

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Slovenia

Slovenia | [Freedom of the Press 2012](#) |

Slovenia's constitution and legal system guarantee freedom of the press, and the media are for the most part free of political interference. At times, however, press outlets are punished or threatened for reporting on controversies and corruption involving powerful political figures and parties.

Articles 170 and 171 of the criminal code, on defamation and injurious accusation, have often been invoked against journalists who published damaging claims about political figures. Three weeks before the 2008 elections, Finnish public broadcaster YLE aired a documentary accusing Prime Minister Janez Janša of receiving kickbacks from arms deals between Slovenia and the Finnish defense contractor Patria. In response, Slovenia's Foreign Ministry sent two communiqués to the Finnish government, protesting the documentary and demanding a clarification. In July 2009, Slovenian prosecutors charged Magnus Berglund, the Finnish journalist responsible for the documentary, with defamation under Article 171, requesting the maximum six-month jail sentence. In January 2010, Janša—no longer prime minister but still head of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS)—filed a €1.5 million (\$2.15 million) damages claim in a Slovenian district court against YLE, Berglund, and several other individuals for offensive allegations. In December 2011, the court awarded Janša €21,500 (\$27,000), of which €15,000 (\$18,800) was to be paid by YLE and Berglund, stating that YLE failed to prove its case in court and never afforded Janša an opportunity to tell his side of the story. However, in September 2011, Janša was brought to trial on charges of bribery in the Patria case.

The 2003 Access to Information of Public Character Act ensures free access to information. In July 2011, members of the National Assembly rejected a proposed media law that defined "the rights, obligations and responsibilities of both individuals and legal bodies with regard to public interest" in the sphere of mass media. Even before the measure was officially submitted to the parliament, many press associations had criticized it for its imposition of government restrictions on journalistic work and its potential use as a means of intimidating journalists.

The Mass Media Act of 2006 established the "right of correction," according to which anyone offended or insulted by information published in the media, even truthful information, can demand a "correction" published in the same space as the offending article. The government and large companies have utilized the law to demand that newspapers print such corrections, which may be longer than the original article. These texts hinder editorial independence and journalists' freedom to publish critical articles. The Ministry for Culture is the main regulatory body of the print media and supervises the implementation of the Mass Media Act. It also handles complaints against the media from the public. Electronic communications, as well as radio and television programs, are regulated by the Post and Electronic Communications Agency. The agency's responsibilities include monitoring the content of broadcasting programs and stimulating competition within the broadcasting industry.

There are very few cases of threats and physical harassment against

2012 SCORES

PRESS STATUS

Free

PRESS FREEDOM SCORE

25

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT

8

POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

10

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

7

journalists, and reporters are generally able to cover the news freely. However, in November 2011, Matej Šurc and Blaž Zgaga, two journalists who authored three books about the alleged involvement of former Slovenian politicians in illegal arms trafficking during the Balkan wars of the 1990s, were the targets of an aggressive online smear campaign that included insults and explicit death threats. Zgaga had also received a death threat in 2008 after assisting Berglund with YLE's piece on the Patria deal.

The print media, including six daily and three weekly newspapers, reach 89 percent of the population, and the radio and television markets are saturated. There is only one local press agency, the Slovenian Press Agency (STA), which was independent when established in 1991 but is now owned by the prime minister's office. Media concentration is high, and ownership of media outlets changes often, making the market unstable and difficult to monitor. Newspapers that are critical of the government sometimes face difficulty securing advertisers, and there have been reports that self-censorship is common among journalists who want to avoid problems with their employers. In December 2010, more than 72 percent of voters in a government-sponsored referendum on the state broadcaster, RTV Slovenia, rejected planned changes that the government said would reduce political interference with the broadcaster. Opposition parties had argued that the proposal would have the opposite effect, and that it would make it easier to ultimately privatize RTV Slovenia.

Approximately 72 percent of Slovenians had access to the internet in 2011, and there were no reports of government attempts to restrict access during the year.

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