

Strikes in 1998-2002

Slovenian Economic Mirror

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Number² of strikes³ in Slovenia in 1998-2002 according to AFTUS sectoral member unions

Sectoral member union – industry	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002 ¹	Total
financial organisations	1	0	0	0	0	1
catering and tourism	1	1	0	1	0	3
construction	6	2	3	2	3	16
chemical, rubber and non-metal	2	1	0	0	0	3
agriculture and food production	1	2	0	0	1	4
metal and electro-industry	6	8	6	7	8	35
wood-processing	4	4	3	2	1	14
crafts	1	1	3	0	1	6
transport and communications	2	0	0	0	0	2
textiles and leather-processing	10	3	3	3	4	23
retail	0	0	0	1	1	2
fire fighting	0	1	1	0	0	2
TOTAL	34	23	19	16	19	111

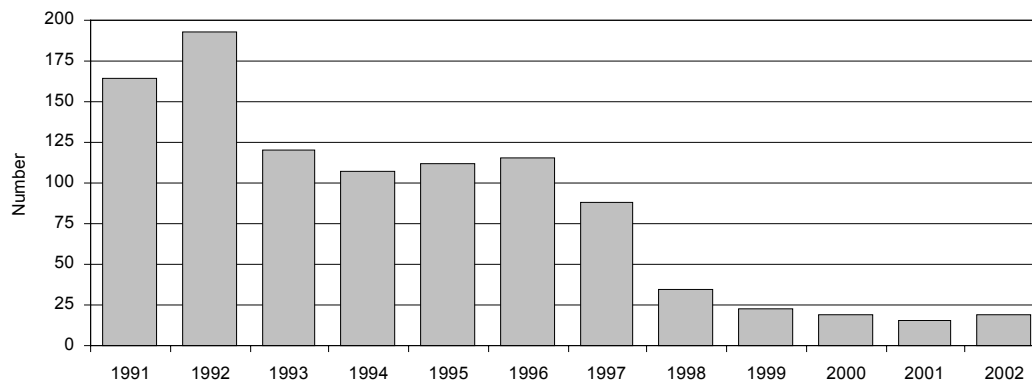
Source of data: Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia (Vrhovec P.: Stavkovno gibanje v ZSSS. Ljubljana, 2003);

Notes: ¹figures cover the period from 1 January to 7 November 2002; ²the number excludes general, sectoral and occupational strikes organised by other trade unions; ³a strike is any deliberate stoppage of work.

In 1993, the International Conference of Labour Statisticians, taking place under the auspices of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), adopted a resolution setting out uniform definitions for **collecting statistical data** related to labour disputes. This resolution has not been put into practice in Slovenia so the collection of data on strikes is not regulated. Data are collected practically without any concepts, definitions or methodologies for collection, compilation and publication. One of the consequences is that the data are not internationally comparable (see SEM 9/2000: 15). They are also incomplete because they do not include all strikes.

Only the **Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia (AFTUS)** collects and analyses data for its **own use**, however, they only cover strikes organised by the AFTUS member sectoral trade unions in individual companies. The criticism of these data is not addressed to the AFTUS because data on all strikes and other industrial actions should be collected by a government institution for the needs of society as a whole. The ILO resolution states that **each country should develop a comprehensive programme of statistics on strikes**, lockouts and, where relevant, other actions caused by labour disputes in order to provide an adequate statistical base for various users. By putting this resolution into practice, the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs would establish a reliable, permanent and complete database on all industrial actions (all forms of collective action taken by workers against employers in pursuit of their claims or grievances, including strikes, protests, demonstrations etc) for their own needs as well as the needs of the social partners, researches, research institutes, universities and students. This would, in turn, improve and encourage the research of industrial relations in Slovenia. Further, various **European institutions and organisations** – the European Commission, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions and, in particular, the European Industrial Relations Observatory on-line (EIRO, <http://www.eiro.eurofound.ie/>) – **are demanding more information and analyses** on strikes and other industrial actions in Slovenia. After 1 May 2004, when Slovenia becomes an EU member, demand for this information will grow further.

Graph: Number of strikes in the Republic of Slovenia in 1991-2002



Source of data: AFTUS. Note: see tables.

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The **deficiency of the existing data** is, first, that they are **collected without any concept or definition** as regards criteria for the inclusion of a strike into data, e.g. the duration of a strike, the number of workers involved, classification of data according to the standard classification of activities etc. Further, the ILO resolution states that the statistical base should cover the whole country and all industries and sectors of the economy and that it should be compiled in a way that is harmonised with other economic and social statistics. The existing data also fail to meet this criterion.

Data given in the tables and graph **do not show how many strikes were organised in a particular sector or sectors**. Instead, they only show how many strikes were organised by a particular sectoral trade union, a member of the AFTUS, having members in the given sector. Hence, data do not include strikes in the public service sectors (education, health, railways etc) where strikes were mainly organised at the sectoral or occupational level. Data do not include all strikes organised in the private service sectors either (banking, transport etc). The AFTUS has few members in these sectors and other trade unions prevail. As a result, the given data are a reliable indicator of strike trends for production industries only. Even here, they are not reliable for presenting an absolute number of strikes because the whole pulp and paper industry is excluded, as are strikes organised by other small trade unions.

Moreover, **these data do not include general strikes and strikes organised at the level of sectors** (railways etc) or professions (doctors and dentists etc) but only strikes organised within individual companies. This means that data on the number of working hours lost are completely unreliable for certain years. Similarly, it is impossible to calculate the number of working hours lost per employee. This is the only appropriate indicator of the volume of strikes which can be used in international and inter-sectoral comparisons, because it takes into account the number of employees in the given country or sector.

The **AFTUS** organised the first general strike in 1994, when the government froze wages, which lasted four hours. The next general strike, lasting one hour, was organised when the Chamber of Commerce and Industry denounced the General Collective Agreement for the Private Sector (see SEM 8/1996: 13). On 25 February 2004, seven industrial sectoral trade unions, members of the AFTUS, carried out a one-hour general warning strike in which almost 120,000 workers took part. This means that almost 120,000 working hours were lost due to this strike. Taking into account that only 54,009 working hours were lost through strikes organised by the AFTUS in individual companies in 2000, the exclusion of this strike from the data for 2004 would make a significant difference between data and the actual situation. The inclusion of data on the biggest strikes can also show a change in trade unions' strike strategy. Most of all, this would make the assessment of loss caused by strikes more reliable.

The graph shows that the **main wave of strikes hit Slovenia** in 1991-1997, when over 100 strikes were organised each year, except in 1997 (see SEM 3/2000: 17). The number of strikes slumped in 1998 and continued to decline up until 2002. According to the table above, the biggest number of strikes was organised in enterprises of the metal and electro-industry, followed by textiles and leather-processing industries, construction and the wood-processing industry. The biggest number of workers involved in strikes was seen in textiles and leather-processing industries. While the number of strikes fell in 2000 and 2002, they became much longer. They lasted an average of 100 working hours, almost twice as long as in 1998.

The main cause of strikes was unpaid wages. According to the table below, the main cause (out of several ones) was wage arrears for the previous month. This was followed by wage arrears for the previous two months. In many cases, the striking workers proposed that the management file for bankruptcy after they had not received pay for several months. The classification of causes will also have to be aligned with international standards, i.e. the ILO resolution, which draws a distinction between two wider categories: strikes and disputes arising from collective bargaining and disputes not arising from collective bargaining. A more detailed classification is made within these two categories: pay, working conditions, employment, trade union issues etc.

Number of strikes according to the main cause of strike, 1998-2002

The main cause or demand	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002 ¹	Total	% share
Wage arrears for the previous month	8	8	5	9	5	35	31.5
Wage arrears for the previous 2 months	9	4	3	3	7	26	23.4
Wage arrears for the previous 3 months	5	4	2	0	2	13	11.7
Wage arrears for more than 3 months	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.9
Late payment of wages according to date given in the collective agreement	0	1	1	1	1	4	3.6
Low wages, demand for wage rise	1	0	0	2	0	3	2.7
Wage payment not in line with the collective agreement	2	3	0	0	1	6	5.4
Holiday bonus not paid	5	0	2	1	0	8	7.2
Demand for resignation of the director or management	1	0	1	0	0	2	1.8
Other	3	2	5	0	3	13	11.8
Total	34	23	19	16	19	111	100.0

Source of data: Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia (Vrhovec P.: Stavkovno gibanje v ZSSS. Ljubljana, 2003);

Note: ¹ figures cover the period from 1 January to 7 November 2002.