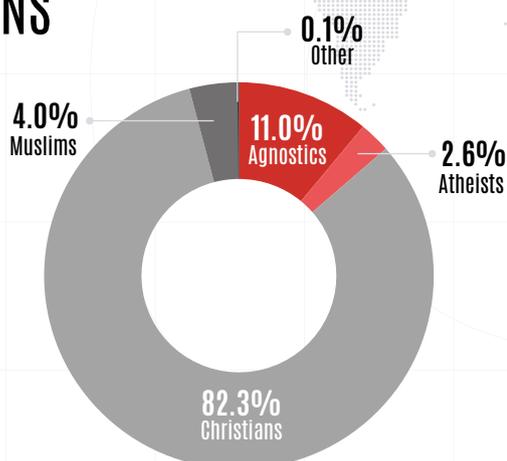




# SLOVENIA

## RELIGIONS



## LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND ACTUAL APPLICATION

The Slovenian constitution<sup>1</sup> guarantees freedom of religion and the separation of Church and state (Article 7). Everyone is equal before the law and guaranteed equal rights and freedoms (Article 14). Article 41 protects freedom of conscience, provides that “religious and other beliefs may be freely professed in private and public life”, and that parents have the right to raise their children in accordance with their beliefs. Incitement to religious discrimination or hatred and intolerance are prohibited under Article 63. Conscientious objection to compulsory military service is permitted under Article 123.

Slovenia’s Religious Freedom Act<sup>2</sup> reiterates constitutional protections, and further enumerates individual and collective religious freedoms, as well as the legal status and rights of religious communities. Article 3 prohibits “discrimination on the basis of religious belief, expression, or exercise of such belief”. Article 5 defines churches and religious communities as “organisations of general benefit”, and Article 29 stipulates that the state may give material support to registered religious communities because of the “general benefit” they provide. Churches and religious communities are not required to

register (Article 6); however, the same article requires that activities must not “conflict with the morals and public order”, while Article 12 prohibits violence, incitement, and profit-making. Article 13 states that in order to be registered, a religious community must have been operating in Slovenia for at least ten years and must have at least 100 adult members.

According to the Office for Religious Communities, in 2020 there were 56 registered religious communities in Slovenia, including the Roman Catholic Church, several Protestant Churches, Orthodox Churches (Serbian, Coptic, and Macedonian), the Jewish Community of Slovenia, as well as various groups of Muslims, Baha’is, Buddhists, and Hindus. Jehovah’s Witnesses and Scientologists were also registered.<sup>3</sup>

In 2004, Slovenia ratified a 2001 agreement with the Holy See regulating legal issues between the state and the Catholic Church.<sup>4</sup>

The Denationalisation Act of 1991 regulates the process of claims for the restitution of property seized after 1945 under Yugoslavia’s former Communist regime.<sup>5</sup> However, that law does not apply to Jewish-owned property confiscated by the Nazis, since they were seized before 1945 and most of the local Jewish population was either killed or fled the country during the Holocaust, thus rendering the properties “heirless”.<sup>6</sup> The World Jewish Restitution Organization and the Ministry of

Justice launched a joint project to determine the scope of potential claims<sup>7</sup> and delegations met in November 2019.<sup>8</sup>

In September 2020, the claim filed by the Archdiocese of Ljubljana under the Denationalisation Act for the return of properties in the Triglav Lakes Valley, Savic waterfall, and Lake Bohinj coastline was rejected after many years of litigation because the property was originally seized by the Nazis before 1945.<sup>9</sup>

Fifty years after the initial request was made, Ljubljana's first mosque opened on 3rd February 2020. After receiving permission to break ground in 2013, the project faced opposition, as well as financial difficulties. The six-part Islamic Cultural Centre cost €34 million (US\$ 41 million), of which 28 million was donated by Qatar.<sup>10</sup>

According to the U.S. Department of State, Muslim and Jewish groups continued to face difficulties in having infant boys circumcised and often opted to have the procedure performed in Austria.<sup>11</sup>

## INCIDENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

In 2019 police recorded two hate crimes committed with a "bias against members of other religions or beliefs", according to data provided to the Organization for Security and Co-op-

eration in Europe (OSCE).<sup>12</sup> The Holy See reported hate incidents, including repeated vandalism of churches and the destruction of roadside crosses with explosives.<sup>13</sup> Hate crimes against other religious groups were not reported by civil society organisations.

No hate crimes recorded by police were reported to the OSCE for 2018.<sup>14</sup> Muslim civil society organisations reported some incidents to the OSCE in 2018, all directed at a mosque, such as pig bones left at the entrance of the building in November 2018.<sup>15</sup> The Holy See reported two incidents in 2018, including death threats against a representative of the Slovenian Catholic Church.<sup>16</sup>

Restrictions on public religious gatherings due to the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 resulted in the suspension of services, including during Ramadan, Easter, and Passover. Leaders of the major religious groups encouraged believers to stay home.<sup>17</sup> The Islamic community's celebration of Eid in 2020 was modified to limit group ceremonies to 50 people.<sup>18</sup>

## PROSPECTS FOR FREEDOM OF RELIGION

It appears that there were no significant new or increased governmental restrictions on religious freedom during the period under review.

## SOURCES / ENDNOTES

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