

# DIPLOMATSKI ZVEZEK DIPLOMATIC BULLETIN



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First recipient of the Lifetime Achievement in Diplomacy Award  
dr. Boris Frlec / Author: Boštjan Podlogar, STA

"This award is an expression of special respect and gratitude to individuals who, through their long-standing work, achievements and efforts, have left an indelible mark on the field of Slovenian diplomacy."

**Tanja Fajon**  
**Minister of Foreign and European Affairs**

## FOREWORD

May is the month when spring bursts forth in all its glory. There is more sunlight and nature comes alive. It is also a month of many anniversaries, celebrations and special days, some of which are featured in the May edition of the Diplomatic Bulletin. In this issue, we write about the importance of food security and biodiversity, as well as the vital role of bees, which are celebrated on 20 May each year on World Bee Day – proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 2017 at Slovenia's initiative. On the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, the In the Past section examines the role of diplomacy during the difficult war years. This significant anniversary was also commemorated through the active participation of our diplomats in the traditional Three-Runner Run in Ljubljana.

Twenty-two May is Slovenian Diplomacy Day, and this year the Ministry is celebrating with the introduction of the Lifetime Achievement in Diplomacy Award. Get acquainted with the new Award and find out who received it? You are also invited to read about the exhibition of Slovenian Impressionist paintings, which have since the end of winter been on display at the Lower Belvedere in Vienna, one of Europe's most prestigious galleries. This spring, we are also expanding the Slovenian diplomatic network as well as honing our knowledge and skills. Slovenia has inaugurated its first diplomatic mission/consular post in Southeast Asia, in Manila. The Bled Strategic Forum is truly becoming a year-round platform, multiplying knowledge and promoting its brand in different ways. At the end of spring, together with the Friends of the BSF, the Ministry organised a panel discussion on the European Union and its future, and Slovenia's role in the related processes. In order to make good use of new tools, diplomats also need new skills: Dr Aleš Dobnikar reflects on the successful in-house training on the use of AI and thematic conferences as well as on AI trends in diplomacy.

Have a pleasant and active spring until the next read in July.

Sabina Stadler Repnik, Editor

## Table of contents

- Bee Diplomacy
- Slovenian Diplomacy Day
- Slovenia opens its first diplomatic and consular representation in Southeast Asia
- Three-Runner Run for solidarity and cooperation
- Artificial intelligence: a challenge or a new power for diplomacy?
- Friends of the BSF on the situation in Europe, the future of the EU and Slovenia's role in this context
- Anniversary of the end of the Second World War
- Exhibition 'The World in Colours – Slovenian Painting 1848–1918' at the Belvedere in Vienna

-Last page

## BEE DIPLOMACY

Food security and good nutrition are essential for meeting the dietary requirements of a healthy, active and fulfilling life. Now more than ever, food insecurity and malnutrition are being exacerbated by the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Unhealthy diets and high prices of quality food further strengthen the effects of the main causes of food insecurity.

Currently, over 700 million people do not have enough to eat, meaning that one in every eleven people worldwide and one in every five people in Africa are hungry. Some 340 million people in 74 countries suffer acute hunger. The countries with the largest populations and the highest levels of food insecurity are the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Sudan, Afghanistan and Ethiopia. The countries with the highest proportion of their populations facing Phase 3 or above of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) are Palestine (Gaza Strip), South Sudan, Yemen, Syria and Haiti.

When citing data on hunger, it is important not to ignore inequalities and the social groups that are more likely to experience food insecurity. These groups include low-income families, female-headed households, households with children, individuals with physical or mental health conditions, and indigenous or marginalised ethnic communities. One has to note that gender inequality and poorer health can be either a cause or a consequence of food insecurity.

Unfortunately, we can say with a high degree of certainty that SDG 2 – End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture – will not be achieved by 2030. On the one hand, food security depends largely on the ability of agriculture to adapt to climate change; on the other hand, ensuring a sufficient supply of quality food is a major global challenge, particularly given the rapid increase in the world's population. This makes agricultural production more challenging and increases energy demand, while depleting fuel and raw material stocks.

The food we eat has significant impact on the environment. According to UN predictions, the world's population is set to grow by more than a third by 2050 – an additional 2.3 billion people. In order to meet the growing demand for food, global agricultural production will have to increase by 70% compared to 2005. Furthermore, agricultural production in developing countries will have to almost double. The question is how to achieve this level of growth without compromising the natural environment.

Human beings depend heavily on biodiversity in many aspects. Biodiversity helps stabilise the climate, purify water and air, protect people from flooding, ensure pollination and contribute to the absorption of carbon dioxide and the fertility of the soil. Its loss is having a particularly negative impact on agriculture and results in increased food insecurity.

Given the impact the humans have on ecosystems, we must adapt globally and locally, meaning that transition to sustainable, equitable and resilient agri-food systems is no longer a choice but a clear imperative. The process of transforming these systems requires a coordinated and integrated approach to ensure the preservation of human and animal health, as well as the natural environment (the One Health principle). Experts warn that any changes must take into account both local needs and the fragmented nature of the agri-food sector.

## One third of the world's food crops depend on animal pollination

Pollinators, bees in particular, play a vital role in maintaining ecosystems and biodiversity. Bees are therefore of paramount importance for ensuring sufficient food production and the survival of the human race, as both the quantity and quality of the crops depend on successful pollination.

It is no coincidence that the initiative for World Bee Day came from Slovenia, a country where beekeeping is firmly rooted in popular culture, and whose native bee, the Carniolan honeybee, is one of the most widespread honeybee species in the world. In May, in cooperation with FAO, Slovenia will organise the second International Forum for Action on Sustainable Beekeeping and Pollination in Ethiopia. This year, the focus of the international World Bee Day celebrations will be on the continent where food security is at greatest risk.



Wild and domesticated pollinators are not only vital for food security and biodiversity, but they also play an essential role in the production of fabrics such as cotton and linen, as well as biofuels and construction materials such as wood. Around EUR 15bn of the EU's total agricultural output depends directly on insect pollinators.

As pollinators are vital for healthy ecosystems, any decline in their populations is a serious cause for concern. The primary causes of this decline are changes in land use resulting from urbanisation and intensive agriculture, climate change and the presence of invasive species and parasites. Over the past 30 years, scientific research in the US and Europe has shown that bees are highly effective natural indicators of water and plants pollution.

The Bee Fund raises awareness of the importance of protecting bees and other pollinators to help conserve biodiversity and utilise natural resources efficiently. The Fund also promotes international cooperation and the transfer of knowledge to developing countries on a large scale.

The bees are not just a part of a larger narrative of pollination, biodiversity, self-sufficiency and the green future we want. They also guarantee the sustainable resilience of the world at local, national and international levels. As the graffiti in Linhartova Street in Ljubljana says: "No more trees – no more birds – no more bees – no more air – no more sense – no more future". This is why bee diplomacy is more important now than ever before.

## SLOVENIAN DIPLOMACY DAY

The Boris Pahor Hall was particularly festive on this year's Slovenian Diplomacy Day. Marking the 80th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, which Slovenia joined on 22 May 1992, the occasion underscored the continued commitment of Slovenian diplomats to contributing their knowledge and efforts towards the co-creation of a peaceful, just and healthy world.

That is why we have chosen this day to reflect even more deeply on the importance of the diplomatic profession and its impact on Slovenia's international positioning, and to commemorate outstanding individuals and their contribution to diplomacy and foreign policy.

We have decided to build on this existing commemorative concept with a Lifetime Achievement in Diplomacy Award. Represented by a crystal globe, the Award is an expression of special respect and gratitude to individuals who have left an indelible mark on Slovenian diplomacy through their long-standing work, achievements and efforts. The criteria and procedures for presenting the Award are set out in the procedural guidelines that ensure transparency and objectivity in the selection of prize-winners, and all Ministry staff have the opportunity to nominate candidates.

The first Award recipient was Dr Boris Frlec, Ambassador and former Foreign Minister, who has been associated with the Slovenian diplomacy for more than 40 years. He was the first Ambassador of independent Slovenia to Germany, the Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1997 to 2000; he later headed the OSCE Reform Group and chaired the ITF Advisory Board.

"Dr Frlec is a polished diplomat, distinguished by his attentiveness and his capacity to consider a range of differing viewpoints. He has earned a high reputation for his insight, tact and respectful attitude towards his colleagues, while at the same time having a thorough knowledge of topics and issues relating to foreign policy, science and the economy. He is characterised by his ethics and upright attitude," said Slovenian Foreign Minister Tanja Fajon at the award ceremony.



Dr. Boris Frlec / Author: Boštjan Podlogar, STA

Diplomacy is a cornerstone of international relations and one of the most important instruments a country possesses for building and strengthening its engagement with the world. At the Ministry, we are fully aware of the importance of engaging with the domestic public and remain highly active in this regard. This year, we once again held an open day, welcoming three groups of curious visitors on a guided tour of the Ministry's premises. They were introduced to the history and architecture of the Mladika and Licej buildings, as well as to the Ministry's organisation and work. The tour also included the viewing of part of the Ministry's art collection and protocol gifts. Visitors had the opportunity to speak with the Minister in her lounge and have their photograph taken with her.

We are particularly pleased that so many young people came to visit, which we believe reflects their interest in the diplomatic profession.

In keeping with this spirit, the Licej building hosted the first-ever Model United Nations simulation on 24 April, marking the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace. Nearly 60 students, selected by the very active United Nations Association of Slovenia, assumed the roles of diplomats in simulated sessions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, demonstrating exceptional knowledge of the topics under discussion. University students debated the civil war in Sudan within the Security Council, while secondary school students explored the various impacts of artificial intelligence on human rights in the General Assembly. Minister Fajon presented certificates to all participants, along with special awards to the most outstanding ones. In her address, she praised their interest and activism, encouraging them to continue reflecting on our shared global future and to uphold the values enshrined in the UN Charter, which also underpin Slovenia's foreign policy.





## SLOVENIA OPENS ITS FIRST DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR REPRESENTATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

A ribbon-cutting ceremony, a speech by a high representative of Slovenia and a toast with Slovenian sparkling wine in the presence of distinguished guests from the host country, the diplomatic corps and other guests mark the final steps in the "birth" of any new diplomatic-consular mission.

This was also the case at the opening of the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in Manila, which was officially inaugurated on 11 March 2025 by the Slovenian Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, Tanja Fajon, and the Philippine Undersecretary for Bilateral Relations and ASEAN Affairs at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Theresa Lazaro, in the presence of Ambassador Smiljana Knez, the first Slovenian resident ambassador to the Philippines. For the Philippines, the Slovenian diplomatic mission is the 68th bilateral mission in the country, while for Slovenia it is the 62nd mission overall and the first and only one in Southeast Asia.

The ceremonial opening coincided with the first official visit by a Slovenian foreign minister to the Philippines, and Minister Fajon was accompanied by delegations of Slovenian businesspeople and employers. In the presence of more than 100 guests, including some 40 representatives of Slovenian businesses, educational institutions and government agencies, Minister Fajon said: "The world is changing rapidly, and now more than ever we need strong partnerships. Like Slovenia, the Philippines is a strong supporter of multilateralism, respect for international law and human dignity.

That is why I am very pleased that we have opened the only embassy in the ASEAN region in Manila. I believe that the Embassy will not only strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries, but will also open doors for Slovenian companies to new markets in the region and help the citizens of both countries."

The ceremony marking the official opening of the embassy is the final act in a long process involving dozens of ministry and foreign service officials. The first steps towards establishing an embassy in Manila were taken in November 2023 with the arrival of the first diplomat and the announcement of the opening of the Consulate General. The whole process was crowned by the decision to upgrade the mission to an embassy and the Philippines' agreement to open the Slovenian Embassy in Manila in May 2024. After moving into the new premises in October 2024 and completing all the necessary requirements and accreditations, full operational capacity was established on 1 February 2025.

Three diplomats (Ambassador, Deputy Ambassador and Consul) and currently three locally employed staff carry out all activities of the diplomatic-consular mission, including consular services (the establishment of the consular section of the embassy was co-financed by the EU Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy) and protection of Slovenian citizens, whose presence in the country is growing. The number of Slovenian visitors is also on the rise, with more expected in September when the Slovenian team competes in the 2025 FIVB Men's Volleyball World Championship hosted by the Philippines.



Ribbon cutting for the opening of the Embassy in Manila  
Avtor: MFEA



## THREE-RUNNER RUN FOR SOLIDARITY AND COOPERATION

The Three-Runner Run took place in Ljubljana on 10 May, with the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs' team participating for the second consecutive year. The event's main goal is to promote cooperation and solidarity rather than achieving a good result. As these are also the values of development cooperation and humanitarian aid, the MFEA runners took part under the banner 'Slovenia – Aid & Partnerships'.

The three-runner run is part of the annual Path along the Wire Walk, which is held on the second weekend of May each year. Unlike other sporting events, its focus is not on individual running results, but on cooperation, solidarity, mutual assistance and team spirit. Teams run in trios, with the result determined by the slowest runner's time over a 12.5 km or 20 km course.

These values are similar to those that guide the development cooperation and humanitarian aid activities of the Republic of Slovenia, with the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs as the national coordinator. Solidarity, a collective spirit and cooperation in achieving shared goals are among the main principles of development and humanitarian activities, aimed primarily at achieving the sustainable development goals set out in the 2030 Agenda. These activities are also intended to help people affected by conflicts, natural disasters and other crises, and to strengthen crisis resilience and prevention.

By running under the 'Slovenia – Aid & Partnerships' banner, we aimed to emphasise the importance of development cooperation and humanitarian aid, as well as to raise public awareness of this significant aspect of Slovenian foreign policy.



Team MFEA / Author: MFEA

This year, we also invited representatives of partner organisations that promote Slovenia's interests around the world through development and humanitarian activities. Among those who joined us were a trio from the Centre for European Perspective (CEP), which further emphasised the importance of cooperation in this area.

The Directorate for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs initiated the Ministry's participation in the Three-Runner Run. All seven trios were enthusiastic, as we managed to combine pleasure with utility and, above all, support a good cause.

Together, we are stronger. You are welcome to join us next year!

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: A CHALLENGE OR A NEW POWER FOR DIPLOMACY?

Written by Dr Aleš Dobnikar

Artificial intelligence (AI) today generates so much excitement, fear and controversy that it is hard to imagine that this field dates back to the mid-twentieth century. The fascination with the idea that machines could think like humans was already present in the years after the Second World War. In 1950, Alan Turing, one of the fathers of modern computing, asked the crucial question: can machines think? His famous Turing test remains a benchmark for evaluating the extent to which computer systems can approximate human intelligence.

However, the development of AI has been far from consistent over the years, progressing through alternating waves of optimism and disappointment. In the 1970s, scientists believed that AI was on the verge of becoming an everyday reality. However, limitations in computing power, language comprehension and perception of the world led many projects to end in disappointment. These periods, known as "AI winters", were characterised by a slowdown in progress and a consequent reduction in research funding.

The turning point has come in the past two decades. With the rise of the internet, the vast increase in available data and the rapid evolution of hardware speed and performance, researchers have finally gained the necessary conditions for the remarkable progress witnessed in recent years. Techniques such as machine learning, deep learning and natural language processing have enabled the development of systems that, in many cases, now surpass human capabilities in specific tasks. Milestones such as the computer Deep Blue's chess victory over Kasparov in 1997, the victory over Lee Sedol in the game of Go in 2016 and the popularisation of large-scale language models have demonstrated that machines can now outperform humans in certain complex tasks.

Large language models such as ChatGPT (OpenAI), Gemini (Google), Copilot (Microsoft), LLaMA (Meta/all USA), DeepSeek R1 (DeepSeek, China) or LeChat (Mistra AI, France) have brought AI into everyday life. Seemingly overnight, it has moved beyond academic laboratories to become a tool used by teachers and students, journalists, lawyers, programmers, diplomats and, of course, ordinary users. At the same time, its widespread use has exposed a range of risks, from the potential disclosure of classified or personal data to the spread of disinformation, from data bias to limited interpretation of decisions and even ethical concerns regarding the ownership of AI-generated results.

Awareness that AI is not infallible and that its outputs are not always reliable is essential to its responsible use. Unlike calculators, which consistently return the same result to the same input, AI systems are complex probabilistic data structures whose outputs depend on a multitude of factors, including randomness. Consequently, verifying the information generated by AI is a fundamental principle for any responsible user.

Amidst all these developments, it has become clear that AI is no longer a matter of the future, but an integral part of our present. The manner in which we choose to use it will shape our future.



## Slovenia and AI

Although Slovenia is a small country, it has a long and proud tradition in the field of AI. Even during periods when opportunities for the development of advanced technologies were limited, Slovenian scientists were already achieving notable results on the global stage. As early as the 1980s, the Jožef Stefan Institute was among the few European centres where AI research was pursued systematically and at a high level. In addition, the Faculty of Computer and Information Science at the University of Ljubljana has become a key research hub in areas such as machine learning, natural language processing and intelligent systems.

One of the most notable chapters in the history of AI in Slovenia is the development of speech technology in the Slovene language. In 2000, the author of this article received an award from the Government Office for Persons with Disabilities for a project involving the development of the Speaker system, which enabled the generation of Slovenian speech from written text. At that time, only IBM had developed a speech synthesiser for English and Spanish, and the estimated cost of creating a similar system by IBM for any additional language, including Slovene, was approximately two million US dollars.

At the time, this project had a profound social impact, as it not only advanced scientific research but also significantly improved internet accessibility for blind and partially sighted individuals. Previously, such individuals were largely reliant on recorded audio cassettes or the use of Braille. With the introduction of this speech technology, they finally gained direct access to content, which meant greater independence, social inclusion and improved opportunities for education and employment.

Today, Slovenian researchers are actively involved in leading European and global projects, including the establishment of the International Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence (IRCAI) under the auspices of UNESCO in 2020. While there is insufficient space here to list all the successful projects in which the Slovenian academic and research community has taken part or is currently engaged, I would like to mention one of the most recent: the AI Factory project. Coordinated by the Jožef Stefan Institute and carried out in cooperation with all national universities, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and other key stakeholders, the project includes the installation of a new supercomputer and will form part of the European network of AI factories. The primary focus of our project will be the use of AI in the fields of energy, health care, sustainable agriculture, biotechnology, smart industry, language technologies, etc.

Slovenia (and the entire Europe) is certainly lagging behind the United States and China in this field. Nevertheless, it is making determined efforts to maintain its position as a co-creator of contemporary AI. In this context, Slovenian diplomacy plays an important role in supporting and promoting this field within the international arena.

## Artificial intelligence and diplomacy – an opportunity and a responsibility

Diplomacy has always relied on access to accurate information, high-quality data analysis and, ultimately, strategic decision-making. In today's world, where the amount of information is growing exponentially, traditional methods of diplomacy are no longer sufficient. AI offers tools that can make diplomacy much more efficient, accurate and strategic.

Large language models such as ChatGPT enable diplomacy to quickly analyse complex reports, summarise content, draft speeches and documents and even detect subtle shifts in the rhetoric of political leaders. Meanwhile, virtual assistants in the form of advanced chatbots can provide immediate support to consular services, offer guidance on local customs, highlight protocol rules, facilitate faster responses to crisis situations, etc.

In 2023, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia organised the first national conference on artificial intelligence, entitled "Artificial Intelligence – An Advantage and an Opportunity for Slovenia". The main objective of the conference was to foster stronger links between the academic and research spheres, the economy and public administration. It was organised in cooperation with other ministries, the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the most advanced companies and, of course, the academic and research community.

At the time, it was expected that this would be the only conference on AI organised by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. However, the significance of the field and the strong interest expressed by other stakeholders prompted the organisation of further conferences. As a result, two AI conferences were held in 2024: the first, in the spring, focused on "Artificial Intelligence – Directions for Development and International Synergies", while the second, in the autumn, addressed "The Future of Education – AI as an Agent of Change".

This year, on 10 June 2025, the fourth national conference entitled "Artificial Intelligence – New Directions and Challenges for Slovenia" will take place at Jablje Castle. The special guest will be Dr Lucilla Sioli, Director for Artificial Intelligence and Digital Industry at the European Commission, who will present the latest European plans and strategic orientations in the field of AI.

Today, systems for analysing news, verifying disinformation, providing real-time translation, assisting with crisis management and anticipating geopolitical trends are no longer a distant prospect. They are a present reality that must be responsibly embraced and integrated into diplomatic work.

However, amidst all this, we must not forget that AI systems are tools requiring careful and judicious handling. Classified data, personal information and strategic decisions must never be placed on open networks without adequate protection. The verification of information obtained remains crucial and is the responsibility of the users, as is exercising judgement – an essential human cognitive input. Ultimately, the responsibility for decisions rests with the users, as over-reliance on AI can lead to neglecting human judgement, empathy or cultural understanding, which are key elements of diplomacy.

This is one of the main reasons why the Ministry organises courses on the use of these modern tools, ensuring that diplomats know how to use them correctly, safely and sensibly. It is important to recognise that AI will not replace people; rather, those who use AI responsibly and intelligently will replace those who lack the knowledge or ability to do so effectively.

## Conclusion – new working methods for a new era

AI has entered diplomacy not as a substitute for humans, but as a new tool. Those who employ it responsibly, thoughtfully and strategically will hold a distinct advantage in an ever-changing world. The most successful diplomatic services will be those that combine human wisdom and empathy with the analytical power of AI.

However, the rapid deployment of AI must not come at the expense of values such as human rights, privacy, transparency and accountability. This was underscored by the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Nataša Pirc Musar, at the second national conference on AI: "AI must remain a tool to enhance human well-being, not a tool to devalue it."

With its experience, long-standing research tradition and awareness of the importance of AI, Slovenia is at a good starting point. The activities of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, ranging from bilateral and multilateral engagement on AI to the organisation of conferences, training courses and the development of its own AI tools, reflect a clear commitment to the responsible use of AI in the service of diplomacy and international relations. If we are to be co-creators of the future world order, we must not only understand AI but also actively integrate it into our daily work. In doing so, we need to be aware of the risks while also seizing the opportunities this new technology offers, with the goal of fostering a more just, sustainable, peaceful and interconnected world.

## **FRIENDS OF THE BSF ON THE SITUATION IN EUROPE, THE FUTURE OF THE EU AND SLOVENIA'S ROLE IN THIS CONTEXT**

As part of the commitment to develop the Bled Strategic Forum into a platform for regular meetings and events that, alongside the main international conference held each September at Bled, provide space for discussions on Slovenia's views on current geopolitical developments, a dedicated debate was held at Jablje Castle on 25 March 2025, focusing on the situation in Europe, the future of the European Union and Slovenia's role and activities within this broader context.

Organised in cooperation with the Department for Strategic Studies and Analyses of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, the discussion brought together a group of intellectuals and experts from various fields focusing on the future of the EU. The meeting was held under Chatham House rules, which allow for an open and direct exchange of views and assessments between participants.

The debate covered the EU's global role – or lack thereof – and its vision and strategy for its political, security, economic (industrial) and development future, the need for enlargement and institutional reforms, the reliability of the transatlantic alliance, integration with other partners, the unity of the EU and its Member States and Slovenia's role in the shaping and implementing of these decisions.

Given the rapidly changing geopolitical environment, one of the main conclusions was the need for the EU to clearly express its specific and global interests. The rules-based world order that was in place when the EU was created is changing due to a variety of factors, including the erosion of multilateralism, the rise of populism, geopolitical rivalries and the rise of geo-economics, selective enforcement of rules, double standards and a general decline in trust. The EU must adapt to these changes. Alongside soft power, it must develop hard power, a capacity that cannot be achieved overnight. Although the EU is often presented as a reluctant actor, it has a wide range of resources and instruments at its disposal to play a decisive role in international affairs. The new geopolitical reality is compelling the EU to define its own interests and common public goods, such as security, connectivity and competitiveness, which individual countries cannot provide for their people independently.

While unity of the EU remains crucial, it is under pressure as Member States respond to challenges arising from their perception of existential national threats and geographical location.

To remain competitive with the US and China, the EU needs to boost productivity and economic growth, strengthen industrial capacity, reduce barriers in a number of sectors and complete key initiatives such as the Banking Union and the Capital Markets Union. The functioning of the internal market remains a challenge. Faced with new issues such as security and competitiveness, existing financial priorities will need to be reviewed and adapted. Inevitable customs disputes will reshape global trade relations and require cooperation with other regions worldwide.

The EU will need to reform its decision-making processes. Enlargement is both a geostrategic and a political issue. The Member States are increasingly aware of this fact, but they remain divided on which approach to use.

Strengthening defence capabilities is essential not only for national security and border protection but also for stability, development and progress in general. The EU needs to consider different scenarios, including the withdrawal of US security guarantees, NATO (in)effectiveness and the growing divisions among Member States. The Union must take greater responsibility for its own security. Defence spending needs to be aligned with the new social compact, which is likely to require a reallocation of certain social transfers.

Future possibilities such as artificial intelligence, quantum technologies and space were particularly highlighted, as the world order is expected to be network-structured in these areas and shaped by different actors, not only states.

The EU is increasingly isolated in its broad understanding of democracy, but this can also be an opportunity. It remains the target of hybrid attacks, not only by Russia but also by other global actors. Social networks pose a particular challenge to democratic systems. Solidarity must remain a core value of the EU. Particular attention was devoted to young people, their values and their confusion about the meaning of the 'West' in the modern world. Communication is key, as it fosters better understanding.

Slovenia needs to define and reach a consensus on its national interests and its vision and objectives within the EU. Greater political engagement and leadership are needed. The 'European dimension' is not yet fully internalised. Even after more than two decades of membership, the EU is still often perceived as an outside force. For Slovenia, there is no alternative to a successful and efficient EU. The country must actively participate in internal negotiations within the EU, which is a union of small states and can only be strong if it is united. Slovenia's credibility in all areas will be decisive for its future.

An initiative was also put forward to reconsider the coordination of European affairs within the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, as several participants expressed the view that this responsibility should be transferred to the Prime Minister's Office.





### ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The anniversary of the end of the Second World War always follows the anniversary of the conference of the so-called "Big Three" in Yalta. Together, these two events shaped post-war Europe, especially the Balkans, and had a strong impact on the entire Slovenian national territory.

Military and diplomacy together created a new order in Europe, which is why 9 May is also an important day for diplomacy, both in terms of the diplomatic effort to build the necessary consensus among the Allies to deal with Nazism, and in terms of sorting out the complexities of post-war relations and establishing a new balance of power. The National Liberation War would not have been successful without military diplomacy and discreet channels of communication between the Allies and the Yugoslav Supreme Staff, which was gradually gaining political legitimacy and building its internal structure. It took two years of struggle and well-considered moves to gain recognition in London and the US.

It was not until the Battle of Sutjeska during the fifth German offensive in June 1943 that Churchill's view of events in the Balkans and the former Yugoslav territory changed decisively. This contributed to Churchill's assessment of the new military and political reality as opposed to the nationalist movements and unrealistic assumptions of the Yugoslav refugee government in London, which he generously hosted and still formally recognised. The refugee government was legitimate, but without effective authority. "Until then, we Allies had no idea that Tito's army was so strong," the soldier and diplomat Maclean, head of the British mission to the National Liberation War General Staff from September 1943, said for the daily Delo on the 20th anniversary of the victory.

At the same time, British politicians pragmatically assumed that early recognition of Tito's movement could win them significant concessions in the Balkans after the war and protect their interests and capital, including the mines (Trepča, Mežica, Majdanpek), the railways and perhaps even their own military base. They believed that the demolished Yugoslavia would not have enough capital to exploit its rich resources, and that the former German capital would need to be strategically replaced. Furthermore, analysts in London at the time predicted that the Crown would not be able to hold on to its distant colonies in the long run, so they sought areas of interest closer to home.

Behind the scenes, secret diplomacy was also underway to recognise the new movement and its leadership in the Balkans and to influence the post-war situation in the region. The Tito-Churchill meeting in Naples in August 1944 made it clear who the West saw at the head of the new state, while Marshal Tito's secret visit to Stalin in September 1944 was designed to balance Allied influence in the Balkans, as if cleverly anticipating the Churchill-Stalin agreement a month later, or the Non-Aligned Movement a decade later.

However, eighty years ago in Europe, the question of what to do with defeated Germany was far more important than what to do with victorious Yugoslavia. Allied diplomacy and armies faced a new task. It was precisely over the status of Germany that strong differences emerged between them. This undermined their wartime alliance and, with the division of Germany, shaped Europe for decades to come.

### EXHIBITION 'THE WORLD IN COLOURS – SLOVENIAN PAINTING 1848–1918' AT THE BELVEDERE IN VIENNA

The exhibition entitled 'The World in Colours – Slovenian Painting 1848–1918', mounted at the Lower Belvedere, one of Europe's most prestigious European galleries, will close on 25 May. It is the largest Slovenian exhibition ever held in Vienna.

Ljubljana and Vienna, two cities closely intertwined and connected through history, are located in a part of Europe that has long been a crossroads of cultures, religions, major political developments, wars, battles and tragedies. This shared history has influenced both cities, which belonged to the same state for centuries – for better or worse. As the multicultural capital of the Austrian Monarchy and home to one of Europe's oldest universities, Vienna has long attracted many Slovenians who came in search of a better future for themselves and their loved ones. From the mid-18th century onwards, many of these people also studied in Vienna, going on to pursue their careers in the capital or elsewhere in the monarchy. A significant influx of Slovenian painters began in the mid-19th century, with many settling in Vienna. Some were already qualified and trained, wanting to hone their skills in one of the world's major cultural centres at the time, while others wanted to study at the University of Fine Arts. The exhibition features the works of many of these artists.



Exhibition brochure/  
Author: VDU

This is why the exhibition is dedicated to the generations of courageous and proud Slovenians who lived, studied and worked in Vienna for centuries, enriching both societies and capitals through the knowledge they brought with them. The exhibition is intended as a tribute to their lives, achievements, challenges, concerns and aspirations.

Everyone at the Slovenian Embassy is particularly proud that the exhibition was put together in such a short timeframe. Less than two years passed between the Ambassador first proposing the idea and the exhibition's opening. This is all the more impressive given that the Belvedere had to postpone quite a few previously planned shows due to the pandemic. Initially, the exhibition was planned for 2027 or even the first half of 2028. However, while the Belvedere management were still considering the proposal, Director Stella Rollig visited Ljubljana in August 2022. She viewed the 'treasures' stored in Ljubljana galleries and elsewhere. The Belvedere executives were astonished, as they had not expected anything like that: a stunning mixture of colour, beautiful portraits and landscapes, and numerous accounts of Slovenian painters, particularly Impressionists, who had strong links with Vienna. They were especially surprised to learn that Ivana Kobilca, the first female painter in the monarchy at the time, had represented it at the Venice Biennale in 1898. In early September 2022, the Belvedere thus postponed several other exhibitions to prioritise the Slovenian one.

Almost 200 of the finest paintings, primarily from the Slovenian Impressionist period, were on display, sourced from the National Gallery and private collections, as well as from the Belvedere's own storage. In order to optimise the exhibition layout, the gallery completely refurbished the exhibition halls and repainted the walls in pastel colours. An extensive catalogue in German and English was published to accompany the show.

## Diplomatic Missions – In Focus



The exhibition was officially inaugurated on 29 January this year by the presidents of both countries, with approximately 800 guests invited to attend. Many people who had heard about the event came without invitations, but had to be turned away at the entrance. Attendance figures show a record turnout. The exhibition provided an exceptional opportunity for the promotion of Slovenian art and the achievements of the most eminent Slovenian painters during the period of national awakening – a message implicit in the title and the exhibition itself.

Slovenian and Austrian presidential couple  
Author: Matjaž Klemenc, UPRS

Another interesting fact related to the exhibition is that it is staged in the palace where the Austrian State Treaty was signed on 15 May 1955. Article 7 of the Treaty stipulates the rights of the Slovenian minority in Austria, and the exhibition is on view during the events marking the 70th anniversary of the Treaty. Whether this is a mere coincidence or not remains to be seen.

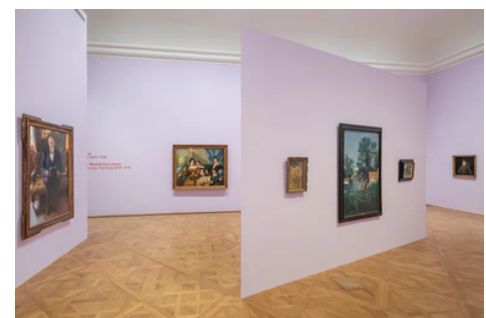
### Highlights from the exhibition



Author: Grega Gutman/ Narodna galerija



Author: VDU



Author: Ouriel Morgenstern/Belvedere

### SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED

- 4 April: Slovenia elected as new member of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs
- 17 April: Opening of Latin America and Caribbean Days 2025 international conference (running until 30 November 2025)
- 10 May: Three-Runner Race 'Slovenia – Aid & Partnerships'
- 20 May: World Bee Day
- 22 May: Slovenian Diplomacy Day

### IN THE PIPELINE

- 29–30 May: Africa Day 2025
- 10 June: Fourth national conference on artificial intelligence
- 29–31 August: Young Bled Strategic Forum
- 1–2 September: 20th Bled Strategic Forum

## Inspirational Quote

"When you have gone so far that you can't manage one more step, then you've gone just half the distance that you're capable of."

**Greenland Proverb**

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