

# Sinfo

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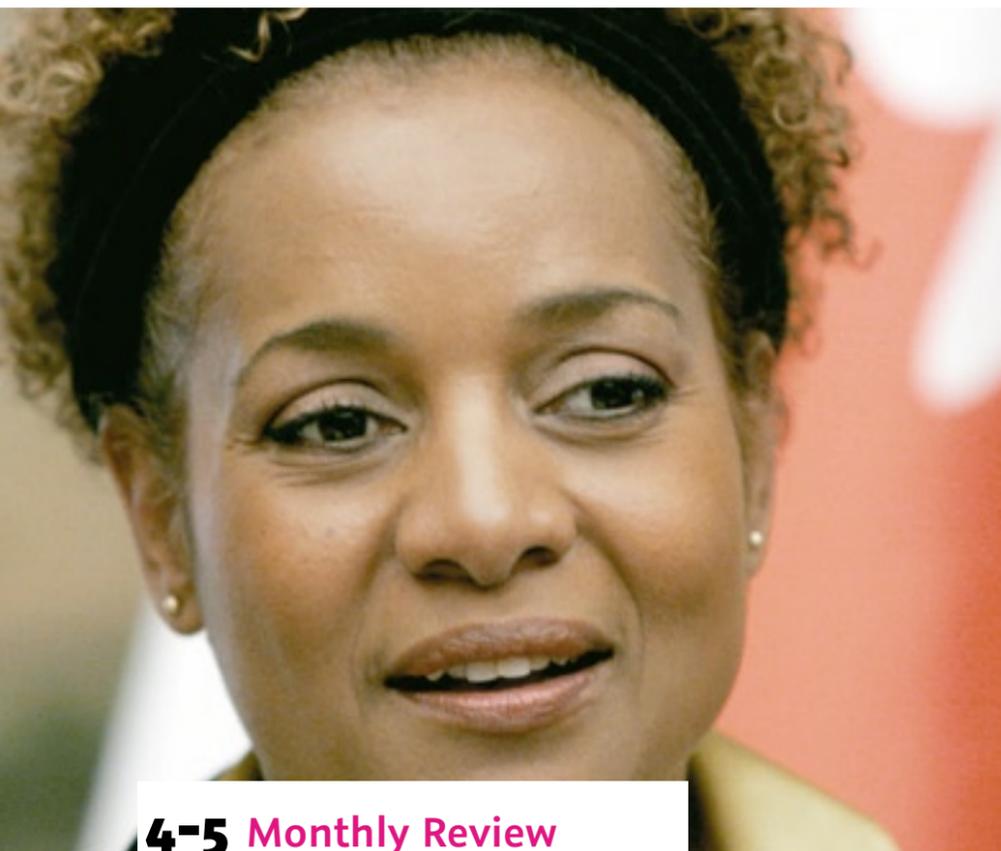
(business culture environment politics sports)

10

November 09

## **SLOVENIA'S INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO PROTECT AND PROMOTE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS**

# contents



## 4-5 Monthly Review

Canadian Governor General Michaëlle Jean

## 35 Sports

Golden Kauzer



## 31-32 Our Excellence

Book in a Box

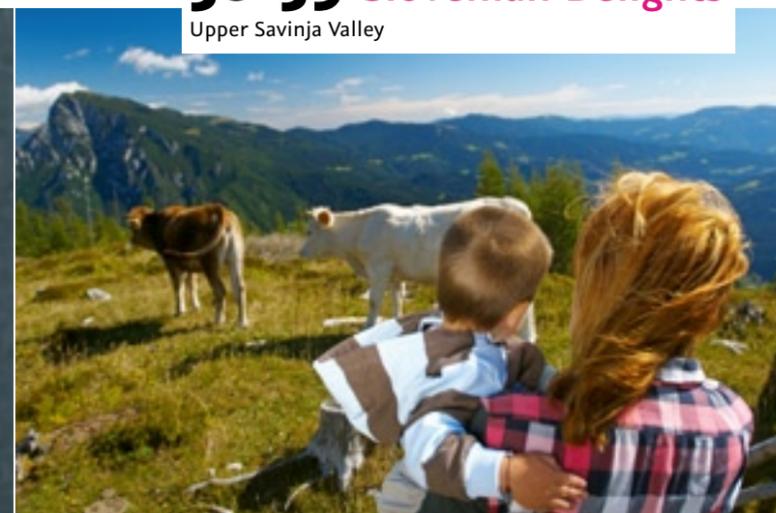


## 45-47 Natural Trails

Trgatev

## 36-39 Slovenian Delights

Upper Savinja Valley



Veronika Stabej

## Our children are worth it

Messages from children – such as children are not adults, let us have our childhood, we're responsible too, trust us, don't reject us when we need your help, we want you to listen, let us talk – demonstrate that the youngest among us are a vulnerable group needing a great deal of attention. At an international conference on the rights of the child and protection against violence held in Ljubljana at the beginning of the month, delegates raised the children's right to protection of their dignity, which goes beyond the right "to privacy at home". Slovenian foreign policy makes children's rights and their general welfare a priority. Young people are the ones most often ensnared in human trafficking. Katjuša Popović, head of the Ključ ("Key") society, teaches young people how to avoid the traps that can lead them into the clutches of human trafficking. You can read more on this in the In Focus column.

In diplomatic matters, we have a report on Slovenian-Canadian relations. Michaëlle Jean, the Governor General of Canada, has visited Slovenia for the second time, a reflection of the excellent relations between the two countries. "There is talk in Canada of a Slovenian miracle," she said during her visit. Slovenia and Canada are interesting partners: despite very different geographic features and natural resources, they share very similar values in terms of the resolution of urgent issues facing humanity. Since diplomatic relations were established less than two decades ago, the two countries have developed exemplary cooperation within the UN, OSCE and the Human Security Network, while Canada has made an important contribution to the development of the International Trust Fund (ITF) for Demining based in Slovenia. Slovenia and Canada have successfully worked together on peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan and the Balkans, and they are also linked by a partnership within the NATO alliance.

From May to November, Slovenia is chairing the Committee of Ministers, the executive body of the Council of Europe. "Although it sounds a little clichéd, many important, even landmark decisions have been made during Slovenian chairmanship of the Committee that are important for the Council of Europe and its member states", said Slovenian foreign minister Samuel Žbogar in an interview published in this issue.

We haven't overlooked reporting on culture, sport and of course the harvest. October, once the grapes on the vines are sufficiently ripe, sees the start of a time of joyful celebration, steeped in tradition, in Slovenia's three wine-growing regions.

### Sinfo – Slovenian information

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● Andrej Savelli

## Government outlines structural adjustments to ease exit from crisis

Over the next two years, a series of structural adjustments will be needed to ease the way out of the economic crisis and in the long term to improve the operation of the economy. According to Mitja Gaspari, Minister for Development and European Affairs, these include the operation of public institutions, competitiveness, environmental policy, social policy and health care.

To ensure better management of state assets, the Government intends to establish a public agency to manage state-owned companies and to reform the Pension Fund Management and the Slovenian Compensation Fund. The Government initiated a project to merge the three existing financial regulators in order to improve the efficiency and transparency of their work. A similar merger is also planned for the regulatory bodies for telecommunications, energy and transport networks.

Slovenia has many development institutions to foster economic competitiveness, although they are relatively poor at coordinating their business policies and instruments. The idea is to achieve synergies among these institutions, Gaspari said, calling on them to enhance their potential, with possible savings of around €1 bn across all such institutions.

More effective environmental policies require structural adjustments in the area of transport and energy infrastructure. To this end, the Government is preparing a special law on the siting of transport, energy and water-supply infrastructure, while Gaspari also announced the development of railway infrastructure and services. To improve energy efficiency, the Government assesses that incentives are needed to promote developmental investments in energy efficiency and in renewable energy sources; at the same time, the Government will prepare a draft Climate Change Act and a national strategy to ameliorate and adjust to climate change, with the aim of adapting to climate change. Agriculture and the food-processing industry will have to become more competitive, while the system of forest management will have to be optimised.

At the press conference, Minister for Development and European Affairs Mitja Gaspari presented the Structural Adjustments for 2010 and 2011.



photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

## Pahor and Križanič present draft budget to National Assembly

At an extraordinary session of the National Assembly on 9 October, Prime Minister Borut Pahor and Minister of Finance Franc Križanič presented draft state budgets and budget memoranda for the next two years. As they pointed out, the budget deficit caused by crisis measures is rising, but without these measures the negative consequences of the crisis would be greater.

The adoption of crisis measures increases the risk to the stability of public finances in the medium and long term, but the Prime Minister is convinced that the Government must act in the short term. He pointed out that the slow recovery of the economy means that withdrawing the crisis measures too quickly and reducing public expenditure too much would have further negative consequences, and forecast an improvement in the state of public finances only in 2011.

This time, the Government decided to change the way it prepared the budget. "Essentially, we have directly linked the planning of expenditure to our objectives and to activities to achieve these objectives," Pahor explained, stating that the proposed allocation of the 2010 and 2011 budgets combines existing strategy into 16 development policies and priorities.

In the National Assembly, Prime Minister Borut Pahor presented the draft budgets for the coming two years.



photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

## New Family Code places children at the centre

Presenting the draft Family Code, Minister of Labour, Family and Social Affairs Ivan Svetlik said that the Code changes the understanding of the family so as not to exclude any form of family. The Code will also enable same-sex partners to adopt children. With regards to marriage, which is proposed as a life community of two people of the same or opposite sex, the draft Code preserves the principle of equality of spouses, said Minister of Labour.

As the Family Code places children and their rights at the centre, in future according to minister Svetlik the state will have more options for intervening in family relationships. The new draft Family Code prohibits corporal punishment for children, and introduces the institute of advocate. Decisions on measures to protect the interests of children will be transferred from social work centres to the courts.

## Slovenian Development Days held in Ljubljana

On 15 and 16 October Ljubljana played host to the first Slovenian Development Days, organised by the Slovenian foreign ministry together with Sloga, the platform of non-governmental organisations for developmental cooperation and humanitarian aid. The Development Days were intended to raise public awareness about the importance of international development cooperation and about the efforts of the international community to fulfil the millennium development goals. In the words of the state secretary at the foreign ministry, Ms. Dragoljuba Benčina, Slovenia wishes to consolidate its position on the international stage as a new donor, and to strengthen its institutional system of developmental cooperation. As Ms. Benčina added, Slovenia's bilateral development cooperation is meanwhile focused primarily on the Western Balkans. However attention is also being devoted to Eastern Europe, while Slovenian development aid for Africa is being channelled through multilateral forums. The state secretary pointed out that Slovenian development aid has for a long time been substantively orientated towards the protection of children's rights, education and capacity building.

## Slovenia and Egypt strengthen relations

On 15 and 16 October the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak visited Slovenia on the invitation of Slovenian President Danilo Türk. The two presidents expressed their commitment to strengthening friendly relations between the two countries, especially in the economic sphere. They also agreed that a just resolution of the Middle East question was the best path to achieving a lasting peace.

Mr. Mubarak was also received by Prime Minister Borut Pahor. They agreed that relations between the two countries were on a very good and friendly level. At the same time they confirmed the good reciprocal economic cooperation, which could be further enhanced by increasing investment, especially in the area of transport services and the food industry. Pahor and Mubarak also touched upon certain international and regional topics, including most prominently the peace process and conditions in Afghanistan and Iran. They agreed that the establishing of a lasting peace and stability in the region required primarily a collective approach and expanded dialogue, which would facilitate further efforts to revive the peace process. Prime Minister Pahor and President Mubarak also exchanged views on the role of the European Union in the region, with the Egyptian President emphasising especially that security in the Middle East was closely connected to security in Europe and the Mediterranean.

## Slovenia and Serbia at the beginning of a new path

On 29 and 30 September Slovenia was paid an official visit by the Serbian President Boris Tadić, who was hosted by Slovenian President Danilo Türk. The two presidents discussed a range of issues, including those tied to the succession of the former Yugoslavia. The strengthening of ties is also indicated by the social agreement between Slovenia and Serbia, signed on the sidelines of the visit by the Slovenian Minister for Labour, Ivan Svetlik, and his Serbian counterpart, Rasim Ljajić. In this way, as the Slovenian President stated, the two countries have demonstrated a maturity in their relations and the capacity to resolve specific issues. President Danilo Türk stressed that there was a historical friendship between the Slovenian and Serbian nations, and while it is true that they have had some difficult moments, and that there have been certain aberrations, Slovenia and Serbia are at the beginning of a new path.

## Slovenia and Canada Seek to Consolidate Ties

President Danilo Türk and visiting Canadian Governor General Michaëlle Jean called for a further strengthening of the already excellent relations between the two countries as they met at Brdo on 21 October. Jean stressed the importance of consolidating "the bridges between the two countries", especially in light of the crisis. The more we join forces, the more solid and effective solutions we will find, Jean added.

The Canadian Governor was also received by the Prime Minister of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, who said that countries had excellent bilateral relations, without any outstanding issues, that could be further strengthened in the area of economy, where there is high potential for a more dynamic cooperation. The host and his guest agreed that one of the key goals in tackling the current economic and financial crisis was maintaining social stability and solidarity.

According to the Governor General, Canada is a very open country, which appreciates the contribution of Slovenian emigrants to its development. Slovenia and Canada took the opportunity of Jean's visit to sign an agreement on the mobility of the young. The Governor General said that investing in the young and in knowledge were among her priorities.

Canadian Governor General Michaëlle Jean and Slovenian President Danilo Türk



photo: BOBO



Smiljana Knez, Blanka Jamničnik, Katja Vidic, Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
 Photo: Higher vocational school for photography, National Assembly  
 Illustrator: Matjaž Schmidt

# CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND PROTECTION AGAINST VIOLENCE

**In the framework of the Slovenian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with the National Assembly and the Human Rights Ombudsman, organised an**

**International Conference on Children's Rights and Protection against Violence on 6 and 7 October. The Conference and its side events took place in the building of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia.**

*"In its foreign policy, Slovenia devotes special attention to promoting the rights of the child. It has paid particular attention to this topic during its chairmanship of OSCE, Human Rights Security Network, EU Council and Committee of Ministers of Council of Europe. Slovenia would like to contribute to the wellbeing of children also during its three-year membership in the UNICEF Executive Board, which began this year."*

**Samuel Žbogar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia**

The aim of the Conference was to raise awareness among the political, expert and general public on children's rights and to send a resounding message to the international public about the efforts of the Council of Europe and Slovenia relating to the rights of the child. Some 60 participants, representatives of government bodies and non-governmental organisations, and Slovenian and foreign experts, presented a number of projects, good practices and current challenges relating to this issue.

The Conference focused primarily on two issues: education on the rights of the child and violence against children. The former was discussed by the second and third panels of the Conference. Special attention was devoted to certain aspects of violence against children, particularly sexual violence and the unacceptability of corporal punishment. The participants presented endeavours to combat violence through the work of relevant government agencies, experts, and by presenting many non-government projects for the protec-

tion of children against violence. Since the Conference was broadcast live on the parliamentary channel of TV Slovenia, it provided an excellent opportunity for informing the broader public, especially schools, about projects implemented in Slovenia to assist children in need.

*"Children, like adults, have the same right to dignity and physical integrity. Slovenia took an important step by adopting the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, which introduces new measures for the protection of children, demands coordinated actions of institutions, enforces compulsory reporting, and requires the continued education of experts."*

**Katarina Kresal, Minister of the Interior of the Republic of Slovenia**

The Conference contributed to raising standards of discussion of children's rights. Its organisers strove to make it accessible and understandable to all children. Therefore, the TV broadcast of the Conference was also interpreted in sign language, so the Conference could also be "heard" by the deaf. Also, Lea Bijol, a student of the Ljubljana School for the Deaf, delivered one of the opening statements, describing not only her perception of deafness, but also the inconveniences and obstacles that it entails.

The Conference would not have been so successful without the numerous children who took an active part in it. They exercised their right to expression in their own way: their messages were delivered in a variety of forms – in speeches, songs and dance, and in other creative ways.



**Children's messages:**

*Children are not adults. Leave us our childhood.  
 We are also responsible. Trust us!  
 Do not abandon us when we are in need.  
 We want to be heard. Let us speak!*

The children made paper hats with messages about their rights, which were distributed to senior Slovenian political and international guests. The Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, used the same hat the next day in his address in Geneva at the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.



*"Promotion and respect of children's rights is not only a matter of discussion at a meeting or a conference. It is a constant work to change attitudes. Adults must realise that children are individuals with their own rights, whose opinion must be respected. It is a revolution. A revolution that takes time."*

**Thomas Hammarberg, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights**



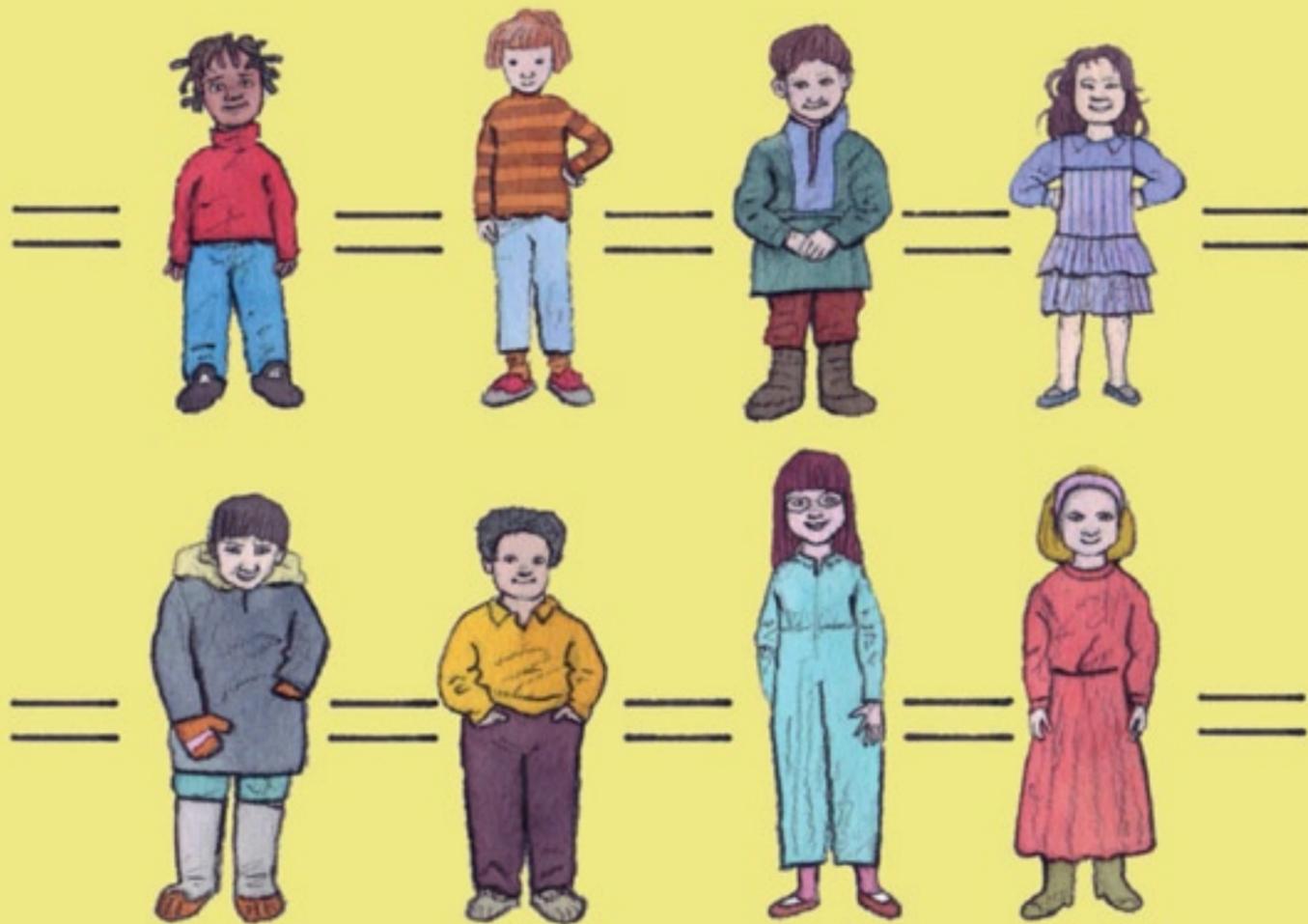
During the Conference, the participants also had the opportunity to see the 'Our Rights' exhibition, an exhibition of the Council of Europe called 'Europe is MORE than you think', and an 'Information market', where several Slovenian NGOs, schools and government agencies presented their work on children's rights and human rights education.

Another important issue which received particular attention at the Conference was human rights education. We believe

that young people should be the first target of education about universal human rights, which enhances understanding of the diversity of human societies, including religious, ethnic, cultural, and national minority aspects. At the same time, inter-cultural and inter-religious respect should also be promoted. The process of learning about human rights and respect for others should enhance our ability to build societies that value tolerance and respect. The Conference provided many opportunities to exchange information and good practices on education on children's rights in Slovenia and international forums. It clearly showed that human rights education is an important element in preparing young people to become informed, active and responsible individuals. The Conference included presentations of certain Slovenian and international efforts in this field, including the presentation of a human rights education project 'Our Rights'.

## Presentation of good practices with the "OUR RIGHTS" Project

During the Slovenian Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2005 our country initiated a Pilot Project on Human Rights Education »OUR RIGHTS«, based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Slovenian experts designed, initiated and led the implementation of the pilot project which involved numerous governments of the OSCE participating States, NGO's, individual experts, ombudsman's offices, field offices of international organizations and other stakeholders. The participating countries showed great interest, so the teaching tool was translated into 17 languages and used with about 66.000 children in numerous countries east and west of Vienna. Children from minorities were involved, including Roma children in several countries of South-Eastern Europe.



The evaluation of the OSCE pilot project OUR RIGHTS clearly shows that the project contributed significantly to raising awareness in teaching and learning about human and children's rights in all the participating countries.

*"It should be underlined that the Republic of North Ossetia-Alanya is grateful to the Republic of Slovenia for being among the first who helped Beslan after the act of terror in September 2004. The OUR RIGHTS course has attracted a huge interest of pupils."*  
**Tatyana Chshieva, PhD, Executive Manager of the Foundation "Achievements"**

After a few years of implementing the »OUR RIGHTS« project on their own, partners in post-conflict societies previously affected by wars and terrorist attacks asked for further support with expertise, especially teaching materials. As a result of the successfully implemented pilot project, the human rights education was integrated into Kosovo's school curricula, which is certainly a big strategic step forward in the education of the young.

*"At present, the right to survive and the right to education are the most important rights for children in Kosovo. This project enables every child to learn about their rights."*  
**Adifete Shabani, teacher from Gnjilane, Kosovo**

In the UN International Year of Human Rights Learning in 2009, the 20th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and in the preparations for its Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2009, Slovenia decided to support partners in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and North Ossetia-Alanya in the Russian Federation in continuing the "OUR RIGHTS" project in the 2009/2010 school year. The project was launched in all three locations in September 2009 for about 50,000 children: the whole generation of 12-year old pupils in Kosovo, children of all three main national communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the whole generation of 11-12 year olds in North Ossetia-Alanya in the Russian Federation.

*"There are never too many trainings and programmes of this kind and we sincerely hope that our cooperation will continue and that we will gradually organise trainings for as many teachers as possible. I cannot say that we have discovered something completely new, but I may say that the programme offered by the Republic of Slovenia is, in my opinion, one of the best and we are pleased to be implementing it."*  
**Hamdija Kujundžić, Chairman of the NGO "Osmijeh" Association, Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Our experience with "OUR RIGHTS" project shows that there are both great opportunities and needs in the field. There is a gap between commitments and the real world of children in all corners of the world. We believe that such projects and other numerous efforts by the international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and governmental institutions are necessary. With additional engagement in our local environment, no effort should be spared to reach out to children and involve them in the process of their empowerment.



## Slovenia's international efforts to protect and promote children's rights

Despite the wide acceptance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child that this year celebrates its 20th anniversary and has been signed by 193 countries, which makes it the most widely ratified UN treaty, children's rights are violated on a daily basis all over the world.

*"There are enough conventional, constitutional and legal bases for effectively protecting children from all forms of violence and inhumane treatment. Nevertheless, violence against children persists. For the suppression of all forms of violence against children, the general public, the media, parents and guardians need to be properly informed and educated."*  
**Dr Danilo Türk, President of the Republic of Slovenia, honorary patron of the Conference on Children's Rights and Protection against Violence**

The promotion and protection of the human rights of vulnerable groups, including children, is a priority of Slovenia's foreign policy. Children are not only vulnerable per se, they are also future adults and are likely to perpetuate patterns of behaviour when they grow up. Thus, combating all forms of violence against children and empowering children to fully enjoy their rights are the focus of our bilateral and multilateral activities.

As an EU Member State, Slovenia actively co-shapes EU foreign policy. Two sets of guidelines on children's rights were adopted in recent years: in 2003, the Guidelines on Children Affected by Armed Conflict, and in 2007, the Guidelines on Children's Rights with a Special Focus on Violence against Children. The implementation of the latter started under the Slovenian EU Council Presidency. Slovenia emphasised the close interrelation between human rights, security and development. In June 2008, the European leaders called on all EU institutions and Member States to promote children's rights, in particular the rights and needs of children in armed conflict in a manner that would address all three of these aspects. We continue our close cooperation with the current EU Presidency regarding this issue.

Among the many forms of violence, special attention of international society has lately been devoted to sexual exploitation and abuse, and to corporal punishment. As a member of the Council of Europe and Chair of its Committee of Ministers

from May to November 2009, Slovenia pays due attention to the continuation of the CoE's activities in this field. The CoE implements various programmes and campaigns for the protection of children. The campaign against corporal punishment will be followed next year by a campaign against sexual exploitation and abuse, which will be based on the 2007 Convention against sexual violence, one that Slovenia still needs to ratify.

Internationally, we believe that much more needs to be done regarding children's access to justice. Despite its wide acceptance, the Convention on the Rights of the Child is the only UN Convention that does not provide those whom it protects (i.e. children) with the possibility of making a complaint about the violations of their rights directly to the Committee established under the Convention. Last year, certain NGOs and interested countries, including Slovenia, tried to find an approach to this matter. Slovenia organised several meetings on the issue and is actively working together with other interested countries within a special working group. In June 2009, the UN Human Rights Council resolved to set up a working group open to all States to address this issue. We hope that UN Member States adopt such a mechanism as soon as possible, which would put children's rights on a more equal footing.

The illustrations from the exhibition prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Government Communication Office are by Matjaž Schmidt (illustrations) and Jaša Schmidt (design).



Vesna Žarkovič, photo: Mateja Jordovič Potočnik, Michele Drascek

# TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS – ANYONE CAN BECOME A VICTIM

**You perhaps know something about this: you are prepared to do occasional work without an employment contract, you are in a life crisis and you would most like to just go off somewhere and leave everything behind you, you want adventures, travel, getting to know new people, you are quick to trust other people and quick to fall in love, you do not check information and believe people's word,**

**you have been given a fabulous job offer but you do not know the employer, you let other people make all the necessary arrangements for work and travel. If at least one of these situations applies to you, there is a danger of you becoming a victim of human trafficking, warns the society Ključ [Key] – the centre for combating trafficking in human beings, on its website.**



The Ključ society is a non-governmental, non-profit and humanitarian organisation. It operates nationally in the public interest, regionally (SE Europe) and transnationally, offering both prevention and cure. It operates preventively by organising and conducting workshops at primary and secondary schools. The fact is, they have ascertained that the groups at risk of human trafficking include primarily young people in the transition from primary to secondary school and youths in the transition from secondary school to university. This is a period when many young people seek work abroad, and at this point they can fall prey to numerous traps and dangers that lead to human trafficking. In an average year they conduct around 80 workshops at secondary schools and 20 workshops at primary schools. In the curative part of its services, the Ključ society offers victims short-term crisis placement and long-term care in a safe house, a programme of (re)integration and assistance in arranging their formal status.

## Emotional abuse, foreign countries and work

The following concepts are most commonly associated with human traffick-

ing, explains the office manager Katjuša Popović: emotional abuse, foreign countries and work. Indeed the typical stories of people who have suffered human trafficking almost always revolve around enticing offers of love or offers of work abroad, and these are turned into exploitation for sexual services, hard physical work and servitude. It can be different in cases of forced marriages, adoptions, trafficking in organs and so forth, where human traffickers often kidnap their victims, buy children from their biological parents, or promise women a rich husband and good life. A consequence of trafficking in human beings is having a person at one's disposal or treating a person as an object for the purpose of all manner of exploitation. In practical terms this means that the person is owned by someone and that they are deprived of their freedom.

In the assessment of experts, trafficking in human beings comes immediately after trafficking in drugs, arms and money laundering as the most profitable activity of organised crime. The majority of people equate human trafficking with prostitution and people smuggling. Many are convinced that in their environment there is no human trafficking, or that such a thing could not happen. Yet this is far from the truth, since any one of us could be a victim, says Popović. It could happen to any of us. Once in captivity, victims of human trafficking are exposed to various forms of violence, which becomes a component part of their lives. Critical events

in their life radically change their social, family, physical and psychological lives. The consequences of this can frequently be seen and sensed days, months or years after this. Out of the traumatic and chaotic experiences, which previously could not be expressed in words, a structured story is created for the first time through telling it in the process of help.

## An experience of respect and personal dignity is important

The long-term consequences of traumatic events such as experiencing human trafficking include most commonly post-traumatic stress disorder. It appears in various ways, some less obvious, others more so. What is typical is that after people find themselves in a safe environment, they feel terrible fear, anxiety, physical agitation and other intense feelings of the conditioned reaction.

Talking to victims means meeting people who have different pasts and experiences that also play a part in the victims finding a solution. In the process of help, we keep re-addressing their hopes and dreams, says Popović. What is important is an ex-

perience of respect and personal dignity, which can only be gained in a relationship with others. In the process of help they respect the principle of confidentiality, since the people they talk to need to be courageous and prepared to say what they think and experience. The assistance projects offered by the Ključ society are original, since new ones are continually formulated for each client separately. They are created with them and for them. They need to respond to the special characteristics and differences, and to create new possibilities where merely within what is usual and known, solutions cannot be found, says Popović.

In the eight years of Ključ work, they have helped many people. Officially Slovenia is primarily a transit country for victims of human trafficking, while practice in the society shows that Slovenia is a strong country of origin and for some time it has also been a country of final destination.

## Development programmes

It is very important for all programmes to be set out developmentally, meaning that they strive for comprehensive (re)integration of victims into society. In this connection, in 2003 separate cooperation agreements were signed for the help and protection of human trafficking victims with the Supreme Public Prosecutor's office, the Ministry of the Interior and the Police, and in 2004 the society applied in the Equal project, through which it obtained funding and started changing its employment policy. */EQUAL is part of the European Union's strategy for more and better jobs and for ensuring that no-one is denied access to them. Funded by the European Social Fund, this initiative has been testing since 2001 new ways of tackling discrimination and inequality experienced by those in work and those looking for a job./* In this way they organised a network of employers who are prepared to give jobs to victims, they set up info points for victims and initiated the procedure for registering a new vocational qualification in terms of counselling based on experience that has turned out to be very good practice abroad. Former victims could in this way

be employed at the society, and through their wealth of experience they could offer counselling to current clients of the programme.

And how do those working at the society – four full-time employees and 70 volunteers – protect themselves in face of the horrors experienced by victims of human trafficking? We are constantly looking out for one another, says Popovičeva. When you notice that a colleague is overtired, that she is showing the first signs of burning out, you need to react immediately. Here we are helped by regular supervision, through which we continuously “process” all the bad things related to our work, she adds. She is happy to be able to work in

such a professional team that helps lift people out of the abyss and into a life worthy of humans, without exploitation and violation of human rights.

(The European Commission declared 18 October as EU Anti-Trafficking Day, with the aim of raising awareness about the phenomenon in which human rights are grossly violated.)

**Katjuša Popović (Office Manager of the Ključ society):**

*We do not moralise, we tell people how to avoid the traps that lead you into the claws of human trafficking. We teach young people how to protect themselves so they do not become human trafficking victims.*



Vesna Žarkovič, photo: BOBO

# SAMUEL ŽBOGAR:

## Identifying and understanding the challenges presented by globalisation

**“What would I count as my biggest successes at the end of my term in office? I will be happy if the list of Slovenia’s unresolved foreign policy issues is a point or two smaller, and if we can succeed in identifying and understanding the challenges presented to us by globalisation; if we can steer the country’s foreign policy apparatus more towards economic diplomacy, shift thinking in a greener direction and be mindful of preserving the Slovenian cultural identity. Diplomacy can help a great deal in all of this,” says Foreign Minister Samuel Žbogar.**

**Slovenia holds the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers – the executive body of the Council of Europe – from May to the end of November. How do you assess this period, was it a success? Where is the “added value” of the Slovenian Chairmanship? What achievements, activities and events in the context of the Chairmanship would you highlight?**

When it appeared at the start of Slovenia’s Chairmanship of the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe that it would be almost impossible to reach an agreement with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on a new secretary general of the organisation, we succeeded through informal negotiations in getting past key disagreements and in agreeing on further dialogue and closer cooperation among bodies. This contributed to the most outstanding success of the Slovenian Chairmanship – electing a new secretary general of the Council of Europe. This is a major success for Slovenia as the presiding state.

Meanwhile, although it might sound a little clichéd, during the Slovenian Chairmanship quite a few major, even crucial decisions were taken that are important for the Council of Europe and its member states. Even at the ministerial meeting in Madrid back in May, when Slovenia took over the Chairmanship, major progress was achieved in reform of the European Court of Human Rights. Two equal measures were adopted that allow the temporary application of individual provisions of Protocol 14 and they will contribute to at least the partial reduction of backlogs for the overburdened court. Slovenia was one of

the first to sign and ratify Protocol 14bis, which is one of the two measures. Just recently a written declaration has come from the Russian Duma with assurances that Russian deputies will restart the debate over ratification of Protocol 14 in Russia, the only country that has not yet ratified it. With this final ratification, the protocol would enter fully into force and would thereby strengthen the protection of human rights in all member states of the Council of Europe. The news from Moscow is encouraging, especially since Slovenia, as the presiding state, has set reform of the European Court of Human Rights as one of its key priorities.

**One of the priorities of the Slovenian Chairmanship was children’s rights. What message would you give, on behalf of the state chairing the Committee of Ministers, to children, their parents, educators and teachers in Europe and elsewhere in the world?**

The Council of Europe is the international organisation for which protection of human rights is one of the most important objectives. Children’s rights and education about human rights are among the key priorities for Slovenian foreign policy, so we have also placed them in the forefront of our Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. We have prepared an educational project about children’s rights, called “Our Rights”, which right now is being carried out in selected primary schools in Kosovo, in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in North Ossetia in Russia. Slovenia has also taken a position in the international framework of efforts to improve children’s rights by organising the International Conference

on Children’s Rights and Protection against Violence. Attaining the full legal power of children and adolescents to exercise their rights deserves special attention. Here equal importance is given to education for human rights, the participation of children in matters that touch upon their rights, and the access of children to national and international mechanisms for protecting their rights. Strengthening international norms and standards and raising awareness about children’s rights, for which Slovenia is striving, are of fundamental importance in eliminating all forms of violence against children.

**This year the Council of Europe is celebrating its 60th anniversary. Where do you see the future of this organisation, perhaps the biggest challenges, and how should this organisation work for the most effective possible protection of human rights in the modern world?**

The Council of Europe has secured enviable and historic achievements: adoption of the European Convention on Human Rights, abolition of the death penalty in almost all the countries of the European continent, the coming together of the ideologically entirely divided Europe at the end of the 20th century, and also successful efforts to halt violence against women and children and to prevent trafficking in humans.

The Council of Europe has in particular great experience and knowledge in the area of human rights, so I believe that this must remain its key mission. Here it can cooperate closely with other international organisations, for instance the European Union, and help them in their efforts to fulfil this important objective. The task of effective protection of human rights is in no way simple. It requires determined political will, support of the population, adequate legislation, a fair judiciary and of course financial resources. There are many demands and it is hard to fulfil them, but it is important to retain optimism, perseverance, emphasis and awareness raising. Nothing can be achieved overnight and without effort. The Council of Europe has not yet said the final word on protection of human rights. I believe that through commitment

and effort a time will come when human rights will no longer be a sensitive topic in any member state of the Council of Europe.

**In some people’s opinion you are one of the rare European foreign ministers to date who has tackled with exceptional seriousness the dialogue with the Parliamentary Assembly and thereby helped resolve the difficulties between representatives and the Committee of Ministers. Could you say a little more about this?**

At the moment I received the keys to the office of the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers, I was somewhat surprised at the disagreement between the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers. Even at the meeting in Madrid it was clear that we could expect complications with the

election of the new secretary general of the organisation, and this naturally caused us some concern. We were planning the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Council of Europe, and the non-election of a secretary general would be a bad message sent out to the world by an organisation whose values are democracy and the rule of law. Even before the July part of the regular meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly, I therefore decided (with the two previous and the three subsequent Chairmanship holders) in what is called the Bureau format to hold an ad hoc meeting with the president of the Parliamentary Assembly and heads of political groups in the Council of Europe. The first meeting with the chairman’s committee showed that there was disagreement regarding the interpretation of the organisation’s statutes, while at the same time – and this was perhaps even more important

– there was a need for dialogue that must be maintained. I am pleased that after five such ad hoc meetings, which were conducted all summer up until the middle of September, we reached agreement on strengthening dialogue and cooperation between the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly.

**Slovenian-Croatian relations. Some people regard the proposed arbitration agreement, which the government confirmed, as not being the best thing for Slovenia, since arbitration would supposedly be limited in time only “through vague wording” about conclusion within the timetable of the average duration of arbitration. This will supposedly give no guarantee that it will be completed prior to Croatia’s accession to the EU, which should be one of Slovenia’s**



# INTERVIEW

**demands. After Croatia's accession to the EU, Slovenia would have no levers for protecting its vital objectives and interests, especially territorial contact with the open sea. How do you comment on such claims?**

Look, we do not even know when Croatia will finish its EU accession negotiations, but it is clear that the arbitration tribunal requires time for the selected adjudicators to wade through the material that we will submit. Slovenia, meanwhile, needs sufficient time to be able to draw up with sufficient quality the relevant material that will justify our demands and expectations regarding the border. The government believes that the deadline (three years at the latest), which is acceptable in the draft arbitration agreement, is objective and offers Slovenia sufficient time to collect and present evidence that will be vital for the arbitration decision. As I have stressed a number of times, ratification of the agreement on arbitration in the Slovenian and Croatian parliaments is in itself a solution to the border issue, since an arbitration decision or ruling will be binding on both sides.

The fact is, and the government has also anticipated this, that not everyone will agree with this draft arbitration agreement. In my opinion, as was also ultimately confirmed by the National Assembly's Foreign Affairs Committee, it offers us sufficient guarantee that the arbitration decision will be in line with the expectations and interests of Slovenia. I think that after 18 years it offers us an excellent opportunity to resolve this issue to the benefit of both countries.

**Foreign policy is not just bilateral relations, and not just relations with neighbours, it is also cooperation in international forums. At the recent 64th session of the UN General Assembly, you presented a new Slovenian foreign policy initiative, which seeks within global challenges to link up a group of countries from all over the world in a more determined struggle for a responsible attitude to the environment. How could Slovenia fulfil these objectives?**

For all of us it is extremely important that the UN summit on climate change in Copenhagen succeeds and provides us with a new framework for operation and cooperation. Nevertheless we should also be focused further ahead – Copenhagen is a milestone and not the end of the road. I therefore believe that we must direct our policies towards greater mutual cohesion, we must have high ambitions and work in synergy. Here we should not neglect two key aspects: raising awareness and transfer of knowledge.

Environmental topics are entering wholesale into international relations and are ending up on the desks of foreign ministers. For this reason it seemed worthwhile to me to invite several like-minded foreign ministers from various parts of the world to focus together on these new aspects of our work. I invited my counterparts from New Zealand, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, Cape Verde Islands, Iceland and Costa Rica. They all responded positively to the invitation.

**The government is determined to include the diplomatic service as much as possible in seeking common solutions and dealing with the economic crisis, and therefore to strengthen the economic component of diplomatic efforts. Fulfilment of this task will involve the help of ambassadors that Slovenia now has in almost 50 countries around the world. What are the measures related to this?**

On 1 October 2009 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs once again, after a break since 2005, took up the task of economic diplomacy, and in this way became the central body and coordinator of this effort. I am aware that one of the main strategic objectives in continuing the internationalisation of our economy is seeking the possibility to increase the diversity of Slovenian exports. For this very reason we are looking into diversifying foreign trade and strengthening the representation of Slovenian companies in promising markets. Since the economic crisis has seriously affected our main and traditional markets, we are devoting attention to the rapidly developing BRIC markets (Brazil, Russia, India and China).

Even more than previously, economic diplomacy is becoming the central task in the work of ambassadors and heads of diplomatic and consular missions. There is thus an understanding today that ambassadors must work for the benefit of the Slovenian economy and cultivate personal contacts with domestic business leaders and those domestic business people seeking a presence in the market of the country where they are accredited. In securing new markets, alongside the activities of the ambassadors themselves and their economic advisers, we will make better use of the capacities of honorary consuls of Slovenia and of Slovenians living permanently in markets of interest to Slovenian businesses. Moreover we wish to exploit better the complementary advantages of the operation of business clubs, while we are also encouraging the creation of mixed trade chambers.

In the near future, on the basis of systemic reorganisations we will extend the network of economic advisers at certain diplomatic and consular representative offices operating in markets that are vital for the Slovenian economy. We will encourage economic advisers to focus on identifying tangible commercial opportunities they perceive in their work, and to provide systematic information on public tenders in which Slovenian companies can apply, as well as on the possibilities offered by counter-trade.

In cooperation with the Ministry of the Economy, the Chamber of Commerce and JAPTI (the Public Agency for Entrepreneurship and Foreign Investments), we will strive to establish a comprehensive system of data on current economic conditions everywhere that diplomatic and consular missions are open and accredited.

**Minister, you went from the diplomatic service to politics. As a diplomat you lived in China, New York and Washington. What is the difference between a diplomat and a politician? Which role suits you best?**

It is true, all my professional life I have worked as a diplomat and dealt with foreign policy issues. This is work that has always attracted me, and in some way I feel it is my calling. Previously I had always

rather observed politics than contributed to it, but now, in this new position, I am encountering it in a different way. Of course I feel the differences that exist between these professions. What seems most obvious to me is perhaps that in politics you often have to work more directly and pursue specific objectives and interests, while diplomacy functions more gently, more obliquely, allowing greater room and different ways of operating.

**They say about you that you rarely get angry, that you operate in a prudent and very well-mannered way; you have run several marathons. Does running relax you and release your anger and any resentments?**

Running is actually a meditation, a kind of conversation with yourself, as anyone knows who has ever done long-distance running. For me running is maintaining physical and mental fitness, which are vital for the kind of work I am doing now. I am not a person who builds up resentment and anger, and any of that I accumulate is definitely released after five or more kilometres of running.

**As a minister do you even have time for regular running or perhaps some other sport? Are you going to take part in this year's Ljubljana marathon?**

I run less than I would like and should do if I wanted to run a big marathon properly. I will take part in the small, 21-kilometre one in Ljubljana, but I won't be looking at the stopwatch. Running is also socialising and validating a kind of lifestyle, and the Ljubljana marathon has great importance here. I am pleased that every year more people are running, and that there are more and more people who realise how important moving and active living are.

**What is currently taking up most of your time?**

Oh, take a look at the newspaper headlines, the pulse of home and foreign affairs is more lively than it has been in a long time. This applies especially to dealing with the unresolved issues with Croatia.



Vesna Bertoneclj Popit, DELO, photo: STA

Estimates of how much Slovenia's gross domestic product (GDP) should shrink this year vary, and range from 7.3 percent, which was what the Government's Office for Macroeconomic Analysis and Development (OMAD) predicted in its autumn analysis, to a 6.7 percent decline as forecast by the Bank of Slovenia and to the 5 percent fall anticipated by certain other analysts. These more favourable forecasts are supposedly based on the increased inflow of orders in some companies and increased optimism in the commercial sector. New orders are making it possible for some companies to return to the normal 40-hour working week, while at the same time some others are only now reducing their working hours. In its autumn analysis OMAD also predicted that despite the improved economic conditions, the number of unemployed people in Slovenia would rise for a further two years. This year surveyed unemployment should amount to 5.7 percent, while in the coming year OMAD forecasts an increase to 6.7 percent and in 2011 to as much as 7.3 percent.

**The Government has based its draft national budget for the coming two years on OMAD forecasts. In the coming year, the deficit should be five percent of GDP. For this reason the Government has proposed a freezing of both pensions and wages in the public sector, or rather the postponing of any increases, on which the previous Government agreed during better economic times, until the end of the coming year.** However, since the public sector unions opposed this, the Government has adopted an intervention act, and now the public sector unions would like to negotiate in order to avoid the intervention act. Pensions, meanwhile, have been partly frozen. **As part of the Government reforms, which should have long-term effects, there is a new pension reform that envisages making the working period the same for both sexes and raising this period to 65 years of age, something towards which the European Union is also leaning. After 2015 the Swedish pension model is set to be introduced.**

Almost 70 percent of the companies that took part in a Slovenian Chamber of Com-



Workers protested against the very low wages while numerous company directors, advisers and their boards were taking much bigger slices of the pie.

merce survey stated that they are experiencing even greater liquidity problems, and of these as many as 38 percent said that they were tougher in the second half of the year than in the first half. Payment periods have also become very extended in Slovenia, while those that export are having slightly better experiences, with payment periods being extended in 30 percent of these companies. Meanwhile, employee dissatisfaction is start-

ing to threaten Slovenia with a wave of strike action. After several protests during the year by workers at companies that have gone bankrupt and who had not received any pay for some time, even the President of Slovenia, Danilo Türk, was surprised at the strike by workers of the Velenje company Gorenje, while protests were also held by workers from the Mura textile factory in Murska Sobota, which has suffered years of major

Protests were also held by workers from the Mura textile factory in Murska Sobota.



commercial difficulties, for which reason the parent company and three subsidiaries were declared bankrupt, meaning the loss of more than three thousand jobs.

Workers protested against the very low wages while numerous company directors, advisers and their boards were taking much bigger slices of the pie. The question also arose about how many times greater the salary of the CEO should be compared to the lowest wage, and the assessment was that the 30-fold difference prevalent at Gorenje was too high, since employees working full time were getting less than the minimum wage. At Gorenje an agreement was then reached between the employees and the board to raise the lowest wages, which will have far-reaching consequences for the lowest paid workers, who have also been forgotten about during the crisis at numerous other companies.

The Eurobarometer survey conducted in European Union countries at the end of June showed that as in other EU countries, three quarters of Slovenia's population believe that the country's economic situation is bad. Regarding the future situation, however, Slovenians are slightly more optimistic, with more people than elsewhere, in fact 28 percent, stating that the situation would improve, although it is true on the other hand that 40 percent believe it will deteriorate. In the opinion of half of those Slovenians surveyed, the primary concern for the Slovenian Government must be economic growth. On the other hand, as much as two thirds of Slovenians do not believe that they will receive a pension once they have completed their paid up period of work. More than a fifth of those surveyed would prefer to make do with a lower pension but with an unchanged retirement age.

**According to European Commission calculations, in 2008 Slovenia received EUR 113.8 million more in European funding than it paid in, and this represents 0.9 percent of the country's gross income. Slovenia received the largest amount, EUR 235 million, last year from the cohesion funds.** As Mitja Gaspari, Minister for Development and European Affairs, said, Slovenia's acquisition of European funds has greatly improved, but he also expects much from the coming two years, when it should secure more than a billion euros a year from European funds for the period 2007-2013. This is critical fund-

ing, since it covers all Slovenia's development priorities, stressed Gaspari.

**The European Commission also found that Slovenian banks are among the most expensive in the Union, ranking eighth in prices of basic annual costs. As revealed by the recently published report on retail financial services, the cost of a current account for a private customer at banks in Slovenia averages a hundred euros, while in Bulgaria it is EUR 276 and in Italy EUR 253.**

This year's summer tourist season in Slovenia went better than expected, something helped partly by domestic guests and partly by tourists from countries in which the Slovenian Tourist Board had increased its advertising. Up until the end of the year, however, there remain some uncertain months. But it is encouraging that the same number of Czech visitors came as last year. Meanwhile, the Slovenian Tourist Board has never collaborated so much with the commercial sector as this year. Ljubljana also recorded fewer tourists in the first half of this year. It is encouraging, however, that among those that came and stayed overnight in the capital, as many as 80 percent were travelling on business. In the first half of the year Ljubljana recorded approximately 272,000 tourist overnights, which is 16 percent less than in the same period of last year, and is not such a poor result, given that in the first half of last year more people visited Ljubljana because at

The two biggest Slovenian business groups were Petrol and Mercator.



that time Slovenia held the European Union Presidency.

**At the international innovation fair Genius - Europe in Budapest, Slovenian innovators won two grand prix and six gold medals. At this fair, featuring 230 innovations from 23 countries, Slovenia was represented by 10 innovators from seven innovators.**

A grand prix was won each by Damjan Jurjavčič of Idrija and Gregor Pevc of Trzin. Jurjavčič won the prize for a chromograph, an omni-directional indicator that offers a static picture from all sides of a device. Pevc won his prize for a surface water guard, which prevents the failure of electrical communication conduits owing to meteorological phenomena.

Slovenia was visited by the Serbian President Boris Tadić, who was accompanied by a sizeable business delegation. Slovenia is indeed the biggest foreign investor in Serbia, and Slovenian companies in that country make the biggest investments abroad.

By the end of September, the majority of Slovenian companies had published consolidated data on their operations in 2008. According to these data, last year the two biggest Slovenian business groups were Petrol and Mercator, while the biggest net profits were recorded by the Krka and Lek groups, and the biggest groups in terms of employee numbers were Mercator, Gorenje and Slovenian Railways.



photo: Pawel Flato

## Pierre Guimond, Canadian Ambassador to Slovenia

### Dear Sinfo readers,

Canada and Slovenia are quite similar countries in many respects, with coast, mountain and valley areas, and a land mass which is mostly made up of forest and uninhabited regions, although there is, of course, much more of Canada.

Despite the current global crisis, the people of Canada and Slovenia enjoy a steadily increasing level of human development. Through hard work on the land, industrial innovation and the increasingly important knowledge economy, we have built societies that can have confidence in their future. We are open societies, recognising the benefit of welcoming foreigners and meeting the challenges of fighting exclusion and intolerance.

My land is a young country, which has come far since the time of New France. Slovenia is even younger as a state and Canadians remember the struggle for independence, Slovenia's accession to many international bodies and its capable leadership within them. Our Parliament made Canada the first to ratify Slovenia's entry into NATO. I take personal pride in having been associated with the establishment of diplomatic relations in the delegation that met President Milan Kucan in 1993.

The 6,596 kilometres separating Ljubljana from Ottawa does not always makes my country an obvious economic partner of Slovenia but the sophistication of our respective economies translates into high-value trade. For example, 90% of Adria Airways' jets are Canadian-made and turbines built in Slovenia generate hydro-electricity in Québec and British Columbia.

As an important basis for our respective prosperity, the Canadian-European Union trade and investment relationship must become even more

dynamic. To this end, business people in Canada and Europe, as well as the Slovenian Government, have provided their full backing and encouragement to the negotiation of a new Economic Agreement between Canada and the EU. With this agreement, and because of the happy circumstances that see Slovenia at the centre of Europe and Canada as part of the North American market and a bridge to Asia, we look forward to becoming strategic economic partners.

Vancouver and Whistler will host the next Winter Olympiad and Paralympic Games in February and March 2010, creating even more opportunities for Canadians and Slovenians to meet and compete in what both countries hope will be a new "Gold Rush".

I wrote about distance earlier, but political, cultural and other "people- to-people" relationships suffer far less from distance in our globalised world. The recent visit to Slovenia of a delegation from the Canadian Senate, headed by Speaker Noël Kinsella, and the first visit by a Canadian Governor General, in October, bear witness to our shared values and a common vision for the future. Governor General Michäelle Jean, in her contacts with President Türk and Prime Minister Pahor, but also through her intense discussions with Slovenian youth, women and cultural leaders, emphasised the absolute necessity of building bridges between nations and within societies.

This work – building and developing relationships – is my daily task as Canada's Ambassador to Slovenia, resident in neighbouring Hungary. This is most interesting and rewarding work, and with the able assistance of our resident Honorary Consul, Igor Zajec, and our many friends in Slovenia, I am proud of what we achieve.



photo: personal archive

## Tomaž Kunstelj, Slovenian Ambassador to Canada

### "From the linden to the maple"

is the title of a book by the Slovenian writer in Canada Dr. Janez Vintar, which I borrowed in the introduction as an expression of the symbolic connection between Slovenia and Canada through numerous Slovenian compatriots, beginning with the missionary Bishop Baraga, Slovenian miners at Kirkland Lake in the 1930s or the political and economic emigrants immediately after the Second World War, and right up to the 1970s. According to the latest Canadian population census from 2006, those identifying themselves as Slovenians numbered almost 36,000 Canadians, of whom approximately two thirds live in the province of Ontario, while there are also sizeable Slovenian communities in the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Quebec, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. People of Slovenian extraction can in fact be found in all the Canadian provinces, which stretch almost 5,000 km from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Slovenia and Canada are interesting partners which, despite a very different geographical character and scope of natural wealth, are linked together by very similar values related to solving the burning issues of humankind. In less than two decades since the establishing of diplomatic relations, the two countries have developed model cooperation within the framework of the UN, OSCE and the Human Security Network, and Canada has also contributed significantly to the development of the International Trust Fund for Demining (ITF) based in Slovenia, while the two countries have cooperated successfully in peace-keeping operations in Afghanistan and in the Balkans, and they are linked further by their partnership in NATO.

The similarity of values is also confirmed by the fact that the countries have no unresolved issues that might threaten their excellent political cooperation. On the bilateral level an agreement on the mobility of young people is due to be signed, and this will enable the even more intensive exchange of young people and their education and familiarisation with different cultures, while on the multilateral level, during its Presidency of the EU Council, Slovenia helped formulate the principles for negotiation between the EU and Canada on closer economic cooperation. Ever since the establishing of diplomatic relations, bilateral relations have been very lively on the level of parliamentarians, something confirmed by the numerous visits by the speakers of parliaments from both countries, and this year on the invitation of the president of Slovenia's National As-

sembly, the president of the Canadian Senate, Dr. Noël Kinsella, visited Slovenia. Furthermore the foreign or defence ministers of the two countries frequently meet at multilateral events, primarily within the UN, OSCE, the NATO alliance or at EU summit meetings. Slovenian film makers are a regular feature at Canadian festivals, especially in Montreal and at the prestigious Toronto Film Festival, which this year included the film Slovenka [Slovenian Girl] by director Damjan Kozole. In February next year, the attention of sports enthusiasts will be focused for two weeks on the Winter Olympics at Vancouver and Whistler in British Columbia, where we anticipate the appearance of all the best winter sports competitors, including Petra Majdič, Tina Maze, Teja Gregorin and Robi Kranjec.

The Governor General of Canada, Michaëlle Jean, visited Slovenia on the invitation of the President of Slovenia, Dr. Danilo Türk. The visit was actually planned last year, but owing to an internal political crisis the Governor General was forced to cut short her visit to central European countries, and was only able to meet with the Slovenian President very briefly. During her term in office, Michaëlle Jean has been closely involved with the victims of violence and military clashes and with the role of young people in the future of Canada and the whole world. She herself has experienced the bitter path of the refugee, which led her as an 11-year-old girl with her parents from Haiti to Canada. The visit by the Governor General of Canada also serves as a stimulus for the two countries, in addition to the smooth bilateral relations and joint projects for the good of the international community, to foster even more self-confident cooperation in the economic field. This might spur companies on both sides that have developed high technology in the area of using renewable energy sources, nanotechnology, biochemistry and so forth to opt for cooperation, in addition to Bombardier of Canada and Slovenia's ADRIA AIRWAYS, Litostroj, ELAN, Cinkarna and Elektronček.

This highest state visit from Canada should also serve as an encouragement for Slovenians and Canadians to fulfil part of their goals, ambitions and opportunities through bilateral cooperation between the two countries. And why not, if our compatriots themselves assert that through modern means of transport and communication it is really not that far "from the linden to the maple"?



## LIFFE IS A REAL CINEMATIC EXPERIENCE

Polona Prešeren, photo: Liffe archives

Over the last twenty years Slovenia's main film festival has really got under our skin. The curtains rise on the Ljubljana International Film Festival (LIFFe) each November. What was once a festival of art films has slowly become a mainstream festival and an unmissable event in the capital. Expectations are particularly high this year, since this will be the twentieth edition of the festival. LIFFe describes itself as a specialised competitive festival that compensates for the lack of quality films for a demanding audience in the Slovenian cinematic landscape. The festival offers an overview of selected contemporary productions from around the world, provides audiences with information about films and major award winners, presents "generation" films, and educates through film workshops, interactive multimedia projects and a programme of accompanying activities. It also opens the doors to highly distinctive cinematic explorations and creates a dialogue with the radical creative achievements of mass culture. Naturally, there are also awards – with winners chosen both by film critics and by the public. The most significant factor,

however, is not the awards but the impressive attendance of the festival. Tickets are often highly sought-after and need to be bought in advance. "Films like this are a great experience for me," says one regular festival-goer, "because cinemas don't usually show them." The events accompanying the festival also go down well with the festival public. Interviews and round-table discussions with festival guests, directors and artists (usually held after screenings) give visitors a chance to look behind the scenes of film-making. And every year the organisers manage to surprise us with something new – this year with the new Kinobalon festival section for children. LIFFe will also be providing an appropriate context for the second Neighbouring Co-Production Meeting (NCM) involving producers and other cinema professionals from Slovenia and its neighbours Italy, Austria, Hungary and Croatia. And most important: LIFFe takes place from 11 to 22 November in various venues in Ljubljana and Maribor, but Cankarjev Dom remains its base.

### LIFFe sections

**Perspectives:** official competition section for young directors competing for the Mobitel Kingfisher award

**Avant-premières:** major films that have already secured distribution in Slovenia

**Kings and Queens:** works by acclaimed and award-winning masters of modern cinema

**World Film Panorama:** festival favourites from the five continents

**Extravagance:** 'midnight cinema' offering bolder and sometimes provocative content in a variety of genres

**Against the Wind:** filmmakers with a more radical vision who dare to defy prevailing trends

**Focus:** an insight into a currently "hot" national cinema – this year it is the turn of the younger generation of female directors from South America

**Retrospective:** a comprehensive look at the work of one or more important contemporary filmmakers. This year the featured directors are Michael Haneke (Austria) and Olivier Assayas (France)

**Tribute:** a brief, condensed presentation of a filmmaker who has received significant festival and media attention

**Thematic cycle:** dedicated to the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and social changes in socialist countries, with an emphasis on East Germany, Romania, Russia and China

**And for the first time at LIFFe**

**Kinobalon:** a separate programme section for film-goers aged 7 to 14; in conjunction with Kinodvor.

For more information: [www.liffe.si](http://www.liffe.si)

## 12<sup>th</sup> FESTIVAL OF SLOVENIAN FILM IN PORTOROŽ

Albert Kos

Portorož, the famous resort on the Slovenian coast, played host for the first three days of October to the traditional festival of Slovenian film, which encompassed almost an entire year's worth of film production in Slovenia. Over these three days, the festival presented nine feature-length, five medium-length and 25 short films, which is quite an achievement for a small national film industry such as Slovenia's. The films in the competition programme, which was selected by Jože Dolmark, were competing for 17 prizes called vesnas, named after the legendary Slovenian film Vesna from the 1950s, and were judged by a five-member jury comprising film makers of various backgrounds and presided over by the author and screenplay writer Branko Šömen. The festival is organised by the Film Fund of the Republic of Slovenia, which provides state support for Slovenian film production and at the same time works to promote Slovenian film, and in the organisation and implementation of the festival it enjoyed the cooperation of the Society of Slovenian Film Makers. Of the feature films, this year the outright winner, garnering nine of the available vesna prizes, was the film 9:06 by director Igor Šterk, which tells the story of a police inspector investigating a murder and in so doing gradually identifying with the victim. The jury's verdict was that this was the best feature-length film, and it also earned the prize for direction and screenplay (Igor Šterk) and for the best male lead actor, Igor Samobor, while the prize for the best female lead went to Polona Juh in

the film by director Miran Zupanič, igra s pari or couples game. The festival's opening film, Slovenka [Slovenian Girl] by director Damjan Kozole, also stood out as a major achievement, although it won no prizes. There was a relative wealth in the festival selection of short films and films made as part of the course work for young film directors at the Ljubljana Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television (AGRFT). In explaining the awards, which were presented to recipients at the close of the festival by Minister for Culture Majda Širca, the jury drew attention to the considerable imbalance in the appearance of the festival programming, and believed that the choice of films should have been more selective, although at the same time it stated that the majority of the film production shown at the festival was on a European level, despite certain deficiencies in terms of adaptation and screenplay, and a lack of originality in seeking out new themes, although the appearance of new creative names promises the solid further development of cinematographic creativity. One of the central events of the festival was the awarding of the Badjur Prize for life work in film, which this year was awarded to director Mako Sajko in belated recognition of his documentary film work, for at the time his work was produced several decades ago, they caused the displeasure of the then authorities for laying bare certain less pleasant aspects and features of Slovenian society at that time.



*The Tiger Lillies*  
PHOTOGRAPHY © BLUE

## EX PONTO THEATRE FESTIVAL

Jože Osterman, photo: B7ue, Ee

The second half of September brought the 16th edition of the Ex Ponto International Theatre Festival to Ljubljana. Since it was founded, the festival has earned itself a considerable reputation among festivals of small and experimental theatre companies, since every year it manages to attract a number of "hot" plays that have either already won prestigious awards elsewhere or go on to do so after their promotion in Ljubljana. This year once again, the festival, which is organised by the cultural association B-51, presented a number of premieres of works that in many cases come into being as international coproductions and in this way open up interesting reciprocal relations and build bridges, something also emphasised by the festival's name.

Ljubljana hosted 10 productions, several of which attracted considerable attention. To

begin with there was Cassandra from the Montenegrin director Slobodan Milatović. This coproduction by four theatre companies from Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia features individuals talking about a special event that they have experienced and includes strong elements of reality shows as the theatrical aesthetic of the 21st century. Then came the premiere performance of Screech Orchestra by Jelena Rusjan, produced by Ljubljana's Glej Theatre. The notorious Pension Fritzl by director Hubsj Kramer is a radical parody of modern "media pornography", which exploits its victims even more than other forms of manipulation. Director Bojan Jablanovec, well known for this theatrical experiments, attracted particular attention with his piece Via Nova Museum, the premiere of a co-production by Glej Theatre

and Via Negativa, which took first prize at the festival. The piece is a performance and an exhibition rolled into one, where present and past mingle. The project also involves intensive audience participation. Jablanovec has long been exploring this intercommunication between the audience and the theatrical play. This production is perhaps the best result of this exploration. The festival also featured a number of other premieres: Bye Bye Daddy by Aphra Tesla, Knitting written and directed by Barbara Kapelj Osredkar, and Evergreen from director Vlado G. Repnik. All the pieces are exciting and, thanks to the wealth of impressions they left, their value will be even more apparent when they are reprised. Yes, this year's Ex Ponto was a veritable explosion of theatrical innovations!

## EX PONTO

16. MEDNARODNI GLEDALIŠKI FESTIVAL

LJUBLJANA, 15. 9. - 23. 9. 2009



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## SUCCESSFUL EUROPEAN HERITAGE DAYS

Jože Osterman, photo: STA

The annual European Heritage Days which take place at the end of September in the majority of European countries are without a doubt one of the most successful projects of the Council of Europe. Since Slovenia is holding the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the oldest international organisation working towards European integration, in the second half of the year, it has naturally devoted maximum attention to this year's edition of this pan-European event. The pinnacle of these efforts is of course the second European Heritage Forum, a joint project of the Council of Europe and the European Commission organised by the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia with the support of the Ministry of Culture. This year the Forum focused its attention on the theme of heritage, creativity and innovation, touching very specifically and precisely on the issue of the promotion of cultural heritage, which should be becoming an increasingly important element in the life of every person living in Europe. Numerous experts from practically every country in Europe presented their own experiences in this field and considered possible new ways by which heritage could cross over more effectively into the everyday life of Europe. One focus of attention was, of course, the possible role of the media in this process. Some major promotional

projects were presented, as an illustration of the great importance and success of this role. Examples included a British TV series on the heritage of the sea, a Belgian TV series on the theme of cultural tourism and a German series on world heritage under the aegis of UNESCO. Also presented were direct methods of guiding museum visitors: through a virtual museum of Polish history, the Tower of London, Cluny Abbey and the urban heritage of the Slovenian cities of Koper, Ljubljana and Ptuj. We can safely say that this was the most important gathering of its kind ever held in Slovenia.

Naturally, events forming part of the European Heritage Days also took place elsewhere: in practically all Slovenian institutions and localities with significant cultural heritage. Museums opened their doors to visitors, especially on Saturday 3 October, and in Ljubljana, Bistra, Kranj, Piran and Idrija, among other locations, visitors were able to view specially prepared displays or enjoy guided tours of the museum collections. In the Goričko region, a new permanent exhibition entitled Gornja Lendava Castle and its Place in Time was opened. It appears that, of all cultural fields, museum staff are particularly successful in their educational work, and for this reason in recent years they have been seeing a constantly and rapidly increasing number of visitors.



## EXHIBITION IN STRASBOURG: “THE LJUBLJANA PROCESS – REHABILITATING OUR COMMON HERITAGE”

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CULTURAL HERITAGE IN LJUBLJANA

In October, as part of the programme of its Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Slovenia is presenting itself in Strasbourg with two exhibitions: a selection of photographs by young photo-reporters from Slovenia's Roma community entitled “*You See Me – I See You: Cultural Diversity Through Rom Eyes*” and an exhibition entitled “**The Ljubljana Process – Rehabilitating our Common Heritage**”, which is the fruit of one of the most successful and high-profile projects in South-East Europe, the joint Council of Europe and European Commission project called the “Integrated Rehabilitation Project Plan/Survey on Architectural and Archaeological Heritage (IRRP/SAAH)”.

The cultural heritage exhibition was opened in Strasbourg on 1 October by the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Dr Danilo Türk. In his speech he emphasised

the importance of the rehabilitation of monuments in the Western Balkans, which goes beyond the framework of cultural, artistic and historical value, and contributes to a rapprochement and a re-establishing of mutual trust and intercultural dialogue among the inhabitants and communities of the region, particularly those in areas affected by war and military conflicts.

Slovenia's Minister of Culture, Majda Širca, also talked about the importance of intercultural dialogue and the rehabilitation of monuments in South East-Europe, and about the need to return life to them. She also drew attention to the great danger of vulgarisation of cultural heritage as a result of “pilgrimages” in the domain of cultural tourism. “Natural and cultural monuments are part of the genetic make-up of every nation, and we must therefore handle them with particular care and never be passive towards them,” added the minister, inviting all present to attend the international conference with the same title, “**The Ljubljana Process – Rehabilitation of our Common Heritage**”, which will take

place in Ljubljana on 6 and 7 November. Through the organisation of this conference, Slovenia hopes to contribute to the even greater success of this project, with the help of which the partner countries have developed their own national heritage policies and established a successful model of regional cooperation.

The other speakers at the opening of the exhibition, who spoke about the importance of the Ljubljana Process project, which has also contributed in many ways to improving the sustainable social and economic development of local communities in this part of Europe, were Lluís Maria de Puig, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Gabriella Battaini-Dragnoni, the Director General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport and Coordinator for Intercultural Dialogue of the Council of Europe, and Luisella Pavan-Woolfe, the Head of the European Commission Delegation to the Council of Europe.

Alenka Ivančič, photo: Tine Rus



## NASA ASTRONAUT VISITS SLOVENIA

Jože Osterman, photo: STA



At the end of September, during the 15th Festival of Science, Slovenia welcomed a very interesting guest: Sunita L. Williams, a US astronaut of Indian and Slovenian descent. Commander Williams was selected by NASA for astronaut training ten years ago. In 2006 and 2007 she spent over six months (195 days) aboard the International Space Station (having been launched by the Discovery space shuttle), logging over 29 hours of spacewalks.

Sunita attracted a great deal of attention in Slovenia. She particularly enjoyed the visit to the house of her ancestors in Leše near Tržič, which is where her grandmother comes from. She was welcomed by a large crowd of local people, including numerous young space enthusiasts, proud that a young woman with roots in their part of the world has had such a glittering professional career. Sunita was clearly touched by their attention and ended up spending a fine Saturday afternoon with them, which was not originally part of the programme...

Young people had another opportunity to meet the astronaut and one of her NASA colleagues, the physicist Dušan Petrač, at a special event held during the Festival of Science. Commander Williams was also received by the defence minister Ljubica Jelušič.



Louis Adamič at the launch of the ship Nikola Tesla in New York



Louis Adamič with a Yugoslav colonel in 1945 during the Slovenian Days in Cleveland

## NEW CONFIRMATIONS OF OLD VIEWS: LOUIS ADAMIC

Janja Žitnik Serafin, photo: personal archive

Last year and this year a number of major events (for the most part organised by the Slovenian Emigrant Association and the Academy of Sciences and Arts) in Slovenia celebrated the 110th anniversary of the birth of perhaps indeed “on the international scale probably the best known Slovenian”, as was put at one of the round tables by the famous historian Dr. Jože Pirjevec.

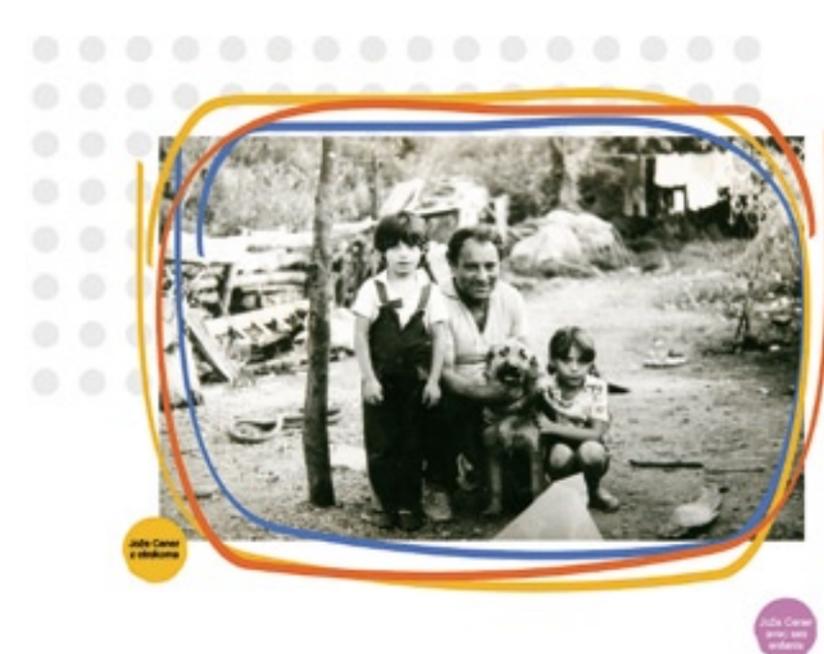
The writer, editor and social critic Louis Adamič (1898–1951), born near Grosuplje just outside Ljubljana, is one of the still frequently quoted forefathers of American multiculturalism, a forerunner of modern concepts of equal integration of immigrants and of developing intercultural awareness. The incisiveness of his work gave the writer national distinction, and he was a guest of Presidents Roosevelt and Truman, he was selected for the Book of the Month Club, and he received a wide variety of prizes, awards and scholarships, including the Anisfield Prize for the best work on racial issues in the modern world. He enjoyed the private and public support of such acclaimed literary figures as Upton Sinclair, Sinclair Lewis, H. L. Mencken, Sherwood Anderson and F. Scott Fitzgerald. His works, which earned him an honorary doctorate from Temple University in Philadelphia

and membership of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, were chosen for the shelves of the White House library, and they made their way into the collection of the best American prose, into textbooks at some twenty American colleges, into literature distributed to American soldiers upon the entry of the USA into the Second World War, and into those works that enjoyed continuous republication, reprinting and translation into numerous languages.

Current scholars of Adamič have found that his works on cultural diversity, immigrant issues and social conditions in a multiethnic area are of fundamental importance for the current development of strategies in the area of American cultural pluralism. The writer provided substance for his ideas in this field through numerous study trips, visits to archives and libraries, field research, mass surveys and in-depth interviews, and he acquainted the public with his findings through countless articles, lecture tours, radio broadcasts and through his books on immigration: *Laughing in the Jungle*, *Grandsons*, *My America*, *From Many Lands*, *Two-Way Passage*, *What's Your Name?* and *A Nation of Nations*, and also as a founder and editor of the magazine *Common Ground*, the official publication of the Common Council

for American Unity, which strove for intercultural education through the inclusion of immigrant content in public education; and in the final years of his life especially as editor of nine books in the *Peoples of America Series*. His works raise still salient issues concerning relations between immigrants and the majority society. Adamič saw the tolerance of the majority society towards immigrants as barely concealed contempt, based on stereotypes and prejudices. In place of tolerance, he called for sincere acceptance and mature respect of differences. He was committed to the creation of a nation that would draw its energy precisely from the dynamic interaction of internal intercultural influences.

He was therefore a forerunner of the most incisive modern social critics, who demand recognition and an equal role for marginalized groups, without demonising the predominant culture. Only in this way can the members of multiethnic societies develop a multicultural national identity and intercultural awareness, since a lack of the former and latter can seriously threaten the fulfilment of certain important human rights, and consequently social stability and the internal security of any country.



## YOU SEE ME, I SEE YOU: CULTURAL DIVERSITY FROM THE ROMA VIEWPOINT

Alenka Ivančič, photo: Council of Europe

At the end of September the permanent representative of Slovenia to the Council of Europe, and at the same time the deputy chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, ambassador Marjetica Bole, opened an exhibition in the Palace of Europe in Strasbourg entitled “Vidiš me, vidim te: kulturna raznolikost skozi romski pogled” [You see me, I see you: cultural diversity from the Roma viewpoint].

The exhibition, which is a result of the project of the same name, studies and addresses the issue of the public image and visibility of Roma people. In its own way it studies the role of photography in the clash with negative images and stereotypes of Roma, and explores the possibilities offered precisely by photography for changing the inconsiderate views of Roma identity and culture.

The project was organised by the Slovenian Ethnographic Museum and the Faculty of Arts of Ljubljana University, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Government Communication Office and the Ministry of Culture. The exhibition was opened until 15 October.

You can find more on the project and exhibition at [www.mzz.gov.si/coe](http://www.mzz.gov.si/coe)



## THE BILATERAL FOKUS IS BACK IN TOWN

Vesna Žarkovič, photo: Michele Drascek

October is the month in which the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands traditionally celebrates the relationship between the Netherlands and Slovenia. As such, the celebration, Bilateral Fokus, has also been organised for this year.

The first Bilateral Fokus was held in 2001. The concept behind it was and still is the need to highlight, once a year, relations between the Netherlands and Slovenia in all aspects. There is great interest, both in Slovenia and in the Netherlands, in each other's cultural expressions. In the course of time, the initiative for joint events has increasingly originated from Slovenian organisations. The embassy now has a long-lasting history of cooperation with many Slovenian partner organisations. Bilateral Fokus has become a tradition which is known by more and more Slovenians every year.

This year's Bilateral Fokus has "innovation" as its central theme. Most of the events are therefore innovative in one way or another. A random selection of events during Bilateral

Fokus: an exhibition of Dutch and Slovenian contemporary jewellery by designers from the Netherlands and Slovenia, a screening of short films by young cineasts from Slovenia and the Netherlands, and Dutch experts teaching in courses at the Centre for Excellence in Finance on effective tax administration and insurance supervision. In addition, the Netherlands Ambassador for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Stella Ronner-Grubacic, will speak during the international conference "Slovenian Development Days", Paul van den Heuvel from Utrecht University will lecture on the image of the Netherlands as part of the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Dutch Language and Culture Department of the University of Ljubljana, and there will be the traditional closing concert with young musical talent from the Netherlands and Slovenia who have come together as one band for the occasion.

Vesna Žarkovič, photo: Mateja Jordovič Potočnik

# BOOK IN A BOX

Alenka Rovan: innovators have to struggle with often being ahead of the times



Igor Evgen Bergant, photo Aleš Fevzer

## BEST KEPT SECRETS

For this reason innovators have to be with the times and not ahead of them, believes designer Alenka Rován, who in May this year at the innovation fair for women in Seoul (South Korea) received the gold medal for a new form of book, the “book in a box”. Its pages are set in a block and inserted into a specially designed box, which requires no adhesive for assembly. At the same time the book is not bound, but just stuck with adhesive. The contents are extracted from the box with an attached ribbon.

For the moment the idea has not yet come of age in practice, in the sense that scores of publishers and printers are “grabbing” at it, but this kind of binding could generate considerable savings. During the innovation fair in Seoul, the new form of book was of great interest to one of South Korea’s book publishers.

Alenka Rován says that she has been obsessed with books for a long time, and her favourite working material is paper. She regards a book as a living being, as something that must be in constant function, in movement and use, and not primarily as “decoration” on a bookshelf. And what motivated her towards such an innovation? The constant idea of a book that would be made in a different way from the usual one. She took the first step in this direction with a special design of Hesse’s book *Francis of Assisi* and *Game with Little Flowers*. She designed the content as four books, where she used spiral binding, and all four books were placed in

a special box. This was a book collector’s edition that was not exactly cheap. In this she tried out designing with various materials – including paper, ceramics and leather. She started working on the concept at the end of 2006, when her friend, poet David Šušel, prompted her to design a new kind of book for his collection of poetry. The poet knew that she “liked working with boxes”, so he suggested that she think about a box-book.

A few months after the poet’s order, a new book was created, this being a kind of “book in packaging”. Traditional packaging involved the protection of the content, and there was something very similar about this book. The printed sheets are the content, and the box is the wrapping. Ms. Rován had to design a box best suited for “storing” the book and for ease of handling.

In any event, handling the “new book” is very simple. The pages open out better than a traditionally bound book. Individual pages can be pulled out without showing any marks or spoiling the outward appearance of the book. This is especially important for a variety of utilitarian, practical contents, for instance various manuals, for cooking and other tips, and also for poetry collections, since individual poems can be taken out separately and individual pages can be passed around from reader to reader. “This is a book that you can draw from any way you like, while you can also add pages,” says Alenka Rován, pointing out the vari-

ous practical possibilities.

Alenka Rován (1968) from Kočevje studied between 1987–1995 and graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Ljubljana. To date she has created a number of innovative products in the design field, especially in packaging. She is increasingly drawn to ecological design.

This year’s innovation fair in Seoul was being held for the second time. It involved the participation of 300 women innovators from 31 countries. In addition to the gold medal, Alenka Rován received a special commendation for creative innovation from the Korean intellectual property office. Two other Slovenian women participated in the innovation fair. Ana Hafner won a silver medal for her stocking clip, while Dr. Marinka Vovk won a bronze for a waste minimisation system. Is there any difference between male and female innovators? “Women are more practical,” believes Rován.

The “new book” is especially suited to various pocket editions, children’s literature and art, drawing books, various practical manuals, tourist literature, sets of postcards and so forth.

“This is a book for all situations – for the car, train, beach, bed, you can carry it around, you can chuck it around without fear of crumpling it or somehow damaging it,” says Alenka Rován. It is “usable goods” and not something that has to be handled with gloves. Ms Rován believes of course that the “book in a box” is just the beginning.

Many of the foreign personalities I happen to meet in my professional life proudly confess that they have discovered Slovenia to be one of Europe’s most beautiful and best kept secrets. It’s fine to hear such a compliment, and I’m sure they mean it in all sincerity. But the fact is that my country still remains an unexplored enigma to almost everyone else. There may be an explanation for that, which goes even beyond the usual ones: the size of the country, squeezed between Italy and Hungary as well as Austria and Croatia, with a total population of an okrug in Moscow. And it goes even further. It is the name of Slovenia which – due to its similarity to Slovakia and the Croatian historical province of Slavonia – often causes confusion, although Slovenia doesn’t even share an inch of a common border, neither Slovakia nor Slavonia. Plus, there is another problem – the flag: the horizontal white, blue and red stripes, equivalent to the present Russian flag, are shared by both Slovenia and Slovakia, with the addition of the coat-of-arms. Slovenia has a white mountain (Mt. Triglav) on it, whereas the Slovaks have put a white cross onto the blue (Tatra) mountain. So, who would blame an outsider for being confused, especially looking at the banners from a distance?

Therefore it comes as no surprise that Slovenians have developed a sort of obsession when it comes to promoting their own country in order to distinguish it, at least from Slovakia. In these efforts, sports is widely considered the most powerful vehicle. And rightly so. It’s a competition, a head-to-head struggle, in which the undesired similarities quickly and clearly get overshadowed by striking differences.

So, the situation regarding the international comprehension of Slovenian originality would be much worse if there were no sporting events. Who on Earth could then claim that the reigning Olympic and World Cham-

pion in the hammer throw, Primož Kozmus, originates from Slovakia when he surpasses his mighty Slovak opponent Libor Charfreitag? The only problem could be a logical perception by some visitors coming to Slovenia that the hammer throw is in fact a national sport here, that hammers fly all over the country and that this would represent a persistent danger for tourists wandering around. Well, to claim it again, it isn’t. Kozmus is actually an exception and proof that small nations can profit from nurturing their natural talents better than bigger nations (such as five million Slovaks). Everybody gets more than one chance throughout their careers, and young athletes are treated far more preciously than in societies in which brutal competition sorts out gifted young people in the (too) early stages. But still, the widespread confusion may not end with Kozmus, who is a master in an individual sport. In team sports, where matches of national squads are often understood as clashes between countries, the divisions are far more visible. In the early days of Slovenian independence, it was difficult to persuade outsiders that Slovenia is in fact no longer part of the disintegrated Yugoslavia, until Slovenia and Yugoslavia (then comprising only Serbia and Montenegro) met at the European football championship in Belgium and the Netherlands in 2000. There, international fans could not be mistaken. Oh, so Slovenia really is something different... and, blimey, what a match (underdog Slovenia led 3-0 in the second half and later saved a 3-3 draw against a ten-men Yugoslav team)!

But Slovakia? One (in Slovenia) could confess that sometimes mistakes were made in favour of our country, especially when the world-class Slovak national ice hockey team was wrongly regarded as Slovenian, although Slovenia is a member of the elite group in world championships and proudly boasts of the promising LA Kings player Anže Kopitar in the NHL.

But this is not more than an exception. Basketball?! Do Slovaks play basketball at all? In any case, Slovenia is a force in basketball. This year in September, the men’s team narrowly missed a medal, even without three of its five NBA players, in Poland (where one of two participating the event was injured most of the time). The public support of the team was great, with more than two thousand fans travelling from Slovenia to Poland and completely drowning out the fans from the other country. Can they shout like this in Slovakia? Well, it’s proven – they can’t. When Slovenia met Slovakia this October in the decisive qualification match for the 2010 World Cup in football in Bratislava (the capital of Slovakia, of course), almost three thousand Slovenian fans completely outshouted the 20,000 and more rigid Slovak hosts. This lesson of spirited support was not the only Slovenian contribution to the game. Slovenia won the match 2-0 and was later denied the direct qualification for the World Cup in South Africa only because Slovakia was able to win in Poland (by an own goal of a Polish defender in a snow storm). It’s a pity and towering injustice, but now at least everybody in the world knows that Slovenia trounces Slovakia in football (the match in Slovenia was, of course, won by Slovenians).

But the Slovenians are far from being frustrated, because in November there comes another chance to catch the glory and the attention (of others) to spot the difference. Slovenia will play Russia in the play-off for a still vacant place in the football World Cup. It will be obvious: of the two more or less similar flags in the stadium, the Slovenian flag is the one with the coat-of-arms. The Russians have their master manager Guus Hiddink (a Dutch import, of course), but there will be no hiding on the Slovenian side. The motivation to struggle through yet another misunderstanding will be huge, perhaps even greater than Russia itself.

Text and photo: Polona Prešeren

# I FEEL SLOVENIA AT WEMBLEY

The fifth of September was an important day for Slovenian football – Slovenia's national team played a friendly against England. The match, which was played at Wembley Stadium in London, was a real treat for Slovenia fans. And because sport brings people together more than anything else, why not connect it with the promotion of Slovenia?

Although the match was a friendly, it attracted a good deal of attention in both countries and drew a crowd of 70,000 – including over 2,000 from Slovenia. Although the match ended with a deserved 2-1 victory for England, it did not matter. The real winners were the Slovenian supporters – well-known for their sporting behaviour – who had travelled to London specially for this match.

Some year ago, when Slovenia's football team rose like a phoenix from the ashes under the leadership of coach Srečko Katanec and began to write their footballing fairy tale, the sporting behaviour and enthusiasm of the Slovenian supporters were an example to sports fans all over the world. They flooded into the Netherlands and Belgium for Euro 2000, and two years later inundated South Korea for the World Cup. Their famous "Kdor ne skače, ni Sloven'c!" (Whoever doesn't jump isn't a Slovenian!) is still the main

supporters' chant today. At Wembley the supporters wore T-shirts with the slogan "I feel Slovenia" donated by the Government Communication Office.

"Because Slovenian fans are known for their sporting attitude, we at the Government Communication Office decided to give all fans travelling to London an 'I feel Slovenia' T-shirt," explained Veronika Stabej, the Office's director. "We believe that sports events are an excellent opportunity to promote the country."

This promotional action is part of the marketing of the national "I feel Slovenia" brand in the field of sport. An important element of the national brand comes from the enthusiasm that Slovenians feel for sport, whether cheering on our sportsmen and sportswomen or taking part in recreational sports – something which 40% of Slovenians do, according to statistics.

It is no surprise that Slovenians have skied from places where no-one has ever skied before, climbed where no-one has ever climbed, and swum distances and that no-one has ever swum. Even the distances covered on bicycles are record-breaking. Slovenians may not overcome elementary natural laws and limits, but they do discover them.



Text and photo: STA

# KAYAKER KAUZER WINS GOLD IN WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

Kayaker Peter Kauzer won Slovenia a golden medal in the kayak single class at the White Water World Championships in Seu d'Urgell, Spain, on 13 September. He beat Borisa Neveu of France by more than two and Spain's Carles Juanmarti by more than three seconds.

Kauzer, who placed 13th at the same event at the 2008 Olympics, crowned an exceptional season, becoming the first Slovenian world champion in a single race and winning the country the first slalom medal after 2002.

"I don't know what to say! I'm so happy! I have finally managed to do a Worlds race the way I'd wanted," said Kauzer, who believes it will be very hard to repeat such a good season.

"But I'll do my best," added Kauzer, whose medal is a birthday present to himself. He turned 26 on Tuesday.

However, the gold was not the only medal for Slovenia at the Seu d'Urgell Worlds. Slalom canoeists Luka Bozic and Saso Taljat won bronze in the double event earlier in the day.

The last time Slovenia won a medal in this class was in 1963, when Natan and Dare Bernot won silver for Yugoslavia.

Having performed well throughout the season, Bozic and Taljat went to Spain hoping to get into the finals. Not even the greatest optimists dared to expect a medal. "This is a dream result," said Bozic, explaining that he and Taljat had been working hard all the season, doing two training sessions day.

Taljat said: "This is a major encouragement, and we'll do everything to achieve a very good result also next year in Tacen." The 2010 Slalom World Championships will be held in Slovenia's Tacen.

The gold and silver went to Slovakia's Peter and Pavol Hochschorner; and Peter in Ladislav Skantar.



# slovenian delights

Polona Prešeren, photo: Tomo Jeseničnik

## UPPER SAVINJA VALLEY

For many people the valleys surrounding the upper reaches of the Savinja River are among the most beautiful in Slovenia. Crowned with the marvellous peaks of the Savinja Alps, they seem so far from the crowds, yet close to the cities and easily accessible. The Savinja River lends an unmistakable stamp to this area, while opening up before true romantics are the valley of Logarska Dolina, plus Matkov Kot and Robanov Kot. Only three roads lead to the Upper Savinja Valley: one from the direction of Celje, the other from Völkermarkt (Velikovec) in Austria along a picturesque mountain road over the Pavlič Saddle, which then descends into Logarska Dolina. There is another one from Ljubljana via Kamnik and Kranjski rak to Podvolovljek, from there it is an easy access to all three valleys.

Nature lovers will be delighted by all the possibilities in this area for activities in the natural world. Hiking across the wonderful valleys and mountain pastures, cycling, horse riding, exploring caves, angling and more. On Mt. Olševa it is possible to walk

in the footsteps of early humans that lived here in prehistoric times. By the Rinka waterfall at the top of the Logarska Dolina valley you can recharge your body's batteries, while fishing enthusiasts will no doubt be delighted to dip their hooks in the sparkling rapids and pools of the crystal clear Savinja (fish like brook trout, pike, pike perch, sheatfish, carp, roach, bass, zelenka, carp). The valleys, which cut deep into the Savinja Alps and create a fascinating terrain, have for centuries represented a living environment and source of survival for local people. Farm tourism is now extremely well developed here. Some of the homesteads that offer this service are in the safe shelter of the hills in the valleys, yet there are homesteads that comprise a real high-mountain kingdom of their own, lying on slopes well above 1,000 metres. These tourist farms are surrounded by high-mountain meadows, pastures and unspoiled forests that offer a wealth of medicinal herbs and fruits of the forest. You can try them in the form of teas and juices or added to spirits.

## Culinary specialities

The general character of the Savinja Valley cuisine is tied to the gastronomic heritage of this part of Slovenia, which in turn is frequently fused with modern specialities, with new culinary links and with specialities of Central European cuisine. The undoubted masterpiece and culinary celebrity of the Savinja Valley is zgornejesavinjski želodec or (Stuffed Pig's Stomach) – a meat and bacon-filled pig's stomach or bladder. This is a dried meat product made from the highest-quality pork and bacon.

As the Slovenian ethnologist Dr. Janez Bogataj points out, the recipe for making the stomach in this area is handed down from generation to generation. In all probability people started making it before the 19th century, and its production is tied to the autonomous self-sufficiency of the isolated hill farms. "Alongside the stuffing and thorough preparation of stomachs, in other words the casing, the drying of the Stuffed Pig's Stomach is one of its peculiarities. Indeed for this procedure the favourable conditions of the sub-Alpine climate and the microclimates in the rooms where the stomachs are dried play a very important part. In the past these rooms were primarily wooden granaries where other meat products and grain were stored, along with fruit must in the lower masonry-built storey", writes Dr. Bogataj. Sometimes the stomach only appeared on the table for special occasions, while today of course this is not the case, and this masterpiece is now also subject to larger

production, though still made according to traditional recipe. The process of making the stomach together with its offer make an attribution to sustainable tourism in this region. Without doubt, however, it has its own group of enthusiastic adherents, and several stories revolve around this. These include the story that the English King George VI was so enamoured of the stomachs that they had to be sent from time to time to the English court. Today this product is protected with a geographical designation of origin. And how is it served? Cut into thin slices on your favourite type of bread. You can also have it with some kind of side dish, although that might be redundant.

Local specialities also include solčavski sirnek, a kind of cottage cheese from skimmed milk to which is added cumin and salt, then it is doused with sour cream and matured in a pot to acquire a slightly piquant flavour. Solčavski sirnek is excellent spread on black bread, while some enjoy it with apples or marmalade, and in the home it is frequently used to prepare thick creamy soups or sirnica, a spicy grated cheese soup. Just as you can find mohant in Bohinj, in the Savinja Valley you will find móhovt, a kind of semi-cured, salted and spiced cottage cheese. It is an excellent spread or side dish for local meat products.

The local specialities also include ajdnek, which is slightly reminiscent of potica cake. This is a folded cake comprising three layers of soft, fluid, leavened buckwheat dough poured into a baking tin, sprinkled with ground nuts and drizzled with honey, this procedure being repeated three times. Especially during pig slaughter times there is a very popular soup addition in the form

of dumplings known as firuš. The old livestock herder dishes include ubrnjenik. This is a flour-based dish in the form of dumplings, and the recipe calls for wheat, buckwheat and maize flour.

Something special is the stand-alone dish that is ideal as a good breakfast, and is called zdrkanka, as well as ujenik or polžkova godlja, "spiral pudding". The basic ingredient is crushed wheat berries cooked in milk and buttered. You can also add prunes and cinnamon to taste.

## Tourist farms

Tourist farms are dotted throughout Slovenia – some of them are close to cities, others are far from the urban crowds and everyday stress, amid greenery and tranquillity, where guests can enjoy very special holidays in close contact with nature and people. They can get to know the everyday life, folk culture and wisdom, as well as the customs and. And there are indeed plenty of tourist farms in the Upper Savinja Valley. Some of them are superbly arranged and offer authentic local features. They prepare the more widely known meat, vegetable, flour and game dishes, which are distinguished by natural ingredients and faithful preparation based on excellent culinary skills. The Savinja Valley also has its central and lower parts, but their cuisine differs from the specialities in the upper area, which represents an independent gastronomic region of Slovenia. And when is the best time to visit? Any time! It is always fascinating and fun on the farm. And in the Savinja Valley, even we Slovenians are lost for words.

## PENZION RADUHA

If the favourite mountain among hikers and mountaineers is Raduha, at 2,062 metres the highest peak in this part of Slovenia, the Raduha Guest House in Luče is the place where even the most spoilt upstarts will be satisfied. Martina Breznik, the proprietor of Raduha Guest House, swears by tradition and the addition of new features and modern guidelines. As she says, they offer dishes that are traditionally from the Upper Savinja Valley – fish from the surrounding water courses, as well as lamb and game

– but they keep up with culinary trends and are adapting to the modern traveller. Martina Breznik therefore recommends smoked trout pâté with fennel or trout made in some other way, game, nettle soup and the house desserts.

They offer food accompanied by wine to complete the gastronomic experience. The guest house is distinguished by exceptional hospitality, and their cuisine is a combination of tradition and originality tied to keeping up with and seeking out

new ideas and tastes that lend their range of dishes an almost unmatched added value. At Raduha they make dishes according with slow food endeavours and visitor can luxuriate in exceptional food.

Raduha is a guest house, so guests can also stay there. It is a house with a tradition, having opened its doors back in 1875, while today it is now the fourth generation that is maintaining the reputation of this establishment.

More information: [www.raduha.com](http://www.raduha.com)



### **Firuš (Soup Dumplings)**

1. First cook a broth of pork bones (backbone) and vegetables (carrots, kohlrabi, onion, parsley and a little celery).
2. Strain the soup, salt and bring to the boil.
3. In the boiling liquid cook dumplings of half buckwheat and half wheat flour and pork blood.
4. The soup should boil for 20 minutes, then sour it with cider vinegar.

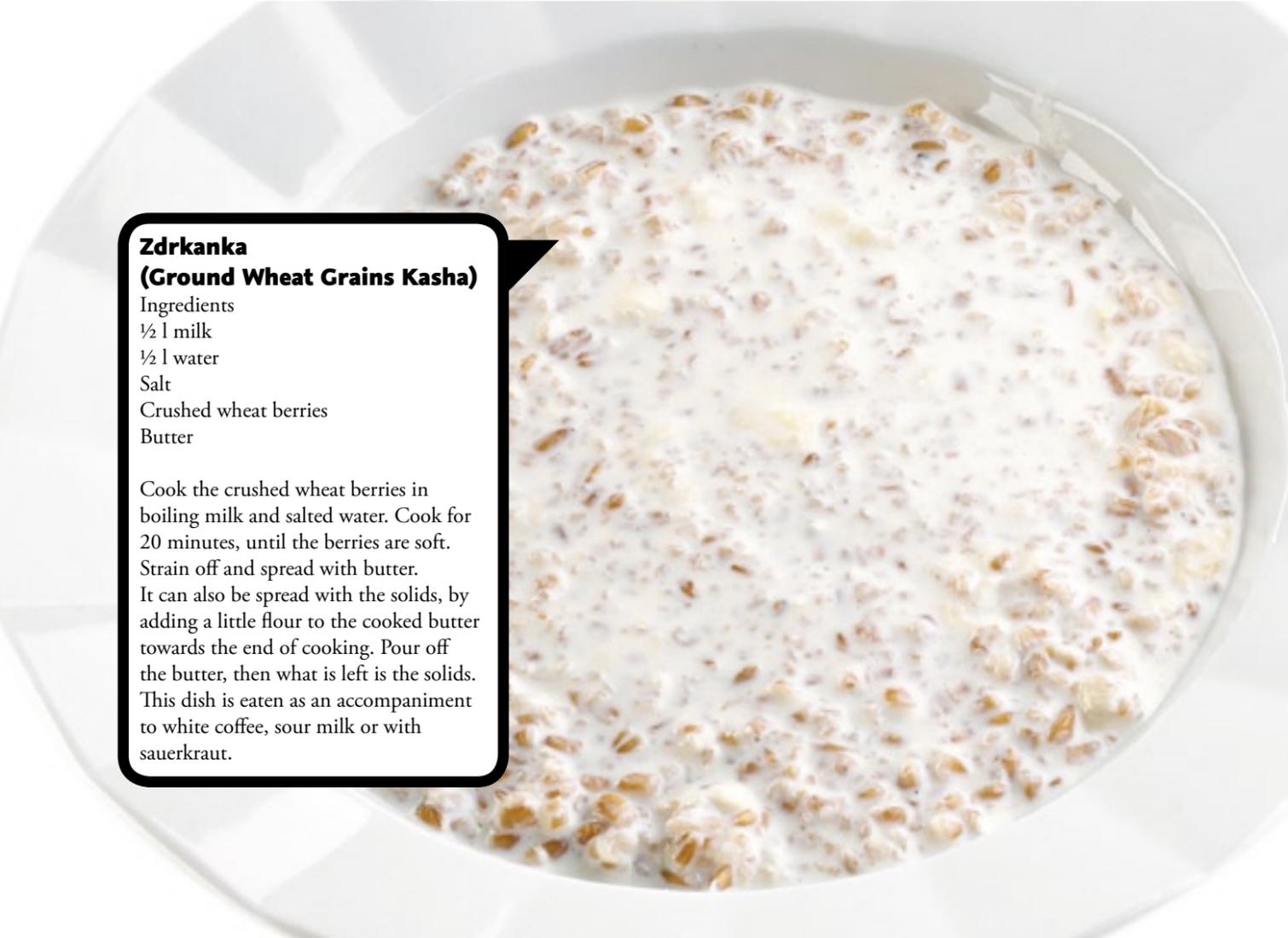
## *slovenian delights*

### **Ubrnjenik (Rich Dumpling)**

#### Ingredients

- 20 dag buckwheat flour
- 15 dag wheat flour
- 20 dag raw butter
- 2 dl rich cream
- 5 dl milk

1. Roast flour until completely dry.
2. Mix cream with raw butter in a separate skillet. Season with salt and bring to boil.
3. Bring milk to boil in separate skillet.
4. Pour scalded cream gradually on roasted flour while stirring continuously. Add hot milk if necessary. Stir until you obtain thick and smooth paste.
5. Stir well. Bring to boil. Shape 1 big dumpling or several small balls. Serve with coffee with milk, sour milk, or tea. This dish can be served cold as well.



### **Zdrkanka (Ground Wheat Grains Kasha)**

#### Ingredients

- ½ l milk
- ½ l water
- Salt
- Crushed wheat berries
- Butter

Cook the crushed wheat berries in boiling milk and salted water. Cook for 20 minutes, until the berries are soft. Strain off and spread with butter. It can also be spread with the solids, by adding a little flour to the cooked butter towards the end of cooking. Pour off the butter, then what is left is the solids. This dish is eaten as an accompaniment to white coffee, sour milk or with sauerkraut.

### **Ajdnek (Folded Cake)**

#### Dough

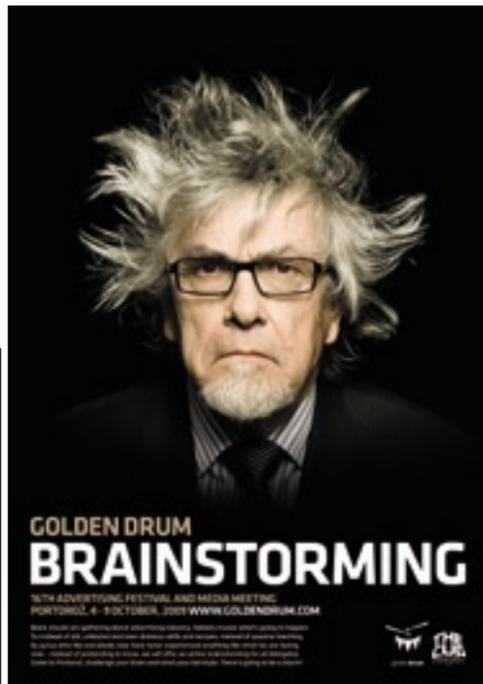
- 0.5 kg buckwheat flour
- 0.5 l salted boiling water
- 0.5 kg wheat flour
- 4–6 dg yeast
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- Milk as required

#### Filling

- 0.5 kg finely ground walnuts
- ¼ l honey
- Vanilla sugar
- Cinnamon

1. Steam the buckwheat flour, stir well, chill and then add the wheat flour, risen yeast and warm milk as necessary.
2. Out of this knead a soft dough that should rise.
3. Ladle a layer of dough into a greased baking tin.
4. Sprinkle the spread dough thickly with nuts, drizzle on warmed honey and sprinkle with cinnamon and vanilla sugar. Sugar can be used instead of honey.
5. Cover the layer of nuts with a second layer of dough and repeat the entire process at least three times. On the top should be a layer of dough.
6. The cake should rise, then it is baked.





Polona Prešeren, photo: Golden Drum Festival

# GOLDEN DRUM STILL A FESTIVAL WITH AN IMAGE

Sixteen years ago, when the idea of a festival to present advertising achievements in the region was first thought up, no-one expected it to become what it is today. An advertising festival with soul and substance and an event not to be missed. Although Golden Drum, like other festivals, has been affected by the recession and for the first time this year has failed to break its own record in terms of entries and participants, it remains the biggest and most prominent festival in the region stretching from Trieste to Vladivostok and from Helsinki to Beirut.

The festival has managed to bring together the advertising, media and (once again) PR communities in this part of the world. The idea of the New Europe, which gives the festival its regional stamp, has been interpreted fairly liberally, and over the years the festival has grown beyond its basic (geographical) limits. Many ties of friendship and of business have been forged over the years. And if we take into account the fact that the region brings together 400 million people, then it becomes clear just how important this market is, and how much more important are

the ties between those people. Today those attending the festival – some have been coming for years – know who is who, and cooperation is therefore easier. The point of the festival, however, lies in the exchange of ideas and creative interflow.

## The festival's president, Jure Apih

The festival's president, Jure Apih, is the doyen of Slovenian advertising and the driving force behind the gatherings in Portorož since the festival began sixteen years ago. He is the father of the festival, and until now has watched it go from strength to strength. Now, however, with the festival in its teens, certain changes have occurred. "The festival has reached maturity at a very unfortunate moment," says Apih, with reference to this year's situation. "We have been growing for 15 years and if the situation were normal we would have continued to grow this year. So many unpredictable things have happened that right now the festival is caught in a kind of snare – it is dependent on its environment, on what is happening in the environment, and at the moment dramatic things are happening. I believe that we are in a phase where we will have to rethink things from the beginning and make some structural changes, although for the moment it is not clear what these will be. In the next phase this will be our key preoccupation."

## Situation: crisis

This was also the focus of most of the debates – almost all the discussion was about the crisis and how to find a way out of it. Advertising is a function of the economy and therefore the situation in advertising cannot be very different from the situation in the economy. From what is happening in the economy, so that it can start to reorganise itself in some way. And this is the point around which everything now revolves. The majority of participants agreed that it is difficult to predict the path that the advertising industry will take in the future. Jure Apih agrees with this, and adds that going nowhere is better than going in the wrong direction. Naturally, the current situation can also provide some useful experience.

The connection between the economy and advertising is a very strong one. And conditions are dramatic. This may sound somewhat dramatic in itself, but if you want to clarify things, you have to exaggerate a little, says Apih. "We can continue to work as we have been doing up to now, and for a while that will be all right. But over time, it is those who have begun behaving differently today who will be successful."



Jure Apih is the doyen of Slovenian advertising and the driving force behind the gatherings in Portorož

No models exist of how to act in a crisis, because this is the first time we have experienced anything like this. "We can take a bold approach and say that the crisis is like a war, something that purges the market and causes new beginnings and a purification of society, as some people believe. If we look at it from this point of view, we will perhaps find the model that will show us how to act, think and see things differently. It is already entirely clear that the world will not return to the same point it was in. The future will be different. If you accept this at the right moment, you enjoy a big advantage," concludes Jure Apih.

So those who act in a visionary manner now will provide for a rebirth of advertising. They will ensure the continuation of its creative stories and visionary focuses. A lot of advertising stories have been attractive. Not only for clients and recipients, but also for advertisers. "Creative spirits have emerged here. That was nice to hear, but it is becoming less and less true. And advertising is slowly losing the charm that was so important in this job and in this profession. Now it is looking for a new route, new relations. Right now, all of us are very lost. When we observe this, it appears that hardware has become more important than software."

## Advertising in Slovenia

In Slovenia, too, the situation is of course greatly affected by the fact that the Slovenian market is losing competitiveness. It is becoming increasingly monopolised and increasingly partial. Essentially, nothing significant happens in the market because it is part of larger markets and actors. As Apih says, there are relatively few major domestic actors playing important roles on this stage; they are more or less extras. For this reason the entire profession is no longer involved with big ideas but with small ones. With a lot of small stories, with survival and a certain amount of aggression, which has become more important. It is no longer working for the long term.

## Brainstorming...

...was the basic focus of this year's Golden Drum. Brainstorming has two meanings – shaking brains out of their lazy and passive attitude, so that the participant does not merely sit and listen passively but is active. And the other thing is that once we have matured as a festival and as an event, this is no longer a place for schooling, for eminent speakers to come and for us to listen to them. This is how Apih explains Golden

Drum's brainstorming. We need to ask ourselves how much lectures are really worth, in the light of all the changes that are constantly taking place. And also whether it is the speakers who are going to show us the way out of the crisis. "Our view was that these 1,600 people – the number of people at the festival last year – should also have something to say. The idea is to reactivate participants to a greater degree. And so we opened our website six months ago and this brainstorming has been going on for six months. Our drummers community is active and has something to say, and will also have its concluding session here."

### What happened?

Golden Drum is a festival of creativity. And creativity is indispensable today. It is important in every single sector without exception. In a time of crisis, big creative ideas are more important than ever before. This is the focus of the Creative Academy section. This year it was also brought "down to earth" in the context of the Voice from the Other Side panel, where the artist, researcher, teacher and preacher Marko Pogačnik presented his approaches to healing the earth. Through his earth healing projects, he has created a number of ways to safeguard and restore various levels of life. Pogačnik, who also happens to be the designer of Slovenia's coat of arms, is convinced that it is possible, using methods similar to acupuncture and homeopathy, to affect the vital, emotional and spiritual levels of places, cities and landscapes, and in this way balance and restore the levels of life. Interesting, isn't it?

The media section of the festival, Media Meeting, covered some surprising aspects of the media scene. Insight into the experiences that we can draw from Barack Obama's election campaign was provided by Ben Self, who managed the online part of the election campaign of the current President of the USA. There was also a great deal of discussion about the links between the crisis, the media and actors in this story. Discussions revolved around what we can learn from the current situation.

A new feature of this year's festival was the PR section and the Best Act award. The organisers also introduced some changes within the individual sections. They tried to change their way of working in the hope of making the festival more interactive and encouraging participants to be more active. Parties, which go on long into the night, are also an important part of the festival. And despite the crisis situation, Golden Drum is still a festival with an image. There is no denying that!

Naturally, numerous prizes are also awarded, the most important of them the award for Agency of the Year, which this year went to: Leo Burnett Beirut. Find out more about the award winners and the Golden Drum festival at [www.goldendrum.com](http://www.goldendrum.com)



## CULTURAL TRAILS

Špela Spanžel, Ministry of Culture

# LJUBLJANA CONFERENCE

## REHABILITATING OUR COMMON HERITAGE



**On 6 and 7 November an international conference will be held in Ljubljana, entitled Ljubljana Conference – Rehabilitating our Common Heritage, organised by the Ministry of Culture together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with the support of the Council of Europe and the European**

**Commission. The event is devoted to the joint action of the Council of Europe and the European Commission for the integrated rehabilitation of the building and architectural heritage in South-East Europe. This project has demonstrated the importance of an integrated approach to managing**

**cultural heritage and has encouraged bridge-building between different ethnic and religious communities in the entire territory of the region, and has thus promoted reconciliation, cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue.**



The Integrated Rehabilitation Project Plan/Survey of the Architectural and Archaeological Heritage (IRPP/SAAH) was initiated in 2003. A central component of IRPP/SAAH is the “Prioritised Intervention List”, which was updated in 2008 and includes 143 monuments and monument sites. This list provides a clear picture of the challenges associated with cultural heritage in the region, and covers its physical sociological, economic and cultural dimensions. The final phase of the project, known as the Ljubljana Process – Funding Heritage Rehabilitation In South-east Europe, began during the Slovenian Presidency of the EU Council in May 2008. Of the monuments and monument sites on the “Prioritised Intervention List”, 25 “Consolidated Projects” were specially selected for the purpose of creating targeted investments and strengthening the approach developed as part of the IRPP/SAAH – Ljubljana Process. The partners participating in the project – Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Croatia, Romania, Serbia, Macedonia and Kosovo\* – have gradually developed their own national heritage policies and have established successful models of regional cooperation. Public and private funding, together with European Commission funds from pre-accession instruments, have enabled a tangible contribution to the fulfilment of projects, which coordinate the protection and new use of cultural heritage.

In this way the initiative has made an important contribution to the sustainable social and economic development of local communities, especially through quality of life improvements for local inhabitants. During the Slovenian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (12 May – 18 November 2009), Slovenia has been paying special attention to promoting and preserving cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, promoting the common fundamental values of the Council of Europe and to seeking a synergy of cooperation with other international and European organisations. It has also been focused especially on the area of South-East Europe. As part of its Chairmanship priorities, Slovenia is seeking to ensure the visibility of the IRPP/SAAH – Ljubljana Process and to contribute to its implementation and future success. The purpose of the Ljubljana conference is to emphasise the achievements of the project and ensure its enhancement and sustainability, to confirm the future commitment of beneficiaries to preserving cultural heritage, to promote social and economic development and the funding of rehabilitation by strengthening regional cooperation and intercultural dialogue, to facilitate the training of experts to manage monuments and to ensure transfer of the methodology, best practices and experiences from this region to the beneficiaries of the Kyiv Initiative (Ar-

menia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine). Activities within the framework of the IRPP/SAAH – Ljubljana Process have confirmed the common principles of European heritage policies, especially the concept of integrated conservation of heritage, as outlined in the European heritage Conventions, especially the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society. Conference participants will adopt the Ljubljana Declaration, which will emphasise the common European heritage, composed of ideals, principles and values that promote the development of peace-loving and stable communities founded on reconciliation and dialogue between cultures. Preserving heritage should become a key means for achieving tangible universal objectives associated with social cohesion, economic and sustainable development and environmental protection. The President of Slovenia, Dr. Danilo Türk, will serve as honorary patron of the Ljubljana Conference – Rehabilitating our Common Heritage. Participants of the event will include ministers of the beneficiary partners and other Council of Europe member states, high representatives of the Council of Europe and the European Commission, and of international organisations and financial institutions, and representatives of local communities and non-governmental organisations from the region.

\* All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/99 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

Jana Bogataj, photo: Darinka Mladenovič and Michele Drascek

# TRGATEV

## THE FINEST TIME FOR WINEGROWERS AND THEIR HELPERS

**In September and October, when the grapes on the vines have sufficiently ripened, begins a time of joyful celebration, steeped in tradition, in the three wine-growing regions of Slovenia. All winegrowers, whether**

**large or small-scale, have since time immemorial been inviting their friends and relations to celebrate the beginning of wine-making. Although they can expect a day of strenuous work, young and old alike are always**

**happy to be invited. For instead of being paid, the invited grape pickers can by all means expect good food, a lot of fun and a great party. This is what the tradition of *trgatev* demands.**

## NATURAL TRAILS

"I will buy a little hill / Upon which I will plant vines / Invite friends and drink it too" ("En hribček bom kupil / bom trte sadil / Prijatelj bom vabil / še sam ga bom pil") goes an old Slovenian folk song. There could hardly be a better or more apt description for the background to this special sociable event, which over the years has not lost any of its popularity. Even nowadays, enthusiasm for the trgategv or bendima, as it is known in the coastal region of Istria, brings all generations together. In the three Slovenian wine-growing regions of Primorska, Podravje and Posavje the joyful anticipation of the day on which the grapes will be ripe for picking is perfectly tangible. At the end of the summer, the houses and wine cellars are cleaned and repainted, the tools and machines necessary for grape harvesting and wine-making are prepared, and the ripeness of the grapes is checked regularly and eagerly. While in the past the ripeness was gauged by how much the taste of the green and blue fruits attracted birds, nowadays it is measurement of the sugar content which decides when the grape harvest should begin. The sugar level is particularly high in the grapes of the Primorska region, which due to its location near the Adriatic coast is particularly blessed by the sun. This means that the grapes can be picked there as early as September, ringing in the new wine season in Slovenia. The winegrowers in the regions of Podravje and Posavje in the north and south-east of the country must wait patiently for a month longer before invitations to friends and relations for their help with picking can be sent in October. Whoever has received an invitation by no means nurtures any hopes of being paid for his or her work, but rather looks forward to a gregarious day on which there will be no shortage of good food and excellent wine combined with fun and entertainment. After all, tradition dictates that the host must ensure the culinary and general well-being of his helpers.

The day of the trgategv traditionally begins with a hearty breakfast, the winegrower's wife bringing to the table freshly baked bread, smoked ham (pršut), cheese and fish. After this initial fortification, the different tasks are allocated: the largest

group consists of the pickers (pobiralci grozdja), who go through vine after vine picking the ripe grapes by hand. During the initial hours, the pickers compete over who will have picked the most grapes by the end of the day. All pickers from the grandchildren to the great-grandparents try to invest all their skill and experience, but very quickly the pleasure of being together wins out over sporty ambition. It would after all be impossible to find the winner, as all the grapes are collected in the enormous panniers carried on the backs of the carriers (pütaš). This group of strong men transports the harvested grapes at regular intervals from the vineyard to the wine cellar, where the wine producers (vinar) are waiting. They immediately get on with the next step in the processing of the fruit. The grapes land in the so-called pecljalnik, a kind of mill in which the grapes are separated from the stalks and leaves. Depending on the desired end product, work continues. For red wine, for example, the grapes must remain for a few days or up to a week in the barrels before undergoing further treatment. In the past, the barrels could only be made of wood. Meanwhile, the grapes meant for the production of white wine are immediately pressed into juice (mošt). After a long rest period this sweet juice turns into outstandingly good Slovenian wines, whose excellent quality was already prized at the time of the Roman Empire.



It was the Celts who planted the first vines on Slovenian land, thereby laying the foundations for wine production. With Roman settlement the techniques of vine cultivation and wine production were further refined, and the quality of Slovenian wines became known far beyond the territory's borders. To cite just one example, Pliny the Elder described the wines from the Karst region as being like elixirs. However, the heyday of Slovenian wine culture came to a sudden end with the advent of Slavic settlers and almost vanished altogether in the following centuries. Some of the vines from Roman times were nonetheless preserved in Slovenia. Grapes were again cultivated from the 11th century onwards, first by monastic orders for the production of quality wines, thereby giving them back their former good name. Since independence in 1991 and the privatisation of the wine sector, successes at international wine fairs led to increased replanting and production of top-class wines. Particularly popular and desirable wines from the Primorska region include the white Rebula as well as the red wines Merlot and Teran. The Posavje region is where the internationally famed rosé known as Cviček originates. It is a blend of different wines. The Podravje region particularly enthralls wine lovers with the classic white wines Rizling, Šipun and Beli Pinot.

If you ignore market-oriented wine production and turn instead to wine's social significance, you cannot fail to notice that wine culture has an important role in Slovenian identity. The best proof of this is the Slovenian national anthem, which, not without reason, is the seventh verse of the Zdravljica ("drinking song") by the poet France Prešeren. So it is hardly surprising that many traditions and customs are connected with the production of wine.

The time of the trgategv is no exception, even if the actual production of the wine has a subordinate role: indeed for many involved, work in the wine cellar is considered the most thankless job, as those working in the cellar only hear the merry activity above ground from a distance and their job in the dark cellars only begins after the pickers have finished

their work. But in the vineyards the mood is very upbeat. This may have something to do with the fact that mentioning serious subjects like politics and economics is strictly forbidden on the day of the trgategv. But what is allowed and expressly desired are funny stories and jokes which keep the helpers' spirits up. During the short pauses for breath, Slovenian folk songs are sung in order to heighten the enjoyment and to get in the mood for the party after the harvest is over. The end of the successful working day is celebrated outside the vineyard with good food, wine and traditional accordion music until late in the evening as the new wine season begins. Typical trgategv dishes, which traditionally the women prepared in the kitchen during the day, are golaš, štruklji (buckwheat rolls) and

jota (sauerkraut with ham and beans). Of course, the menu cannot fail to include a freshly baked potica, which helps make every Slovenian feast a special one. The wines that are drunk are from the previous year and have been specially kept by the winegrowers to be enjoyed and savoured at the trgategv.

How greatly Slovenians have prized and indeed still prize this social gathering becomes clear from the old custom of writing letters to friends and relations who, for important reasons such as military service or because they lived abroad, could not participate in the grape harvest. The letter was sealed with the mark left by a glass which was first dipped in the freshly produced mošt. But according to tradition everyone receives a souvenir

of this unforgettably happy day: they are allowed to take home bunches of grapes which they then keep in a cold place. It is not until Christmas that the grapes can be taken out and eaten.

In the meantime, friends and relatives come together a second time to celebrate wine again. On 11 November, the feast of Saint Martin – the patron saint of wine, a countrywide wine feast takes place. This day of martinovanje has even greater significance than being just the day on which the sweet mošt becomes wine. The winemakers celebrate it with a feast for friends and relations during which seasonal chestnuts are eaten and the new so-called "young" wines are tasted. After that, the wine rests undisturbed in the wine cellars until the winter is over.



**I FEEL  
SLOVENIA**



**Cerknica lake**  
Photo: Darinka Mladenović