

## 5. Ljubljana in the system of settlements and centres

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The capital city Ljubljana is the largest urban settlement and town (NUTS 7) in Slovenia with approximately 258.873 (2002) inhabitants followed by Maribor (92.284), Celje (37.547) and Kranj (35.237). In addition there are also ten towns with more than 10.000 inhabitants and twenty towns with more than 5000 inhabitants. According to definition of central places in Slovenia, Ljubljana is the macro-regional centre, together with Maribor. Ljubljana is also the centre of the largest urban municipality (NUTS 5), administrative unit (NUTS 4) and statistical region (NUTS 3) in Slovenia. Ljubljana has also the largest functional urban area, due to travel to work, education, and shopping, covering almost two-thirds of the Slovenian territory. According to the Strategy of Spatial Development of Slovenia (2004) Ljubljana is the national centre of international importance, together with Maribor and the city cluster (conurbation) Koper – Izola - Piran. Despite being one of the smallest capital cities in Europe, Ljubljana is the only city in the cross-border potential European region Alpe-Adria-Pannonia with the status of MEGA – one of the 76 Metropolitan European Growth Areas in Europe 29 countries (ESPON 1.1.1., 2005).

### 5.1. Settlements, urban settlements, towns, urban areas

One of the specific characteristics of Slovenia is the settlement system based on approximately 6000 settlements of which only 156 are consider as urban settlements. Only 58 urban settlements have the official status of a town.

*Table 7: Population of the largest towns in Slovenia.\**

Census years	1900	1931	1948	1953	1961	1971	1981	1991	2002**
<b>Total urban population (%) in Slovenia</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>22.7</b>	<b>26.9</b>	<b>29.1</b>	<b>33.2</b>	<b>38.7</b>	<b>48.9</b>	<b>50.5</b>	<b>49.0</b>
<b>Ljubljana</b>	45.017	79.391	98.914	113.666	135.806	173.853	224.817	267.008	258.873
<b>Maribor</b>	31.337	46.251	62.677	70.815	82.560	96.895	106.113	103.961	92.284
<b>Celje</b>	9471	13.576	16.083	18.549	22.424	31.305	33.033	40.710	37.547
<b>Kranj</b>	5220	8308	15.981	17.827	21.477	27.211	33.520	36.456	35.237
<b>Koper</b>	8230	8035	7381	6666	10.512	17.116	23.581	24.704	23.285
<b>Novo mesto</b>	2750	4173	4218	5134	6885	9668	19.741	22.333	22.368

*Notes: \*population of urban settlements; \*\*rate of urbanisation (49%) in year 2002 was based on calculations of the same number of urban settlements (182) as in year 1991.*

*Source: Pichler-Milanović, 2005a; SURS (various years).*

### 5.1.1. »Urban settlements«

For the purposes of Census 1981 the Statistical Office of RS had defined 224 urban settlements. At the next Census (1991) only 182 settlements (3 % of the total number of settlements) were defined as urban settlements based on their size, settlement morphology, density and employment structure, comprising half of all inhabitants in Slovenia. In 1991 the official level of urbanisation was 50.5 % (i.e. population living in urban settlements). According to the latest Census (2002) and the same number of urban settlements as in year 1991 (182), the urbanisation rate declined to 49.0 %, as a consequence of the suburbanisation process.<sup>3</sup> Rather low rate of urbanisation in Slovenia need to be taken in comparison with the low number of agriculture population. In 1991 less than 10 % of inhabitants in Slovenia were employed in agriculture, while in year 2004 this number was even less than 3 %. The difference means that Slovenia is a country with one of the highest proportion of deagrared population in Europe - i.e. population living in non-urban (rural) settlements but employed in industry and services in (near-by) urban (employment) centres and daily commuting to work.

This number of urban settlements (182) did not take into account suburban settlements of larger (urban) settlements. The criteria according to which suburban settlements could be defined as urban settlements were not known. In order to prepare the new list of urban settlements the Statistical Office of RS decided to use the method that is entirely based on statistical data. The new list of urban settlements and settlements in urban areas was prepared in year 2003 and used exclusively for statistical surveys and analysis. The indicators are joined into four groups of criteria for determining urban settlements: number of inhabitants, morphology (population density, built-up areas), functions (number of jobs, daily migrants, transport connections, services), structural (e.g. number of farms).

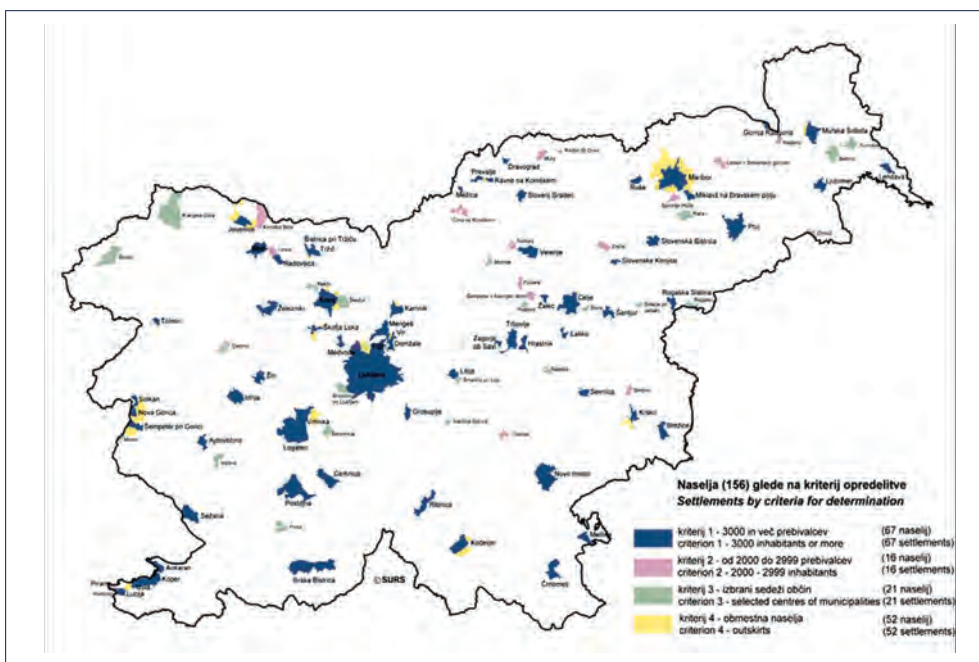
»Urban area« represents the central urban settlement that gives urban areas its name, including all neighbouring (suburban) settlements that are gradually becoming part of it in spatial terms. These suburban settlements are connected with the central urban settlement by built up areas, roads, public parks, and other elements of urban structure. Therefore four types of urban settlements were defined:

- settlements with more than 3000 inhabitants (67 settlements);
- settlements between 2000 - 3000 inhabitants, and a surplus of jobs over the number of employed persons (16 settlements);
- centres of municipalities with at least 1400 inhabitants and a surplus of jobs over the number of employed persons (21 settlements); and
- a combination of criteria for determining (sub)urban settlements that form urban areas (52 settlements). Therefore the list of »urban settlements« with »settlements in urban areas« thus includes total of 156 urban settlements and 104 urban areas. Urban areas only come to be near settlements with over 5000 inhabitants. According to this new classification of urban settlements, the urbanisation rate in Slovenia in year 2002 was 50.8 %, showing the importance of small (non)urban settlements, effected by intensive suburbanisation process in 1990s (Pavlin, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> In settlements with less than 500 inhabitants (92 % of all settlements) live 34 % while in 15 settlements (towns) with more than 10.000 inhabitants live 32 % respectively of all inhabitants in Slovenia.

From the original list of 224 urban settlements in year 1981, the present list of 156 urban settlements does not include 46 settlements, while not taking into account 58 settlements that have merged with central urban settlements because of the administrative changes in 1980s in order to form 182 urban settlements in year 1991. The new list of 156 urban settlements (2003) includes 40 settlements that were not determined at the Census 1991.

Figure 14: Urban settlements in Slovenia.



Source: SURS.

## 5.1.2. Administrative definition of »towns«

According to the Local Self-government Act (1994) a "town is a larger urban settlement that in terms of population size, economic structure, density and historical development differs from other settlements". A town has a population of more than 3000 inhabitants. A settlement obtains town status by decision of the National Assembly of RS. As regards settlements that have already been given a »town« status in accordance with regulation valid when the status was given, the National Assembly can only confirmed their status ("historic towns"). Therefore according to the Official Journal of Republic of Slovenia (no. 22/00 and no. 122/05) there are 51 towns in Slovenia. Some municipal councils declared another 7 towns. There are also some (urban) settlements with no status of a »towns« despite fulfilment of criteria defined by the Local Self-government Act. Therefore there are 58 urban settlements in Slovenia with the status of »towns«. There are no official definitions as yet for medium-sized cities or small towns. Therefore Ljubljana is the largest urban settlement and a town (247.772 inhabitants) and urban area (249.442 inhabitants) in the system of settlements in Slovenia.

## 5.2. Network of »central places«

First studies of central places in Slovenia date in late 1960s, when Vrišer and Kokole defined central places in Slovenia, their hierarchy and gravitation influence. In 1971 Kokole prepared a new thorough research on central places in Slovenia. The next important milestone in analysing central places in Slovenia was in 1987, when Vrišer prepared a new categorization of central places in Slovenia. He used almost the same indicators as in his previous research. He defined 600 central places in seven hierarchical levels. Vrišer prepared a new analysis of central places also in 1994 using the same methodology as in the year of 1987. He defined 612 central places (Černe at al, 2007).

Table 8: Research on central places in Slovenia and position of Ljubljana in the hierarchy of central places.

Author	Hierarchy of central places in Slovenia	Position of Ljubljana
V. Kokole (1968)	8 levels (cities only; separate categorization for industrial and rural centres)	the highest position
I. Vrišer (1968)	7 levels (265 central places): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• local centres</li> <li>• municipal centres</li> <li>• county centres</li> <li>• district centres</li> <li>• sub-regional centres</li> <li>• regional centres</li> <li>- national centres</li> </ul>	6 <sup>th</sup> level (regional centre), but the highest in Slovenia (classification was prepared for the territory of Yugoslavia)
V. Kokole (1971)	9 levels (534 central places): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sub-central village</li> <li>• central village</li> <li>• rural centre</li> <li>• 7 hierarchical levels of towns</li> </ul>	the highest position (9 <sup>th</sup> level)
I. Vrišer (1987)	7 levels (600 central places): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• local centres</li> <li>• rural and industrial centres</li> <li>• communal centres</li> <li>• county centres</li> <li>• district centres</li> <li>• provincial centre</li> <li>• republican centre</li> </ul>	the highest position (7 <sup>th</sup> – republican centre)
I. Vrišer (1994)	7 levels (612 central places): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• local centres</li> <li>• rural and industrial centres</li> <li>• ex-communal centres</li> <li>• county centres</li> <li>• district centres</li> <li>• provincial centre</li> <li>• republican centre</li> </ul>	the highest position (7 <sup>th</sup> – republican centre)

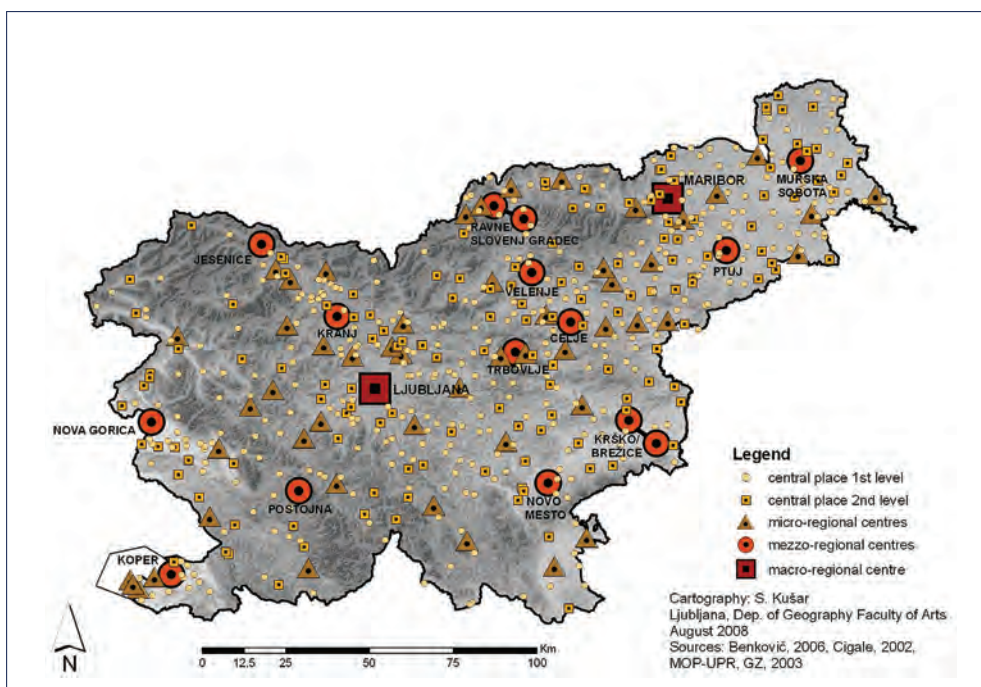
Source: Černe at al, 2007.

The latest research on central places in Slovenia was conducted by Cigale (2002) and Benkovič-Krašovec (2005). Cigale prepared the central-place relationship study in 1999. On the basis of questionnaires and statistical data about provision of central places with different services he distinguished two macro-regional centres (Ljubljana, Maribor), 17 mezzo-regional centres and 79 micro-regional centres. Besides that there are also numerous smaller, less important centres on the lower hierarchical levels.

When comparing his results with central-place hierarchy of Vrišer from 1987, he pointed out numerous changes in the central-place relationship, especially on the micro-regional level, where due to the growing importance of some of smaller centres the network of micro-regional central places has become denser. The importance of smaller settlements, which are municipal centres now, has been enlarged, as well (Cigale, 2002). Cigale did not highlight the role of Ljubljana as the capital city and the centre of (inter)national importance.

Cigale (2002) discussed only the role of central places of higher ranks, while Benkovič-Krašovec prepared a thorough study of central places at lower levels. According to presence of selected services in settlements she defined 358 central places of the first level and 132 settlements of the second level (Černe et al, 2007).

Figure 15: Central places in Slovenia in the middle of the first decade of the 21st century.



A comparison of different categorization of central places in Slovenia shows, that in the system of 6000 settlements only 10 % of settlements have some role from the aspect of distribution of central place activities of which Ljubljana has the highest position. Ljubljana was put on the highest position in central place hierarchy, because it was the largest settlement in Slovenia with many economic functions and because Ljubljana was

the republican centre. After the independence of Slovenia in year 1991 Ljubljana became also the national capital and hence increased its role in the system of central places in Slovenia. The gravitation influence of Ljubljana as a macro-regional centre increased as well spreading now across two-thirds of Slovenia. It is interesting, that gravitation influence of Ljubljana can be partly noticed also in the most north-eastern part of Slovenia (i.e. Pomurje region), which is spatially closer to Maribor, the second largest city (Cigale, 2002). The gravitation influence of Ljubljana within the bordering NUTS 3 regions of the neighbouring countries of Italy, Austria, Hungary and Croatia has not been studied, yet.

## 5.3 Local government reforms

### 5.3.1. NUTS 5: »urban municipalities«

According to the Local Self-government Act (1994) the number of municipalities (NUTS 5) has been constantly increasing from 62 communes in year 1994 to 147-192-193-210 municipalities in year 2006. The process of decentralisation has not been completed as yet. The Local Self-government Act defines »urban municipality« as: densely populated settlement(s) of a unique territory inter-linked with daily migrations of population. The town is granted a status of urban municipality with at least 20.000 inhabitants and 15.000 jobs of which more than half are in service sectors and represent geographic, economic and cultural centre of the functional urban area. The status of urban municipality needs to be confirmed by the National Assembly of RS after local (municipal) referendum. Therefore among 210 NUTS 5 municipalities (2006) in Slovenia, only 11 NUTS 5 municipalities have the status of urban municipalities: Celje, Koper, Kranj, Ljubljana, Maribor, Murska Sobota, Nova Gorica, Novo mesto, Ptuj, Slovenj Gradec, and Velenje. Ljubljana is the largest urban municipality in Slovenia with (279.653 inhabitants in 2010). It is also worth mentioning that half of the new NUTS 5 municipalities (106 of 210) in Slovenia have no urban settlements as their municipal centres.

Local government reforms in year 1994 also transformed the city of Ljubljana administratively and spatially. The official city territory of Ljubljana was reduced from 902 to 272 km<sup>2</sup>. The administrative division of the city agglomeration into five communes was abolished with establishment of the City Municipality of Ljubljana and 9 surrounding NUTS 5 municipalities. In 1995 the City Municipality of Ljubljana became the largest local authority in Slovenia. The City Municipality of Ljubljana is divided in 17 local city districts. The City Municipality of Ljubljana has directly elected Mayor (with four deputy mayors appointed by the Mayor), the City Council (45 directly elected local politicians), City Management Authority (with more than 20 different departments and offices), 17 local city districts, and other legislative, management or advisory bodies ([www.ljubljana.si](http://www.ljubljana.si)).

### 5.3.2. NUTS 4: administrative units

In Slovenia there are also 58 territorial administrative units (NUTS 4) that serve as outposts of the state administration. These NUTS 4 areas are equivalent to former larger communes (or NUTS 5) with the exception of Ljubljana (former five communes) that became one NUTS 4 after year 1994. Between years 1955 - 1995 in Slovenia, former communes (or current NUTS 4 areas) represented basic local units for implementation of polycentric

development policies (spatial and regional) since 1970s onwards. Today NUTS 4 areas are still important as local labour system, and therefore they can be considered as »micro-regions«. These administrative units perform tasks for all ministries. With respect to organization, the employees of these administrative units report to the ministry responsible for administration, while the ministries monitor the operations of administrative units, each for their own field of work. The NUTS 4 Ljubljana is the largest administrative unit in Slovenia with 323.200 inhabitants covering the territory of 902 km<sup>2</sup>.

### 5.3.3. NUTS 3: »statistical« and »development« regions

Until year 2009 no regional NUTS 3 administrative level as the second level of local self-governance has been established in Slovenia, due to long political negotiations about their number and size. However, Slovenia has been using 12 »statistical« regions as NUTS 3 spatial division of the national territory. The basis for determination of statistical NUTS 3 regions was "12 areas of inter-municipal cooperation" which originated from academic findings in 1970s<sup>4</sup>. Statistical NUTS 3 regions in Slovenia are incorporated into the European Union law through the European system of NUTS regions.

Ljubljana is a regional centre of Osrednjeslovenska (Central Slovenian) statistical NUTS 3 region. Osrednjeslovenska statistical NUTS 3 region is the largest region in Slovenia by population size with 488.364 inhabitants (2002) or 24.9 % of total Slovenian population but not by the size of its territory (12.6 % of Slovenian territory). Osrednjeslovenska statistical region is often called now "Ljubljana urban region", especially after establishment of the Regional Development Agency of Ljubljana Urban Region in year 2002. The city of Ljubljana (NUTS 7) contributes 53 % of the population to Osrednjeslovenska statistical NUTS 3 region.

Although current 12 NUTS 3 statistical regions in Slovenia are originally used mainly for collection and analysis of statistical data, they are far more important now as they are used also as »development« regions in which instruments of regional policy at the national and EU level are being implemented. However, Ljubljana and Osrednjeslovenska NUTS 3 region do not enjoy any special position in the framework of Slovenian regional policy and planning.

Recently, there had been intensive power put into the transformation of the NUTS 3 (statistical or development) regions into pokrajine (provinces) as the second level of the local self-governance. In year 2007 the Government of the Republic of Slovenia proposed 13 new administrative regions (provinces). This proposal was a result of intensive scientific efforts taking place already in 1990s, public discussions and political bargaining process. The proposed map of the NUTS 3 provinces was partly similar to current statistical or development NUTS 3 regions, but with some important modifications. Osrednjeslovenska NUTS 3 province would be composed of the former Osrednjeslovenska statistical region and Zasavska statistical region together with north-eastern part of Notranjsko-kraška statistical region and western part of statistical region Jugovzhodna Slovenija (e.g. Kočevsko and Ribniško area). The municipality of Ljubljana (NUTS 5) would be its own NUTS 3 province as the only urban NUTS 5 municipality in Slovenia having also the status of the NUTS 3 province. This proposal was evaluated by the citizens of Slovenia on the referendum in June 2008.

<sup>4</sup> The basis for creation of 12 areas of "inter-municipal cooperation" was Vrišer's classification of 12 "functional regions" (Vrišer, 1997).

Referendum was successful in most parts of Slovenia except in Obalno-kraška statistical region and in Osrednjeslovenska statistical (Ljubljana) region. On the basis of the referendum results and additional scientific and public evaluation the Government of RS prepared new proposal with 13 NUTS 3 provinces. The proposed Osrednjeslovenska NUTS 3 province was divided into two parts and with the urban municipality of Ljubljana as its own NUTS 3 province.

Unfortunately, there was no political will to complete the process of regionalisation therefore Slovenia still has not introduced the administrative NUTS 3 regions (provinces) as the second level of self-governance. Ljubljana therefore does not enjoy the status of its own province.

### 5.3.4. NUTS 2: European “cohesion” regions

NUTS 2 macro-regions are very important in the EU regional policy, because they are territorial units for which financial aid in the framework of cohesion policy can be received. Until year 2008 the whole Slovenia was considered as one NUTS 2 (European) region. From January 2008 there are two NUTS 2 European (or »cohesion«) regions: West Slovenia (consisting of 4 more developed NUTS 3 statistical (or development) regions: Osrednjeslovenska region with Ljubljana, Gorenjska, Obalno-kraška and Goriška regions) and East Slovenia (consisting of 8 less developed NUTS 3 statistical or development regions: Jugovzhodna Slovenija, Zasavska, Spodnjeposavska, Savinjska, Koroška, Podravska, Pomurska and Notranjsko-kraška regions respectively). However, this has not influenced the implementation of the cohesion policy in Slovenia during the 2007 - 2013 programming period, because Slovenia is eligible for the status of “convergent region” in the EU until 2013. Later two cohesion NUTS 2 macro-regions will be more important, because it is expected that the more developed West Slovenia NUTS 2 region would not be eligible for special financial assistance from the EU Structural Funds anymore. Therefore, two NUTS 2 macro-regions in Slovenia are now important mainly for statistical reasons, but without political or administrative representations.

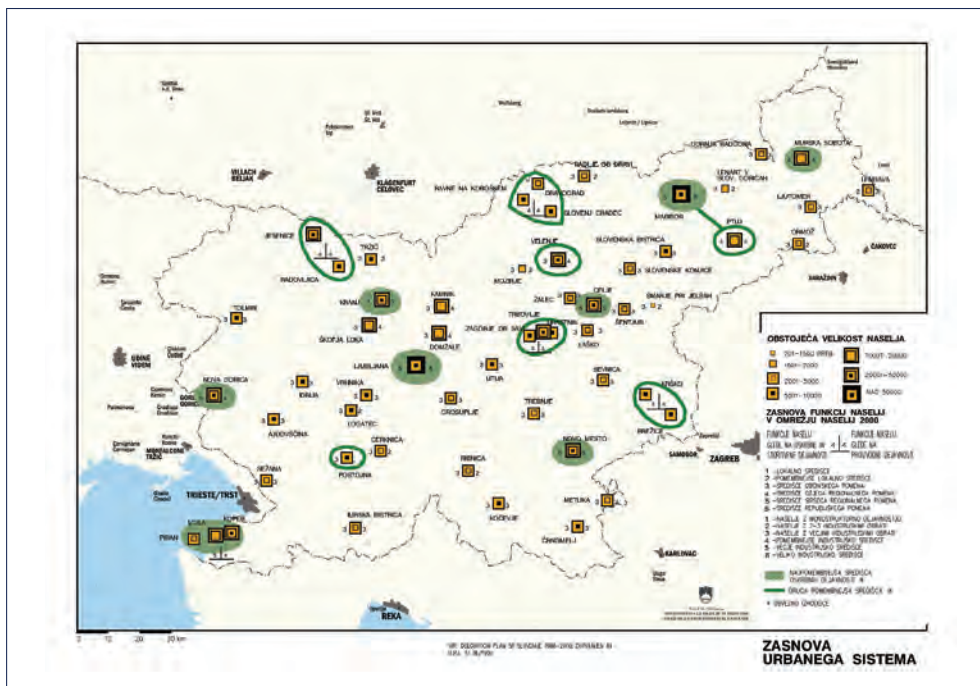
## 5.4. Polycentric urban and regional development concepts

According to the implementation of the hierarchy of central places defined by Vrišer in 1980s, seven levels of central places were designed for spatial planning and regional policy purposes: local centres (1 - 4 lower level) and regional centres (5 - 7 higher level) in the Long-term Development Plan of Slovenia 1986 - 2000 adopted in year 1986 as the comprehensive strategy for social, economic, spatial, regional and environmental development of the Republic of Slovenia within the Yugoslav Federation. This development plan was formulated according to the concept of polycentric development taking in consideration specificities of different (geographical) areas (»planning regions«) and the network of regional and local centres (58 towns) with different population size and functions. The most important 12 regional centres were: Ljubljana, Maribor, Celje, Kranj, Novo mesto, Nova Gorica, Murska Sobota, Postojna, and several city clusters (conurbations)



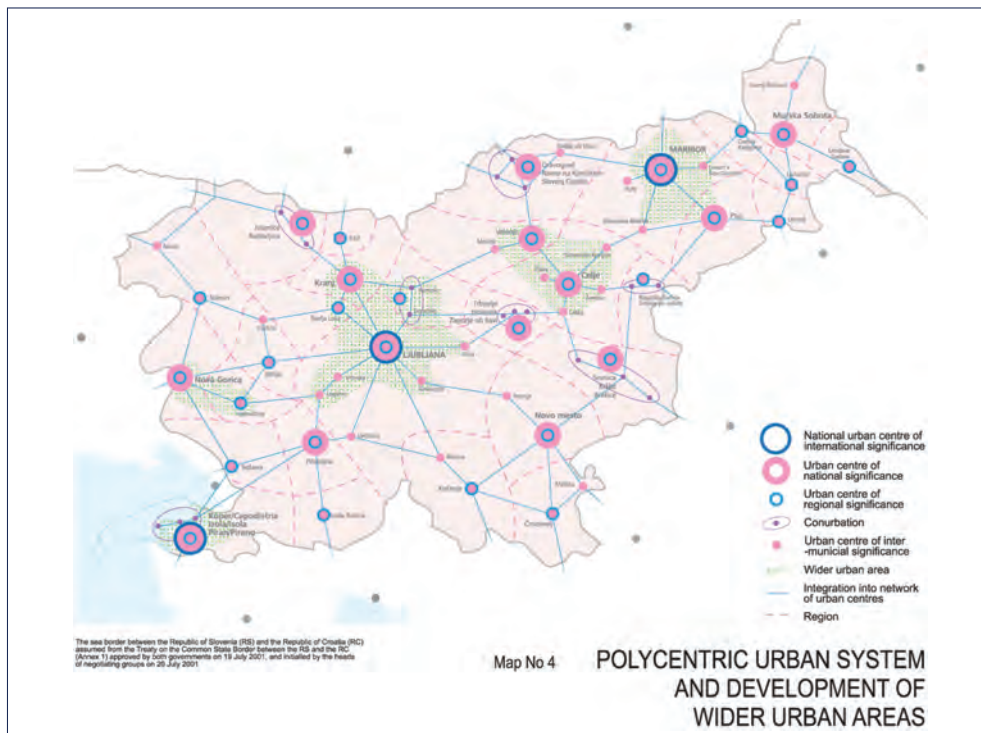
such as: Koper – Izola - Piran, Trbovje – Zagorje - Hrastnik, Slovenj Gradec - Ravne na Koroškem - Dravograd, Krško - Brežice; Jesenice - Radovljica, with their gravitation areas (i.e. »planning regions«) covering the whole territory of Slovenia.

Figure 16: Long term development plan of SRS 1986-2000: Urban network of 15 regional centres and 43 local centres with city clusters (conurbations).



After independence of Slovenia in year 1991 and the local government reforms taking place since year 1994 with transformation of former communes (62) to new NUTS 5 municipalities, this urban hierarchy has been slightly transformed in the Spatial Development Strategy of Slovenia (2004) defining »centres of (inter)national, regional, intermunicipal importance« - together 51 »urban centres« with 64 towns and other urban settlements, taking into consideration also urban conurbations (city clusters) at all levels. The most important regional centres (or the »centres of national importance«) in SPRS (2004) are: Ljubljana, Maribor, conurbation Koper – Izola - Piran, Celje, Kranj, Novo mesto, Nova Gorica, Murska Sobota, Velenje, Postojna, Ptuj, and conurbations: Slovenj Gradec - Ravne na Koroškem - Dravograd, Jesenice – Radovljica - (Bled), Zagorje – Trbovlje - Hrastnik, Krško – Brežice - (Sevnica) with their (15) potential gravitation zones (i.e. functional urban areas) that are not territorially specified and overlap between each other. Ljubljana, Maribor and conurbation Koper – Izola - Piran are also named as »centres of international importance« due to their population size, the status of a capital city of Ljubljana, the importance of the port of Koper for Central Europe, and geographical location of urban conurbation Koper – Izola - Piran near the borders with Italy and Croatia, and the second largest city of Maribor near the border with Austria, close to Hungary and Croatia.

Figure 17: Polycentric urban system and development of wider urban areas.



Notes: 51 »urban centres« = 43 towns+ 8 urban conurbations (21 towns and urban settlements) = 64 towns and urban settlements:

- 3 »centres of international importance«: Ljubljana + Maribor + Coastal conurbation (Koper – Izola - Piran);
- 12 »centres of national importance«: 8 towns (Murska Sobota, Ptuj, Celje, Velenje, Kranj, Novo mesto, Postojna, Nova Gorica) + 4 urban conurbations (Jesenice – Radovljica - (Bled); Zagorje – Trbovlje - Hrastnik; Slovenj Gradec – Ravne - Dravograd; Brežice – Krško - (Sevnica);
- 16 »centres of regional importance«: 13 towns +3 urban conurbations (Domžale - Kamnik; Šmarje pri Jelšah - Rogaška Slatina; Tržič - Bistrica);
- 20 »centres of inter-municipal importance«.

Source: Spatial Development Strategy of Slovenia (2004).

These 15 »centres of national importance« are also regional centres in Slovenia. Twelve of them are also centres of statistical NUTS 3 regions. Towns of Ptuj and Velenje in eastern Slovenia were in year 2008 proposed by the Government of RS as centres of two new administrative NUTS 3 provinces. Only one »centre of national importance« - city cluster (conurbation) Jesenice – Radovljica - (Bled) in Gorenjska statistical NUTS 3 region has not been officially proposed as the centre of new administrative NUTS 3 province.

In the polycentric development concepts from 1980s, the most important urban centres in Slovenia (e.g. regional centres) with their gravitation areas (planning regions) were already highlighted. The new polycentric urban development concept (as before) emphasise the improved (equal) accessibility to public goods – administration, jobs, services and knowledge, that are located in these urban centres which are also important transportation nodes in Slovenia, and in Central Europe. Therefore polycentric development of (3-12-16-20) regional and local (urban) centres corresponds to the balanced regional development concept and development infrastructure along main European corridors V and X. During the preparation of the (revised) polycentric development concept in the Strategy of Spatial Development of Slovenia (2004), the importance of urban agglomerations, city clusters and their morphological and functional urban areas are being envisaged by the experts and policy makers, with potentials for cross-border cooperation taking in consideration improved cross-border mobility, accessibility, institutional links and networks, and cross-border, inter-regional and trans-national cooperation, and Slovenia's accession to the EU in year 2004.

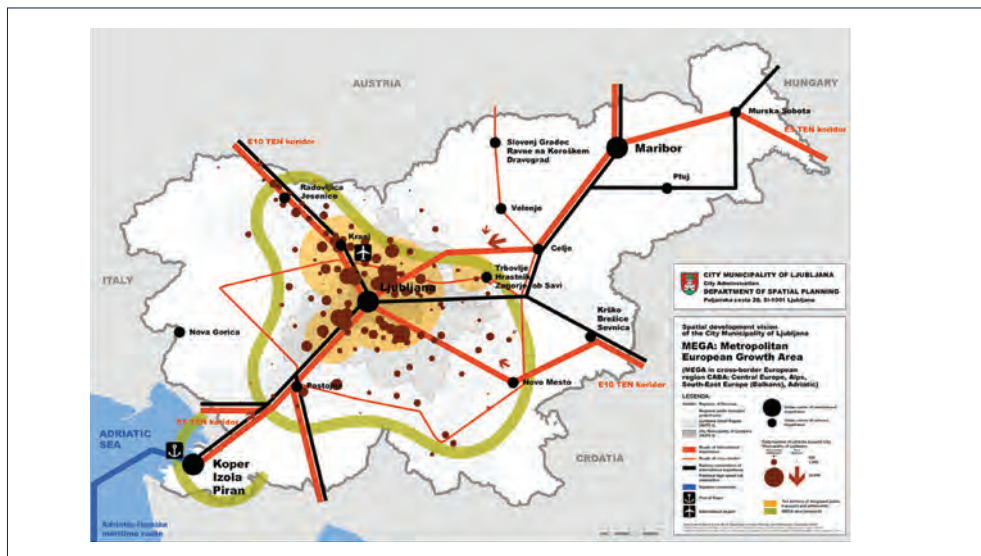
## 5.5. Functional urban areas

Most jobs and economic activities in Slovenia are concentrated in the urban areas of Ljubljana, Maribor, Celje, Coastal conurbation Koper – Izola - Piran, followed by Kranj, Novo mesto, Velenje, Nova Gorica. Therefore travel-to-work migrations are the most intensive towards these cities. Most intensive daily commuting occurs in the gravitation areas of the largest employment (regional) centres such as Ljubljana, Kranj, Maribor, Celje, Velenje, Krško - Brežice, Koper – Izola - Piran, Novo mesto, Nova Gorica, Ptuj, Slovenj Gradec - Ravne na Koroškem, Murska Sobota. The Strategy of Spatial Development of Slovenia (2004) promotes 15 »centers of national importance« (e.g. regional centres), including four city clusters, and their gravitation and commuting zones as potential functional urban areas, even though they are not territorially defined. Twelve of these 15 centres of national importance are also centres of current 12 NUTS 3 (statistical or development) regions.

The project ESPON 1.1.1 (2005): Potentials for polycentric development in Europe was taking in consideration functional urban areas (FUA), as travel-to-work areas of the main urban centres according to the common criteria implemented for approximately 1600 FUA in 29 European countries. The FUA consists of an urban core and the surrounding area that is economically integrated with the centre, and represents the (sub)regional labour market area.<sup>5</sup> The analysis of FUA in Slovenia was prepared firstly according to the proposed methodology without any special modifications. As a result six FUA of European importance were selected: Ljubljana (with Kranj), Maribor (with Ptuj), Celje (with Velenje), Novo mesto, Koper – Izola - Piran and Nova Gorica. According to the weighted results of ESPON 1.1.1. indicators, Ljubljana FUA is the only one urban area in Slovenia with the status of "weak" MEGA (Metropolitan European Growth Area) as one of 76 MEGAs in Europe. Due to the sea port function of international importance Koper – Izola - Piran FUA was given the status of transnational/national FUA while Maribor (with Ptuj), Celje (with Velenje), Novo mesto, Nova Gorica are identified as regional/local FUA.

<sup>5</sup> The quantitative criteria are described in the following way: "In countries with more than 10 million inhabitants, a FUA is defined as having an urban core of at least 15.000 inhabitants and over 50.000 in total population. For smaller countries, a FUA should have an urban core of at least 15.000 inhabitants and more than 0.5% of the national population, as well as having functions of national or regional importance.

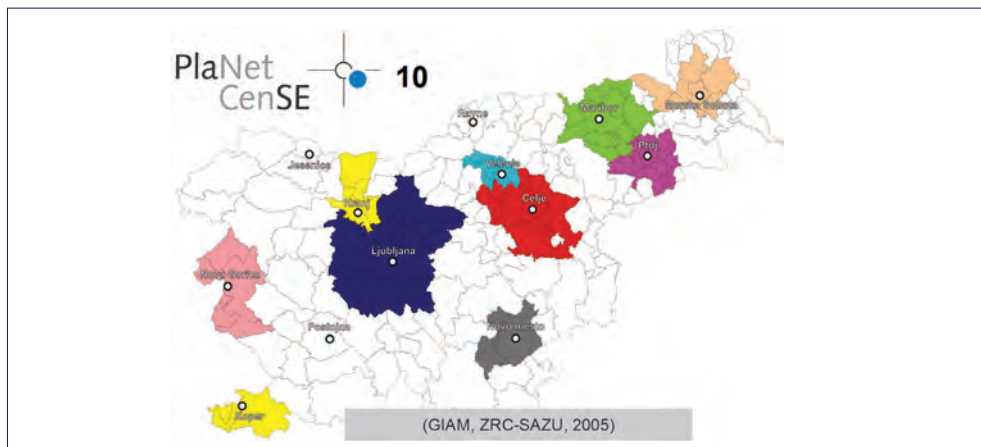
Figure 18: Ljubljana as MEGA.



Source: City Municipality of Ljubljana, Department for Urban Development, 2007.

As it is important for Slovenia to remain focused on small towns and middle-sized cities, and for the purpose of implementation of the INTERREG IIIB project PLANET CENSE in Slovenia, the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning of RS (re)defined 10 FUA in year 2006 showing the most important regional centres – Ljubljana, Maribor, Koper – Izola - Piran, Celje, Kranj, Velenje, Novo mesto, Nova Gorica, Ptuj, Murska Sobota. Despite lower criteria for identification of other urban centers, the project did not take in consideration four city clusters of national importance (as one urban centre) with the common travel-to-work and gravitation areas. Therefore it is more likely to talk about 14 FUA of European importance in Slovenia, including MEGA Ljubljana that are also important urban nodes in a polycentric and balanced development of Slovenia.

Figure 19: Functional urban areas in Slovenia.



Sources: ESPON 1.1.1, 2005; Planet CenSE, 2006.

Most recently »Strategy for Regional Polycentric Urban System in Central-Eastern Europe Economic Integration Zone« (RePUS 2007) project implemented under the framework of the EU programme INTERREG III B CADSES addressed the problems of a more balanced, sustainable and polycentric urban system of middle-sized cities and small towns, that could contribute to strengthening of emerging Potential Economic Integrating Zone (PEIZ) in Central and Eastern Europe. According to the RePUS methodology implemented in Austria, Italy, Hungary, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia, 42 local functional urban areas (as local labour systems) and 17 regional functional urban areas (as regional labour systems) were identified in Slovenia. According to the selected RePUS indicators the urban hierarchy in Slovenia is dominated by the position and role of the capital city region of Ljubljana, followed by the urban area of the middle-size city of Maribor, Celje, Kranj, city cluster Koper-Izola-Piran, Velenje, Nova Gorica, Novo mesto. Ljubljana FUA is even larger than Osrednjaslovenska NUTS 3 statistical region (or Ljubljana urban region).

## 5.6. The role of Ljubljana in cross-border (potential) integration zones

The Republic of Slovenia borders four countries: Italy (the common border length is 232 km), Austria (330 km), Hungary (102 km) and Croatia (670 km), and the Adriatic Sea (coastal length is 46.6 km). Geographically, Slovenia is located at the cross-roads of Alpine, Pannonian and Mediterranean regions. The capital city of Ljubljana is located in central Slovenia and metropolitan area covers almost one-third of Slovenian territory. Taking in consideration the close-by location of cities of a similar size to Ljubljana and other regional centres in Slovenia such as Trieste, Gorizia, Udine (Italy), Graz, Villach, Klagenfurt (Austria), Rijeka, Pula, Karlovac, Varaždin (Croatia), and comparative results of European projects the main urban areas in Slovenia are able to compete and cooperate on the equal basis with other near-by urban areas across the national border. Ljubljana and Zagreb are the only capital cities in this cross-border area. Zagreb is the largest city in this cross-border area, but Croatia is not the member of the EU, therefore the position and potential role of Ljubljana is even more important in this city network (Pichler-Milanović, 2005b).

Cross-border links and networks between Italy, Austria, Slovenia and Croatia have been developed since 1960s. Yugoslav citizens did not need travel visas for Austria, Italy and many other European countries. In the past Slovenia and Croatia were both part of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy until the First World War and Yugoslavia between years 1918 - 1991. After independence of Slovenia and Croatia in year 1991 the official border crossings were put in place, but no visa regime introduced. The citizens of both countries could cross the border only with the identity card. From January 2008 the border between Slovenia and Croatia becomes external EU border with tight regulatory (»Schengen«) requirements.

The Alps-Adriatic Working Community (Alpe - Adria) was established in year 1978 as an important step towards a new future for Europe. The main task of this cross-border and inter-regional association is joint informative expert treatment and co-ordination of issues in the interest of the current members – countries, counties, and regions from: Austria (Burgenland, Carinthia, Upper Austria, Styria), Italy (Friuli – Venezia - Giulia, Lombardia, Veneto), Hungary (Baranya, Somogy, Vas, Zala), Croatia and Slovenia. The Alps - Adriatic

territory covers a total area of 190.423 km<sup>2</sup> and is home to about 26 million inhabitants. The Alps-Adriatic Working Community has no legal status or central administration, and costs of activities are borne by each member state itself. The most important projects have been concerned with regional development, transport infrastructure, environment, and promotion of tourism. The members of the Alps - Adriatic Working Community have come together at a hot spot of European integration. The socio-cultural contacts in this area are of great importance for the success of European integration. Shared history and past experience serve to prove that future-oriented cooperation is essential in this part of Europe. Slovenia has been always very active in many activities of the Alps - Adriatic Working Community ([www.alpe-adria.org](http://www.alpe-adria.org)).

Taking in consideration Slovenia's geo-strategic location as the crossroad between Central Europe, the Mediterranean, and South-East Europe, the Spatial Development Strategy of Slovenia (2004) also envisage the active role of Slovenia in European links and networks – through integration in European-wide infrastructure corridors (TEN), especially corridors V and X, and participation in different European urban networks - cross-border, inter-regional and trans-national associations, etc. Special emphasis is given to development of stronger links between Slovenia and cross-border cities and regions in neighbouring countries of Italy, Austria, Hungary and Croatia, especially through joint programmes and projects funded by EU structural, cohesion and regional funds. The city of Ljubljana could play an important role as being the only capital city of the EU member state in this cross-border area vis-à-vis Trieste, Udine, Graz, or Zagreb. At the same time enhanced competitiveness and sustainability of small towns and medium-sizes cities in the border areas of Slovenia, could be strengthened with further development of tourism and cultural activities through cooperation with cities of the similar size and function across the borders in Italy, Austria, Croatia and Hungary.

Recently the name of Alpe – Adria - Pannonia is associated with the INTERREG III B project MATRIOSCA (2006 - 2008), aimed at proposing the institutional structure for the implementation of common projects in this cross-border area, located at the interface of old and new EU member states that involves regions from Austria, Italy, Hungary and Slovenia, as well as from Croatia, as a EU candidate country ([www.matriosca.org](http://www.matriosca.org)). Alpe – Adria - Pannonia has a possibility of becoming a new potential EU region in Central Europe, similar to CENTROPE cross-border EU region between: Vienna (A) – Bratislava (SK) – Brno (CZ) –Gyor (HU).<sup>6</sup> The capital city of Ljubljana is according to some scenarios, seen as the centre of this new potential EU region due to central location of Ljubljana and Slovenia in the Alpe – Adria - Pannonia, improvements in transport infrastructure, better accessibility, fully-fledged EU membership. For historical and political reasons, the development axis towards South-East Europe is also in the strategic interest of Slovenia, capable of taking development initiative in this part of Europe. Other potential cross-border inter-regional links and connections are between the North Adriatic ports Koper (SI) – Trieste (IT) – Rijeka (CRO) that could become an important transportation node able to compete with the largest Mediterranean and North European ports. Maribor (together with towns of Ptuj and Murska Sobota) could take an active part in polycentric urban network with the nearby Graz (A), Varaždin - Čakovec (CRO), and towns in Hungary (Zalaegerszeg/Szombathely).

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<sup>6</sup> MATRIOSCA Alpe-Adria-Pannonia: NUTS 2: Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, Veneto (IT) /NUTS 2: Burgenland, Carinthia (AT) /NUTS 1: SLOVENIA /NUTS 3: Baranya, Győr-Moson-Sopron, Somogy, Tolna, Vas, Zala (HU) /Istra, Koprivnica-Križevci, Varaždin (HR) / NUTS 2: Vojvodina (SR) is the new potential cross-border EU region as part of the Alps-Adriatic Working Community ([www.matriosca.net](http://www.matriosca.net)).

Figure 20: Position of Ljubljana in the southeastern part of Alpe-Adria-Pannonia.

