



An EU Survey on Whole-of-Government Approaches to External Conflict and Crisis

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Slovenia Report

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1 | Introduction

Established after the end of the Cold War, the Republic of Slovenia is a small state with a multicultural identity of Central, Southeastern, Mediterranean and Western European influences. It proclaimed independence in June 1991 and received international recognition in January 1992. The first democratic elections took place in spring 1990, and the opposition coalition Demos was sworn in that May. It is very important to note that the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution granted its republics certain statehood prerogatives as constituent parts of the federation. As a result, the first formal structure for the conduct of international cooperation was established. The Republic Committee for International Cooperation was a formal structure and served as a structural and organisational foundation for the formation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of the independent Slovenia. This primarily means that the administrative/governmental approach of cooperation and coordination – or a so-called whole-of-government approach (WGA) – has a tradition stretching back almost half a century in Slovenia.

During the first decade and a half of its independence, Slovenia was engaged in a unique series of multilateral projects. It was a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (1998–1999); it became a member of NATO and the EU (2004); it has held the chairmanship of the OSCE (2005), of the Human Security Network (May 2005–May 2006), and of the IAEA Board of Governors (Autumn 2006–Autumn 2007); and it has held the presidency of the Council of the EU (first half of 2008) and the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (May–November 2009). Two challenges that it faced during its presidency of the

Council of the EU were Kosovo's proclamation of independence and the conclusion of the partnership and cooperation agreement (PCA) between the EU and the Russian Federation.

From this, one can draw three basic conclusions that can help one gain a better understanding of the behaviours and structures of Slovenia's foreign policy. First, from the beginning, Slovenia has been an active member of the international community, and by successfully combining bi- and multi-lateral diplomatic approaches, it has had unique 'soft power' policy output. Second, the most important products of this approach are the Bled Strategic Forum, the International Trust Fund for Demining, the Centre for European Perspective, the Centre for Excellence in Finance, and the Centre for International Cooperation and Development, all of which are important tools for conceptualising international development cooperation as one of the priorities of Slovene foreign policy. Third, from the organisational point of view, these activities were managed by intra- and interministerial task forces that were formed on an ad hoc basis and pursued a relatively loose network approach. In other words, they were formalised bodies with targeted purpose that only existed for the duration of a single project.

These policy characteristics are the basic premises for understanding how Slovenia conducts its international relations as well as how it conceptualises and manages related projects and processes. This was most clearly illustrated by Slovenia's presidency of the Council of the EU. This extremely important – and complex – project is also the background for understanding and analysing Slovenia's stance towards and experience with a WGA. Indeed, these experiences enhanced the country's institutional/organisational mindset and conceptualisation, although they were not explicitly formalised within structures as a WGA. However, a WGA can be implicitly detected in Slovenia's strategy related to international operations and missions (Government of the Republic of Slovenia 2009). At the same time, there are some structures (e.g. intra-governmental bodies, working groups and permanent commissions) that use the goals of a WGA – namely, to be comprehensive, coordinated, goal-oriented and integrated – as a policy guideline.

2 | What policies have been developed to further policy coherence?

Slovene policy documents do not explicitly formalise a WGA. However, as mentioned above, there are some examples of clear implicit references, such as in the strategy for activities related to international operations and missions (Government of the Republic of Slovenia 2009). What's more, taken together, there are a number of documents that de facto present and form Slovenia's WGA-like framework. From the Parliament of the Republic of Slovenia, there is a resolution on the country's foreign policy (2015a), the foreign policy strategy itself (2015b), a resolution on the country's national security strategy (2010b), a strategy on international development cooperation and humanitarian aid (2018b), and a declaration on the Western Balkans (2010a). From the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, there is an action plan regarding the fight against human trafficking (2019a), an action plan regarding the Western Balkans (2019b), and a strategy on migration policy and coordinating related activities (2019c).

The documents are focused, of a high quality, and geared towards the nation as a whole. There is a clear guidance approach in these and related operational documents. What's more, there

are various action plans in place to spell out the specific aspects of implementing the various strategies.

In these documents, one will find a combination of an explicit (binding) approach and an implicit (suggested) approach. For example, paragraph 21 of the resolution on development cooperation (Parliament of the Republic of Slovenia 2017) says that the government has to regularly inform the parliament about the progress of implementing this resolution, while the binding aspect is found in paragraph 19. Seven months later, the parliament adopted the related law on development cooperation (Parliament of the Republic of Slovenia 2018a).

The related fields of action are numerous and broad. They include humanitarian aid and development cooperation, stabilisation, crisis management, peacebuilding and post-conflict transformation, all of which are backed up by economic efforts. They form an integrated, complementary set of activities whose thematic priorities have been specified in policy documents or decisions of the government and/or parliament.

In thematic terms, Slovenia's humanitarian-aid and development- cooperation efforts focus on two sets of priorities. First, they aim to foster inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. Second, they promote the sustainable management of natural resources and the fight against climate change. Third, Slovenia pays special attention to children and women, particularly in armed conflicts, as well as to providing them with post-crisis rehabilitation and psychosocial assistance. For example, these priorities prompted Slovenia to launch the International Trust Fund for demining and the social rehabilitation of the victims of landmines in 1998.

In geographical terms, Slovenian priorities for development- cooperation and humanitarian-aid efforts encompass the Western Balkans, the so-called 'European neighbourhood' and sub-Saharan Africa. The priority issues here are environmental protection and social inclusiveness.

In terms of stabilisation activities, among other things, Slovenia has launched the Brdo-Brijuni Process and has contributed a police contingent to North Macedonia. Its collaborative peacebuilding efforts include contributions to KFOR and UNIFIL. And it has contributed to post-conflict transformation efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The EU Global Strategy has both inspired and influenced policy thought in Slovenia, especially regarding the formation of EU-related policies and what kind of EU Slovenia would ideally like to see (in this case, one that is strong and united). Since Slovenia views integration as being in its strategic interest, it would like the EU to become more cohesive and stable. With these goals in mind, Slovenia has influenced and supported the EU's Global Strategy in discussions and by participating in various fora at different levels.

Furthermore, the UN Millennium Goals decisively paved the way for Slovenia's strategy and specific policies related to development cooperation and humanitarian aid (Parliament of the Republic of Slovenia 2018a). In addition, to a large extent, all Slovene national strategies take into consideration and draw from documents of the UN, the OECD and the OSCE. In the Slovene documents, foreign policy is conceptualised as a whole. Rather than explicitly setting out a WGA, such an approach is implicitly obligatory for the most part, since it appears in policy

formulations in various documents and thereby paves the way for a possible future formalisation of a WGA.

Slovenia also supports further development of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in all its dimensions: operations, institutions and capabilities. It participates in CSDP operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Chad/Central African Republic. It also took part in the CSDP operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and joined EU efforts to support the African Union in Sudan/Darfur. Together with the European Commission, Slovenia also launched the Positive Agenda for the Youth in the Western Balkans initiative in April 2015.

Management of the 2015/2016 migration crisis stands out as the clearest example of a WGA-like effort by Slovenia. With his November 2015 letter to EU and World Bank leaders, then-Prime Minister Miro Cerar set the framework for solving the crisis. The Slovene government formed a special task force with members drawn from various ministries and agencies, who collaborated in a de facto WGA manner and produced successful results. During its chairmanship of the OSCE in 2005, Slovenia published the Slovene translation of the IOM's Dictionary of Migration (IOM 2006) to aid understanding of the issue. Slovenia also initiated efforts to strengthen regional cooperation aimed at preventing radicalisation and stemming the recruitment efforts of foreign terrorist organisations.

Other soft policy initiatives include water diplomacy, membership in the so-called 'Green Group' of countries advocating action to slow the pace of climate change, and participation in Responsibility to Protect (R2P) activities. During its 2005 chairmanship of the OSCE, Slovenia also launched a project to increase children's knowledge of human rights, which has been recognised as an important tool for almost 15 years.

Generally speaking, there are explicit elements as well as strong hints of a WGA in various documents and policies. When circumstances call for an ad hoc WGA, it is goal-oriented, goal-driven and well-articulated. Hence, there should be a planned push towards contextualising those policies as a WGA whose scope is system-wide, encompassing foreign, security, development-cooperation, humanitarian-aid, economic and trade policies in cooperation with the NGO sector.

3 | Who are the main actors involved in cooperating in a WGA?

Slovenia has a long tradition of acting in a WGA-like fashion. Presently, it could be understood as a unique combination of several outstanding multilateral projects from the first decade and a half of Slovenia's existence as well as from the experiences from the last decade. Although Slovenia has experienced political turbulence during the latter period, it has continued to be an active player in the international arena.

After Slovenia became a member of the EU and NATO, in-country cooperation and coordination in dealing with external conflicts and crises increased in terms of both momentum and scope. Cooperating and coordinating with the Brussels-based structures and member states of the EU became part of routine procedures. This has broadened the scope and enriched policy results, while preserving both formal and informal methods and processes. This

enrichment significantly has to do with the adoption of a WGA in both practical and pragmatic ways, even though it has not been formalised.

There are a number of formal governmental bodies and structures that produce coherent and integrated policy approaches. Some of the most important are the Government Committee for Policy Affairs, the Government Committee for Economic Affairs, the National Security Council and its secretariat, the Strategic Council for Foreign Policy, the Permanent Coordination Group for International Development Cooperation, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the supreme formal coordinating body for the whole field of development cooperation. These bodies coordinate policies and approaches between government departments as well as with the relevant EU bodies (as well as NATO, depending on the issues at hand). At the same time, they also coordinate their activities with relevant parliamentary bodies, and such efforts are well established and formal, producing policy output on areas relevant to a WGA. Some of the most important formal parliamentary bodies here are: the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Policy, the Parliamentary Committee on European Union Affairs, the Parliamentary Committee on the Defence, and the Parliamentary Commission for Supervision of Intelligence and Security Services.

In addition, most of the ministries employ senior officials who deal with parliament and its bodies for this purpose, while some of them also have small task forces that permanently nurture these relations. What's more, the secretary general of the government has a special team dedicated to looking after government-parliament relations. Within the ministries, bodies can be formed on an ad hoc basis to help coordinate policy, but their organisational approach, practical activities and duration of activity vary from case to case.

Coordination and cooperation with EU institutions and actors are primarily handled by Slovenia's permanent mission to the EU, although some governmental bodies maintain direct contact with their EU counterparts on policy issues. As far as foreign policy, security and development cooperation are concerned, the MFA is the main formal coordinating/cooperation body within the government as well as for important international actors, such as the UN, NATO, the OECD- DAC and the OSCE. Although Slovene permanent missions are the 'point' players for these international organisations, some government and other bodies also have direct communication with them. In addition, an important aspect of Slovenia's cooperation with the UN is the Ljubljana-based International Institute for Middle East and Balkan Studies (IFIMES), which has had a special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 2018.

Various formal and informal groups in different ministries are also responsible for coordination/cooperation with civil society groups. Among the most important are the Government Coordination Group for Civil Society and the Permanent Coordination Group for International Development Cooperation. Ad hoc meetings with senior governmental representatives also take place occasionally, as was the case with the MFA regarding crises in Yemen and South Sudan. An important part of policy cooperation is handled by the MFA's Policy Planning and Research Department.

Last but not least, strong informal coordination and cooperation has been driven by a group of highly experienced members of the previous and current governments. This has included two

ex-prime ministers as well as ministers of defence, of economic development and technology, of education and of justice.

The cooperation/coordination activities discussed above are both horizontal and vertical, taking place both within and between various government departments, as well as with the parliament, civil society organisations, the EU and other important international actors. This broad and flexible web of formal and informal activities amounts to a de facto WGA that is goal-oriented, goal-driven and well-articulated when circumstances arise. Indeed, although it is not formalised, Slovenia's WGA works very efficiently on its current informal basis.

4 | How does your country operationalise a WGA?

Generally, the main part of the structural shifts that support the WGA-like policies and approaches were introduced into Slovene policymaking after it became a member of the EU and NATO in 2004 as well as when it held the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU in 2008, both of which deepened, enhanced and formalised many elements of its policymaking structures and processes. It was also influenced by experiences of taking temporary leadership roles for other multilateral projects and institutions, as discussed above.

These memberships and leadership roles have triggered many changes that reflect Slovenia's commitment to an integrated WGA-like approach. For example, after Slovenia joined the EU, its former Ministry for EU Affairs was transformed into the Government Office for Development and EU Affairs (GODEA). In the meantime, the main change within the MFA involved the introduction of the position of a director general and corresponding directorates as well as the position of a political director.

The MFA's Directorate for EU Affairs has four departments: the Department for European Affairs, the Department for European Countries (i.e. EU and EEA members), the Department for European Countries (which are all EU members), and the Department for General and Institutional Affairs. The position of its director general is merged with that of the political director, as experience showed that this was the best solution for policy integration in practice. The main principle for defining departments consists of geographical and topical criteria, which is in keeping with the practice of the EU's organisational units. The MFA has a Directorate for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), and the Department for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid is located in the Directorate General for Economic and Public Diplomacy.

The related changes in structures, approaches and policy efficiency have primarily been driven by practical needs. They are most noticeable in the MFA and the MoD as well as in the organisational arrangements and changes in the Office of the Prime Minister, but also in some other ministries, such as the Ministry of the Interior. They focus on adopting and implementing policies and their organisational modus operandi as well as on pragmatic approaches related to the activities of various international actors.

On the whole, one can say that, even though they are not formally defined as a WGA, these adapted structures do produce integrated, comprehensive and coordinated approaches to policy issues and their implementation. They have also functioned at between an average and

excellent level. For example, in times of an emergency or crisis, these bodies and structures have been able to respond in an effective and high-quality manner. One outstanding example of this is the efficiency with which Slovenia (in close cooperation and coordination with the EU bodies as well as on their behalf) managed the process related to Kosovo's proclamation of independence while Slovenia held the presidency of the Council of the EU in the first half of 2018.

Currently, the strongest motivator for further effectiveness and quality of the process leading to a formalised WGA is Slovenia's forthcoming presidency of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2021. Its preparations are mainly focusing on policy, political, financial, organisational and personnel-related aspects. If its efforts to foster collaboration, coordination and synergy succeed in Brussels, it would only strengthen the argument and push for formalising a WGA back home.

One should also note that there are no special financial resources dedicated to WGA-like activities in Slovenia. They are therefore covered at present by the 2020–2021 national budget, which is also focused on the forthcoming presidency of the Council of the EU. Budgetary means for processes related to responding to international crises and emergencies are taken from the MFA, the MoD, the Ministry of Interior, and other resources. A recent example of this involved the management of the 2015/2016 migration crisis. Although there were no explicit resources in the budget for this purpose, the government's response was efficient and had the needed financial and personnel resources. Regarding the latter, one should add that there are also no explicit human resources (HR) policies related to WGA-like activities in Slovenia. However, the Ministry for Public Administration seeks out individuals who have the experience and abilities needed to conceptualise and implement integrated, comprehensive policy approaches and solutions.

Within the government structure, there are not any formal leadership positions that would push for a WGA. However, clear elements of such an approach are evident in the activities of the current government, which was appointed by the National Assembly on 13 September 2018. Indeed, working under the determined prime minister, these veteran officials have brought a WGA-like method of leadership to this government's activities. These individuals include the minister of foreign affairs and the minister for infrastructure, both of whom are former prime ministers. There is also the current minister of defence, who is serving his second term in this position and is the longest-serving of all the ministers, having also been the minister of foreign affairs for seven years and the minister of the environment for three years. And there are also the minister of economic development and technology, the minister of education, and the minister of justice, all of whom are also serving in their second terms.

The effectiveness and quality of this political/administrative leadership when it comes to enabling a WGA can be assessed as average to excellent, depending on the issue at hand. This way of coordinating and implementing political issues can primarily be attributed to the vast political experience of the above-mentioned members of the government. Indeed, their style of governmental decision-making reflects a de facto WGA – and one that could rather easily be transformed into a deliberate, formalised WGA, a move for which there is noticeable support.

5 | Conclusions

Although Slovenia does not have a formal WGA, it has a de facto one in practice. Behind this are three main drivers. First, the tradition of cooperating and integrating policy issues in political management in Slovenia has a long tradition. This stems from the fact that, in accordance with the Yugoslav Constitution of 1974, Slovenia established the Republic Committee for International Cooperation as the first formal structure for managing its efforts related to international cooperation. Following Slovenia's independence in 1991, this served as a basis for the Slovene Ministry for Foreign Affairs in both structural and organisational terms. In other words, an administrative governmental notion of cooperation and coordination has a long and proven track record in the country.

Second, being engaged in a series of outstanding multilateral projects in the first decade and a half after its independence enabled Slovenia to develop very early on a special policy sense for taking a soft- power approach in multilateral efforts, on the one hand, and to frequently set up ad hoc structures capable of producing integrated, comprehensive and coordinated policy results, on the other.

Third, Slovenia's first-ever holding of the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU in 2008 has been the strongest push to date towards transforming its informal WGA into a formalised one. The main WGA-related challenges it faced during the presidency involved taking an integrated, comprehensive and coordinated approach (within the Slovene government as well as within the structures of the EU, with its member states and with other international actors) towards Kosovo's proclamation of independence and the conclusion of a partnership and cooperation agreement (PCA) with the Russian Federation. The presidency also influenced important structural changes in the organisational setup of Slovenia's public administration (especially of the Office of the Prime Minister and the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence). Structural changes were also introduced as a result of responding to the 2015/2016 migration crisis as well as of holding the presidency of the UN Human Rights Council in 2018.

Another important characteristic of Slovenia that contributes to its informal WGA is its administration's high level of flexibility when it comes to adapting to structural challenges. Indeed, whether it involves foreign policy, defence, development cooperation or closely related areas, Slovenia's de facto WGA has been able to swiftly, flexibly and efficiently respond to concrete challenges and produce successful results.

One can already say that Slovenia's de facto WGA works well in practice, efficiently producing high-quality policy outcomes. It is backed by various policy statements in a wide range of documents (strategies, declarations, action plans), and it rests on numerous, primarily ad hoc structures.

Given these experiences, structures, characteristics and documents – and the fact that there are many leaders who recognise the need for an integral, coordinated and comprehensive approach – Slovenia's de facto WGA could be easily and smoothly upgraded from an ad hoc approach to a formalised, institutionalised and policy- backed WGA.

In addition to the experiences Slovenia has gained while developing its policies (as discussed above), there are three success factors that could underpin such a transformation. First, the

current government has a strong, informal group made up of a determined prime minister and highly experienced ministers who are used to working together in a WGA-like manner and could back and assist with a formalisation effort. Second, since Slovenia held the presidency of the Council of the EU in 2008, there has been continuous (though admittedly not very visible) policy planning support for activities and decisions related to foreign policy. Third, there are the two important drivers of Slovenia's foreign policy ambitions: outside policy influence and encouragement combined with internal policy decisions. For example, the fact that Slovenia was the first of the group of countries that became EU member states in 2004 resulted from both initiative within EU circles in Brussels and Slovenia's political ambitions, which increased as a result of having already successfully managed multilateral projects, such as while holding the OSCE chairmanship in 2005. It also had a successful presidency of the UN Human Rights Council in 2018, and its forthcoming presidency of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2021 offers an excellent opportunity for Slovenia to articulate a formal WGA in terms of structures and policies.

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