Direct Democracy in Slovakia

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3rd Conference

of the Network for Direct Democracy in Europe

Bratislava, Slovakia, November 15 - 17, 2002
Presentation Outlook

1. Where are we now (map)
2. Slovakia Basics
3. Direct Democracy
4. Referendum
5. Agora
6. Confidence opinion poll
7. Agora Manifesto
8. Agora Goals
9. Agora Principles
10. Success ?
Slovakia in Europe
Slovakia Basics

- Population: 5,379,455
- Area: 48,845 sq km
- Capital: Bratislava
- Nationalities: Slovak 85.8%, Hungarian 9.6%, Gypsies
- Religion: Roman Catholic 68.9%, Greek Catholic 4.1%, Lutheran 6.9%, Calvinist 2%
- Political System: Republic (since 1993)
DIRECT DEMOCRACY

- Public assembly of all citizens is allowed on municipal level (Agora).
- Popular initiative exists on national, regional and local levels.
- Referendum (on each level) is obligatory by law or facultative on other important issues of public interest.
- Facultative referendum is based on citizens’ initiative or decision of representations:
  - The results of referendum (each level) are valid if more than 50 % of eligible voters participated in it and if the decision was endorsed by more than 50 % of the participants in the referendum.
- There have been several unsuccessful attempts on national level. Collapsed on low participation.
- New referendum on EU membership anticipated next year. Threshold?
REFERENDUM

**National level**
Facultative referendums are allowed if requested by a petition of citizens (350,000 citizens) or by a parliament.

**Regional level**
Facultative referendums are allowed if requested by a petition of citizens (30%) or by a regional council (representation).

**Local level**
Citizen initiated referendums are provided for by law with 20% thresholds.
Civic Association in Support of Direct Democracy
## TRUST OPINION POLL

May 5, 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full trust</th>
<th>Rather trust</th>
<th>Trust</th>
<th>Rather distrust</th>
<th>Distrust at all</th>
<th>Distrust</th>
<th>Do not know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>President</strong></td>
<td>10,9</td>
<td>39,0</td>
<td>49,9</td>
<td>31,8</td>
<td>14,3</td>
<td>46,1</td>
<td>4,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Government</strong></td>
<td>2,2</td>
<td>17,9</td>
<td>20,1</td>
<td>39,1</td>
<td>37,7</td>
<td>76,8</td>
<td>3,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliament</strong></td>
<td>1,0</td>
<td>12,8</td>
<td>13,8</td>
<td>44,5</td>
<td>36,8</td>
<td>81,3</td>
<td>4,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Army</strong></td>
<td>9,6</td>
<td>35,7</td>
<td>45,3</td>
<td>27,2</td>
<td>16,5</td>
<td>43,7</td>
<td>11,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Police</strong></td>
<td>3,0</td>
<td>21,2</td>
<td>24,2</td>
<td>39,3</td>
<td>32,7</td>
<td>72,0</td>
<td>3,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Law-Court Prosecution</strong></td>
<td>2,8</td>
<td>17,2</td>
<td>20,0</td>
<td>37,3</td>
<td>34,7</td>
<td>72,0</td>
<td>8,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Church</strong></td>
<td>18,2</td>
<td>32,0</td>
<td>50,2</td>
<td>18,7</td>
<td>22,2</td>
<td>40,9</td>
<td>8,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trade Union</strong></td>
<td>2,9</td>
<td>17,3</td>
<td>20,2</td>
<td>25,9</td>
<td>32,4</td>
<td>58,3</td>
<td>21,5</td>
</tr>
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</table>
A common trust in possibility of resurrection of the citizen confidence in public administration has sprung in Slovakia after November 1989. Growing disbelief and apathy has been replaced with joy and willingness to create the more acceptable society that we can identify as our home. It was only ten years enough to return to the high lack of confidence of common people to elected representatives. Nobody knows which member of the parliament is representing me, interests of my village, birthplace or region. The parliament is a place of quarrels, struggles for more and more power and tenures according to political parties decisions and lobbyist priorities. For the time being, who would care about old preferential votes for this or that candidate? The so-called national party panels make the decisions, without looking at the interests of the electorate. A citizen would have to govern directly, similarly as it was in ancient Greece, where all of the full-fledged citizens meet in the square the Agora to make their decisions. Without any elected person. Nevertheless, because it is not possible to call all of the citizens at once to one place for practical reasons, let us then make our elected representatives at least more responsible to us, their electors. Political parties and movements are repeatedly offering magical solutions, always with the same results, making politicians the winners and citizens only the losers. While THEY will master democracy, let us try to force THEM to slow down and to compel if only partially to transparency and accountability in relations to Slovakia, its communities, regions and constituency and also to Europe. Let establish direct supervision of their activities and subordinate them to their real bosses, the citizens. Members of parliament do not even have a chance to behave in a better way than they do, in the presently existing scheme.

Therefore, to all citizens that care about their surrounding life, we have opened the way to create a system with confidence in public administration, a system, where a citizen will not lose interest of himself and the future.

June 2000
AGORA GOALS

- Reduce number of parliament members in the National Council of the Slovak Republic to 100. Establish the second chamber of parliament, created through majority voting system without direct activity of political parties and movements by election of representatives directly responsible their constituent regions.

- I. Chamber with 50 members, elected with using proportion-voting system according to their political membership
- II. Chamber with 50 members, directly elected persons from higher regional units with using majority-voting system

- Establish governmental system with justice and transparency guaranty
AGORA PRINCIPLES

- Cooperation with all public institutions /political parties and movements, state administration, local self-government, NGO/
- Following strategy of optimism, positive attitude, not to be involved in specific and governmental issues
- Initiate public discussions
- Receive civic support of legislative initiatives before elections
- Implement the goals into election program of political subjects
- Initiate creation of NGO with intention to lobby for decentralization and more effectiveness in public administration in national parliament
1. After two years of our work on the Project „Civic Society Direct Democracy Enforcement“ majority of political parties has accepted necessity to change election system and many of them are in favor of bicameral structure of parliament.

2. We have established national network of local grassroots’ activists.

3. What we are missing is real confidence that pre-election promises of the new administration will true.

4. Broad public awareness campaign will be necessary to not allow forgetting election programs.

5. NDDIE?