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The government coalition in Slovenia breaks up

The centre-left cabinet led by Borut Pahor has lost its majority in the Slovenian parliament since the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS) left the government coalition on 9 May. The break-up of the government coalition resulted mainly from a dispute over the pension reform, which will be the subject of a referendum at the beginning of June. The government is expected to sustain a defeat in the referendum, which is likely to bring about its fall.

Since the departure of DeSUS from the coalition, Borut Pahor's cabinet can expect support from 42 of the 90 MPs. If the coalition, which now consists of three parties, wants to continue ruling as a minority government, it will have to enter into *ad hoc* agreements with individual independent MPs and those representatives of DeSUS who have declared a will to co-operate with the government. The most important task for the coalition at present is the pension reform which is to introduce the same retirement age, 65 years, for both men and women. This bill, which was adopted last December, as a result of pressure from the opposition and the trade unions, is still to be approved by a referendum scheduled for 5 June. According to polls, the referendum, which in addition to the pension system reform will also cover issues concerning the amendment of the labour law and access to the files of the communist services, will bring a defeat for the government.

In the present situation, Prime Minister Borut Pahor has three weeks to convince the citizens to vote for the proposed reforms and to build a stable support in parliament. However, if the government sustains a defeat in the referendum (which would be already the third time during this tenure), more parties can be expected to leave the coalition. A rejection of the pension system reform, for which the European Commission and the International Monetary Fund have been pressing, would undermine Slovenia's credibility on the international markets. <grosz>