relations between the national polity and Brussels, and to manage the horizontal relations among national institutions in order to efficiently cope with European business and policy implementation. This paper's first, examines the impact of Slovenia's engagement with the EU on the country's central governmental and administrative system – the core executive, and second, analyses how EU affairs were handled in Slovenia during the accession (negotiating) process.<sup>5</sup>

In Slovenia, deep social, political and economic change was condensed into some fifteen years of democratisation along with the creation of an internationally recognised state and capitalist economy. Simultaneously, this young state sought its place in the European Union. When the 'Europeanisation period' started, 'returning to Europe' became a synonym for economic benefits, enculturation of the dominant European values, institution-building according to European models, and membership in a community of democratic and wealthy nations that constitute some of the world's leading powers. 'Europeanisation' also became an ideology (a kind of substitute for the old socialist ideology) as well as a practical strategy for the survival and prosperity of the new Slovenian state.

## **THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT IN SLOVENIA**

The Slovenian political system, established following independence, is based on Western European models, especially that of Germany. The 1991 Constitution provides for a parliamentary democracy with a weak and largely ceremonial President. Legislative power is centred in the elected 90-member 'National Assembly', supplemented by a 'National Council' whose role is limited.<sup>6</sup> The Government is a single collegiate body composed of a Prime Minister and a cabinet of ministers (Council of Ministers). The Prime Minister is elected by the National Assembly according to the proposal of the President of the Republic, which follows consultations with representatives of groups of deputies. Once endorsed, the Prime Minister places a list of proposed Ministers before the National Assembly for individual nomination and election. The legislation regulating the structure of government has been revised under each coalition

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<sup>4</sup> At an informal meeting of the European Council in Greece, 16-17 April 2003, the Accession Treaty was signed by the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia.

<sup>5</sup> Research for this study involved an analysis of official documentation, 25 semi-structured interviews conducted in Ljubljana and Brussels in spring 2002 and the monitoring of the important features of EU-Slovenian relations up to the end of 2002.

<sup>6</sup> The National Council has 40 members representing local and functional interests.

Government and to date the number of ministers has varied between 15 and 23. The Prime Minister is responsible for the government's political unity, policy direction and administrative programme along with the coordination of the work of the various ministers. The government's policy programme is the collective responsibility of the ministers, while each minister is responsible for their ministry and its political direction. State secretaries, nominated by ministers and appointed by the government, carry out expert work, with the ministries' various divisions.

### **SLOVENIA'S ENGAGEMENT WITH THE EU**

Slovenia (as part of Yugoslavia) was the first entity from the socialist world to become an exception to the pattern of marginal relations between the EC and socialist countries when a special agreement was signed between the EC and Yugoslavia in 1970, confirming its 'most-favoured-nation treatment'. Until the 'Co-operation Agreement' was signed in 1993, Slovenia relied on trade privileges dating from 1980 when Yugoslavia up-dated trade agreements, protocols and a co-operation agreement in line with the Community's policy of concessions to Mediterranean countries. Immediately following Slovenia's proclamation of independence in 1991, a process of engagement with European integration began that was designed to culminate in full membership of the Union.

**Table 1: Timeline of the independent Slovenia's engagement with the EC/EU**

<b>1991</b>	
25 June	The Slovenian National Assembly proclaimed the 'Declaration of Independence and the Basic Constitutional Charter on the autonomy and independence of the Republic of Slovenia'
23 December	The new 'Slovenian Constitution' was adopted
<b>1992</b>	
15 January	The European Union officially recognised the Republic of Slovenia
13 April	Diplomatic relations between the Republic of Slovenia and the EC/EU were established
<b>1993</b>	
5 April	'Co-operation Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Slovenia' was signed. The 'Co-operation Agreement' was supplemented by the 'Joint Declaration on Political Dialogue', a 'Financial Protocol' and a 'Transport Agreement'
1 September	The 'Co-operation Agreement' came into force
7 December	Pursuant to the 'Co-operation Agreement', the Republic of Slovenia and EC/EU began explorative discussions on signing the 'Europe Agreement'. In this period the first serious problems emerged, including the matter of real-estate ownership (problems relating to Italy)
<b>1995</b>	
15 March	Negotiations begin to sign the 'Europe Agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and their Member States, acting within the framework of the European Union, of the one part, and the Republic of Slovenia, of the other part'
19 May	Negotiations to sign the 'Europe Agreement' conclude
<b>1996</b>	
10 June	The 'Europe Agreement' was signed. On the very same day Slovenia formally applied for EC/EU membership
11 November	'Interim Agreement on trade and trade-related matters between the European Community, the European Coal and Steel Community and the European Atomic Energy Community, of the one part, and the Republic of Slovenia of the other part' was signed. The 'Interim Agreement' was in force from 18 May 1997 until the 'Europe Agreement' came into effect on 1 February 1999

**Table 1: Timeline of the independent Slovenia's engagement with the EC/EU (cont.)**

<b>1997</b>	
3 July	Leaders of Slovenian parliamentary political parties signed a special agreement on co-operation during Slovenia's accession to the EC/EU
13 July	The Slovenian National Assembly amended Article 68 of the Constitution as required by the EC/EU (the so-called 'real-estate clause') as a pre-condition for signing the 'Europe Agreement'.
15 July	Ratification of the 'Europe Agreement' in the Slovenian National Assembly
16 July	The European Commission set out its opinion on Slovenia's EC/EU membership application in Agenda 2000
September	The Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the 'Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia for Integration into the European Union'
December	The Luxembourg European Council endorsed the Accession Partnership as a new instrument which was a key feature of the enhanced pre-accession strategy – preparation for full membership
<b>1998</b>	
31 March	The accession negotiations were officially opened
April	The Slovenian National Assembly decided on priority proceedings of European legislation to accelerate the process of adopting the <i>acquis</i>
<b>1999</b>	
1 February	The 'Europe Agreement' came into force – the delay being due to the slow ratification procedures of EU member-states
May	The Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted 'The Republic of Slovenia's National Programme for Adoption of the Acquis by the end of 2002'
<b>2002</b>	
13 December	Negotiations on the Republic of Slovenia's accession to the EU were completed
<b>2004</b>	
1 May	Slovenia joins the European Union

Diplomatic relations between Slovenia and the EU were established on 13 April 1992. A '*Co-operation Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Slovenia*' was signed on 5 April 1993 and came into force five months later. The 'Co-operation Agreement' formed the bases for the exploratory discussions between the Republic of Slovenia and the EU on a 'Europe Agreement'. Slovenia's formal relations with the EU were enhanced through the Joint Declaration on Political Dialogue, a Financial Protocol and a Transport Agreement (Fink Hafner 1999: 789). However, during the negotiation of the 'Europe Agreement' serious problems emerged regarding foreign ownership of real estate which was prohibited under Article 68 of the Slovenian Constitution. Italy successfully argued that this provision was contrary to EU law and that a change was required. The negotiations on the 'Europe Agreement' were postponed on several occasions until Slovenia accepted a compromise proposed during the Spanish presidency in 1995 (Brinar and Svetličič 1999: 819). The 'Spanish Compromise' involved the modification of Article 68 of the Constitution, which was agreed by the Slovenian National Assembly on 13 July 1997.

The Europe Agreement was finally signed on 10 June 1996 and Slovenia formally applied for membership on the same day. The National Assembly ratified the agreement on 15 July 1997 and decided that the final decision on EU membership should be made by referendum. On 1 February 1999, the Europe Agreement came into force after it was finally ratified by the Greek Parliament in October 1998. The accession negotiations were officially opened on 31 March 1998 and were completed in December 2002.

**Box 1: Decisive junctures on Slovenia's path into the EU**

- Slovenia as a constituent part of former Yugoslavia had the earliest and closest relations with the EC of any other socialist country (special agreement signed in 1970).
- The democratisation and modernisation processes at the end of the 1980s led to 'Euro-euphoria' arising as a synonym for a better state, better society and higher quality of life.
- The establishment of an independent state - the Republic of Slovenia with a strong official policy of integration with the EC.
- Signing of the 'Co-operation Agreement' meant the beginning of building up institutional relations with the EC/EU.
- In negotiations on the 'Europe Agreement' ideological conflicts appeared in Slovenia with regard to Slovenian-EC/EU relations (the issue of foreigners' ownership of real estate in Slovenia) and to some degree Euro-scepticism also started to appear.
- Modification of Article 68 of the Slovenian Constitution as an idiosyncratic pre-condition for signing the 'Europe Agreement'.
- The signing and later ratification of the 'Europe Agreement', which enabled Slovenia's inclusion in a group of six countries eligible to start EU membership negotiations.
- Starting the pre-accession process (formally started with the recommendation of the Commission to the Council of Ministers – Agenda 2000).
- Expansion of the pre-accession process to the negotiating process, when negotiations on 31 negotiating chapters actually began.
- Successful completion of five years of negotiations on the Republic of Slovenia's accession to the EU in December 2002 in Copenhagen.

## I STRUCTURES

### **Developing Patterns in the Management of EU Issues**

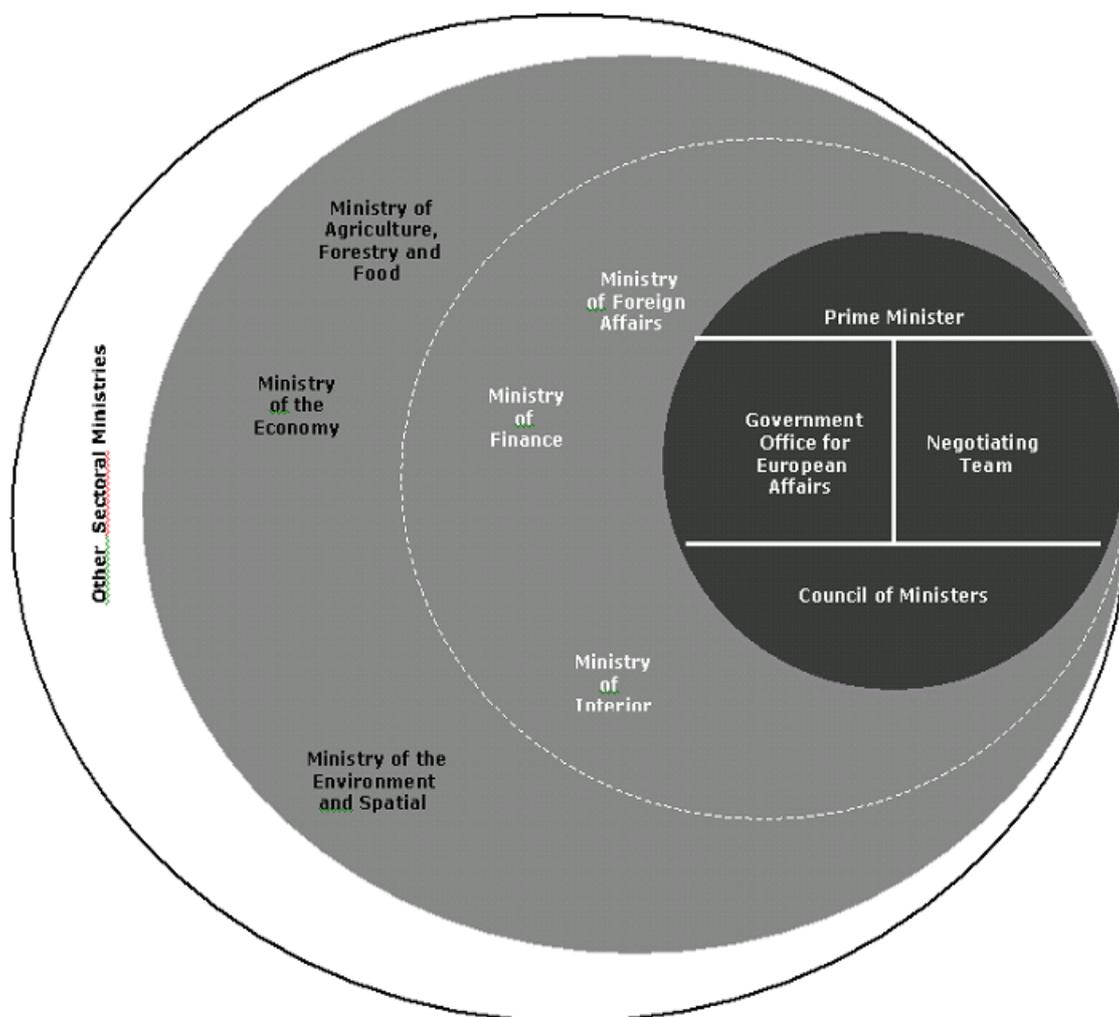
The co-ordination of European affairs in Slovenia developed in response to needs emerging in the integration process. Shortly after Slovenia attained its independence and began establishing institutional relations with the EU, it was clear that the co-ordination of European affairs was unsatisfactory. At that time, all matters relating to Slovenia's integration with the EU happened more or less spontaneously. Although, there were some attempts to co-ordinate the management of EU business. Numerous meetings were convened to consider the matter at various levels of seniority, with differing membership and for varying purposes. However, most of these meetings were lengthy and inefficient, devoid of any strategic orientations or clearly defined goals. The mentality of the old government system that 'co-ordination was neither necessary nor desired' impeded the formation of effective co-ordination. Each department worked in its own field and did not see the necessity for co-operation with other departments. While some departments acquired new responsibilities and roles there were no radical procedural or structural changes. The developing pattern did not correspond to the need for effective communication with Brussels. A relatively dispersed and decentralised system for co-ordinating European affairs evolved.

As a result of the greater intensity and deepening of European integration, the Slovenian government was becoming ever more aware that a process, as complex as accession to the EU, required effective, strong and transparent co-ordination. Furthermore, the government realised that effective co-ordination would become increasingly important with the progression from the process of pre-accession to that of negotiations on membership, the latter formally began at the end of March 1998. Consequently, in December 1997 a special independent office was established - the *Government Office for European Affairs*, which has been led by a Minister without portfolio. This office took on responsibility for managing and co-ordinating the entire process of Slovenia's accession to the EU. Parallel to the Office for European Affairs, the Negotiating Team of the Republic of Slovenia for Accession to the European Union was also formed, as were 31 Working Groups responsible for preparing negotiating positions. Therefore, at the end of 1997 and start of 1998, a key 'turning point' came in the co-ordination of European affairs. These structures and procedures brought radical change which represented a partial shift towards a centralised system of 'EU' co-ordination, as well as the outset of tendencies towards the systemic internalisation of the management of European business rather than treating it in the context of foreign affairs.

Due to the enhanced intensity and deepening of Slovenia's engagement with European integration formal internal co-ordination procedures were established within individual departments, and inter-departmental committees were set up, extending from working (technical) and expert levels through to the highest political co-ordination involving the Prime Minister. The line ministries in Slovenia remain the 'lead ministries' relative to the articulation of national positions on particular EU issues, while the newly established Government Office for

European Affairs as a focal point on the EU has gained responsibility to ensure the effective co-operation and circulation of information among individual departments, as well as coherence and consistency on different EU policy issues. Practically all sectoral ministries and almost all civil servants in Slovenia are involved in EU business to varying degrees as the *acquis communautaire* touches on the work of all departments. Of course, the extent of particular departments' involvement in EU business is not the same but is determined by the level of Europeanisation found in their respective policy domains. Deriving from this premise, the distinction between the varying degrees of the core executive's involvement in the management of EU affairs in Slovenia are figuratively represented in terms of the co-ordinators, the inner core and the outer circle (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1:** The Slovenian Core Executive on EC/EU business



The overall co-ordination of EU business in Slovenia falls within the competence of the Prime Minister, the Council of Ministers (the cabinet), and the Government Office for European Affairs,

together with the Negotiating Team. They all played a crucial role in Slovenia's integration with the EU, have been involved in all key decisions and are responsible for handling EU matters as a whole.

### **Prime Minister**

The Europeanisation process has not caused any substantial changes to the administrative structure of the Prime Minister's role, nor the role of his Office. According to many interviewees, the Prime Minister's role has not intensified due to the Republic of Slovenia's accession to the EU. His role has remained practically the same and 'European duties' have simply been added to his other functions. However, his role during the whole negotiating process was quite noteworthy as, under Slovenian constitutional law, the Slovenian Prime Minister is regarded as 'the leader of the government'. During the negotiating process, the Prime Minister represented the top of the 'co-ordination pyramid' on European business (see Figure 2). He did not pay much attention to day-to-day issues or questions of organisational capacity, but focused mostly on strategic issues. The daily co-ordination of European business was the responsibility of the Minister of European Affairs. While the Prime Minister was not involved with the details of EU matters given the complexity and intensity of the Europeanisation process he maintained constant contact with the key people involved, particularly the ministers from relevant departments. These key people were located in the Government Office for European Affairs, the Negotiating Team of the Republic of Slovenia for Accession to the EU, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Finance. The Prime Minister's main co-ordinating responsibility at the national level was to resolve any inter-ministerial conflicts and to intervene when ministries held different viewpoints and positions on specific EU issues

A very similar situation prevailed in the Prime Minister's Office. EU business was added to the Office's existing duties and EU tasks were incorporated into the established structure based on spheres of activity. During the process of EU accession and membership negotiations the role of the Prime Minister's Office was first, to provide expert qualitative materials to assist the Prime Minister in directing the government's management of European business, second, to organise inter-ministerial co-operation on European issues relating to a number of areas of responsibility and third, to present alternative solutions to any controversial issues. In addition, organisational assistance and expert advice was provided for Prime Ministerial meetings with heads of government of EU member states and accession states as well as the President of the European Commission and Commissioners during the negotiations process. The Office has undertaken these tasks based on specific needs and the Prime Ministers requirements rather than on a weekly or monthly basis.

### **The Council of Ministers**

The Council of Ministers (the Slovenian Cabinet) comes second to the Prime Minister in the management of European business. It was the Council that formally determined the official Slovenian negotiating positions for ministerial meetings at a European level, thus making it the unit of the national executive to make the final decision on EU business. Following the

completion of preparatory negotiating procedures by officials, the proposed negotiating positions were discussed by two government committees, the Committee for Economic Affairs and the Committee for State Administration and Public Affairs, and subject to confirmation by the Council of Ministers. Composed of specialist standing committees, the Council of Ministers addressed EU matters under its existing structures, procedures and practices. While considered by key political actors, a special EU standing committee or similar alternative was not established although, the formation of such a body is thought likely following Slovenia's accession to the EU.

The Europeanisation process did impact on the order of the agenda for the Council of Ministers weekly meetings. Reflecting the priority accorded to Slovenia's accession to the EU the first item on the agenda was devoted to European business. The Minister for European Affairs reported on events, developments and problems related to the accession and negotiation processes while Ministers, directly involved or with an interest in an issue, had the opportunity to present their positions. The formal procedures in the Council of Ministers were effectively supplemented by informal discussions on European matters.

### **The Government Office for European Affairs**

The Office for European Affairs, within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was supplanted by the Government Office for European Affairs on its establishment in December 1997, pursuant to the Act on the Organisation and Competencies of Ministries. The former Office's personnel, tasks and facilities came under the control of the Government Office as the central coordinating unit in the management of EU business at national level. These changes marked a significant shift from an approach based on foreign affairs to the systemic internalisation of European matters and the movement towards a centralised system for handling EU business.

The Government Office for European Affairs has managed and co-ordinated the process of Slovenia's accession to the EU. Headed by a Minister without portfolio the office is responsible for co-ordinating ministerial relations with the EU and addressing the national organisational capacity to handle EU business. Its coordinating role has involved the implementation of agreements signed with the EU including the Europe Agreement and Phare, monitoring the inter-departmental preparations for negotiations and compliance with the '*acquis communautaire*' and facilitating the participation of officials in the various EU institutions and bodies. Furthermore, at state secretary level, the Government Office for European Affairs heads the Inter-ministerial Committee for relations with the EU and co-ordinates the Committee's working groups. The increasing scope of the Office's responsibilities and workload over the course of the EU negotiations has been reflected in the increase in its personnel from 17 in December 1997 to 123 by the end of 2002. Although, the recruitment of a cadre of EU specialist proved difficult. While senior officials came from the former Office for European Affairs and different ministries a significant number of the new personnel were young people with limited experience of the EU recruited on the basis of their educational achievements and knowledge of foreign languages.

The Government Office for European Affairs was organised in four principal divisions: Integration Division I; Integration Division II; Foreign Aid Division; and Translation Division. Integration Division I played a leading role in the implementation of the 'Europe Agreement' (in association with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and the preparation of the National Programme for the Adoption of the *Acquis Communautaire* by 2002. The monitoring of the EU's common and security policy along with developments in the field of justice and home affairs policy has been the responsibility of the Integration Division II. The programming, implementation, monitoring and assessing of EU pre-accession aid was undertaken by the Foreign Aid Division. While the considerable task of translating official Slovenian and EU documentation has seen the significant increase in the staff and responsibilities of the Translation Unit. The Department for Negotiations, which has gradually been scaled down since the completion of the negotiations, drew together the special roles of the four principle divisions when coordinating the submission of negotiating positions, providing legal and technical material to the negotiating team, monitoring the fulfilment of commitments and supplying information to the public.

### **The Negotiating Team of the Republic of Slovenia for Accession to the EU**

On the 2 April 1998 the Slovenian Government set up a Negotiating Team for the accession of the country to the EU, which was composed of ten experts.<sup>7</sup> Designed to ensure the prevalence of expertise over political and factional interest the four main criteria for nomination to the Negotiating Team were expert knowledge, pro-European orientation, no affiliation to any political party and compatibility with team members. On his appointment as team leader, Janez Potočnik,<sup>8</sup> took over responsibility for the nominations from the Minister for European Affairs, Igor Bavčar. The team was responsible for the negotiations of the 31 chapters of the *acquis* through all phases; the legislative screening, the drafting of policy positions, and the submission of the proposed policy positions to government committees and the National Assembly for approval. A working group for each chapter of the *acquis* assisted the Negotiating Team along with external experts and independent bodies as required. These working groups were managed by members of the Negotiating Team and headed by a senior official from the ministry or government institution responsible for the policy field of a given chapter. Their membership included ministry officials and representatives of employers and employee bodies. Given the technical assistance provided by the Government Office for European Affairs cooperation with the team was constant. Following the completion of the accession negotiations the team was formally dissolved on 24 April 2003.

### **The 'inner core' and the 'outer circle'**

The Ministries, whose degree of involvement in European business ranks next to that of those fulfilling a co-ordinating role, are presented as occupying the 'inner core' (see Figure 1). These are the Ministries of Foreign Affairs; Finance; the Interior; Agriculture, Forestry and Food; the Economy; and the Environment. All these Ministries have specialist EU units and have

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<sup>7</sup> Negotiating Team For Accession of the Republic of Slovenia to the European Union [www.sigov.si/ops/ang/index.html](http://www.sigov.si/ops/ang/index.html) [consulted 29 April 2004]

<sup>8</sup> Dr. Janez Potočnik has held the position of Director, Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development, Ljubljana and lecturers on economics at the Faculty of Law, University of Ljubljana.

participated in key policy decisions regarding European accession, however, it is necessary to further subdivide this group in order to distinguish between those ministries whose roles include macro negotiations and those who focus on their sectoral policy field.

The former group is made up of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance and the Interior. Each of these ministries is involved in a substantial range of key decisions on European issues, their officials were found on almost all the '*acquis*' working groups and they participate in macro-negotiations. Based on its diplomatic network (including Slovenia's Mission to the EU) the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been primarily responsible for the vertical co-ordination between Ljubljana and Brussels. The Ministry of Finance has had extensive responsibilities in respect to financial and budgetary provisions, financial control, taxation and negotiations on EMU. The reform and development of Slovenia's public administration has mainly the responsibility of the Office for the Organisation and Development of the Public Administration within the Ministry of the Interior. While the reform of the state's public administration formed part of the transition process, accession to the EU acted as a catalyst in its implementation. Policies related to immigration, asylum, citizenship and international crime also feature among the Interior Ministry's European responsibilities.

The Ministries of Agriculture, Forestry and Food; the Economy, and the Environment have been involved in a significant number of important decisions during the accession process. However, unlike the Ministries discussed above their policy responsibilities are principally sectoral. The remaining ministries, who occupy the 'outer circle' (see Figure 1), have policy responsibilities that lie principally in the domestic arena and the establishment of specialist European units has not been deemed necessary.

### **'EU Co-ordination' Capabilities**

A precondition for the effective horizontal co-ordination of European business in the core executive is a well functioning system of co-ordination between departments within ministries. While some ministries established new, so-called 'EU Units', others just added additional duties pre-existing to units within ministerial departments. Among ministries these 'EU Units' differ in name, size responsibility and status. Their functions range from technical or co-ordinating support to a more significant policy advisory role. Those 'units' in the former category tend to be small and may only have one official while those serving the latter function are often form independent directorates within a ministry. While not all ministries established formal structures every ministry has at least one official responsible for EU information and fulfilling a co-ordinating role internally with an emphasis on informal contacts and processes. However, those ministries with the most formalised internal co-ordination systems are also those that displayed particularly high internalisation of EU business as part of the accession and negotiating processes. Formal pathways can be found in the Government Office for European Affairs, the Negotiating Team, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of the Interior. Collegiate bodies of the responsible minister met on a frequent and regular basis. The European Minister's collegiate body during the course of the negotiations on EU

membership, also included the representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Head of the Negotiating Team. This body represented co-ordination at the highest level of the Government Office for European Affairs' hierarchy. However, the formal and informal pathways coexist within the Office as information circulates through the 'intranet' and semiformal meetings.

**Box 2:** Internal co-ordination of EU business within the core executive departments

<p><b>The Government Office for European Affairs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Collegiate Body of the European Minister (weekly meetings)</li> <li>• Various regular and <i>ad hoc</i> working meetings</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Negotiating Team</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Collegiate Body of the Head of the Negotiating Team (weekly meetings became less frequent during the final phase of the negotiations)</li> <li>• 'issue' meetings as required of the Negotiating Team</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Ministry of Foreign Affairs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Collegiate Body of the Foreign Minister (weekly)</li> <li>• The Collegiate Body of the European Integration and Economic Relations Sector (weekly)</li> <li>• other forms of regular and ad hoc co-ordination</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Ministry of Finance</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Collegiate body of the Finance Minister (weekly)</li> <li>• The 'European meeting' at the working level (every 14 days)</li> <li>• Meetings of the International Finance Department (weekly)</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Ministry of Interior</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Collegiate Body of the Interior Minister (weekly)</li> <li>• Meetings of the Office for the Organisation and Development of Public Administration (weekly)</li> </ul>

The presence of representatives of the Government Office for European Affairs, the Negotiating Team and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the meetings of the Minister's or principle's collegiate bodies is illustrative of the first level of inter-departmental co-ordination on EU business in Slovenia. However, during the course of the negotiating process the three main levels of interdepartmental co-ordination were those occupied by the Working Groups, the Inter-departmental committee (and its sub-committees) and the Prime Minister's 'European meeting'.

Co-ordinated negotiation positions, on the chapters of the 'acquis', were prepared at meetings of the thirty one *Working Groups*, comprised of the relevant ministerial and institutional representatives, which embraced different sectors. The leaders of the Working Groups along with the ministerial State Secretaries and Directors of government offices were briefed on the negotiations' progress by the European Minister at the meetings of the *Inter-departmental Committee*. With the intensity of the EU membership negotiations reports on their progress came to dominate the Committee's agenda, over the monitoring of the Europe Agreement. The Committee was convened regularly as the pace of the membership negotiations required, while its subcommittees met annually to discuss specific policy issues. Whereas, the Inter-departmental Committee dealt the issues of a technical nature, political or strategic matters requiring inter ministerial co-ordination were addressed at a '*European meeting*', convened by the Prime Minister as required. These meetings were attended by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Europe and Finance along with the Head of the Negotiation Team and officials relevant to the subject under discussion.

### **The Mission of the Republic of Slovenia to the European Union**

Over the last decade the development of vertical co-ordination between Slovenia and the EU has been intertwined with that of the independent state's foreign policy institutional and political relations. The Mission of the Republic of Slovenia to the EU, accredited in 1993, is unique in Slovenia's diplomatic service. The intensity and complexity of its responsibility for ensuring an effective exchange of information and communication channel between the administrations in Ljubljana, via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Brussels distinguishes it from the country's traditional diplomatic representation. The experts from ministries, which make up the majority of the Mission's diplomatic staff, increased as the EU membership negotiations progressed and in March 2003 eleven ministries were represented.<sup>9</sup>

During the course of the membership negotiations the Mission's staff have first, undertaken research and prepared briefings, second, provided technical support to a wide range of political actors, ministerial officials and experts and third, actively engaged with the EU institutions. The Mission has been central to the formal two way process of communication between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the EU. However, far from simply serving as 'a post office' (interview material), the execution of these functions placed the Mission in a position to provide analysis and contribute to the Slovenian EU policy formation.

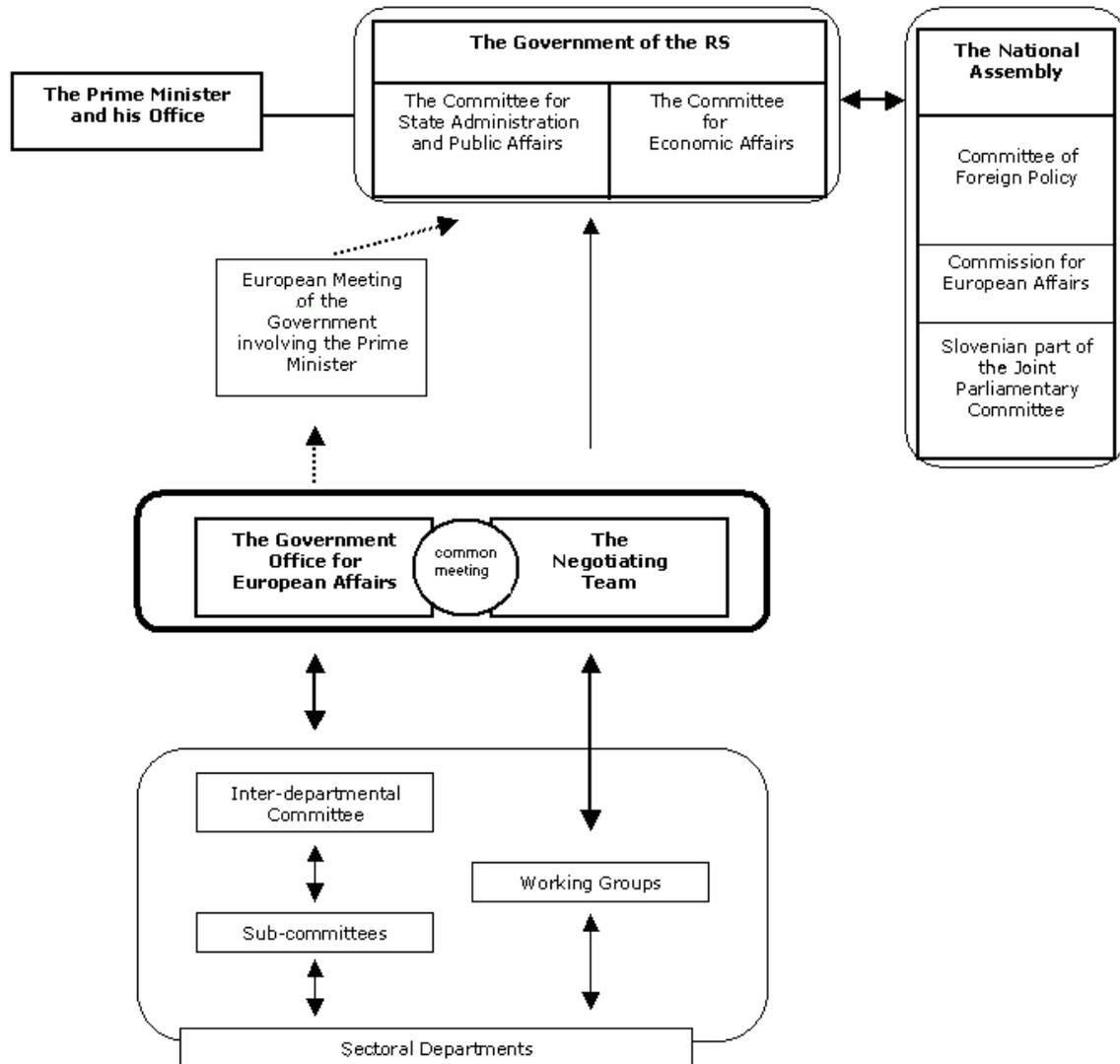
In anticipation of Slovenia's membership of EU in 2004, the The Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Mission, in co-operation with the Government Office for European Affairs, prepared a special report on preparations necessary for the Mission's transformation into the country's Permanent Representation to the EU. The report proposed that the Mission's staff be increased to 56 (40 staff of diplomatic rank, comprising specialists from ministries and 16 staff support staff) by the

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<sup>9</sup> Ministry's represented in the Slovenian Ministry March 2003: Foreign Affairs (8 staff); Finance (3 staff); Agriculture; Forestry and Food; Economy; Transport; Environment and Spatial Planning; Information Society; Education, Science and Sport; and Regional Development (one staff each).

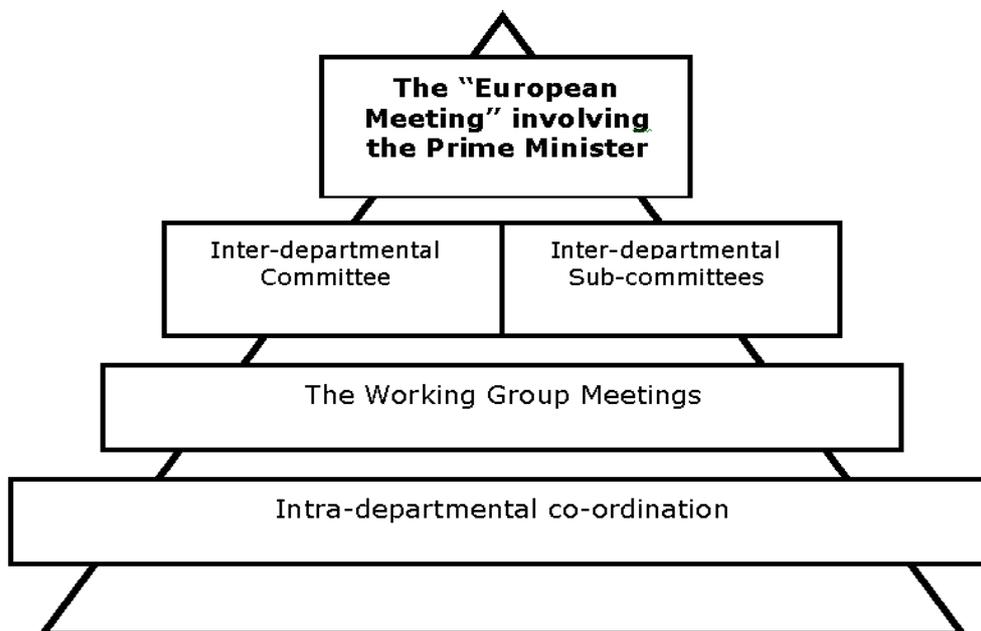
end of 2003 and an internal re-organisation on its formal upgrading to Permanent Representation following Slovenia's formal accession to the EU.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 2:** Managing the horizontal co-ordination of EU business across the political system in Slovenia



<sup>10</sup> Proposed structure of the Slovenia's Permanent Representation to the EU contained an internal report – Ambassador, head of the representation, COREPER II; Ambassador, deputy head, COREPER I; Department for Co-ordination (5 staff); Department for Economic Integration and Budget (13 staff); Department for Agriculture and Fisheries (3 staff); Department for Political Integration (3 staff); Department for Policies (8 staff); Department for Justice and Home Affairs (3 staff); Department for European Security and Defence Policy (3 staff) and; Administrative and technical support service (16 staff).

**Figure 3:** The 'co-ordination pyramid' of the horizontal management of EU affairs in Slovenia



## II PROCESSES

The co-ordination process runs along two axis. The precondition for successful and effective co-ordination that reflects consistency and coherence in Slovenian positions is qualitative, transparent and timely codes, rules and guidelines. Nonetheless, the Slovenian system relies more or less on both traditional and newly shaped 'European' norms, while the production of codes, rules and guidelines at different levels of seniority and responsibility is ongoing.

In Slovenia, the main direction was set with the decision, and strong consensus of the political elite, to join the EU. In this context, the largely rule-bound procedure derived already from the structure of the negotiating positions and the *acquis*, which allows practically no (or little) flexibility. However, it has been necessary to provide coherence and consistency in the work of the different ministries. In particular policy fields, the responsible ministries have a large degree of autonomy in shaping (their own) appropriate guidelines, while responsibilities for: 1) forming the guidelines of the main strategic decisions; 2) ensuring coherence and consistency between different policy fields and managing cross-cutting issues; and 3) developing, promoting and protecting the negotiating positions lie with the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, European Minister and Head of the Negotiating Team.

During the negotiating process, the Prime Minister set guidelines for the main strategic decisions and managed cross-cutting issues only where an issue was beyond the responsibility of one ministry thus requiring both intervention at the highest level and his authority. Other forms of codes, rules and guidelines for managing EU business can be divided into political, co-ordination (technical) and working (contents of the negotiations). The Minister of Foreign Affairs as the formal chief negotiator was responsible for forming political guidelines, the Minister of European Affairs was responsible for co-ordinating the whole process and shaping procedural rules, while the Head of the Negotiating team in fact carried the whole process and set up overall guidelines for the negotiations. In February 2002 the functions of the Minister of European Affairs and Head of the Negotiating Team were merged (this was politically feasible since the Head of the Negotiating Team also became the Minister of European Affairs). The few minor differences, regarding the distribution of responsibilities, which did arise never entered the political domain due the actors mutual respect. However, the absence of conflict did not mean that the 'Slovenian model' was beyond criticism. Dr. Janez Potočnik noted, while serving as head of the Slovenian Negotiating Team and Minister for European Affairs, that the hardest part of the negotiations was 'at home'.<sup>11</sup> There was a recognised need to adapt the horizontal management of EU business (interview material) to first, reflect the EU's horizontal logic, second, facilitate the prompt provision of opinions to Slovenian representatives involved in the EU policy making process (particularly on membership) by introducing statutory rules on the division of labour and detailed decision making procedures and third, centralise problem solving regarding EU business. Apart from horizontal co-ordination at the national level, effective vertical co-ordination between the national capital and Brussels arena is also very important.

Formally vertical co-ordination has been guided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the Slovenian Mission to the EU serving a central point for the two way circulation of documents and communications between the Slovenian administration and the EU Institutions. However, the Ministry's formal communication system has on occasion proved time consuming due to technical problems with the electronic communication system and the need to redirect material to the relevant ministries. Therefore, the need for expert and timely responses to developments in the Brussels arena has prompted the gradual development of a complementary informal network of vertical and horizontal communications operating on a sometimes daily basis. The Mission has played an important role in the operationalization and ongoing development of the informal network.

The widening of the vertical perspective around the signal channel linking the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Mission and the EU institutions brings a range of diplomatic, state and non state actors into the picture, who have become part of the informal network in particular. The Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia to Belgium has both formally and informally been able provide pertinent information gleaned within diplomatic circles. These formal diplomatic channels proved very important when Belgium held the Presidency of the EU (July-December

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<sup>11</sup> Roundtable on the EU in Slovenia, Sobotna priloga Dela, 22 June 2002, pp. 5-6.

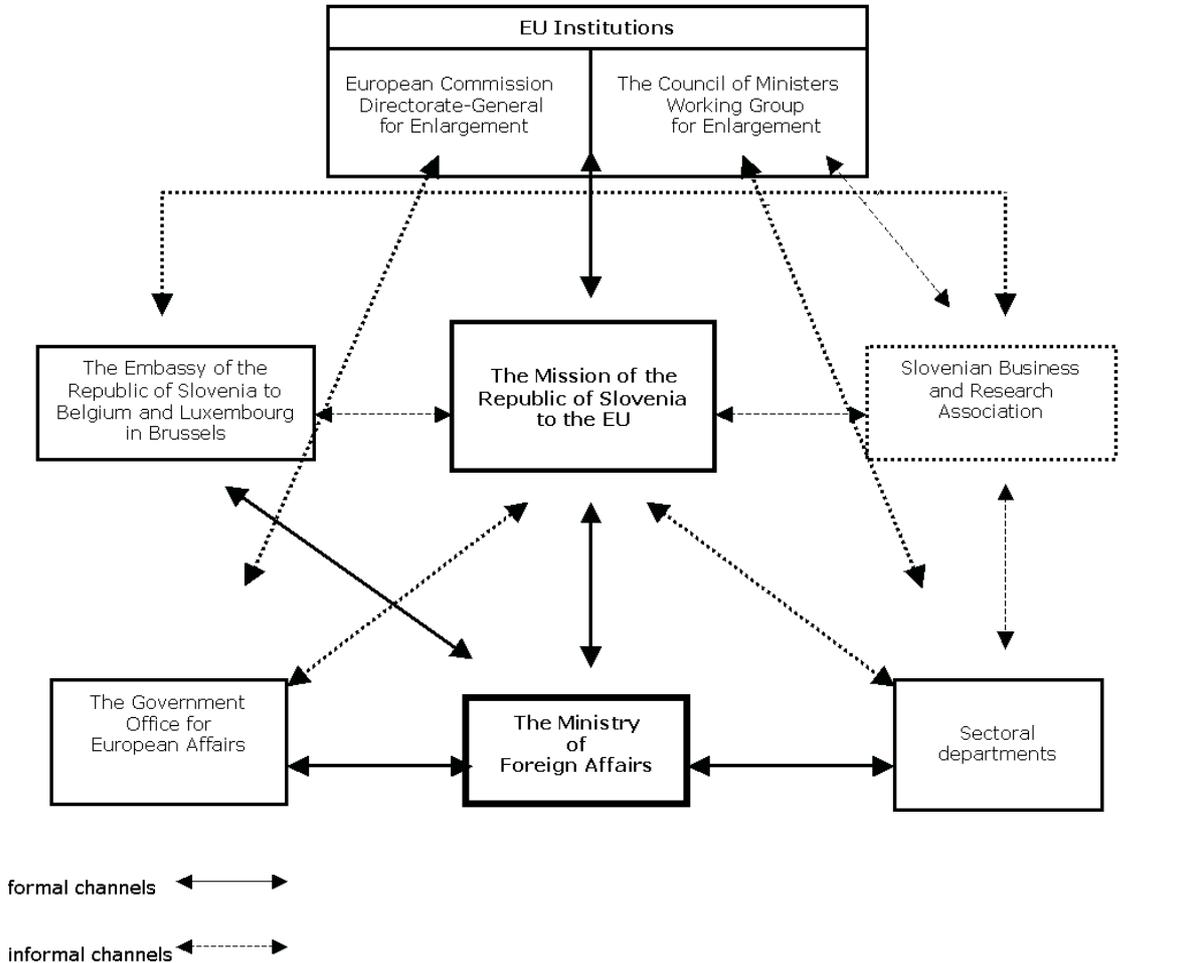
2001). Among the 'members' of the emerging Slovenian network in Brussels is the Slovenian Business and Research Association (SBRA), although it is not part of Slovenia's official representative structures in Brussels, it merits mention. The Association, which receives financial support from two government ministries, describes its role 'seeking to act as a 'bridge' between the business and research communities in Slovenia and the EU institutions and other public and private bodies at EU level'.<sup>12</sup> Given the Association's active involvement in EU 'think tanks' and the Network of Interests Representation Offices from Candidate Countries (NIROC), along with its links to the Mission and, executive in Ljubljana it has become an important channel of information.

There has been a gradual development of informal horizontal co-ordination between the Slovenian state actors and a variety of sectoral, cross sectoral and international representative bodies in Brussels. Thus the Slovenian Mission to the EU engages in a range of pluralistic contacts which have facilitated easier and quicker responses to EU demands over rigid periodic procedures under a formal system. This informal network is likely to become more significant, as it is anticipated that on Slovenia's joining the EU, the Mission's decision making autonomy will be enhanced to meet the ongoing demands of the EU's institutional policy arrangements like comitology.

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<sup>12</sup> Slovenian Business and Research Association, [www.sbra.be/frame.htm](http://www.sbra.be/frame.htm) [consulted 12 July 2004].

**Figure 4:**Managing the vertical relations between Ljubljana and Brussels (inclusive perspective)



The increase in the intensity of Slovenian’s engagement with the EU, culminating in full membership, has seen an increase in the number of actors involved in the co-ordination of EU business. In this light there has been growing support for the idea of establishing a ‘Slovenain House’ in Brussels’ that hosts all Slovenia’s official and non governmental representation.

### III AGENTS

Slovenia’s accession to the EU has resulted in the emergence of an EU cadre of officials at a senior level, along with experts at the operating level. In both these ‘dimensions’ of the EU cadre there is evidence of officials thinking in terms of planning careers in the EU context either in the Slovenian Permanent Representation or the various EU institutions. The principle members of the cadre are found in the Government Office for European Affairs, the Negotiating Team, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Finance. The breadth of involvement and knowledge of the EU is greatest among the cadre in the Government Office for European Affairs while a narrower specialist approach is evident among those based in line ministries.

However, the 'cadre' is relatively small and the deficit in personnel with experience and expertise in EU business remains a significant problem for Slovenia's public administration. This problem will become all the more acute following EU membership when some 300 positions will be available to Slovenian civil servants in the EU institutions (including 150 translators) thus attracting existing and potential members of the 'elite cadre'.

Characteristically, this cadre's knowledge and experience of the EU has been acquired 'on the job' through engagement with the EU and the accession process. Of particular significance is experience gained in the Slovenian Mission. However, as the negotiations on EU membership progressed the government recognised the need for a more systematic approach in its *Strategy of training and perfecting officials to increase their administrative abilities before Slovenia enter the EU* agreed in 2000. A variety of programmes on the EU are organised by the Administrative Academy, complemented by periodic conferences covering sectoral issues. Increasingly, civil servants receive training in advance of taking responsibilities pertaining to the management of EU business.

The implementation of the government training strategy has been organised in five programmes designed for specific focus groups. A three year intensive programme 'Fast Stream', modelled on British training practices, is specifically designed to prepare young civil servants for the 'concoirs' for positions in the European institutions. Senior officials and specialists participate in workshops organised by European training organisations in different member states including, the European Institute of Public Administration, Maastricht; the Civil Service College, London; Verwaltungsakademie, Vienna and the Centre des Études Européenes, Strasbourg. The remaining programmes address the needs of administrators, recently appointed civil servants and those handle EU business periodically.

### **The role of the National Assembly and its relations with the Executive**

Relations between the Slovenian National Assembly and national executive are held to be of special importance and the significance of the Assembly's role in European affairs is *unique* among the accession states. The Assembly's prioritising of Slovenia's integration with the EU has been evident in the progressive expansion of its activities related to EU business. A combination of discussion documents, debates and resolutions on key national EU policies, including the *Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia for Integration into the European Union* and the *National Programme for Adoption of the Acquis by 2002*, has seen the Assembly outline the strategic orientation of Slovenia's path to EU membership.

Two of the Assembly's most important tasks in the process of Europeanisation have been first, the debate and prior approval of the government's proposed negotiation positions and second, the alignment of the Slovenia's legislation with the EU *acquis*. The first task evolved from the association between Slovenia's EU Accession Treaty and the requirement under the Foreign Affairs Act that government negotiating positions pertaining to international treaties must be submitted for the discussion and approval of the National Assembly. The characteristic feature

of the Assembly's role in EU affairs has been the preliminary verification of negotiating positions by the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Policy and subsequent Assembly approval. Therefore, it is in the government's interest to keep the Assembly regularly informed on EU matters.

The second key task saw the transition from a voluntary to an obligatory approach regarding the adoption of the *acquis*. During the course of Slovenia's transition to independence and democracy the National Assembly incorporated a voluntary alignment with the European Union 'acquis' as part of the ongoing process of modernisation and legislative reform. The entry into force of the Europe Agreement, in January 1999, marked the commencement of formal obligation to adopt some 240 laws detailed in the *National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis*.

However, a combination of factors, external and internal to the National Assembly, lead to serious delays resulting in the failure to fulfil the completion of the legislative programme by 2002. While delays in the government's submission of draft legislation to the Assembly and on occasion its inferior quality contributed to these delays, a significant part of the 'blame' rested with the Assembly's procedures. Attempts to address the legislative 'bottleneck' through the reform the 1993 Rules of Procedure failed in the mid 1990s. The European Commission's Opinion on Slovenia's Application for Membership of the European Union acknowledged the respect attributed to the Slovenian Assembly's powers and functions but noted the need to speed up the legislative process with the aid of technical support and increased staffing.

Subject to continued criticism in the European Commission's regular reports on the country's accession process a further attempt to reform the legislative procedures failed in 2001. Finally, in April 2002 new rules of procedure were agreed by a narrow majority<sup>13</sup> of the Assembly following a controversial debate and resistance from the opposition. The new procedures detailed the responsibilities of the authorities submitting draft legislation, enhanced the role of the parliamentary working bodies, rationalised the Assembly's work and vested decision making powers with the Speaker of the National Assembly. Although these measures prioritised and facilitated the adoption of legislation necessary for harmonisation with the *acquis* the speeding up of the procedures was aided by an agreement among the parliamentary parties (with the exception of the Slovenian National Party, which withdrew its original support) to co-operate on matters related to EU accession. This multi party agreement improved co-ordination and communication while consolidating the consensus of the political elite around Slovenia's foreign policy priority for European integration. Furthermore, this agreement, and the consensus it represented, marked a key juncture in the relationship between the National Assembly and the national executive as co-ordination, co-operation and the flow of information between the two branches of power improved significantly.

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<sup>13</sup> Two thirds majority required

Structural and organisational changes in the National Assembly, accompanied the reform of the procedural rules as part of the Europeanisation process. A special working group, the Commission for European Affairs, comprised of a president, vice president and eight assembly members was established in 1996 to co-ordinate the Assembly's management of EU business. Among the functions performed by this Commission have been the analysis of the consequences of Slovenia's membership of the EU, the monitoring of the implementation of the 'acquis' and an involvement with a variety of state and non state institutions (including those of other candidate states and the Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union) along with an engagement in public debate. It is the Commission for European Affairs, which has been primarily responsible for co-ordinating the EU matters within the National Assembly with a special emphasis on effective communications among the interested committees. Key among these committees are the Committee for Foreign Policy and the delegation to the EU-Slovenian Joint Parliamentary Committee. In addition to its responsibilities regarding the approval of national negotiating positions, discussed above, the Committee for Foreign Policy also addresses general EU issues.

Responsibility for the monitoring of the European Agreement, since 1998, has rested with the twelve member delegation to the EU-Slovenian Joint Parliamentary Committee, with opinions exchanged with the Association Council, the National Assembly and the European Parliament. A small staff of experts and administrators provide assistance to the Commission for European Affairs and the delegation to the EU-Slovenian Joint Parliamentary Committee in preparing analytical materials, monitoring events in 'Brussels and supporting official delegations. Since the 1998 complementary studies and comparative analysis on EU issues has been provided by the National Assembly's Research Sector. A pragmatic and flexible approach to communications on EU related matters has ensured that the formal channels are complemented by an informal circulation of information. As required, the President of the Commission for European Affairs brings together the principals of the relevant committees and bodies within the National Assembly.

The legally required approval of the National Assembly for the positions adopted by the Slovenian government in the course of the negotiations on EU membership combined with the support of the majority of political parties for EU membership and their agreement to facilitate the accession process, has seen the development of a greater transparency in the management of EU business and relatively good co-operation between the government and the National Assembly. This collective approval for the progressive development of Slovenia's engagement with the EU has seen an improvement in the otherwise traditionally defective relations among political parties and between the legislature and executive.

## **CONCLUSION**

Economic and social interaction with the EC and its member-states has been part of Slovenian life since socialist times, particularly after Yugoslavia signed a special agreement with the EC in

1970. Europeanisation as an ideology and in many respects 'practical' integration with the EC (especially economic) was closely linked to the processes of liberalisation in the economy, society and politics as well the processes of democratic transition and creation of an independent state in the late eighties and early nineties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the last decade Slovenia has been engaged simultaneously in two international relations challenges, namely a) achieving the status of an internationally recognised independent state with the political and diplomatic institutions necessary for a functional foreign policy; and b) deeper integration with the EU. The latter gained greater meaning for Slovenian society due to the 'internalisation' of EU matters as 'domestic matters', including building up the co-ordination of European issues horizontally at the Slovenian national level and vertically between Ljubljana and Brussels. Since the early 1990s the Slovenian executive's institutional adaptation to Europeanisation has developed in several stages. This adaptation can best be seen in terms of a series of gradual shifts in responsibility for the management of EU business from 'foreign affairs' through systematic internalisation to 'domestic matters'.

The adaptation of Slovenia's executive following independence was initially limited by the legacy of the socialist administrative culture and institutional structures re-established in the likeness of those under the previous independent administration. The 'new' European tasks were in general simply added to existing functions within individual departments. However, several years of incremental change, fuelled by the increasing intensity and deepening of European integration, have brought new demands to the co-ordination processes, which have been finally reflected in radical change and institutionalisation of the co-ordination of European issues, namely the establishment of a special and independent Government Office for European Affairs. This radical change was based on the perception of the key political players, the Council of Ministers (the Slovenian cabinet), that EU matters should not be dealt with in the same way as traditional diplomatic matters. Thus triggering a substantial shift from foreign affairs to the systemic internalisation of the management of EU business at the horizontal level, and discontinuation the informal co-ordinating role of the Foreign Ministry.

Although, it could be argue that establishment of the Government Office for European Affairs meant a shift in direction to a more centralised management model. However, despite the formally crucial role assigned to the Government Office for European Affairs in managing EU issues, the evidence presented in this paper suggests that a polycentric model has developed with various departments having different tasks and the line ministries remaining the 'lead ministries' relative to the articulation of national positions on particular (sectoral) EU issues. The polycentric model, in the Slovenian case, saw first, the Government Office for European Affairs as a central node for co-ordinating EU issues at the national level with the Prime Minister as the key co-ordinator of politically sensitive questions; second, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the formal negotiator and vertical co-ordinating institutional point; third the Negotiating Team as an expert group that ensured the prevalence of expertise over political and factional interests in the negotiating process and finally, the Council of Ministers (Slovenian cabinet) as the ultimate national (executive) decision-making unit on EU issues. In this polycentric model the relative

importance and continuity of informal contacts in vertical and horizontal communications is also stressed, which on occasion addressed the disadvantages of the rigid and insufficiently transparent formal channels and means of communication.

The duration of Slovenian accession to the EU has been marked by a broad consensus among the political elite regarding the accession process. Whereas the detail of the speed, nature and intensity of Slovenia's accession has seen some differences expressed among the opposition parties, EU membership and an agreement to co-operate with the accession process, were supported by all the parties, with the exception of the Slovenian National Party. An awareness of Slovenia's historical vulnerability and pride in its relatively new independence informed the general political and cultural concerns regarding the impact of EU membership on national identity, the Slovenian language and real estate ownership.

As a result of the broad consensus among the political elite, to some extent the process of Europeanisation has also brought to Slovenia's political system a completely new value to inter-institutional relations. In the case of EU accession the relationship between the Executive and the National Assembly's working bodies was enhanced greatly and accompanied by an excellent circulation of information. However, this assessment applies only to the co-ordination of business and cannot be said of exchanges on the detail of policy and legislation proposed by government. The co-ordination and information flows experienced during the EU accession still remains a real curiosity in a system where these have been traditionally unsatisfactory between the Executive and National Assembly.

The Slovenian negotiating style can be characterised by its relatively high level of formalisation, prioritisation and transparency. Formalisation is reflected mostly in the clearly defined steps and precisely developed procedures for the preparation of the negotiating positions. Slovenia's 'negotiating positions' (characterised as 'the Bible') served as the basis for first, the considered selection of priorities; and second, the weighing up of the interests, which the country sought to protect as a full member.

A distinctive feature of Slovenia's approach to accession to the EU has been its commitment to the principle of full transparency of integration. The political elite decided to publish all negotiating positions and to invite civil society and external experts to co-operate in their preparation. In addition, the discussion and approval of negotiating positions by the National Assembly has contributed greatly to the transparency of the negotiations. The Parliament's role in managing EU affairs and (at least at the normative level) the importance given to civil society's role in preparing the negotiating positions combined with the public presentation of these positions distinguishes the Slovenian approach to the management of the accession process from that of the other candidate states.

The greatest difficulties encountered when managing European business have involved the capacity of Slovenia's 'European cadre', above all: a) the deficit of personnel with knowledge of the EU; b) the absence of any previous (practical) experience of the EU cadre; c) the lack of foreign language knowledge; d) the lack of a modern organisational, administrative culture; e) the only recently acquired knowledge of the EU's 'policy-taking' and f) the lack of an EU 'policy-making' culture. In addition to problems in managing European business, some duplication in EU work has also been observed but this had not adversely affected EU co-ordination to a significant extent. However, there have been some minor conflicts in responsibilities among key institutions (especially the Government Office for European Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), but so far they have not become open political questions due to 'mutual respect'.

The adaptation of Slovenian institutions had originally been directed towards the efficient co-ordination of the EU negotiations. However, with the successful advancement of the accession process consideration turned to how the co-ordination structures and processes could be adapted to provide effective and speedy communication to meet the needs of full EU membership and Slovenia's role in EU policy making. The practices of the prevailing polycentric institutional structure had given voice to various institutional interests and ideas about the future of the 'Slovenian model' for co-ordinating EU affairs, which to a certain extent complicated the political decision on the reforms necessary. The alternative proposals were distinguished by their source, reflecting the different preferences conditional on specific interests as well as external pressures. There were four alternative proposals for the management of EU affairs in light of Slovenia's membership of the EU. These alternatives were as follows:

- a) the establishment of a central co-ordination unit, either independent of or directly subordinate to the Prime Minister (some kind of reformed Government Office for European Affairs);
- b) the establishment of a special department or sector within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- c) the establishment of a special department or sector within another ministry (for example the Ministry of Finance); or
- d) moving the central co-ordinating role to the jurisdiction of the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Slovenia to the EU.

However, the first two alternatives were the most plausible. Only the Government Office for European Affairs provided an elaborated proposal that suggested its own transformation to manage EU business on Slovenia joining the EU. Notably, following a government decision in February 2003 the central co-ordinating role for managing EU business at the Slovenian national level remains with the (reformed) Government Office for European Affairs. This decision ensures the continuity of the Slovenian pattern of gradual, pragmatic and flexible adaptations to the challenges of EU integration. As a result of the growing centrality of the Government Office for European Affairs at the national level and the new challenges posed by Slovenia's direct

involvement in policy-making processes at the EU level the Office has formally gained the status needed to provide effective and quick communication in the circumstances EU membership.

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