



## When tourism meets law: governing short-term rentals in Slovenia

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**Abstract:** Purpose of the article - is to provide insight into regulatory efforts concerning short-term rentals (STRs) of private accommodations for tourists in Slovenia. The study examines the perspectives of public sector representatives engaged in STR regulation and to synthesize the most recent governmental approach to STR regulation in new the Hospitality Act (HA). The article builds upon previous research on STR regulation in Slovenia initiated in 2018.

Research methodology - adopts a qualitative research design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and in relevant secondary sources. The data were processed through content analysis, using coding and matrix techniques. Findings are presented descriptively and illustrated with tables and graphs.

Findings - reveal the positions of public actors on the societal and tourism-related impacts of STRs, and their views on the regulatory framework. The synthesis of HA provisions is complemented by legal considerations, suggesting that establishing a definitive STR framework in Slovenia remains ongoing.

**Keywords:** tourist accommodations, technology-based business models, short-term rentals, Airbnb, regulations, Hospitality act

**JEL classification:** L83, K29

## Ko se turizem sreča s pravom: upravljanje kratkoročnih najemov v Sloveniji

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**Povzetek:** Namen članka - prispevek ponuja vpogled v regulativne napore na področju kratkoročnih najemov (STR) zasebnih nastanitev za turiste v Sloveniji. Raziskava preučuje perspektive predstavnikov javnega sektorja, ki so vključeni v regulacijo STR, ter povzema najnovejši državni pristop k njihovem urejanju v novem Zakonu o gostinstvu (ZGos). Članek temelji na predhodnih raziskavah regulacije STR v Sloveniji, začelih leta 2018.

Metodologija raziskave - temelji na kvalitativnem raziskovalnem pristopu. Podatki so bili zbrani s polstrukturiranimi intervjuji in iz relevantnih sekundarnih virov. Obdelava podatkov je potekala s pomočjo analize vsebine, s kodiranjem in matričnimi tehnikami. Rezultati so predstavljeni deskriptivno ter ponazorjeni s tabelami in grafi.

Ugotovitve - razkrivajo stališča javnih akterjev o družbenih in turističnih učinkih STR ter njihova mnenja o regulativnem okviru. Sinteza določb novega Zakona o gostinstvu je dopolnjena s pravnimi vidiki, ki nakazujejo, da oblikovanje dokončnega okvira STR v Sloveniji ostaja v teku.

**Ključne besede:** turistične nastanitve, tehnološko podprti poslovni modeli, kratkoročni najemi, Airbnb, regulacija, Zakon o gostinstvu

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Digitalization and advanced technologies (D&ATs) have significantly reshaped the tourism sector (Jagodič, Jagodič & Gorenak, 2025). They have become indispensable in contemporary tourism, where consumers increasingly rely on digital tools for searching, comparing, and booking experiences (Bekele & Raj, 2024). The accommodation sector was among the first sectors of tourism to adopt technology-driven business models, particularly through reservation platforms such as *Booking.com* (introduced in the late 20th century - About Booking.com, n.d.) and later *Airbnb* (launched in 2008 - Harknes, n.d.).

Technology-based business models, however, often outpace legislative developments and raise questions of legality (Guttentag, 2015). While *Booking.com* has not generated major legal disputes, *Airbnb* has been subject to substantial controversy. The difference lies in the nature of the accommodations offered. *Booking.com* primarily markets formally registered tourism accommodations (TAC) that comply with hospitality and general regulatory frameworks. In contrast, *Airbnb* and similar platforms offer privately owned residential properties, originally constructed for housing rather than commercial activity. Such accommodations often operate outside both hospitality-specific and broader regulatory systems. Guttentag (2015) therefore categorized them as part of the “informal” tourism accommodation sector.

Initially, when small in scale, the exchange of tourist accommodation between private individuals posed little threat to traditional TAC providers, local residents, or destinations (von Briel & Dolnicar, 2021). However, the rapid expansion of short-term rentals of privately owned housing (STRs) led to growing social, economic, and legal challenges, sparking regulatory and political debates (Guttentag, 2015) and legal disputes (Court of Justice, 2019). From these public and political controversies, *Airbnb* and STRs soon became subjects of scholarly research.

A substantial body of literature has since emerged on *Airbnb* and STRs, including research on their regulation (Guttentag, 2019; von Briel & Dolnicar, 2021; Jovanović, Zornić & Marković, 2024). Generally, legal frameworks governing hospitality businesses are rarely at the forefront of tourism research, which makes the scholarly focus on STR regulation relatively exceptional.

According to von Briel and Dolnicar (2021), the evolution of regulatory responses to STRs remains underexplored. Scholars argue that a longitudinal perspective can provide valuable insights into both successful and unsuccessful efforts to address unregulated STRs. As this study builds upon earlier research on STR and *Airbnb* regulation in Slovenia initiated in 2017, it aligns with this recommendation by adopting a longitudinal perspective.

The study seeks to address the following research questions (RQs):

- RQ1: How does the public administration in Slovenia perceive STRs?
- RQ2: What regulatory solutions has the Government of the Republic of Slovenia sought to implement in the recently adopted Hospitality Act (HA) to govern STRs?

The study holds significance for at least two reasons. First, in Slovenia, *Airbnb* and STRs have received limited scholarly attention, particularly from a legal standpoint. Only a few studies specifically address STRs and *Airbnb* in the Slovenian context (Kerbler & Obrč, 2021; Knežević Cvelbar & Vavpotič, 2021; Kokot & Turnšek, 2022), while even fewer investigate STR regulation in Slovenia (e.g. Zupan Korže, 2018; Vlahek & Damjan, 2018). Second, the present study is situated at a pivotal moment, 2025, when Slovenia’s National Assembly finally adopted comprehensive legislation on STRs.

Most existing studies have focused on regulatory attempts in large European cities such as London, Berlin, Amsterdam, and Barcelona. Smaller destinations, by contrast, have received far less attention, even though STR-related issues are no less relevant for them. This research therefore contributes to the literature by providing timely insights into STR regulation in a geographically small country with a high tourism-related share of gross domestic product and a rapid expansion of STRs.

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## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 STR/Airbnb as a research agenda

In the early stages of *Airbnb* and similar accommodation platforms, scholars predominantly conceptualized short-term rentals (STRs) as part of the sharing or collaborative economy, as peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation, or as a form of networked hospitality business (Oskam & Boswijk, 2016). As *Airbnb* emerged and continues to operate as the market leader in P2P accommodation (Boswijk, 2017), the brand itself has become synonymous with STR platforms more broadly. Consequently, the majority of existing studies place *Airbnb* at the center of their analyses.

Several thematic themes have emerged in the scholarly literature on *Airbnb*/STRs (Guttentag, 2019). The most common focus has been on *Airbnb* guests and hosts (e.g., Kokot & Turnšek, 2022). Other thematic categories include supply-side dynamics, impacts on destinations, regulatory responses, effects on the broader tourism sector, and investigations of *Airbnb* as a company.

Jovanović, Zornić, and Marković (2024) document substantial growth in academic publications between 2017 and 2023, noting that 357 studies were indexed in the Web of Science in 2023 alone. This increase reflects *Airbnb*'s expanding influence on global accommodation practices, local communities, and the hospitality sector. Researchers have also examined *Airbnb* as a disruptive innovation, its economic and social consequences, and the role of trust and reputation in P2P transactions. Studies on regulatory issues typically focus on specific destinations, predominantly cities, and their attempts to devise localized approaches to STR governance (e.g. von Briel & Dolnicar, 2021).

Several additional contributions shed light on the complexity of STR regulation. Crommelin, Troy, Martin, and Pettit (2018) highlight that some large cities had regulations governing STRs even before *Airbnb*. However, existing frameworks were ill-equipped to address the rapid rise of technology-enabled P2P platforms, necessitating reconsideration. Baril (2017) emphasizes the legal challenge posed by platforms such as *Airbnb*, which are operated by global corporations but function within fragmented local legislative environments. Ferreri and Sanyal (2018) underline difficulties in identifying and gathering evidence against violators of STR rules.

Critical perspectives have also emerged. McKee (2017) argues that *Airbnb* has successfully shaped regulatory debates in its favor, positioning legality as the default assumption even where listings contravene existing laws. Stabrowski (2017) contends that *Airbnb*'s success is tied to narratives of open markets, family values, and technological progress, as well as to alternative discourses of community and sustainability. These narratives emphasize individual economic empowerment through the redefinition of the notion of 'home.' Evidence also suggests that federal policymakers may be more receptive than local authorities to adapting regulations in ways favorable to sharing economy firms. Hong and Lee (2018) empirically demonstrate that higher levels of political competition are positively associated with more favorable regulatory responses to sharing economy companies such as *Airbnb*.

The above-mentioned studies underscore the complexity of STR regulation. Scholars have identified several contributing factors. First, STR rules must align with broader norms and regulatory frameworks across multiple levels of government (Bei & Clota, 2023). Second, different perceptions and interests across different governmental domains often create additional challenges. Moreover, national and local governments do not always share the same priorities: the negative effects of STRs tend to be concentrated in urban areas, while state-level concerns are often less acute (Aguilera, Artioli & Colomb, 2021). Additionally, STR regulation must strike a balance between safeguarding public interests – particularly housing accessibility – and protecting the legitimate interests of private operators and property rights, which may at times be contradictory (Colomb & de Souza, 2021).

A further challenge lies in the enforcement of STR regulations. Verdou and Eccleston (2022) caution that the absence of direct access to data on online transactions, coupled with

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the inability to remove irregular listings, renders enforcement either highly difficult or prohibitively costly. As *Airbnb* and similar platforms retain exclusive control over critical market data, their data-power confers significant influence over the design and implementation of regulatory governance.

## 2.2. Development of STRs'/Airbnb's legal framework in EU

Within the European Union (EU), STRs were initially viewed through the prism of the sharing or collaborative economy and were explicitly addressed in the *European Agenda for the Collaborative Economy* - EU Agenda (European Commission, 2016). However, despite their collaborative character, the EU Agenda emphasized that STR platforms and providers were not exempt from tax obligations.

As the number of STRs increased and began to generate negative impacts for local residents in certain cities, municipal authorities introduced restrictions to limit their spread. Several European cities, including Berlin, Brussels, Paris, Marseille, Lyon, Amsterdam, London, and Barcelona, undertook initiatives to reduce STR activity (EP Briefing, 2015).

While each destination faced unique tourism demand patterns and localized negative externalities, regulatory responses varied considerably. For example, Berlin prohibited unhosted STRs, while allowing hosted rentals subject to municipal approval. The city also introduced mandatory registration and imposed fines of up to €100,000 for non-compliance. Amsterdam limited both the number of guests and the number of days a property could be rented unhosted (maximum 60 days per year). London adopted a 90-night annual cap, while Barcelona introduced a nightly tourist tax alongside compulsory registration. Such diverse regulatory approaches have been the subject of comparative scholarly analyses (Guttentag, 2019).

The 2019 judgment of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) against *Airbnb Ireland* further complicated regulatory efforts. The Court classified *Airbnb* as an 'information society service' rather than a TAC provider. This decision restricted the regulatory powers of national and local authorities over STR platforms. It underscored the pressing need to reassess and adapt existing regulatory frameworks.

By 2023, STRs accounted for approximately one quarter of total tourist accommodation capacity in the EU (Eurostat, 2024). Yet, existing EU e-commerce rules were not designed to address the digital platform-based business models underpinning STRs (Hotrec Europe, 2019). In response, the European Parliament adopted a new regulation on STRs in April 2024. The regulation recognizes the benefits STRs create for hosts, tourists, and regional economies (European Parliament, 2024), while also acknowledging the concerns raised by scholars regarding rising housing prices, resident displacement, overtourism, and unfair competition.

The new regulation harmonizes *transparency requirements* for the provision of STR services through online platforms, in cases where Member States choose to impose such requirements (EUR-Lex, 2024). Rather than prescribing uniform rules, the regulation encourages tailor-made strategies, aiming to promote a transparent and accountable platform economy while also protecting consumers from fraudulent STR offers.

The EU anticipates that new rules will generate more reliable data on STR activities and enable national and local authorities to design appropriate policies. Improved data availability is expected to facilitate monitoring and the development of targeted interventions. Key provisions of the new EU regulation include (European Parliament, 2024):

- In jurisdictions with registration procedures, STRs must comply with registration rules, and platforms must share corresponding property data.
- Hosts are required to provide complete and reliable information, including a visible registration number.
- Member States must establish a single digital entry point for platforms to submit monthly data, including the number of nights rented, number of guests, address, registration number, and URL of each listing.

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Overall, the EU regulation establishes a common framework obliging platforms to advertise only accommodation units that are properly registered under national law—where such requirements exist. This mechanism, adopted by consensus between the EU and digital platforms, represents a significant step toward balancing innovation with accountability in the STR sector. Also in EU, the STRs have been firstly viewed through the lens of sharing/collaborative economy, they were discussed in the European agenda for the collaborative economy (European Commission, 2016). However, despite the collaborative nature of the business, Agenda has highlighted that the platforms and providers of STRs have not been excluded from tax payments.

As the rising number of STRs had caused problems to local residents in some cities, local authorities started to limit STRs with local restrictions. There were several attempts of European cities to decrease number of STRs, e.g. in Berlin, Brussels, Paris, Marseille, Lyon, Amsterdam, London, Paris, Barcelona, etc. (EP Briefing, 2015). So far, different jurisdictions have approached Airbnb regulation very differently and several studies have explored these differences (Guttentag, 2019).

The judgement of Court of Justice of EU (2019) against Airbnb Ireland weakened the powers at the disposal of national and local authorities to regulate the STR accommodation market. With this judgement, Airbnb and similar accommodation reservation platforms were formally acknowledged as activities of information society services and not as tourism accommodation provider. New situation exemplified the need to review existing rules.

In 2023, STRs comprise about one quarter of total tourist accommodations in the EU (Eurostat, 2024). As existing EU e-commerce rules were not adopted to business models enhanced by digital platforms (Hotrec Europe, 2019), in April 2024 European Parliament adopted a new regulation on STRs. EU highlighted that it believes in benefits created with STRs for hosts, tourist and many regions (European parliament, 2024). Yet, it also follows the findings of some researchers that the lack of appropriate rules contributed to problems like higher housing prices, the displacement of permanent residents, overtourism, unfair competition, etc.

New EU regulation harmonises the rules of “transparency requirements for the provision of short-term accommodation rental services through online STR platforms in cases where Member states decide to impose such transparency requirements” (EUR-lex, 2024). Actually, the EU regulation stimulate tailor-made strategies. It aims not only to promote a transparent and responsible platform economy in the EU, but also to protect customers from fraudulent STR offers.

EU believes that the new rules should reveal the actual impact of STRs and enable local authorities to develop appropriate policies. Data will allow national and local authorities to monitor STRs and enable them implement suitable policies. A brief summary of new STR rules for online platforms is the following (European Parliament, 2024):

- In the areas, where registration process exists, STRs need to comply with registration procedures and data sharing for the properties they list.
- Information provided by the host must be reliable and complete (with visible registration number).
- EU members states need to set a single digital entry point to receive data from platforms about host activity on a monthly bases (about number of nights that unit was rented out, number of guests, address, registration number, URL of listings).

New EU rules on STRs establish common framework, a mechanism, which binds digital platforms in EU member states that they can advertise only those accommodation units that have been registered in member states. This is binding for reservation platforms only if this is required by the member state regulations. The solution was adopted with consensus of EU with digital platforms.

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## 2.3 STRs/Airbnb in Slovenia

Airbnb entered the Slovenian market in 2011 (Zabukovec, 2017). From an initial 31 listings, the number rose to approximately 2,600 by 2015 and exceeded 12,500 by 2023 (Pricelab, n.d.), representing a fivefold increase over eight years. According to an analysis of Airbnb activity between 2015 and 2019 commissioned by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, more than half of STRs were concentrated in five destinations: Ljubljana, Piran, Bled, Koper, and Kranjska Gora (Knežević Cvelbar & Vavpotič, 2020). By 2025, the Ministry of the Economy, Tourism and Sport (METS, 2025) reported nearly 13,000 STR listings on Airbnb and similar platforms across the country.

Until 2015, neither tourism stakeholders nor the broader public regarded STRs as a significant disruptor of the accommodation sector. The government, however, began seeking ways to minimize illegal STR practices. A working group of ministry representatives was tasked with preparing proposals to amend existing TAC and housing regulations in order to integrate STRs into the legal framework. Although the HA already contained provisions relevant to STRs, existing rules needed to be adapted to the realities of digital platform business models. After a year of discussions, no concrete solution emerged, and a subsequent expert group was similarly unsuccessful (Zupan Korže, 2018).

The climate toward STRs in Slovenia shifted in 2017. The rapid increase in listings, coupled with media coverage of regulatory interventions in other European cities, underscored the growing significance of STRs. Rising earnings among Slovenian STR hosts further demonstrated that STRs had become an integral part of the hospitality industry, TAC business. Consequently, platforms such as Airbnb were no longer perceived as part of the sharing economy but rather as alternative distribution channels with clear commercial characteristics (Zupan Korže, 2018). STRs came to be seen as unregulated disruptors of the traditional accommodation sector, operating in violation of existing regulations and evading taxation (Lončar, 2017). Local communities in established tourism destinations increasingly identified STRs as contributors of overtourism and as limiting factors in the availability of long-term rental housing (Ploštajner, 2017).

The government sought to defend its inability to regulate STRs by arguing that the issue lay not in the absence of rules but in their weak enforcement. A limited step forward was achieved when inspectors intensified controls on illegal STR activity. In a notable development, the Slovenian government succeeded in obtaining host data directly from Airbnb headquarters in San Francisco. Based on these records, tax authorities invited hosts to self-declare their earnings for taxation purposes (Zupan Korže, 2018).

In 2018, a group of parliamentarians drafted a Law on Digital Platforms in the Collaborative Economy (Državni zbor, 2018). However, political circumstances prevented its adoption. In 2021, the ministry responsible for tourism prepared draft amendments to the HA that included STR provisions. Yet, in the context of upcoming elections and the sharp decline in STR activity during the COVID-19 pandemic, STR regulation was deprioritized.

The pandemic had a profound effect on Slovenia's STR market. Real estate experts estimated that 60-70% of property owners in Ljubljana shifted from STRs to long-term rentals as tourist demand temporarily collapsed (Pušnik, 2021). After the pandemic, however, the STR market gradually recovered, reigniting concerns about what Vovk (2023) described as a Slovenian 'real-estate Wild West.'

An updated study by Knežević Cvelbar and Vavpotič (2024) highlighted renewed exponential growth of STRs promoted on Airbnb and Vrbo platforms between March 2023 and March 2024. The study reported an average nightly rate of €149 per unit and a total annual STR income of €175 million, 2.5 times higher than in 2019.

In its 2024 assessment of STR conditions and the rationale for new regulation, the Government characterized STRs as a high-yield business activity that, in the absence of regulation, operated within the 'black economy' and constituted an unfair competitor to registered TAC providers (Government, 2024). From a tourism perspective, the growing prevalence of STRs was seen as contributing to a decline in the overall quality of TAC in

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Slovenia, given that STRs consist primarily of private rooms and apartments. The Government also emphasized that residents of the most tourism-intensive municipalities were experiencing a decline in quality of life, leading some to relocate (ibid.). This created a 'vicious circle': as local residents sold their properties, more units entered the STR market, further undermining the long-term development of municipalities. Finally, the report highlighted the incompatibility of STR activity with other legal frameworks, including housing legislation, spatial planning regulations and others.

### **3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

The qualitative orientation of this study enabled an in-depth exploration of the complex issues surrounding STRs in Slovenia that would have been difficult to capture using purely quantitative approaches. In recent years, qualitative methodologies have been increasingly applied in tourism research (Jagodič, Jagodič & Gorenak, 2025; Frost & Frost, 2021; Airey, 2013). Appropriate methods and techniques were selected for each stage of the empirical inquiry.

Data collection was conducted through two complementary approaches:

- Field research: five semi-structured interviews (addressing RQ1).
- Desk research: analysis of secondary sources, including governmental publications and other relevant online documents (addressing RQ2).

#### **3.1 Methods applied for RQ1**

To investigate the first research question, 15 potential participants were invited through convenience sampling; five agreed to take part. Four participants were public administrators engaged in STR-related issues across different governmental bodies (two in tourism, one in tourism infrastructure development, and one in housing). The fifth participant was a tourism scholar.

Building on prior research and theoretical concepts identified in the literature, an interview guide was prepared with five open-ended questions covering: (a) the perceived positive effects of STRs, (b) the main problems caused by STRs, (c) the relationship between STRs and the availability of long-term rentals, (d) the impact of STRs on the housing market, and (e) potential approaches to curbing illegal STR practices.

Interviews were conducted in 2024 via videoconferencing. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured anonymity. The sample included three women and two men, aged 30-50, with educational attainment ranging from bachelor's to master's level. Each interview lasted between 20 and 30 minutes, was audio-recorded, and subsequently transcribed.

The transcripts were analyzed using qualitative content analysis, following the guidelines of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). Four analytical matrices were developed, one for each of the first four questions. Thematic codes were placed along the horizontal axis, and interviewee identifiers along the vertical axis. Condensed text segments corresponding to each code were entered into the respective matrix cells.

Findings are presented as a descriptive synthesis of participants' responses. An interpretive approach was applied, supplemented by direct quotations to illustrate salient expressions or opinions. Responses to the fifth question were additionally quantified and visualized in a graph.

#### **3.2 Methods applied for RQ2**

The second research question was addressed through desk research conducted in 2025. Secondary data were collected from official governmental documents, media releases, and reports published by relevant institutions and organizations, providing a contemporaneous perspective on STR regulation in Slovenia.

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A content analysis of these documents was undertaken to extract and systematize information relevant to RQ2. Results are presented descriptively, with a summary table highlighting the key regulatory solutions proposed for STRs.

## 4 FINDINGS

The findings are presented in two parts: first, the analysis of the interviews, and second, the analysis of relevant documents.

### 4.1 Analysis of interviews

Responses to the first question, concerning the positive effects of STRs, can be categorized into four major groups: environmental and sustainability effects, impacts on the real estate market, benefits for local residents, and benefits for destinations.

Several interviewees emphasized that STRs increase the supply of tourist accommodation (TAC) “without additional use of space for construction.” This was considered particularly valuable during the summer season and during major events such as international conferences or sporting competitions, when hotels are often at full capacity. STRs were described as “making use of spaces that would otherwise remain empty,” especially since many property owners prefer not to rent their properties on a long-term basis. In this sense, STRs, framed as a form of collaborative economy, were seen to “balance the needs of proprietors with the needs of tourism.”

From the perspective of property owners, STRs bring additional income and, through potential increases in real estate prices, higher capital gains. From a sustainability perspective, STRs were described as contributing to the more efficient use of existing housing stock. In some cases, travelers using STRs may rent out their own apartments while traveling, thus generating a circular use of housing. Positive cultural impacts were also highlighted, as STRs enable more direct interaction between local residents and guests, fostering cross-cultural encounters. From the destination perspective, STRs were reported to “push more visitors to destinations,” thereby stimulating economic growth and enhancing competitiveness.

Responses to the second question, which addressed the challenges of STRs, focused on three areas: impacts on local residents, pressures on the real estate market, and the absence of effective regulation. Interviewees were unanimous in observing that rising real estate prices, driven by the attractiveness of STRs, have negatively affected the affordability of housing for locals, especially in city centers. Investors purchasing housing units for STR purposes were seen as displacing long-term rentals, leading to a “drastic change in the housing market” and a “reduction in the availability of long-term rental housing.”

STRs were also associated with the displacement of local residents from their primary communities, resulting in neighborhoods “losing their original pulse.” Tourists staying in STRs were sometimes perceived as disruptive, with reports of disrespect for local customs and traditions, increased tensions in residential buildings, and reduced feelings of safety due to the constant presence of unfamiliar people. In addition, “public infrastructure is overloaded” because it was not originally designed to accommodate such high levels of use.

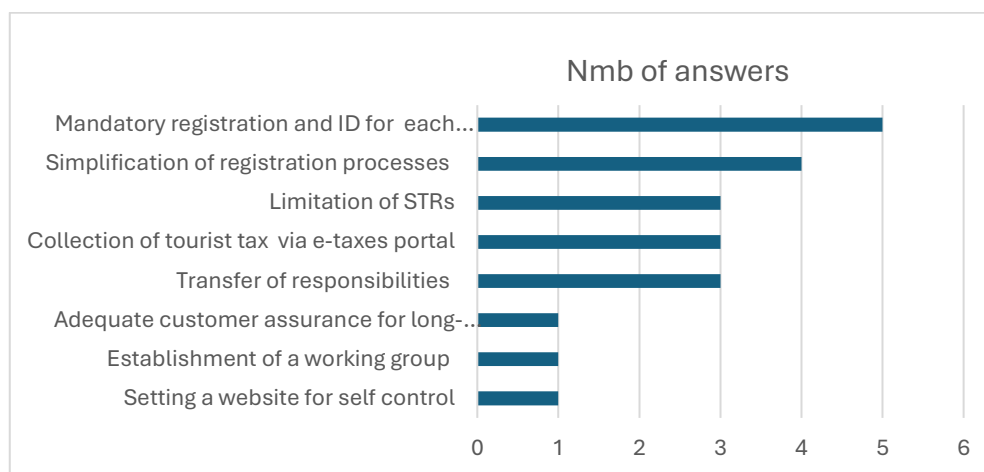
With respect to legality, all interviewees agreed that STRs largely operate within the “black or grey economy.” Existing regulations were described as poorly adapted to digital business models, while enforcement was considered extremely difficult. Even “intensified inspections by the financial administration” were said to be insufficient to deter illegal practices by so-called “micro-entrepreneurs.”

The third question explored the relationship between STRs and the increase in long-term rental prices. Two interviewees argued that the growth of STRs has driven up long-term rents, since “it is the same housing stock,” and reduced supply necessarily increases prices. However, the other three interviewees disagreed. Two of them pointed to the pandemic period, during which the number of STRs fell drastically while long-term rental prices rose.



In their view, the problem lies not with STRs but with broader “housing policy” and an “unregulated real estate market.”

All participants emphasized that STRs do not represent a threat to the traditional tourist accommodation sector. They argued that hotels and STRs cater to different tourist segments, and therefore STRs do not diminish the competitiveness of hotels. Responses to the fifth question, which asked participants for suggestions on regulating STRs, are summarized according to content and frequency in Graph 1.



Graph 1: Suggestions on regulating STRs  
Source: Authors research

As long as STRs remain largely informal and unregulated, interviewees expressed clear support for their limitation. The most frequently proposed solution for legalizing STRs was the mandatory registration of accommodation units and the issuance of a unique identification number (ID). One participant emphasized that obtaining such an ID should be conditional upon registration in the e-taxes portal, thereby ensuring the payment of income tax, tourist tax, and other obligatory contributions. Three interviewees specifically highlighted non-payment of taxes and contributions as one of the most pressing problems requiring resolution.

Another commonly mentioned solution concerned the simplification of legalization procedures. Current requirements were described as excessively complicated, bureaucratic, and fragmented across multiple laws and by-laws, making compliance overly burdensome for hosts.

Three participants also advocated for municipal-level limitations on STRs, following the example of various European cities. They argued that municipalities, rather than the state, should have the authority to impose restrictions, as “each location has its own specific characteristics.” In this view, STRs may be acceptable in some destinations or periods but less appropriate in others. For effective oversight, participants suggested empowering municipal inspectors, rather than relying solely on state inspectors. Additional proposals included establishing a special working committee to monitor compliance in the field and creating a dedicated online portal where citizens could report illegal STRs.

## 4.2 Analysis of Documents

The adoption of the new EU regulation on responsible and transparent STRs in 2024 encouraged the Slovenian Government to intensify and ultimately conclude its nearly decade-long attempts to regulate STRs. A new draft of the HA was prepared, followed by a month of political and public debate in the first half of 2025.

Stakeholders articulated divergent positions. Opponents of STR regulation strongly argued that housing policy issues cannot be resolved through limitations on STRs. They contended

that the shortage of long-term rental housing cannot be causally attributed to STR activity. They criticized the Government for failing to provide evidence on how many housing units would return to the long-term market, or when, should the new provisions be enacted (RTV SLO MMC, 2025). By contrast, the Government defended the reform on the grounds of the significant growth of STRs in recent years and the urgent need to ‘restore order in STRs.’

The Economic Chamber of Slovenia also voiced criticism, claiming that restricting STRs would reduce overnight stays, thereby diminishing spending on goods and services (Združenje sobodajalcev, 2025). Similarly, the Association of Room Providers (STA, 2025b) labeled the new provisions ‘absurd’ and announced that it would challenge the legislation through all available legal means if adopted (STA, 2025a).

In July 2025, however, the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the revised HA (GOV.SI, 2025). One of the central aims of the reform was to establish a more favorable business environment for the effective and sustainable development of the Slovenian hospitality sector (Vlada RS, 2024). A key novelty in the Act was the formal regulation of STRs. The provisions sought, first, to introduce time limits on STR activity in the most heavily burdened municipalities, and second, to ensure the transparent operation of STRs in a manner that supports the balanced development of local communities (GOV.SI, 2025).

The general conditions for conducting STR activities, as defined by the new Hospitality Act, are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: A summary of conditions for carrying STRs  
(Source Author’s elaboration of recent HA)

CONDITIONS FOR STRs	DESCRIPTION
Mandatory registration of STRs operator	They need to be registered with Agency of RS for Public Legal Records and Related Services (AJPES)
Registration of accommodation units (AU) / accommodation providers	In national register managed by Financial administration (FURS)
Consent of the Municipality	Submitting the application with prescribed information
75% consent of co-owners	In the apartment building, 3 years validation
Consent of all neighbours	Of whose apartments share the walls with renting apartment, 3 years validation
Label requirements	Rental unit must display a visible label at the entrance about TAC
Occupancy limitation	1 guest/m <sup>2</sup> and max 15 guests per TAC
Rental time limit	Municipalities can limit rentals to 30-270 day; if not, for apartment buildings limit is 60 days/year; there is no limits for detached houses or rural areas, unless otherwise designated
Control	Municipality inspectors for STRs, housing inspectors for consents

When the provisions on STRs eventually enter into force, their implementation will be phased. The general requirements including registration, labelling, and the obligation to obtain consent from co-owners or neighbors are scheduled to apply from February 2026, while the time restrictions are planned to take effect in 2027.

Although the revised HA has been adopted, it is not yet in force. The National Council has exercised a veto, which necessitates a second vote in the National Assembly (STA, 2025b). To override the veto, an absolute majority of Assembly members is required. Until such a vote takes place, STRs remain unregulated. Even in the event of successful adoption, the long-term fate of the STR provisions remains uncertain, as several institutions and legal experts have raised concerns about their constitutionality.

The Institute for Legal Research (IPRIS, 2021) has argued that time limitations, the requirement for co-owners’ consent, and other restrictions on STRs may constitute excessive

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interference with constitutionally protected rights, such as the freedom of economic initiative and the right to private property. Similarly, the Municipality Association (2025) maintains that the provisions encroach upon the economic rights of property owners. The Legal Network for Democracy Protection (PMVD, 2025) has taken a more conditional stance, contending that the new regulation could be considered permissible only if it withstands the test of proportionality or reasonableness.

At present, therefore, the legal status and future implementation of STR provisions in Slovenia remain highly uncertain.

## 5 DISCUSSION

Since 2015, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia has made repeated attempts to design an adequate regulatory framework for STRs. Over time, proposed solutions have gradually converged with those adopted in several EU member states, but with a notable distinction. In many EU countries, municipal authorities in cities heavily burdened by STRs took the initiative to regulate these activities independently of state intervention (EP Briefing, 2015; Guttentag, 2019). In Slovenia, however, the regulation of TAC has from the outset been embedded within the HA, which functions as the overarching legislative framework for this sector. Consequently, the HA must serve as the legal foundation for STR regulation, and only through the HA can municipalities be formally authorized to implement detailed provisions at the local level (eUPRAVA, 2025).

Two broader contextual factors have shaped the trajectory of STR regulation in Slovenia. The first relates to the absence of a harmonized EU framework for tourism and its subsectors, including TAC. Regulation remains the responsibility of each member state, and the 2024 EU regulation on STRs merely provides a voluntary framework rather than binding obligations. The second factor concerns the nature of digital reservation platforms such as Airbnb, which operate as providers of information society services (Court of Justice of the EU, 2019). These platforms are legally obliged to ensure that only lawful accommodation units are advertised; however, what qualifies as “lawful” depends entirely on national regulatory frameworks.

Slovenia’s prolonged and inconsistent efforts to regulate STRs, together with the influence of EU debates and comparative international practices, have likely shaped the perspectives of interviewees in this study. Their perception on STRs - *answer to the first RQ* - largely reflect themes already documented in the literature. As advantages and disadvantages of STRs they perceived increased tourism flows, economic gains, pressures on housing availability, overtourism, and a decline in residents’ quality of life (e.g., Knežević Cvelbar & Vavpotič, 2020). Participants revealed a split (proponents and sceptics) about influence of STRs on real-estate prices and long-term rental markets, but were quite close in suggestions on how STRs should be regulated (e.g. mandatory registration of STRs operator, ID for AU used for STRs, time limitation, tax collection).

The political trajectory of STR regulation in Slovenia also shows a cyclical pattern: periods of intense governmental activity followed by phases of inaction, when other priorities, such as elections or competing policy agendas, took precedence. Like many other countries (Verdou & Eccleston, 2022), Slovenia has struggled with the enforcement of existing rules, facing difficulties in monitoring compliance and sanctioning violators (Ferreri & Sanyal, 2018).

Regardless of the intense debate preceding the adoption of the new HA and the subsequent developments, STRs are regulated in HA, nevertheless it is not yet valid. The following solutions on STRs regulation *address the second RQ*. STR operators must be registered with AJPES, while each accommodation unit (AU) dedicated to STR purposes must also be entered into a special register maintained by FURS. Upon registration, every AU receives a unique identification number that serves as its official record. In addition, each STR-designated AU is required to display an official label. The number of guests per AU is subject to limitations. Municipalities, along with other owners and co-owners of units within apartment buildings, play a decisive role in granting permission or consent for STR activities.

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Furthermore, municipalities are authorized to establish time limits for STR operations and are entrusted with supervisory responsibilities.

Recent public debate surrounding the HA has underscored the tensions between the state's regulatory approach and the positions of stakeholders benefiting economically from STRs. The housing issue has been the most contentious theme, echoing debates in major European and global tourism destinations (Kanellopoulou & Ntouins, 2024). While housing scarcity is often presented as a rationale for limiting STRs, the Slovenian Government has struggled to present convincing evidence. For instance, if only 2% of the national housing stock is used for STRs (ibid.), the scale of the issue may appear limited. Disaggregated data for hotspots such as Ljubljana or Piran would provide a far more accurate picture of local impacts than the average percentage for the whole country.

Against this backdrop, the new HA provision requiring majority consent from co-owners for STR activity appears reasonable. Apartment owners who purchase units for residential purposes cannot be expected to easily accept the continuous influx of transient guests, particularly when these may disregard house rules. Critics argue that securing majority consent will be difficult, but this must be balanced against the constitutional rights of residents to enjoy their homes free from excessive disturbance. The right to free economic initiative, while constitutionally protected, cannot automatically override the rights of other property owners.

Beyond the housing debate, there is a fundamental question of classification. TAC services are legally defined as a business activity in Slovenia. Given the substantial income generated through STRs, combined with evidence of tax evasion, it is logical and equitable that STRs should be treated as business activities subject to similar legal obligations than traditional TAC. While certain exceptions may be justified, but only under specific conditions, these should remain limited in scope to preserve regulatory consistency.

Balancing the competing interests of tourism development, housing affordability, and community well-being presents a formidable challenge for policymakers. Yet the core function of law is precisely to regulate areas of conflict. The rapid expansion of STRs has undeniably generated such conflicts, making regulation unavoidable. In a market economy, the right to free enterprise is fundamental, but it must coexist with the rights of others. As such, stakeholders in the STR sector should recognize that their economic benefits cannot come at the unchecked expense of broader societal interests.

## 6 CONCLUSION

STRs have become an integral component of contemporary tourism. While STR activities contribute to tourism growth and generate economic benefits for destinations, their unregulated and extensive expansion has raised significant social, political, and legal challenges. This study examines the most recent developments in Slovenia and provides a synthesis of the country's decade-long efforts to regulate STR activity. The regulatory objectives have been multifaceted: to control the scale of STR operations, establish conditions comparable to those applied to traditional TAC, improve tax compliance, balance residential lease markets, and safeguard both local communities and guests.

The findings of the *empirical research* indicate that interviewed representatives from the Slovenian public sector largely agree on both the advantages and disadvantages of STRs. They are unanimous in recognizing the necessity of regulation and in supporting specific regulatory mechanisms such as mandatory registration of STR activities and accommodation units (via identification numbers). This provides the answer to the first research question.

The second part of the empirical analysis examined the regulatory framework introduced in the newly revised HA, thereby addressing the second research question. A comparison of the adopted provisions with the suggestions of interviewees reveals that the regulator has, to a considerable extent, incorporated expert recommendations.

Nonetheless, the future of these provisions remains uncertain. Even if the National Assembly confirms the HA in a second vote, strong indications suggest that one or more interest groups may challenge the STR provisions before the Constitutional Court. Given that

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constitutional review procedures in Slovenia are typically long-lasting, STRs may remain effectively unregulated for one or more years.

This study is not without *limitations*. The empirical component is based on a relatively small sample of interviewees, and the two phases of data collection were separated by a time lag due to delays in the legislative process. However, as both phases reflect the prevailing discourse on STRs, these limitations are unlikely to have compromised the validity of the findings. Another limitation stems from the general characteristics of qualitative research, namely the potential subjectivity in data collecting, processing and interpretation. Nevertheless, given the authors' expertise in qualitative methodology and familiarity with the research topic, it is reasonable to conclude that the procedures followed adhered to established research standards.

*Theoretical implications* of this study are twofold. First, the empirical results are consistent with existing literature on STR regulation, confirming that Slovenia is not an exception in the complex issues posed by STRs. Second, the study provides one of the few analyses of STR regulation in Slovenia. It documents a protracted regulatory trajectory, capture the prevailing socio-political atmosphere, and reflect the perspectives of diverse stakeholder groups. As such, it contributes to the broader body of knowledge on STRs, with implications not only for Slovenia but also for international debates on tourism regulation.

The study also offers *practical implications*. At the national level, the findings may inform both tourism and housing policymakers in designing balanced and effective regulatory frameworks. At the municipal level, where decisions on time restrictions are delegated, the results underscore the need to align regulations with regional tourism demand and local development strategies.

Finally, this research opens several ideas for *future research*. Follow-up studies should be undertaken once the STR provisions are fully implemented, particularly to assess the Constitutional Court's eventual ruling on their validity. Comparative research across Slovenian municipalities may illuminate differing regulatory approaches and their impacts. Longitudinal studies are needed to track how STR supply responds to new restrictions and how regulation affects housing and tourism markets over time. Cross-national comparisons could further identify transferable best practices in STR governance. Additionally, future studies should also explore the perspectives of STR providers and consumers, thereby broadening the empirical base for understanding this increasingly significant segment of TAC sector.

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