

National Report - Slovenia

Case study 4

About the organization

The second case study from the public sector is Slovenia's national public broadcasting organization, providing a wide range of radio, television, and multimedia services. Established in 1928 for radio and 1958 for television, it operates under a specific legal act, ensuring it meets the public service obligations set by legislation.

Headquartered in Ljubljana, the organization has regional broadcasting centers in Koper and Maribor, and correspondents throughout Slovenia, Europe, and globally. The organization employs more than 2000 workers, including journalists, technical staff, and administrative personnel. This diverse team is dedicated to delivering high-quality content across various platforms. It operates three national and four regional radio stations, which are also available online. The television division, known broadcasts two national TV programs, two regional TV programs, and specialized content for the Italian and Hungarian national communities in Slovenia. Additionally, it produces radio and television programs for the Romany ethnic community, Slovenian ethnic communities in neighboring countries, and Slovenian expatriates and migrant workers.

A significant portion of the organization funding, approximately 73 %, comes from television license fees. The organization also receives funding from the state and other sources to support its operations. It is committed to maintaining high standards of quality and innovation, continuously upgrading its technology and expanding its multimedia offerings. This includes the multimedia center, which produces teletext, websites, mobile portals, and info-channels. The organization is also home to the symphony orchestra, the Slovenia Big Band, and various choirs, contributing to the cultural landscape of Slovenia. The organization plays a crucial role in promoting Slovenian culture, language, and heritage through its diverse programming.

The organization has an active presence of trade unions and works councils, which play a crucial role in representing the interests of employees and ensuring their rights are protected. The primary trade unions include the Slovene Association of Journalists and the Trade Union of Journalists of Slovenia. These unions are vocal in advocating for the rights of journalists and other staff members, particularly in response to changes in programming and management decisions. For instance, they have expressed concerns over proposed modifications to news programming that could impact the quality of public service reporting. The unions argue that such changes are unrealistic and could be detrimental to the broadcaster's mission.

In addition to trade unions, the organization has a works council that facilitates worker participation in decision-making processes. The works council is involved in various aspects of organizational governance, ensuring that workers have a voice in matters that affect their work environment and conditions. This body works alongside the management to address issues such as workplace policies, employee welfare, and operational changes. Additionally, the presence of workers representatives in the Program Council of the organization is mandated by the law and institution's statute. These representatives are involved in discussions and decisions related to programming and other critical areas, ensuring that the perspectives of the workforce are integrated into the broader organizational strategy. Overall, the presence of workers' representatives underscores the importance of worker

representation and participation in maintaining a fair and supportive work environment. These entities help to balance the interests of the staff with the operational needs of the organization, contributing to a more collaborative and transparent workplace. There are four collective agreements applicable to the organization: the Public Sector Agreement, the Non-Economic Activities Agreement, the Cultural Activities Agreement, and a local collective agreement that applies exclusively to the organization.

In summary, the organization is a cornerstone of Slovenian public media, providing comprehensive and diverse content to meet the needs of its audience. Its commitment to quality, innovation, and cultural promotion ensures that it remains a vital institution in Slovenia's media landscape.

Interviewees

The interviews with the President of the Works Council, the President of the Trade Union, and the HR Manager at the organization provide a comprehensive view of the institution's internal dynamics and labor relations.

The President of the Works Council has been with the organization since 1995, with a brief hiatus. Initially uninterested in labor participation, her role as Ombudswoman for viewers' and listeners' rights between 2017 and 2012 exposed her to institutional issues, leading her to join the journalists' union and run for the Works Council in 2022. She emphasizes the importance of collective action in addressing institutional irregularities. The President of the Trade Union, a journalist with 25 years of experience, leads the coordination of two journalists' unions. She has been active in union activities for many years, organizing freelance journalists and negotiating with management and the government. Union activities are voluntary, with members balancing their professional duties and union responsibilities. The HR Manager, with 32 years in the organization, has held various roles, including TV producer and assistant director. His extensive experience in leadership positions helps him manage the institution's processes effectively.

Labor relations

The Vice president of the Works Council highlighted the presence of three representative unions at the organization: the journalists' union, a more technical union, and another union. These unions have negotiated with management to establish agreements that define the operations of the Works Council. However, conflicts have arisen, particularly regarding the representativeness of these unions. The main division occurred over the amendment to the relevant legal act, with the journalists' union supporting it while the other two unions sided with management, creating a confusing situation. This division has affected the functioning of the Works Council, as most members were elected for opposing the previous management's policies. Recently, there has been a slight improvement in cooperation among the unions. The Works Council also deals with issues like mobbing and legal matters, and the nature of their work, being a media institution with many creative professions, fosters a progressive environment with significant worker self-management.

The Vice president of the Trade Union described the labor relations as catastrophic, with increasing employee dissatisfaction due to rising living costs, inflation, and stagnant wages. Since the financial crisis of 2011, there has been a freeze on hiring and wage increases, and training and education were among the first casualties of austerity measures. Many employees earn below the minimum wage, and the workforce is ageing, with an average age of 48. There are limited opportunities for young people and students, who often work under precarious conditions. The union provides legal protection

and support for its members, but students and freelancers lack such protections.

The HR Manager noted that the workforce is aging due to hiring restrictions, and the lack of a steady influx of younger employees is a significant issue. The organizational climate has been deteriorating, partly because the organization is part of the public sector, which limits its ability to operate like a private company. In other European countries, public service broadcasters are often state-owned companies that can operate more efficiently and motivate their staff better than public sector organizations.

Overall, the interviews reveal significant challenges in labor relations at the organization, including conflicts among unions, employee dissatisfaction, and an aging workforce. The institution's status as a public sector entity further complicates its ability to address these issues effectively. The analysis highlights the need for improved cooperation among unions, better management of employee expectations, and strategic initiatives to attract and retain younger talent. Addressing these challenges will be crucial for the organization to maintain a motivated and effective workforce, capable of meeting the demands of a modern public broadcasting service.

Direct employee participation and the interplay

The Vice president of the Works Council emphasized that employee participation at the organization is highly focused on the interests of the employees, who feel empowered to advocate for their rights. The unions play a crucial role in negotiating systematization, improving working conditions, handling legal matters, and ensuring the payment of overtime. The Works Council leverages all available mechanisms provided by the Workers Participation in Management Act and the participatory agreement to address issues comprehensively. They interpret these provisions broadly to benefit employees, particularly concerning working conditions and health and safety measures.

Direct employee participation is not systematically managed but is facilitated through worker assemblies and direct interactions. The recent amendment to the legal relevant act introduced a significant change by increasing the number of employee representatives on the program council, the supervisory body, from five to six out of seventeen members. This council now oversees both programming and business matters, enhancing employee influence in decision-making processes.

The President of the Trade Union outlined the union's role in addressing employee issues, either directly or by representing members in negotiations with management. During strikes, the union has represented broader employee interests, including content-related pressures and censorship demands. The union also organizes meetings between employees and their supervisors to resolve issues and provides legal opinions to the Works Council.

The HR Manager described the structure of employee participation, which includes three unions: the journalists' union, the union of cultural and artistic creators, and the broadcasting union for technical staff. The Works Council operates under a participatory agreement, holding monthly meetings with management representatives to discuss various topics. The unions are autonomous but are invited to participate in these meetings. The HR Manager noted that while the participatory system encourages dialogue, it can also hinder necessary organizational changes due to the unions' ability to block management decisions. Despite these challenges, the HR Manager acknowledged the benefits of this system, as it forces both management and employees to engage in dialogue. Employees have the right to receive answers to any questions regarding their status or work processes, either through their direct supervisors or the Works Council. This system ensures that employee concerns are addressed

effectively. The HR Manager also highlighted the lack of formal innovation committees but mentioned the annual RTV awards for achievements, which recognize outstanding contributions from employees. These awards, which include financial incentives, help motivate staff, particularly those in creative roles.

The Vice president of the Works Council highlighted the extensive opportunities for employee participation in decision-making processes at the organization. Employees can propose ideas to their supervisors, and journalists have significant influence through editorial boards as outlined in the statute. However, the effectiveness of these participatory mechanisms depends on the persistence and courage of the groups involved. Fear of retaliation and the lengthy legal processes often deter employees from fully exercising their rights. The council also noted that while the institution has the formal structures to support broad participation, the sheer size and diversity of the workforce can hinder unified action. There is a tension between the need for hierarchical management to coordinate 2,000 employees and the desire for more inclusive decision-making processes.

Future development

The President of the Trade Union discussed the impact of recent political pressures and the prolonged strike, which led to significant staff turnover and a loss of experienced journalists and editors. The union has been active in providing support and legal assistance to its members, increasing its membership by over 50 % in the past three years. The union's role in direct communication with management and participation in public sector reforms has been crucial. However, the union faces challenges in balancing its advocacy role with the need for effective communication and collaboration with the Works Council.

The HR Manager expressed concerns about the recent legislative changes that have increased the number of employee representatives on the program council. This shift, while intended to enhance employee participation, complicates decision-making processes and poses challenges for implementing significant organizational changes. The HR Manager emphasized that the current structure, with a high proportion of employee representatives, is unique compared to other European public broadcasters and may hinder necessary reforms due to financial constraints.

Overall, the interviews reveal a complex landscape for future development at the organization Slovenija. While there are robust mechanisms for employee participation, the institution faces significant challenges in balancing these with the need for effective management and organizational flexibility. The aging workforce and limited opportunities for younger employees further complicate the situation. Strategic efforts to enhance communication, foster collaboration, and adapt to legislative changes will be crucial for the institution's future success.

Summary

This case study focuses on Slovenia's national public broadcasting organization, which provides a wide range of radio, television, and multimedia services. Established in 1928 for radio and 1958 for television, the organization operates under a specific legal act to meet public service obligations. Headquartered in Ljubljana, it has regional centres in Koper and Maribor, and correspondents globally. The organization employs over 2,000 workers, including journalists, technical staff, and administrative personnel.

The organization operates three national and four regional radio stations, and two national and two

regional TV programs, including specialized content for various ethnic communities. Approximately 73 % of its funding comes from television license fees, with additional support from the state and other sources. The organization is committed to quality and innovation, continuously upgrading its technology and expanding its multimedia offerings. It also contributes to the cultural landscape with its symphony orchestra, big band, and choirs.

Trade unions and works councils play a crucial role in representing employees and ensuring their rights. The primary unions include the Slovene Association of Journalists and the Trade Union of Journalists of Slovenia. These unions advocate for staff rights, particularly in response to programming and management changes. The works council facilitates worker participation in decision-making, ensuring that employee perspectives are integrated into organizational strategy.

The interviews with the Vice president of the Works Council, the President of the Trade Union, and the HR Manager provide insights into the institution's internal dynamics and labour relations. The President of the Works Council, with the organization since 1995, emphasized the importance of collective action in addressing institutional issues. The President of the Trade Union, a journalist with 25 years of experience, leads the coordination of two journalists' unions and has been active in union activities for many years. The HR Manager, with 32 years at the organization, has held various roles and brings extensive leadership experience.

Labor relations face significant challenges, including conflicts among unions, employee dissatisfaction due to rising living costs and stagnant wages, and an aging workforce. The institution's status as a public sector entity complicates its ability to address these issues effectively. Improved cooperation among unions, better management of employee expectations, and strategic initiatives to attract and retain younger talent are needed.

Direct employee participation is facilitated through worker assemblies and direct interactions. Recent legislative changes increased the number of employee representatives on the program council, enhancing employee influence in decision-making. However, the effectiveness of these mechanisms depends on the persistence and courage of the groups involved. The HR Manager noted that while the participatory system encourages dialogue, it can also hinder necessary organizational changes. The future development of the organization involves balancing robust employee participation with effective management and organizational flexibility. The aging workforce and limited opportunities for younger employees further complicate the situation. Strategic efforts to enhance communication, foster collaboration, and adapt to legislative changes will be crucial for the institution's future success.

COMPANY CHARACTERISTICS	Slovenia's national public broadcasting organization, providing radio, television, and multimedia services. Established in 1928 for radio and 1958 for television, operating under a specific legal act to meet public service obligations.
	Located in Ljubljana, with regional centers in Koper and Maribor, and correspondents globally.
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS	High level of unionization.
	Active trade unions and works councils representing employee interests. Primary unions include the Slovene Association of Journalists and the Trade Union of Journalists of Slovenia. Also, workers representatives in the supervisory board

	Collective agreement at the sectoral and organizational level.
DIRECT WORKER PARTICIPATION	<p>Structure: Worker assemblies and direct interactions facilitate participation. Recent legislative changes increased employee representatives on the program council.</p> <p>Communication: Monthly meetings with management representatives to discuss various topics. Employees have the right to receive answers regarding their status or work processes.</p> <p>Union Role: Unions negotiate working conditions, handle legal matters, and ensure payment of overtime. They also address content-related pressures and censorship demands.</p>
THE ROLE OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN DIRECT WORKER PARTICIPATION	<p>Collaboration: Works council and unions work alongside management to address workplace policies, employee welfare, and operational changes.</p> <p>Support: Unions provide legal protection and support for members, particularly students and freelancers who lack such protections.</p> <p>Engagement Initiatives: Annual RTV awards for achievements, recognizing outstanding contributions from employees. Financial incentives included.</p> <p>Challenges: Fear of retaliation and lengthy legal processes deter full exercise of participatory rights.</p>
DIFFICULTIES	<p>Employee Dissatisfaction: Due to rising living costs, inflation, and stagnant wages.</p> <p>Aging Workforce: Limited opportunities for younger employees and students, leading to precarious working conditions.</p>
IMPACTS	<p>On Workers: Conditions and well-being affected by economic pressures and an aging workforce.</p> <p>On the Organization: Performance impacted by conflicts among unions and the need for strategic initiatives to attract and retain younger talent.</p> <p>On Innovation: Efforts to engage employees and encourage innovation are ongoing, with a focus on recognizing outstanding contributions.</p>
FUTURE PROSPECTS	Sustainability: Balancing robust employee participation with effective management and organizational flexibility. Strategic efforts to enhance communication, foster collaboration, and adapt to legislative changes will be crucial for future success.