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Slovenia

Slovenian trade unions propose referendum to overturn the new government's anti-social policies



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- News from around the world -

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The parliamentary elections held in early 2026 in Slovenia resulted in a narrow majority for the right, thereby enabling the formation of a radical conservative government. This government wasted no time in taking steps to undermine the welfare state. [1]

The Slovenian Constitution (Article 90) provides for the right to a repeal referendum initiated by the people. This allows civil society to compel the government to organise a referendum aimed at repealing a law passed by Parliament. There must be 2,500 petitioners. They then have one month to collect at least 40,000 signatures (just over 2 per cent of registered voters). The result of the referendum is binding, subject to two conditions: that the 'no' vote secures an absolute majority, and that 20 per cent of voters have cast their ballots.

It is this mechanism that the Slovenian trade unions have decided to set in motion. The president of the Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia [Zveza svobodnih sindikatov Slovenije; ZSSS] stated on this matter:

We oppose the adoption, without proper social dialogue and under the guise of intervention or emergency, of significant systemic changes that undermine the foundations of the state, the pension, health, education and social protection systems, as well as labour relations. We oppose the worsening of job insecurity and the facilitation of unfair competition in various sectors.

The government attempted to have the referendum initiative annulled, but the Constitutional Court upheld the trade unions' initiative, and a campaign in favour of consulting the public through referendums has begun. Since 1 September, the trade unions and left-wing groups have been working to collect the 40,000 signatures required. There is a very good chance that the campaign will succeed, which could call into question the legitimacy of the current government, or even its survival.

Slovenia is not the only European country to allow civil society to force the organisation of repeal referendums. This provision also exists in the Italian constitution. In 2011, three repeal referendums targeted the privatisation of water, the return to nuclear power and the immunity granted to Silvio Berlusconi. They were won by the initiators.

The right to a repeal referendum is an important democratic demand that should be championed everywhere. This is particularly true in the current climate of rising authoritarianism, exemplified in particular by the tendency to force through attacks on pension systems.

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PS:

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[\[1\]](#) Image: ZSSS logo.