

## EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTION BRIEFING NO 38 THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS IN SLOVENIA, 7 JUNE 2009

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### Key points:

- The victory of the opposition Slovenian Democratic Party.
- Surprisingly very good results for New Slovenia and Liberal Democracy of Slovenia, two parties that, during the last five years, have experienced turbulent events. Those deserving the most credit for their results are two incumbent MEPs, Lojze Peterle and Jelko Kacin, who, in the last few years, have become established as two of the most prominent EU (politician) specialists in Slovenia.
- Mainly street-level-oriented (more direct contact with the electorate) and low intensity election campaigning, making the campaign a relatively boring one.
- The same (low) voter turnout as at the 2004 EP elections, namely 28.3%, was recorded.
- Only on a few occasions did representatives of a single party, the Slovenian National Party, reveal Eurosceptic stances.
- The almost complete absence of EU-related topics.
- Only one party (the non-parliamentary Christian Socialists of Slovenia) placed a woman candidate as the leader of its party list.

On 7 June 2009 the second elections to the European Parliament (EP) were held in Slovenia. Unlike the first EP elections, which were held four months before the 2004 parliamentary elections,<sup>1</sup> these second EP elections were held nine months after the national election.<sup>2</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> See: Alenka Krasovec, Simona Kustec-Lipicer and Damjan Lajh, 'The European Parliament Election in Slovenia, June 13 2004,' *European Parties Elections and Referendums Network European Parliament Election Briefing No 18* at <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/documents/epnep2004slovenia.pdf>.

electoral system for EP elections was un-changed. The law establishes a proportional electoral system (using the d'Hondt counting method for seat allocation) with a single constituency (for national parliamentary elections Slovenia has 8 constituencies and a nationally defined threshold of 4%) and the possibility of a preference vote. The legislation governing EP elections determines that every candidates list may not comprise less than 40% of representatives of each gender and at least one representative of each gender must be placed in the top half of the list (since Slovenia has 7 MEPs, this means in the top three positions). After the first experiment with such a gender quota at the 2004 EP elections, similar legislation was also introduced for the first time for the 2006 local and 2008 national parliamentary elections. However, for the 2008 national parliamentary elections the gender quota was set at 25%. In Slovenia, a candidate list for EP elections can be proposed by parties (supported by four MPs or 1,000 voters) or voters (in which case the candidate list must be supported by 3,000 voters). Each MP and each voter may only support one candidate list.

According to the electoral law, each candidate list can spend no more than EUR 0.40 per voter on the campaign (this spending cap of EUR 0.40 is the same as for parliamentary elections). At the time of writing, it is impossible to ascertain how much money each candidate list invested in the EP electoral campaign since parties are only obliged to send a financial report about this to the Court of Auditors within four months of the EP elections. However, according to representatives of the individual candidate lists the amounts, they had planned to spend was between (approximately) EUR 250,000 (for example, the Social Democrats, Slovenian Democratic Party, Liberal Democracy of Slovenia) and EUR 0 (Greens United, Independent List of Patients' Rights). Under the electoral law, each party was allowed to spend a maximum of EUR 681,408.40. While it appears that no party spent the maximum permissible amount at this time, at the 2008 parliamentary elections several parties' expenditures were very close to the limit.<sup>3</sup>

Altogether, 12 candidate lists competed in the 2009 EP elections, one less than in 2004 (on that occasion one candidate list was a joint one comprising Liberal Democracy of Slovenia and the Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia). All seven parliamentary parties offered their own candidate lists and some non-parliamentary parties also competed (New Slovenia, the Youth Party of Slovenia, the Christian Socialists of Slovenia – at the last parliamentary elections this party formed a common candidate list with the Social Democrats – and Greens United) as well as one independent list, namely: the Independent List for Patients' Rights. All parties included the maximum number of candidates on their lists (seven), while the independent list included just four candidates.

In line with the election law, the parties and those involved in the independent list had to propose their candidate lists before 8 May. Some of them (such as New Slovenia) decided, at least informally, very quickly on their candidate lists, while some were very late. Notable examples of the latter include: the Social Democrats (the main governing party), the Slovenian People's Party (which was caught in an awkward and unenviable position since its leader resigned at the end of March and its party congress was only held in mid-May), and the Slovenian National Party. It appears that the Social Democrats making late decisions about its candidates is becoming the norm for the party, at the 2004 EP elections party leader Borut Pahor also decided at the last moment to be on the candidate list in the last position (although he was then elected an MEP by preferential votes) while, for the 2007 presidential elections, Mr Pahor

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<sup>2</sup> See: Alenka Krasovec and Damjan Lajh, 'Europe and the Parliamentary Elections in Slovenia, September 2008, *European Parties Elections and Referendums Network Election Briefing No 46* at [http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/documents/epern\\_eb46\\_slovenia2008.pdf](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/documents/epern_eb46_slovenia2008.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> See website of the Court of Auditors and revisions of the financial reports at <http://www.rs-rs.si>.

also decided at the last moment but this time not to stand as a candidate. In the case of the 2009 EP elections, the party leader (simultaneously also the Slovenian prime minister) played a *de facto* very important role in the candidate selection process, that is: he supported two candidates who were then placed on the top of the party list. Some of the party's MPs and most prominent politicians publicly criticised this decision as it involved placing two non-party members in the two main positions on the candidate list: the leader was a one-time member of Liberal Democracy of Slovenia and the Slovenian foreign minister, who had actually never publicly announced he is no longer a member of this party. Nevertheless, the relevant party body supported Mr Pahor's decision.

Since the law makes holding position of MEP incompatible with being an MP, a member of the government and or a member of a local representative bodies, we could have expected that top ranking politicians, especially from parliamentary parties, would not have been candidates in this election. This expectation was only partly confirmed in the Slovenian case and two current ministers were still among the candidates. When the current environment minister, who is also the leader of a coalition party (the Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia) decided to become an MEP candidates (and was even placed in the first position), Mr Pahor publicly announced his dissatisfaction with this along with his expectation that the minister's involvement in the electoral campaign should not hinder his normal governmental work at a time of the fiscal and economic crisis. Here, it is also worth mentioning that even six former ministers from Janez Janša 's (the prime minister in the period 2004-2008) previous government, who were not elected MPs at the most recent parliamentary election, were among the candidates (three on the list of the Slovenian Democratic Party, two on the list of the Slovenian People's Party, and one on the list of New Slovenia). In addition, three former Slovenian foreign ministers were among the candidates and all of them held the first positions on their parties' lists. Altogether, eight party leaders were among the candidates. We have already mentioned the leader of the Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia, but they also included the leaders of the Youth Party of Slovenia, New Slovenia, the Christian Socialists of Slovenia, and in the case of Greens United - which included four green parties - the leaders of each individual party, were also among the candidates. Former and current members of Liberal Democracy of Slovenia held first positions on the lists of three of the parliamentary parties. This was not only the case for the party itself, but also for the Social Democrats and Zares. Other candidates included four incumbent MEPs, two of them being leaders of their respective lists – Lojze Peterle in the case of New Slovenia and Jelko Kacin in the case of Liberal Democracy of Slovenia - while two incumbent female MEPs held the second positions on their parties' lists.

Political scientists frequently describe EP elections as second-order elections.<sup>4</sup> Since there is less at stake in second-order elections they are supposed to be a convenient opportunity for parties and voters to experiment with new solutions (alternatives), which can later be transferred to the functioning of parties within the context of first-order elections. In the case of the 2009 EP elections in Slovenia, we could only find one such experiment, Namely: the Youth Party of Slovenia, which experimented with its candidate-selection procedure by choosing one candidate using the Facebook social network. In addition, later in the election campaign the candidate selected by this unusual method publicly announced that he was gay. This was definitely an unprecedented event in the Slovenian political arena. His announcement was, in fact, a response to a homophobic statement by Ljudmila Novak, the leader of New Slovenia who was an incumbent MEP and EP election candidate, that homosexual relationships were un-natural and sick.

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<sup>4</sup> See: Karlheinz Reif and Hermann Schmitt, 'Nine second order national elections: A conceptual framework for the analysis of European election results, *European Journal of Political Research*. Vol 8, 1980, pp.3-44.

If we return to the question of the gender quota and the presence of women on the candidate lists, we should note that: a) women were in the majority (4 female and 3 male candidates) on five candidate lists (at the EP elections of 2004 this was the case for just two parties); and b) that women topped the list of candidates of only one party, the Christian Socialists of Slovenia (at the 2004 EP elections this was the case for three parties).

Otherwise, the most important contextual factor of the EP elections was the deep fiscal, economic and social crisis, especially in Slovenia. In addition, since the new government started work in autumn 2008 several internal disputes had already emerged among coalition partners: mainly concerning personnel appointment in the government and public (or partly publicly owned) companies. Despite it being the most ideologically homogeneous (centre-left) ideological coalition in post-communist Slovenia so far, it is obvious that the so-called 'cluster' of centre-left parties was internally divided. Moreover, it was also been occasionally obvious that MPs and prominent politicians from his own party, seriously challenged the prime minister's decisions.

## **The Campaign**

According to Slovenian election law, the official campaign starts one month before polling day. Among all competing parties, the non-parliamentary New Slovenia - the winner of the first EP elections in 2004 and in the 2004-2008 period the second largest governmental party - became the first to start systematically presenting its candidates around Slovenia. Since it started on these activities more than one month before the elections this was not part of the official campaign. New Slovenia's decision to present its candidates so early was probably influenced by two factors. First, its poor result at the 2008 parliamentary election and the Slovenian rules on the submission of candidate lists for EP elections, namely: a political party may submit a list of candidates if it is supported by the signatures of at least four MPs or at least 1,000 voters. New Slovenia had to collect the signatures of voters since it currently has no MPs. Alongside the presentations of its candidates the party did indeed collect voters signatures (such a way of generating support is also connected with the idea of voter mobilisation). Further, the leader of the party's candidate list, Lojze Peterle, had some experience with the start election campaigning early – when he ran in the 2007 presidential election he started travelling around Slovenia and promoting himself up to a year before the election. Although such an approach did not prove to be successful, since Danilo Türk defeated him in the second round, the 2009 EP elections proved the opposite.

In general, a feature of the election campaign was the absence of any genuine party election programmes. In fact, the only party to prepare a serious and full electoral programme was Zares. The party prepared a 52-page programme, entitled: 'Let's Take Europe for Real' (in the Slovenian language *Zares* means 'For Real', which is also the name of the party). The programme was divided into five parts: 1) for an enterprising, innovative and socially responsible Europe; 2) for an important role in the fight against climate change and in working towards sustainable development; 3) for a free, safe and just Union; 4) for one Union – one vote; and 5) for co-operation and better governance of Europe. A very short electoral programme, published on the party website, was also prepared by New Slovenia. The programme's title was 'New Slovenia-Close to the People'. However, the programme was very short and divided into ten different fields, with each field only being described in a few sentences. A bit more extensive programme prepared Slovenian People's Party. Liberal Democracy of Slovenia took over and presented the Manifesto of European Liberal, Democrat and Reform trans-national party federation (ELDR) for the 2009 EP elections, while, at the same time, it also prepared its

own short Official Letter for the European Elections, with four parts: 1) Slovenia is at home in Europe; 2) the liberal origin of the European model of integration; 3) Europe in the context of global changes; and 4) how much of Europe does Slovenia need? Practically no other party (including the biggest coalition party Social Democrats and the biggest oppositional party Slovenian Democratic Party) prepared any genuine programme for the EP elections. On the other hand, the independent list was established primarily established as a response to the EP's proposition that patients in the EU would have a chance to choose a country for their medial treatment and this was its main 'programme'.

On public billboards the European component was also quite neglected. Only the Youth Party of Slovenia put the logo, sign and name of the European party (as at the 2004 EP elections) on its billboards, while the Slovenian Democratic Party only had a small emblem of the European Peoples Party on some of its billboards. As in the case of the first 2004 EP elections in Slovenia, European issues were again hardly prominent in the campaign. However, at least the media put somewhat greater emphasis on EU topics so that at least the debates among parties during TV confrontations were 'richer' in this regard. The topics most exposed by journalists at these TV confrontations were: for example, an evaluation of the work and role of the EP in general and Slovenian MEPs in particular; the salaries of MEPs; in which EP working committees candidates would like to participate if they were elected; and why, how and if the EP arena can or would be used by Slovenian MEPs to resolve certain problems in relation to Croatia. In a way, the 2009 EP elections were a missed opportunity to highlight EU-related topics. While we may have expected that the first EP elections would mainly not be organised in terms of EU-related topics, since they only were held four months before the parliamentary elections, and it was obvious that parties would seek to exploit the opportunity during the EP elections to campaign for national parliamentary elections (this indeed happened), there were no such expectations in 2009 since the national election had already been held just a few months before.

During the last few months Slovenia has been pre-occupied with two major issues. The first one has involved problems concerning the (global) fiscal and economic crisis and taking appropriate measures to respond to it. The second one has included the country's relations with Croatia. In the campaign, the second topic, the border dispute between Slovenia and Croatia, prevailed. The dispute is as old as the independence of the two countries, although in the last few months it (again) intensified, especially given that Slovenia blocked the Croatia-EU accession negotiation process. The maritime border dispute between both countries concerns Slovenia's access to international waters, namely: its desire to reach international waters without passing through the territorial waters of Croatia or Italy. The way that the border is drawn makes all the difference between Slovenia being a maritime country or a nearly landlocked country without any direct access to international waters. Croatia's application for EU membership in 2003 and the opening of accession talks in 2005 complicated these border problems because Slovenia said that it might hold a referendum on Croatia's EU membership if a solution could be reached. At the end of 2008, when Croatia was due to open extra chapters in the negotiation process, Slovenia blocked the move as, in its documents, Croatia had included legislation and maps which placed the maritime border in the middle of the Bay of Piran. According to Slovenian officials, these documents prejudiced the (still not agreed) border. This Slovenian move was in stark opposition to its attitude to date since previously the Slovenian political stance was based merely on diplomatic notes. The dispute took the EU largely by surprise, as revealed in the now-famous exclamation of French foreign minister Bernard Kouchner: 'But it's only a few kilometres of disputed border!' Unlike at the 2008 parliamentary elections, when relations with Croatia were not (an important) part of the campaign (all parties agreed with the Slovenian stance on the issue), at the 2009 EP election this was (again) a very visible topic. At the same time, this obviously shows that the political elite and general public in Slovenia perceives relations with

Croatia (at least partly) as an EU issue or EU membership as a ‘joker card’ in Slovenian hands, to be used if necessary.

From the perspective of election campaign content, two more features are worth mentioning. The first was the absence of Eurosceptic standpoints. A small exception to this was (as usual) the Slovenian National Party, but even this party was more reserved with exposing Eurosceptic positions. This was quite logical as EU-related topics were generally neglected. The second important feature of the campaign was the prevalence of internal political affairs, especially including competition between leaders of the biggest governing and opposition parties: the Prime Minister Mr Pahor and Mr. Janša, the leader of Slovenian Democratic Party. The campaign ended with a scandal including the third important player: Gregor Golobič, the leader of Zares. It was revealed that, during the 2008 parliamentary election campaign, Mr Golobič did not tell journalists the truth in response to a very explicit question about his wealth. While the opposition claimed that Mr Golobič had lied and should resign immediately from his ministerial post (and leave politics), while admitting he had made a mistake his party defended him by noting that he had reported his financial means to the Anti-Corruption Commission. Other governing coalition parties tried to avoid taking any clear positions on this. Mr Golobič decided to take some time to reflect on whether or not to resign; and decided to announce his decision after the elections.

The campaign was mostly street-level oriented, meaning that there was a tendency for more direct contact with the electorate. This approach was also a consequence of less money being invested in the campaign. Candidates also attended numerous events and frequently several candidates from different parties attended public events, for example: a dance of school children about to finish their secondary education, a marathon in Ljubljana, or a public event organised by the Association of Consumers of Slovenia. At the same time, parties and their candidates also ran presentations and campaigns across Slovenia. In addition to the Association of Consumers of Slovenia, another NGO tried to lead its own campaign and exploit media attention during the campaign to present its aims. At the beginning of March, the Women's Lobby of Slovenia started a parallel civil society campaign with the slogan ‘50-50’ and aimed for Slovenian parties to place female candidates in the first position on candidate lists and declare their positions on the challenges of EU policies concerning gender equality in their electoral programmes. Despite the quite good media coverage of this campaign, the parties did not actually meet these civil society organizations’ expectations.

## **Election Results**

Taking into account the characteristics of the political arena and abovementioned economic crises of the last several months, as well as the idea that EP elections are second-order elections, the results of the 2009 EP elections in Slovenia hardly come as a surprise. As we see in **Table 1**, the governing parties (Social Democrats, Zares, the Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia and Liberal Democracy of Slovenia) received 52.4% of the votes at the 2008 parliamentary elections and 46.9% of the votes at the 2009 EP elections.

The opposition Slovenian Democratic Party can be described as the clear winner of the EP elections, even though it had expected up to three MEPs. In a way, New Slovenia, which received 16.3% of the votes, and Liberal Democracy of Slovenia, which received 11.5%, can also be characterised as winners. Both parties did indeed lose one MEP relative to the 2004 EP elections, but both experienced stormy events within the last five years. New Slovenia was the unexpected winner of the 2004 EP elections, while it recorded a substantially poorer result at the

parliamentary election held just four months later. Nevertheless, in the 2004-2008 period the party was the second largest governmental party, while at the 2008 parliamentary election it failed to pass the 4% threshold to enter parliament. On the other hand, Liberal Democracy of Slovenia was the main governing party in Slovenia in the 1992-2004 period and, after its defeat in the 2004 parliamentary election, several big conflicts occurred and the majority of its MPs left the party during the legislative period. At the 2008 parliamentary election the party recorded its worst result ever since it received only 5.2% of the votes. However, it seems that both parties represented some kind of a success story at the EP elections chiefly because in the eyes of the public both of them had one candidate who was clearly appropriate to work at the EU level, respectively: Lojze Peterle and Jelko Kacin. Both were incumbent MEPs and even before the 2004 EP elections they were both prominent politicians who, after several disputes within their respective parties, re-oriented their interests to the EU level.

**Table 1: Share of votes received at the 2009 EP elections compared with the 2008 national parliamentary elections**

	2008 national parliamentary elections (% of votes)	2004/2009 EP elections (% of votes)	Number of seats in the EP 2004/2009	Membership in a European party
Liberal Democracy of Slovenia****	5.2	21.9/11.5	2/1	ELDR
Slovenian Democratic Party	29.3	17.6/26.6	2/2	EPP
Social Democrats**	30.4	14.1/18.4	1/2	PES
Slovenian People's Party*	5.2	8.4/3.6	0/0	EPP
New Slovenia – Christian People's Party	3.4	23.6/16.5	2/1	EPP
Slovenian National Party	5.4	5.0/2.9	0/0	
Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia****	7.4	****/7.2	0/0	
Zares – New Politics	9.4	-/9.8	-/1	ELDR
Youth Party of Slovenia*	*	2.3/1.9	0/0	EG
Greens United	***	-/0.7	0/0	
Christian Socialists of Slovenia**	**	-/0.3	0/0	
Independent List for Patients' Rights	-	-/0.4	0/0	

Source: Slovene State Electoral Commission (<http://www.dvk.gov.si>)

\* At the 2008 elections the Slovenian People's Party formed a coalition with the Youth Party of Slovenia.

\*\* At the 2008 elections the Christian Socialists of Slovenia formed a coalition with the Social Democrats.

\*\*\* At the 2008 national parliamentary elections the coalition among green parties was significantly different to that at the 2009 EP elections and it is thus impossible to compare the results.

\*\*\*\* At the 2004 EP elections the Liberal Democracy of Slovenia and the Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia had a common list.

The Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia is very successful as an issue party in the national political arena and is no doubt a party with big coalition potential since it has been included in every government since 1996 when it entered parliament for the first time. At the 2009 EP elections, it managed to confirm its very good result at last year's parliamentary elections, although this was not enough for it to win an MEP. Similarly, Zares succeeded in confirming its election result in the last parliamentary election. Nevertheless, this can be described as a very good result in the circumstances of the event described above involving its party leader Mr Golobič and which significantly marked the final week of the electoral campaign.

Among the losers, we have to mention the main governing party, the Social Democrats, which was the only one of the governmental parties not to have confirmed or improved its result from the 2008 parliamentary election. Mr Pahor actually acknowledged that his party had lost the elections but right after that also stressed that its results in terms of MEP numbers was better than in 2004. Almost immediately, some MPs from the Social Democrats directly and publicly

said that it was impossible to treat the EP election results in any other way than as a defeat. Some more cynical statements were also made regarding the above described candidate selection by some party MPs: that the Social Democrats had indeed sent two liberals to the EP. In addition, Mr Pahor also personally apologised for such a candidate selection and assumed responsibility for the relatively poor result. In a way, one can explain the party's poor electoral result with the smaller degree of strategic voting at the EP elections – since they are second-order elections such voting can be expected at these elections to a lesser extent than at the most important national parliamentary elections. In the case of the 2008 parliamentary election, when public opinion polls had indicated that the difference between the biggest two parties, would be very small (this indeed happened) there were also some open appeals to vote strategically. It is also obvious that voters used the EP elections to send a signal (mainly) to the leading governing party that the government’s measures to stop or alleviate the crises were not felt to be the right ones or sufficiently forceful.

The Slovenian National Party, which is the only party that can be described as a Eurosceptic party (in the past its representative stressed the party is actually a ‘Eurorealist’ party) recorded a poor result since it received just 2.8% of the votes. However, here it is necessary to mention that the party leader did not feature among its candidates, nor did any of its other more prominent politicians. Consequently, its poor result can hardly be described as a disappointment or unexpected. The poor result of the Slovenian People's Party also cannot be seen as a surprise. The party had many internal problems, while its election results during the last few years have worsened continuously. The new party leader (elected in mid-May) openly described the party’s EP election result as a defeat.

As Table 2 shows, voter turnout was, once, again very low – in fact, it remained at the same level as at the first EP elections in 2004.

**Table 2: Turnout at the 2009 EP elections and 2008 national parliamentary elections (%)**

EP elections 2004	28.3
National parliamentary elections 2008	63.1
EP elections 2009	28.3

Source: Slovene State Electoral Commission (<http://www.dvk.gov.si>)

There are probably some extra explanations, apart from the more standard ones (EU institutions are largely seen as being distant from the people), that explain this. Firstly, the already mentioned hardly visible and somewhat boring election campaign which did not attract or mobilise voters or offer concrete ideas about what the parties’ candidates would do in the EP if elected. Secondly, there were hardly any other efforts to visibly mobilise voters: obviously in the EP campaign the parties invested much less money than in the parliamentary election campaign held several months earlier, the candidates included many politicians who had failed to attract enough votes to be elected to the national parliament just a few months earlier, or candidates who can hardly be described as well-known or prominent. Thirdly, several party leaders as well as the President of the Republic called on voters to cast a vote, but their calls were faint and not followed by any more concrete action. Fourthly, the scandal involving the leader of Zares in the last week of the campaign further disillusioned voters and alienated them from politics.

Last but not least, female candidates were not very successful since only two were elected (in 2004 there were three) and it is obvious that Slovenian voters are inclined to cast a preferential vote when they have such a possibility. Namely, in all parties at least almost 60% of voters



decided to use it, while in the cases of Liberal Democracy of Slovenia, Zares and the Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia, more than 80% of party voters cast such votes.

At the end of June 2009, the EP elections in Slovenia had still not been formally concluded. In Slovenia it is possible to vote by post and such postal ballots were, as usual, delivered to Argentina, but they were not delivered to the electoral commission in Buenos Aires. Nobody knows what exactly happened with these ballots, but it is clear they were sent in time and it has been confirmed they were indeed delivered to Argentina, but not to the responsible electoral committee. Because of this complication, subsequent elections in Argentina will be held at the beginning of July. It is clear that it is impossible (even theoretically) to change the proportions of MEPs among the parties, yet it is theoretically possible that in the Slovenian Democratic Party Zofija Mazej Kukovič would be elected instead of Romana Jordan Cizelj. In any case, Zofija Mazej Kukovič is currently in the 'waiting room' – if the Lisbon Treaty enters into force she will become the eight Slovenian MEP.

## **Implications/Future Prospects**

The 2009 elections confirmed that, in relation to other elections in Slovenia, EP elections are peculiar in several aspects. Firstly, not only is the electorate very passive but also parties did not actually try to mobilise voters to a larger extent. This be seen particularly in the lower level of resources invested in the EP election campaign by parties together with the fact that the parties have not, so far at least, played their very 'strong cards' in the election: namely, in both EP elections held in Slovenia so far it has been difficult to find the most prominent party politicians on candidate lists. If there won't be changes in these two aspects, we can continue to expect Slovenia to record one of the lowest EP election turnouts among the EU member states.

Secondly, the EP election results have confirmed that voters are inclined to cast preferential votes if there is such a legal possibility. It was already evident in the 2004 EP election that Slovenians cast votes for several individual candidates, irrespective of their party affiliation; the clearest examples were Mr. Pahor, Mr. Peterle and Mr. Kacin. The same pattern was evident in the case of latter two candidates in 2009. Since there are some ideas to slightly amend the legal framework for national parliamentary elections in Slovenia and empower voters in relation to parties, the EP election experiences regarding preference votes can be used as a basis for possible changes and as such have once again acting as a testing ground (as they did in the case of the introduction of a gender quota for national parliamentary elections).

Finally, it seems likely that, at the time of the next EP election, the main governing party will share the same fate as governing parties suffered in 2004 and 2009 EP elections, when they were both were defeated irrespective of the national parliamentary electoral cycle: the 2004 EP elections were held several months before, while 2009 EP elections several months after, the respective parliamentary elections.

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