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Januar 2008

# Sinfo

## **Janez Janša:**

**Our good economic results are one of the greatest achievements of our three years in office**

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**I FEEL  
SLOVENIA**

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Jože Tanko /Head of SDS Deputy Group/: **Tycoons have power over the Slovenian media**

Ljubljana, 6 December



“As the motion of confidence was tabled, the PM produced two diagrams showing that all the relevant media are linked through ownership structures. Some are under the control of SD and others under LDS. Lately, much has been said about pressures on journalists, so something has obviously been going on in these two media groups. Despite the fact that both journalists and the media know very well that they are controlled by SD and LDS, they are attempting to pin censorship on Mr Janša and the Government. On someone who has no influence on them whatsoever. And what’s even worse, they have mailed this lie to a number of addresses around the world at a crucial time, just ahead of the start of the Presidency.”

Dragutin Mate /Minister of the Interior/

Brussels, 6 December



“Besides the introduction of the euro, Schengen enlargement is a tangible way of joining the European space for our citizens. Once we can move freely within the EU, we will be able to feel, like when we adopted the euro, that we are a part of Europe and equal to other EU citizens.”

Žiga Andoljšek of the Ministry of Finance /Director General of the Public Property Directorate Ljubljana/: **It seems that the Government has made the most out of the NKBM sale**

Ljubljana, 6 December

“Given the current situation, the selected mode of sale and goals, it seems that the Government has made the most out of the NKBM sale, since the market set the price between 20.5 and 27 euros. The Government acted as a market regulator, choosing the highest price. If the majority of bids were at 27 euros, then this is the market price and in the given circumstances, the optimal price.”

Danilo Türk /New President of Slovenia/: **Slovenia and the USA could cooperate closely**

New York, 5 December

“Slovenia, as the presiding member state, and the USA, could cooperate closely and successfully in a number of areas, particularly in resolving the issue of Kosovo’s future status. Slovenia’s advantage in being small is that it can ‘decide more flexibly’ than countries with longer histories and greater interests. Already as Slovenia’s Ambassador to the UN I noticed that relatively small countries like Ireland and Luxembourg can make significant contributions to adopting important decisions at the global level.”



Žiga Turk /Minister without Portfolio and Head of the Government Office For Growth/: **The key issue will be innovation and creativity**

Ljubljana, 6 December:

“The key issue of Slovenia’s EU Presidency in education in the light of the revised Lisbon Strategy will be innovation and creativity. If we don’t do something in terms of education in the EU, production with low added value will once again move from Asia to Europe.”



Vesna Žarkovič

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## FOR UNIFIED AND FRUITFUL COLLABORATION

This month Slovenia became a member of the Schengen Area. After the introduction of the euro, Schengen enlargement is the most tangible form of European integration for citizens of Slovenia, as free movement will make them feel a part of Europe in practice, and equal to other EU citizens.

In Lisbon, the heads of state and government signed the Lisbon Treaty, which is to provide a way for the EU to break out of the political and institutional standstill which has hindered its operation.

In his column 'The Island of Freedom and the Censorship' the writer Drago Jančar rejects the infamous 'petition of journalists', arguing it is a hysterical reaction to unreasoned and illusory 'pressure' from the government and its PM, Janez Janša, on freedom of the press and alleged censorship. Find out more in this month's issue.

A short while ago the tourism legend Hanspeter Danuser visited Slovenia. He is convinced that Bled could easily be called Imperial Bled, because that is what it really is. Many foreign visitors who come to Slovenia during Slovenia's Presidency can judge for themselves.

Oskar Kogoj, the world-renowned Slovenian designer, who we present in this issue, believes that nature is the greatest designer: "Nature is God, pure God. It is an embodiment of the supernatural, the mystery of creation."

In these festive days, which also abound in the mysteries of creation, I call on our readers to toast our unified and fruitful collaboration in heading the EU.

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# Monthly Report



Photo: STA

Ramón Miklus

## Slovenia Signs Landmark EU Treaty

Prime Minister Janez Janša and Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel signed the new reform treaty of the EU at a ceremony in Lisbon on 13 December as representatives of the 23rd EU nation to pen the document replacing the constitutional treaty.

The pair signed what is known as the Lisbon Treaty after their Romanian opposite numbers and ahead of Slovakia's. Janša and Rupel signed their names against the backdrop of the Slovenian flag on a large-scale display at the Jeronimos Monastery in Lisbon.

Janša hailed the document as crucial for Europe in taking on the challenges of globalisation. "It gives Europe the power to take part in shaping globalisation instead of just fearing it or adapting to it," the Slovenian prime minister said.

The document is also important for Slovenia from the points of its upcoming stint as EU president, because it "cleans the slate" and therefore gives it greater ability to focus on issues such as the Lisbon Strategy and the energy-climate package, Janša said.

Slovenia has made it a priority of its six-month stint at the helm of the EU next year to be a custodian of the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, and it plans to be among the first member states to ratify the document to serve as a role model for the other member states.

However, Janša said that Slovenia did not see the ratification

process as a competition. "We don't want to be first at all costs. However, it is only right that the presiding country carries out the procedure as soon as possible," he said. According to him, ratification looks set to go smoothly in Slovenia.

He added that in other countries, too, there seemed to be no major concerns about the ratification process. He said that efforts would be made by the countries that ratify the treaty quickly to help those with complicated parliamentary procedures or those opting for a referendum.

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## Estonia and Slovenia Role Models to Each Other

Prime Minister Janez Janša and his Estonian counterpart Andrus Ansip praised each other's countries as they addressed the press following talks in Ljubljana on 27 November. While Janša quoted Estonia as a role model for reducing administrative barriers, tax reform and investment in R&D, Ansip hailed Slovenia as the most successful newcomer to the EU.

Janša said the visit was happening at an important moment for the EU, in particular for new members, referring to the Schengen expansion. "This will enhance the actual feeling

of integration in the EU. I find that after the elimination of customs, this is the second such major achievement for the EU and, in fact, guarantees that integration processes in the EU will expand further in the future," Janša said.

Ansip, who assured Janša his full support for Slovenia's spell as EU presiding country in the first half of 2008, said the Slovenian Presidency would be important for the ratification process. He also called for Croatia's speedy accession to the EU and progress in talks with Turkey.

The Estonian Prime Minister urged the EU to do more to integrate the energy sector, saying Baltic countries wished to establish energy connections with Finland and Poland.

Turning to bilateral cooperation, Janša said the countries had posted an increase in trade of more than 35% since his visit to the Baltic states in 2005. "These figures are still relatively low, but the trends are extremely positive." According to Economy Ministry data, trade amounted to EUR17.1m last year.

"Estonia is the best EU member when it comes to trends in investment in research and development," Janša said, adding that its "realistic approach" entailed not only a steady increase in funds, but also making sure these were spent productively.

## PMs Janša and Prodi: Relations between Slovenia and Italy are Very Good

PM Janez Janša met the Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi during his 29 November visit to Rome. Janša expressed his appreciation for the positive trends with regard to the protection of the Slovenian minority and the implementation of the Protection Regulations which apply in 32 municipalities. He also welcomed the decision of the Italian Senate to



PM Janša (left) expressed his appreciation for the positive trends with regard to the protection of the Slovenian minority in Italy.

Photo: STA

increase funds for the Slovenian minority.

The PMs exchanged views on future challenges in the region, where important decisions await the EU in the coming months. "Together we will make every effort, so that the European Union will unanimously accept these decisions" stressed the Slovenian PM. In his view, Slovenia is not the only country wishing to see consent from both Belgrade and Priština on Kosovo's future status. Janša added that a unanimous decision should be reached in the UN Security Council. "If this does not work and there are different options on the table, Slovenia will make every effort to see that the European Union responds with one voice and reaches a decision once this can be done unanimously", he said.

With regard to the Croatian Eco-Fishing zone in the Adriatic, both PMs believe that this issue would best be resolved within the EU, i.e. in collaboration between Italy, Slovenia, Croatia and the European Commission. PM Janez Janša also said he expected that a government would soon be formed in Zagreb, which would facilitate further talks.

## Writer Gradišnik and Designer Licul Win Prešeren Prize

On 3 December author and translator Janez Gradišnik and designer Miljenko Licul were declared the winners of the Prešeren Prize, the highest national awards for outstanding lifetime achievements in the arts.

Gradišnik (90) told the press conference held by the Prešeren Fund that translation was his "true profession" and pointed out that several decades had passed since a translator was last honoured with the prize. The jury described Gradišnik's oeuvre as expansive, diverse and fine-tuned. His work enabled the greatest achievements of international literature to find their way into Slovenia, while he also presented Slovenian literature on the world stage.

Being the author of some well-received books himself, Gradišnik has translated into Slovenian from French, English, German and Serbo-Croatian, and also took on works from Russian, Polish and Danish literature. The authors he



Prešeren prize winners Janez Gradišnik (writer and translator) and Miljenko Licul (designer). Photo: STA

translated include James Joyce, Thomas Mann, Robert Musil, André Malraux, Ernest Hemingway, Franz Kafka and Laurence Stern.

The 'pleasantly surprised' Miljenko Licul (61), said he also saw the prize as an award for the young profession of design. According to the jury, Licul is one of those who helped instill into the strictly modernist graphic design of the 1970s a different, more poetic form of expression.

Licul is known to the wider public for his design of the tolar and euro coins, Slovenian passports, IDs, health insurance cards and beer labels, the visual functionality of these contributions being a statement in itself, according to the jury.

The Prešeren Prize, named after Slovenia's best known poet France Prešeren (1800-1849) is traditionally awarded on the eve of Culture Day, 8 February, along with Prešeren Fund prizes, which are awarded for individual achievements.

## Rupel and Mexican Minister Discuss Plans for Lima Summit

Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel received his Mexican counterpart Patricia Espinosa Cantellano in Ljubljana on 4 December for talks focusing on Slovenia's EU Presidency and plans for the EU-Latin America and Caribbean Summit, which will take place in Peru's Lima in May 2008.

Rupel told the press after the meeting that he had acquainted Espinosa with Slovenia's EU Presidency priorities, while they devoted the bulk of their debate to the summit in Lima, which is to be organised jointly by Peru and Slovenia. The summit is to focus on the fight against poverty, social cohesion, energy and climate change, as well as sustainable development.

The pair announced that a representative of the Mexican Foreign Ministry, hosted by the Slovenian ministry, would assist Slovenia during the country's EU Presidency in questions related to Mexico and Latin America.

Rupel said that Mexico, a country of more than 100 million people, was an important trade partner for Slovenia in Latin America, while many opportunities to strengthen cooperation remained unexplored. Espinosa agreed that possibilities to strengthen cooperation remained plentiful, irrespective of the geographical distance between the two countries.

Minister Rupel added that Slovenia was opening an honorary consulate in Mexico City. It meanwhile covers Mexico from its Embassy in Washington.

## PM Apologises to 20th Century Political Prisoners

Prime Minister Janez Jansa apologised on behalf of the country to all Slovenian political prisoners who suffered injustice in the second half of the 20th century, as he addressed the national ceremony marking Human Rights Day on 10 December.

"It was wrong what they did to you. You were right, those who judged and persecuted you were wrong," he said at Monday's ceremony, adding that awareness about this needs to be kept in mind, or else history may repeat itself.

Outlining the history of persecution in Yugoslavia, Janša pointed out that whereas the world adopted in 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, these rights were being trampled in Slovenia in show trials and concentration camps.

It took until 1988 that the notion of human rights settled in in



Mexican Foreign Minister Patricia Espinosa Cantellano (left) stressed there's plenty of possibility to cooperation between Mexico and Slovenia. Photo: STA



Prime Minister Janez Janša apologised on behalf of the country to all 20th century Slovenian political prisoners as he addressed the national ceremony marking Human Rights Day. Photo: STA

Slovenia, which was the defining moment of the Slovenian spring. "All the parties and movements emerging at the end of the 1980s adopted human rights as a the essence of their political programmes," he said.

Human rights have changed the course of political history and are an inalienable heritage of Slovenian constitutional history. "But, sadly, this was not the case before," he recalled the theme of the celebration, political prisoners after 1945.

He said the celebration was dedicated to "tens of thousands of fellow countrymen who suffered incredibly in the second half of the last century, as the country which emerged after WWII and which Slovenia was not a part of, was not based on human rights.

The Prime Minister also pointed out that Slovenia was part of the "safer and richer half of the planet", so people should not be too introvert, they should look around the world.

## Ljubljana Tech Park to Add to National Competitive Edge

The EUR41.3m worth business premises of the Ljubljana Technological Park were opened on 7 December in what its general manager Iztok Lesjak says is a step towards creating an environment conducive to high-tech companies.

The advanced infrastructure is to boost the commercialisation of innovation and in this way contribute to making the whole economy more competitive, Lesjak told the press. Although the plans for building a park are more than 15 years old, the construction was launched 14 months ago. It now comprises seven buildings, while further expansion is planned to attract as many knowledge-based high-tech companies as possible.

According to Lesjak, the company running the park

acquired EUR8m from the European Structural Fund for the construction of buildings and the purchase of research equipment, while the balance of the investments come from its own funds and bank loans.

The Ljubljana municipality has contributed plots and thus acquired 70% ownership of Tehnološki Park Ljubljana. It has also provided for the infrastructure and exempted companies operating in the park from paying the fee for the use of site during the incubation period.

According to building plans, the tech zone at Brdo on the south west outskirts of Ljubljana, is to comprise 23 buildings with a total area of 100,000 sq. metres.



Iztok Lesjak, general manager of the Ljubljana Technological Park. Photo: STA



# Presidency of the EU

Treaty, Western Balkans, Lisbon and energy issue at the forefront

**S**lovenia will assume the Presidency of the EU immediately after the new European treaty is signed. Therefore, following the ratification process will be among the priorities of the Presidency. In addition, Slovenia will focus on the Western Balkans, the Lisbon Strategy, and energy and measures against climate change. The Spring Summit during Slovenia's Presidency will focus on economic issues. European leaders are to confirm the new three-year cycle of the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy, which aims to strengthen the EU's competitiveness.

During the Slovenian Presidency, rather demanding negotiations between member states on decreasing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing the share of renewables will probably begin. This spring, the EU committed itself to decreasing greenhouse gas emissions by 20 per cent by 2020, and now the member states have to agree on how this burden is to be shared.

Also during the Presidency the enlargement of the Schengen area to nine new member states which joined the EU in 2004 will complete. Land and sea border controls will already be abolished on 21 December 2007, while air control will follow only in March 2008. At the same time, activities to set up the second generation Schengen Information System will be fully underway.

As 2008 is the Year of Intercultural Dialogue, Slovenia will also focus on relations between cultures in the EU and the world. The main ceremony on this occasion will be held in January in Slovenia.

Slovenia drew up the 18-month Presidency Programme with its predecessors, Germany and Portugal. This is the first joint programme of its kind in the history of the EU, when the Presidency trio has identified key guidelines for EU's activities over eighteen months.

The presiding country is expected to act neutrally and promote European and not its national interests. However, the Presidency can naturally add its own political flare. Several other topics will be discussed at the meetings of the Council of the EU, most from the so-called inherited agenda. These are issues which have been addressed but not resolved by previous Presidencies.

The Council of the EU, which is to be presided over by Slovenia, meets in nine configurations. Foreign, finance and agriculture ministers meet most frequently, once a month, while other meetings are held less often. All formal Council meetings will take place in Brussels and in Luxembourg (in April and June), while informal ones will be held in Slovenia. Key decisions will be confirmed by the European leaders in March and June at the meetings of European Council in Brussels.

## MOST FORMAL MEETINGS IN BRUSSELS, THE MAJORITY OF THE INFORMAL ONES AT BRDO

During the Presidency, numerous different level events will be organised: 160 in Slovenia, including 11 at ministerial level. However, most formal meetings will take place in Brussels and Luxembourg, while Slovenia will mostly host informal ones. In addition, several meetings at the highest level between the



EU and third countries are planned. The first big event during the Presidency will be the traditional meeting between the presiding Government and the European Commission. The Slovenian cabinet is to meet the commissioners, headed by Jose Manuel Barroso, on 8 January, when the ceremony launching the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue takes place in Ljubljana.

Both March (13 and 14 March 2008) and June (19 and 20 June) meetings of the European Council, that is of the Heads of State or Government of the EU member states, will be held in Brussels, which will also host all formal meetings of different Council of the EU configurations, except the April and June ones, which are traditionally held in Luxembourg. Slovenia will follow the tradition of organising informal ministerials and run eleven such meetings. Ministers will meet at Brdo pri Kranju, except for fisheries ministers who will meet somewhere on the coast.

Representing the EU in relation to third countries is also among the key tasks of the presiding country. Every Presidency organises several meetings with third countries and regions at different levels. The biggest event will be the meeting between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean, which will be held in Lima on 16 and 17 May.

## THE PRESIDENCY OF THE EU WILL COST SLOVENIA 62 MILLION EUROS

According to Government estimates, the cost of Slovenia's Presidency of the Council of the EU will reach 62 million euros. This sum includes new public administration staff and Presidency logistics, including promotion, public relations and material costs. It should also cover most costs relating to the 160 events held in the country. Unforeseen events and costs will be covered by the budgetary reserve.

Most of the money, 27 million euros, has been earmarked for logistics. About 25 million euros has been allocated for human resources: about 2,100 public servants are participating in the project. Promotion and public relations activities account for 5.6 million euros, while four million are to cover material costs.

## SLOVENIAN COMPANIES TO HELP WITH THE EU PRESIDENCY

During the Presidency, the Slovenian Government will be helped by companies who answered the public call for Presidency partners. Twenty-three Slovenian companies will participate in carrying out the project by contributing their products and services, donations and discounts, totalling at least half a million euros.

## OFFICIAL SPOKESPERSONS WILL BE THE VOICE OF THE PRESIDENCY

Public relations significantly contribute to creating the overall image of a Presidency. From 1 January 2008, Slovenia will carry out this task through official spokespersons in Ljubljana and Brussels who will brief the public on important activities and events. In addition, relevant information will be available at the official website of Slovenia's Presidency. The official spokesperson for the Presidency in Ljubljana will be Anže Logar, the Director of the Government Communication Office (GCO), while Maja Kocijančič and Dragan Barbutovski will hold this post in Brussels. Ministries and government offices in Ljubljana will also have their own spokespersons, whose



Maja Kocijančič

work will be coordinated by the Director of the GCO. Ms Kocijančič will be the official spokesperson for events covered by Coreper (Committee of Permanent Representatives) II, which deals with general affairs, foreign relations, finance, justice and home affairs; while Mr Barbutovski will be the spokesperson for areas under Coreper I: the internal market, consumers, industry, research, transport, energy, environment and agriculture. All spokespersons have undergone special training, which included language courses. They have familiarised themselves with the work of press officers and their predecessors from other EU member states. According to Mr Logar, they reviewed the practices of other Presidencies EU before deciding on a communication strategy. "Considering the models of other countries, Slovenia opted for a system of official spokespersons, which is a new approach in public administration," says Logar, explaining that a spokesperson is actively involved in preparing dossiers, while being responsible for their presentation at the same time.

The official presidency website [www.eu2008.si](http://www.eu2008.si)



Anže Logar

is also among the key communication points. Any queries can be addressed to [predsedovanje@gov.si](mailto:predsedovanje@gov.si). In addition, the press will be informed of current events at briefings, press conferences, in press releases and different publications. The

website will also offer live streaming of some events, such as press conferences. Key people involved in the Presidency and basic information are presented in a special brochure.

During the presidency, briefings will be held every two weeks at Brdo pri Kranju, where journalists will be informed of current events and presented with the agenda, and will have the opportunity to arrange interviews. Before both meetings of the European Council, taking place in March and June in Brussels,



Dragan Barbutovski



Brdo will host a teleconference with Brussels. During the Presidency Slovenia will be visited by many journalists. Considering the experience of previous Presidencies, the Government Communication office expects that informal meetings of foreign ministers will attract the greatest attention, about 350 journalists. About 300 media representatives are expected to follow the meeting of finance ministers, while about 200 the informal meetings of justice and home affairs ministers.

## INTERPRETING A DEMANDING TASK FOR THE SLOVENIAN PRESIDENCY

Slovenia is one of the official EU languages, but it is spoken by fewer than two million people, which means there are not many interpreters. Therefore, interpreting was a great challenge for Slovenian Presidency. According to the Government Office for European Affairs, the number of interpreters should suffice for all planned events in Slovenia and Brussels if they and their work are coordinated well and planned carefully, and if they cooperate closely. During the Presidency the interpreting services will be the responsibility of the Translation and Interpretation Division of the Secretariat-General of the Government, which will collaborate with approximately 50 interpreters. In addition, there are 68 Slovenian interpreters accredited in Brussels who will provide their services at events in Brussels and informal ministerials in Slovenia.

## PRESIDENCY AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PROMOTING THE COUNTRY AND ITS TOURISM

The Slovenian Tourist Board wishes to take advantage of the opportunity offered by the Presidency to achieve greater recognition of Slovenia as a country and tourist destination with everyone who has already visited the country or knows little or nothing about it. A bit less than 700,000 euros will be allocated to promotion in the first half of 2008.

The Slovenian Tourist Board will help the Slovenian tourist economy with promotional activities at home and abroad, as it already does. The STB stressed the media significance of the EU Presidency for Slovenia and its tourism. They believe that this is a unique opportunity to increase Slovenia's presence in the European and global media, and the general and professional public, which can greatly contribute to increasing the country's recognition at the European and broader international level and placing it on the global tourist map.

The Tourism Directorate at the Ministry of the Economy agrees. They also think that the greater presence of Slovenia in global media will speed up the country's recognition and

make it a more recognisable tourist destination, which will result in a greater number of visitors. They are confident that the Slovenian tourist industry will know how to take advantage of the opportunities available.

The STB has decided to organise a large project called the EU Roadshow, which includes 26 events over 26 weeks in 26 towns in the EU. The presentation targets different publics, depending on the type of event organised.

## LACES AND CRYSTAL GLASS PRODUCTS AMONG PROTOCOL GIFTS

During its six-month Presidency Slovenia will present itself to participants at major events with protocol and promotional gifts, which are the responsibility of the Government Communication Office and Protocol Services. There will be 1,680 protocol gifts, and 35,000 promotional backpacks and other promotional material.



The total value of the protocol gifts is 111,547 euro excluding VAT. The 1,680 gifts were selected by a panel which assessed how products followed the tender guidelines, the clarity of the message it was supposed to convey, originality in terms of its message, content or motif, aesthetics, quality and use. There are two sets of gifts: the first will be presented to heads of delegations at the ministerial level and more senior officials, while the second set will be given to ministers at events at meetings of Heads of State or Government and spouses of delegation heads.


 A close-up portrait of Janez Janša, the Prime Minister of Slovenia, looking thoughtfully at the camera with his hands clasped in front of him. He is wearing a dark suit jacket, a white shirt, and a dark tie.
 

## Janez Janša:

Our good economic results are one of the greatest achievements of our three years in office

Vesna Žarkovič, photo: Kristina Kosec/Bobo

**W**HEN REVIEWING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF HIS THREE YEARS IN OFFICE, THE PRIME MINISTER STRESSES THE MOST RECOGNISABLE ONES: IN 2005 WE ACHIEVED 4.1% ECONOMIC GROWTH WHILE IN 2006 IT STOOD AT 5.7%, PUTTING US IN THIRD PLACE IN THE EMU, WHICH WE JOINED AT THE START OF 2007 AS THE FIRST NEW EU MEMBER STATE. ACCORDING TO EUROSTAT FORECASTS, WE WILL ACHIEVE ABOUT 91% OF THE EU GDP AVERAGE IN 2007 OR €22,300 PER CAPITA IN TERMS OF PURCHASING POWER PARITY. SINCE ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE FIRST NINE MONTHS OF 2007 WAS 6.5%, THE PM BELIEVES WE CAN EXCEED THIS EXCELLENT FORECAST.

Prime Minister, this month the Government is marking its third anniversary in office. In your initial statements when you assumed office you said the Government would help create conditions to boost economic growth, particularly by improving the tax and administrative environment, enhancing financial discipline, increasing and ensuring the greater efficiency of investments in science and technological development, withdrawing the state from the economy and creating a favourable environment for foreign investment. Which of these have you carried out?

A lot has been carried out. At the beginning of our term we wrote in Slovenia's Development Strategy that Slovenia should develop three percentage points faster than the European average. We have met and exceeded this goal.

To this end, we drew up a package of economic and social reforms intended to boost economic growth. We lowered taxes for the first time in the history of Slovenia. By gradually abolishing payroll tax and lowering corporate and personal income taxes, we have significantly disburdened the Slovenian economy and created the conditions for the less-costly employment of highly educated and qualified labour. We have put a special emphasis on encouraging investment in research and development, where we are approaching the target of 3% of GDP by 2010. Recently, the amended Employment Relationship Act, co-ordinated with the social partners, entered into force. It creates the conditions for a more flexible labour market.

The results of the measures we have carried out are clearly seen. In 2005 we achieved 4.1% economic growth, while in 2006 it stood at 5.7%, putting us in third place in the EMU, which we joined at the start of 2007 as the first new EU member state. According to Eurostat forecasts, we will achieve about 91% of the EU GDP average in 2007 or €22,300 per capita in terms of purchasing power parity. Given that Slovenia's economic growth in the first nine months of 2007 was 6.5%, I believe we can exceed this excellent forecast. In this respect, it is also significant that the high economic growth has favourably influenced the employment rate since in September 2007 it was 2.7% higher than in the same period last year, while the unemployment rate is falling. In October it reached 4.4%, which is 2.8 percentage points lower than the European average, ranking Slovenia third in the EMU and seventh in the entire EU.

The Government has eliminated countless bureaucratic obstacles, thereby simplifying procedures relevant for the lives of the citizens and the operations of companies. We have also been true to our word when it comes to withdrawing from the economy. Several weeks ago we carried out the first initial public offer where anyone interested could buy shares. This decision was received very favourably by the citizens as the interest exceeded all expectations. After long-running co-ordination the Government adopted legislation on the regions, which is vital for the faster and more harmonious development of Slovenia. During our time in office we have, despite real growth in pensions, recorded lower expenditure of the pension budget, which has dropped below 13 per cent of GDP. In light of everything it is also very encouraging that after years of a declining number of births the trend has recently reversed.

**What do you see as the greatest benefit in these three years and what is your greatest disappointment?**

The greatest benefit for Slovenian citizens in the last few years is the good economic results, which I have already mentioned, since a good economic foundation is a prerequisite for rising welfare. Naturally, we should not forget that after joining the EU and introducing the euro we recently joined the Schengen area. This is far more than a symbolic act as the elimination of the last administrative obstacle to crossing the border is opening the doors even more widely to the free flow of people and initiatives, and connecting us more closely within the European family.

However, I am disappointed to see that the coalition is more or less alone in the Presidency of the EU, as it should be a national project. Instead of taking advantage of the time when Europe and the world is watching us to present our achievements, future goals, natural beauties, cultural wealth, and our contribution to the common European future, we must refute the lies and absurd accusations and prove that Slovenia is truly a democratic country. No European government which has presided over the EU has had to face this. I still hope that political stakeholders will reshuffle their priorities and forget their short-term internal political goals. As I have said several times, the doors for co-operation are always open, but promises must be substantiated with concrete acts.

**The high economic growth and low employment are clearly the result of your Government's work; however, many claim you have failed to carry out all the promised reforms and not taken decisive steps to curb inflation. What will you do to limit inflation?**

I believe that the recent assessment made by the European Reform Barometer Business Europe tells a lot about this Government's work and its commitment to the Lisbon goals, ranking Slovenia in 7th place within the EU. In terms of reforming its business environment, our country ranks first!

As for inflation, which has risen in the last few months: the main reason lies in the high oil and food prices in global markets and Slovenia has no influence on these. It is, however, utterly unacceptable what retailers have done, namely they have increased their profit margins without any good reasons. The Government is using all its mechanisms to respond to the higher inflation. We are lowering the budget deficit, strengthening the anti-cyclical fiscal policy, controlling regulated prices more closely, while keeping



government-controlled salaries within an acceptable macroeconomic framework. We have also carried out certain changes to strengthen consumer protection and competitiveness since under previous governments these institutions failed to perform their duties correctly, which facilitated the establishment of monopolies.

**What is your comment on the drop in public support for the Government in the second half of its term, after the strong start seen immediately after the election?**

No government has the same support in the last year of its term as it had right after its election, and this is particularly true of any government which implements new reforms such as our Government. By their very nature, reforms cause a certain reluctance among people as their effects take a considerable time to be seen. The effects of this Government's reforms have so far mainly been reflected on the macroeconomic level. More time must pass before people feel their effects directly in their everyday lives. The first such opportunity will present itself next year when we review our personal income tax forms.

**In recent months, the so-called journalists' petition against censorship has attracted a lot of attention at home and abroad. How do you see the petition yourself, and respond to its claims?**

A petition is a completely legitimate institution in a democratic society. However, in this case there are several facts and circumstances that seriously question the petition's credibility. The offhand claims made in the petition that the Government has ownership leverage through which it is supposedly exerting its influence on the media are not supported by a single example. The RTV Slovenija Act was backed by the people at a referendum. In fact, it is the media owners that have the leverage. The ownership shares and the links between politics and capital in the Slovenian media are no secret. This Government has no ownership shares here.

The second problem I see with regard to the petition is that it was sent to a number of addresses abroad before the issue was discussed, or attempted to be discussed, at home. There was no such interest; we were merely informed about the contents of the petition and the fact that it had already been forwarded to addresses at home and abroad. If we add here that the claims made in the petition are identical to the points made in an assessment report of the largest opposition party, then it becomes clear that this institution was exploited to discredit the Government abroad.

Moreover, there have been quite worrying responses by some signatories to the petition who claim they were misled when signing the petition as the text they signed was reportedly different from that which was subsequently presented to the public. I personally believe this is a matter which should be settled among the signatories first; however, I see it as casting yet more shadow on the petition itself.

**What will the Government's priorities be regarding home affairs during the last year of its term in office?**

In spite of the obligations of the EU Presidency, the Government will invest every effort in further promoting Slovenia's development. We will work towards concluding



the process of decentralising the country as the division into regions will enable a faster, more uniform and just development. We also seek to bring to a close the second stage of privatisation; many of the procedures are under way as we speak. Further, the Government will focus on the issue of the just distribution of profits and other benefits resulting from good work, and to this end propose that an act on employee participation in profit be passed. In addition, we will make every effort to improve the social conditions of those living below the poverty line. Although their numbers have fallen considerably in the last few years, our work is still not done.

**You have announced a fight against political-tycoon connections. What changes can we expect in this respect?**

Above all, a more just distribution of the fruits of Slovenia's economic success, which is the result of prudent work and management. The core of Slovenia's economy, which is represented by hundreds of quality companies, is healthy and it is thanks to these very companies that Slovenia's economic growth is one of the highest in the European Union. Therefore, it is only proper that everyone who has contributed to this should be rewarded and not just the handful of people who amassed incredible wealth through their political connections during the transition period.

**Which topics are key to Slovenia's future development? How do you see Slovenia, say, ten years from now?**



Given the objectives we have set ourselves, Slovenia will definitely overtake the average EU development rate in terms of GDP per capita, and further increase its employment. More funds will be earmarked for R&D and I see Slovenia as an orderly and pleasant business environment for centres of innovation which will not rely exclusively on business success, but also on an environment that will promote creativity rather than competitiveness. I would like Slovenia to become a creative environment which attracts talent.

I see Slovenia in the future as a knowledge-based society that has preserved traditional Slovenian values: creativity, entrepreneurship, justice, openness, tolerance, fairness and solidarity. Slovenes have never had such good opportunities as today to create an environment in which we can live a full life; an environment where our children can grow safely and be healthy; an environment where the quality of life does not solely depend on economic efficiency. We can create a society which is aware of the fact that true welfare considers the social balance. This is a positive view that we wish to build within the EU.

**The Government's main project in 2008 is clearly the Presidency of the Council of the EU. What are the Presidency's priorities and what does this mean for our country?**

The Presidency of the Council of the EU is one of the greatest challenges for us, yet we are well prepared. The Slovenian Presidency will focus on the future of the EU, negotiating global challenges such as climate change, security, competitiveness etc. Rather than merely adapting to or even fearing globalisation trends, Europe should help to shape them.

During our Presidency, the delicate process of ratifying the Lisbon Treaty, which provides a new institutional basis for further development of the Union, will be under way. The

first half of 2008 will see an assessment of the three years of implementing the Lisbon Strategy and the beginning of a new cycle with which we aim to continue the rise of the European economy. One key area of our Presidency programme is the Energy Efficiency Action Plan which will require that we share the burden of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing the share of renewable energy in national energy balances among member states. Another of our priorities is the European enlargement policy, with the Western Balkans as one of its main highlights. I believe that the EU should take the initiative here as the sustainable stabilisation and development of the region are vital to the security and welfare of the whole of Europe.

**Together with the opposition you have signed an agreement on cooperation during the Presidency. How will this work in practice?**

Despite the Government's best intentions, the cooperation agreement has remained nothing more than letters on paper. Unfortunately, the opposition parties that signed it have failed to support their words with actions. Nevertheless, I remain hopeful that they will be able to overcome political divisions and face the historic challenge together with the Government.

As the old year gives way to the new – one that will no doubt be historic for Slovenia – I would like to ask you, Prime Minister, to make a short address to our readers.

Holidays are an opportunity for us to spend more time with our families, loved ones and friends, to take time for each other, and wish each other good luck, health and success. In so doing, we should not forget about all those who cannot celebrate the occasion in the way they would want. A mere handshake, some nice words, or a symbolic present can also bring at least some festive spirit to them. Let 2008 be a bright and friendly year.



(This article was published in Delo - Sobotna priloga, 24 November, 2007). Photo: Nebojša Tejić

**Drago Jančar**

# CENSORSHIP

## and an Island of Freedom

**T**owards the end of the 1980's, the Newsweek US daily published a short article in which Slovenia was referred to as an 'island of freedom' in the midst of an unfree Communist world. Both the journalist who wrote the article and those of us who knew the situation in our homeland knew that this was a case of relativism, compared to neighbouring Hungary or the Czech Republic, and all the other parts of then-Yugoslavia. And this is what the article was about: democratisation not democracy; the breakthrough of pluralism in a single-party

monolith; and about the media increasingly opening up so as to often allow opinions other than those of the Party. At that time, censorship was, of course, still commonplace in the Slovenian media; a Party organ known as the Socialist Alliance of Working People nominated editors of all the media, fresh newspapers reached Party leaders when still warm, and overnight some articles disappeared or were replaced by others; there is no need to mention control of television, which the rulers particularly cherished.

# WHAT MAKES THE NEWS



Nevertheless, I was pleased to come across the article. I was the president of Slovenian PEN, and in our committee we often had to deal with book banning and various other journalistic 'Berufsverbots', bans on student newspapers and literary magazines, even legal proceedings. We sent a number of appeals to the Slovenian and Yugoslav authorities, and informed International PEN. This is why I saw the article in Newsweek as timely. Although I was a journalist myself for three years and know all too well that good news spreads much harder than bad news, I copied the article and mailed it to friendly addresses in Slovenia and abroad. At home, I thought, the news might hearten people who were despairing over the situation; it might even be an encouragement to the Party faction which was opening up the society and was given hard time by dogmatic hardliners. Likewise, many PEN friends and acquaintances of mine abroad would see that things are moving, that yet they are moving. At that time, very little was reported about Slovenia, so an article mentioning an 'island of freedom' was, naturally, good news. Even though I have never considered myself too much of a patriot – one simply finds it more pleasing to read something good about one's homeland than something bad.

Last week, in a Viennese coffeehouse, I nearly spilled my morning coffee having read the news that Slovenia was a land of censorship, that the government was controlling all the media through ownership shares, and that this was a bad omen for Slovenia's EU Presidency. The article quoted a petition by Slovenian journalists. I would have never almost spilled my coffee if this had only been a case of patriotism. A patriot knows the way to instant consolation: 'Oh, these Austrians!', the patriot says, 'They envy us for heading Europe; us – yesterday's serfs.' And on the front page they are writing about a severe increase of the cost of living in Austria; bad news from the neighbourhood helps them to digest this. I did not nearly spill my coffee out of patriotic feelings, but out of astonishment: that in these two months that I have been abroad much and have only periodically glanced through Slovenian newspapers, the country has fallen prey to censorship? That was to be a bad omen for Slovenia's EU Presidency. And what media are actually owned by the government, when there is not a single newspaper which we could claim, as is commonplace in all European countries, is pro-government?



If the truth be told, I have not read, watched or listened the Slovenian media much; partly because I have become somewhat fed up with them; and I also believe that freedom of press in Slovenia has been abused. That sensationalism making mountains out of molehills is in full swing; that people are offended and deprived of all dignity on radio and television. That, say, Janez Janša – also mentioned in the petition as somebody imposing censorship – was a victim of unprecedented media lynching at the time he led the opposition and that now, as Prime Minister, he is faring no better. My memories from Vienna bring me to the covers of newspapers bashing the government – and going so far as to write about a minister's wife going to buy a broom in an official car and reporting about it on the front page – shocking headlines against ministers, in short; everywhere one turned one would see not only criticism, but the ruthless tearing apart of the government, the Prime Minister, civil servants, the 'state' in its own right; to my mind sprang the TV news of at least two channels, beginning every single day with: it's raining – damn the government! So here, where practically everyone writes against the government, there is supposed to be censorship? Which text is it, be it as biased and offensive as possible, that cannot be published in Slovenia?

I have lived to see my 'island of freedom' and it has been a long while since I was really happy living there. One of the reasons is that it has seen a proliferation of media quarrelling and ruthlessness, a brutal tone in its retributions and petty sarcasm. At the time of former governments I would highlight the fact that the media almost never criticised the government, but always and relentlessly – the opposition. I wrote about it; I wished we had media which would not only attack and lambaste, but report objectively and analyse. Critical, truthful and normal media. But even during the time of marked media 'Gleichschaltung' I did not talk about censorship and lack of freedom, but about problems related to professionalism that cannot or will not fight win its independence from the centres of capital and political powers.

Well, now we have lived to see a time when everyone is criticising the government – and now we are supposed to have censorship?

Naturally, I myself share the opinion that it is not normal to discuss the media in parliament. However, I think, as a reader, that the entire journalists guild in Slovenia should, at least to a certain extent, take a look at itself. Many years ago, one of the two authors of the now famous petition would write articles every day for six months in which he openly insinuated that the unfortunate 'singing major', who disappeared suddenly, was abducted on the orders of Janez Janša. When this proved to be a complete lie, the journalist even failed to make an apology. I thought then that the editors could discard one of those articles without causing any damage or restricting media freedom. The other author of the petition spoke on television of Janša as if the latter were an idiot, resembling a US congressman. I believe that it is not acceptable in public speech to accuse people of being abductors and call them idiots, whether they are Slovenian or American politicians. The current situation in Slovenia allows both professional journalists to write similar things and disseminate them without being stopped or censored. I am aware that the problem of journalistic independence

and the ethics of the public word is a complex matter. A fierce battle between the capital and the centres of political power has been raging in society, and as in all areas, these interests also conflict in the media. The social atmosphere is saturated with tensions which are moving into completely personal spheres of human existence. Many people's vision is clouded with anger and the wish to dominate; hurting your enemy is becoming more important than creating and working well. One can hardly expect that in such a situation journalists would behave like independent and ethically subtle angels who would succumb to neither influence nor pressure. However, it is precisely because of this atmosphere that it would be good to hold the wild horses. Together with politicians, journalists can do the most in this respect. In a month we will be 'the ring of Europe', as Valentin Vodnik affectionately forecast a long time ago.

And we are truly not worthy of having our own democratic state if during this time we will not be able to demonstrate the most basic mutual tolerance and decency. We need both more because of ourselves than Europe. To truly live on an 'island of freedom', which would above all be an island of the intellect, intelligence and tolerance, a place where people listen to each other and are heard. And not to live as if on a Caribbean island of convicts, where those who are stronger and more brutal, more shrewd and insidious have the upper hand.

And where people flee from if only they can.

## About the author:

Drago Jančar born in Maribor, Slovenia, 1948, is the best-known Slovenian writer at home and abroad. After studying law, he worked as journalist, editor and free-lance writer. In time of communist regime he was sentenced for "hostile propaganda." As a Fulbright fellow, he spent a year in the USA (1985), and in Germany (1988). As the President of the Slovenian PEN Center 1987-91 he was engaged in the rise of democracy in Slovenia and Yugoslavia.

His novels and short stories have been translated and published in many languages. His plays have seen a number of foreign productions, whereas at home they are always considered the peak of Slovenian theatrical season. His exhibition of the crimes and misdemeanors of the post-war authorities entitled *The Dark Side of the Moon* turned into one of the major cultural events in Slovenia in 1999. It also drew attention of major European press.

In 1993, he was awarded with the Prešeren Prize, the highest Slovenian literary award;  
In 1994 he was awarded with the European Short Story Award in Augsburg, Germany;  
In 2003 he was awarded with European Herder Prize for literature;  
In 2007 he was awarded with the Jean Améry Award for European Essay Writing in Frankfurt, Germany;

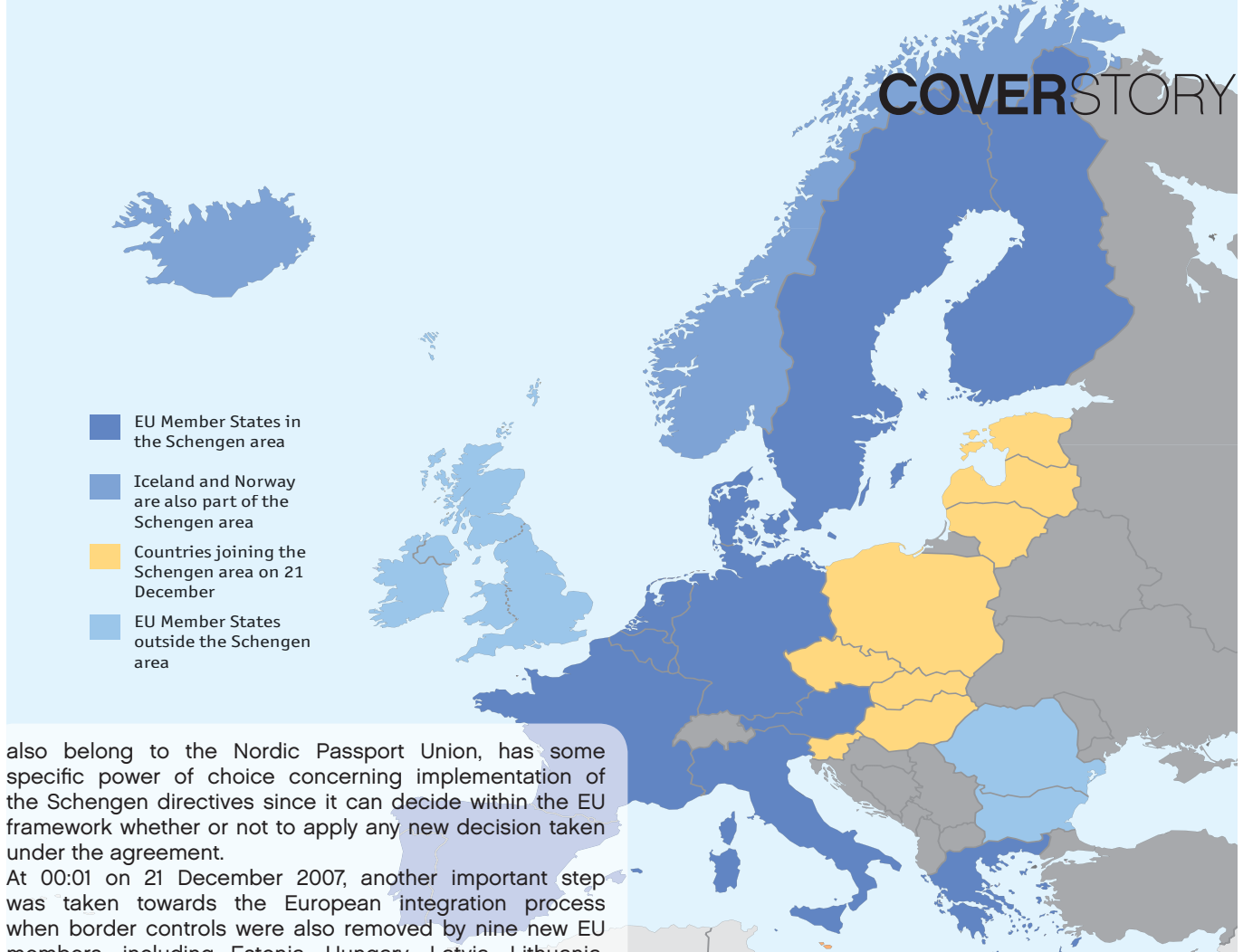
# Slovenia joined Schengen:

Another, important step toward the integration of the European countries has been made

Ramón Miklus

**W**hen joining the EU on 1 May 2004 Slovenia committed itself to fully implement the Schengen regulations on border security. Before removing all border controls with its EU neighbours, the country had to meet a number of security conditions along its border with Croatia, which has become an external EU border. On 21 December, Slovenia finally removed all checks on its border with Italy, Austria and Hungary. From now on, the long and often unpleasant border controls will just be a faint memory in everybody's minds, especially for those living in the border areas who are used to travelling from one country to another. Of course, the expansion of the Schengen free circulation area was a very delicate and complex process since it required the implementation of many regulations, mostly in terms of security and police cooperation, such as application of the Schengen Information Security System (SIS).

Establishment of the Schengen area of free circulation  
The Schengen free circulation area finds its origin in the Schengen agreement signed in 1985 by five EU member states (Belgium, Germany, France, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) in a town of the same name in Luxembourg. The main purpose of this agreement, signed outside of the EU framework, was to abolish the systematic border controls between the participating countries. The 1985 Agreement has been implemented by the Schengen Convention that was signed in 1990, providing for the abolition of controls at the internal borders of the signatory states, establishing common rules on checks at the external frontiers and introducing the accompanying measures which enable the internal border checks to be lifted. The Schengen Convention came into force in 1995. Pursuant to the Treaty of Amsterdam (signed in 1997 and entering into force in 1999), this agreement has been implemented in the law of the European Union. By that time, other EU member states (Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece) had joined the initial signatories to this inter-governmental agreement. Not all EU members have joined the Schengen free circulation area. Ireland and the UK have never signed up to the agreement, meaning they have not removed border controls with other EU member states. However, there is no border control when travelling between Ireland and the UK since these countries constitute a common passport-free area of circulation. On the other hand, there are some countries (Iceland and Norway) that have joined Schengen even though they are not members of the EU. Switzerland started to negotiate its accession to Schengen in 2002 since the country also wants to be part of the free circulation area. Denmark, which joined Schengen in 2001 together with Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Norway, the countries which



also belong to the Nordic Passport Union, has some specific power of choice concerning implementation of the Schengen directives since it can decide within the EU framework whether or not to apply any new decision taken under the agreement.

At 00:01 on 21 December 2007, another important step was taken towards the European integration process when border controls were also removed by nine new EU members, including Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. After its last expansion, the Schengen free circulation area counts 24 member states.

### The Schengen Information System: high technology in the service of free circulation

The many advantages offered by the elimination of systematic border controls may unfortunately be accompanied by a series of risks given that illegal movements between Schengen members will become easier. The Schengen Information System (SIS) was created for the purpose of limiting criminal circulation within the area with a high-technology police cooperation system. The SIS database allows Schengen police forces and consular agents to access data on specific kinds of subjects considered potentially dangerous to public security (i.e. criminals wanted for arrest or extradition) as well as missing persons, third-country citizens to be refused entry, along with lost or stolen goods.

The SIS has been in operation since 26 March 1995 when controls on internal borders between the first group of Schengen countries were abolished. Since then technology has taken some giant steps: given the progress made and the future prospects of enlargement a new version of the SIS had to be developed allowing for the faster and more efficient circulation of information between member states. The new version of the Schengen Information System, called SIS II, was expected to be used by the new member states joining the Schengen area. Due to some problems in launching the new Schengen Information System, in September 2006 Portugal proposed the project called 'SISone4all', a solution that allows further delays in the Schengen expansion to be avoided, connecting the nine EU-2004 member states to the

existing version of SIS 1 plus.

Implementing the Schengen standards in Slovenia After joining the EU in 2004 Slovenia abolished customs controls with the EU member states, while police controls remained in a simplified form. The Schengen implementation was then launched in mid-February 2006. Police co-operation, data security, maritime and land borders security were checked in the first half of the year. Air border security was checked at the end of June when faults with Ljubljana's airport infrastructure were identified by evaluators concerning the separation of passengers coming from the Schengen zone and those coming from outside. The problem was soon resolved and a year later a new terminal of the Ljubljana airport, then renamed 'Ljubljana Jože Pučnik Airport', along with a fresh check of air border security was opened. In April 2007 the Slovenian Government appointed an interdepartmental task force to find a solution to the checkpoints on internal borders that would become obsolete after Slovenia joined the Schengen zone. In September 2007 EU interior ministers decided to allow Croatian citizens to continue using their identity cards to enter Slovenia, Italy and Hungary after the Schengen expansion. This decision envisaged the use of a special slip for Croatian citizens that will be stamped upon entry and exit to and from the three countries.

### What changed when Slovenia joined Schengen?

When Slovenia joined Schengen, border controls shifted to Slovenia's 670-kilometre border with Croatia. All border checks with Italy, Austria and Hungary are no longer being carried out, thereby ensuring Schengen citizens the right of free movement within the free circulation area. Regarding

# COVERSTORY

## BORDER CROSSING POINTS AT THE EXTERNAL SCHENGEN BORDER



security checks on the external EU border with Croatia, practically nothing has changed. According to Slovenia's Interior Minister Dragutin Mate, Slovenia already carried out Schengen-compliant border checks before joining Schengen. Comprehensive control (identity checks as well as phytosanitary, veterinary, customs and inspection control) will only be undertaken at the Gruškovje, Obrežje and Jelšane road crossings, the Dobova rail crossing, the Ljubljana airport and the port of Koper. At other crossings only security and customs checks will be performed.

The citizens of third countries will be able to enter Slovenia at all 25 international crossings. Only the citizens of Slovenia and Croatia will be allowed to cross at the smaller inter-country border crossings, whereas local border crossings require special border passes issued by local authorities to people living along the border. Foreigners travelling to Slovenia will have to carry their ID if they are from a Schengen member state or their passport if they are third-country citizens. Border formalities have therefore been simplified since Slovenia joined Schengen. If Schengen citizens merely need to carry their ID while travelling across the area, non-Schengen citizens simply have to get a single Schengen visa from one of the countries they intend to visit. This means that non-Schengen citizens who are planning to visit more than one Schengen country just need to get a common Schengen visa from the country that will be their main destination.

In practice, this means that if an Australian citizen wants to visit Ljubljana travelling by train from the airport in Munich, they just need to get a visa from the Slovenian Embassy or Consulate since Slovenia is the main destination of their trip. On the other hand, if a non-Schengen citizen intends to visit several Schengen countries starting their trip from Slovenia they will have to get a visa from the Slovenian Embassy or Consulate since Slovenia is the first point of entry in the Schengen area.

A standard Schengen visa allows non-Schengen citizens to travel around the Schengen area for up to 90 days. Visas issued for stays longer than 90 days are country-specific. Members of the Schengen zone may in certain instances

decide to issue country-specific Schengen visas to the citizens of third countries, which may only be used to visit the issuing country. According to the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Slovenia, such visas are usually issued on humanitarian grounds or on the basis of national interests. All data related to visas are entered by the member states in the Schengen Information System. The data stored in this database are therefore instrumental in deciding on visa applications.

### Another wall in Europe has fallen

A special Christmas is being celebrated in those countries that entered the Schengen area on 21 December. Four official ceremonies in Europe marked the expansion of the Schengen area to the new members, with one of these being celebrated on 22 December at the border crossing of Škofje/Rabuiese between Slovenia and Italy.

Removing border controls with countries that were once part of the so-called socialist bloc, Europe has taken a concrete step towards realisation of the European integration process. Slovenia's Nova Gorica and Italy's Gorizia offer an excellent example of integration. The relations between these towns have gone through the historical transition from socialism to globalisation, continuously developing despite living on a border that was for many years the "dividing line" between Western and Eastern European culture. These people have found their own way to communicate, to interact and to create human relations despite the many differences and the strong, artificial border.

Against this cultural background Slovenia joined Schengen, well aware that the expansion of the free circulation area is just the starting point of the new challenge of integration that calls for intelligence, knowledge and mutual understanding. A new, stimulating challenge in response to which Slovenia will do its best.

**Public Sale of NKBM a Success**

The first initial public offering (IPO) in Slovenia has ended. On Monday 10 December, after a four day delay, the shares of Nova kreditna banka Maribor (NKBM) were listed on the Ljubljana Stock Exchange (LJSE), designated KBMR. The LJSE expected intense trading in the shares of Slovenia's second largest bank, so it extended business on the first and second day by two hours (until 15.00). Since there was a great possibility of market imbalances and currency fluctuation, the 10% limit

did not apply on the two days. The task of balancing a possible supply surplus in the first trading days falls to the underwriter, Citigroup, which has the over-allotment option. This enables it to sell up to nearly 1.5 million of NKBM shares (6.4% of the total capital) in thirty days after the announcement of the offered price, although it is not yet a legal owner of the shares (naked shorting). Citigroup is attempting to acquire the shares in the market, but stabilising purchases will not go ahead above the price offered, i.e. EUR27. If

**PETRA SOVDAT,**  
Business Daily Finance

domestic institutional investors, the largest share went to KD Group (11.3% of the bank). NKBM Group also wanted its own shares, submitting a bid to buy 6.25% of the bank, and receiving a 1.85% share. Publikum Group took 1.08%, while the City of Maribor bought 0.3% of the bank with funds from the municipal budget. There are 69 domestic institutional investors. Among foreign investors, major shares went to Everest Capital and HBK Investments. The former, an over EUR1.7bn-strong global investment advisory firm registered in the Bermuda Islands, and the latter, a firm managing some EUR10bn worth of funds, registered in Texas, each bought NKBM shares for EUR9.3 million. The Swedish East Capital was the most eager of all foreign investors, submitting a bid to buy EUR120 million worth of shares, which would have gained it a 21.7% ownership of the NKBM, and acquiring 340,000 shares. East Capital regularly features as a buyer at the LJSE.



**Trading: big first day, back to normal on the second**

The first day of trading in NKBM shares saw a turnover of EUR33.5 million, a record for the LJSE. On 10 December the total turnover reached EUR42.04 million, more than doubling the previous daily record of 3 July.

On the first trading day investors were less surprised by the price of the share than by the number of transactions, as shares amounting to 3.9% of share capital changed owners. A total of 1,788 transactions were concluded with 914,346 shares worth EUR33.48 million. The majority of transactions were concluded at prices between EUR34.5 and EUR37.97 per share. The top price was reached by an investor paying for 70 shares at EUR41.06 per share. The average price was EUR36.61, as predicted by analysts.

On the second trading day there were far fewer transactions; turnover amounted to EUR8.6 million, which was still the highest figure on the LJSE that day. The average price per share was EUR37.66, while deals were struck at EUR37-38.4 per share.

Citigroup fails to acquire the amount of shares it sells, the difference will be provided by the Government at EUR27 per share.

**Who are the new owners?**

As a result of great demand by small and qualified investors, the price was set at EUR27 per share, i.e. at the top end of the announced range of 20.5–27 euros per share. The Republic of Slovenia put up for sale 9,771,752 shares, 41.8% of NKBM's share capital. Of these, 48% were intended for small investors, and 52% for qualified domestic and foreign investors. Without the 'green shoe' option to increase the size of the offering by 15%, the Government has acquired EUR263.8 million, reflecting the market capitalisation of NKBM at EUR630.7 million. There was exceptional demand from qualified investors in

Slovenia (approx. up to EUR1.2bn) and internationally (approx. up to EUR720m). Some 30.8% of the offering will be allocated to qualified investors outside Slovenia, while qualified domestic investors will be able to acquire 21.2%. Small investors in Slovenia showed great interest in the shares, submitting almost 110,000 applications to buy (worth a total of EUR 740 million). Each small investor is guaranteed up to 20 shares, while the rest will be distributed among them pro-rata.

The distribution of shares among qualified investors caused quite a stir among the public and politicians, mainly due to the allocation of shares to foreign hedge funds. Afterwards, the finance minister Andrej Bajuk confessed the mistake of having unintentionally excluded from the list the NFD investment company, and promised to amend this. Among



Shares of Nova kreditna banka Maribor debut on the stock market. In the picture: CEO of the Ljubljana Stock Exchange, Marko Simoneti, and President of the Management Board of NKBM, Matjaž Kovačič. Photo: STA

**Government promises more sales**

"The decision for the Government to withdraw from non-strategic investments was never revoked, so it is still in force," says the Office of the Prime Minister in response to the question of whether freezing privatisation would be one of his anti-tycoon measures. As is well-known, at the end of July 2006, the Government set a deadline of 24 months to withdraw from non-strategic investments, which expires in July 2008. Unofficial sources about new calls for tenders by the state-owned funds Kad and Sod are conflicting – some claim that there will be none, while others estimate that there may be a few more, since sales procedures initiated before 15 January 2008 can be concluded before the elections.

**Inflation high in November**

According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, consumer prices went up in November on average by 0.9%. Annual inflation rose by 0.6 of a percentage point compared to October, reaching 5.7%. Higher inflation is mainly the result of rising prices of oil, clothing and footwear.

On average, liquid fuels jumped by 2.9% and solid fuels by 1.4%, while electricity and gas prices remained unchanged. Clothing and footwear went up by 2.9%, which can be attributed to new lines now in stores. On average, clothing prices increased by 3% and footwear

prices by 2.8%. Higher prices of liquid and solid fuels pushed the inflation rate up by 0.5 of a percentage point, higher prices of clothing and footwear added 0.2 of a percentage point, and higher prices of motor cars, eating out, and other rises added 0.1 of a



Andrej Bajuk, Minister of Finance. Photo: STA

percentage point each. Prices in the Restaurants and Hotels group rose as a result of the higher prices of catering services (2.6%), while accommodation services recorded were cheaper by 4%. Other groups where prices went up are Housing, Transport, Miscellaneous Goods and Services, Household Equipment, Recreation and Culture. November saw price reductions in only two groups: Communications and Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco, by 0.6% and 0.1% respectively. New price increases have been announced for January – electricity by 6.2%, and some food products. The Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development (IMAD) has announced that inflation would not level off before the spring.

**This year's final road show**

Eight LJSE issuers: Gorenje, Krka, Luka Koper, Mercator, Telekom, NKBM, Petrol and Triglav, plus representatives of Probanka and Medvešek Pušnik asset management companies presented their activities in Stockholm on 5 and 6 December. The LJSE, which co-organised an introductory meeting, says that the road shows will continue next year. The LJSE has hitherto organised several such shows in Slovenia and abroad, including in the majority of the largest financial centres.

**IEDC – Bled School of Management Confers Three Honorary Doctorates and Degrees on 93 Managers from 20 Countries**

On 7 December, the IEDC - Bled Management School - held a ceremony marking the end of the post-graduate MBA and Master of Science international management courses of the 19th and 20th generations of students from a total of 20 countries, during which they received their MBA and MSc degrees. The event was particularly interesting because for the first time ever, the IEDC awarded the academic title of 'Honorary Doctor', conferred on three exceptional people who have contributed significantly to the development of the region from the business and leadership point of view. The IEDC, 'A School with a View', is doubtless one of those Slovenian institutions which present our country's distinctiveness at international level, not only as a tourist destination, but also as a country of big ideas and bold actions. Honorary doctorates 'for their contribution to the creation and uniting of knowledge

and to the development of leadership for a better world' were awarded to (in alphabetical order): Dr Ichak Adizes, an internationally-renowned expert on change management, founder and President of the Adizes Institute, Santa Barbara, California, USA, Dean of the Adizes Graduate School for the study of Leadership and Changes, Provost of the University of Canada; Dr Erhard Busek, a well-known European leader, Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and former Vice-Chancellor of Austria; and Professor Aleksandra Kornhauser Frazer, an expert of international renown in the field of education, Professor (Emeritus) at the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering, and Director of the UNESCO International Centre for Chemical Studies of the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. The recipients spoke about change management in business (Dr Ichak Adizes) and public life (Dr Erhard Busek) and about knowledge management (Professor Aleksandra Kornhauser Frazer). Dr Adizes also stressed the importance of free time

and the necessity of taking some time off, without which the everyday pace of modern life will overwhelm us and we will not even know who we are. Dr Busek spoke about the advantages of united Europe and pointed out that short-term plans to make profit should not be a decisive factor for EU enlargement towards the South-East; instead, an integral vision of a reunited continent and long-term peace and stability are of basic importance. According to Dr Busek, the great advantage of Europe lies in its diversity, which can only be appreciated through sufficient mobility; therefore it should be stimulated even further, while at the same time, we should be developing a broader view of the world. Professor Kornhauser Frazer focused on knowledge management, which she defined as the transformation of dispersed knowledge into a structured and oriented system using intelligent methods. She stressed that the path towards added value – as one of the most frequent goals – must continue as the path towards a new objective: a good quality life.



IEDC – Bled School of Management Confers Three Honorary Doctorates and Degrees on 93 Managers from 20 Countries. Photo: Anja Lorenzetti



# Krka Receives the Award of the Republic of Slovenia for **Business Excellence**

**T**he Award of the Republic of Slovenia for Business Excellence 2007 was conferred on the pharmaceutical company Krka, which is one of the most successful Slovenian companies. It was founded over fifty years ago, but has remained competitive through its first-rate technology and investment in research and development. In Krka they have always been aware of the importance of excelling in their field, which they will continue to strive for.





Krka pays special attention to management and improvement systems. Top quality control and environmental friendliness, with the lowest possible costs are amongst the basic strategies of this company. Krka has a clear vision and a strong corporate culture, which supports the vision. It is one of the top pharmaceutical companies in Central and Eastern Europe, due to its creativity, efficiency and high levels of mutual trust. The financial strength of the company lies in its adequate capital structure, with low liabilities and high yield growth as a result of controlling raw materials. These are all good reasons Krka is the recipient of the award. "We're aware of the fact that we want to improve and be better than our competition, constantly attempt to excel, and that we have to combine knowledge, or the will to acquire new knowledge, with work," said Jože Colarič, the company's CEO. "It is the combination of these that gives positive results," he added. Colarič also said that this award was not the result of a single day's work, but of the efforts of the previous generation of Krka employees. The company, which was established in 1954, originally employed nine people. Today, it employs 6,500, with more than 40% of these working abroad.

In Krka Novo mesto they told us that the company's competitive advantage lies in its vertical integration, which ensures control of the entire process, from developing raw materials to end products. Krka produces everything from basic raw materials to end products, thus ensuring added value in the business system. Krka is aware of the importance of R&D, and the company's scientists are currently working on over one hundred new products. Annually, Krka spends eight per cent of sales revenue, sixty million euros, on R&D. "We know how to market and sell products, as well as how to settle debts," said the first man of the company.

The recipient of the Award of the Republic of Slovenia for Business Excellence 2002 was the Trimo Trebnje company, which this year received the European Leadership & Constancy of Purpose Award. The director of the company, Tatjana Fink, said that the award had proven that Slovenian companies were able to compete in the European market. She also invited all Slovenian companies to compete for European awards, because this contributes to the greater recognition of Slovenia, which in turn makes it easier for Slovenian companies to enter foreign markets.

"In its development strategy, Slovenia aims at being competitive as one of the key national priorities, and business excellence is an important element for increasing the competitiveness of the economy, which Krka and Trimo, as well as other successful Slovenian companies, continue to prove," said Andrej Vizjak, Minister of the Economy.

The eighteen companies that took part in the competition were assessed and, for the first time this year, also visited by sixty-nine assessors. Besides Krka in the category of companies with over two hundred and fifty employees, the finalists included the BSH Hišni aparati company from Nazarje, and Hidria AET from Tolmin. In the category of companies with fewer than two hundred and fifty employees there were no finalists. Business excellence is also finding its way into the public sector. General Hospital Novo mesto and Novo mesto Administrative Unit received silver awards, while the Krško Administrative Unit and the Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia received the bronze certificate. The certificate for recognisable progress in introducing a new business model was bestowed for the first time this year, and the winner was the Krško Administrative Unit. "It is very good that the public sector is also improving quality, because it serves the people and the economy, which is why it should strive for excellence and high quality," said Vizjak.

Andrej Vizjak, Minister of the Economy congratulates Jože Colarič.



# Hanspeter Danuser

## Tourism Legend Visits Slovenia

Mateja Gruden, Delo, photo: Žare Modlic

It was already late afternoon, but the curiosity of the participants at the conference focusing on the development of Slovenian tourism showed no signs of decreasing. Sitting at the conference table were for the most part representatives of the Slovenian tourist industry, but, rather than the current state of development of Slovenian tourism, the audience seemed to show more interest in the prospects of development for the future – the guest of honour at the conference was Hanspeter Danuser from Switzerland, a legend of the tourist industry, and for many years the Director of the St. Moritz Tourist Board. After the discussion, the questions from the audience were aimed mainly at him: what was the experience regarding the development of the exclusive resort town, how it was marketed, the current challenges...And after three hours, it seemed that no-one had yet grown tired of listening to the eminent speaker.

Danuser visited Slovenia in late November at the invitation of the Socius Business Club. After arriving at Bled's Grand Hotel Toplice, he met representatives of the Slovenian tourist industry, to whom he spoke about the development of tourism in St. Moritz and the efforts to maintain the prestigious status the town enjoys around the world. Then he was the guest of honour at the aforementioned conference, which also saw the participation of two key men in Slovenia's tourism

policy and promotion: Marjan Hribar, Director-General of the Tourism Directorate at the Ministry of the Economy; and Dimitrij Piciga, the Director of the Slovenian Tourist Board.

Danuser's visit coincided (purely by chance) with the current debate within the Slovenian tourism industry on certain issues. The Swiss is, as it happens, a leading expert, with a lot of experience in the field, and he has over the past few years dealt with the challenges of these issues. In the mid-1980's, Danuser registered and protected St. Moritz as a trademark, an unprecedented move in the world of tourism. Only a few days prior to his arrival in Bled, the Slovenian government approved the first-ever trademark of Slovenia as a country, which will also act as the trademark of Slovenian tourism. Danuser is also an expert on destination management, one of the key current approaches in the development of Slovenian tourism. Besides that, a growing number of 'clean energy' projects are being carried out in St. Moritz; environmentally friendly or sustainable tourism is also one of the most important guidelines for the future development of Slovenian tourism. As to environmental issues, Danuser feels that climate change is a particular challenge: last year's relatively mild winter with little snow calls for new approaches to the future development of winter tourism in Slovenia.

» **Bled could easily be called Imperial Bled! Because that is what it really is.** «



### Always Taking the Alphorn to His Travels Abroad

He is the embodiment of the spirit of tourism. He has good reasons to be as confident as he is when there is talk of his business: stars of international renown, such as Sophia Loren, visit and promote 'his' St. Moritz! And still, even St. Moritz cannot afford to rest on its laurels, as he points out. The competition in this world of global economics is becoming increasingly serious, so they have to keep moving on, inventing new offers in order to attract attention. They feel obliged to constantly justify their international fame. Or, as he puts it: 'Each trademark is a promise which raises expectations. If you fail to fulfil your promise, in due time, you are bound to lose your credibility – that is, the very essence of the trademark. You will lose the trust of the consumers, which was the reason behind the trademark.' He explains that in the world of global exchange it is becoming increasingly difficult to ensure that one is recognised. This is



why (and because the worst thing one can do in the tourist business is to bore people, he adds) he always travels to business meetings abroad with his Swiss alpenhorn, which he will also play. At Bled, he made no exception: after his lecture, he grabbed a long, light-brown horn resting in a corner and played it, filling the room with soft melancholy sounds. Later that evening, he even played along with Slovenian pop singer Nuša Derenda.

Danuser (born in 1947) has been the director of the St. Moritz Tourist Board since 1978. In 1987, he made history when he registered and protected the name of St. Moritz as a trademark.

## The Sun from Seventy Years Ago

The new trademark of Slovenia...Perhaps he is familiar with it? "No, I have never heard of it." Well, it relates primarily to our senses and feelings and is based on the 'I feel Slovenia' slogan and logo... "No, I am not familiar with it", he shakes his head again. "Mind you, I did like the old tourism slogan 'On the sunny side of the Alps'. Well, now that you do not use it anymore, perhaps I should take it to Switzerland!" he laughs, but soon regains his seriousness. "If you have a new trademark, which relies on human senses and feelings, you will have to start sending your message into the world. This will be a long and tiresome process; it always is. Establishing a trademark for an entire country is without doubt a far more complex process compared to less extensive, say, local trademarks. Constant, consistent and long-term positioning of a trademark is essential", he concludes. Given that the logos and slogans promoting Slovenian tourism have been changing far too frequently in the past, many people working in the industry probably wish for Danuser's advice to be taken.

## Bled Should Be Marketed as 'Imperial Bled'

St. Moritz has a venerable tourist tradition spanning some 150 years. As early as 1864, the town boasted a tourist office. Of course, Slovenia and its short post-independence history could never match that... "As a matter of fact, it was exactly twenty years ago that I first came here. Many things have changed since then - progress is obvious. Slovenia may be a young and small country. But you will be the first new EU member to preside over the European family of millions. This alone could give you some confidence, make you proud." He looks out the window and gazes at Lake Bled. "You should not be overly critical. This is the first time I have visited Bled, and let me tell you, it is much prettier in reality than it is in the photographs! I have travelled far and wide and I can say that Bled is unique. The lake with the small island and the church, the castle on the cliff... If you manage to keep it what it is, if you just keep the current offer up-to-date and work towards the best possible quality, if you organise a few noticeable events, then Bled has a fantastic future ahead of it! Moreover, I was told that the Emperor of Austria once stayed the night here. Why not make it known to everyone? Does 'Imperial Bled' not sound majestic? Try feeding it to the world for twenty years and they will gradually start repeating it after you. You will not be lying. Bled does have something imperial to it. And while we are at it, St. Moritz is not at the top of the world in geographical terms. Yet it is a top resort town." Twenty years? By outlining the distant future, Danuser unintentionally tones down the impatience surrounding the development of national tourism in Slovenia, which includes placing the country on the world map and establishing its own brand. His words sound rather soothing, appeasing the minds of the impatient, who wish to see results as soon as possible.

# WHAT MAKES THE NEWS



Photo: Darinka Mladenovič

What is a better option for a successful tourist industry? Strong tourist trademarks, such as Paris and the Eiffel Tower in France, Venice in Italy, Mozart in Austria, or St. Moritz in Switzerland? Or a strong trademark for a whole country? And what does one do if the country does not have star sights like the above trademarks? “If you have no star sights, you simply create them. This is what we had to do in St. Moritz. The development of trademarks on both levels can also be a parallel process. St. Moritz was developing alongside Switzerland. But these partial trademarks can be a great foundation for the umbrella trademark.” His suggestions for Slovenia are Bled (‘Imperial Bled’), the caves of the Karst, Lipizzaner horses... “Switzerland relies successfully on trademarks, such as St. Moritz, Geneva, the Jungfrau, Lucerne, etc. These make it better recognised in the world than its name alone.” Which is rather hard to believe: who in the developed world has not yet heard of at least Swiss bank accounts... But Danuser tells me of a situation which happened to him on several occasions during his visits to the United States of America. “Americans tend to confuse Switzerland with Sweden or even Swaziland in Africa! Then I tell them, I am from Switzerland, a small Alpine state around St. Moritz. And they will know immediately where I am from.” Then he adds: “Therefore, you should have your Imperial Bled and Europe’s Number One Cave...”

## Pragmatism, Not Envy

The other thing the creators of the development blueprint for Slovenian tourism are actively considering is how to reorganise it – based on the public-private partnership at destination level, where stakeholders are primarily connected by their shared interests. Danuser’s advice should forever be imprinted on the minds of everyone involved in the development of Slovenian tourism: “There is no room for politics, emotions or envy; business must be based on rationality, pragmatism! Whoever cannot do it, should blame themselves for their likely failure.” “For centuries,” he continues, “St. Moritz was the smallest and the least important place in its valley (Engadin).” “Then it evolved into the giant it is today. The neighbouring towns and villages are a little bit jealous of us, but they are at the same time aware that the success of St. Moritz helps their recognition and

improves their budget, too. At the same time, even though St. Moritz is beyond doubt the heart and the driving force of the valley, it could not survive without it.”

## Environmentally-Friendly Tourism

“Our offer is based on unspoilt nature (so is most of Slovenia’s tourism), so we must take good care of it. Likewise, we must be mindful of our reputation, and I think the public expects us to be responsible guardians of nature,” is how Danuser justifies St. Moritz’s choice of ‘clean energy’ projects, developed and carried out in the past few years, based primarily on sustainable energy sources and energy efficiency.

And still: have they by any chance given up the thought of snow-making, which is becoming increasingly important due to scientific forecasts of increasingly poor snowfalls in the Alps? It is true that St. Moritz lies at 1,856 metres above sea level, which means that the ski slopes are at even considerably higher altitudes: is it possible that they do not need artificial snow? “Oh, but of course we do - we have over three hundred snow cannons,” Danuser quickly replies. But is this an environmentally friendly practice? This issue has also raised many debates in Slovenia, where ski-slopes are becoming increasingly dependent on snow-making. “It depends which way you look at it. I am by no means a fundamentalist, and environmentalists should listen to certain explanations. Let me explain: we have huge amounts of water in the valley and in the mountains. In autumn, artificial lakes produce the most energy and the water then flows towards the sea. Such a pity, don’t you think? So it is better to transform water into a solid form, the snow on the slopes, keep it there, and in the spring, when the artificial lakes are empty, we turn the snow back into liquid and fill the lakes. I find this entirely environmentally friendly!” That may be, but many Slovenian ski resorts do not have such amounts of water at their disposal. What could be done for them, given that only one resort lies high in the mountains, while others are located at relatively low altitudes? “In that case, do your best to optimise skiing at the highest-lying resorts, and focus on alternative offers at others. Say, summertime alternatives. You see, alternatives are always merely a question of creativity,” he says and shrugs his shoulders in a very assured way: Hanspeter Danuser, a true legend of tourism.

Jože Osterman, photo: STA

## SLOVENIA TO BE A SPECIAL GUEST AT THE 2008 SARAJEVO WINTER FESTIVAL

Slovenia will be a special guest at the twenty-fourth cultural festival entitled Sarajevo Winter. The renowned festival first began in 1984 when Sarajevo hosted the XIV Olympic Winter Games, and it was organised even during the worst times of the Bosnian war in a besieged city. The legendary director of the festival, Ibrahim Spahić, has invited Slovenia to be featured as a special guest next year, when it also takes over the Presidency of the EU. The Slovenian Ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Nataša Vodusek, was pleased to accept the invitation.

The festival, which is named "Barricades Without Borders – '68 New (Brave) World", will showcase a book entitled Četrta stran trikotnika – Slovenci v BiH 1878 – 2000 ('The Fourth Side of the Triangle – Slovenes in BiH 1878 - 2000') by Stanislav Kobler, and the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra featuring conductor George Pehlivanian, solo singers Sabina Cvilak, Branko Robinšak and Irena Koblar. The Ljubljana Academy of Fine Arts and Design will present an exhibition and design workshop entitled "No Border". The Ljubljana City Theatre will perform Ay Carmela, Mladinsko Theatre will perform Kleist and Visoka pesem ('The Song of Songs'). The Prešeren Theatre from Kranj will be featured with their performance Podeželje ('The Countryside'). A writer's meeting featuring writers from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia will also be held. Slovenia's representation at this festival will be stronger than it usually is at other cultural festivals abroad.

## CHANSON SINGER VITA MAVRIČ PERFORMS IN VIENNA

Slovene chanson singer Vita Mavrič performed at the Akzent theatre in Vienna at the beginning of November. The performance, entitled Hrepenenja ('Yearnings'), was created in honour of the fiftieth anniversary of the death of the famous playwright Bertolt Brecht, and features the most famous songs by the composer Weill and lyric writer Brecht. A woman's destiny, characterised by the typical motifs of yearning and nostalgia, is the central theme of the performance.

The performance was in Slovene with German subtitles. Brecht's songs were translated by renowned Slovenian literary translators like Ervin Fritz and Milan Dekleva. The set designer was Andrej Stražičar, while Mavrič's costumes were designed by the famous designer Alan Hranitelj.

## PRESENTATION OF MARIBOR AS THE CANDIDATE OF THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE 2012 AND THE MAIN POINTS OF THE PRESIDENCY

In Brussels the Slovenian Minister of Culture, Dr Vasko Simoniti, presented the City of Maribor and its surroundings, which could host the European Capital of Culture event in less than five years, to his ministerial colleagues. By the end of this year, Maribor has to confirm its candidacy to the European Parliament, the European Commission and the

Committee of the Regions. This time next year, Maribor could be declared European Capital of Culture 2012.

Simoniti stressed that Maribor is one of the seven candidate cities and has every chance of winning because it is a lively and vital city located in an area which has beautiful countryside and spa tourism.

Two days later, the Minister presented the outline of duties that the Ministry of Culture aims to accomplish during the Slovene Presidency of the EU. He said that Slovenia would not dictate, but would follow pre-arranged directions and tasks. Events will be centred on multi-cultural dialogue and the design of a European plan for culture for 2008–2010. Slovenia does not plan to have any ministerial meetings, but there will be plenty of informal exchanges of opinion and international conferences. Two



Vita Mavrič. Foto: Nebojša Tejić



events will be given special attention. Within the framework of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, which opens at the start of January, Cankarjev dom in Ljubljana will host an opening event on 8 January. At the beginning of April, an international conference entitled Europe, the World and the Humanity in the 21st Century will be held. Participants will tackle questions about what Europe has to offer based on its historical humanist heritage, and what globalism, which as Simoniti has said, is still not completely understood, has to offer Europe.

### AGRFT AWARDED

At the fourteenth international film festival Etiuda&Anima, which took place in the Polish city of Krakow between 16 and 22 November, the programme of student films by the Academy of Theatre, Film, Radio and Television (AGRFT) received the Special Golden Dinosaur Award for Best European School.

AGRFT was presented at the festival with three films by Matevž Luzar, Gregor Božič and Mark Šantič. The award is a great achievement which puts AGRFT on the same footing as the other excellent film schools which have previously received the Dinosaur award such as Hamburg Media School, the University of Art, Design Helsinki, Filmstudium der Universitae Hamburg and the Academy of Music & Dramatic Arts Bratislava.

### BOOK FAIR 2007 CONCLUDES

The 23rd Slovene Book Fair, which took place over five days, was successful in many ways, as it showed that the love of books, which is a Slovene tradition, has not yet died out. The fair saw over 27,000 visitors over the five days, but the organisers were expecting even more people, as entry was free of charge this year. Many visitors were families and young people.

The fair also offered an opportunity for discussions about the state of books and publishing. The reading room, with fairy tale readings twice a day, was very well received, and the debating cafes attracted a wide range of experts, and stimulated controversial discussions. The publishing academy was also successful, with many visitors. The president of the board of directors, Rudi Zaman, was satisfied with the event. Although the event did not experience increased numbers of visitors compared to last year, the organisers will try to keep it free of charge. This would not be possible without their many sponsors, to whom Zaman expressed great gratitude.

### A BOOK ABOUT THE BISHOPS OF LJUBLJANA AND ŠPANZEL'S PORTRAITS

One of the best Slovenian experts on the science of archiving, Dr Franc Dolinar, presented his new book Ljubljanski škofje ('The Bishops of Ljubljana')

at the beginning of December. The introduction to the book, which will be published by Družina in 1000 copies (of six hundred pages), was written by Cardinal Franc Rode. He says that 2007 has been a very important and successful year for the Archdiocese of Ljubljana. The author also stresses that the book forms an important contribution to the nation's history, as it presents thirty-four bishops of Ljubljana, dukes, archbishops and metropolitans since the 15th century, when the first one was named. After the book launch, an exhibition entitled V zrcalu ('In the Mirror') was opened. It featured many portraits of famous Slovenes by Rudi Španzel, who is quite possibly the best Slovenian portrait painter.



Metropolitan Archbishop of Ljubljana, Msgr Alojz Uran.



France Prešeren monument in Kranj.

### A MERRY DAY OF CULTURE

The small cultural event on 3 December celebrates the birth of France Prešeren and was first organised as a complement to the official Slovenian Day of Culture that is celebrated on 8 February, which is the day that the most renowned Slovene poet died. The event has been very well accepted, and on that day many people attend free exhibitions and performances, which are offered as part of the Open Door Day.

On 3 December many theatre, musical, dance and literary performances were held. Exhibitions and collections were also well-attended. Some theatres and galleries were flooded with visitors, who could choose between two hundred events. In Prešeren's birth village of Vrba, Milan Dekleva, the winner of the Prešeren Award was the guest of honour. The 2008 Prešeren Award winners were also announced. They are writer and literary translator Janez Gradišnik and designer Milenko Licul, who is the first ever designer to win the Prešeren Award.

### THIS YEAR'S EXODOS SMALLER

The international dance festival Exodos held in Ljubljana used to feature a number of excellent European dance productions and became one of the most prominent dance events. However, this year's thirteenth festival,

which had a new concept designed by a new team, was by about two thirds smaller and took place in a little over three days. The director of the festival, Nataša Zavolovšek, said that the reason lay in the fact that the Ministry of Culture did not support the new concept. In addition, Cankarjev dom, which used to be the festival's main co-producer, did not participate this year.

The festival reflected all of these problems. The introductory project entitled All Different All in the Same Boat, which was designed by all the artists of the rejected projects. Despite well-thought concepts, the latter failed to win the support of the Ministry.

The festival featured performances by two Slovenian and three foreign artists. On the first day, the festival premiere Fake It by Janez Janša was presented. According to board member Primož Jesenko, the spectator is placed before the black market of contemporary dance, which puts fake performances and replicas of work by some of the key choreographers of the second half of the 20th century like Pina Bausch on stage. The artist explores the question of whether the difference between the original and the copy is only recognisable in the trademark that is an artist's name. Other performances featured at the festival were Maria-Dolores by a Belgian Filmmaker Wayn Traub, Bare Naked Souls by a Canadian choreographer Dave St-Pierre, and 50/50 by a Danish-Belgium choreographer Metta Ingvarsten. The festival concluded with the

Umberto Eco. Foto: Primož Lavre



Slovenian project The Four Deaths (Envy) by Via Negativa, in which director Bojan Jablanovec explores the sixth of the seven deadly sins. This was the second performance of the show, which asks the question who we have to love in order for the audiences to love us.

### UMBERTO ECO AWARDED AN HONORARY PHD BY THE UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA

The author of the famous novel The Name of the Rose, a philosopher, aesthete, linguist, scientist, and one of the few polymaths left in the world, Umberto Eco has been awarded an honorary PhD by the University of Ljubljana. In the assessment of his work, the University citation stressed his influence on Slovenian literature and science.

Eco's answers to the questions that were posed at the ceremony were witty and connected to the world we currently live in. The writer also touched on current social problems as he pointed out the importance of historical heritage, which can teach us a lot. He also spoke of the mistakes made by some of world leaders. Eco said that he believed in the European Union, because we live in a time when for the first time in history war between European nations seems absurd. He also predicted the gradual disappearance of national states.

The day after, Eco gave a lecture on the history of ugliness and received ovations from the audience in a packed Linhart Hall of Cankarjev dom.

# PEOPLE

## Oskar Kogoj:

“Exploring yourself gives birth to miracles”



Anja Lorenzetti, photo: Personal Archive

**M**y soul is my own way of self-searching. The world-famous Slovenian designer Oskar Kogoj attracted the attention of the world public with his designs and revitalisation of ancient cultures and myths that resonate in his work. The Vače situla served as the inspiration for one of

his greatest works – the Venetian horse, which was forged under his hands, proudly fronts the United Nations building in Geneva with its face of graceful tranquillity. “The peace horse or the spiritual horse was taken from the famous Vače situla, and it evokes the ancient culture of Slovenes – the culture of Slovenian Venetians. Through it I portrayed human spirituality.” The very spirituality he evokes in himself and conveys in his work is one of the greatest characteristics of the artist from Mirna near Nova Gorica.

One must also respect fear, but fear is ignorance, thus one must gain knowledge.

Oskar Kogoj is a deeply spiritual man, which is reflected in his work and words. He finds the answers to questions of form and self-analysis in creating works of art; constantly searching, discovering and inventing, without ever tearing himself away from the world in which he lives. He has found scores of answers in ancient cultures, religion, philosophy and creation. Not all of them, however. Searching fuels his creativity. Aware that searching for a perfect form or pure perfection is a lasting process in one’s personal development, he believes in what Aristotle and Plato claimed – that human is the measure of all things, that human is creation and creation is human. Many of his pieces – from glasswork to the Venetian horse – are made from natural materials and encompass knowledge gained from his research of millennia-old cultures. “I never start a new project as a spiritual novice. My every work is based on long pre-meditated preparations - this spiritual research and internal discourse can last months, even years. Only then do the elements for construction start coming together and falling into place. Design is the last step – like clothes for the body.”

The array of glasswork by Oskar Kogoj comprises collections and individual works – a collection of bottles, special collections of brands linked to a specific region or famous personality, as well as a smaller collection of applied and decorative art. Among the most exclusive is the Slovenska dvanajstija (the Slovene dozen) collection, which meet the highest standards of Slovenian diplomatic protocol, as well as making an excellent choice of gift. The peculiarity of his glasswork lies in the fact that each of his collections carries







a more or less distant spiritual message, and some even an audible one. Kogoj says the clinking of glasses sounds like an echo of ancient beliefs and that this sound repels evil forces. The resonance of Kogoj's glasses fuses with the language of symbols – the undulating line, the life-line; the circle with a dot, an ancient symbol of God and all that is divine. All his works are about perfectly handcrafted beauty and applicability. The artistically designed bottles that bear rich symbolism are the true phenomenon of Kogoj. Every year, one of these bottles is filled with fine wine from the oldest Slovenian vine that grows in Lent, Maribor, as a symbolic act of restoring old customs. The artist's profound perception of form can also be observed in the Caffe Florian vase collection, which was created for his exhibition housed in Caffe Florian in St Mark's Square, Venice. This exhibition inspired him to create a collection of porcelain coffee cups named after the dome of St Mark's Basilica.

Nature is the greatest designer of all. Nature is God, pure God. It is an embodiment of the supernatural, the mystery of creation.

Oskar Kogoj is a spiritual man with a profound respect for nature. This is reflected in the materials he uses in his artworks. Besides glass, he also uses stone, ceramics, porcelain, metal, and he is captivated by wood, particularly walnut, which the artist refers to as *materia prima*. Its warmth fired him to create objects such as a wooden kick scooter, chairs, tables, chests of drawers, trays, a collection of wooden leaves symbolising peace and love, various mirror frames, even a violin – each with a story of its own to tell. This rich collection of woodwork is augmented by twelve sticks which the artist retrieved from nature, modified them slightly



and dedicated them to his greatest teachers. The secret of Kogoj's popularity lies also in the ingenious concept of his work, which combines traditional techniques with arts and crafts. Many of Kogoj's products are made using traditional methods, yet carry a notable artist's insignia. When searching for the essence of his new work, he often ventures into the realms of Slovenian folklore, mythology and national history. He then slightly adjusts or upgrades that concept to bring it closer to the modern-day consumer. One thing he never lets slip his mind is that every product must also be useful.

Sai Baba is the cosmic teacher of all teachers. He holds up a mirror to us all – when you meet him, you start to change and do away with the flaws we all have.

In his birth village of Miren, Oskar Kogoj invites you into his gallery, which is run by his two daughters, Katjuša and Nataša, both connoisseurs of fine things. The gallery walls are covered with paintings by Ivo Kisovec, whom Kogoj recognised as a highly talented painter. After inviting Kisovec to participate in his exhibition, Kogoj shared with him the Indian story of his spiritual teacher Sai Baba. He dedicated the elephant Ga-ja to Sai Baba, designing its trunk in the shape of an egg. According to Kogoj, the egg is the most perfect form in the world, as new life originates from it and is, therefore, the basis for reproduction, while the elephant symbolises power, progress and virtue in the western world. In the eastern world, where it originates, it is a symbol of eternity, royalty and enlightenment. One of the morals that Kogoj passes on is that one's beliefs must also be supported by their words and actions. Truth can only be realised by an open heart and not through mental awareness. Whoever realises that being alive is a sign of great fortune and grace becomes aware that the essence of existence is getting to know oneself. Who am I, really? The only way to obtain the answer to this question is by exploring the true essence of spirituality and existence. He believes humans are spiritual beings, and the only reason the spirit is embedded in a material body is to find the truth and to play. That's the essence. The more one's play is sincere, pure and from the heart, the greater one's success, which is a result of one's correct actions. One must realise who one is if one wants to persevere and follow one's own path.

Oskar Kogoj is preparing an independent exhibition called *Skrivnosti* (Mysteries) for the Town Hall in The Hague as part of Slovenia's Presidency of the EU.



## Dr Janez Rugelj, Psychiatrist

# “I Am Very Proud of the Triumphant Life I Have Had”



Anja Lorenzetti

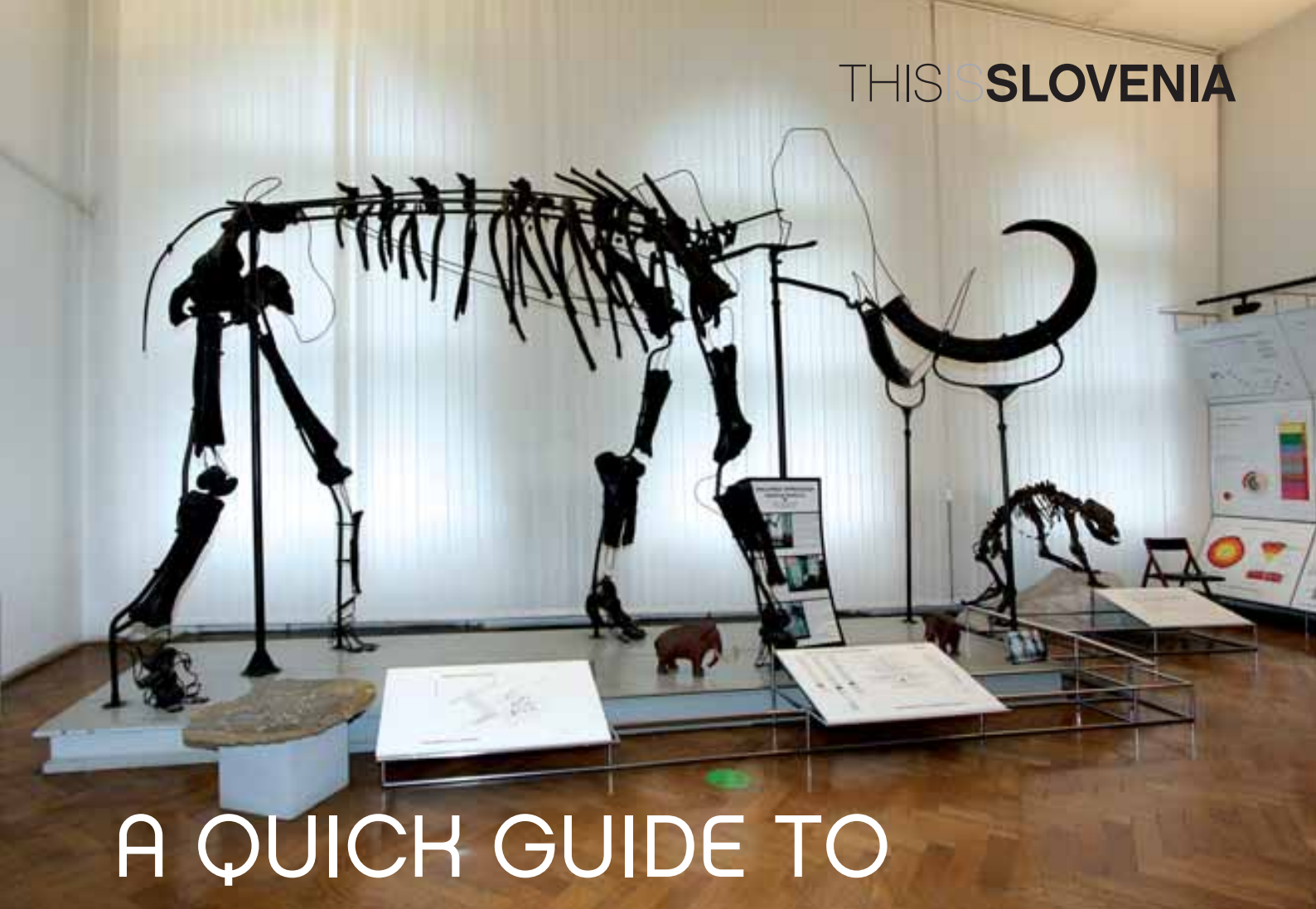
**W**hen, after four hours, I finally reached the finish line of my first Ljubljana marathon, I nearly bumped into a group of people in woollen blankets who were zealously cheering for someone behind me. Among them was a man who was particularly loud and who ran to hug a nice lady with grey hair, who was also very happy to embrace him. My family was also proudly waiting for me, but I could not forget the voices of the people in Rugelj's group. Janez Rugelj, a renowned Slovenian psychiatrist and founder of a therapeutic group *Poti samouresničevanja* ('Paths to Self-Fulfilment'), has been helping people for many decades to find meaning in their lives. Rugelj says that his therapeutic group consists of remarkable people who have faced many personal problems (especially sexual), and problems in their professional and social lives, which were brought about by neurosis. Now these same people are: "non-smokers, non-

alcoholics, gym lovers, marathon runners, mountaineers, literature enthusiasts, and we all try to be good partners, parents and to be successful and happy in our professional lives," says Rugelj.

Janez Rugelj was born in 1929 in a village called *Brezovica pri Mirni*. He is proud of having participated in the resistance movement during World War II as a partisan courier and assistant in military hospitals. After the war, he took a degree in psychiatry and for many years worked as a military psychiatrist with the Yugoslav People's Army, where he radically reorganised the military psychiatry department. After he was demobilised, he began working with alcoholics in Slovenia. He introduced a complex socio-psychiatric system for the treatment of alcoholics and, with colleagues, in only three years established over a hundred groups and clubs for recovering alcoholics throughout the country. He then began accepting people with partnership and sexual problems in his programmes. Unfortunately, many other doctors disagreed with his methods; they lobbied to have his licence revoked, and showed no appreciation for his work, although he received positive feedback even from the WHO. Rugelj's model of a perfect balance between man and woman is based on mutual empathy, wherein they each perform their natural role. Many of his radical and controversial views on today's society are in fact provocations intended to awaken people from a state of apathy.

Rugelj is a remarkable man of principles and clear convictions. He is the founder and leader of various associations across Slovenia, which all treat with a holistic approach, since it is the attitudes and unhealthy habits of people that harm them and those close to them. He is very proud to be the only doctor in Slovenia with a licence to work according to his own rehabilitation programme of treating alcoholics, other addicts and people with problems. He is convinced that it is this alternative approach that has brought about such positive results and helped hundreds of people to lead better lives. He is a perfect example to all Slovenian intellectuals of how to fight a conservative field of expertise, withdraw from it and pave one's own way.

Unfortunately, Rugelj is only human, and his years and days are numbered, like everyone else's. In October he decided to stop working because of his illness and to slowly prepare for eternal rest. His hard work and strict methods have helped many to enjoy life in all its beauty and love, which would not have happened without the 'Paths to Self-Fulfilment'. And this deserves our deep respect.



# A QUICK GUIDE TO

# LJUBLJANA MUSEUMS

Kornelija Ajlec, photo: Darinka Mladenovič

Ljubljana's first museum opened almost two hundred years ago when, following a decree issued by Austrian Emperor Francis I, the Carniolan State Museum was founded. The museum was originally located in a building standing in the present-day central market area, next to the cathedral. At first, the collections were rather poor and development slow; but thanks to the zeal of the museum's curators, the first permanent collection was opened to the public ten years after the museum was founded. The rooms of the host building soon became too small, so sixty years after the museum's founding, the Carniolan State Parliament decided that a new building should be constructed, one entirely devoted to museum activities. The Emperor Franz Joseph agreed that the building be named after the heir to the throne: on 2 December 119 years ago, the Rudolfinum, Ljubljana's first museum building was inaugurated. Today, the building is home to the National Museum of Slovenia and the Natural History Museum of Slovenia.

The **National Museum** houses several collections, which are indeed a treasure-trove of history from the Palaeolithic to the New Age. Among the most important items are a Neanderthal whistle, the oldest preserved wind instrument in

the world, and a situla (bronze vessel) from Vače decorated with exceptional depictions of fighting and everyday life. For over 150 years, the museum has also kept an Egyptian mummy of a priest of the temple of Amun, which is over 3,000 years old and was put on display for the first time only three years ago, following complete restoration.

The neighbouring **Natural History Museum** caters for those who have a thirst for scientific or more easily accessible knowledge of the plants, animals, rocks and minerals found on Slovenian soil. One of the most beautiful pieces is also its symbol – a mammoth skeleton discovered at the foot of the Kamnik Alps and considered to be one of the most complete such skeletons in Europe. Another curiosity of the museum is a 210-million-year-old Triassic fish fossil found on the face of Slovenia's highest mountain, Mount Triglav. The mineral zoisite is named after Žiga Zois, owner of foundries, natural scientist, mineralogist and collector, whose minerals are at the core of the museum's mineral collection. This is good company for two special animals, the olm, which lives only in the caves of the Slovenian Karst, and the tiny *Leptodirus hochenwartii* cave bug, the discovery of which surprised the world of biology, as it had been previously assumed that cave ecosystems did not include insects.

# THIS IS SLOVENIA



It was only ten years ago that the third institution, the Slovene **Ethnographic Museum**, moved from the Rudolfinum building. Today, it can be found on Metelkova Street, in a former barracks of the Austrian and Yugoslav armies. The museum traces its roots to the time when Slovenian missionaries working around the world donated items to the ethnographic collection of the State Museum. In the mid-20th century, the museum's curators became increasingly interested in national popular culture, which was studied systematically. Objects were collected and documented, thus establishing the basis of the

present-day permanent collection. The current collection, with over 3,000 objects on exhibition, presents the heritage of everyday life and festive occasions from both Slovenia and non-European cultures. From December through September 2008, visitors can see an exhibition entitled 'The Sounds of Slovenia: from Folk Musicians to the Avsenik Band', which will offer an overview of sounds and folk musicianship on Slovenian soil from prehistoric times to the 21st century.





Lovers of architecture, urbanism, industrial and graphic design and photography might well enjoy the **Architecture Museum** in Fužine Castle. The museum was created as part of an archive collection on architecture, including architect Jože Plečnik's personal archives, so even today the museum devotes special attention to the study and preservation of the architect's heritage. The museum's permanent exhibition is in fact an exhibition on Plečnik. Currently, it is complemented by an exhibition on project ideas for the landscape corridor of the Sarco River near the town of Arco, Italy.

**The National Museum of Contemporary History** is located within the city's Tivoli Park, in a palace known as Cekin Castle which has been its location since its founding just after the end of the Second World War. Following the restoration of the building, a permanent exhibition was opened under the title 'Slovenes in the 20th Century', which won the museum a nomination for the 'European Museum of the Year' Award. The permanent collection is complemented by the 'United in Victory' exhibition on the democratisation process and independence of Slovenia. 2nd December saw the close of an exhibition called 'The Struggle Against the Church and Faith 1945-1961'.

Situated between the Ursuline Convent and the Jože Plečnik Comprehensive School, in the former convent school for girls, is the **School Museum**, founded over one hundred years ago by Slovenian teachers to honour the fiftieth anniversary of Emperor Franz Joseph's reign. The permanent collection of this varied and visitor-friendly museum presents the development of school education in Slovenia from its beginnings to the modern era. The museum also sets up many temporary exhibitions: the two current exhibitions focus on the life and work of Blaž Kocen, the pioneer of Slovenian geography teaching; and on the education of the blind and visually impaired through history.

Not far away, just across Congress Square in the Križanke area, stands the **City Museum of Ljubljana**, a centre of learning focusing on the historical development of the area of present-day Ljubljana: beginning as prehistoric pile-dweller settlements around 4,500 BCE and developing into a modern city. The new permanent exhibition features an archaeological presentation in the basement of the museum palace, and a treasury with the most important finds attesting to a well-developed prehistoric culture. The exhibition allows visitors to learn about the migrations of various peoples and their impact on the shaping and constant change of the Ljubljana area. The current temporary exhibition presents the city's urban icons with scale models of the architectural monuments of Ljubljana.

Also part of the City Museum of Ljubljana is the **Tobacco Museum** which is located in the former tobacco factory. The permanent exhibition traces the history of growing, processing and using tobacco from its introduction to Europe to the present day, with a special focus on the history of the Ljubljana tobacco factory. It should be pointed out that the museum is open only twice a month, so it is essential to check information on opening times when planning a visit.





# Tasting Stork Soup in Prekmurje

Bogi Pretnar; Photos Tomo Jeseničnik

**S**torks love the Prekmurje region. They flock to Northeast Slovenia to find a mate, hatch their chicks, raise them and prepare them for an independent life. When autumn comes, they all fly off together to Africa. The people of Prekmurje believe that storks bring good luck, so their nests on chimney tops, village lamp-posts or on roofs are nothing short of a sacred object. A stork on its nest is also the symbol of Lovenjak, a typical Prekmurje inn, located four kilometres west of Murska Sobota, at Polana. The view that storks bring happiness is shared by the inn's patrons, who find pleasure in both the impressively stocked wine-cellar, and in the varied and imaginative culinary offer of chef Branko Časar. He is the creator of the inn's exclusive specialties, a dessert known as štrkovo gnezdo ('stork's nest') and štrkova juha ('stork soup').

Lovers of storks fear not: no long-legged feathered creature is harmed to make the soup. Its name simply reflects the stork's favourite when it comes to food: frogs' legs – which the chef gently poaches to make a thick creamy soup.

One cannot imagine Prekmurje-style cuisine without some key ingredients, such as paprika, sour cream, garlic and onions. And, of course, buckwheat. Or mushrooms and pork. Lovenjak's milky buckwheat soup, with porcini is an exquisite mix of the above ingredients. The milk smoothens the soup; the buckwheat thickens it, while the mushrooms and cream add to it a gourmet touch. It is seasoned with the finest herbs, such as marjoram, thyme, rosemary and bay leaf. Since we are talking about dishes that make Prekmurje cuisine so specific, popular and worthy of 'guilty pleasures', let us also mention dódoli (potato žganci), bujta repa (stewed sour turnips with pork), bograč (a type of goulash) and retaši (strudel).

Retaši is what the rest of Slovenia calls zavitek (rolled pastry), and our Austrian neighbours know as strudel. The people of Prekmurje display a lot of imagination when it comes to the various fillings for the filo pastry. At Lovenjak, they bake no fewer than nineteen varieties of retaši, and the most common fillings (sweet and savoury) include apples, curd cheese, cabbage, pumpkin and poppy seeds. In late October, they

# GOODSLOVENIANINNS

organise an event known as *retašijada*, a culinary exhibition and gourmet fair of these pastry delights. The *retaši* differ from classic Slovenian *zavitek* in that the stretched dough is rolled from both sides towards the middle (whereas in other recipes, the dough is rolled from one edge to the other), thus creating a hollow between the two rolls. When sour cream is generously poured over the *retaši*, the cream has nowhere to flow but into this hollow, which makes the dish exquisitely juicy.

“For pumpkin *retaši*, it is best to use red pumpkin; you should not even attempt to make it with their green cousins, courgettes,” advises Branko Časar, a man who feels at home at cooking contests: for ten years, he has been the organiser of the famous *bogračijada*, a competition of amateur cooks making *bograč*. The recipes for this goulash-type potato stew, with various other ingredients, were almost as many as the cooks taking part in the competition, during which the stews were actually simmering in cauldrons over open fires. Some swear by adding mushrooms, while others find the idea preposterous; some like to throw in a few chunks of green or red pepper, while others think it heretical. What is certain, though, is that over the border, in Hungary, the dish is much spicier than its Slovenian counterpart, although some will add red peppers or even a chilli or two. Branko also won an annual competition of Slovenian chefs organised by the nation’s largest newspaper company.

The victorious dish was a fillet of pork with brandy, and naturally it features on the *Lovenjak* menu: two prime cuts of pork tenderloin per person, prunes, and home-made plum brandy, which is used to flambé the dish. The alcohol should be allowed to evaporate, leaving the plum brandy aroma to complement the tasty meat juice. The dish must then be served immediately. When asked if one could accompany the dish with *dōdoli*, Branko grins at the writer’s pronunciation of the *Prekmurje* dialect. “Yes, of course,” he says, “*dōdoli*



Branko Časar, who has written two cookbooks, is a very popular guest speaker on the radio, and the winner of the Cook of the Year award.

## VEAL WITH BEANS AND OCTOPUS

Veal tenderloin stuffed with beans and liver, garnished with girolle and octopus.



# GOODSLOVENIANINNS



## MEAT ROLL WITH FILLING

Beef tenderloin wrapped around a porcini omelette, roasted and sliced.

would be fine.” This is a Prekmurje variant of potato žganci: boiled and mashed potatoes, white flour, shaped into small dumplings with a spoon. They can also be served as a main dish, generously sprinkled with sautéed onions and smothered in sour cream. And here we are, talking about onions and sour cream again! “There you go, now you’ll see what a tasty dish dōdoli can be if you spoon some zaseka (smoked minced pork rind) over them and put them in the oven,” says chef Časar, placing a pretty earthenware dish full of white dumplings on the table. Vegetarians will enjoy dōdoli with bujta repa – sour turnips stewed with millet. For the rest of us, bujta repa is only right if sometime during the cooking process, some pork is included in the formula. It is hardly a secret that pork tastes best in these winter months in the form of sausages, as pork roast or roast ribs. Bujta repa is no exception when it comes to spicing it up with the ‘national condiment’ of Prekmurje, paprika, a fact attested to by the dish’s red-to-orange colour. A thick stew with millet, bujta repa tastes refreshing, but beware, it is very filling indeed!



## GIBANICA WITH ICE CREAM AND CUSTARD

A slice of gibanica with ice-cream on a strawberry base, vanilla custard, and a fine home-made chocolate wafer.

Make no mistake: chef Branko Časar of the Lovenjak Inn also cooks all kinds of international classics, especially various excellent fish dishes. Many other seafood dishes can also be ordered here in Prekmurje: it is as if the memory of the Pliocene Pannonian Sea were still alive. But real gourmets will be equally delighted by Branko’s pikeperch specialty, which fits better the land along the Mura River: a pan-fried fish fillet, crispy on the outside, yet moist on the inside, is placed on a nest of pasta with slices of black olives. Also plated is a small cup containing a sauce made of tiny porcini in a sauce: so tiny, in fact, that there is no need to cut them.



## BOGRAČ IN A CAULDRON

Bograč is a trademark dish of Prekmurje cuisine; for ten years, Branko Časar has been organising bograč cooking competitions.

As for the typical prekmurska gibanica sweet pastry, let us say only this: there is not much point attempting to make it at home, for the preparation is far too complicated: nine layers of pastry, three different types of dough, then layers of filling – apples, curd cheese, walnuts and poppy seeds, etc. If you wish to taste the poppy seeds without the other ingredients, we recommend you try Lovenjak’s pasta with poppy seeds and sugar. The taste of poppy seeds is far more prominent than in the gibanica.

Fans of Lovenjak’s solid and liquid delights have a special day to look forward to: on 26 December, St Stephen’s Day, the traditional ice grape harvest takes place, when the dark blue grapes are finally picked. For months, they have been patiently hanging on to the vines in the garden by the inn, tempting patrons who walk past them into the inn to stretch out their hands ... but no, these are the grapes of St Stephen, and they will become a special treat reserved for friends, for they hardly yield a hundred litres of wine.



# Ljubljana's Festive Season Splendour

Polona Prešeren, photo: STA

In December, Ljubljana is transformed into a fairytale town: under the thousands of lights of the Christmas illuminations, the city's everyday hustle and bustle yields to the festive spirit of December. The air is filled with the sweet smell of the season's delights, roasted chestnuts and mulled wine. And the cold evenings seem strangely warmer with the warmth of the holiday season.

It has become a sort of tradition in Ljubljana that the festive events begin on one of the first days of December. The season's first cultural event was held on 3 December under the name 'People, Let Us Turn on the Light': during the event, the Christmas illuminations were lit for the first time this year. In his public address, the Mayor of Ljubljana, Zoran Janković, made an announcement and then all of the lights were switched on simultaneously. The event was dedicated to the memory of two great Slovenes: the poet France Prešeren, who was born on that day; and Frane Milčinski Ježek, the most popular Slovenian humorist of all times. Ježek was also the author of the poem which gave its name to the event.

The string of events that will lead the people of Ljubljana and its visitors into the New Year continues until 2nd January next year. Perhaps we should point out that Ljubljana attracts many visitors from home and abroad in December.



Children and the young at heart rejoice at the arrival of the 'Good Men of December': the first to visit was St. Nicholas, who paraded the streets of Ljubljana with his merry suite on 6 December. And, of course, Christmas would not feel right without Father Christmas.

Market stalls in the city centre adorned with typical Christmas ornaments offer a range of products, mainly Christmas presents. The Holiday Market is a favourite meeting spot, with several stalls offering typical snacks and drinks such as tea and mulled wine. The various accompanying entertainment events reach a climax just before the end of the year.

'New Year's fever' will start building up after Christmas: Prešeren Square in the heart of Ljubljana will become the venue for concerts of popular singers and bands, which have become traditional. For those who do not feel like spending their evenings at home, this is an ideal opportunity to meet friends and acquaintances and at the same time enjoy the entertainment programme by selected performers. Of course, the city will also organise an open-air New Year's celebration. The schedule of the season's events is available from the official website of the Municipality of Ljubljana at [www.ljubljana.si](http://www.ljubljana.si).



# Christmas – Slovenia's

Jože Prešeren, photo: Darinka Mladenovič

Christmas is a holiday which has won over the entire world, and Slovenia is no exception. Many traditions, beliefs and personal memories of each of us are related to Christmas. Everyone has fond recollections of how they celebrated Christmas in their childhood and youth: it was usually a family affair, when spirits were high and in tune with the special atmosphere. For the older people among us, we remember with a certain nostalgia how Christmas celebrations were different from today: those were the days when 'Christmas shopping fever' was unheard of, and when (because of the communist regime of former Yugoslavia) we had to celebrate

Christmas as a religious holiday celebrates the birth of Jesus; it is the day when God sent his only-begotten son to save the world, so Christmas is originally and primarily the celebration of God's love and peace. The Christian message often recited at Christmas in Slovenia 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will' is part of the Christmas secret, which everyone can understand as they see fit. Even the symbols of the church rituals allow for various individual interpretations, and people will also understand the message of peace in a number of ways.

## The Ancient Cult of Fire

Historians hold that most of the celebrations at Christmas and New Year originate from ancient sun worshipping practices, the proof being certain traditions still surviving in parts of Slovenia. In Bela krajina, for instance, Christmas is called badnik (as opposed to the Slovene božič, which is derived from bog meaning 'god'), a word of old Slavonic origin, referring to the time when people celebrated the winter solstice. If we compare ancient traditions and popular beliefs we find that our ancestors celebrated the time which coincides with modern-day Christmas as the time when the days begin to grow longer again. Since times immemorial, farmers throughout Europe have been lighting fires on certain days of the year. It seems the old belief that the strength of the dying sun can be revived through magic is still alive and well in rural Slovenia. This belief is reflected in the tradition of burning a Christmas tree-stump. Slovenian peasants firmly believed that their house would enjoy good



this religious holiday almost secretly. Anyway, the common consensus is that Christmas is a special time when everyone cares for each other, when we try to understand each other, when Christians reflect on the dogmas of their creed; that said, even atheists seem to have adopted Christmas as a special day. Traditionally, Christmas in Slovenia – as elsewhere in the world – is a family and religious holiday. People never really stopped celebrating it, although during the time of the former political system here, it was an ordinary working day and only became a public holiday in 1989. A typical Slovenian family Christmas would hardly be perfect without a Christmas crib, found in most homes in the country. Equally important is the Christmas tree, and many also maintain old Christian traditions, such as blessing every room in the house with incense and attending Midnight Mass.



# Favourite Holiday



luck throughout the year if they burned a large stump in their fireplace. Families would gather around it, they would pray, sing, eat and drink. In certain places the way that the stump burnt was an omen for the coming year's crops.

The dates associated with the fire cult were not chosen at random. They coincide with the winter solstice, when the Sun is at its lowest point on the horizon. Simple people used to think that the Sun was being reborn on the shortest day of the year and reached full maturity on Midsummer Day in late June. This supports the theory that Christmas tree-stumps were originally burned to help the tired Sun regain its light and warmth.

## New Year Fortune-Telling

In many Slovenian homes on the last evening of the old year, people got together (this was before the days of radio and television, which changed things quite a bit) for some fortune-telling. There were several methods, and one of the better-known was 'hat soothsaying': six hats were placed on the table and various items were then put under the hats. For instance, a key symbolising the house and farm was under the first hat; the second hat covered a ring, which meant a wedding; a purse under the third was for money; a bundle under the fourth stood for moving house; a rag-doll under the fifth hat announced a birth; and a piece of coal under the last hat meant death. Each of the people present would then lift one hat. After each round, the order of the hats would be changed. And people's actions were actually influenced

by the predictions of the fortune-telling. If that soothsaying is rare nowadays, some Slovenian families still practice another method on New Year's Eve – the casting of lead. The casting begins at 11PM, when people pour molten lead into water. The shapes thus formed are then interpreted to predict the fate in the coming year of the people present. Girls in particular were eager for this evening to arrive: they believed that the fortune-telling would reveal if, and when, they were going to be married.

The Christmas and New Year's holiday season is a time that everyone awaits with special joy: children, because of the presents they expect to receive, and because they know they will not have to go to school for at least a week; adults, because they know they will bring people joy with their gifts, for giving is indeed a rewarding experience. In Slovenia, where one of the national sports is skiing, the joys of Christmas are all the greater when the country's skiing resorts or at least nearby slopes are covered with fresh snow.

The essence, however, is the Christmas message of happiness and peace, which is the true desire of all humankind.



# Slovenian Festive Dishes

Jože Prešeren, photo: Darinka Mladenovič

In recent times, the traditional cuisine of Slovenia has been covered extensively by ethnologists, specialists on our national heritage, some of whom have also become prominent as authors of cookbooks containing selected recipes. Most cookbooks of recent years have nevertheless been written by professional cooks and many of these chefs work in well-known restaurants and have cooked for celebrities. Several Slovenian cooks, for instance, cooked for Tito, the late president of Yugoslavia. Thanks to the work of Slovenian ethnologists, especially Professor Janez Bogataj and Dr. Boris Kuhar, attitudes to traditional fare have changed considerably: it now features on the menus of fine restaurants and well-known inns, not to mention tourist farms. This helped boost recognition of the more exquisite specialties of Slovenian cuisine – dishes which are commonly referred to in Slovenian as 'better (food)' or, in other words, festive dishes cooked by Slovenes for major holidays, such as Christmas, New Year's, Easter, as well as various popular, local and family festive occasions.

Specialists on Slovenian cuisine are well aware of the fact that a small country like Slovenia could not have produced an entirely original culinary tradition: when it comes to culinary art, the country is 'Europe in miniature', as it lies on the crossroads of great European cultures: the Alpine, Pannonian and Mediterranean, each of which has contributed



Doughnuts

its share of typical dishes. That said, Slovenian cuisine is also very diverse, with many regional traditions, which reflect the local climate, farming and the various cultural and historical conditions.

According to ethnologist Dr Boris Kuhar (incidentally, true to his surname, which translates as 'cook', the ethnologist also tries for himself all the dishes he writes about), an interesting fact is that the richest heritage is that of festive dishes, as almost every type of holiday is associated with characteristic specialties. Food eaten every day by our rural population used to be very simple and almost vegetarian, but meals



Carniolan sausage

were much richer on festive occasions, when even poorer families put meat on their tables; when pork was scarce, they could always find something to replace it, such as chicken, duck or goose, hare or wild rabbit, to name but a few. But as always, this largely depended on the economic situation of any given home. In the past, meat served on Sundays, for important holidays, at weddings, fairs, blessings and on similar occasions, was either boiled in a broth, roasted in the bread oven, or charcoaled. The methods of cooking meat were most often influenced by kitchens in castles, monasteries, towns or certain rich houses, a fact reflected in the first Slovenian cookbooks, which were intended primarily for townspeople. The recipes for many Slovenian dishes known today have for generations been passed down orally and written down quite recently.

Yet, regardless of Slovenia's small size and its links to the heritage of Central Europe, we can still say that there are some dishes which deserve to be protected internationally as culinary specialties originating from Slovenia, since they are primarily known under their Slovenian names. First comes Slovenia's favourite festive specialty – potica; followed by the dessert from Prekmurje – gibanica; and third place should probably go to arguably the best-known everyday treat – kranjska klobasa: sausages bearing this name can be bought in the USA and Australia, not to mention European countries.

## Slovenian Potica and Štruklji

As mentioned above, one of the best-known Slovenian festive dishes also known abroad are potica cakes. Potica recipes can often be found in foreign cookbooks, where it is usually stated that it is a Slovenian recipe (sometimes it is said that this roll recipe originates from Carniola or, even more precisely, from Ljubljana), or that it is Slovenia's



Štruklji

national cake, made with leavened dough. Ethnologists say that potica is an improved and more recent variation of a kugelhupf recipe. Usually, potica is baked in a round baking dish, which gives it its characteristic shape. Old-style baking dishes, which can still be purchased today, are an expression of the Slovenian people's creativity and imagination. In other words, besides the flavour, potica cakes are also pleasing to the eye. Some Potica moulds have a cylinder in the centre, so the baked cake is in the form of a ring or a kugelhupf.

Apart from the shape, the main distinctive feature of different potica cakes is the type of filling. Traditional fillings include walnuts, hazelnuts, honey, mint, curd cheese, cream, cracklings, dried fruit, tarragon and the like. Modern variations of potica may be filled with chocolate, cocoa, ground carob pods, etc. Slovenian cooks make at least fifty different varieties of potica.

The best-known of the flour-based festive dishes of Slovenia



Slovenian potica

are štruklji rolls, of which there are over one hundred varieties: there are various fillings and štruklji may be cooked in boiling water or baked in the oven. One can even hear certain ethnologists say that štruklji are among Slovenia's top ten curiosities. The oldest written štruklji recipe dates back to 1589, when the cook at the Archduke's palace in Graz in Austria described the dish as 'Slovenian tarragon štruklji'. But it goes without saying that the dish must have been a popular festive delight well before that.

The differences between regional culinary traditions are even more pronounced in štruklji recipes than other dishes: the rolls made in Gorenjska, Primorska, Štajerska, Dolenjska or in Prekmurje really do differ widely. Sometimes they have a vegetable filling, of cabbage, for example; others have a good sauce, others still bacon or pork cracklings, beans, etc. Each region may also use a local name for štruklji.

Doughnuts, which are becoming increasingly popular, can also be considered a Slovenian festive dish: the most widespread are doughnuts filled with apricot jam. Many families make doughnuts during the carnival season; they are available daily from food stores.

## The 'Prekmurska Gibanica' Trademark



Gibanica

One of the first Slovenian dishes with a protected designation of origin is the so-called prekmurska gibanica pastry, one of the most popular desserts in the entire country, which originates, as the name implies, from the Prekmurje region. The recipe is well-defined, and those making gibanica according to the specifications have already received their certificates of authenticity. There are, of course, several variants of gibanica, but not all are entitled to the protected name. A genuine prekmurska gibanica is made of filo pastry and filled with ground walnuts, ground poppy seeds, grated apples, cottage cheese, eggs, sugar, butter and cream.

We are certain that in the future, there will also be a 'kranjska klobasa' Slovenian food registered trademark. These sausages are not considered a classic festive dish. But they can be one – it all depends on how they are made, cooked and served.

## Adam Ramejkis, Liverpool, UK



### Why Slovenia?

I arrived here in January, and the first question people asked me was 'Why Slovenia?' My reply, which is completely true, was always taken as a joke - 'I like the name'. And that is still the main reason I'm here: because I like the name. I also used to add 'and it's the sunny side of the Alps', but then I changed to 'I FEEL LOVE in Slovenia'. (As you can see, I'm a sucker for tourist board slogans!) So I can't say why I'm here, and what I like about being here, even though it would be very easy to write about how I felt when I was standing at the top of Triglav in thick fog, and how beautiful the walk across to the seven lakes was, or how romantic it was when I was in Piran in November and the street lights hadn't come on yet even though it was dark and the wind was trying its best to entice me into the sea, or about how much I enjoy running through Tivoli park on a bright autumn morning, or even about how much I really like Bela Kava (especially Bar 2000 coffee), or about how happily surprised I was to see the open-air 'life-drawing' classes by Three Bridges. My answer is still the same; I'm in Slovenia because I like the name.

Unlike some who have chosen to live here, I'm not 'in love' with Slovenia, and I can't say that it has 'captured me'. And whilst the people are nice and friendly, I don't see this as a stronger characteristic than of any other country I've lived in (I think there are nice and friendly people everywhere, just as there are 'not nice' and unfriendly people everywhere). I can see, and agree, that nature is beautiful in Slovenia, but

beauty is an inherent feature of nature, so this isn't something which I see as 'special' or 'magical' about Slovenia. I live in Ljubljana, and yes, it does have a beautiful old town and it's nice to walk along the Ljubljanica in the evening, but it isn't the only 'old town' in the world, and there are lots of cities where I can have a 'nice evening walk along the river'. And, of course, I'm aware of how many things are going on in Ljubljana, and that it's 'a small city, but a capital city' (although I've heard this too many times already in my short time here for it to be anything more than a 'cliché'). In fact, all the reasons Slovenia often deemed to make glorious, I can apply to lots of places, and none of them strike me as a strong enough reason for being in Slovenia. The more I think about it, the more difficult it becomes to answer the question 'Why Slovenia?'

I was thinking about this the other day and I realised that it's not so much about what Slovenia has or doesn't have, it's more about how I feel in myself being in Slovenia. I feel relaxed and at ease, comfortable in my daily life - I feel good. I feel like I'm on holiday. I am content in myself, and this naturally reflects on how I feel in my surroundings (or maybe it's the other way round?) Whilst it's true that I can't think of any superlatives to describe Slovenia, I can't really think of any strong negatives either. I feel comfortable in, and with, Slovenia, and it's a subtle but deep-rooted comfort, and it's often the subtle things which combine to make our happiness.

So, why Slovenia? Because I like the name, and also because I feel at ease in Slovenia.



## Protocol Gifts for Slovenia's Presidency of the EU

Slovenia's Presidency of the EU is a great opportunity for our country to promote itself and its achievements; therefore, special attention was given to the selection of gifts for different categories of participant, as gifts can significantly contribute to the promotion and recognition of a country. The gifts are also a great opportunity for Slovenia to present itself as a young, modern, and technologically and economically advanced European country at the crossroads of the Alps, the Mediterranean and the Pannonian Plain. They promote Slovenian heritage and contemporary creativity. The selection includes Catbriyur chinaware (two cups with saucers and milk jug) by Katja Jurgec Bricman and Jure Bricman; a Catbriyur porcelain tray; a Kapnik lamp by Tanja Pak; a crystal bowl with a lace motif and one with a star motif by Steklarna Rogaška; the 'Records of creative centuries' range: a bird and Vače situlas; hand-made bobbin



lace by Studio Lan; a bottle (vase) with metal bobbin lace by Anars; a 'Reke' bowl by Tanja Pak; a candle with bobbin lace motif and golden sphere candle by Rafael Samec; flax place mats with Idrija bobbin lace by Studio Koder; glasses with bobbin lace motif by Steklarna Rogaška; a ceramic plate with a golden star motif from Eti Svit; a framed print of the Karst by Nina Zelenko; a framed mythical bird picture from the Vače situla by Studio Lan; a ceramic flask with national motifs containing mead, by Darila Rokus; and a glass paperweight with metallic bobbin lace by Anars.

Protocol Gifts will be placed in packaging with the Presidency logo in accordance with the overall visual identity. The logo will be applied only to the packaging and not the gifts, which will not be wrapped.





## **CULTURAL**TRAILS

**Protocol Gifts for Slovenia's  
Presidency of the EU**