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THE TRANSCRIPT OF PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS AND THE ANSWERS OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA, JANEZ JANŠA, AT THE 67th EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Ljubljana, 22 March 2021

At the 67th extraordinary session of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia, Prime Minister Janez Janša answered oral parliamentary questions raised by Franc Jurša (Desus), Zmago Jelinčič Plemeniti (SNS), Tina Heferle (LMŠ) and Janja Sluga (SMC).

**FRANC JURŠA (DeSUS Deputy Group):** Thank you for the floor, Mr President. Good afternoon, Prime Minister, fellow deputies. In the past year we were all forced to primarily fight against the coronavirus epidemic and mitigate its consequences; however, despite the hard times, a lot has already been done for pensioners in this period. I can say with great pleasure that in the last year, together, we have done the following, at least in the context of improving the economic situation: coronavirus-related solidarity bonus was paid twice, holiday pay for pensioners was higher than the year before last, the pension legislation was amended several times, and we continued remedying the setback in pension indexation, which originates from the period of the previous economic crisis.

The extraordinary indexation last December decreased the setback due to non-indexation by as much as 5% in total. The deficit due to the economic crisis currently amounts to 3.6%. Some time ago, more exactly in September 2020, you announced that this year, if the economic forecast was favourable, this deficit or setback in the payment of pensions would also be eliminated. With regard to this I would like to know whether pensioners can actually expect this indexation this year and, of course, when?

My second question regards the drafting or discussion of the already proposed and long awaited act governing long-term care. During Tomaž Gantar's term as minister the proposal for the act was in the final drafting stage, with the public discussion being concluded, which means that it was just before the discussion at the Government level. Therefore I am asking you, Mr Prime Minister, what is the timeline for the adoption of the proposed act and whether you and the new minister intend to change the concept of the last text of the proposal? If the answer is yes, I would like to know in which direction. Thank you in advance for your answers.

**PRIME MINISTER JANEZ JANŠA:** Yes, thank you for both questions. This is true, last year the generation of pensioners experienced extensive corrections with regard to remedying the injustice and eliminating the setback in pension indexation, as well as with regard to special bonuses during the coronavirus epidemic, which is logical, considering that this generation suffered the most due to the epidemic and this is, I can say, normal and in accordance with common sense, and, of course, an act of solidarity of our Government or any government.

This setback in the elimination of this imbalance, which was eliminated last year, is actually greater, that is to say this eliminated part is greater as before in ten years, I believe. It is possible to catch up to what remains in the next two years, certainly, if the economic situation is as forecast, or; if it is somewhat better, maybe already this year, bearing in mind that the current forecasts regarding economic growth are between 4% and 5%, which is promising for more or less making up for the fall in the last year this year; but I believe that we could be even better and in this case we could double the commitment from the coalition agreement, which is to eliminate 1.5% of the gap per year, and thus approach the final goal. Now, at his moment, it is probably too early for definite answers, considering that the speed of recovery is to a great extent dependent on the moment when we are able to say that we have overcome the epidemic. So, we believe, that the final answer could be given probably in May; but, according to the forecasts of the competent institutions concerning the economic growth for this year, it is almost 100% possible to realise the commitments under the coalition agreement. As regards the long-term care, the act has been under consideration and in coordination for some time and will certainly be supplemented. The inter-ministerial coordination has been carried out, as well as the coordination within the Economic and Social Council. As regards the things that need to be done or the measures that have been lacking to date, there are no great doubts in relation to long-term care of the elderly; what is weighed in the additional coordination and gives rise to additional considerations are the methods of financing, the implementation of this act. If it was only the question of adopting the act, we can adopt it in two months; however, when the act is adopted, the funds for its implementation need to be allocated, and not only for the next year, but permanently; we are talking about the figure amounting to almost half a billion euro in the short term and more than 700 million euro in five or six years. In view of this, it is very important to ensure some additional sources. One of such indirect sources is the national demographic fund; thus the enforcement of this act is also to a great extent a prerequisite for ensuring another basis for the long-term care having solid foundations. In any case, the act will be before the deputies in time to enter into force on 1 January next year, which is the goal; it is difficult to say if this will be in spring or at the beginning of autumn, as this is financially the most difficult project in term of this coalition.

**FRANC JURŠA (DeSUS):** Thank you. I think that we are all well aware that there are currently 59 public institutions and 43 concessionaires operating in Slovenia and that they provide 19,000 places for the elderly. One-fifth of the population is older than 65, which today is 425,000 people. It is forecast that in 10 years there will be 10 thousand more of us, if we are alive of course. The average age, I have to emphasise this, in these care homes is 87 years and as many as 75 residents need the most demanding nursing care. The homes are actually falling apart at the seams and at this moment we would need 1000 beds for those who urgently need residential care. 12 thousand people are already on the waiting list. The Government has not built one home in 10, 15 years, everything is focused on the concessionaires. This Government also will allocate 285 beds to them. Of course, this is all well and good in an emergency. However, there is another problem. The second problem is that the concessionaires usually have higher prices, but this is not all. Public institutions also do not have uniform prices. So, Mr Prime Minister, I would like to know, whether you will order or participate in the modification of these prices, so that they are at least to some extent harmonised.

**PRIME MINISTER JANEZ JANŠA:** Thank you. This problem has been known for a long time and also the non-solving of this problem; it has been known for a long time and I will not repeat these issues. Now, for the future, the Government has tried to ensure from all sources, or from all sources available in the last and this year, as much funding as possible for this issue. These are the funds available through various European programmes or sources and also from the national budget. In the next years, Slovenia will, on the basis of what has already been signed and approved, on the basis of what is now planned, for example, within the national plan for resilience and recovery for the next period, thousands of capacities for the residential care of the elderly will be built in Slovenia. This is practically also the only way that will have an impact on more bearable prices or cheaper services, because where the demand is considerably greater than supply, there is always the problem of expenses, even if attempts are made to solve this administratively. There is definitely some room for manoeuvre here, as regards the standards on which the price depends; but overall, we will be able to deal with the problem on a healthy and permanent or sustainable basis when there is enough capacities. And this is our priority. We are working on this. Soon the figures from the plan for resilience and recovery will be known, when the plan is approved. Furthermore, it is possible to provide additional capacities within various so-called innovative programmes, which are additionally financed by the European Union and exist, which already exist in various local communities. We are all aware of this problem and many municipalities have already had programmes ready but there were not sufficient funds for realisation and we are now providing these funds.

**FRANC JURŠA (DeSUS):** Mr Prime Minister, you mentioned two dates. I have written down these two dates in bold. I am telling you, that before these dates I will again ask you the same questions. And considering that I have been a deputy for some time, I will not request a public discussion of this topic because it is not possible to adopt any decisions or any conclusions at such discussion. Thank you.

**ZMAGO JELINČIČ PLEMENITI (SNS):** Thank you. Mr Prime Minister, 50 countries around the world have also accepted the Russian vaccine Sputnik 5 for vaccination. In essence, this is an identical, the same vaccine as AstraZeneca. In fact, I would say that AstraZeneca is actually a kind of licence of Sputnik 5. In Britain they started to use it because they do not believe in American products of Pfeizer and Moderna, because these vaccines involve genetic modification of ribonucleic acid and the effect of these vaccines is not known. This genetic modification of the body actually goes so far that many things can happen, a myriad of side effects. For example, in India effects are known, the side effects of vaccination, where mass infertility in women occurred; furthermore, the effectiveness of this vaccine is falling rapidly, so that after the age of 70 the effectiveness is around 20%, at the age of 80 10% and at 90 around 5% and side effects pose a much greater threat than this 20% to 5% protection against the virus. In short, I would like to know how far has our Government come in talks for the use of the Russian vaccine, as, for example, Austrian Chancellor Kurz is also advocating for Austria to use it, and I think that this vaccine could also be produced by the Slovenian pharmaceutical industry in Krka, if Krka's director was not mainly interested in making profit. Slovenia must stand on its own feet and above all take into account the scientific findings and not the private wishes of America to make money. I like it that our Government is using AstraZeneca vaccine, which is smart, but why would we not also accept Sputnik 5 vaccine. After all, this is one of the options and regardless of *[the signal for the end of the discussion]* the fact that Europe, the European Union will somehow demand some vaccination, green vaccination passports, I think that it would be reasonable also at the European Union level to raise this question and to also tell the European Union that it is not all in the profit, which also goes to the pockets of some people at EMA, but that the most important is the health of people. *[the signal for the end of the discussion]* Mine. This is all I have to say for now. Thank you.

**PRIME MINISTER JANEZ JANŠA:** Yes, thank you. Let me start off by saying that all the vaccines we are currently using in Slovenia or in the EU have been tested and have passed all the necessary clinical trials and are therefore safe. Additionally, all cases of unwanted side effects are promptly analysed and studied, while, under intense media scrutiny, many countries have even suspended vaccinations until things are cleared up. There has been no scientific proof that would show the difference in efficacy or side effects between the AstraZeneca vaccine and other vaccines, which are based on a different technology. Regarding the Sputnik vaccine, I can say that it is undergoing a clinical trial at the European Medicines Agency. Slovenia, as a member of this agency, depends on EMA's results and findings regarding the use of vaccines as the consent of all national regulatory agencies is required for the final authorisation. This was also the reason that it took a little bit longer for the EMA to authorise the use of certain vaccines than was the case in, say, the UK or USA. There is a way to bypass this step, though. The national regulatory agency, namely, the Agency for Medicinal Products and Medical Devices of the Republic of Slovenia, could potentially authorise any vaccine, but would still have to follow the set procedure, which means that we would have to undertake clinical trials, as well as all other things and procedures, which take months or even years, ourselves and there is no theoretical possibility that our national agency could finalise these procedures faster than the EMA, where the procedure is already ongoing. Even if we had started sooner, even last year or even a year before that, we would not have been able to complete these trials sooner with the capacities at our disposal.

Of course, every country can decide to use a certain vaccine regardless of all the trials, regardless of all the rules, regardless of all the procedures, but, so far, no one decided to go down this path. For instance, Hungary, where the Sputnik vaccine was authorised, I think, had to amend its national legislation to also take into account the trials carried out in other countries and they themselves also began trials much earlier. And even in their case, some dilemmas remain. And even though Hungary took this step, the inoculations with the Sputnik vaccine have been sparse as the main problem still persists – there are simply not enough doses of this vaccine at our disposal. According to the data from the European Commission, 600 or even 800 million doses of the Sputnik vaccine have been sold on the world market to this moment, while only several ten million doses have actually been supplied. The Sputnik vaccine is facing the same problems as all others or even larger, namely the lack of production capacity. Even if Slovenia, alone, had carried out all the trials and authorised this vaccine, it is not clear when the first doses would have been delivered. Procurement process for this vaccine is relatively simple in comparison to e.g. Chinese vaccines, but, with the delivery dates as they are today, it would probably make no sense to do that at present.

Regarding the Slovenian pharmaceutical companies, Lek as well as Krka are participating in our efforts to ensure enough vaccines *[the signal for the end of the discussion]* are available, one of the options is also establishing their own production. However, none of these would help us stop the epidemic during the first half of the year, which is our priority.

By the end of the year, 16 or even more vaccines will be authorised according to the European Commission. Distribution and production capacities *[the signal for the end of the discussion]* will not be the issue any longer. The issue remains the first half of the year.

**ZMAGO JELINČIČ PLEMENITI (SNS):** Mr Prime Minister, it has been scientifically proven that there is a difference between the AstraZeneca and the Pfizer and the Pfizer's branch Moderna. I am speaking about the difference between the traditional vaccines and gene therapy – Pfizer and Moderna use gene therapy. This is actually Abbott's invention. They researched the influence of gene therapy in different cancer treatments and came to important conclusions and then Abbott decided to continue the research in 2010. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration authorised the development of this therapy until 2025, but some therapies for the treatment of prostate cancer and an exclusive RNA-based cancer therapy were already discovered and patented in 2016. And even though the FDA prohibited an immediate sale of the patents, Abbott sold the patents to Pfizer 14 days upon obtaining them. Pfizer then continued the research with regards to the gene manipulation of the human body *[the signal for the end of the discussion]* and, has come to this point now when they are treating COVID with gene therapy There are dangers, which remind me of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Plans in this direction were already made and thought out at the turn of the century and I am afraid that we are continuing down that road. We have to take care of the health of our own citizens, therefore, I think that the Slovenian regulatory agency *[the signal for the end of the discussion]* should give these issues more thought.

**PRIME MINISTER JANEZ JANŠA:** Look, around 50 million doses of different vaccines have already been used in Europe. The majority of these vaccines are based on mRNA technologies. With the vaccines, which you designated as unsafe and which have been trialled extensively, if we can call these vaccination operations that, there have been no negative side effects outside of those that became evident during the trials. After 50 million doses, these side effects should have already manifested. During the last months, we have been hearing about trusting science. This, however, is not only about trusting science. Practical repercussions are already known, therefore, we can also trust our own experience. If we add tens of millions of people vaccinated in the U.S., the Arab world, where the vaccination rate has been extraordinary, or, say, Israel, where they have almost finished their vaccination operation, to those 50 million vaccinated in Europe, we can ascertain that the consequences are in line with what has been anticipated. There have been no negative surprises outside of the anticipated side effects, which are relatively mild and manifest in only a small percentage of vaccinated people, while the key consequence of vaccination has been a positive one, namely the virus is not spreading anymore, the people are not dying or getting sick, and even if they do get sick, their condition does not require hospital treatment. I think what we can do is hope and keep our fingers crossed for the strengthening of the production capacities for the production of the authorised vaccines so that we receive as many doses as possible. We also hope that the new vaccines, which are undergoing clinical trials, will be tested and authorised as soon as possible, and produced in large quantities as we have to take into account that the virus mutates and that the vaccines that are effective today may no longer be effective in the autumn. All pharmacists are currently also working on the updated versions of vaccines, therefore, any forecasts regarding the sufficient supply and related topics are quite risky.

**ZMAGO JELINČIČ PLEMENITI (SNS):** Mr Prime Minister, do not get me wrong, I am not against vaccination, I am only against vaccination with gene therapy. Namely. The British take care of their own, the Russians take care of their own, the Chinese take care of their own, the Americans want to make money. Why has AstraZeneca received so much criticism regarding the side effects? Because of the money that is behind it all, of course, and it is not true that there are no side effects with the gene therapy. There are, and a lot of them, but they are not recorded, the data is kept secret and that is what worries me. We have to take care of our own. Slovenians, our numbers are dwindling, more and more newcomers are coming and intruding on our, I would say, territory, and gene therapy ...

**ZMAGO JELINČIČ PLEMENITI (SNS Deputy Group):** ... can also be another step towards the extinction of the Slovenian nation. That is why I am worried. This is why I think that a wider discussion in the National Assembly is necessary. Mr President of the National Assembly, I suggest that a discussion about this topic be put on the agenda for one of the next sessions.

Thank you.

**TINA HEFERLE (LMŠ):** Thank you, Mr President, for giving me the floor. Good afternoon everyone. Dear Mr Prime Minister, good afternoon. I will try to be as concise as possible not to waste my or your time. My question is therefore very exact. I would like to know why the Government of the Republic of Slovenia has not taken note of the two candidates selected for European Delegated Prosecutors to the present day. We know that Slovenia has been running late since 1 March when we missed our deadline for the appointment and, not insignificantly, the European Commissioner for Justice called on Slovenia to finally complete its national selection procedures as early as February, therefore, I do not want to discuss the two candidates, who have already been selected in the selection procedures. I do not want to speculate about the potential harm done to the reputation of the Republic of Slovenia in the EU by the Government not taking note of the candidates. I do not want to speculate as to whether the Government wants to use this delay to indirectly influence the role of prosecutors in Slovenia. Neither would I like to speculate as to whether this incident and delay in any way influence the rule of the law in our country.

Today, I would only like to know why the Government of the Republic of Slovenia has not yet taken note of the two selected candidates. We know that the State Prosecution Service Act stipulates the selection and notification procedure in a very concise and simple way. The State Prosecutorial Council carries out the selection procedure and assesses the professional competence and compliance with all conditions. Then, it notifies the Ministry of Justice of its selection by way of a proposal, after which the Ministry of Justice forwards this proposal for the Government to take note of it. It is not a complicated procedure.

In this case, the Government as a collective body is not a decision-maker, therefore, I would like to honestly find out what for, why, the Government has not yet taken note of the *[the signal for the end of the discussion]* selection procedure, even though we know that it would only take two minutes of a Government session to do so, if there were interest of course, to read the names of the candidates and add a general comment, e.g. the Government has taken note of the candidates. Dear Mr Prime Minister, my question was really precise and I truly hope that your answer will also be precise, for which I thank you in advance.

**PRIME MINISTER JANEZ JANŠA:** Yes, thank you. Well, first I would like to say that last year, I think, the Government appointed 15 prosecutors. In the last eight or nine years no Government has appointed more prosecutors within one year. As far as this particular case is concerned – the two prosecutors – thank you for the detailed description of the procedure, which in itself is rather unusual. Look, in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, abroad Slovenia is represented by the Government, not by the Judicial Council and not by the ministries, but by the Government. The case came to my attention in recent weeks, because it became a political issue and I asked some of my colleagues across Europe what the usual procedure is in their countries. Everywhere – everywhere – well, I haven't asked everyone, but those I did ask told me that it is the Government that decides on these proposals. But here, in our country, during the previous Government’s term of office or the one before that, an act was adopted under which the Government plays the role of a postman. The Judicial Council decides and then sends its decision to the Government and the Government should only take note without having any right to decide and forward the decision. Under the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia the Government of the Republic of Slovenia is not a postman. While we are considering this procedure and until we receive a clear answer to these formal questions, the Government will not take note of this matter and we are not running behind schedule. As of this date, eight countries among the 27 Member States of the European Union have completed the procedure. Slovenia is among the 19 countries who have not yet completed it. We are by no means running behind schedule and we will resolve the matter in a proper manner, in accordance with the Slovenian Constitution and also in accordance with the act in force which must be taken into consideration as long as it is such as it is and that act does not define a time limit within which the Government should take note of this matter.

**TINA HEFERLE (deputy group LMŠ):** Yes, thank you. I would lie if I said I did not expect such an answer. Well, I am glad that you are referring to the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, but I also believe that as the head of Government you know that the Government is also obliged to respect not only the Constitution but also the laws. And the State Prosecution Service Act clearly and in a very simple way prescribes the procedure that applies to the selection of candidates and the procedure of taking note at the Government level, as I already explained earlier. So Slovenia has no lack of laws in this regard and the comparison with other European countries from the procedural aspect is somehow inappropriate, because I am not interested in how other European countries regulate this issue; in our country the procedure is such that the Government takes note of the selection of these two European Delegated Prosecutors. You justify your approach by saying that other European countries – there are eight of them - are also behind schedule as regards the appointment; well, I was always taught that I should follow the example of those who are better than I am. But if a selection procedure is completed on time and the case is submitted to the Government of the Republic of Slovenia to take note of it, I would expect you, as the person in charge, who always likes to emphasise that the Constitution and the laws must be respected, to nevertheless take note in due time in accordance with the State Prosecution Service Act *[the signal for the end of the discussion]* . And it is not true that no damage has been done due to this delay; the two European Delegated Prosecutors should have been operational since 1st March, and today is 22nd March, which means that we are behind schedule. As for the politicisation of this issue – that is not our responsibility; we, the opposition, have drawn attention to the fact that the procedure is being delayed; in my opinion, this delay indicates *[the signal for the end of the discussion]* that you, Mr Prime Minister, wish to politicise this issue. Therefore, I would like to ask you once again, when will you take note of the two selected candidates?

**PRIME MINISTER JANEZ JANŠA:** I think, I have already answered this question. In continuation of this question, the deputy also failed to cite the article of the act which sets the time limit for the Government to take note. That means that the Government decides when to place the issue on the agenda. I have already told you that we will place the matter on the agenda after we have clarified these formal issues; however, it might also happen that we will propose an amendment to the act, because in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia the Slovenian Government does not play the role of a postman but represents the country abroad.

**TINA HEFERLE (LMŠ):** Yes, Mr Prime Minister, I certainly agree with you. Of course the act does not set a time limit in which you should take note of the selection. However, this is a very important new institution where a reasonable time limit in which the Government should take note of the selected candidates could be expected. As regards the formal issue you are stressing, the law is very clear. If you are talking about the Act amending the State Prosecution Service Act that lays down this procedure of taking note, my sincere hope is that you or your advisors are aware that the retroactive application cannot apply in Slovenia unless in very, very exceptional circumstances. And let me repeat here the position of the Ministry of Justice that we could hear the other day at the Committee on Justice session when addressing the Act amending the State Prosecution Service Act. With regard to these two candidates already selected for the European Delegated Prosecutor, the Ministry clearly stated that the selection process is over, so it can no longer be interfered with retroactively, with any change in the law, so it is up to you to take note of the selection. The sooner you do it, the sooner the prosecutors’ work can start, and the sooner we will meet all the conditions for the start of the European Public Prosecutor’s Office’s operations in Slovenia, which is, I believe, in our interests, in view of the fact that these two prosecutors will investigate criminal offences related to the EU funds. As we know, Slovenia is receiving quite a large sum at the moment.

In view of all the above, and also your introductory remarks, in which, Mr Prime Minister, you mentioned this appointment of public prosecutors, where, as we also know, some are still awaiting both appointment and promotion, I think it is extremely important for this National Assembly to discuss the Prosecutor's Office in general or \[the signal for the end of the discussion] , if I focus on my question, why it is important for the Government of Slovenia to promptly take note of the two selected candidates for European Delegated Prosecutor, or for us to discuss why the Government has not taken note of this to date. Is there any other background reason – according to you, Mr Prime Minister, the politicisation of the Prosecutor’s Office? As a legal expert \[the signal for the end of the discussion], I am sincerely concerned, so I believe such a discussion in the parliament will be extremely welcome.

**JANJA SLUGA (SMC):** Thank you. Last week marked a year since the present Government took office. During this time, it has operated in an extremely demanding crisis situation marked by the epidemic and all its dimensions and consequences. At stake were human lives, the security of vulnerable groups and, of course, the existence or maintenance of the state of the economy. The assessments of how well the Government has played the first half are, of course, different, as they usually are, and the same is true for the expectations of various stakeholders. We can agree that we have managed to maintain most jobs and keep the economy in good shape, which will be important for a speedy recovery in the coming months. Many measures were also socially oriented and targeted at vulnerable social groups. Although the macroeconomic picture is relatively encouraging, it is necessary to continue the efforts for the revitalisation of all social subsystems that have been significantly affected by the epidemiological crisis.

In view of this, I would like to know how you assess the Government's work over the past year and what are the key projects that the Government will focus on in the coming year in order to end this crisis as quickly as possible and, of course, reliably and efficiently.

**PRIME MINISTER JANEZ JANŠA:** Thank you for your question. Now, as I said in the answer to a similar parliamentary question at the beginning of the previous session, the Government has devoted about 80% of its time, resources and energy last year, the first year of the Government's mandate, to fighting the epidemic. Now, that in itself pretty well illustrates how much time has been left for the matters laid down in the coalition agreement. Still, we managed to keep up the pace.

Now, we have done what we could. Slovenia was not prepared for the epidemic. In 2017, a delegation of the World Health Organization visited Slovenia and prescribed a series of measures that should have been taken during peacetime, before the storm. Nothing was done. We are still investigating, examining whether anybody dealt with it at all. If the measures prescribed in 2017 had been implemented by Slovenia, the epidemic could haven been tackled much better. We have also done many things necessary for a more normal functioning of state subsystems, especially health care and long-term care, which has been mentioned earlier.

One of the things that probably, if we look at it objectively, surprised everyone, in a good way, is the reaction of the understaffed health care system, which was able to essentially increase its capacity by about ten times to treat patients with Covid-19 from spring to autumn last year. If we had not done this, and it really required additional efforts and, I will say, sacrifices elsewhere, then patients from Slovenia would have had to be transferred to other countries because of the severe second wave, as it happened in many countries, including countries such as the Netherlands, which was considered to have the best health care system before the crisis. The first year and all these challenges are something for us that we also take as a lesson and a warning. That is, we do not want to act like those in the 2017 report of the World Health Organization, and to believe that the sun will always shine and that the epidemic will not happen again. But we want to make Slovenia, and especially the health care system and other subsystems, resilient in the future. We have also proposed or set this as one of the priorities of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. That means this is also the European priority in the second half of the year. Despite the fact that this will take a lot of additional energy alongside the Presidency, we also strive to fulfil in the future the key commitments we made when we were forming the Government, a good year ago. These are to debureaucratise the state as much as possible, decentralise the state and ensure that the resources available more or less under the same conditions are available to those in Ljubljana, as well as to those in Slovenske Gorice, Brkini, Bela krajina, Prekmurje, and so on. The programme for this purpose is in place. However, we also need some time and room for manoeuvre. You need it in the National Assembly too if you discuss the interpellation three times a week, then you cannot discuss the laws and other measures that are absolutely necessary for us to implement these commitments.

**JANJA SLUGA (SMC):** Thank you. You have actually indicated in your answer how challenging the situation is and how inter-connected things really are. Of course, the Presidency is one thing that is also upcoming. But precisely in view of this challenging situation in which we have found ourselves, I think we have learnt something important, which is that trust is basically the glue that in difficult times holds us together as a society. And also that trust is very difficult to build, yet very easy to lose. And in this situation, the trust is most reflected in the communication of the necessary measures, which I myself firmly believe would be even more effective if the Government representatives were able to communicate them somehow more appropriately. And in this light, in fact, many people are also wondering why you did not use the opportunity of leading the third Government to strengthen integration and raise reputation more widely rather than just among your current followers. Why, in such a situation, the communication is conducted through dispatches, letters, some hasty congratulations, which actually irritates the domestic public even more than this epidemic. And in this light, why not pay attention to the fact that some of such inappropriate moves also affect the country's reputation. The latest story is the one with STA; furthermore, why not put out the fire between the STA and UKOM rather than adding fuel to it. And, why should we use the crisis situation for some ideological restitution of the state rather than for solving the crisis itself. These are very demanding questions, which, I believe, are also important. In the light of the continuation of some constructive work of this coalition and some common credibility, of course, I must ask you if you intend to continue working in this way until the end of your term of office.

**PRIME MINISTER JANEZ JANŠA:** Thank you. Look, contrary to this allegation, I do not think the problem is in the way we communicate. This is always an excuse. The issues are those that I have outlined earlier. Those who threw in the towel a year ago are now being very smart towards the others considering empty warehouses and the unpreparedness of the country that we have inherited. If the situation was normal, then of course the Government might have time to meet once a week and talk about communication, instead, we had to introduce an additional Government session that deals with the protection of human health and lives. Also, I find it a bit odd to listen to the advice on communication given by the head of the parliamentary group with one per cent support in the public to the Prime Minister and the president of the party enjoying thirty times greater support.