

Sinfo

January-February

The Best from Slovenia

IN FOCUS
Slovenia Celebrates
25 Years of Independence

**I FEEL
SLOVENIA**



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SLOVENIA**

Sinfo

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INDEPENDENCE – A CENTURY-OLD DREAM

It took considerable boldness and determination for Slovenians to gain independence and sovereignty in a democratic and peaceful manner 25 years ago. The dream of generations of Slovenian men and women for the past 150 years was finally fulfilled. We now take great pride and pleasure in celebrating the anniversary of an undertaking which brought all Slovenians together. We had shared fears and doubts, and as a nation together aspired to gain international recognition. The first Western European countries – Germany, Sweden and Iceland – recognised Slovenia on 19 December 1991.

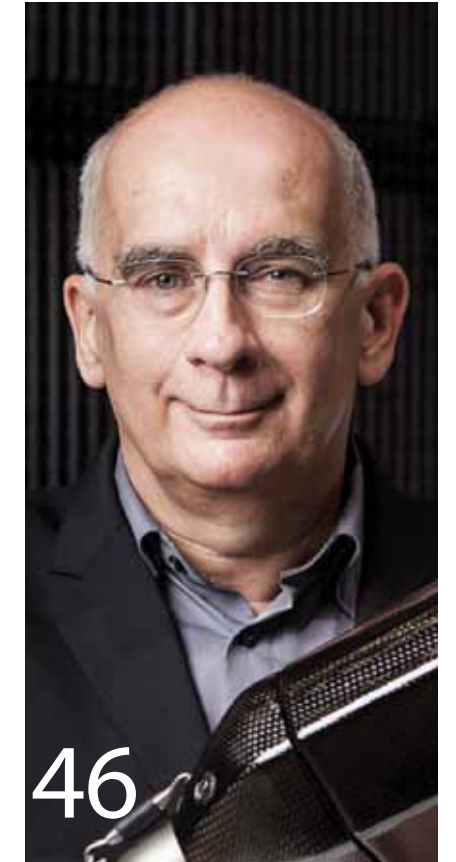
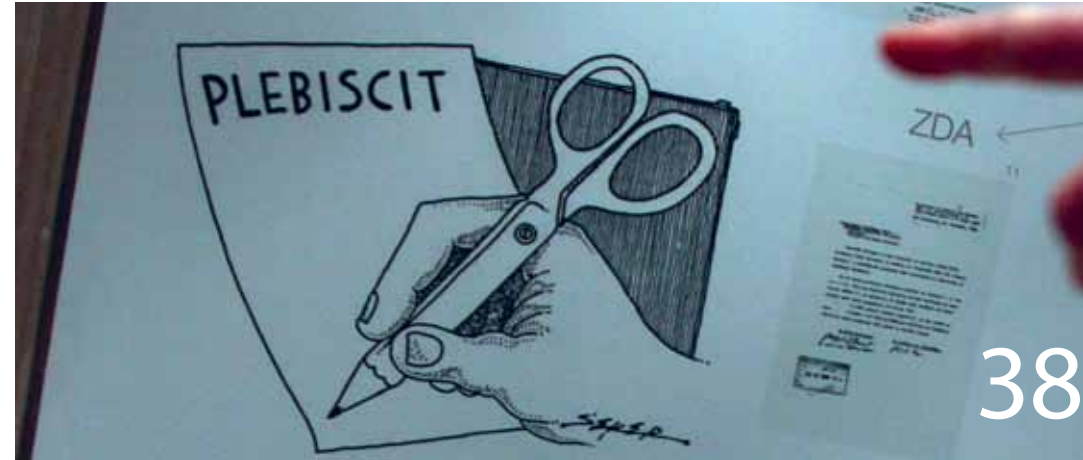
This year's celebrations have started with an event marking the anniversary of the plebiscite of 23rd December 1990 in which citizens overwhelmingly voted to establish Slovenia's independence as a sovereign state. It will end at the close of 2016 with the 25th birthday of the Slovenian Constitution.

We asked law student Gregor Oprčkal how he would address the citizens of Slovenia on the Independence Day if he were Prime Minister? »I would tell them to use their abilities to the full and develop their talents. I would also encourage them to take the initiative and start changing things for the better. And it is precisely the determination and courage of certain individuals that have allowed Slovenia to exist as an independent country for almost 25 years. We may take all this for granted, but not long ago our parents and grandparents could not even dream about what we have today. Free elections, a multi-party system, freedom of speech, membership of international community. For the first time in history, a Slovenian – former President of the Republic of Slovenia, Dr Danilo Turk – is one of the candidates for UN Secretary-General. I would also try to gain the trust of citizens and convince them to reinforce the credibility of state institutions, for how can we convince others to trust us, if we ourselves do not believe in our country?«

Yes, how can we?

Vesna Žarkovič, Executive Editor

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A QUARTER CENTURY OF EXISTENCE

The year 2016 marks the quarter of a century of Slovenia's independence and sovereignty. Slovenians consider their vote in favour of independence at the plebiscite 25 years ago to be the most important decision ever made by Slovenian citizens who seized the historic moment. As a nation they stood united by courage and solidarity when, with the turnout of 93%, as many as 1,289,369 Slovenians on the electoral roll or 88.5% of all eligible voters said YES to the question of whether Slovenia should become an independent and sovereign country.

25TH ANNIVERSARY OF SLOVENIA'S INDEPENDENCE

The future belongs to the brave

NATAŠA BUŠLJETA

For Slovenia and Slovenians, the year 1991 was a turning point. In that year, Slovenia was placed on the global political map as a sovereign and independent state. Independence is considered the most important decision made by Slovenian citizens who, 25 years ago, understood the historic aspect of the opportunity and seized it. The political agreement reached by the parliamentary parties signaled a political unity and national maturity.

Nevertheless, the foundations for the statehood were established by Slovenians more than a thousand years ago. The exceptional geographic location at the crossroads of the Alps, the Mediterranean, the mysterious Karst and the vast Pannonian Plain undoubtedly played an important role in this process. The diverse landscape left its mark on the rich natural and cultural heritage, influenced people's creativity, and inspired various outstanding individuals.

THE MATURING OF NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

In the 6th century, our Slavic ancestors moved from the area behind the Carpathian Mountains and settled in today's Slovenia. In the 7th century, they had already formed the oldest known Slavic state – the principality of Carantania, a tribal union under the leadership of King Samo. The principality survived for almost 300 years.

Carantania was renowned for its democratic system, which even inspired the authors of the United States Constitution.

The rich blend of the old and the new has gone through a long process of transforming itself into an independent ethnic community which matured primarily through the publication of the first books and by establishing the foundations of the national programme in the 16th century. Although up until the 20th century the Slove-

nian national community was governed by foreigners, mostly the House of Habsburg and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it still managed to establish its own national identity. After World War I, Slovenia became part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and after World War II, it became part of the Social Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

After being a part of Yugoslavia for more than seventy years, a consensus for an independent path developed among Slovenians.

Slovenia became a sovereign and independent state in June 1991 and was recognized internationally in January 1992, which was followed by the efforts of the state to become a relevant player in the international community.

In 1998, Slovenia, which was still a new state at that time, received great recognition when it was elected as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council and when it also presided over the Council. The year 2004 was an important milestone for Slovenia as the country became a member of the European Union and NATO. Among the new EU member states, Slovenia was the first to introduce the common euro currency on 1st January 2007 and the first to preside over the EU Council in the first half of 2008.

25

25 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE
REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

23 December 1990

Plebiscite on independence of Slovenia. 88.2 % of the people vote FOR an independent Republic of Slovenia.

www.slovenia25.si

25 June 1991

The Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia adopts the Basic Constitutional Charter, the Constitutional Act and the Declaration of Independence.

www.slovenia25.si

25

25 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE
REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

With determination, we formed our own democratic state and, in 25 years, achieved the most important goals in the international environment.

PRESERVING THE MESSAGE OF THE INDEPENDENCE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

By reminiscing about the most important historic events of the Slovenian nation which occurred 25 years ago and were unprecedented in the sense of unity, we want to show especially to the young generation that the values of the "independence" period are important now and will continue to be important in the future. An independent country is not something to be taken for granted; we have to take care of it and instil optimism and determination in young people with which they will pursue their unfulfilled goals and set equally ambitious objectives.

THE RECOGNISABILITY OF SLOVENIA IN THE WORLD

The international recognition and membership in all major international organizations are important achievements for Slovenia. However, we are still not completely recognized in the international sphere. For example, there are no stereotypes about the Slovenians, except in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, in contrast to the Germans, for example, who are seen as precise, and the Spanish, who are presented as passionate.

Slovenia is still often mistaken for Slovakia and vice versa. For that reason, we will take the advantage of our 25th anniversary to further promote and present Slovenia in the world.



Photo: STA

Slovenia and Slovakia are cooperating on a project entitled the SLOV-SLOV Dimension. Very few European countries have as many things in common as Slovenia and Slovakia. For that reason, we should not resent foreigners for making such mistakes. In addition to presenting the common points and the roots of both Slovenia and Slovakia, the exhibition will highlight their differences that emerged under the influence of different historic events and geographical conditions. The opening of the exhibition will take place in Bratislava in June 2016.

The exhibition entitled Mount Triglav (Slovenia and its national mountain), which will be on display at the Swiss Alpine Museum in Bern from 30th January to 28th March 2016, will also be of great interest.

The Swiss find it interesting that Mount Triglav is a Slovenian national symbol and that Slovenia is the only country that has a specific mountain depicted on its coat of arms and the flag.

Prepared by the Swiss Alpine Museum in Bern, the exhibition will present the significance of Mount Triglav for the Slovenian national consciousness, as well as the political importance the mountain has had in the history of Slovenia and mountaineering from the first ascent in 1778 to this day.

This year, a brochure about Slovenia for students will be published in the United States, which will also be issued as a Washington Times magazine supplement. The Americans will thus have the opportunity to learn more about the homeland of the LA Kings hockey player Anže Kopitar, the NBA basketball players Goran and Zoran Dragič, and the potential first lady of the United States Melania Knauss Trump.

During the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, visitors and athletes will have the opportunity to discover new facts about Slovenia at the famous Barra Beach.

On its 25th birthday, Slovenia will be presented as a green country with exceptional people. You can regularly follow all events and activities at www.slovenia25.si.

Important dates:

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 23rd December 2015 | 25th Anniversary of the Plebiscite Proclamation |
| 24th June 2016 | Slovenian National Day |
| 25th October 2016 | Sovereignty Day – 25 years since the last JNA soldier left Slovenia |
| 23rd December 2016 | Independence and Unity Day – 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia |



Photo: Nea Culpa

 <p>8 February 1992 - 23 February 1992 25 Slovenian sportsmen compete at the Albertville Winter Olympics under the national flag of Slovenia for the first time.</p> <p>www.slovenia25.si</p>	<p>www.slovenia25.si</p>	<p>22 May 1992 Slovenia is accepted to the UN as its 176th member.</p> 
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DR MIRT KOMEL: A PHILOSOPHER'S VIEW OF YOUNG SLOVENIA

“A constitutional state does not have to be loved, it must be understood”

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ
Photo: PERSONAL ARCHIVES



As a researcher and lecturer in philosophy at the University of Ljubljana and associate of the Peace Institute in Ljubljana, Dr Mirt Komel is well placed to assess Slovenia a quarter of a century after independence. He is a former member of the editorial board of the *Journal for the Critique of Science, Imagination, and New Anthropology* and a co-founder of the Aufhebung International Hegel Association. Author of two travelogues, one novel and three scientific monographs, he regularly publishes in renowned national and international scientific (*Problemi, Filozofski vestnik* etc.) and literary magazines (*Apokalipsa, Sarajevske sveske*). What is more, he occasionally stirs up the Slovenian public with articles in Slovenian mass media such as the *Delo* and *Mladina*.

“If you’re involved in philosophy, one of the effects is that you’re constantly distracted from the real world. And you need things that bring you back to earth. It’s very strenuous for the body to live exclusively in the world of ideas. To think means to think by applying concepts, which is unimaginably difficult,” he explains.

What are your thoughts on the 25th anniversary of Slovenia’s independence?

Slovenia? A young republic in the company of other European states with a long history. The concept of a modern state governed by the rule of law is significantly older than mere 250 years, which means that Slovenia with its 25th anniversary is in this regard still in its infancy. Of course, we have our history, also our experience as a state, our own institutions, culture and people who lead and govern it. Drawing a parallel with the Indian philosophy of reincarnation, one might say that the Socialist Republic of Slovenia was reincarnated into another form – the democratic Republic of Slovenia.

What does it look like today?

Philosophers are supposed to know and see things as they actually are, but to grasp the actual reality represents the utmost challenge. I understand a state to be a political community and the result of the actions of all its citizens. In that sense, all citizens are equally

responsible for the current situation. We have no right to criticise and complain about state institutions, if we do not assume our own responsibility for them. The state is not something that evolves beyond our will, quite the opposite. So when we feel powerless before the massive infrastructure of the state, there is no excuse for our inaction. I am convinced that we are too passive as citizens. The first duty of citizens should be to read the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia at least.

To be a full citizen means to personally assume responsibility for the law. In short and very simply put: to know what is right.

And do we know that?

The problem with the law is that it behaves like the Roman emperor who hung the acts so high up that people were unable to read them. Legal language is so complex that ordinary citizens have difficulty understanding it. A constitutional state does not have to be loved, it must be understood. Civic education should be based on this: to learn to read and understand the law and then know how to intervene in the governance of the state so that ultimately we do not feel powerless victims. Were we familiar with the law, we

would become aware of our great power as citizens. For instance, the "Today is a new day" initiative has set itself the task of making the state more accessible to citizens. They created the Parlameter, a tool which monitors the functioning of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia, and at the same time in the case of a referendum they translate legal language into everyday language. In short, there prevails the desire to keep the state their own and they refuse to permit the state to become the hostage of any government or social group.

What is the difference between state and society?

The question about the relationship between state and society is an extreme sore, neuralgic point of any attempt to analyse and examine politics. The two should not be equated. We too often consider ourselves to be members of society and not frequently enough as citizens. Society per se is that which stands against the state. As citizens we have a set of rights and duties, and for the most part we behave as a market-oriented society which is trying to grow and develop by shaking off the domination of the state.

The problem for citizens is that we let politicians deal with politics instead of getting involved ourselves, and we consider ourselves social beings that are not affected by the state or politics.

This is the very same mistake as leaving thinking exclusively to us, philosophers as professional thinkers, saying "they are here to think so we don't have to." People who consider themselves as social beings and not as citizens can easily view the state as a collection of unnecessary duties, even as some type of a repressive machine which encroaches upon our rights. I find this a completely erroneous understanding of the state. The very thing that underpins our rights and freedoms we perceive as a yoke. When it comes to elections or referenda, these are seen as a matter of convenience in the sense that people say "I don't feel like going to vote in the elections" ... What nonsense! There are so few opportunities available to us within the institutions of state that we should seize them with

both hands, and yet we say that we just don't feel like it. Not to even mention being politically active generally, beyond the framework of state institutions.

How did you perceive the uprising movement?

Politics is not a question of the heroic mien of a Hamlet or Antigone. You cannot do anything by yourself. You need people with whom you can act in tandem. Citizens became aware of their political power with the uprising movement two years ago, but they didn't know how to truly capitalise on it and make it work. The most important political event of my generation was without question the uprising movement a few years ago; it can be equated to the civil society movement of the 1980s. The state was reset to zero. Power moved from state institutions onto the streets, where it was tossed about for a while waiting to be picked up and seized by someone. The people behaved as if they didn't know what exactly to do with it; as if afraid of their own power, power which they were willing to return immediately into the hands of a predictably safe government. We weren't prepared to take risks and make radical changes. The uprising movement was, or at least it could have been, the revolution of our time, but instead ended in a reformation of the state.

How would you compare Slovenia to Europe and the world?

I perceive Europe as the sum of the combined tradition of Greek and Roman antiquity, Christianity, Renaissance and the Enlightenment. In international relations, our size puts us in a subordinate position, but from the political standpoint, I see this as an advantage. Rather than being a modern constitutional state we are more akin to the polis of ancient Greece, the very cradle of politics. We could practice politics in a manner unlike any other EU country because they are all competing on an equal playing field in terms of size.

We could lead the way in terms of quality, becoming some kind of political avant-garde in relation to others. Our very size might allow us to afford ourselves what large countries simply cannot.

In what field could we stand out?

For example, in philosophy, where we already excel. The Ljubljana Lacanian School with Slavoj Žižek at the microphone and Mladen Dolar on the guitar has amply demonstrated that quantity means nothing and that everything depends on quality. In the official world of academia and science, it is those individuals and institutions which publish the most articles and are awarded the most points, projects and similar quantitative qualifiers that lead the way. And with such qualifiers, they turn science into a production line and as a result kill off any thought process or thinking. However, in so far as thinking is concerned Ljubljana is the very place one needs to be in order to practice actual philosophy thanks to the aforementioned Lacanian School.

If you were the Prime Minister...

...I would be sceptical of Plato's idea that rulers should be philosophers. Plato tried to elevate rulers into philosophers, and he was imprisoned on two occasions. Marcus Aurelius considered himself to be a Stoic philosopher, a free man whether in power on the throne or in chains, but one who just happened to find himself Emperor on the throne. I could go on. But I would always assert the same thing: philosophers are not suitable people to rule.

What's it like to be a Slovenian citizen today?

Only when one leaves the country, does one actually feel what it's like to be a Slovenian citizen. In Europe, I'm considered a Slovenian. Outside Europe, I'm seen as a European, in the Middle East as a Westerner and were I to go to the Moon, I'd probably be deemed an Earthling.

One great thing about Slovenia is that we are forced to learn foreign languages due to our limited size, and languages expand our horizons and understanding of the world.

What does the future hold for Slovenia and Europe?

One possible scenario points in the direction of enhanced integra-

tion of Europe, where the EU wishes to become the United States of Europe following the example of the USA. The second scenario leans towards a process of fragmentation into smaller units. A balkanisation of Europe in a way, where nation states dissolve into smaller units. In any case, the idea of nation statehood is doomed and destined to fail. But if a state governed by the rule of law is able to overcome the defunct idea of a nation, that is another matter altogether.

As a professor of philosophy at the Faculty of Social Sciences, how do you see the younger generation?

This is a restless generation completely overcome and driven by action. It doesn't know how to stop and think things through. It is a generation born with new technology in its cradle, technology which actually hinders the educational process, rather than enables access to knowledge, namely to books, lectures and the like. They are convinced that too much work and discipline is required of them and they fail to understand the difference between information and knowledge. They can get information via the Internet, but they can only obtain knowledge through studying, which means reading and listening to their teachers. Watching a lecturer via YouTube is not the same as the actual experience of the lecture, and herein lies the problem of an entire generation which does not realise that it even has a problem. They could build on everything that we don't understand about them, and develop something new, different. Every generation brings something new, unique. But in order for them to develop that, they must first walk the path of previous generations. The only way to take a step forward is to take a step back. You have to know what has been done before: it's a question of the relationship towards tradition. They are too worried about the future. They are afraid even if they're not in danger, because they don't understand that they can resolve their situation solely as a generation since the matter at hand is a collective-political and not a personal-psychological issue. They take most pleasure in the narcissistic self-affirmations of the type predominantly offered by Facebook, because they don't realise that the prerequisite of happiness is the readiness to forget about oneself. If you seek happiness, you have to create and provide it for others.

What are your personal plans for the future?

To think, work, read, write and simply to be.

HOW DO STUDENTS SEE SLOVENIA?

Flying like a bird or laying eggs like a chicken - and making big efforts to prove itself

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ, URŠKA STOLNIK
Photo: NEBOJŠA TEJIĆ/STA



How do young people represent Slovenia to foreigners? Which of its positive features would they highlight? And if Slovenia were an animal, what would it be? How would young people characterise the country's achievements, its good and bad points? What would be their response as to why Slovenians are so successful at international competitions? Sinfo went to ask them.

Blaž Točaj, student of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering in Maribor
I am glad that students have the possibility of free education until the age of 26. The quality of education in our country is very high in my opinion. I believe that a student with even just a little self-initiative can get substantial benefit from education. I am certain of this because we, students, can appreciate the quality of our education when we go abroad. I am also proud to say that our schools provide a very broad general education, and we can thus easily compete with other European countries. How do I see Slovenia in 25 years? Well, I wish that many more engineers would stay here in Slovenia and not be tempted to go abroad. I personally wish to stay in Slovenia, but if there are no good opportunities, I'll unfortunately be forced to leave.



Domen Vavpotič, student
One of its most distinctive features is its size, actually its smallness, which is really evident, particularly when you contrast this with Slovenia's diversity. First and foremost I would present the varied geographical features which combine in such a small area as our Slovenia. One of the first things would also be our language, which I like and respect very much. I find it a very interesting and suitable means of introducing our country. These would be the first two things I'd mention. I'd leave any political and other matters to one side.

Valerija Zabrač, student of the School of Arts in Nova Gorica
 How would I describe Slovenia to a foreigner? As a small, green country with a small capital, where people are generally friendly, and as a good starting point for travelling. It's different from other countries; it's an interesting little country. Its negative points are the current economic crisis and the distrust in politics. Many Slovenians are successful internationally. Because we come from a small country, we make even bigger efforts to prove ourselves. We constantly worry that we are less noticed because of our small size, but we also successfully prove that size is not an obstacle to achieving success. How do I see Slovenia in 25 years? I hope the EU doesn't become one large single state, but remains a union of autonomous countries.



Tim Poštuvan, school – boy
 I would list all the natural sights and places of interest to a foreigner and I'd also describe its people. I would mention that Slovenia is known internationally for its sporting successes and other achievements in all areas of life. Slovenians are friendly and eager to learn. I would tell young people about our school system and explain how good it is. If Slovenia were an animal, it would be a hen because of its shape. Or a tiger that attacks the world. It could also be a reclusive animal due to its independence, or a smart and cunning animal. A big advantage of Slovenia is that education is free and that there's a variety of different schools you can go to.

Maja Rupret, student of the Faculty of Law:
 I perceive Slovenia as a country whose population is highly educated. Unfortunately, the unemployment rate is high and thus the brain drain problem is getting worse, which is damaging the country. And unemployment also represents an immense financial outlay for the country – one which will not get repaid. It's difficult to predict what will happen in 25 years, but if we have survived until now, I'm sure we'll continue to do so in the future as well.



Klavdija Sitar, student of the Faculty of Law in Ljubljana
 Creativity should be promoted more. There should be greater emphasis on practical work, students should resolve problems and look for their own solutions. My advice to the country is to invest more in young people.



Tilen Handare, student of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering in Maribor
 What is my wish for Slovenia? That things remain as they are and that all citizens help to live in peace and harmony. And that our sportspeople continue taking first places at international competitions. I think that as a nation we have so many good sportspeople because there's so few of us and we have to make extra efforts to be noticed. I would advise young people to participate in public life and government activities, including elections, and to follow their dreams and realise their goals. I would present Slovenia to foreigners in terms of its geographical characteristics, and as a land with numerous wonderful attractions.



Matija Stupar, student
 Slovenians are a very small nation with a good reputation in science. However, its size is also a disadvantage because people are not aware of their potential. Perhaps Slovenians are rather humble by nature, and therefore they do not try to make use of their potential. I would encourage foreigners to visit Slovenia by describing our nature, the diverse opportunities and ways of life. We have beautiful nature, really clean air and clean water. The country is sparsely populated which is important to people who prefer to live in small towns or in the countryside. This is ideal for them. If Slovenia were an animal, it would be a hen, because it's useful and small; every now and then it also lays an egg.

Maruša Kerenčič, school-girl

Slovenia features beautiful nature, diversity, many different events. Slovenians are friendly and the education system is good. Teachers are very friendly and understanding if you have to participate in competitions or attend various preparations. We are a small nation. On the one hand, this is a good thing. We all know each other, and you can quickly get from one end of the country to the other. On the other hand, this is also a disadvantage. If you want to be successful and rise above the average, you often have to go abroad. There's simply not enough space here for everybody to be a success. Hidden reserves?



Tjaša Valič, school-girl

Slovenia is a small, very beautiful country, full of good people and picturesque places. If Slovenia were an animal, it would be a hen. And that's not just because of its geographical shape. In the same way as a mother hen takes care of its chickens, Slovenia takes care of its people and protects them under its wings. As for Slovenia's achievements, I would mention the successes of our sportspeople, Tina Maze and Peter Prevc. The best things about Slovenia are its small size, the connection between people, the familiarity and awareness between all parts of the country.



Boštjan Vrisk, student of the Faculty of Law in Ljubljana

If Slovenia were an animal, I would describe it as a dog. A very obedient and loyal animal. I think we are very submissive towards the European Union. I think that despite the fact that we are an EU member state, we should develop an independent "backbone" within Slovenia, rather than taking for granted everything the EU says. Generally, I wish Slovenia was more critical of the EU. It's difficult to imagine what Slovenia will be like in 25 years' time; we'll just have to wait and see. Only time will tell.

Goran Tišma, student of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering in Maribor
I see Slovenia's biggest plus points being the fact that it's an EU member, it's independent and it provides free education. However, I would add that we skim too quickly through the curriculum. There's definitely not enough hands on, practical work related to our studies, and that'll be single most important thing in our profession. So, I wish that more practical work might be provided during our studies. If Slovenia were an animal, it would certainly be a bird – a bird which flies far and wide and often migrates from place to place.



Ivana Rajko, student of the Faculty of Design

I come from Croatia and I see Slovenia as a country which offers more possibilities and opportunities than Croatia and also as a nation of friendly and communicative people. If Slovenia were an animal, I think it would be a bird, which flies freely without limits and constantly engages with other countries.



Martina Lokar, school-girl

How would I persuade foreigners to move to Slovenia? I would tempt them with beautiful places and friendly people. I think Slovenians are welcoming to foreigners; we are hospitable. Its small size is also an advantage; people can see many things in a small area. If Slovenia were an animal, it would be a bee or an ant. People are industrious, hard-working, and do their best at work. In addition to sport, I would also include business enterprises and companies among Slovenia's achievements, for example, the Pipistrel light aircraft manufacturer, based in the Primorska region where I come from.

GREGOR OPRČKAL – LAW STUDENT

Slovenia as a crossroads of ideas

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ
PHOTO: NEBOJŠA TEJIĆ/STA

What does he think about Slovenia today, what has the country achieved in its 25 years of independence, what are the shortcomings and what are the strengths of today's reality, what would he change if he had the power to do so – we talked about all this with a 23-year-old law student who has lived in independent Slovenia all his life, and knows the former Yugoslavia only from others' descriptions.

Gregor, you are two years younger than our country and a student in his graduation year at the Faculty of Law – how do you see Slovenia?

I'm glad to be Slovenian and I have never had any trouble admitting it. There's a lot that is good and beautiful in our country. Despite the usually gloomy media reporting, we're still doing quite well. Maybe we don't focus enough on positive events.

I feel good in Slovenia as a student.

The country still provides a reasonably broad spectrum of health-care services. However, I don't like the fact that the politics is extremely sectarian, with politicians divided into two camps that seldom find common ground. Events from the Slovenian history are still too often perceived as black and white. There are too many discriminatory public statements and we are too susceptible to them. If we didn't react in such a way, the politicians would be forced to behave differently as they would know that populist remarks would not have any effect on voters.

How does this affect real life?

Important debates, such as those on the tax reform or pension law, are all too often consumed by quarrels about the "Communists and the Home Guard". We should be looking for the solution that would best suit Slovenia at the given moment. We certainly lack impartial, profound insight into history. The first step towards finding a solution would be to listen to each other and to establish a dialogue. That would allow us to understand each other. But most importantly, everybody should accept their share of responsibility for the

problems in our society. Better people would then lead to better politics.

What did you learn about our former country from older people?

They have mixed feelings, but mostly they felt good living in Yugoslavia. After World War II, there was a lot of optimism, and the nations were connected by the idea of a successful common economic and social area. They told me about great sporting events, for example the 1970 Basketball World Championship in Ljubljana and the 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo, and about other positive events. Some complained about the sense of deprivation, particularly in the areas of religion, culture and politics. If you did not belong to the right political party, it was very hard to succeed. I also heard a lot about the tragic and bloody conflicts following the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

And how do you, as a student, experience Slovenia today?

As Slovenians, our problem is that we only act when we are forced to act. What I mean is that we tend to be complacent and take shortcuts that don't pay out in the long run. It bothers me that many people only think of their own short-term interests while ignoring the long-term common good. This is very harmful for the society. Under these circumstances, corruption flourishes, which has damaging consequences for the country. People don't realize that the greater common good would lead to individuals receiving more as well. For example, the Swiss rejected a minimum wage increase two years ago because they were aware that their economy would be simply unable to withstand the additional burden. At roughly the same time, Slovenians rejected the pension reform, although

all objective indicators showed that it was absolutely necessary. This led to the lowering of Slovenia's credit rating and increased the interest rates; two years later, we adopted a proposal that was substantially the same, but the harm had already been done. In a nutshell, we lack a collective spirit that would lead us to make decisions for the common good. We also fought against austerity measures, and only when they were presented to us by somebody else, in this case the EU, we accepted them with few reservations. The golden fiscal rule was a similar story; it was discussed for a couple of years, but when the EU made a decision, we accepted it. It is sad that we are unable to make such decisions by ourselves. That is what I would like to change. For people to prioritize the long-term common good over short-term individual interests. On the other hand, it bothers me that we accept EU measures too quickly, without giving them enough concern. It is a fact that Europe is a large market and that the key European countries are going to lead the way. The question is, how much of the say do smaller countries such as ours actually have when decisions are made. In any case, we should be more critical of these decisions, ask more questions instead of just nodding, participate confidently, boldly and constructively, never losing sight of our national interests and stating them clearly. The adopted measures are, of course, not equally beneficial to all countries.

But still, Slovenians know how to stand together when necessary.

That's true. In difficult moments, for instance, when faced with a natural disaster, we always come together and help each other. I would like that we could act in the same manner in other cases as well, without needing the Troika or nature to force us into unity. I also wish that every citizen would contribute more to the greater common good. The laws we have are quite decent; however, we are having problems with their implementation. We really have a problem; we know we are not doing the right thing but we do it anyway. Obviously, the field of education and upbringing should make more effort in this regard, instilling people from a very young age with greater social responsibility. To only think of one's own interests is to foul one's own nest. Due to the widespread corruption, we have to work for a longer time for a lower pay and a lower pension, as well as pay higher taxes. However, it is excruciatingly obvious that people are unaware of this. We should also be investing much

more in education. Ethics should be taught in both elementary and high schools. The fact is that we Slovenians are too corruptible which means the country is less appealing to foreign investors. It all begins with perfectly basic things, e.g. the employment. As people are often employed through personal connections, too many positions are staffed with incompetent individuals. As a future lawyer, I also think that Slovenians are too quarrelsome and leave too many decisions to the courts. Maybe that stems from our history, as we constantly felt threatened as a nation. I'm sure, however, that we could resolve a greater number of matters by ourselves, without mediators. For instance, Japan has an average of two judges per 100,000 people, while Slovenia has as many as 50.

What are our greatest accomplishments in the 25 years of our state?

Independence in itself was a great achievement. We broke away from the previous system, and adopted constitutional democracy and the principles of respect for human rights and separation of powers.

Today, we may take all this for granted, but no too long ago our parents and grandparents couldn't even dream about it, and that is an aspect we should acknowledge more often.

We have free elections, a multi-party system and freedom of speech that has become well-developed over the 25 years. About the country's greatest accomplishments – we became a member of the international community, the UNSC, the Council of Europe, the EU, NATO and many other institutions, and have adopted a number of international instruments.

What about our weaknesses?

Most of them actually stem from such crucial turning points, our achievement of independence and our accession to the EU. We have been adversely affected by the incomplete transition. We somehow seem to be unable to come to any agreement regarding the former system. We are also having trouble adapting to the EU and preserving our identity at the same time.

How do you feel as a Slovenian when you travel abroad?

I am proud to tell people that I am Slovenian. I often get angry at the media for reporting only the bad things and overlooking the positive stories. Slovenia is a very beautiful country. Although it is small, it is very diverse and successful in numerous fields. I never felt I was doing poorly, and despite of the crisis we preserved many elements of the welfare state. To a foreigner, I would explain that Slovenia may seem tiny on the map but it is home to more diversity than many other, even much larger countries. I would also tell them we are industrious, well educated, that we speak foreign languages very well and have an excellent geographical position.

What future would you like to see for the country?

I would like to picture Slovenia as a "Switzerland on the east", a kind of a bridge between the East and the West. Western countries have long acknowledged us as the most developed country on the Balkans, and we know a lot more about this region than the rest of Europe, which allows Slovenia to function as a bridge, as a sort of logistics centre. I think we are trying too hard to be successful in too many areas; it would be better to take on fewer projects and carry them out more effectively. For example, it is absurd to expect Slovenia to ever be the home of the largest automotive corporate group in the world; however, we could manufacture individual parts for larger systems and develop ideas and technology solutions.

Our university could be the best in the EU, we could have, for example, a centre for the development of ideas – start-ups, we are known to be good and inventive in this area.

Unfortunately, we often forget about our many natural resources, e.g. timber. There is great potential for development in the timber industry. And in politics as well – due to its location, Slovenia could function as a kind of arbitration centre.

Considering its tiny population, Slovenia is extremely successful in sports. How do you explain that?

Sport makes you focus on a certain goal. As your desires become

crystallized, it is a lot easier to ignore everything that could prevent achievement. Sport requires unity; there is no place for grudges and politics there. It would be good if we handled other things in a similar way as well. We are also successful because we are aware of how small our country is and want to show the world not only that we exist but that we are capable of great things.

What do you think about your generation?

I think we are quite optimistic. We are aware that success depends on ourselves and we know that knowledge is power.

Young people like challenges; we started to realize that knowledge acquired through one's studying is merely the foundation and that we have to keep investing in ourselves.

We like debates and critical thinking. We also know that everything is relative. We are curious and ask ourselves how the world works.

How do you picture Slovenia in another 25 years?

I'm a bit concerned that we might lose ourselves in the flatness of modern Europe. But I am also comforted by the thought that we will, again, come together once the going gets tough, like we had in the time of other major historical events. I want Slovenia to be a trustworthy country with reliable public administration, education and healthcare and a stable banking system.

How would you address the citizens of Slovenia on the Independence Day if you were the country's Prime Minister?

I would tell them to use their abilities to the full and develop their talents. They should not just complain but try to change what they believe is inadequate upon their own initiative. We are often oblivious to how little sometimes has to be done for things to improve. And it is precisely the determination and courage of certain individuals that have allowed Slovenia to exist as an independent country for almost 25 years. At the same time, I would try to acquire the trust of citizens, convince them that the government is doing well and reinforce the credibility of state institutions. How can we convince others to trust us if we ourselves don't believe in our country?

THE BRANDS OF SLOVENIA

From the linden leaf to 'I feel Slovenia'

POLONA PREŠEREN

When Slovenia became independent 25 years ago, it had to find its own way of presenting itself to the world. The 'Slovenija, my homeland' campaign towards the end of 1980s significantly raised national consciousness at a time when Slovenia was still part of Yugoslavia, and focusing on the domestic audience proved its worth at the time of the war for independence in 1991. Subsequently however, the new Republic of Slovenia required a strategic branding aimed at the international market.

Countries around the world are recognised by their typical features. When we think of Germany, we think of quality, attention to detail and the flawless precision of their products. We associate Italy with fashion, France with anything related to the enjoyment of life, Switzerland with watches, cheese, and chocolate, etc. Nowadays, the competition between countries is severe and only a handful of them are successful in multiple areas. In practice, we see that even small countries, such as Slovenia, are also competitors in the global arena, as they appeal to the emotions of their visitors. When creating this emotional appeal and the reputation of a country, the importance of its brand, presenting it to the outside world, cannot be denied.

Slovenija also has its own national brand, by means of which it wishes, like other countries, to solidify its position in the global arena and go beyond mere tourist promotion.

Since 2007, Slovenia has been represented and promoted through the use of the 'I feel Slovenia' brand.

Prior to this, it strengthened the national consciousness of its own people by means of the linden leaf; however, it failed to take a final, decisive step in the area of uniform branding. It used various brands and position statements with a focus mainly on tourism. Can we list them? Let's see.

SLOVENIA, MY HOMELAND

It was the turbulent time at the end of the 1980's. Slovenia was still a part of the former Yugoslavia, but its aspirations for independence were becoming increasingly evident. Slovenia had become aware of the importance of its national promotion and of the value of the establishment of independent recognisability. In more ways than one, the 'Slovenija, my homeland' campaign was exceptional and unrivalled, mainly due to the social and political context. It set the foundation for a uniform national brand.

The campaign enjoyed significant political support. Years later, the main promoters of the brand said that it was entirely inward-focused and much less recognisable beyond the borders of the then new country.

Reminiscing about this period, Slovenians still remember the linden leaf, which was a symbol of Slovenian tourism at the time.

Slovenija



7 October 2000

Slovenian extreme skier Davo Karničar skies non-stop down the world's highest mountain Mount Everest (8850m).

www.slovenia25.si

16 June 2001

The American and Russian presidents, George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin, meet for the first time at Brdo pri Kranju.

www.slovenia25.si



The tourist slogans 'Slovenija, my homeland' and 'Tourism is People' marked the manner in which Slovenians viewed themselves. They strengthened national identity and self-confidence, thus transcending tourism.

A BOUQUET OF COLOURFUL FLOWERS

When the first tourism forum was hosted in Bled in 1995, a bouquet of colourful flowers was selected as a symbol of Slovenian tourism for this occasion. It was accompanied by the slogan 'The Green Piece of Europe.' The Centre for the Promotion of Tourism was founded. Slovenian tourism policy was defined and a basic marketing strategy was devised.

The key advantages of the Slovenian tourist offer were based on the properties of the small, green, cultivated, and diverse country that has excellent tourist infrastructure, is hospitable, kind, and dynamic.

In December 2002, following a discussion focusing on the country as a brand, experts in tourism revealed that, as a country, Slovenia was not yet a brand. Furthermore, marketing experts discovered that it had the potential to become one. A year later, the Slovenian Tourist Board, issued a call for tender to obtain offers for creative marketing communication concepts for increasing Slovenia's recognisability.

SLOVENIA INVIGORATES

The result of the tender was a comprehensive communication campaign entitled 'Slovenija invigorates.' This also marked the beginning of the first large-scale promotional campaign. Abroad, Slovenia wished to position itself as a country that surprises, invigorates, and enriches the European Union. The message and the slogan assumed the role of a position statement for tourism and the country: Slovenija poživlja/invigorates/belebt.

The campaign's objective was to enhance the positive attitude towards Slovenia. In addition to enhancing tourism, the campaign also attempted to raise the level of interest in Slovenia, its brand in the field of tourism, its culture, economy, and politics.

'Slovenija invigorates' was the first attempt to use a uniform slogan in all fields, not just in tourism. In 2006, this slogan made way for the brand and slogan 'I feel Slovenia', which is still in use.

I FEEL SLOVENIA

It became evident that the presentation of Slovenia was missing an emotional component of the country's appeal that would add value to Slovenia as a brand. For this reason, the Communication Office of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia (GCO) issued an anonymous call for tenders in July 2006 to obtain designs for Slovenia's new logo and slogan. From among the received suggestions, a panel of experts selected the slogan 'I feel Slovenia' that then served as the basis for its graphic image and the creation of the identity of the Slovenia Brand.

The brand may be used for promotional purposes by anyone. In the future, the custodian will be focusing on introducing the brand in the sphere of the economy and enhancing its presence in the field of sports. Ultimately, the Slovenian brand will also become more recognisable globally if it is consistently used by all those who love Slovenia.



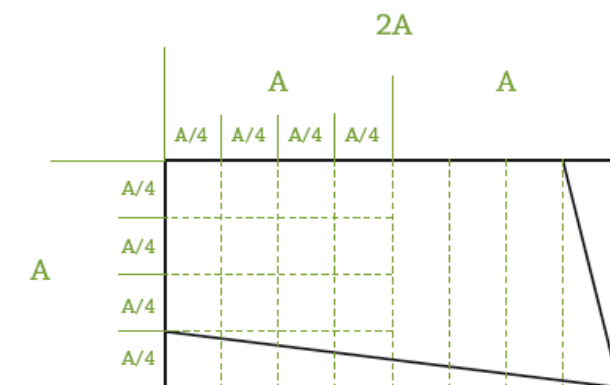
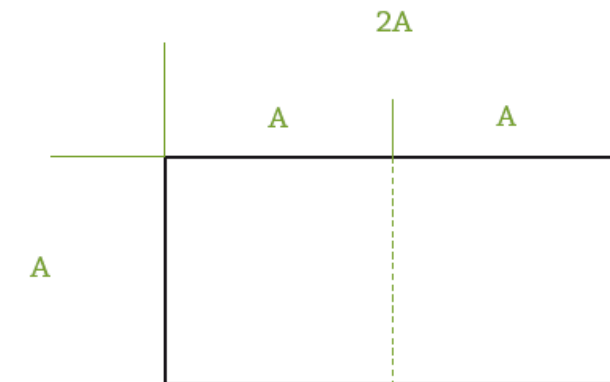
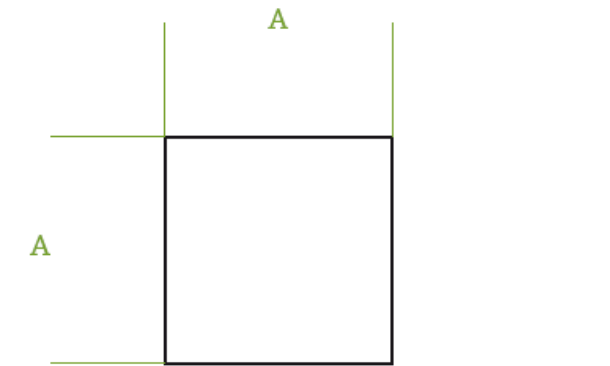
Photo: Ukrom Archives

I FEEL SLOVENIA

After eight years, Slovenia's brand has stood the test of time

MATJAŽ KEK

When seeing the 'I feel Slovenia' logo, do you feel something warm, endearing and inspiring? Does the logo make you want to visit Slovenia, experience our green countryside and chat with a Slovenian when or wherever you might come upon one? To have a glass of excellent Slovenian wine or order an innovative Slovenian product, many of which are to be found on the brand's website? This was undoubtedly the intention of the creators of the slogan and the logo when Slovenia started its six-month presidency of the EU Council in 2008. At that time those involved in the promotion of Slovenia abroad felt they needed the support of a strong new brand, particularly within the EU member states.



Slovenia gained its new and first wide-ranging state brand in November 2007. Prior to that, various tourist brands had been created with varying degrees of success and these had been used to promote tourism in Slovenia.

In 2007 the Ministry of the Economy together with other bodies determined that after almost twenty years of independence Slovenia must at last be 'put on the map of Europe and the world' – as a modern and democratic state and as a land of beautiful nature, talented and pleasant people, a land with potential and with promising opportunities for locals, foreign visitors and businesspeople alike.

These were the bases on which the new state brand, 'I feel Slovenia', was created, though it came about somewhat unusually and in a manner rather different from that generally recommended by experts. To be precise, the slogan came first and it was from this that the agency developed the brand and logo. In any case, the Government Communication Office of the Republic of Slovenia started using the new brand in November 2007. Since Slovenia's independence, the Government Communication Office had been intensively involved in the promotion of the country abroad.

LIVE THE BRAND

At first people in Slovenia had to be informed as to what the brand represented, what was its purpose and as to how they as citizens might help in consolidating the main themes of the logo. This was no easy task, particularly since the logo was registered in English – and not Slovenian. The reason for this was the opportunity to exploit a play on words hidden in the English version of the name of our country – **Sloven**ia, which would be more easily understood and recognised around the world.

Within a few years the brand had gained a satisfactory level of recognition among Slovenians; they particularly liked the 'Slovenian green' colour.

But to actually 'live' the brand requires a longer period of time, suitable incentives and achievements. As with other things, we tend to remember and recognise colours, logos and symbols, but we do not always know what lies hidden behind them or what they represent. This was a more difficult task. It is easy to print out or use a logo, but the core of a brand lies in its symbolic promise of a wonderful experience and repeated recognition of a positive experience upon seeing the logo. In other words, tourists, who have spent some amazing days in Slovenia, seen its sights of natural beauty, experienced active adventures, tasted the food, spoken to friendly and enterprising locals when using the logo and slogan, 'I feel Slovenia', will relive the pleasant memories of their experience when they encounter the logo and slogan at a later date. When further encouraged and prompted, they will become motivated to learn more about Slovenian culture, tourism, sporting events and other aspects of life in Slovenia.

The adoption and application of the brand in tourism went smoothly. Truth be told, the brand was practically ready-made for direct application in the tourism industry, where it was received exceptionally well and without hesitation. Promoters of tourism further developed the brand with creativity and now we have an array of products which nicely complement the basic identity and message of the brand with their own contents, message and visual image.

WITHIN THE STATE ADMINISTRATION, THE PROCESS WAS NOT SO EASY NOR TAKEN ON BOARD QUITE SO QUICKLY

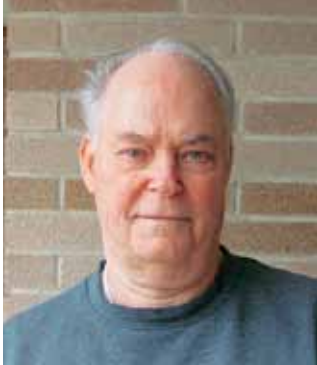
It took several years for the logo to be used by the state authorities suitably and consistently in their everyday communication with corresponding bodies abroad. The six-month presidency of the EU Council was in a way a pilot project on how to present and communicate the brand both at formal occasions as well as in the tourism,



Photo: Aleš Fevžer

culinary and cultural contents of events associated with the presidency at home and abroad. In the first three to five years following the establishment of the brand, the Government Communication Office of the Republic of Slovenia tried to skilfully incorporate the logo into the international sporting arena: during national team competitions, world championships, Olympic Games, large international sporting events organised in Slovenia etc. This involved the introduction of a unified official sports kit for the national team, issuing sports fans with the requisite accessories in the colours and with logos of the brand, advertising at international sporting events, promotional gifts and more.

We believe that establishing a brand in sport is a sound and sensible approach to facilitate general promotion abroad and brand identification among the national public at home. Several challenges and new opportunities remain over the next period of the brand's development: more consistent and creative application of the brand in investment circles, business and agricultural affairs, including Slovenian culture and science. The brand itself may perhaps need some content and design upgrade along with the development of co-branding. That said, any substantial changes or indeed replacement of the brand is currently unimaginable and out of the question.



A LETTER FROM THE USA

Slovenia seen from America

LARRY ZALETEL, PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVES

HOW DID I SEE SLOVENIA WHEN IT BECAME INDEPENDENT IN 1991?

At that time there were many hopes and dreams of freedom for my grandparents' homeland. There were positive feelings among the immigrants and first and second generation Americans in the United States, particularly in the heavily-populated Slovenian communities in northeastern Ohio, where we live, and the northwestern Pennsylvania area, where many Slovenian Festivals are held. We watched on television the events that led to the 10-Day War of Independence and its aftermath. We read that Slovenia had lofty goals to become independent, to become a western democracy, something like a little Switzerland, and to transition to a market economy. We saw that Slovenia quickly strengthened its economy, established democratic institutions, and became the most westernized of the former eastern European countries.

On our first visit to Slovenia in September 1991, however, the people appeared distant, aloof, and a little tense. We experienced a lot of difficulty trying to communicate with the local shopkeepers and the ordinary man on the street. We tried talking in English, German and even some of my Slovenian. Everything was tense; the war had just ended in July and Yugoslav troops were still stationed on Slovenian soil and would be until sometime in October. On our next visit in 1994 we learned from an Adria Airlines flight attendant that the people were very angry in 1991 with the Bush Administration for not helping them during their fight for independence. This later visit would be much nicer.

In 1991 the street names in Ljubljana were changed to reflect Slovenia's newfound independence, including the main street Titova cesta, which was renamed Slovenska cesta. The Museum of the

National Revolution, previously located in Tivoli Park in northwest Ljubljana, contained a weapons collection glorifying the partisan struggle for the liberation of Yugoslavia. The museum was gone. The national symbol of Slovenia, Mount Triglav, Slovenia's highest mountain, replaced the red star on the Slovenian flag and on their license plates. I remember watching Slovenians in broad daylight scratching off the red star from their license plates with a passion.

Owning up to the past will allow Slovenia to move forward. I feel that there are still many issues dividing the Slovenes.

HOW DO I SEE SLOVENIA TODAY?

Slovenia is a parliamentary representative democratic republic, although those Swiss standards were never achieved. Slovenia became a success story among transition countries. It has become prosperous and is now a member of the European Union and NATO. The government early on appeared to be headed in the right direction. Subsequently there were problems and each successive government seems to be floundering. Today Slovenia appears to be in a holding pattern and unsure of where to go. I don't know but I would have thought that after 25 years Slovenia would have gotten its act together.

Privatization is still incomplete, the new property tax initiative was ruled unconstitutional, from what I understand the Slovenes are heavily taxed to cover pensions, etc. I doubt that, like anywhere else in the world, they need additional taxes. Slovenia's export-dependent economy was badly hit in the global economic crisis and austerity measures have met with popular resistance. It appears that the economy was better five years ago than it is today.

Every year I learn more about Slovenia. We were fortunate enough to meet members of my family in 2005, which was a very dramatic and emotional experience. Luckily at that time we were with friends from Novo Mesto, who translated for us. We were offered wine and plum brandy, which is a common practice when invited into someone's home. This further enhanced my perception of a very friendly and outgoing people. On subsequent visits we met more of my family, aunts, uncles and cousins. They always provided something to eat (ham, salami, and cheese) and something to drink (beer and wine). By their actions I learned how open and friendly they are. Visiting and staying in the village where my grandfather was from, we learned the customs and met the people. I watched as they went on with their daily lives, working on the farms and in the fields.

HOW DOES SLOVENIA LOOK FROM AN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE?

Slovenia is a connection to our past, the home of our ancestors. It is a country of newfound freedoms and responsibilities. America has been dealing with "freedom" for 240 years and we still have much to learn. Slovenia has much to offer; its citizens are a quiet, hard working, and conservative people with a family-orientated culture and values, hospitality and traditions, and world-renowned wines and spirits (plum brandy, etc.). Sports equipment (Elan) and the button accordion, the national musical instrument, are as well known in America as they are abroad.

Slovenia is located on the sunny side of the Alps and is a jewel in the rough. It should be appreciated and treasured. It is a wonderful and economical destination for a vacation, from the beauty of its mountains and many lakes to its nearness to the Adriatic Sea. On our many visits we have stayed in a variety of hotels, apartments and family homes. We have found them to be clean and spacious. The apartments and family homes had gardens that were colorful, with flowers in flower pots or in planters on the windows. We met new friends in the various apartments where we stayed during our

visits and have visited them again during subsequent visits. The people were always helpful, courteous, and friendly.

My views on Slovenia joining the European Union (EU) are mixed. Prices in Austria, Ireland, and Slovenia increased after they joined. We observed some of the benefits of Slovenia joining the EU from the signs posted in the Slovenian countryside explaining where the money for the new autobahns and other infrastructural needs was obtained. In 1991, when we drove from Ljubljana to Novo Mesto, the roads were in pretty decent shape and consisted partly of autobahns and two lane highways. Today the roads are almost all autobahns from Austria to Croatia. It might have been a toss-up between the tolar and the euro, however for the tourist in 2000 the tolar had an exchange rate of 240 SIT -1 dollar. Slovenia was definitely cheaper under the tolar.

In Ljubljana the architecture has changed from the drab socialist modern style of the communist era to the more current and modern western style. It is no longer drab and dull, but color is obvious from the large cities to the smallest villages. We observed new homes being built in Ljubljana and in the villages, especially in Dolenjska. New building is evident almost everywhere. Many of the very old familial homes are being torn down to make way for larger and modern homes that reflect the people's new found affluence.

We are hopeful that as Slovenia grows that it keeps what is important, its national beauty, its peoples, and its values.

Larry Zaletel, a retired auditor, belongs to the third generation of Slovenians who emigrated to the United States at the turn of the previous century. He kindly accepted our invitation to share his views of Slovenia and described his experience of our independence.

THE PLEBISCITE OF 23RD DECEMBER 1990

Should Slovenia become an independent and sovereign state?

VESNA GOTOVINA AND ALENKA STARMAN ALIČ
PHOTO: ARCHIVES OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

In December 2015, Slovenia celebrated the 25th anniversary of the plebiscite whether to establish an independent and sovereign Slovenia. The plebiscite of 23rd December 1990 invoked the permanent and inalienable right of the Slovenian nation to self-determination. The holding of the vote was decided by an Act passed with the vast majority by the Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia on 6th December 1990. The Act also laid down the question that would be asked in the plebiscite and the day on which the plebiscite would be held. In addition, the Assembly on the same day adopted a Statement on Good Intentions, while the political parties and delegate groups signed an agreement adopting a joint stance at the plebiscite despite their significant political differences.

THE PERIOD OF GREAT POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND INTER-CULTURAL CRISIS

Even before the Act was adopted, the majority of voters were clearly decided to vote for an independent and sovereign Slovenia. The main reason for such strong determination to vote "FOR" an independent and sovereign Slovenia can be attributed to the atmosphere in the former Yugoslavia, which went through a serious political, economic and inter-cultural crisis after the death of its long-standing president Josip Broz Tito.

Workers across the state organized strikes, which were, among other places, held also in large factories that were employing several thousand people. The strike at the Litostroj factory in Ljubljana received particular attention.

Military courts staged legal proceedings, and the lives of Slovenians serving in the military in Kosovo were in danger due to the outbreak of a new crisis in the area. There was also a noticeable increase of

nationalism in Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. In the field of education, Slovenia had to defend itself against the implementation of the so-called "common cores", which would greatly interfere with the autonomy of Slovenian schools. The generals of the Yugoslav Army increasingly tried to extend their political influence.

The participation in the plebiscite was open to all adult citizens of Yugoslavia who had permanent residences in Slovenia. The Slovenians who lived beyond Slovenia's borders and across the world did not have the right to vote.

However, they sent letters of support from around the world. On the initiative by the Executive Council and the Initiative Committee of the Conference of the Republic of Slovenia for the Slovenian World Congress, several thousand letters of support were sent in just a few days; some of these letters are already kept at the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia.

"MY COUNTRY IS OUR STATE, THE STATE OF SLOVENIA"

An advertising campaign also played a significant role in the plebiscite, convincing the constituency to vote for the independence. The decision on how the campaign would be conducted was left to the

10 June 2008

Slovenia hosts the EU-US Summit, which is also attended by the President of the United States of America, George W. Bush.

www.slovenia25.si

21 October 2008

The Britain's Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh make a three-day state visit to Slovenia.

www.slovenia25.si



Republic Information Secretariat (today Government Communication Office). Marketing experts and editors of several newspapers, and the Slovenian National Radio and Television (RTV Slovenia), were invited to participate in the campaign. Advertisements supporting the plebiscite were published in newspapers, on posters, in television and radio spots as well as on tags, badges and commemorative stands available for every family. The Slovenian symbols, i.e. the three-coloured flag and the linden leaf, were revived.

“God’s blessing on all nations, who long

and work for that bright day,” the words of Slovenian poet France Prešeren, were used to convince the people to vote in the plebiscite, as were the well-known slogans “My country is our state, the state of Slovenia” and “A country with four million working hands needn’t fear an independent future”.

The voters were also addressed in a heart-warming speech by Alojzij Šuštar, the then archbishop and metropolitan in Ljubljana, who invited them to show up at the polling stations and vote for the independence.

VOTING IN THE PLEBISCITE

The question on the ballot read: “Should the Republic of Slovenia become an independent and sovereign state?” As many as 93% of all eligible voters cast their vote in the plebiscite. There were 4143 polling stations opened in 62 municipalities across Slovenia. The voting also took place in people’s homes, at 102 hospitals as well as in nursing homes and in prisons. The day of the plebiscite was marked by celebrations, especially after 7 pm when the polling stations were closed. The answer YES on the ballot was encircled by 1,289,369 people or 88.5% of all voters. However, a festive atmosphere could already be felt in the early hours on the day of the plebiscite. Immediately after the unofficial results were published, people started celebrating both in the countryside and in towns, despite the cold winter weather.

SLOVENIA – AN INDEPENDENT AND SOVEREIGN STATE

On 26th December 1990, the State Election commission published the official report. President of the National Assembly Dr France Bučar announced the official results of the plebiscite with the following words: “I hereby solemnly declare, before this revered assembly as well as Slovenian, Yugoslav and global public, that, on the basis of the permanent and inalienable right to self-determination, the Slovenian nation decided that the Republic of Slovenia shall become an independent and sovereign state.”

As early as in January 1991, the Government of the Republic of Slo-

venia prepared a programme for achieving the objectives of the plebiscite. The decision adopted by means of the plebiscite served as the foundation for the declaration of independence of the Republic of Slovenia, which happened almost exactly six months after the results were published.

There are only a few nations in the world that achieved independence and sovereignty in such a peaceful and democratic manner.

EXHIBITION “ONE MILLION 289 THOUSAND 369 FOR INDEPENDENT SLOVENIA”

In 2010, the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia prepared the exhibition entitled “One Million 289 Thousand 369 for Independent Slovenia”, which was dedicated to the defining moment in the Slovenian history and was part of the national celebration at the Cankarjev dom hall to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the plebiscite.

With awareness that the plebiscite was one of the most important events in the history of Slovenia and Slovenians, the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia took over the materials related to the plebiscite in 2013, including the digital database entitled “Plebiscite 1990”; this was also one of the first archival materials acquired in the digital form.

At the moment, the material in the digital form can only be accessed in the reading room at the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia. The users can access the archival material marked SI AS 1210/IV, the Plebiscite 1990 Digital Database, through a special application for viewing archived databases, in which the users can choose one of the pre-prepared searches and "live" view of the materials and records from the database.

At the 25th anniversary of the plebiscite, the exhibition was once again hosted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia. This was its 13th display as it was previously presented in different parts of Slovenia – from Murska Sobota to Koper and from Jesenice to Novo mesto – with the aim of raising the national awareness. The added value of the current exhibition is the interactive map produced as one of the first results of the Slovenian digital archives, which is still under development. The map was created by connecting the data from old software tools (for example dBase) of the State Election commission and the spatial data collected by the Surveying and Mapping Authority of the Republic of Slovenia.

The Archives of the Republic of Slovenia keep an invaluable collection of the archival material which has the status of a cultural monument. In the following years, the Archives will start to accept archival material which will preserve information about the beginning of the Slovenian state for the next generations.

The role of the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia as the keeper of the archival material with the status of a cultural monument is to raise awareness, both today and in the future, that the defining moments for Slovenia, and in the lives of all Slovenians, are always an opportunity to embark on a path of courage, unity and solidarity. These are the characteristics that brought us together as a nation 25 years ago.



16 November 2010

The world's leading motor glider aircraft designer and producer Pipistrel is selected as the winner of the prestigious European Business Award selection in the category UKTI Award for Innovation.

www.slovenia25.si

20 July 2012

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon paid an official visit to Slovenia.

www.slovenia25.si



DR DANILO TÜRK

A Slovenian aims for the highest post in the United Nations

UROŠ MAHKOVEC, NATAŠA BUŠLJETA
PHOTO: NEBOJŠA TEJIĆ/STA



The prevailing opinion of the United Nations is that now is the right time for a Secretary-General from Eastern Europe. But the person replacing Ban Ki-moon on 1 January 2017 will have to display exceptional skills in manoeuvring between the interests of the big-power permanent members of the UN Security Council.

At the beginning of December 2015 the UN invited UN Member States to put forward their candidates for the position of UN Secretary-General. During the campaign the potential candidates will have the opportunity for informal and non-binding dialogues or meetings with UN Member States. Such meetings are planned for the end of March or the beginning of April 2016.

SLOVENIA PUTS FORWARD ITS CANDIDATE

Dr Danilo Türk, former President of the Republic of Slovenia, is a credible candidate for the Secretary General of the UN and is internationally highly esteemed. His strong cards include rich experience with the United Nations, where he worked for years. He is an expert in international law and has successfully managed many international disputes during his term in the UN Security Council. In 1992, Dr Türk assumed the position of Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia to the United Nations. Evidence of Slovenia's success in the UN was its election to the UN Security Council in 1997 and successful work performed in the Security Council between 1998 and 1999 in relation to the crises in Kosovo, Iraq, Libya, East Timor, DR Congo and others. Following the completion of Slovenia's term as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Mr Kofi Annan, then Secretary-Gen-

eral of the United Nations, appointed Dr Türk as Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

His only flaw, if we can say this, is that he is not a woman. The UN has never in its history been led by a woman and there are some debates that this fact should be taken into serious consideration ahead of the next election.

OPPORTUNITY FOR SLOVENIA

We argued in previous articles that our efforts will be focused towards enlarging Slovenia's recognisability around the world. A Slovenian at the highest post in the UN would be a good shot to achieve not only better recognisability but a positive image too. Slovenian therefore fully and proudly supports Dr Türk's candidacy.

At the end the decision is made by the permanent members of the UN Security Council. The fact is that big countries do not want a revolutionary General Secretary, which agitates individual states. Since Slovenia always puts dialog at the forefront of international dispute settlement and Dr Türk is a wise and experienced man, the chances for his election are real.

EXHAUST TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Akrapovič commemorates 25 years

SOURCE: AKRAPOVIČ ARCHIVES
 EDITED BY VESNA ŽARKOVIČ



Along with Slovenia Akrapovič is also marking its 25th anniversary. We could argue that independence accelerated our business initiative and innovation potential. This Slovenian highly innovative exhaust specialist will celebrate with the highly exciting production of a very limited edition of selected motorcycle and car exhaust systems.

To kick off the celebrations, Akrapovič has prepared a special logo to mark the occasion, featuring an interlocked “25” in the shape of a racetrack, with a chicane design element to honour one of the most important areas of the firm’s history: the highly emotive and exciting world of racing. The logo debuted on the 2016 Akrapovič calendar, with creative illustrations that reflect some of the company’s major milestones since its inception in 1991, when it was founded by Igor Akrapovič.

The new logo will feature prominently through the season on all of Akrapovič’s two- and four-wheel racing platforms around the world, including MotoGP, DTM, and others. The first race to see the new design was the Supercross season opener on January 9th at Anaheim, California.

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS IN THE EARLY 1990’S

Since the company’s humble beginnings in the early 1990s, Akrapovič has gone from strength to strength. The first major milestone in its history came in 1993, with entry into international competition in the Pro Superbike and later WSBK championship, leading to a partnership with Kawasaki Deutschland after the Akrapovič system outperformed the factory version.

Continued expansion in high-level racing led to the company achieving its first victory on the world stage in 1997, when Japanese factory rider Akira Yanagawa won a WSBK race on a Kawasaki.

On the retail side, Akrapovič designed and offered customers full titanium exhaust systems for Kawasaki and Yamaha sport bikes in 1997 – a product that has grown and become more innovative and widely available to a diverse range of motorcycles as the company has evolved.

In 1999 the company moved to bigger premises with the opening of a new 3,000 m² production plant. That year also marked a racing first, when every single Japanese team in the Superbike World Championship used Akrapovič systems, demonstrating the quality and high regard the exhausts had attained.



THE FIRST WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

Akrapovič hit new heights on the racing scene in 2000, winning its first world championship, when the WSBK title was taken by Colin Edwards riding a Honda. This was followed by the company's entry into MotoGP in 2002 and cooperation with factory teams at the highest level of motorcycle racing. Further modernisation of the company continued, with production upgrades and improved workforce education, all leading to an enhanced development process.

In 2005 Akrapovič took the motorcycle aftermarket world by storm with the introduction of the first hexagonal exhaust system. This revolutionary and unique design marked a huge step for the company and another important landmark in its history. Akrapovič followed up its two-wheeled success by achieving its first victory in a 24-hour car race, with Manthey-Racing Team taking victory at the prestigious Nürburgring 24-hour event in 2008.

HIGH-PROFILE CAR PARTNERSHIPS

As the first decade of the 21st century drew to a close, Akrapovič continued to expand, and 2009 saw the opening of a new state-of-the-art titanium foundry in a large purpose-built extension of the factory at Ivančna Gorica in Slovenia. High-profile car partnerships followed, as ventures with Audi Sport in FIA WEC and BMW Motorsport in DTM were announced in 2012.

The Audi Sport partnership in 2012 saw Akrapovič win its first car world championship title with an Audi R18 e-tron quattro racing car, and added to the strength of the collaboration, which witnessed unbeatable performances by Akrapovič-equipped Audi LMP1 racing cars at the 24h Le Mans from 2010 until 2014.

New partners were revealed in 2013, as Akrapovič became an official supplier to Aston Martin Racing in FIA WEC and the official exhaust sponsor to X-raid Team's MINI ALL4 Racing cars – a partnership that led to victory in the tough and demanding Dakar rally. With the company being heralded as the best premium exhaust manufacturer in the world, honours and commendations have been regularly bestowed upon the Slovenian specialists.

Winning the highly important Red Dot: Best of the Best award in the Product Design category for the Akrapovič Evolution Line (Titanium) exhaust system for the Ducati 1199 Panigale in 2014 further underscored the high standards the company had reached.

The system is now a permanent feature at the Red Dot exhibition in Essen.

NEW-GENERATION EXHAUST SYSTEM

Akrapovič pushed the innovative boundaries of exhaust design and manufacture even further in 2015, in both the car and motorcycle sectors. The Evolution Line (Titanium) exhaust system for the Mercedes-AMG S 63 Coupé, which was presented at IAA Frankfurt in 2015, is a new-generation exhaust system that is 45% lighter than the stock system, is EC/ECE type approved, and features an innovative active x-connection to create two distinct sound characters of the V8 engine. In the two-wheel market, 2015 saw the latest concept and the first titanium version of the (r)evolutionary Akrapovič exhaust system launched at the prestigious EICMA show in Milan. These cutting-edge, technically advanced designs feature a whole host of innovative features, and are a distinctive progression from the initial hexagonal muffler, showing that the Slovenian exhaust specialists are constantly looking towards the future with their innovative and hi-tech exhaust technology.

Akrapovič racing heritage has been a constant feature throughout the company's history, and Akrapovič is certainly an organisation that can be #TrustedByChampions.

The importance of racing led to a significant event in the company's history in late 2015, as the milestone of 100 world champions was achieved when Jorge Lorenzo secured the MotoGP title at Valencia.



Igor Akrapovič, owner:

"This is not only a momentous event for the company, but also a very happy and rewarding one on a personal note for me. When I started making exhausts for myself and some racing friends back in the early nineties, I never envisaged that the company would become what it has, or achieve so much in both the commercial and racing worlds. All this has been realised through dedication to be the best and the unstinting belief and hard work of the loyal Akrapovič workforce, and I would personally like to thank all of those who have been responsible for getting us to this point. Impressive honours such as Red Dot: Best of the Best are a true recognition of everything that the whole workforce contributes to making the company number one, and the pride shown in every product demonstrates this commitment. Racing has always been the lifeblood of Akrapovič, and so to go into our 25th anniversary with 100 world champions to our name is a fantastic and almost unbelievable success – I believed we would be able to make competitive exhausts, but to have so many champions is almost beyond what I could have imagined!"



SLOVENIAN ATHLETES OF THE YEAR

**Yet again it's skier Tina Maze
and ski jumper Peter Prevc**

POLONA PREŠEREN,
PHOTO: STA

When the Association of Sports Journalists of Slovenia made its year-end Athlete of the Year awards, the same two sportspeople topped the rankings for the third consecutive year – alpine skier Tina Maze and ski jumper Peter Prevc. Team of the Year for the first time was the Slovenian volleyball team.



In a ceremony at Ljubljana's Cankarjev dom, Tina Maze was named female Athlete of the Year title for the sixth time, Peter Prevc won the male title for the third time. The event was presided by Bogdan Gabrovec, president of the Olympic Committee of Slovenia – Association of Sports Federations.

For some years now, the first lady of Slovenian sports has been Tina Maze. She has already won almost everything that can be won.

In 2015, the peak of her season was the Beaver Creek World Championship, where she won two gold medals (in the downhill and alpine combination) and silver in super-G. At the end of the season, she lost overall World Cup victory to Anna Fenninger in a photo finish, and was thus second in the overall standings. Once the season was finished, Tina Maze took some time for herself and said goodbye to competitions for a year. We still have to wait for a while to learn whether she will continue competing.

Last season, the ski jumper Peter Prevc also continued with excellent results from the Olympic winter.

During the past season, he has again proved to be one of the best ski jumpers in the world. Although he was also second in the overall standings, his collection is impressive. This year's winter began as a dream for Peter Prevc. Currently, he has the yellow shirt. "The yellow shirt clearly brings the role of the favourite, but this is not a burden for me", he said before the traditional New Year's tour. His virtues are calmness, firmness and patience. Peter Prevc also won the Ski Flying World Championship in Bad Mitterndorf, Austria in January. Prevc also set a new record of the Kulm flying hill, touching down at 244 metres. His younger brother Domen is following in his footsteps, and has already demonstrated some excellent jumps. Like his older brother, he has already achieved the top of the world's ski jumping. Thus, it is not surprising that all Slovenia impatiently awaits the performances of our eagles on the renovated ski jump at Planica, where, once more in 2016, the finals of the Ski Jumping World Cup will take place in the second half of March.

And finally, the Team of the Year: the new Slovenia's heroes – the volleyball team.

With their exceptional performances they have surprised the competitors in the European Volleyball Championship and won the silver medal. The team with Tine Urnaut as captain at the forefront was assembled by the Italian coach Andrea Giani. Their silver medal, one that has sprouted so suddenly, is shining just like a golden one.



Peter Prevc trounced arch-rival Severin Freund to win the prestigious Four Hills Tournament on January 6 in Bischofshofen. Prevc won three of the four events and came in third once, beating the German Freund by 27 points on aggregate.

In the last event in Bischofshofen he emerged on top in the first series with a jump of 139 metres, opening a seven-point gap to Freund. In the final second series Freund mounted a serious challenge by jumping the day's distance of 141 metres, but Prevc retorted with a distance of 142.5 metres. Prevc had been the favourite, coming into the tournament as the overall World Cup leader. This is the 12th World Cup victory of his career, bringing him within three wins of Slovenia's best ski jumper of all time, Primož Peterka.

THE NEW PLANICA NORDIC CENTRE

Legendary Slovenian ski jumping venue grows bigger and better



At the end of 2015, there was a particularly festive atmosphere in the air at Planica. This was due to the completion of a modern ski jumping and cross-country ski centre which will now be open all the year round. The Planica Nordic Centre is ready for new records – in particular we hope in ski jumping, a sport which officially started in Slovenia with the very first record and championship held in Bohinj in 1921. The first record holder was Jože Pogačar, who jumped a distance of 9 metres. In doing so he initiated the sport of ski jumping at Planica which has gone on to establish itself as the cradle of ski flying.



NEW PLANICA NORDIC CENTRE

As early as the 1930s, Joso Gorec conceived the idea of a modern year-round sports resort, one which would attract visitors from near and far and which would become home to the world's largest ski jumping hill.

In December 2015, this idea was fully realised with the opening of the upgraded Planica Nordic Centre. In January 2016, it hosted the first race of the Cross-Country World Cup, while in March it will be the venue of the traditional final event of the Ski Jumping World Cup.

The Nordic Centre covers 100,000 square metres of sports terrain, where seven ski jumping hills and the flying hill take centre stage. The newly constructed cross-country complex includes a stadium, sports area and various cross-country tracks. There is also an artificial snow-making system together with cableways, athletics and football stadium, wind tunnel, zipline, cycling and walking paths, cultural heritage park and information area with catering facilities.

The sports centre will thus be open and functioning all year round – in winter and in summer. Top sportspeople will have ideal conditions for training and the Planica ski jumping school will be revived once more for young enthusiasts. Recreational sports lovers will be able to test their endurance with a range of challenges and thereby spend their leisure time engaged in active pursuits. Adrenaline junk-

ies will have the opportunity to test their nerves on a 566-metre long zipline with a 202-metre drop in altitude and 38.8 per cent gradient – making it the steepest zipline in the world where speeds of up to 90 km/h can be achieved. Safety regulations dictate that visitors must weigh between 40 and 120 kg and measure between 140 and 200 cm in height.

Nevertheless, the focus at Planica will always be on the sporting competitions themselves. Sport integrates, inspires national consciousness, strengthens friendship and raises the recognisability of Slovenia in the world.

IMPORTANCE OF PLANICA FOR SLOVENIA

The opening competition was organised at the Bloudek Giant Hill on 4 February 1934. The first international competition with 14 ski jumpers from Norway, Austria and the then Yugoslavia was held between 23 and 26 March 1934. A new world record was set. Norwegian Birger Ruud jumped 92 metres and the reputation of Planica spread throughout the world.



On 15 March 1936, Austrian Josef "Sepp" Bradl became the first man in the world to jump over one hundred metres at Planica recording a distance on landing of some 101.5 metres. The ski jumping hill at Planica was the largest in the world. Thus began the rivalry and competition with the Norwegians for global recognition. The Norwegian Ski Federation tried to hinder the development of ski jumping through the FIS. As late as 1954, no competitions were held in Planica; only trials were held under different names and there was no scoring. But that did not prevent the development of ski jumping hills and the setting of new records. In 1948, the Swiss Fritz Tschanen set a record of 120 metres, a record which lasted for 21 years.

So far, 42 world records have been set at Planica and it was here that the magical

threshold of 200 metres was passed for the first time.

The dream of the Planica pioneers came true after 1971 when the FIS at its congress in Opatija, Croatia, decided to hold the 1972 FIS Ski Flying World Championship in Planica; ski jumping thereby became a discipline of equal status to other winter sports. Planica has established its place on the calendar of the Ski Jumping World Cup as the season's grand finale on the Bloudek Giant Hill.

Planica reflects the knowledge and excellence of Slovenian designers, engineers and other experts. It is a symbol of boldness, natural beauty and of world-renowned heritage. Planica is one of the national symbols of Slovenia.



The designer and builder of the first giant hill, Ivan Rožman, came up with another innovation: because of soft snow, he chemically treated the ski jumping hill and invented snow cement. In his memoirs, the Norwegian ski jumping champion, Sigmund Ruud, described Rožman's invention, which enabled the first international competition in Planica in 1934 to be held in conditions of severe thaw in front of some four thousand spectators. "We were afraid that the next day's competition would be called off. But in the afternoon, the engineer who constructed the ski jump arrived. He brought with him several large dispensers. That was the first time we saw artificial means for freezing snow. It was a mixture of sal ammoniac and salt. He had been experimenting over the past three months and discovered that snow could be solidified within minutes with this mixture and it remained solid for eight to ten hours. To say that we were sceptical would be something of an understatement. We observed him with curiosity as he started work on the landing strip. But we didn't believe that it would work. I cannot deny that we were all gob-smacked when we tested the snow a few minutes later. Just moments before, we were sinking in it. And now, it was solid ice which carried our weight."





TOLMIN

Alpine Town of 2016

DANILO GOLOB
PHOTO: LEONARDO OLMI/LTO SOTOČJE ARCHIVE

A Slovenian municipality on the border with Italy lying partly within Triglav National Park has been awarded the prestigious title "Alpine Town of the Year" by an international jury. With this title, Tolmin has now become a member of the Alpine Town Association, which focuses on nature-friendly and socially responsible development of the Alpine region.

Alpine towns that put into practice the economic, environmental and social interests of the Association in accordance with the principle of equality, as stipulated in the Alpine Convention, have been competing for the title Alpine Town of the Year since 1997. The title rewards a town's implementation of sustainable development policies and encourages it to continue its activities in this direction. The towns that have been awarded are connected through the Alpine Town Association. Currently, this network consists of 15 municipalities in Austria, France, Italy, Germany, Slovenia and Switzerland.

After Maribor in 2000 and Idrija in 2011, Tolmin is the third Slovenian Alpine Town of the Year.

It convinced the jury that it was strengthening its Alpine identity in a context of sustainability and innovation.

NATURAL AND CULTURAL POTENTIALS

Tolmin is situated between the rivers Soča and Tolminka and at the junction of the Soča valley, the Baška grapa valley and the Idrijca valley. Adorned by a historic centre, the town has a general high school, an excellent library and rich sports infrastructure. The Tolmin Museum, which tells the story of the entire Soča river basin, is also important. The Tolmin Gorges (Tolminska korita), the most important natural attraction of the Tolmin municipality and the lowest entry point into the Triglav National Park, are located near Tolmin. Throughout the region, there are many relics from World War I. Certainly the most beautiful monument from that period, which was designated as a European Heritage Site in 2006, is the

Memorial Church of the Holy Spirit at Javorca, built on a magnificent site above the Polog mountain pasture in the Tolminka valley by Austro-Hungarian soldiers in memory of their fallen comrades. On the picturesque Šentvid Plateau, there is the magnificent Church of Mary's Visitation, one of the latest works by architect Jože Plečnik. Trebuša is known for its remote farmsteads, narrow valleys and waterfalls, while the tradition of transhumance is kept alive on surrounding mountain pastures, where the famous Tolmin cheese is produced.

The awareness of natural and cultural potentials represents one of the bases of Tolmin's planned course of development. Among other things, this is demonstrated by the successful, internationally recognised project of repopulation of the autochthonous Soča trout and the inclusion of the Tolmin municipality into the UNESCO Julian Alps Biosphere Reserve.

The jury that awarded Tolmin the title of Alpine Town of 2016 pointed out that "Ecological farming and the development of traditional farming methods create the basis for the promotion of sustainable tourism and the creation of new opportunities for the younger population."

The municipality of Tolmin says that Tolmin will, in cooperation with other Alpine Towns of the Year, mountain and environmental organisations and the local population, use the title for the imple-



alpenkonvention • convention alpine
convenzione delle alpi • alpska konvencija

mentation of several projects related to green economy and social responsibility. This year they hope to analyse and create new opportunities for supporting people of all ages, but particularly the young, in the implementation of their own initiatives. At the same time, Tolmin also wants to prove that environmental and economic efforts can be successfully integrated with social responsibility.

TOGETHER FOR A GREENER FUTURE

In Tolmin, the potential of the local population has always been highly recognised, particularly in the field of climate protection. After Tolmin was awarded the title of Alpine Town of 2016. Local citizens and other representatives of the interested public actively participated in the preparation of the programme for 2016.

The activities will be carried out in the fields of green economy and social responsibility with main topics covering young people, the future of the Alps, sustainable mobility and tourism.

The central desire and concern of the Alpine Convention is to integrate measures for the protection of the Alpine region with sustainable and long-term regional development. The Alpine towns, including Tolmin, wish to prove that environmental protection and economy are not mutually exclusive but, instead, complement one another and are oriented towards a greener and friendlier future.

Tolmin proves that the entire region is dedicated to the implementation of sustainable development principles.



Alpine Convention

The Alpine Convention is an international treaty signed by Alpine countries (Austria, France, Italy, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Germany, Slovenia and Switzerland) and the European Union and aimed at fostering sustainable development in the Alps. With their biodiversity, water and wood resources, the Alps are the natural, cultural and economic environment of and home to almost 14 million people. They are also an attractive tourist destination for approximately 120 million visitors annually.

By signing the Alpine Convention in 1992, Slovenia committed itself to the protection and sustainable development of the Alps in cooperation with other Alpine countries, while observing the economic and cultural interests of the local population. In Slovenia, the Alpine Convention applies on the territories of 62 municipalities, of which 45 are fully and 17 partially included.

The Alpine Convention is also actively involved in the preparation of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region, which connects mountainous areas and plains with large Alpine cities. With its experience, the Alpine Convention can contribute to the preparation of sustainable development projects for mountainous areas.

Slovenia hosting the launch conference of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP)

On 28 July 2015, the European Commission officially launched the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region, which is the fourth EU macro-regional strategy. The Strategy enables closer cooperation in the fields of research and innovation, SME support, mobility, tourism and energy resources management. The Strategy concerns the cooperation of 5 EU Member States (Germany, France, Italy, Austria and Slovenia), Liechtenstein and Switzerland, and involves 48 regions.

During preparations for the Strategy, Slovenia recognised its interest particularly in the fields of tourism and the creative and cultural industries, as well as in agriculture, forestry, food and fisheries, especially in relation with rural development in the Alpine region. The Alpine region sees its main challenge in the preservation of natural environment and cultural diversity, which are essential elements of the attractiveness of the region for development investments.

In the beginning of 2016, the Launch Conference of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region was held in Slovenia on January 25–26 in Brdo pri Kranju. The event was organised by the European Commission and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia. Slovenia has also offered to undertake the role of the first presiding country of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region.

THE RENOVATED NATIONAL GALLERY OF SLOVENIA

More space for art

DANILO MAŠIĆ
PHOTO: NATIONAL GALLERY ARCHIVES

The National Gallery shines in new glory in the New Year following the completion of renovation of its oldest section which started three years ago. All three buildings forming the gallery are now uniform: the Narodni dom building, the entrance hall and the new

wing designed by architect Edvard Ravnikar. An additional 2,200m² is available for art exhibitions. Visitors to the gallery can enjoy more art, as the existing permanent exhibition is being extended and made more lavish.





The National Gallery started to keep an inventory ledger before World War II. Paintings by European artists were either purchased or obtained on loan, or as bequests and gifts. After World War II, the gallery received some paintings from the closed down Federal Collection Centre and state institutions.

The permanent art collection at the National Gallery constituted an amalgam of two collections: works by Slovenian artists and a permanent collection of European painters from different European art schools.

Works created in the territory of Slovenia between the 13th and the first quarter of the 20th century include paintings and sculptures from Gothicism, Baroque, Classicism, Romanticism, Realism and Impressionism.

The new permanent collection, including works from the high Medieval period to the mid-20th century, initially consisting of 409

pieces of art has now been supplemented and includes a total of 587 exhibits. Decisions as to what to include in the collection were made on the basis of the existing stock, artistic quality and available space. The renovation enabled the utilisation of all available space in the building for the needs of the gallery, since the Narodni Dom (National Hall) Sports Association previously also occupied part of the building. The need for expansion related both to the demands of stock capacity and the lack of exhibition space for the establishment of permanent and special collections and stock. With renovation, there are also more possibilities for the preservation of cultural heritage. The permanent collection of Slovenian art has been extended, and there is also more space for occasional showings. A private collection, a bequest to the National Gallery, will also have its own area.

The objective of the gallery is to popularise artistic heritage.

Various methods for the effective presentation, understanding and experience of fine arts are being developed within the department of education and animation. Many leisure activities are also organ-



ised, where it is possible to participate in creative workshops. In 2001, the Gal's Club was established for children aged 6 to 14.

The National Gallery, the foremost gallery of Slovenian fine arts, was built in 1896.

The gallery became fully operational in 1928 at the premises of the Narodni dom building. Before that year, art was also displayed at the Kresija Palace, which together with the Philip Mansion marks the entrance to the old town centre of Ljubljana. The Narodni dom was the basis for the establishment of other institutions: the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, the Republic Institute for Monument Conservation and Protection (today, the Institute for the Protection of the Cultural Heritage of Slovenia), the Restoration Centre, the Academy of Fine Arts (today, the Academy of Fine Arts and Design) and the Modern Gallery.

The Narodni dom building was designed by the Czech architect František Edmund Škabrouk and built in 1896 on the model of the National Theatre in Prague. The Narodni dom building was initially home to various dance, theatre and other social activities. There was a gymnasium on the ground floor, and a large garden and res-

taurant to the rear of the building.

In 1993, the gallery expanded to the area of the demolished Delegates Club along Puhar Street where a new extension was built according to Edvard Ravnikar's plans. A glass connecting section was constructed between both buildings in 2002. This was designed by Sadar + Vuga Architects and serves as the connecting hall of the gallery and a venue for various events.

The original of the magnificent Fountain of Three Carniolan Rivers by Francesco Robba, one of the most important works of art in Ljubljana, is on display in the entrance hall of the gallery, which remained open to the public when other sections of the gallery were closed for renovation. Prior to the official opening, the gallery hosted an exhibition, entitled Jottings, by the important Slovenian artist Richard Jakopič. A new coffee shop, Café Zvezda, has also opened at the gallery. Here one can order the Luiza Cake which was inspired by Mihael Stroj's portrait of Luiza Pesjak, one of the most popular paintings at the National Gallery. There is also a new gallery store with books and products with motifs of Slovenian designers made especially for the gallery.

Impressionist Rihard Jakopič - Jottings

An exhibition entitled *Jottings* by the great master of Slovenian Impressionism Rihard Jakopič has been on at the National Gallery since the beginning of December. In this first exhibition after the building was re-opened after renovation, Jakopič was commemorated as a giant figure of Slovenian art, not just for his creations, but because he successfully campaigned for the nation to have its own National Gallery. *Jottings* is how the artist described the spontaneous depiction of an idea captured in a sketch – sometimes they are also called “croquis” – and he gave much importance to sketching in his creative process.

Jakopič was born into a wealthy family in the Ljubljana suburb of Krakovo in 1869. A man of restless spirit, Jakopič attended various art schools in Vienna, Munich and Prague, where he spent several years studying under Hynais. At the academy in Munich, he met the Slovenian painter Anton Ažbe who also became his mentor. Later, Ažbe suggested that Jakopič and Sternen open their own art school, which Jakopič went on to establish in his own home. He frequently painted together with his painter friends Matija Jama, Ivan Grohar and Matej Sternen. Jakopič used his own funds to construct the art pavilion in Ljubljana's Tivoli Park. The pavilion which was known as the Jakopič Pavilion was built according to the plans of architect Maks Fabiani, and was demolished in 1961 due to the construction of a railway line. Jakopič was also a co-creator of the idea to establish the Modern Gallery.

He sought inspiration from the writer Ivan Cankar and other artists. Jakopič co-organised the first Slovenian exhibition within the Slovenian Artists' Society and later after its dissolution, he was the co-founder of the Sava Art Club under whose auspices an exhibition of Slovenian impressionists was prepared, which travelled to Vienna, Belgrade, Sofia, Trieste, Zagreb, Warsaw, Krakow and Rome.

According to Jakopič, Impressionism represented the very cornerstone of the Slovenian artistic renaissance



coinciding as it did with the re-emergence of fine arts on the path to international recognition.

The exhibition presents the process from the initial idea of the author's creation, from so-called croquis to a realised motif in colours on the canvas following a set of key motifs which guide the artist from the beginning of the creative process to its completion. A photograph was also an important tool in Jakopič's creative process. His works can be divided into three periods: Naturalist Impressionism, Realistic Impressionism and Colour Expressionism.

During his studies in Vienna, Jakopič was undecided as to whether to study music or painting. He frequently visited the opera and theatre in Vienna, and for a while he believed that he would exchange brush and canvas for a musical instrument. Jakopič was a proficient and enthusiastic singer who knew many folk songs by heart. He researched the concept of synaesthesia or how to draw a musical tone in order to detect from the painting whether it was inspired by Mozart or Beethoven. When reading Jakopič's memoirs, one can discover many interesting insights about the artist. In them his daughter for instance reveals that coffee and a sweet tooth were her father's weak points.

His most renowned works include *Under the Birch Trees*, which was bought by King Peter I in 1904, *The Green Veil*, *Sava*, *Blind man* and *Sower*. Jakopič was considered to be way ahead of his time and received criticism that he was 'monstrously modern'.

Since 1969, awards conferred for best achievements in fine arts have been named after him.

The exhibition is accompanied by an organised programme which includes the Thursday creative workshops with Suzana Belak Pungartnik based on Jakopič's sketches. The programme concludes at the gallery coffee shop after a guided tour of the exhibition.

“KISS WITH LANGUAGE”

Exhibition on the past and present of the Slovenian language

DANILO GOLOB
PHOTO: DAMIR KOLAR

The earliest and latest Slovenian grammar books and dictionaries have been gathered together for the first time at the National and University Library in Ljubljana. In addition to the latest publications, visitors may view valuable book editions and manuscripts which are rarely if ever on display.

Why is the exhibition entitled “Kiss with Language”? The creators wanted to show how grammatical and lexicographical work has always ignited people’s passions. Without such strong feelings these manuals could not have been written. Grammar books and dictionaries are thus nothing else but a passionate kiss through language.

There are some four hundred thousand words in the Slovenian language and almost one quarter of these may be found in the *Dictionary of Standard Slovenian Language*. The remaining lexis is recorded in other types of dictionaries. The most important ones are: the monolingual explanatory dictionary, terminological dictionary, general bilingual dictionary, orthographic and orthoepic dictionary, etymological dictionary, phraseological dictionary, dialect dictionary, historical dictionary and dictionary of foreign words and expressions.

LONG AND RICH HISTORY

The exhibition, “Kiss with Language: Grammar books and dictionaries of the Slovenian language throughout history until today”, is a historical review of Slovenian grammar and lexicography from its beginnings in the Middle Ages to the most recent works in the field. The historically most important works include 79 books and 17 manuscripts which are less known also to the expert public and thus are of even greater interest. Some of the most interesting exhibits include grammar books by Blaž Kumerdej and Jurij Japelj from the end of the 18th century, which were never published. On display are the lesser known dictionary by Valentin Vodnik in over 60 notebooks dating from the early 19th century and the manuscript of a dictionary from 1854 with particularly interesting idea of the author who thought that Slovenian should be written in Greek characters.

The exhibition clearly and systematically presents the development and establishment of the Slovenian language through history. The first known Slovenian grammarian Bernard Perger wrote a grammar of Latin in 1479, which is today considered the first grammar written by a Slovenian author.

The first Slovenian grammar book by Adam Bohorič from 1584, *Arcticae horulae succisivae de Latinocarniolana literatura* (Spare Winter Hours on Latin-Carniolan

Grammar), is very important because Slovenians thus became the ninth European nation to acquire a modern grammatical description of their language.

Bohorič's grammar book had a major impact on all subsequent grammar books of the 17th and 18th centuries. The first two Slovenian dictionaries written by the German scholar Hieronymus Megiser (German-Slovenian-Latin-Italian from 1592 and a multilingual dictionary from 1603) had a considerable influence on Slovenian lexicography and became examples for other lexicographers to follow.

In the second half of the 18th century, grammarians and lexicographers focused more on their own Upper Carniolan, Styrian and Carinthian dialects, while others wished to compile a grammar which would integrate the entire Slovenian language and a dictionary which would consist of words spoken over the entire Slovenian territory.

Slovenians had to wait until 1809 for the publication of the comprehensive, "large grammar book" written by Jernej Kopitar, while an extensive dictionary was prepared by Valentin Vodnik in 1804 and between 1806 and 1817, but which unfortunately remained in manuscript form.

The real turning point in the field of dictionaries initially occurred with the German-Slovenian dictionary by Matija Cigale in 1860 and the Slovenian-German dictionary by Maks Pleteršnik (1894-1995), which to this day is still considered the essential dictionary of old Slovenian. In the field of grammar books, the second edition of the Slovenian grammar by Anton Janežič from 1863 must be mentioned. It played a leading role and served as the primary reference work until 1916.

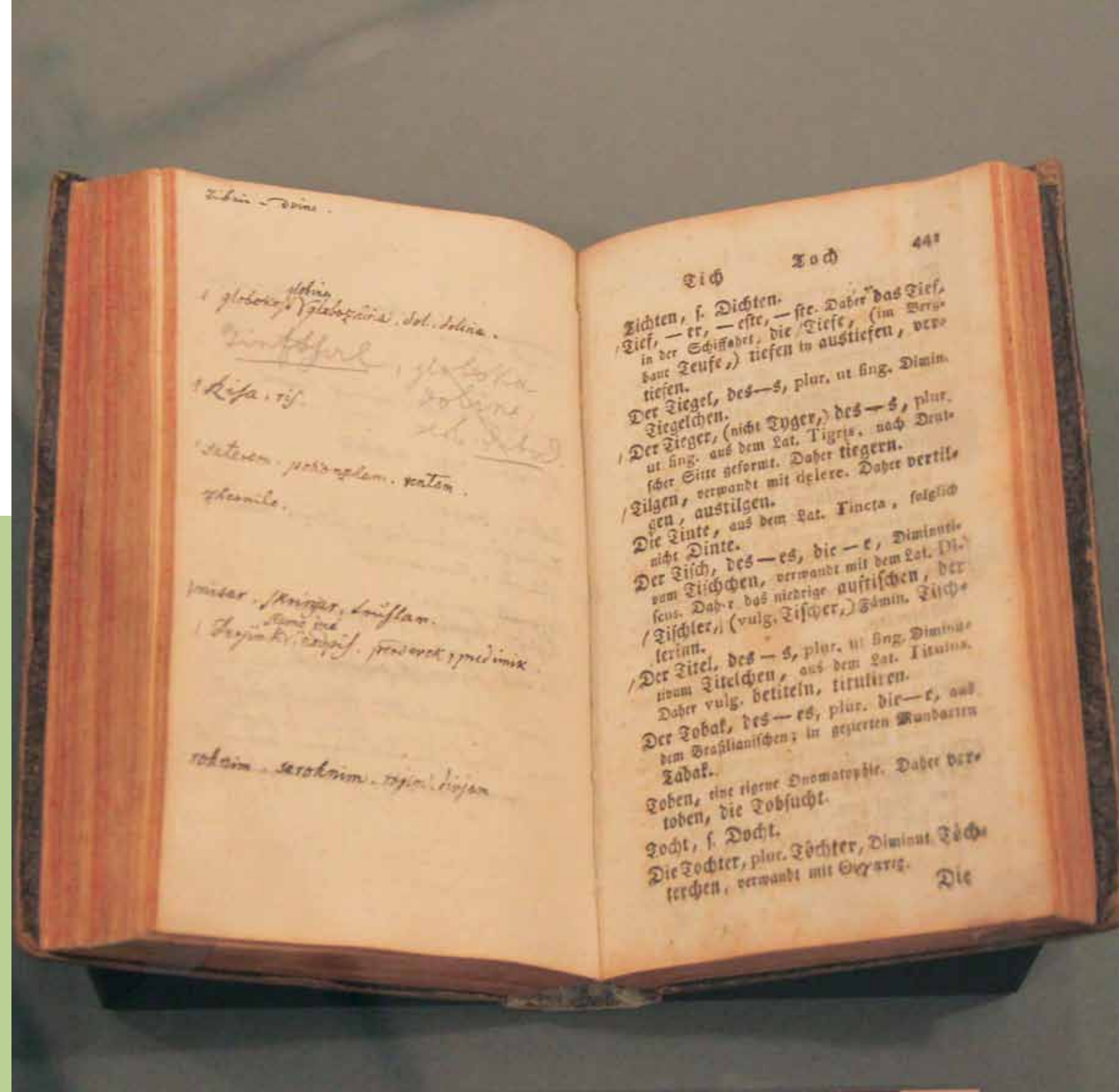
The 20th century brought even greater linguistic diversity with the appearance of a range of orthographic dictionaries and normative manuals on lexicography and grammar. The year 1976 marked the publication of the Slovenian Grammar written by Jože Toporišič, the leading Slovenian linguist of the second half of the 20th century. This most extensive Slovenian grammar book to this day was last revised and expanded in 2000. This period witnessed exceptional growth and diversification in the field of lexicography; it is thus somewhat

difficult to enumerate all the different types of dictionaries produced. However, it remains the case that Slovenians have only two monolingual explanatory dictionaries of the Slovenian language. The exhibition also features the most cutting edge sector of language development. This highlights the role of language technology, which has become particularly relevant in recent years. The exhibition is interactive and with the help of tablets allows visitors to learn about how language is used today.

The most beautiful Slovenian word

There is a box on a desk in the corner of the exhibition hall inviting visitors to write their favourite Slovenian word on a piece of paper and post it in the box. On a weekly basis, the National and University Library empties the box and publishes on Facebook the latest information as to which word is in the lead. Currently, the word, ljubezen (love), is well ahead of others. I also wrote down my favourite word and put it in the box. And what Slovenian word is the most beautiful for you or holds a special significance?

Ljubezen, the Slovenian word for love, was first written in 1550 by Primož Trubar. In 1584, Adam Bohorič was the first to record it grammatically and, in 1592, Hieronim Megiser used it for the first time in a dictionary. After that, it could be found as an entry in every subsequent dictionary. It is one of those Slovenian words which did not change its meaning throughout the centuries. A variation of the word *ljubezen*, i.e. *ljubáv*, which is not to be confused with the Croatian word of the same orthographic form, first appeared in the 17th century but has become obsolete over the last decades. It is still used only in the song entitled *Ne čakaj na maj*: "Srce nič ne čaka, bije tiktaka, kliče ljubav, zakaj čakala bi na maj." ("The heart does not wait; it beats like a drum, calls out for love, so why wait for May?" – from the Slovenian film *Ne čakaj na maj*; English title: *Don't Whisper*). *Kozma Ahačič*, a professor of Slovenian language and co-author of the exhibition "Kiss with Language"



1815 Alič rokopišni SLOVAR

Jurij Alič je dopolnil Adelungov slovar (izdaja iz leta 1815) s slovenskimi izrazi. Izvod Adelunga je interfoliiran z vstavljenimi Aličevimi listi in vezan tri zvezke. Razstavljen je eden od njih. NUK, R 77596.



TOMAŽ LAVRIČ

A mysterious cartoon artist wins Slovenia's Order of Merit

POLONA PREŠEREN
PHOTO: DANIEL NOVAKOVIČ/STA

No one has influenced the Slovenian comics culture as much Tomaž Lavrič, a cartoon artist, caricaturist and illustrator who has been holding a mirror to our society and our country for years. As the author of numerous cartoons, cover art and illustrations, Tomaž Lavrič has become a Slovenian comics legend.

So who is Tomaž Lavrič? He is a mysterious artist. Even when a documentary *Kdo je Tomaž Lavrič ali Državljan Diareja* (Who is Tomaž Lavrič or Citizen Diareja) was made two years ago, he rather let others speak about him. But we do know that he started creating short comics called Diareja for the Mladina weekly magazine in 1988. Diareja is a satirical and subtle comic, which played an important role during the Slovenian spring and at the time when the need for Slovenian independence was growing in the last years of Yugoslavia. Diareja found its way into the daily political life of Slovenians of all ages, education and preferences. Even to this day it remains a comic which goes beyond time and remains an inspiration to young Slovenian artists. Its important satirical value still holds a mirror to the society.

He has published numerous comics collections, in the last twenty years also in France, Croatia, Spain, Italy, Belgium etc.

Lavrič is a creative, meticulous, and skilled comics artist, whose style is constantly changing, and images and texts are always in correlation.

While he likes to play with different genres, his comics are masterpieces, full of humour and provocative. Tomaž Lavrič is a dedicated author who deals with the latest (social) topics.

For the last two months, the Cankarjev dom Gallery has been hosting the lifework exhibition offering a different, in-depth view on Lavrič's creations. His work captures different elements of the visual culture, like film, paintings, drawings and videos, and deftly implements them into the comics language that is typical only of Lavrič. The exhibition took us on a journey into the comics world of Tomaž Lavrič. The description of Lavrič's exhibition in Cankarjev dom reads: "It is only the greatest, world-class masters of comics – and Lavrič certainly is one – who are capable of creating a flawless mutual dependency and synergy between the image and the text, where both are striving towards the same idea but can only communicate it in interaction."

The exhibition coincided with the special recognition award, the Order of Merit for outstanding contribution in the field of Slovenian illustrations, cartoons and comics, which was presented to Tomaž Lavrič by the President of the Republic of Slovenia Borut Pahor.

FRANKFURT BOOK FAIR

Slovenia – candidate to be 2021 Guest of Honour

RENATA ZAMIDA
PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVES



Among publishers, you are not considered to exist if you do not participate at the world's largest book fair which takes place each year in Frankfurt. It's the book event to which the media pay most attention, and there is a long list of countries which would like to be featured as a Guest of Honour. Slovenia, as a candidate to be showcased in 2021, submitted its bid book of ideas and ambitions to the management at last year's fair. Prepared by the Slovenian Book Agency, the application aims to make Slovenia only the third Slav country to be Guest of Honour since the title was created 30 years ago, and the first for more than 15 years (the last being Russia).

SLOVENIA – GUEST OF HONOUR

In the "Slovenia – Guest of Honour" project we see an opportunity for the promotion, establishment and successful marketing of Slovenia as a trademark and for the presentation of Slovenia as an "overall art" and thus, in its very design, a connection of various departments and the participation of stakeholders is anticipated. A successful establishment of Slovenian literature and authors in the broader international area will certainly be accompanied by positive effects in the fields of education, tourism, economy, diplomacy and more since such are the evaluated effects and experiences of the previous Guests of Honour. For the most successful showcases of the past number of years, those of Finland (2014), New Zealand (2013) and, in particular, Iceland in 2011, which was also one of the cheapest in history, are considered.

Through numerous preparations, we already began the project last year. One of the more prominent was definitely the notable guest appearance of the Slovenian authors and publishers in Berlin where Slovenia was successfully presented as the main guest of the Stadt Land Buch literature festival. At the same time, an annual study reaching all across Slovenia for foreign publishers and journalists was introduced. In 2016, the preparation of two notable literary guest appearances is planned, the first in Vienna at the end of April and the second in Munich in the middle of November. In Frankfurt in 2021, we would also like to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Slovenia's independence.

All in all, Slovenia has been constituted as a country particularly through its language, literature and culture, while in the process of the country's emancipation a key role was specifically played by Slovenian writers and other intellectuals.

LAND OF WRITERS PAR EXCELLENCE

Slovenia had already presented itself at the Frankfurt Book Fair with a national booth for the first time in 1997, that is just six years after its independence. For the last 15 years, it has been strengthening its participation in international cultural and other appearances. In 2010, Ljubljana was awarded UNESCO's World Book Capital title; two years later, Maribor, Slovenia's second largest city, was the European Capital of Culture; in 2015, Slovenia participated at the Modern Art Biennale in Venice, while Ljubljana was also awarded the permanent title of UNESCO's City of Literature, and was thus placed in the Creative Cities Network. Furthermore, Slovenia has already successfully presented itself as the main guest at the international book fairs – in Prague in 2005 and in Leipzig in 2007 – while each year, it participates with its national booth at book fairs in Europe (in Leipzig and Bologna in addition to Frankfurt), and in the future to include London and Vienna.

SLOVENIA – CREATIVE MIX OF IDEAS

Although Slovenia is a small country, it definitely should not be omitted from the map of countries that anyone with a curious attitude towards culture should see, read, taste and feel during their lifetime.

Due to the vicinity of cosmopolitan centres such as Vienna, Trieste and Venice, it has always been considered as a creative mix, where numerous famous artists have searched for their inspirations and left their mark.

At the beginning of his career, the composer Gustav Mahler worked as a conductor in Ljubljana; James Joyce spent one night here mistaking Ljubljana for Trieste; and, at the end of the sixties, Agatha Christie visited Slovenia and discovered Lake Bohinj in the heart of

Alps as “too beautiful to be tainted with murder”. Ernest Hemingway placed the main character of the cult novel *A Farewell to Arms* in the Isonzo Front (where presumably he was himself fighting during World War I); along the emerald Soča River, the Hollywood fantasy hit *The Chronicles of Narnia* was filmed a few years ago. In the sixties, Piran on the Slovenian coast was a popular film location among Italian and French film-makers, while Arthur Miller and Jean-Paul Sartre attended the PEN World Congress at Bled in the same period. Even Alfred Nobel stayed briefly in Celje in pursuit of love. And Nobel Prize winner Ivo Andrić spent some time in the dungeon of Maribor prison in 1914 as a member of the Young Bosnia organisation that organised the assassination of the heir to the throne, Franz Ferdinand, in Sarajevo. Later on, Paulo Coelho was also creating in Ljubljana and particularly placed one of his novels in Slovenia's capital.

IT HAS EVERYTHING THAT THE BIG BOYS HAVE

Setting historical and romantic connotations aside, the significance of literature and culture in Slovenia can be realized in another manner. Despite the fact that Slovenia only has slightly over two million inhabitants, it has everything that the big countries have in terms of publishing. The tradition of the Slovenian Book Fair and the Vilenica International Festival of Central European Literature is more than 30 years old; more than a dozen important events dedicated to books take place annually; each year, around 20 different awards and recognitions in the area of books are awarded, notably the Prešeren Award for Literature and the Best Novel of the Year award are at the forefront and particularly well supported by the media, a fact which is reflected in high number of copies of award-winning works sold.

Slovenia is also a giant considering the number of books published per capita.

According to International Publishers Association (IPA) data, Slovenia is, by means of its 2,500 publications, ranked second in the world by the number of books published per million inhabitants, which is particularly significant since its neighbours, Italy to the west, Austria to the north, Hungary to the east and Croatia to the south are far behind it in this respect. But above all, Slovenia is considered a land of writers par excellence, and literature has always been understood as a specifically Slovenian strength in the periods of historical trials. Or, as the renowned writer Peter Handke wrote: “Slovenians do not write their history with a help of their war heroes, but through their poets”.





TOP FOREIGN INVESTORS OF THE YEAR
**Sogefi Filtration, Optotek,
 Willy Stadler and Schenker**

LIDIJA VINKOVIČ
 PHOTO: DANIEL NOVAKOVIČ/STA

The SPIRIT Slovenia Public Agency has for the tenth time conferred awards to the best foreign investors. The Invest Slovenia FDI Awards go to foreign investors who produce exceptional results and contribute to the development of the Slovenian economy. The awards went to: Sogefi Filtration, d.o.o., Optotek, d.o.o., Willy Stadler, d.o.o. and to the company Schenker, d.d.

The expert committee included in its selection those companies or foreign investors which have at least 50 employees, operate profitably, have settled all tax obligations, enjoy a high credit rating and create added value of at least EUR 35,000 per employee.

BEST EMPLOYER AND INVESTOR IN THE REGION IS SOGEFI FILTRATION D. O. O.

The company was established in 1993 by Sogefi SpA from Italy. Sogefi Filtration, d.o.o. is a manufacturer of air and oil filters for private motor vehicles, but primarily for large lorries, buses, movable working machinery and custom-made filters. The company has 160 employees and generates EUR 30 million in sales exclusively on foreign markets. The company exports all its production. 60% sells directly to vehicle manufacturer and 40% through Italian group Sogefi. The company has a credit rating of AAA (credit rating is calculated on the basis of a failure model for assessing the companies' risk level). The company's future plans are also ambitious.

BEST OPERATING RESULTS AND BUSINESS-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT HAS OPTOTEK, D.O.O.

The foreign investor of the company is the Polish subsidiary of the Japanese Canon, Canon Ophthalmic Technologies, which today holds a 73-per cent equity stake. In 1990 it established a Slovenian subsidiary, which develops innovative optical and laser solutions and technologies for medicine. With 58 employees, the company

generates annually EUR 7 million of which only 10 per cent is generated in Slovenia. The added value per employee amounts to EUR 45,000. In the production of lasers used for the treatment of eye diseases, the company has a 15-per cent share of the world market and an average annual growth of 15 per cent. The company has a credit rating of AA.

IN CATEGORY OF LONG-TERM PRESENCE AND FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY WON WILLY STADLER, D.O.O.

In 1997, the German investor, Willy Stadler GmbH & Co., established the company Willy Stadler, d.o.o. Now with some 76 employees, the company generates revenue of EUR 14 million, more than half of which is generated on foreign markets. The added value per employee is almost EUR 50,000. The parent company, which is a full owner of the Slovenian subsidiary, has been in the metal processing business for over two hundred years. The company has a credit rating of AA, with business risk rated as minimal.

BEST LOGISTICS HUB HAS SCHENKER, D.D.

The German investor, DB Mobility Logistics AG, established the company Schenker, d.d. in 1989 and is the 100-per cent owner of this Slovenian company. Some 130 employees generate annually EUR 36 million, a quarter of which derives from sales on foreign markets. The added value per employee is almost EUR 65,000; their yield is above average. The company has a credit rating of AAA.

STEKLARNA HRASTNIK

Slovenian quality glass-maker joins the European elite

TEXT AND PHOTO: STEKLARNA HRASTNIK

Steklarna Hrastnik, a Slovenian company making premium products from some of the world's purest glass, has joined the London Stock Exchange Group's ELITE international programme for ambitious high growth businesses. The ELITE programme currently comprises over 320 companies assessed to have a high growth potential. For the duration of the programme, the core management of Steklarna Hrastnik will attend education seminars, but the programme will also serve as a launching pad for networking, obtaining new sources of financing and broadening the recognition of glassworks.

Steklarna Hrastnik was included in the ELITE group of European companies thanks to its business results and sustainable principles of operation that enable the production of technically perfect products.

The glassworks expects this year's total revenues to reach EUR 55 million, which is 13% more than last year, and the profit before tax to amount to EUR 7.1 million, which is a 60% increase compared to last year. Its customers include established global companies, brand owners, distributors and retail groups such as Hennessy, Heineken, Villeroy&Boch, Sainsbury's, Diageo, Baccardi Martini and many others, all of whom demand top quality.

When it comes to the global market of luxury bottles, Steklarna Hrastnik is seen as the best choice: made from some of the purest glass, its bottles are technically perfect and contribute to the added value of the end product. In the coming years, they are planning to increase their growth in this segment as well as to enter the segment of perfume and miniature bottles and cosmetic packaging in 2016.

20 new companies from all parts of Europe were accepted into the ELITE programme in December. Since its introduction in 2012, the ELITE programme has been joined by over 320 companies employing more than 120,000 people across Europe and operating in various fields, such as food, production and services. The Slovenian company Halcom joined the programme last year.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Environmental responsibility is of vital strategic importance to the Steklarna Hrastnik glassworks.

They follow rigorous environmental standards and regulations in the course of modernizing their technology. The primary focus rests on the environmental protection of air and water.

They base their operations on a sustainable model, which enables them to produce top quality glass products with motivated employees where environmental responsibility plays an important role. With this in mind, they invest in the best technology available on the market and upgrade it with their own know-how. With that they have successfully reduced their environmental impact despite the increased capacities of their production units in the period of last four years. In tableware unit, they have reduced the consumption of water by 55%, NOx emissions by 75%, both dust particle emissions and CO2 emissions by 35%. In packaging unit, they have reduced specific energy consumption by 16%, NOx emissions by 25%, dust emissions by 30%, CO2 emissions by 10%, and the consumption of urban water by 30%.

GLASS CARRIES A NUMBER OF SIGNIFICANT ADVANTAGES COMPARED TO OTHER MATERIALS

The clearest ones are:

- ecologically pure substance,
- can be fully recycled or processed,
- maintains its original properties after any number of recycling procedures,
- extraordinary range of practical uses,
- environmentally friendly production,
- outstanding chemical resistance and diverse optical properties,
- complies with the rigorous norms of foodstuff and related industries, helps ensure the quality and integrity of the end product,
- highly hygienic, does not absorb flavors,
- has no scent, the smooth surface is extremely easy to clean,
- the surface of glass is not porous and does not transmit gases.



Andrej Božič, General Manager of Steklarna Hrastnik:

“We are proud to have joined an elite group of companies. I see the ELITE programme as an opportunity and a challenge for the continued growth of our glassworks. We expect the programme to act as our partner on this journey, since it enables companies to access a variety of financing opportunities and sources. In addition, the programme also improves the recognition of companies, promotes relations and business opportunities with potential investors and supports the exchange of best practices.”





SMALL BUSINESS OWNER OF THE YEAR 2015

From modest craft workshop to family business serving major industries

DANILA GOLOB
PHOTO: NEBOJŠA TEJIĆ/STA

The winner of the prestigious title of Small Business Owner of the Year 2015 is Bojan Železnik, Director of the KGL family company in Litija making metal components for brands such as Volkswagen, Mercedes, Toyota, Peugeot and Citroën. In its 30th year, the company expects up to 40 per cent revenue growth in 2016, and its order books are already filling up into 2019 and 2020. Besides the automotive sector, it also makes high added-value products for the metal and electro industries.

In making the award, the Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia recognised his work commitment and business excellence.

“A company must constantly evolve, and what you earn has to be invested in its modernisation if you want to be successful. The moment a businessman wishes to fill his own pockets, the story ends,” says this successful businessman, who claims to do a little bit of everything in his company.

As a director and financial manager, he knows what takes place in production, and is expertly involved in development, technology and accounting. He prides himself on his clear insight into the overall running of the company. In the first 20 years of operation, director Bojan Železnik frequently left his vacation in order to attend to pressing issues because, as he says, that is how it is in trade: “If you want to last, you must respond immediately. But I like doing this, it is inside me, otherwise I would have closed the company down a long time ago. If you like your work, you insist. I never had any regrets.”

KGL is a family company, also employing his son who will take over the running of the company after his retirement. The demand for their products will not run out, since orders for 2019 and 2020 have already been placed, while the production of each car brand lasts

from five to seven years on average. In 2016, as high as 40 percent revenue growth is expected compared to 2015.

The award also coincides with the 30th anniversary of their operation. The cars of and of many other brands would not function without the metal components produced in this successful company from Litija.

PROCESSING OF METAL PRODUCTS FOR THE AUTOMOTIVE, METAL AND ELECTRO INDUSTRY

The company KGL, involved in manufacturing and processing of metal products for the automotive, metal and electro industry, was established in 1985. It has grown from a small developing craft workshop that had to overcome some hard times and crises, which is the proof that Bojan Železnik – the founder of the company – is really “a man of iron” (as is the meaning of the surname Železnik). Today, the company may also take pride in its state-of-the-art technology, machinery and equipment that enables the company to develop products of high added value. They develop new products in cooperation with the Faculties of Mechanical Engineering of the Universities of Ljubljana and Maribor. They have been awarded the certificates of standards (ISO/TS 16949 Automotive Industry Quality, ISO 9001 General Quality and ISO 14001 Environmental Protection), which they regularly maintain, while they also compete more and more successfully in foreign markets.

Currently, there are 90 people employed in the company. Technology is so demanding that they cannot afford any lapses, thus they only



Zdravko Počivalšek, Minister of Economic Development and Technology, Branko Meh, President of the Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia and Bojan Železnik, Small Business Owner of the Year 2015.

employ people with experience and excellent knowledge in their field. This is the only way that they can be competitive worldwide. The excellent personnel are also properly paid for their work.

SUCCESS ABROAD

They sell as much as 70 % of their production to the automotive industry as a direct or indirect supplier. Since the end of the nineties, KGL has been a direct supplier for Toyota and Volkswagen, the biggest and third biggest car manufacturers in the world. "There are only a few direct suppliers, and it is hard to achieve this position. Last year, we managed to obtain a multimillion project for the German corporation. We manufacture the front wheel support arms for Volkswagen vans. Our own engineering solutions are included in this demanding metal product. The production occupies eight processing lines, while the manufacturing will be completely ro-

botised and, thereby, higher added value achieved," says Bojan Železnik and emphasises that the trust of the German concern was earned by means of both past work and references.

On the global market, they manage to remain competitive precisely due to the robotisation that creates added value. "This year in KGL, we have achieved the intended plan of five robots working by the end of 2015. For the next year, the robotisation of two production lines is planned. The objective is that seven robots will be working in production by the end of 2016. We are also thinking about an additional new facility ready for new projects." In 2009, they moved a part of their production to Bosnia and Herzegovina, where mainly sheetmetal welded products for municipal and construction machinery are manufactured. There also, they have been slowly growing.

I FEEL SLOVENIA

FOR YOU ONLINE
www.ifeelslovenia.org





25 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE
REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA