

politics environment
culture business sports

14
2008

Sinfo

Queen Elizabeth II
pays historic visit to Slovenia

Parliament
Inaugurated,
Gantar elected speaker

Janša: EU leaders took on
consequences and reasons for
crisis

Slovenia Provides
EUR 8bn in bank guarantees



Milan Matos /Manager of Mladinska knjiga and initiator of the project/: **Leading Publisher Issues Special Edition of Bible**

Ljubljana, 22 October - Mladinska knjiga issued a hand-bound Bible decorated with gilt edges, enfolded in leather and packed in a wooden box in a limited edition of only 1,000 copies at a full price of EUR 2,480 a copy. According to this is the biggest project in the history of the publishing house. Such an edition does not only have a great cultural value, but buying a copy is also a good investment in the economic sense and numerous Slovenians are well aware of that. One third of the books has already been sold at the pre-order price of EUR 1,980. The 1,056-page book contains the standard Slovenian translation of the Holy Scripture and illustrations of the crucial Biblical scenes. These are reproductions of paintings, made between 1000 and 1610 in European Roman Catholic countries from England to Romania. The works of art, which were once reserved for royal eyes only, have been copied using a special technique at the Austrian National Library in Vienna, where they are stored, but are not on display, over 100 illustrations were coated with gold foil.



Andrej Bajuk /Finance Minister/: **I Remain Optimistic in Face of Financial Crisis**

Washington, 12 October - I remain optimistic about Slovenia's ability to cope with the global financial crisis, which is in the focus of the annual meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in Washington. The situation of the Slovenian banks is really stable. These are not things that I could have invented in recent weeks, but the result of findings that matters in our banks are far from being as complicated as elsewhere - this is so simply because our banks were not buying these papers (in reference to the repackaged mortgage bonds of US citizens.) But Slovenia is not an island and that problems could arise if the inter-bank market freezes. »There should be no problems because our banks have sufficient reserves to cover their commitments in the coming months. However, if the crisis persists and there is no solution that gets the inter-bank market going again, we could also be in trouble. He believes it is now vital to ensure that Slovenian banks continues to have access to the funds they had on disposal so far on the inter-bank market, and »if there is no other way, this will have to be done with support and guarantees from the state.



Barbara Orež /The selector of the biggest Slovenian theatre festival, the 43rd Borstnik Meeting/: **Slovenian theatre is in good shape and responsible**

Maribor, 17 October - The productions display »a colourful diversity of type and genre, ranging from the ritual to radically political theatre. Social commitment and political awareness are typical of the Slovenian theatre. There is the keen interest for the issues concerning the Slovenian identity, which I decided to showcase in the accompanying programme themed »Nation, Theatre, Community«. The programme will feature five productions.



Trubarjev forum: Trubar's Book Comes out in Modern Slovenian

Ljubljana, 14 October
The spelling-book »Abecedarium«, which along with »Catechism« represents the first Slovenian book, is now available in modern Slovenian. 458 years after Primož Trubar (1508-1586) it was published by Trubarjev forum. It is ironic that someone who is praised as the founder of the Slovenian language and the father of national identity should be read by just few experts, Trubarjev forum had thus made it its goal to translate the Protestant reformer's books into the modern standard Slovenian language. »This way we want to bring Trubar back to life,« Sukic said, hoping primary school students could once read Trubar as well. The first edition of »Abecedarium« will be intended for studies. It contains the original text on one page and the translation on the other. The second, popular edition of the book will only contain the translation and will be cheaper to buy, Crnivec said and announced the publication of »Catechism« for next year.



Anže Logar

10-11 QUEEN ELIZABETH II PAYS HISTORIC VISIT TO SLOVENIA



17-18 INTERVIEW

DR PETER VERLIČ, STATE SECRETARY AT THE
MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT: IT IS ALMOST OBVIOUS
THAT SLOVENIA WILL HAVE TO INTRODUCE
VIGNETTES FOR SHORTER PERIODS

25-27 - OUR EXCELLENCE

INTRA LIGHTING - WHEN LIGHTING CONTRIBUTES
TO THE CREATION OF A BUILDING, EXPERIENCES AND
FEELINGS

32-34 - PEOPLE

JURE ROBEŽNIK, THE COMPOSER
SEA OF MODESTY IN BREADTH OF CREATIVITY

39-40 - I FEEL SLOVENIA

THE LIPIZZANER - SYMBOL OF THE LIPICA STUD
FARM, THE KARST REGION AND SLOVENIA



contents

ROYAL SLOVENIA

The British Queen Elizabeth II. and the Duke of Edinburgh visited Slovenia. This past week everything revolved around this visit. Also, the international press reported on it extensively. The walk in the capital was attended by hosts of people who greeted the royal pair. The event was so picturesque that it overshadowed even the coordination talks of the future government comprised by the centre-left coalition, which were well directed at the media. The visit passed with impeccable organisation, which is not surprising after the six-month 'training' during the time of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU.

Slovenia has not avoided the world financial crisis. The stock-exchange collapsed and banks became much more careful in offering loans. Despite that, the average citizen does not (yet) feel the crisis. The citizens' trust in the financial system remains adequate, to which the latest government also contributed by ensuring unlimited state guarantee for deposits.

Slovenia is also witnessing the ninth month this year when temperatures are above average. That is probably one of the reasons that the income from tourism is a few per cent higher than last year. But despite additional Euros in the state treasury, such information cannot mean good news. Namely, it warns that there is not much time left with regard to the topic of climate changes. Despite the financial crisis. We also write about that in this issue of Sinfo.

Government Communication Office: www.ukom.gov.si
Government Institutions: www.gov.si
Slovenian Tourist Board: www.slovenia.info
Slovenian Chamber of Commerce and Industry: www.gzs.si
Slovenian Chamber of Craft: www.ozs.si
Public Agency of the RS for Entrepreneurship and Foreign Investments: www.japti.si
Ljubljana Stock Exchange: www.ljse.si
Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: www.stat.si
State Portal of the Republic of Slovenia: <http://e-uprava.gov.si>
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008: www.eu2008.si

FM THANKS DIPLOMATIC CORPS IN SLOVENIA

Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel organised on 16 September a traditional autumn get-together for the diplomatic corps in Slovenia. The diplomats visited the Snežnik and Prem castles in Notranjska and went on a tour of the famous Postojna karst cave, where Rupel thanked them for supporting Slovenia during its presidency.

The presidency dealt with a number of issues of great importance to Europe and the Western Balkans, Rupel was quoted as saying in a press release from the Foreign Affairs Ministry.

He believes that Slovenia's position and reputation strengthened, and that it proved to be a reliable partner in the EU.

SLOVENIA, MACEDONIA SIGN EU AFFAIRS COOPERATION PROGRAMME

Slovenian EU Affairs State Secretary Barbra Borota and Macedonian Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration Ivica Bocevski signed on 17 September a cooperation programme in EU affairs for 2008–09. The programme secures Slovenia's assistance in 67 areas as part of 21 negotiation chapters for Macedonia's accession to the EU.

According to the Government Office for European Affairs (SVEZ), the programme primarily deals with the areas of finance, economics, regional policy, the environment, consumer and health protection, customs, justice and internal affairs.

Slovenia will provide assistance to Macedonia chiefly through counselling and by passing on its experience gained during accession talks with the EU, SVEZ said.

Borota signed the programme with Bocevski as part of her two-day working visit to Macedonia, which was aimed at boosting cooperation between the countries and reassuring Slovenia's support for Macedonia's efforts on its way to the EU accession.

Borota assessed Macedonia's transposition of the EU legislation at the technical level as good. "Macedonia has made progress in eight criteria," said Borota, expressing hope that the country would fulfil its commitments as soon as possible.

The eight criteria refer to the commitments from the 2001 Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between the EU and Macedonia, dialogue among political parties, implementation of the law on police and anti-graft legislation, reform of the judiciary and public administration, measures in the employment policy and promotion of entrepreneurship.

Borota also met the head of the Council for European Integration, Radmila Šekerinska, and the head of the Macedonian Parliament Council for EU Affairs, Peter Pop-Arsov. Both Macedonian officials labelled Slovenia as the key partner in the process of Macedonia's accession to the EU and hailed successful cooperation between the countries in EU affairs, SVEZ said.

EU NEWCOMERS OPPOSE BLUE CARD

On 25 September at a session of the EU Justice and Home Affairs Council in Brussels, Interior Minister Dragutin Mate spoke against the launch of the blue card, the EU's equivalent of the U.S. green card. He argued that freedom of movement should first apply to all newcomers; only then could this freedom be extended to third countries.

The blue card, which would allow highly qualified immigrants to live and work in the EU to fill gaps in the labour market, is a problem for all newcomers, Mate said after the EU failed to



Interior Minister Dragutin Mate.

reach agreement on the blue card due to opposition from the newcomers.

"Member States which joined [the EU] in 2004 or later cannot agree to have movement, employment or dwelling restrictions while the EU searches for solutions and proposals to enable migrations of workforce from third countries," he added.

Mate pointed out that citizens from third countries should get work permits and move relatively freely across the EU only after all restrictions for EU members are removed.

"I can't imagine a politician who could face the media at home and say: 'We accepted this proposal, so that you, our citizens, will be worse off than the citizens of third countries.' This is unacceptable," the minister declared.

Freedom of movement for workers within the EU has been an issue since the beginning of the debate on the blue card. EU politicians and diplomats responded that this problem would be solved by assuring EU citizens preferential treatment over the citizens of third countries when it comes to employment. Eleven countries have removed all restrictions for the 2004 newcomers, while Austria, Belgium, Denmark and Germany still have some limitations, which will have to be removed by April 2011 the latest.

Slovenia is also one of the countries with gaps in the labour market which need to be filled by highly qualified personnel, especially in higher education, Mate said.

Blue cards are expected to be launched by spring 2011. They will be issued by national authorities, which will also decide on the number of workers the country will accept. National work permits, however, will not be abolished.

Asked about the difference between the blue card and the work permit, Mate said that national authorities would still issue work permits and set their national quotas, but a certain amount of highly qualified workforce would be able to obtain the blue card. After a certain period, the holder of the card will be able to move relatively freely within the EU, the minister said.

EU ENDORSES IMMIGRATION PACT

Slovenian Interior Minister Dragutin Mate labelled the Pact on Immigration and Asylum which the EU interior ministers endorsed in Brussels on 25 September an "important framework for the formation of a balanced policy on immigration and asylum".

The pact, encouraging legal and preventing illegal immigration, will be formally confirmed by the European Council at its session on 15 and 16 October in Brussels.

Mate said that such a quick endorsement of the pact was a nice example of successful cooperation between the Slovenian and French Presidencies, as several important directives regarding immigration were adopted during the Slovenian stint at the helm of the bloc.

"Slovenia believes that the pact will contribute to the formation of joint goals of immigration and asylum policy for the EU as a whole, as well as for each individual Member State. Now we have to focus on implementation," said the minister, adding that the implementation would largely be the responsibility of the Czech Presidency.

The pact aims to regulate legal immigration, fight illegal immigration by assuring the return of illegal immigrants to their native country, enhance control at the EU external borders, provide asylum to those who need it and form partnerships with immigrants' countries of origin.

The document faced criticism for reportedly being too vague and inefficient, leaving individual members too much room to manoeuvre and thus failing to form a united EU response to the issue.

Mate rejected this by saying that the pact was a compromise acceptable to everyone. "Some are very happy, others maybe less, but what is extremely important is that the pact takes us forward, improves the situation, and gives us common ground for future work in this area," he said. "For Slovenia, all of the compromises were acceptable. There was no point where we would have had to yield too much," the minister said.

The pact is only one of the projects within EU asylum policy. "It is important that minimal criteria for immigration and asylum are determined at the EU level," Mate explained.

The EU interior ministers backed the pact for the first time at an informal meeting in Cannes, France, in July, while the preparations for it started two years ago in Rabat, Morocco, according to Mate.

MINISTER SATISFIED WITH HEADWAY IN LJUBLJANA PROCESS



Higher Education, Science and Technology Minister
Mojca Kucler Dolinar.

Higher Education, Science and Technology Minister Mojca Kucler Dolinar said in Brussels on 26 September that the EU should be satisfied with the headway in the Ljubljana Process, which was launched during Slovenia's EU Presidency and is aimed at improving the flow of knowledge in the bloc by forming a single European research area (ERA).

EU ministers in charge of science also discussed researchers, their

career possibilities and mobility, with Kucler Dolinar presenting junior lecturers and researchers in Slovenia as an example of good practice. They established that progress in this area was not sufficient, as the ties between researchers and business were not strong enough.

Kucler Dolinar also highlighted the need for a comparative analysis on working conditions for home and foreign researchers, with the aim to improve the conditions for foreign researchers. She added that Slovenia should also take care of the researchers' social security, especially of those researchers who are about to retire, and young and female researchers.

The ministers also debated nanoscience and nanotechnology, with Kucler Dolinar highlighting the importance of ethics in the field.

During a working lunch, the ministers were to debate joint planning of research focusing on more efficient responses to common challenges.

BASKETBALL: SMODIŠ FIRST FOREIGNER TO CAPTAIN CSKA MOSCOW

Slovenian basketball player Matjaž Smodiš has been named the new captain of perennial Russian and reigning Euroleague champion CSKA Moscow. The 28-year-old, who has been with CSKA since 2005, is the first foreigner to have the honour of captaining the club.

"My new role is a great honour to me. As you know, I'm the first foreigner to be the 'first among equals', so I'm really happy that my teammates, coaches and management believe in me," said Smodiš.

"Being the captain will not change me as a player or as a person, because this is not necessary. It was my previous role and my hard work here in Moscow that earned me the captain armband, so I think there is no reason for change," he added.

The Slovenian power forward, who is entering his fourth season with CSKA, will take over the captain duties from guard Zakhar Pashutin, who has signed with Spartak Saint Petersburg.

Smodiš has won three Euroleague championships, one with Italy's Kinder Bologna in 2001 and two with CSKA (2006 and 2008).

PRESIDENT DISCUSSES RIGHT TO PUBLIC INFORMATION AT CONFERENCE

President Danilo Türk addressed on 29 September the 3rd European conference of information commissioners, which took place at Brdo pri Kranju, saying that restricting the access to information available to executive power holders also meant restricting individuals and the media in their functioning in modern society.

According to the president's office, Türk said that "every restriction can lead to irresponsible and self-willed use of power and limitation of the freedom of expression".

The president added that information in the modern world represents power, a means for achieving interests, a basis for protecting the rights of individuals and an opportunity for exercising the responsibility of executive power holders.

According to Türk, acquired information enables individuals to understand and evaluate reasons for taking an individual decision, to formulate their opinions and express them.

On the other hand, the media can use information to objectively and responsibly inform the public about important aspects of the accountability of public office-holders, the press release quotes Türk as saying.

MONTHLYREPORT

Türk also emphasised the need for further development of the legal framework for providing the right to access information at the international level and welcomed the efforts by the Council of Europe in drafting of a European convention on access to public documents.

The 3rd European conference of information commissioners is hosted by the Slovenian Information Commissioner's Office, which said that the conference was aimed at exchanging opinions among European information commissioners and discussing exercise of the right to access public information in practice.

According to the office, "Constructive exchange of opinions and formation of positions by information commissioners as independent and unbiased guardians of this fundamental human right is necessary at the EU level."

The conference also marked the fifth anniversary of the information commissioner's office in Slovenia, which coincides with International "Right to Know" Day, which has been observed on 28 September since 2002.

On the occasion, Public Administration Minister Gregor Virant, MP Pavle Gantar and the director of the human rights organisation Access Info Europe, Helen Darbishire, were presented the award "Transparency, Yes Please!" for their contribution in this area.

SLOVENIA PRESENTS ITS PROPOSALS FOR CAP REVISION



Agriculture Minister Iztok Jarc.

On 30 September in Brussels, Slovenia presented to the European Commission and the French EU Presidency its objections to the revision of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Agriculture Minister Iztok Jarc pointed out that Slovenian stock breeding could suffer damage if the EU cuts bovine production premiums.

Slovenia would like to see more flexibility, which would provide additional assistance to milk production, such as transport of milk from farms to valleys, said the minister.

He added that modulation funds (transfer of funds from the first pillar to rural development) should not be invested into new challenges, such as the fight against climate change. Instead, additional funds should be provided for these projects.

Slovenia is against the proposed cancellation of area-based payments to farms smaller than one hectare, because 5% of its farms are smaller than one hectare. Jarc proposed that the decision on the minimum farm size should be left to individual Member States.

The minister was optimistic after the meeting, saying that Denmark, Sweden and the UK also objected to the changes regarding production premiums, while Finland, Austria, Germany and France were against the changes in milk production.

AUSTRIA DECORATES SLOVENIAN ARMY CHIEF



Chief-of-Staff Lt-Gen Albin Gutman received the Austrian golden mark of honour.

Slovenian Chief-of-Staff Lt-Gen Albin Gutman received in Ljubljana on 30 September the Austrian golden mark of honour for his merit in cooperation between the Slovenian and Austrian Armed Forces.

The decoration, which is given out by Austrian President Heinz Fischer, was presented to Gutman by the Austrian ambassador to Slovenia, Valentin Inzko.

Gutman was decorated for his self-initiative and non-bureaucratic work, which enabled members of the Austrian Armed Forces to gain international practical experience, according to the official argumentation by the Austrian president.

SLOVENIA BACKS TRANSFORMATION OF EU MISSION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

On 1 October at an informal EU defence ministerial meeting in France's Deauville, Slovenia backed a gradual transformation of the EU's military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina into a civilian operation. According to sources in the Slovenian delegation, Slovenia is considering a further cut in its troops in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while it is still examining whether to keep its soldiers in Chad in place after the EU mission there hands over to the UN. EU defence ministers established that the Althea mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina had importantly contributed to the improvement of the security situation in the country, and consequently also to its economic and reform progress.

Slovenia currently has more than 30 troops deployed there, but like most EU countries, it supports plans to gradually scale down the bloc's military mission and replace it with a civilian one.

The ministers, among them Slovenia's Karl Erjavec, also expressed satisfaction with the EUFOR mission in Chad. The mission, which includes 15 Slovenian soldiers, is expected to end in March 2009, whereupon the UN will take over.

Several countries whose troops participate in the EU mission said they were willing to stay on after the change in command, while Slovenia is still examining the possibility.

COTMAN URGES CAUTION IN CHANGES TO EU LABOUR DIRECTIVES

Slovenian Labour Minister Marjeta Cotman pointed to the "lasting and difficult negotiations" on the working time and temporary



Labour Minister Marjeta Cotman.

workers directives at an EU ministerial meeting in Luxembourg on 2 October, adding that any major changes might endanger the balance of the compromise reached during Slovenia's EU Presidency.

At the meeting, EU ministers for employment and social affairs discussed the results of the negotiations between the French EU Presidency and the European Parliament on the directives, which were agreed on in June during Slovenia's EU Presidency.

EU ministers then agreed on a maximum 48-hour week, but added that opt-outs would be possible. Any opt-out would require the consent of social partners, including trade unions, according to the new directive.

According to Cotman, the European Parliament's committee on employment and social affairs had no objections to the temporary workers directive, while "certain discussions are expected" on the working time directive. She called on Member States to support the June compromise so that negotiations could start as soon as possible.

Cotman added that she was happy that an increasing number of Member States have adopted the principle that new legislation must improve the position of EU workers, which she believes is a step forward. She added that all Member States wanted to adopt an agreement on both directives in a package.

However, the EU is running out of time, said Cotman, adding that the last meeting of EU ministers for employment, social policy, health and consumer protection under the French Presidency will take place on 15 and 16 December.

The ministers also discussed the directive on implementation of the principle of equal treatment irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, with which the EU wants to establish the lowest common denominator of protection against discrimination also outside of the area of employment, labour and professional training.

Slovenia endorsed the directive in principle, with Cotman emphasising that Europe must set very high standards in this area, whereas "legal clarity of individual provisions of the directive" must be ensured so that the directive is successfully implemented in practice.

SLOVENIA, UNHCR SIGN AGREEMENT ON ASYLUM PROCEDURES COOPERATION

The Slovenian Police and the regional UN refugee agency (UNHCR) have signed an agreement on cooperation in processing asylum applications on the EU external border in Slovenia.

The agreement, signed on 1 October, determines regular supervision of police procedures, entry of asylum-seekers at the Slovenian border, working meetings, training of police officials and exchange of information between the police and the UNHCR. Oversight will be carried out by both partners.

This is the fourth agreement that the UN agency has signed with a Central European country since 2007, according to the regional UNHCR website.

Regional UNHCR representative Lloyd Dakin said that the agreement actually dealt with cooperation already carried out in the past and necessary for achieving the aim of UNHCR that asylum-seekers can enter the EU and apply for asylum in Slovenia. He added that this was one of the most important steps in assuring international protection.

UNHCR said on its website that it understands that countries have the responsibility to control their borders; they, however, also have the responsibility to allow people to apply for asylum and prevent their return to countries where their lives and safety are jeopardised.

ADMINISTRATION MINISTER PROMOTES BEST PRACTICE



Public Administration Minister Gregor Virant.

Public Administration Minister Gregor Virant gave out three best practice awards on 6 October at the beginning of the 8th annual Conference on Best Practice in Slovenian Public Administration at Brdo pri Kranju. The "virus of quality and good practice" in public administration is spreading quickly, he said.

This year's best practice awards went to the Slovenian customs administration for the solution called "With Partnership to Optimisation of Work Processes", to the tax administration for their virtual tax assistant, and to the Administrative Unit Trebnje for the promotion of electronic administration.

Virant said he is especially proud of administrative units, which scored highest in all indexes, but others followed quite closely, like the tax and customs administration. The minister concluded that "the course of Slovenian public administration is geared in the right direction, but autopilot will not be enough in the future". He then wished his successors favourable winds, as the sails are fully spread, and that they would continue in the right direction.

MONTHLYREPORT

The expectations for efficiency in the public sector are increasing, Justice Minister Lovro Šturm said at the conference, and added that the state has replied with measures for the abolition of administrative obstacles to prevent unnecessary bureaucracy. He pointed to the unifications within the ministry, the improvement of the information flow, transfer of best practice between departments and time savings by using standardized forms. The purpose of the Public Administration Ministry's conference is the revision of the most recent activities concerning quality of administration in Slovenia and in Europe, while the presentation of examples of best practice are intended as a motivation for further improvements. The participants also discussed quality management in the public administrations of EU Member States.

HUMAN RIGHTS OMBUDSMAN PRESENTS ANNUAL REPORT TO PRESIDENT



Human Rights Ombudsman Zdenka Čebašek Travnik and President Danilo Türk.

Human Rights Ombudsman Zdenka Čebašek Travnik on 7 October presented the report for 2007 to President Danilo Türk. The report says the number of claims increased by 10%, while court backlogs and Constitutional Court decisions that have not been implemented remain the biggest concerns.

After the meeting, Čebašek Travnik emphasised poverty in Slovenia, which according to her "is always getting new faces, while the state responds too slowly to this phenomenon".

The ombudsman expects from all deputies of the new parliament to read the report and from the new government to draft a reply report. "I expect from them to first think about it and then take measures," she said.

President Türk said he would be glad if the new coalition agreement was inspired by human rights, as they express the nature of society. A lot should be done in this area, said Türk, adding that trust in state institutions should be improved.

"We don't have serious and extensive violations, but no country is flawless. The foundation for a mature society is accepting that it cannot be flawless and that there are reasons for making improvements," Türk said.

The president also highlighted new forms of poverty in the country, which he said are hardly visible. "Poverty in Europe is usually invisible, which means that the society must show special sensitivity towards this issue," Türk asserted.

Türk will do everything in his power so that "our politics evolves in a way which will expand the area in which human rights are exercised".

The president is convinced that everyone in Slovenia must be aware of the value of the institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman. "This is an important institution which should be respected and considered as independent," he said.

GOVT APPROVES LISBON STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMME

The government approved on 9 October the final version of the Lisbon Strategy implementation programme, which must be sent to Brussels by 15 October. The programme contains an action plan for implementing EU recommendations, a report on the realisation of the reform programme for 2008 and a strategy implementation programme for 2008–2010.

Development Minister Žiga Turk said after the government session that the new programme also stipulates annual reports to Brussels with a 15 October deadline.

The integrated recommendations of the European Commission focus on measures for strengthening pension reform and motivating older people to postpone retirement, and on increasing employment flexibility within a flexicurity approach.

The programme until 2010 includes conservative fiscal policies and more investment in research and development, improvement of the public procurement system and the preparation of an action plan for environmental technologies, an action plan for sustainable production and consumption, and a national strategy of reaction to climate change.

The government adopted a draft programme on 17 September and sent it to public discussion for the rest of the month. According to the minister, the notes made to the draft have been implemented in the final version of the document.

The EU will also get a note that the government is aware that the programme was approved at the end of this government's term and that the new one might change it. However, Turk is convinced the programme is modern, compatible with European standards, ambitious, and leads Slovenia towards further development despite difficult circumstances.

DEFENCE MINISTERS DISCUSS KOSOVO AND AFGHANISTAN OPERATIONS

Slovenian Defence Minister Karl Erjavec said after an informal meeting of NATO defence ministers in Bucharest on 9 October that stability in Kosovo was strategically important for Slovenia and that Slovenian troops would remain in the region.

The ministers agreed that the NATO-led KFOR mission was crucial for the stability in Kosovo, Erjavec said.

The Slovenian minister pointed out at the meeting that the UN and the EU must also take their share of responsibility. "It is especially important to maintain the operational capability of the EULEX mission," he added.

Slovenia has around 293 soldiers in the KFOR mission and will not retreat from the region, Erjavec said, adding that the stability of Kosovo was strategically important for Slovenia.

Discussing the situation in Afghanistan, the ministers said that the operations there should continue, especially in light of the upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections.

They agreed that part of the responsibility for stability will have to be transferred to the country's authorities. According to Erjavec, this means that the Afghan Army, which now has 68,000 soldiers, will increase its number to 122,000 by 2013. He added that the 78,000-strong Afghan Police would also have to start fighting drugs and other crime.

Moreover, NATO should deploy more soldiers and equipment to the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, where there are currently 51,000 soldiers, the ministers said. There are currently 66 Slovenian soldiers taking part in the mission, and in November two civilian experts will be deployed there as humanitarian assistants.



Climate-energy package - Europe must go on

Contagion of a financial crisis seems to be spreading around the world. Investors are losing their confidence in the financial system and therefore their interest into investing - also investing in research, knowledge and innovation. Consequently, achieving of European environmental goals could be endangered as it requires the transformation to a low-carbon economy. The situation therefore should serve as an impetus to politicians to set a proper framework and not as an excuse for inaction or weakening the objectives.

Not surprisingly, it took a very short time for Europe to face a financial crisis almost as grave as the one in the United States, which demonstrates that a global financial system national borders are porous. So are in the case of climate change, another big challenge humanity will have to face in the coming years and decades.

Though both challenges are to be taken seriously, possible consequences of climate change and a financial crisis in the medium to long-term cannot be compared. Financial crisis, after all, is most severe in the countries that in big part are also responsible for the conditions that caused the crisis (e.g. financial speculations and overspending), while in the case of climate change people that contributed least to the pollution and global warming suffer most. Often economically and politically marginalized climate change makes them even more exposed to an increased inequality and poverty, social unrest, hunger and spreading of diseases. Humanitarian impacts of climate change could be unprecedented, especially in developing countries.

This is the first reason I think the fight against climate change must remain a priority. The financial crisis must not weaken the objectives of the energy and climate change package or postpone its adoption scheduled for the end of 2008. The EU should stick to its goals to cut greenhouse-gas emissions by 30% by 2020 in case of reaching an international agreement, to increase the use of renewable energy sources to 20% and to increase energy efficiency by 20% by 2020. Only by sticking to its targets the EU will be able to retain its credibility on the international stage and preserve its leading role in the field of climate change and low carbon technologies.

After all, humans - especially in industrialized countries - are according to a broadly recognized panel of international scientists (IPCC) "very likely" the main cause of global warming. And pursuing of our economic goals in developed world and our (un)sustainable way of living has had very little to do with financial crisis, when we give it

a second thought. However, if nothing is done now, the world is looking at billions of euros in costs adapting to a warmer world over the next century. According to some forecasts the world needs to spend 1 per cent of global GDP dealing with climate change now, or face a bill between five and 20 times higher for damage caused by letting it continue. The costs of inaction, however, would be much higher than this. Unchecked climate change would turn 200 million people into refugees, the largest migration in modern history, as their homes succumbed to drought or flood.

The crisis caused by climate change can (similar as in case of a financial crisis) spread through many channels, e.g. trade, investment, and it can affect everybody.

The fear of the heavy cost of the measures in combination with the financial-markets crisis and the prospect of recession in the EU therefore should not be a reason to reduce the EU's ambitions in fighting climate change.

I do not claim it will be easy for industry to make the necessary big investments in clean energy. However, well-formed policies could be part of the solution. They could increase level of investments in energy efficiency, promoting renewable sources and providing incentives to stimulate the economy and contribute to growth. Climate-energy package is a good basis to give a spin to Europe's economy and make it more efficient and in this context can only prevent future financial crisis.

In sum, the financial crisis did not remove the threat of climate change, but it definitely gives us an opportunity to prevent similar crisis due to expensive adaptation measures in the future. We need to underpin an effective global response to both challenges - financial crisis and climate change - and by promoting a comprehensive response our chances of success will be much higher.

However, there is much more to a comprehensive approach than reorganization of financial markets and taking care of our economy. Sooner or later we will have to answer ourselves whether we are ready to take over responsibility for considerable changes of ecosystems. Do we truly want to stick to our present - and often extremely consumer-oriented life style - even at the price of endangering and worsening lives of thousands of already poor and marginalised people? Our answers count. So do our actions, which will determine Europe's role in the changing world.



Queen Elizabeth II pays historic visit to Slovenia

President Danilo Türk and spouse Barbara Miklič Türk (right) receive the English royal couple, Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh.

Queen Elizabeth II and her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, arrived in Slovenia on 21 October for a historic three-day state visit that celebrated the long and rich history of relations between the United Kingdom and Slovenia.

The royal couple received a stately welcome by Slovenian President Danilo Türk and his wife, Barbara Miklic Türk, at the Brdo estate north of Ljubljana, a picturesque setting with a dramatic view of the Alps.

After the talks, the Queen and her host exchanged state honours and gifts. President Türk decorated the Queen with the Order for Exceptional Services of the Republic of Slovenia, while he received the Most Honourable Order of the Bath.

President Türk received as present a book of photographs of paintings by Hans Holbein which are kept in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle. He also got a hand-signed photograph of the British royal couple and a silver jewelry box.

The Queen received a unique hand-made porcelain tea set. The Duke of Edinburgh received »Opus Insignium Armorumque«, a book on heraldic insignia and devices by Janez Vajkard Valvasor, the famous Slovenian 17th century polymath.

A prolific writer, Baron Valvasor (1641-1693), represents a symbolic bond between the two nations, having been elected a member of The Royal Society in London in 1687. Indeed, Valvasor was a recurring motif at the proceedings.

Making the toast at the banquet at Brdo Castle, President Türk noted that an interest in nature, a topical subject at present, bonded the two nations as early as the 17th century, when the London Royal Society admitted Valvasor.

The Queen also mentioned Valvasor, noting that a scholarship for Slovenian students wishing to study in the UK was named after him.

The president drew attention to Britain's role in World War II and its »decisive contribution to peace and coexistence« in Europe,

including in the resolution of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, which he said were both vital for Slovenia.

Türk highlighted cultural ties, noting that Shakespeare, Scott, Byron and Shelly inspired the great Slovenian poet France Preseren, while his generation experienced the cultural revolution associated with the Beatles.

The Queen meanwhile underlined Slovenia's success as EU president, saying it was all the more striking considering that Slovenia had become an independent country only 17 years ago. »Slovenia's transformation since 1991 is a remarkable tribute to the country's energy, vision and determination.«

Touching on bilateral relations, the Queen said that the UK had strongly supported Slovenia throughout the 1990s in its bid to join



Queen Elizabeth II receives a 16-year-old stallion named 085 Favory Canissa XXII, which will remain in the care of the Kobilarna Lipica stud farm.

the EU and NATO. »The close ties established with your government, judiciary, police and armed forces continue to flourish«.

QUEEN GETS LIPIZZANER, GOES WALKABOUT IN LJUBLJANA

The proceedings continue on 22 October with a visit to the Karst village of Lipica and a tour of the stud farm famous for its Lipizzaner horses.

The visit to the Lipica stud farm, home to famed white horses, must have been a highlight of the visit for the Queen, who is known for her fondness of horses and riding.

More so, given the majestic gift she was presented with. Only symbolically though, as the 16-year-old Lipizzaner named 085 Favory Canissa XXII, will remain in the care of the local stud farm.

The Queen smiled at the stallion, Slovenia's champion in dressage and one of the world's elite, describing him as »very nice«, while Prince Philip said the thoroughbred was »magnificent«.

The British royal couple were also treated to a presentation of the classic riding school. Eight riders performed the school quadrille, an extremely difficult performance requiring years of daily training.

Accompanied by Slovenian President Danilo Türk, the Queen and Prince Philip were given a tour of Kobilarna Lipica by its director Matjaž Pust. The Queen also inspected a display of local crafts and a demonstration of traditional grape picking and crushing.

Before returning to Ljubljana, their base during the three-day stay, the royal guests also met participants in a conference on sustainable development, which was also addressed by British Foreign Secretary David Miliband.

A warm welcome by thousands of locals and foreign visitors awaited the royalties in the Slovenian capital as they walked across Ljubljana's landmark Triple Bridge into the square named after Slovenia's great poet France Preseren.

The Queen was smiling as she crossed the bridge designed by Slovenia's most acclaimed architect, Jože Plečnik. She stopped shortly to talk to children of expats living in Ljubljana, who presented her with flowers.

President Türk and Mayor Zoran Janković exuded pride as they pointed out to the Queen the sights surrounding the square in the heart of Ljubljana and Janković also brought to her attention the statue of Preseren overlooking the square.

The British royal couple went on walkabout after a ride on a funicular down Ljubljana Castle. There they attended a lunch hosted in their honour by British Ambassador to Slovenia Tim Simmons, along with some 80 guests from all walks of life.

THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S AWARD- A VOLUNTARY SCHEME FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The British monarch and her husband rounded off their visit at a ceremony for the Slovenian version of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, a voluntary scheme for young people.

Prince Philip, who founded the programme in 1956, presented Gold MEPI Awards to 26 Slovenian students together with President Türk, the patron of the Slovenian programme.

Apart from Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh, the event in the building housing the Slovenian Philharmonics was attended by more than 500 guests.

Addressing the ceremony, President Türk highlighted the value of the programme in that it helped young people to learn how to live, and give them an opportunity to acquire different skills and personal connections.



He thanked the Duke of Edinburgh for sending a wave of good will across the world with his well-conceived award scheme, which he said had become established in more than 130 countries over more than 50 years and was one of the world's biggest youth programmes.

Türk said all the recipients of the MEPI Gold Awards could rightfully be proud of their achievement, while the more valuable for them were the skills they had acquired, leadership abilities, team work, self-initiative, perseverance and determination.

Launched in 1999, MEPI in Slovenia is intended for young people between 14 and 25, encouraging them to spend their spare time creatively through voluntary work, sports and by learning new skills that would prepare them for adult life.

To win a Gold Award, the participants must meet the goals set in the scheme, taking part in it for at least 18 months.

Last Year, the awards were presented by the Duke of York, during his two-day visit of Slovenia as an emissary of the British Foreign Office and the UK Trade and Investment.

The award ceremony was the last event on the programme of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip before she wraps up her first ever state visit to Slovenia on Thursday after a formal farewell by a guard of honour.

The award ceremony was the last event on the schedule of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip before they wind up their state visit to Slovenia after President Türk bids them a formal farewell with a guard of honour.



Queen Elizabeth II meets people during a walkabout in Ljubljana.



Parliament Inaugurated, Gantar elected speaker

Ljubljana, 15 October

The new sitting of the Slovenian National Assembly elected Pavel Gantar of Zares the chamber's speaker in a secret ballot at inaugural session after it endorsed the terms of the 90 deputies elected in the 21 September general election.

The chamber also elected in a highly unanimous vote three deputy speakers, Miran Potrč of the Social Democrats (SD), Vasja Klavžar of the Pensioners' Party (DeSUS) and France Cukjati of the Slovenian Democratic party (SDS).

Gantar, who was elected with an overwhelming majority of 69 votes against 13, pledged in his first address to the chamber that he would perform his duties responsibly and honourably for the benefit of parliamentary democracy in Slovenia.

He called on the assembly to pass good laws and said that his role in parliament would be, »if necessary to protect the minority, that is the opposition«. The opposition is not just for show, but it is a »continuous proof that there is an alternative in all political decisions«, Gantar said.

The new speaker also promised to do everything in his power for the assembly to implement the unrealised rulings of the Constitutional Court in reasonable time, especially in the cases concerning human rights.

He furthermore pledged to continue with the policy of open parliament. »This house needs to open up more to the spirit of lively civil society and aside from dialogue in parliament develop dialogue between parliament and the civil society.«

In a similar vein, Slovenian President Danilo Türk said in his address to the new house that it was not good when parliament was reduced to the voting mechanism and that the period ahead would require thorough consideration and debate on economic, welfare and pension reforms.

He called for efforts to achieve development, social fairness, to prevent pathologies such as excessive gaining of riches and corruption, and to lead a principled foreign policy, all of which he

said would increase the country's confidence and patriotism.

The president also said that Slovenia should do all in its power to enhance the authority of institutions, the genuine rule of law, respect for human rights and social solidarity.

»The National Assembly has the right to insist on the efficiency and independent responsibility of the executive government and on the independence and authority of the judiciary,« Türk said, urging parliament to implement Constitutional Court decisions.

The president pledged that he would conduct the necessary consultations with the deputy factions as soon as possible to put forward prime minister-designate, voicing the confidence that government formation would be successful.

Holding a doctor's degree in social sciences, the 58-year-old Gantar served as minister for the environment and spatial planning in 1994-2000 and as the minister for the information society in 2001-2004.

He was elected to parliament in 2004 on the slate of the left-leaning Liberal Democrats (LDS), but following a party split defected to Zares, whose MP he stayed until the end of the term in 2008. He was one of the founding members of Zares.

Before electing the speaker, the chamber appointed the Credentials and Privileges Commission, which proposed the endorsement of deputy terms based on the National Electoral Commission's report on the election results.

The commission, headed by SocDem deputy Dušan Kumer, established that none of the terms were contentious. Nor were any complaints filed, so the confirmation went smoothly.

The biggest deputy faction in the new parliament is the left-leaning Social Democrats (SD), who have 29 seats in the 90-member legislature, while the centre-right Slovenian Democrats (SDS) have 28 seats.

The left-leaning Zares have nine members in parliament, and the Pensioners' Party (DeSUS) has seven. The Liberal Democrats (LDS), the People's Party (SLS) and the National Party (SNS) have five seats each. The Hungarian and Italian ethnic minorities have one deputy each.



Janša: EU leaders took on consequences and reasons for crisis

The European leaders have seriously taken on the consequences as well as the reasons for the financial crisis and defined measures that Europe should take to protect its economic growth and jobs, Prime Minister Janez Janša said at the EU summit in Brussels on 16 October.

EU leaders have adopted guidelines for fighting the reasons for the crisis, Janša said, highlighting »calls for better regulation and more accountability in the financial sector, which is one of the most important reasons for this financial crisis«. Among the issues that need to be addressed are also rating agencies, Janša said. »If these measures are implemented, we will not only successfully do away with the consequences but also the reasons for this financial crisis.«

EU leaders also agreed that the world needed a new financial system, as the system established in 1944 no longer suits the new conditions, Janša said. According to him, changes on global financial markets are one of the reasons for the crisis.

Europe proposes a reform of the system which envisages »greater accountability on the part of those running it, more transparency and better supervision of financial markets,« Janša added.

»The world of finances has become globalised, a new global agreement is necessary,« said Janša, who thinks that the EU will make the first step in this direction with a visit to the US and Canada.

Call for changing the system is based on a proposal by British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, who called for a revision of global financial institutions established in 1944.

The UN financial conference in Bretton Woods then resulted

in the founding of the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

»Even before new mechanisms are established, coordination between national supervisory bodies, which have practically not been connected so far, will start. The summit's resolutions call for meetings on a monthly basis at least,« Janša also said.

EU LEADERS LEAVE CLIMATE-ENERGY PACKAGE TIMETABLE UNCHANGED

EU leaders confirmed on the second day of the EU Summit in Brussels, the proposed goals and timetable for the adoption of the climate and energy package. Prime Minister Janez Janša said, however, that wishes of a group of countries strongly affected by the financial crisis would be considered in the implementation of the ambitious goals.

Janša stressed that adaptations to requests for special treatment of eight member states - Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia - will be the key to the success of the climate package.

Italy as well warned that rigorous climate and energy package goals would inflict an even greater damage to its already strained economy. Moreover, Italy and Poland threatened to use their right to veto.

»Meeting the goals of the climate and energy package brings greater dependence and risks to some new member states, therefore, they tried to find principle solutions, which will become concrete with the work of the European Commission by

WHATMAKESTHENEWS

December,« Janša said.

The outgoing Slovenian prime minister believes one of the key problems of these eight countries to be the year compared to which they have to cut their emissions by 2020. He did not exclude the possibility that this be changed. Janša said that Slovenia had understanding for the problems of Poland, the Czech Republic and the Baltic countries. European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso expressed his satisfaction with the fact that the December deadline to form a programme remained unchanged, adding that the Commission would work side by side with the industrial sector.

The summit urged the member states that they further develop their existing infrastructure, especially the pan-European networks, with special emphasis on connecting the most distant European countries.

EU leaders called upon the commission to draft an action plan to boost cooperation in the Baltic region by the end of year. The commission was also urged to propose solutions to help the EU's industry by the end of year.

At the march summit, leaders agreed that the EU must reach an agreement regarding the package by the end of 2008 and thus enable its adoption by the end of this parliament term - in the beginning of 2009 at the latest.

JANŠA HAPPY ABOUT ENDORSEMENT OF EUROPE-WIDE IMMIGRATION PACT

Prime Minister Janez Janša welcomed the endorsement by EU leaders of the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum, which commits member states to push for a just, effective and consistent response to challenges and opportunities brought by immigration.

»This is an important agreement within Europe, which will secure a uniform approach to immigration and asylum policy, especially for Schengen zone members as well as all remaining countries. This is of key importance in the current situation and I am very happy that a project has been wrapped that was also intensively worked on

during Slovenia's EU presidency,« Janša said in Brussels.

The European Pact on Immigration and Asylum is considered a document of political intent as opposed to bringing binding laws. It defines principles for managing migration, fighting illegal immigration and forming partnerships with countries people leave or travel through to get to Europe.

It moreover proposes more effective border controls and changes to asylum policy, with refugees increasingly obliged to apply for asylum status from outside the EU.

The new guidelines have not been welcomed by rights groups, who claim they focus on skilled workers rather than refugees.

SLOVENIAN TO BECOME SECRETARY-GENERAL OF EU REFLECTION GROUP

A Slovenian will take the post of secretary-general in the "reflection group", a group of experienced EU statesmen, who are to help shape the bloc's future and study the challenges it will face between 2020 and 2030. The news was announced after the EU Summit by French President Nicolas Sarkozy. Former Spanish prime minister Felipe Gonzales will meanwhile chair the group, which was first called "the group of nine wise men".

Former Latvian president Vaira Vike-Freiberga and ex-boss of Finnish corporation Nokia Jorma Ollila were appointed vice-presidents, who will help Gonzales head the meetings of the group's nine members. The idea for the group came from Sarkozy in 2007, who suggested that the group tackled the question of Europe's frontiers, however, now it will focus on key strategic questions for the period between 2020 and 2030.

Key issues include the strengthening of economy and social responsibility, the rule of law and sustainable development, as well as global stability, migrations, energy and climate change. The group will consider in its work the possible developments within and outside the EU.

The group will do its work independently in a way it will find appropriate, and will present its first report to the European Council in June 2010.



French President Nicolas Sarkozy (left) and Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša ahead of the second and final day of the EU summit.

Božo Jasovič of the central bank, Finance Minister Andrej Bajuk and Head of the Treasury and Finance Directorate Stanislava Zadavec Caprirolo (left to right) announcing measures to relieve financial turmoil.



Slovenia Provides EUR 8bn in bank guarantees

The Finance Ministry has decided to provide EUR 8bn in bank guarantees to shore up Slovenia's financial system. The money would be made available to financial institutions on a per need basis.

The Finance Ministry took the measure together with the Bank of Slovenia and other financial regulators in Slovenia on 22 October. The measure, with which EUR 8bn in guarantees will be provided to finance domestic loan institutions, is valid immediately and will be in place until the end of 2009. It comes amidst a drying up of credit around the world. »The problem is that one of the key sources of financing, the wholesale market abroad, is frozen at the moment,« said Bajuk as he outlined the measure. The Finance Ministry has also proposed further changes to the public finance act that would enable the government to loan and provide capital to domestic loan institutions, insurers, reinsurers and pension funds. The whole package has been sent to the government for confirmation, although the bank guarantees are already valid. The other measures would be used if required. He explained the measures follow similar steps taken by other countries of the EU and the eurozone, only that they are tailored to Slovenia's needs. He said they were designed to bolster confidence in the Slovenian financial system at a time of global financial turmoil. The latest series of measures follows the introduction of unlimited deposit guarantees for individuals and small companies on 14 October. The measures were coordinated among a special group of financial wise men, who met last Friday. Apart from the Finance Ministry and Banka Slovenije, the group includes the Insurance Supervision Agency, the Securities Market Agency, and two of the top economic advisers in the likely next government, Mitja Gaspari and Franc Križanič.

MANAGERS CALL FOR STATE GUARANTEES OF BANKS' FOREIGN LIABILITIES

The Slovenian Managers' Association on 21 October called on institutions responsible for the Slovenian financial system to start thinking about providing state guarantees for the foreign liabilities of Slovenian banks. The association's president Franjo Bobinac said in a written statement that the managers wanted to encourage and support the institutions to adopt in the shortest possible time measures addressing the financial crisis. The measures should also keep in mind the needs of the real sector. "As an appropriate substantive solution to the uncertain situation, we propose thinking in the direction of a state guarantee on the loans of Slovenian banks obtained on the international market and from foreign institutions," Bobinac wrote. This would enable "the existing credit lines to be reprogrammed and release the bank's credit activities in relation to Slovenian companies". The association notes that the consequences of the financial crisis are being reflected in the real economy through a lack of access to new sources of financing and through rising interest rates, which affects the refinancing of existing credit lines.

COMPANIES FEELING IMPACT OF CRISIS, ADOPTING MEASURES

The first reactions of Slovenian companies to the global financial crisis are marked by reserved optimism, they however also contain warnings that the impact may become more serious if the turmoil persists. Some companies are already feeling the impact of the crisis and are looking for solutions. Beverage group Pivovarna Laško for instance said that the crisis had so far not been seriously reflected in the groups' business. This could change if the business conditions continue to deteriorate and cause problems in financing. The negative developments on capital and financial markets however have contributed indirectly to poorer results. The group expects that the drop in purchasing power could result in less demand. The Istrabenz holding on the other hand said that its business is affected by the unstable prices of fuels and raw materials, delayed payments, the slide in the value of shares on stock markets, and stricter conditions for external financing. "In the area of food there has been a substantial price hike for certain important groups of raw materials, the effects of which we have tried to mitigate through forward contracts. We avoided a substantial impact on business results by economising and partly adapting sales prices," Istrabenz said in a press release. Logistics group Intereuropa believes the crisis will affect all the factors of future business. It expects a drop in demand for land transport services, planning to make up for the shortfall on Western European markets by focusing more on eastern and southeastern markets, where relatively high growth should persist. "Given the intensity of the financial crisis and its impact on the logistics sector, the geography of the company's market and interest rate trends, we are preparing several scenarios for measures, which will be presented in more detail in the business plan for 2009," the company said. Also having to deal with the crisis is Slovenia's largest reinsurer Sava Re. The company says that despite its conservative investment policy, the crisis is having a direct impact on its investment portfolio and indirectly on its reinsurance activities. It adds that more problems could come in case of a deeper recession, which would have a negative impact on business activities and thereby on market opportunities for insurance.



Franjo Bobinac.

18 October - EU Anti- Trafficking Day

Sandi Čurin- National
Coordinator for combating
trafficking in human beings

Trafficking in human beings is becoming increasingly identified and is one of the priority topics on the list of discussions of each country, in developed countries and transition countries. The importance of action against trafficking in human beings is ascribable to the initiatives of international organisations, which have stimulated long-lasting but persistent shifts also in this field by using different mechanisms. This is particularly reflected in establishing adequate mechanisms to combat trafficking in human beings, as well in increased awareness of the people facing these issues.

Despite the fact that trafficking in human beings is not a recent problem, the European Union has faced more in last two decades. Additional dimensions in this field appeared during the previously mentioned transition of eastern European countries and consequent opening of borders. However, numerous activities have contributed to the more identified phenomenon today.

The Republic of Slovenia started to participate actively in the fight against trafficking in human beings as early as 2001 by forming an Inter-ministerial Working Group (MDS) and appointing a national coordinator as the head of the group. With development and increasing numbers of tasks, the role of MDS and national coordinator focused on the coordinated and active operation of all national actors in this field.

Readiness and political will on this issue was thus demonstrated. Establishing such coordinating mechanisms is at the same time the basis for formulating Action Plans, which have been amended and upgraded through the years. The current Action Plan for the period 2008–2009 was approved by the Government of Slovenia in July 2007. Besides the numerous envisaged activities of the law enforcement bodies, financially assessed projects implemented by non-governmental organisations (NGO) selected by public tender are of key significance. NGOs play an important role in

preventive programmes and in the programmes of assistance for victims of trafficking.

The high importance of good cooperation between the government and non-government sector should be emphasised, both at the operational level and in planning and designing common measures and activities. On the basis of this, the current Action Plan is designed as the continuation of good practice particularly of those projects that proved to be efficient and need to be continued due to the nature of the work.

It has been in the legislative field absolutely that the most important achievements have been accomplished. Trafficking in human beings is thus as a new specified criminal offence, as defined by amendment to the Penal Code in 2004. Article 397.a summarises the provisions of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementary to the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organised Crime. Slovenia ratified both international documents in 2004. Similarly, in the field of the status regulation of victims, some amendments or additions to the Aliens Act were implemented, envisaging measures and procedures with victims of trafficking (citizens of third countries), including a three-month period of recovery and the possibility of obtaining a temporary residence permit. Thus, in this section, the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings currently in the process of ratification, have been fully implemented.

Upgrading knowledge and training personnel in State institutions facing such issues in their work is of continuing importance in preventing trafficking in human beings. Preventive measures are considerably among the more creative, and are directed towards changing the trends of trafficking. Information on all these activities and the measures Slovenia is taking to combat trafficking in human beings is available on the web page of the Ministry of the Interior, http://www.vlada.si/delo_vlade/projekti/boj_trgovina_z_ljudmi, which also indicates the transparency of the topic and its introduction to the general public.

The listed achievements and positive results can quickly become transitory. New trends and forms of trafficking demand more effective solutions and the interconnection of all key actors against this deviation phenomenon of modern society. The realisation of some useful European Commission Recommendations, particularly in the procedures for victim identification and the assessment of measurements being implemented at the national level, are important factors in the continuation and upgrading of each country's activity.



**NATIONAL WORKING GROUP
ON COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

Text: VESNA ŽARKOVIČ, Photo: Primož Lavre



Dr Peter Verlič, State Secretary at the Ministry of Transport: It is almost obvious that Slovenia will have to introduce vignettes for shorter periods

Next year Slovenia will probably introduce vignettes for a period shorter than half and one year. Now it is clear that the system is financially sustainable and the introduction of vignettes for shorter periods will not affect the system, announced Janez Janša, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia.

THE INTRODUCTION OF ONLY HALF-YEARLY AND YEARLY VIGNETTES IN SLOVENIA WAS THE BASIS FOR THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION DECISION ON 2 OCTOBER, WHICH IN THE FIRST FORMAL NOTICE, WARNED SLOVENIA TO STOP DISCRIMINATORY TREATMENT OF OTHER EU CITIZENS OR FOREIGN RESIDENTS WHO USE SLOVENIAN MOTORWAYS ONLY OCCASIONALLY. NAMELY, IT ASSESSED THAT THE LATTER ARE IN A LESS FAVOURABLE SITUATION THAN SLOVENIANS DUE TO DISPROPORTIONATE TOLLS FOR TRANSIT OR SHORT-TERM USE OF MOTORWAYS. HOW WOULD YOU COMMENT ON THESE REPROACHES?

This dilemma is now considerably less significant than a while ago, when the system was introduced. Upon implementation of vignette toll collection on 1 July, Slovenia took a risk on the basis of available calculations. Now we will see how much additional margin of discretion there is; changes will, if necessary, come into force next year. Let me also explain that Slovenia, which sent the European Commission a request to extend the reply deadline from one to two months due to the change of government, introduced the vignette system for toll collection for private vehicles and motorcycles on 1 July. This year, only a half-yearly vignette is available, for which private vehicle drivers have to pay 35 euros and motorcycle drivers 17.50 euros. According to the current regime, purchase of yearly vignettes will be possible next year.

By the end of September DARS, Motorway Company in the Republic of Slovenia – with 2.2 million vignettes sold – had made 61 million euros, and including tolls collected, almost 177 million euros this year. They claim that if we keep this system and introduce only a 10-day vignette at 15 euros, it would mean a drop of revenue of 20 million, or one fifth.

HOW DID SLOVENIA DEFEND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF VIGNETTES?

With arguments that this measure in no way discriminates on the basis of citizenship; that it does not limit free movement of persons within the EU internal market, and that it does not affect access of foreign citizens to the markets of other Member States, and it cannot prevent or limit access to the territory of Slovenia or

INTERVIEW

movement in the territory of internal market. In addition, Slovenia also emphasises the positive effects of implementing vignettes in ensuring higher traffic flow capacity, reducing queues at toll stations, reducing traffic on secondary roads, protecting the environment, etc.

Vignettes are valid both for domestic as well as foreign users, and the implementation of vignettes brought to Slovenia exactly what the government wanted - among other things, the positive effects this year in the summer season were also felt by foreign tourists.

We are of the opinion that Slovenia does not treat foreign citizens unequally compared to its own citizens. It is neither direct nor indirect discrimination, because the implementation of vignettes does not establish criteria which could be fulfilled only by domestic or by foreign citizens and would therefore lead to possible discrimination.

The criteria are the same for everybody, and the requirement to drive on Slovenian motorways is the purchase of a vignette at a price which is the same regardless of citizenship. The fact that the system is more favourable for those who drive more than for those who drive less does not lead to the conclusion that it is more favourable for domestic and less favourable for foreign citizens.

A relatively high proportion of foreign users use the Slovenian motorway network quite often, therefore especially for them, the implementation of vignettes with regard to its low price represents an improvement of the situation. On the other hand, a high proportion of Slovenian citizens use the motorway network only occasionally.

On the Gorenjska motorway alone, for example, traffic increased by 12,000 vehicles per day. Before, drivers used secondary roads to avoid payment. That now means that many fewer vehicles on secondary roads, which increases traffic safety.

Let me also say that a vignette represents the time lease of a route. Already as a measure allowed by the EC, a vignette is not the most optimal; a vignette will be fairest when we pay according to the kilometres actually driven. Also, the price represents a proportional measure, which means that the half-yearly price is proportional to toll payment. If you drive to Croatia, you will pay for one toll as much as for a half-yearly vignette here.

I think that the very purpose of introducing vignettes, to achieve the objectives of the European Union for a freer flow on the motorways, was the first step towards toll collection in free flow, which vignettes certainly are until the implementation of electronic toll collection.

WHEN WILL THAT BE IMPLEMENTED?

We wish to be the first in Europe to implement electronic toll collection, which is based on a common system, so it would be good if other countries start to introduce it in the same time. Namely, the toll system is so intertwined that it would be cheaper for users if the system were be more unified. Unfortunately, the EC is late with the Galileo project and with the directive on setting up electronic systems.

The system should start to operate in 2010; the EC envisaged these measures already in a directive in 2008. I believe it is good that Slovenia is ambitious regarding that, to be the first country in the EU. We hope it will encourage other countries.

If more of them set up a system together, the system could be cheaper for all users. Slovenian professionals wish to be active one in this field.

One of the biggest arguments for implementing satellite system is to provide the highest possible traffic flow and the lowest possible air pollution.

CUSTOMS OFFICERS ISSUED 1896 FIXED PENALTY NOTICES FOR VIGNETTES IN THE TOURIST SEASON

During the tourist season, the Customs Administration of the RS intensified their checks on vignettes, from July to 9 September issuing 1896 fixed penalty notices and 934 warnings.

11 mobile units and the customs officers at the Obrežje border crossing were directly included in this activity. At all other border crossings with Croatia, customs officers provided all required logistics support, including the distribution of informative pamphlets on the use of vignettes.

In 106 especially organised actions, mobile units most often stopped drivers at motorway rest areas, petrol stations, toll stations and certain former border crossings on the western border: Šentilj, Karavanke, Fernetiči, Vrtojba and Škofije.

Since the tourist season, the customs service no longer organises special actions intended solely to control the use of vignettes; this role is performed within its otherwise regular work.

As is well known, the amendment of the Public Law Act, which implemented the compulsory use of vignettes for journeys on toll roads on 1 July this year, authorised oversight, in addition to that by the Transport Inspectorate of the RS and the police, by the Customs Administration.



Text: DANILA GOLOB, Photo: STA



LJUBLJANA POWER PLANT TO BURN WOOD BIOMASS

The TE-TOL cogeneration plant in Ljubljana will test-run in October and launch in November the burning of wood biomass for the production of district heat and electricity, TE-TOL director Blaž Košorok said. The EUR 10m project will enable the plant to burn 150,000 cubic metres of biomass a year, substituting 32,000 tonnes of coal and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 59,000 tonnes.

The share of energy produced from biomass will meanwhile stand at 7% of the total output. The project is part of the company's development strategy through 2020. In line with the strategy, TE-TOL has launched an extensive investment cycle aimed at gradually reducing the consumption of coal and switching to more environmentally friendly technologies by 2020. The plant also plans to construct a gas steam unit, which will represent a partial transition to natural gas and diversification of energy sources, as TE-TOL will be using two or three different energy sources. According to TE-TOL, the unit is expected to more than double the production of electricity (from 400 GWh to 900 GWh) and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It is expected to be operable in 2012. Half of the project, estimated at EUR 106m, will be funded with a loan from the European Investment Bank, and 30% will be loaned from commercial banks, while TE-TOL will cover the remaining 20% with its own funds. Another project is burning municipal solid waste and sludge from wastewater treatment plants in cooperation with the Ljubljana utility company Snaga, energy utility Energetika Ljubljana, utility company VO-KA, public holding Ljubljana and the Ljubljana municipality.

HOPE FOR HAULIERS IN A SPECIAL SLOVENIAN-ITALIAN COMMISSION

Representatives of Slovenian and Italian hauliers, transport ministries and oversight authorities agreed at a meeting in Nova Gorica on 16 September to form a joint working group to help Slovenian and Italian hauliers solve a number of problems in transit traffic. The participants agreed to intensify their cooperation in tackling the most pressing problems and to inform each other of legislation changes in their country, Bojan Pečnik, secretary

of the transport section at the Slovenian Chamber of Craft, said after the meeting. Slovenian Transport Ministry official Bogdan Potokar pointed out the recent problems of Slovenian hauliers when Italian authorities issued fines to hauliers without CEMPT permits, although they are not necessary for transit transport. This problem has been solved, but there are still differences in transport traffic regulations and differences in fines, he said. The joint commission will thus send the European Commission an initiative to level the normative and penal policies for transport throughout Europe, said Francesco Del Boca, the president of the Italian hauliers' association Confartigiano, who is also the president of a European hauliers' association. Potokar explained that because work in this field has slowed down during the French EU Presidency, the uncertainties between Slovenia and Italy would now be dealt with bilaterally. According to Pečnik, it is in the interest of both sides not to hinder European standard transport unless necessary. What Slovenian hauliers find the most irrational are truck confiscations for minor offences and unreasonably long proceedings in Italy, Pečnik added.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CONFERS TWO GOLDEN BEST INNOVATION AWARDS

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GZS) conferred on 17 September golden awards for the best innovations in Slovenia in 2007 to steel manufacturer Acroni and Hidria Institute Klima. The Jesenice-based Acroni received the award for the development of invar nickel alloys, while Hidria Institute Klima, a research and development division of the Hidria industrial conglomerate, was honoured for its axial fan blade with uneven pressure and suction area. The key elements of innovation are individuals who bring fresh ideas, creative unrest, improvements and solutions to companies, said GZS chair Zdenko Pavček. He added that government should create a more entrepreneurship-friendly environment. Economy Minister Andrej Vizjak meanwhile said that although some progress has been made in the field, the process needs to be continued. The chamber also conferred 20 silver awards, 11 bronze awards and 7 diplomas. The sixth competition for best innovation saw some 300 innovators enter more than 170 innovations.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL DISCUSSES ITS FUTURE ROLE



Development Minister Žiga Turk.

The Sustainable Development Council, a government consultative body, discussed on 17 September the sustainability package of the European Commission and the council's future role. Its head, Development Minister Žiga Turk, said that the council wanted to gain importance and be influential both in the government and in the public. The council adopted a resolution proposing to the next government to open discussion on reforming the body, its future role and its position in decision-making procedures so that the principles of sustainable development are taken into account in key strategic decisions. »Sustainable development is a topic which can expect strong support from NGOs and commercial, craft and other chambers. This is also a topic which requires a change of certain policies,« Turk said before the session. Regarding the sustainability package of the European Commission, Turk said that it represented a strategy of the European Commission for a comprehensive approach to promoting and implementing the principles of sustainable consumption and production in practice. The council members also discussed a study of the long-term energy balance until 2030 and the project Energija.si, whose main purpose is the promotion of efficient energy use and which includes an upgraded Web application that calculates CO2 emissions. The study, which was made by the Energy Efficiency Centre of the Jožef Stefan research institute, indicates possible development of the use of energy and the energy sector through 2030 at higher and lower economic growth rates. The main conclusions of the study show that Slovenia is very unlikely to reach the objectives of the Kyoto Protocol, nor those envisaged in the energy and climate change package. The council called on the government to create a comprehensive strategy of response to climate change and Slovenia's transition to a low-carbon society. The session was attended by representatives of the environment, agriculture, labour and economy ministries, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry, Chamber of Craft, trade unions, the Slovenian Employers' Association and NGOs.

PROSPERITY REMAINS OBJECTIVE OF LISBON STRATEGY, MINISTER SAYS

Development Minister Žiga Turk presented on 18 September the government's draft reform programme for the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy in Slovenia until 2010, saying »prosperity remains the goal of the strategy. ... The condition for it is economic growth, which needs to be propelled by a competitive economy,« he added. The draft, adopted on 17 September and now to be discussed by the National Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, will be forwarded to the European Commission by 15 October. »We have written a good paper, comparable to other documents of this sort in the EU, which is a good basis for taking on forthcoming challenges. We do, however, allow for the possibility that the new government would supplement or correct it,« Turk said in Ljubljana. According to the minister, the modernised programme gives more weight to knowledge and creativity. At the same time, it preserves the goal of increasing the share of renewables from 16% to 25%. »The government needs to draw up a comprehensive strategic project to gear up for climate change,« Turk said. Meanwhile, he sees the economic slowdown as an opportunity to strengthen the key elements of the economy and thereby await the next growth spurt with a better economic structure, one that will draw more strongly on knowledge and creativity and use the opportunities brought by climate change, the information revolution and globalisation. In the first cycle of the revised Lisbon Strategy (2005–2008), Slovenia has done a lot in terms of economic and social reform, whereas in the coming years it will be necessary to focus on continuing

and speeding up the implementation of the reforms, Turk said. »The development level reached 89% of the EU average in 2007; economic growth, at 6.8% in 2007 according to the latest data, was the highest in recent years,« he stressed. The new programme for 2008–2010 tries to connect three key factors necessary for meeting the Lisbon objectives. »If we manage to connect the use of information and communication technologies, the facilitation of creative technologies and an effective economy ... we will be able to meet the goals of sustainable development,« the development minister added.

SLOVENIAN-ROMANIAN COMMISSION DISCUSSES ECONOMIC COOPERATION

A joint Slovenian-Romanian commission for economic cooperation, meeting in Romania's capital Bucharest on 18 September, assessed cooperation in trade, investment, industry, energy, tourism and transport, establishing that there are still many opportunities for trade between the countries. The commission agreed that cooperation in the services sector was strong, as there was an over 70% rise in that area between 2006 and 2007. The sides also agreed they would work together in establishing a regional energy market. The commission also discussed the air route between the countries' capitals which opened at the end of April, and further cooperation between port operator Luka Koper and the Romanian port Constanta, which signed a cooperation agreement in May. Romania expressed its wish to exchange experience in the car industry, industrial policy and the phasing of EU funds. The Slovenian Public Agency for Entrepreneurship and Foreign Investment (JAPTI) meanwhile presented Slovenia's experience in internationalisation and foreign investment and suggested that JAPTI hold regular monthly meetings with the Romanian Trade Promotion Centre. Slovenia also presented the initiative of the NGO Slovenian Convention Bureau, which will organise the first South Eastern European bourse for congress tourism in January.

MINISTRY PUBLISHES TENDER FOR R&D FUNDS FOR SMALL COMPANIES

The Economy Ministry published on 19 September in the Official Gazette a public tender for direct initiatives for research and development in micro, small and medium-size enterprises. The tender is worth around EUR 8m, which should be spent in 2009 and 2010. Economy Minister Andrej Vizjak said that the purpose of the tender was to encourage companies to invest more of their own funds in research towards technological development and innovation so they would boost their competitive position on the home and foreign markets. The European Regional Development Fund will secure EUR 6.8m for the tender, while the remaining amount will be provided from the national budget. The tender, carried out by the Public Agency for Entrepreneurship and Foreign Investment (JAPTI), will be open for applications between 22 October and 22 December. According to Vizjak, the tender is an important incentive for companies on their way to achieving higher added value and strengthening their innovation and competitive potential. He added that emphasis would be put on projects from the areas of industrial research and experimental development. The head of the Directorate for Entrepreneurship and Competitiveness, Miran Pleterski, said that the ministry had paid particular attention to the needs of micro, small and medium-size enterprises in the area of R&D. "These measures are a part of industrial policy," he said.

ANOTHER STEP MADE TOWARDS COMPLETION OF NORTHERN MOTORWAY



Transport Minister Radovan Žerjav.

A 10km motorway section between Vrba and Peračica in NW Slovenia, valued at EUR 114.3m, was opened on 22 September; this marks a step towards the completion of the 70km southbound motorway from Austria. The motorway is expected to be wrapped up in 2010, when the final stretch is to replace the 2.4km bottleneck between Peračica and Podtabor. »I'm happy that we are putting together the 'Slovenian motorway cross' piece by piece, and the Vrba-Peračica section is certainly one of the most important sections,« Transport Minister Radovan Žerjav said at the opening. He admitted that the construction of the motorway network could have been carried out even better, and expressed hope that things will improve in the future, regardless of who is to be the next transport minister. Tomislav Nemeč, the chairman of the national motorway company DARS, said that the company had recently drafted a public tender for the construction of a 2.4km section between Peračica and Podtabor, which is expected to be published in the following days. The EUR 25m investment, which includes reconstruction of three viaducts and a tunnel, is expected to be finalised before the 2010 summer tourist season as the last piece in the puzzle, said Nemeč.

NKBM SUPERVISORS ENDORSE CAPITAL INCREASE

The supervisory board of Slovenia's second largest bank, NKBM, endorsed on 22 September the bank's capital increase and set the price for the new shares at EUR 19.5. The bank will collect subscriptions for up to 5.7m stocks between 24 September and 8 October. The existing owners will have preference in acquiring new shares in proportion to their stakes in the bank. Individuals and companies from Slovenia and well-informed investors from abroad will also have the chance to participate in the capital increase. Trading with the new stocks is expected to begin on 29 October, management member Manja Skerlišak said. She added that all subscribers will have an equal chance to buy stocks regardless of the date of the subscription. Supervisory board chair Franc Škufca said that the capital injection was necessary because of the bank's growth. He also called on small shareholders to buy new shares so that the bank would retain its current ownership structure or even increase the number of owners. Škufca added that the bank's policy regarding dividends should become more friendly towards small shareholders. The bank's CEO, Matjaž Kovačič, said that NKBM is the only Slovenian bank that had

not received a capital injection in the last 15 years. According to him, the bank will spend the acquired funds for its regular operations, assuring capital adequacy, growth and takeovers of financial institutions in line with its strategic development plans. Asked about the expected demand for the stocks considering the current fall of the bank's shares, Kovačič said that the bank has operated successfully and that investing in its shares could be a good decision.

TELEKOM PLANS TO POST QUARTER OF ITS PROFIT ABROAD BY 2010

The CEO of national telco Telekom Slovenije, Bojan Dremelj, said in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 24 September that the company currently generates 10% of its revenues and 5% of pre-tax profit on foreign markets. Telekom expects the share of revenues and pre-tax profit posted abroad to increase in the next two years to 20% and 25%, respectively. Dremelj said before opening the new premises of Telekom Bosnian subsidiary Aneks, a provider of fixed telephony, that the company had managed to achieve such results with intensive expansion in the region, including Bosnia and Herzegovina. He also announced Telekom's participation in the privatisation of Bosnian telecom incumbent BH Telecom when the tender is published, and boosting of its presence in the Serb entity. In Republika Srpska, Telekom is the owner of Aneks, ISP Blic.net and cable TV operator Netkom. The trio has become the biggest alternative provider of advanced and comprehensive broadband services, with a 30% market share in the entity. Aneks is expected this year to post about EUR 12m in revenues and EUR 1m in net profit.

SLOVENIA GETS HYDROGEN TECHNOLOGIES CENTRE



Five companies and two research institutes founded the Development Centre for Hydrogen Technologies on 24 September in a bid to boost research, development and realisation projects in the field of hydrogen and fuel cells. The contract was signed by the fuel retailer Petrol, electronics company Domel, informatics, energy and automation company INEA, technical gas producer and retailer TPJ, research and development company Mebius, Slovenia's prime scientific institution Jožef Stefan Institute, and the Ljubljana Chemical Institute. The main goal of the new centre is to link industry and institute-based knowledge capacities, said the acting director of the newly founded centre, Matjaž Čemažar. Other goals include providing conditions for the transfer of expertise, stimulating lasting cooperation between research and the business sector, influencing state development policies, organising expert meetings on hydrogen technology, and increasing the competitiveness of Slovenian companies and institutions in the long term, he added. According to Čemažar, hydrogen technology is currently used in constant power supply systems, where the fuel cell technology is so developed it is also economically close to conventional solutions. An example of such a system in Slovenia is in a military building in Grosuplje, and there are active talks to bring more systems of that kind to Slovenia. Hydrogen technology can also be used in transport, Čemažar explained, and added that the car industry would probably be the one to give this technology the biggest boost. One of the signatories, Petrol CEO Marko Kryžanowski, stressed that despite the fact that Slovenia has taken on high standards and commitments in providing alternative energy resources, these still cannot compete with other energy sources, especially fossil fuels, as the legislation does not promote the use of renewables.

SLOVENIA SEES 5% MORE TOURISTS IN AUGUST

Slovenian tourist resorts saw 392,120 tourists in August, which is a 5% increase year on year. In the first eight months of 2008, the number of tourists in the country increased by 4% to 1,955,084. The number of Slovenian guests increased by 12% to 125,458 in August, while the number of foreign guests increased 2% to 266,662. In the first eight months, the number of domestic visitors saw an increase of 6% to 688,742, with the number of foreign tourists rising by 3% to 1,266,342. About 1,304,072 overnight stays were registered in August, which is up 2% year-on-year. The number of Slovenian tourists rose by 5% to 507,542, while the number of foreign guests stayed the same as last year (796,530). In the first eight months of 2008, the number of overnight stays increased by 2% to 6,123,966, with the number of domestic guests up by 4% to 2,571,920 and foreign guests by 1% to 3,552,046. Foreign guests made up for about 58% of all overnight stays in the first eight months of 2008. Broken down by country of origin, Italian, Austrian and German guests made up the majority in August, followed by tourists from Croatia and the United Kingdom.

CONFERENCE STRESSES IMPORTANCE OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Concern for workers, local communities and the environment were the key topics of a conference on corporate social responsibility and cooperation with the non-governmental sector, organised in Ljubljana on 26 September by the U.S. Embassy. Samo Hribar Milič, the director general of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GZS), which hosted the event, told participants that social responsibility is present in Slovenian companies, but not



to the extent desired. He stressed that businesses also need to be aware that responsibility does not only mean making profits, but also caring for the environment, people and community life. According to him, many companies outside Ljubljana subscribe to corporate social responsibility, getting involved in the cultural and social life in their regions. They moreover fund sports activities, infrastructure and environment projects. U.S. Ambassador to Slovenia Yousif B. Ghafari said that in the United States small and medium-size enterprises often overlook corporate social responsibility. He would like to see this changed, since SMEs can play a much stronger role in local communities than larger companies. He added there were many ways in which companies could contribute socially. They can make donations to different sectors, or collect funds in other ways, through various foundations. Louise Stanton of the British Embassy, on the other hand, stressed that corporate social responsibility was not only about money. Instead of money, companies can also invest their time or the time of their employees and managers into local communities. Anita Hrast, the director of the Institute for Development of Corporate Social Responsibility, said that since 2004 the concept has made good progress in Slovenia in terms of raising awareness, while there is still room for improvement in its implementation. She added that donations and sponsorships were the forms of corporate social responsibility most common in Slovenia.

DEVELOPMENT MINISTER EMPHASISES ENERGY PROBLEMS AT SEMINAR

On 1 October, Development Minister Žiga Turk addressed a seminar on energy efficiency dubbed »Efficient with Energy 008«, saying that the biggest energy problems included reliability of the supply and sources of energy, fluctuation of energy prices, and issues related to the environment and climate change. He added that the Government Office for Growth had made a review of research policies and a comparison between Slovenia and the rest of the world. The office found that Slovenia lags behind in investing into R&D in the share related to energy and efficient use of energy, said Turk. »The Competitiveness Council is trying to close the gap and is planning a new research agenda for Slovenia, which will also include energy, efficient use of energy and renewable energy sources,« said the minister. According to him, Slovenia's strategy should support industries dealing with technologies of the third industrial revolution – renewable energy sources and energy efficiency. The energy strategy should also support R&D in this area, encourage investment in such industries and accept all these challenges as an opportunity for development and growth, added Turk. He believes that the recent global financial crisis also has a brighter side when it comes to the use of energy. When it is harder to get loans and attract investors, investment in the area of energy and climate change becomes more rational, said the

minister. According to Jože Renar of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GZS), energy is included in the white paper for greater competitiveness of the Slovenian economy, which the GZS confirmed in April. The seven measures emphasised in the white paper include increased support for R&D projects in the field of efficient use of energy and renewable energy sources, and provision of competitive conditions for the electricity supply for industry. Slovenian companies last year spent EUR 1.5bn on energy, and industry used EUR 960m, while manufacturing consumed EUR 767m in energy, said Renar, adding that the cost will rise next year. According to him, there were 210 companies in Slovenia which spent more than EUR 1m on energy last year, and this number is expected to rise by about 10% next year.

READER'S DIGEST HONOURS SLOVENIA'S TRUSTED BRANDS

Publisher Reader's Digest has recognised the winners of its second Trusted Brands study in Slovenia, which looks at the brands most trusted by consumers. Among the winning brands are Slovenian home appliances maker Gorenje, car maker Renault and mobile phone producer Nokia. Other winners include NLB bank, Kompas tourist agency, retailer Mercator, news portal 24ur, mobile operator Mobitel, Internet provider Siol, pain killer Lekadol, Head and Shoulders shampoos, body-care brand Nivea, Milka sweets, mineral water Zala and Barcaffè coffee, as well as Reader's Digest partner Mladinska knjiga. Trusted Brand identifies by country the brands consumers say they trust the most, and places them in 38 different categories of products. The study is one of the largest consumer surveys in Europe and includes 15 countries. The Slovenian part of the study polled 951 respondents and was carried out by Media Research Institute. The study was carried out for the eighth time in a row, and the second time in Slovenia. It also enables intercultural comparisons, as 20 categories are identical in all 15 countries. Other categories are chosen locally.

PRO PLUS BOSS WINS MANAGER OF 2008 AWARD

On 2 October, the Managers' Association of Slovenia (MAS) conferred in Maribor the Manager of the Year Award on Marijan Jurenc, general manager of Pro Plus, the company owning both leading commercial TV stations in Slovenia, POP TV and Kanal A. Marijan Jurenc is a co-founder of Pro Plus and has been its manager since 1995. The company was founded as a joint venture of two Slovenian TV stations and the U.S. media corporation CME, which invests in local commercial TV projects in Central and Eastern Europe. Jurenc has been the CME director for the Adriatic region since 2005 and is also a member of the CME board of directors. Since September, he has been chairing the company's group for Internet, which includes all general and finance directors of the CME Internet units. He is also the vice-president of the Association of Commercial Television in Europe (ACT) and the president of the Slovenian Golf Association. Business magazine Kapital has listed him among the 100 most influential businessmen, and he was named the marketing personality of 2002. Pro Plus owns POP TV and Kanal A, news portal 24ur.com, nonlinear television pop.tv.si, numerous specialised websites, and one fifth of the local TV station TV Pika. In 13 years, the company has acquired a 70% share of the country's television marketing. According to AGB Nielsen Media Research polls, Pop TV has the highest rating in Slovenia, while Kanal A is in third place. The Manager of the Year is one of the most prestigious awards in management, conferred on exceptionally successful business

executives with reference to their companies' financial results, their development, the person's long-term care for the company and their leadership competence.

SLOVENIA TO GET ASSISTANCE IN FINANCIAL REPORTING

Slovenia and Switzerland signed an agreement on 3 October under which Switzerland would provide EUR 1.5m Swiss francs (EUR 950,000) for technical assistance aimed at enhancing auditing, public oversight and financial reporting. The training will be conducted by the World Bank. The agreement was signed in Ljubljana by Finance Minister Andrej Bajuk, Swiss Embassy official Annegret Zimmermann and Deputy Director of the Government Office for European Affairs Gregor Krajc. Slovenia has some 130 auditors and 43 auditing firms. Under EU legislation and the auditing act passed in June, the country must enhance the sectors of auditing, public oversight and quality of financial reporting. The project dubbed Financial Reporting is set to do just that. Its costs will be covered by Switzerland as part of its financial obligations in exchange for access to the EU's internal market. The World Bank was put in charge of the project's implementation, while the Slovenian Finance Ministry will oversee the implementation of the project and the use of funds. Krajc also signed an additional agreement with World Bank representative John Hegarty, under which the bank will arrange for the training of personnel and assistance necessary to set up a public oversight system via the new agency for public oversight of auditing. The training by the World Bank will also help the country to establish a public registry of auditors, and provide it with assistance to improve institutional capabilities for the implementation of international accounting standards, internal oversight and final assessment. The training will focus on the acquisition of new expertise on the use of international accounting standards for civil servants in Slovenian oversight institutions. The project will be launched this year and is to run until 2012.

CONFERENCE PROMOTING HYDRO DEVELOPMENT OPENS IN LJUBLJANA

The annual Hydro 2008 conference, which focuses on ways to progress world hydro development, opened in Ljubljana on 6 October. Dams, reservoirs and other water resources are important for green energy supply, said Economy Minister Andrej Vizjak at the opening of the conference, adding that there was a renewed impetus worldwide for hydro-power development in light of global climate change. Hydrology has become increasingly important in Slovenia, not only for its production of hydroelectricity, but also for regulating running water, irrigation and the supply of drinking water, he added. A multi-disciplinary approach towards the development and building of reservoirs is crucial at a time when the world is facing demographic problems and many poor communities are plagued by hunger, poverty and increasing food consumption, Vizjak said. The chairman of the International Committee on Large Dams (ICOLD), Luis Berga, pointed out that more than 1.6 million people in the world have no access to electricity, which is a quarter of the world's population. Hydro 2008 is the 15th annual conference, organised by British event management companies Aqua Media International and NetWork Events in cooperation with the Slovenian Economy Ministry, electricity distributors Holding Slovenske Elektrarne and Gen Energija, and the Slovenian National Committee on Large Dams.

KEMPINSKI PALACE HOTEL OPENED



The landmark Portorož hotel Palace, which has been under renovation since 2006, welcomed its first guests on 12 October, while the opening ceremony was held on 18 October. The refurbishment of the prestigious hotel, now bearing the name Kempinski Palace Portorož, cost EUR 70m. The Kempinski Palace Hotel is a part of the Kempinski chain of high-end hotels, investor Istrabenz Hoteli Portorož said. Istrabenz Hoteli Portorož signed a 20-year management contract for the landmark hotel with Kempinski in June. Kempinski will manage the hotel independently, while the building itself will remain in the hands of Istrabenz.

The Kempinski chain will advertise the hotel through its sales network. Besides hospitality at the highest level, it will also offer

its guests in Portorož attractive wellness services and cuisine. The owners of the hotel, a subsidiary of the Istrabenz holding, view the opening of the hotel as an affirmation of the potential Slovenian tourism has. Built at the turn of the 19th century, the luxurious Palace Hotel was the largest hotel of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It boasted top-of-the-line amenities and a variety of premises for socialising, such as a reception room, a crystal hall and gentlemen's and ladies' salons.

But its splendour since faded – the hotel was last refurbished in 1951 and had been closed since 1990.

SLOVENIAN COMPANIES IN DOW JONES STOXX INDEX FAMILY

A leading international company for stock market indexation, Stoxx Limited, on 7 October launched a new family of indexes for Eastern Europe, which includes the most successful Slovenian companies on the Ljubljana Stock Exchange. With the new indexes, the Slovenian stock issuers will become more recognisable internationally and more important within the region, the Ljubljana Stock Exchange wrote on its website. The new index group of Eastern Europe measures the performance of top stocks traded in 18 countries of Eastern and especially South Eastern Europe. The 13 Slovenian companies in the index are (in order of strength in the index): drug maker Krka, energy group Petrol, conglomerate Sava, telco Telekom Slovenije, retailer Mercator, household appliance maker Gorenje, bank NKBM, beverage group Pivovarna Laško, port operator Luka Koper, conglomerate Istrabenz, coatings maker Helios, shipping firm Intereuropa and airport operator Aerodrom Ljubljana.

CONFERENCE DISCUSSES CONSUMER HABITS AND GLOBALISATION

The biggest challenge that the Slovenian retail sector will have to face in the future is the changeable shopping habits of domestic buyers, participants of a conference dubbed »Triangle of Growth: Buyers, Retailers, Suppliers«, which was organised by the Chamber of Commerce, agreed on 8 October at Brdo pri Kranju. The Slovenian consumer is becoming an increasingly important element in the supplier-retailer-buyer triangle, said Geni Arh of the research company Arhea. More attention should be given to consumers, as their shopping habits are changing, she added. Arh pointed to an increase in the sales of non-food products and services, and added that consumers have become more mobile and better educated, but also less loyal and more unpredictable. They are prepared to put less time and effort into shopping, she added. Retailers have already responded to these changes by turning big shopping malls into entertainment centres on the one hand and reviving small neighbourhood shops on the other. Discount stores and online sales are also becoming more important, Arh said. According to her, suppliers must also react to the situation. In her opinion, the best way to do that is by creating strong brands. Companies decide to move to foreign markets due to a slow-down in the domestic market, explained Igor Maroša of the research company AT Kearny. According to him, the most interesting foreign markets for Slovenian retail are Eastern European and Russian markets. Retail is one of the most important branches of the Slovenian economy. The 23,000 retailers employ 110,000 people, who generate a third of the country's income, Dušan Mramor, the dean of the Ljubljana Faculty of Economics, said. The Slovenian retail sector

has significantly expanded and progressed since the country's independence, he said, pointing to high inflation as one of its biggest challenges. Head of the Chamber of Commerce Bojan Papič pointed out that retail carried no responsibility for the growth of inflation and said that politicians have made it a scapegoat, as putting the blame on farmers or the processing industry would not have a desirable effect on voters in this election year. In terms of profit, Slovenian retail still lags behind Europe; its market concentration is about the same, while the prices of food are much lower in Slovenia than in its neighbouring countries, Papič pointed out. Slovenia should find its own market niche at the global level to succeed there, said Signe Ratso, director of the Directorate-General for Trade at the European Commission. She highlighted the proximity of large markets for goods and services as one of Slovenia's advantages. She moreover said that the biggest challenge the European retail sector faces is climate change, which is what President Danilo Türk also underlined in his welcome address. He also said that the period of economic boom, cheap food and moderate oil prices was over.

SLOVENIA INTRODUCING UNLIMITED DEPOSIT GUARANTEE

Slovenia has introduced an unlimited guarantee on deposits, Finance Minister Andrej Bajuk announced on 8 October. The measure is temporary and will remain in place just until the end of the financial crisis. Bank and savings deposits of individuals, independent entrepreneurs and small businesses will be guaranteed in their full amount for banks operating on the territory of Slovenia. »Slovenian banks do not feel the consequences that we see in the world and in Europe. ... But in a financially interwoven world, Slovenia must retain a comparable level of protection for savers,« Bajuk said. Slovenia is taking its cue from European countries such as Austria, Germany, Hungary, Ireland and Slovakia, which removed the ceiling on guarantees to calm fears and prevent bank runs amidst the worsening financial turmoil. Indeed, Minister Bajuk pointed out that one of the reasons for the move was to keep Slovenia on par in particular with neighbouring EU countries.

D&B PLEASANTLY SURPRISED BY SLOVENIA'S EXPORT PERFORMANCE

International ratings firm Dun&Bradstreet finds in its September report that Slovenia's export performance has remained surprisingly robust given the current global conditions, and is optimistic in its risk assessment for the country. While growth in exports is slowing down, the strength of growth in the first half of 2008 still exceeded the expectations of most analysts, who had pointed to weaker demand in Slovenia's main export markets (primarily the EU) and the strength of the euro, D&B says. The fact that exports defied these circumstances is an indication of the competitiveness that Slovenian exporters have achieved, suggests the report. What is more, fixed capital formations also remained above expectations, considering the turbulence on international markets as well as the domestic and external prospects for economic growth. According to ratings firm I, D&B's Slovenian partner, this indicates that Slovenia could survive the global downturn better off than other EU countries. D&B, which preserved the DB2b rating for Slovenia, moreover finds that inflation has dropped off and does not expect it to increase in the short term.

LOCOMOTIVE TO PROMOTE PROTECTION OF ALPS

An engine carrying motives representing the Alpine Convention, an international agreement aimed at preserving the Alpine ecosystem and promoting sustainable development in the Alps, was inaugurated in Ljubljana on 7 October. The joint campaign of the Slovenian and Austrian environment ministries has two aims; increasing awareness of the significance of rail transport, especially in carrying cargo, and promotion of the Alpine Convention. The locomotive will connect Slovenia and Austria until the end of 2009 and is expected to cover some 180,000 kilometres during this time. The Environment and Spatial Planning Ministry said that the wish of all those who had taken part in the inauguration was that the engine would contribute to strengthening awareness of the importance of sustainable forms of transport and the significance of the Alpine Convention. Traffic is among the most burning issues in the Alps, the ministry added. Their ecosystem is extremely vulnerable and the impact of traffic is bigger than in other areas. Furthermore, the costs of building and maintaining infrastructure in the Alps are also higher. Eight countries (Germany, Austria, France, Monaco, Italy, Liechtenstein, Switzerland and Slovenia) met in 1989 and agreed to form a convention aimed at protecting the Alps. The convention entered into force in November 1991. Slovenia will take over the two-year presidency of the convention's bodies next year. According to the ministry, Slovenia wants to encourage the implementation of the Alpine Convention.





Intra lighting – when lighting contributes to the creation of a building, experiences and feelings

Intra lighting d.o.o – a Slovenian company which stands alongside the largest of the world’s lighting producers.

The company Intra lighting d.o.o. is a leading lighting producer in the region which is continuously winning recognition on the demanding international market with its innovative lighting solutions. In addition to the former Yugoslavia, where they have the largest market share, they also cover the whole of Europe, parts of Asia, and some states in the Middle East, and exporting to Australia and New Zealand. Their guiding principle is to get as close as possible to the wishes and expectations of users who, as well as having a pleasant stay somewhere, also desire quality lighting.

The beginnings of Intra, which has its headquarters in Mirn at Nova Gorica go back to 1989. The company soon outgrew the borders and became an international group with branch offices in Holland which cover the market of the Benelux countries, in Denmark for Scandinavia, and in Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the United Arab Emirates and France. This year, the company can boast of two acquisitions: the company Tim-ing Škofije, and the purchase of production premises in Donji Milanovac in Serbia. As well as being promoted in the most renowned media for interior design, they also boost their recognisability by enrapturing with their innovative products at leading illumination fairs in Frankfurt, Milano and Moscow.

In 2004, as an example of a company which successfully connects high technology production with the creative vision of young designers, in the Month of Design, they received the Success Story of the year award

The company creates top quality product regarding design and technical aspects in cooperation with world famous architects, designers and lighting designers as Sadar Vuga Arhitekti, Gigodesign, Bojan Klančar, Bojan Bitežnik and Asobi, Louis Clair from France, Lars Bylund and Mats Thornom from Norway. They cooperate on a project basis with the University of Ljubljana and IEDC, the Bled School of Management. The result of this cooperation is an interlaced piece of work composed of modern design, uncompromising quality, maximum energy efficiency and high ecological standards that puts them among the top international lighting producers.

The extent of the production programme enables the discovery of optimal solutions that fit the needs of all modern facilities:

- stores, saloons and shopping centres
- business premises and buildings
- cultural and educational institutions
- wellness and entertaining centres

The basic strategy of new product development is also composed of modularity and innovative solutions, and creating lighting solutions with state-of-the-art technology. In the company, all this is realized through the rich production programme, which is continuously upgraded in accordance with the needs of the market and modern trends, and thus are becoming a strategic partner of investors, architects and other key actors in the illumination market.

“To set a goal that is not being realized remains a wish. Achieved goal is what matters most” is just one of the guiding principles that the director of the company, Marino Furlan, follows.



To assure quality products is a very important asset of competitiveness on the market. In Mirno, they developed their own development department, which enables them to quickly respond to the needs of the market, and through which they can precisely monitor new technologies, and trends in design and materials.

In their own laboratory, they carry out various tests, trials and measures, and with the information they gain, they can constantly implement improvements to their lighting. The knowledge is also used as the guiding principle for new product designs. Their offer is upgraded through the creation and design of lighting solutions for public, business and commercial premises and, as well as legal regulations, is also focused on the purpose of the lighting, and the characteristics of the place itself - its size, position and environment. Each solution is therefore unique. Besides their technical completion, their lighting is distinguished by a uniform and recognisable style which ensures the distinctive recognisability of the trademark in a competitive market. The company's vision also follows the direction of trademarks becoming brand names. They decided to invest heavily particularly in design, marketing and support for a while, which is made possible by the best technology and factories equipped with the latest machinery, which enables flexible production and accuracy.

The Intra Studio in Ljubljana, in cooperation with architects and investors, is intended for consulting and the creation of lighting solutions.

In the BTC City shopping centre in Ljubljana, on the first floor of the Diamant (Diamond) building, they have opened a new exhibition and consulting premises called Intra Studio, which exhibits integrated lighting solutions. In five cubes designed by Sadar Vuga Arhitekti d.o.o. there are, next to the extensive offer of lighting and creative lighting solutions, effects exhibited that can be achieved with the use of different sources of light. In this exhibition and consulting premises you can see the entire range of products, and discuss the necessary support for making your ideas

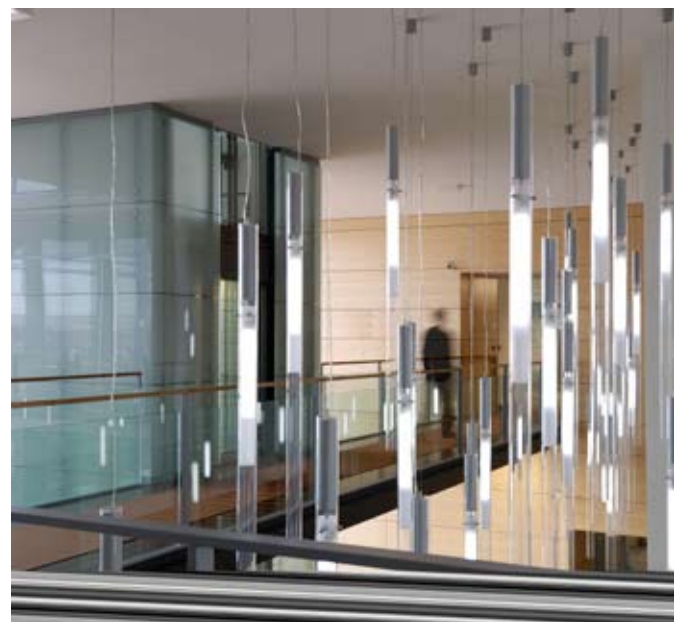
become reality. The effects that are seen in studio offer creative ways of solving lighting challenges, achieved with the use and disposition of different sources of light. Numerous professional lectures are organized here on the future of lighting. A while ago, there was a lecture by an acknowledged Scandinavian lighting designer, who also lectures at the Bergen School of Architecture in Norway, and is director of Eco-Digi City Consulting, a lighting design consultancy in Helsinki, Professor Lars Bylund.

LED technology - the future of lighting - offers a longer lifetime, lower energy consumption and longer durability of the light source.

In intra lightning we are aware that, as in other branches of business, lighting is more and more focused on the search for sources that would lower emissions, and despite the low use of the energy, ensure the greatest possible efficiency. They eagerly follow all the development guidelines, and with an offer of LED lights, are completing their offer of basic lightning. Considering the fast development of LED technology, in the company they are convinced that lighting utilisation rates and the luminosity of LED will be used for basic lightning within 10 years. Today, this technology due to its lower luminosity, is used mainly as secondary lighting, i.e. ambience lighting, which with the use of coloured light and mixing colours creates an excellent atmosphere and dynamics. Compared to other sources of light, LED has quite a few advantages, such as a longer lifetime, lower consumption and the durability of the light source.

“We are aware that stress is an inevitable consequence of the modern way of life. Therefore, in our company, we are encourage open mutual communication and relaxed relations on all levels – vertical and horizontal» said the president of the board Mr Furlan.

The values of the company are always deriving from the persons and relations in the company. The most important values are team work, and transfer of experience to younger co-workers and all new co-workers; they are aware that only with combined power and cooperation is further development possible. An orientation towards a common goal – to follow innovations and trends in technologies, sources of light and materials - is possible only if based on mutual respect and work evaluation. At Intra lightning, due to everything stated above, this is certainly possible.



Text: JOŽE OSTERMAN, Photo: STA



Alan Hranitelj.

EXHIBITION OF COSTUMES BY ALAN HRANITELJ

Alan Hranitelj is the most interesting Slovene costume designer of the last two decades, which is why his ever more frequent exhibitions always attract great attention. At the end of September his exhibition opened in the National Museum entitled briefly 'Autumn, Winter 2008/09', undoubtedly surprising his audience. A mixture of costumes, attire-sculpture and other objects of all kinds and every opportunity were on display - a swirl of ideas and styles expressing his restless and explosively creative nature.

Hranitelj remains rational and realistic. »I know I've matured, but it took me twenty years,« he says. The exhibition is totally unconventional: sculptures are a crossbred with humans and insects, with antennae, tails and wings. They are not just haute couture creations, but at the same time theatre costumes, sculptures, installations, bodies and much more. In a word, it's one of the most thrilling of recent exhibitions.

In the twenty-two years of his active work in Slovenia, Hranitelj has created costumes for 175 theatre shows and 80 other events. At the moment he is working in Canada on the spectacle 'Cirque du Soleil'.

TRIBUTE TO TRUBAR'S ANNIVERSARY IN ITALY

The image and life of Primož Trubar are also connected with places which today lie in Italy. The fifth centennial of the birth of this great Slovene was celebrated in Trieste with the exhibition 'Primož Trubar – the great unknown European'. The exhibition was held at 'Narodni dom' and closed at the end of October. Visitors were able to see facsimiles of Trubar's editions from the 'Narodna in študijska knjižnica' library in Trieste.

A scientific theological symposium was held in Rome in September, organized by the Slovene Theological Academy in Rome and the Institute of Church History at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Ljubljana. Twenty-nine lecturers spoke about Trubar in the six days of the symposium. They discussed Trubar's theological views of sacraments, righteousness, anthropology, church tradition, popular devotions, ethics and the Bible, as well as his pastoral activities and his role today. Trubar was a harsh critic of the Catholic Church of his time, wanting to reform it. The driving force behind his work was his deep faith and love for all Slovene people, which is why most of the time he preached in simple language.



DAYS OF EUROPEAN CULTURAL HERITAGE



At Trubar's home in Rašica, one of the central Slovene cultural venues this year, the 18th Days of European Cultural Heritage were opened in September. A project initiated by the Council of Europe almost two decades ago, it has grown into a broad movement in Slovenia. Museologists, restorers and conservators are presenting and developing their skills, introducing them to numerous visitors. The project has opened the doors of museums and other Slovene institutions protecting the national heritage, significantly increasing the number of visitors and, has especially made history a subject popular among school children. The opening statement was given by the Slovene President Danilo Türk, who described this project as one of the most interesting initiatives in Europe. He accentuated the interesting diversity of European cultures, as well as many common traits which enable the building of bridges between people and nations. In the following ten days numerous events took place around Slovenia which were attended by crowds of visitors.

SLOVENE FILM FESTIVAL IN PORTOROŽ



It is an annual tradition for the Slovene film industry to show its best features in October. It has been burdened for the last few years by deep misunderstandings between the creators and their backers, mostly the Slovenian Film Fund. A seemingly impressive number of 55 films will be presented, selected by Jože Dolmark, from 73 films of various genres, but as Dolmark says, only a few are able to raise the quality of film production and leave their mark. The programme consists of 15 feature films - live action, documentaries and experimental, among them three co-productions - as well as nine shorts (three of them animated) and eleven student films.

The majority of the most well known Slovene filmmakers of the day are screening features – Metod Pevec, Jure Pervanja, Vlado Škafar, Filip Robar Dorin, Vinko Möderndorfer, Vito Taufer, Ema Kugler, Damjan Kozole and others. While Dolmark was pleased that Taufer's and Möderndorfer's films (both are mainly theatre directors) are about dark and disturbing social issues, he was more sceptical about the others, saying that their themes are vague, and enveloped in aestheticism, which reduces the number of »real« films in the presentation.

There are a few treats in the accompanying events we should mention: four decades of the Slovene film archive will be presented, as well as a monograph by Anton Frelih on the director France Štiglic. Filip Robar is writing about the documentaries and Jan Cvitkovič will present his first book of poetry.

THE 'ROŽANC' AWARD GOES TO DUŠAN JOVANOVIČ



One of the most valued Slovene literary awards, the 'Rožanc' award (Rožančeva nagrada), awarded for the best book of essays, this year went to the famous Slovene director, playwright and lately more and more an essayist, Dušan Jovanovič. In his 'The World Is a Play' (Svet je drama) he has published a selection of notes on the dramaticity of human participation in the world and the creation of history. The essays are delivered through the optic of an experienced director who knows one should speak from a certain distance, and judge events prudently, looking for the levers which guide people's acts in the long run.

The jury, composed of Professor Edvard Kovač, Jelka Ciglencečki, Milček Komelj, Manca Košir and Ivo Svetina considered that this collection of notes and essays, most of which were written for the 'Sobotna priloga' supplement of the Delo newspaper, »has become a drama itself and not just a collection of incomplete diversities«.

THE POET TONE PAVČEK CELEBRATES HIS 80TH ANNIVERSARY



One of the most popular Slovene poets, one with an original poetic credo of frisky, bright and joyful songs, Tone Pavček, celebrated his 80th birthday anniversary at the end of September. In his honour, the Slovene National and University Library in Ljubljana opened an exhibition of his work - on view are all his books of poetry, essays, poetry for children, as well as an extensive body of translations. The title of the exhibition, prepared by Tatjana Kovač, is 'Gifts' (Darovi). In his opening speech, academician Matjaž Kmecl analysed the poetry and creative development of Tone Pavček, paying a lot of attention to Pavček's transition from an early vitality into a more melancholy and grave depiction of

life, due to his own experience of the fragility and vulnerability of human happiness and life itself.

Besides his creative work Pavček has pursued a number of important tasks as an editor on the Slovene broadcasting service, in publishing and at the Slovene writers association, as well as participating in the process of Slovenia's attainment of independence. There are only a few people who have contributed so many gifts to the development of Slovene culture and society as Tone Pavček, with his indestructible energy and human warmth.

SLOVENE FILMS AT FESTIVALS HOME AND ABROAD

At the end of September, Slovene film was successfully presented at the Eurofest 2008 film festival in Montreal, with the Slovene director Janez Lapajne winning the 'Crystal Eye' award for the best feature - 'Short Circuits' (Kratki stiki). There was a lot of competition, with entries from nineteen European countries, as well as Canada and the United States. The festival is dedicated to the systematic promotion of Middle and Eastern European film in Canada and the United States.

The 24th international film festival in Warsaw has begun - one of the twenty leading European film festivals, where Slovene films are regularly presented. This year's festival has a total of 153 feature films and 87 short films from 55 countries. Vinko Möderndorfer's feature 'Landscape no. 2' (Pokrajina št.2) was shown in the competition section of 16 films, while Tomo Križnar's and Maja Weiss' documentary 'Darfur - War for Water' (Darfur- Vojna za vodo) was shown in documentary film competition program. Jan Cvitkovič's 'I Know' (Vem) competed in the short film section. In the non-competitive section entitled 'Masters Touch' this year's Slovene Oscar award nominee 'Rooste's Breakfast' (Petelinji zajtrk) by Marko Naberšnik, as well as Janja Glogovac's film 'L for Love' (L kot ljubezen) were shown. In the 'Discoveries' section, Djurić's 'Tractor, Love and Rock'n'roll' (Traktor, ljubezen in rokenrol) was presented.

Maribor hosted the 2nd Children's Film Festival with the well known basketball player Marko Milič as its first ambassador. The films screened were from Belgium, Denmark, France, Latvia, Holland, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand and Slovenia. Among the most interesting were the Spanish 'Nocturna', which in Spain won the Goya Award for best animated film, and the Belgian 'Gilles', which won an award in Belgium.

21ST BIENNIAL OF INDUSTRIAL DESIGN OPENED ITS DOORS

One of the most well known Slovene cultural events which also broke new ground in the European industrial design opened its doors in the Architectural museum with an awards ceremony. The jury awarded a Gold Medal for the funicular railway to the Ljubljana Castle by the architects Miha Kerin and Majda Kregar from the Ambient Company in Ljubljana. A gold medal also went to the booklet '40ish sheets of paper' by Studio Cuculić from Zagreb which brought together in a clever way the world of poetry with a pragmatic commercial concern. An alternative family of free-standing household appliances, Qube White by the designer Tina Jerebek (Gorenje Design Studio), dinner set for hospitals and retirement homes by the designer Gyula Mihaly from Budapest,

3P trekking poles by Igor Ravbar, a boat for touring the Ljubljana river by Jernej Jaroslav Kropce, and the Guardian system for the safe disarmament of explosive ammunition components by Aleks Komel all won BIO Quality Concept awards.

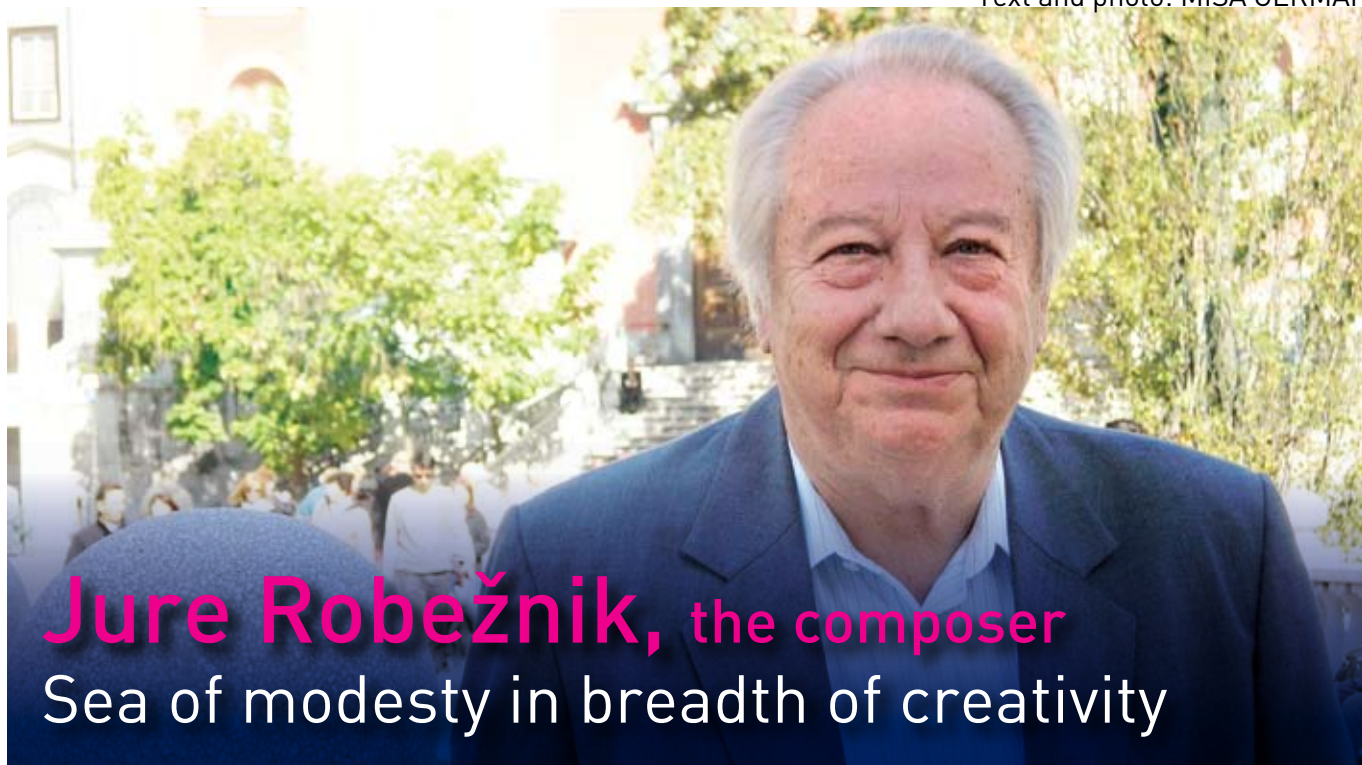
The jury, selecting from 128 entries, also awarded BIO Honourable Mentions and an RTV Slovenia award for work by a student.

DRAGO JANČAR AND BORIS PAHOR ON THE WRITERS' TOUR DE FRANCE

Within the framework of the cultural programme organized in the second part of this year by France, the presiding country of the Council of the European Union, a well known Slovene writer Drago Jančar was presented in the European Writer's Tour de France with translations of his short stories collection 'Joyce's Pupil' and the novel 'Northern Light'.

Jančar began his tour in Paris, where he read his work in the famous theatre Chatelet and in the European House, followed by appearances at the University of Toulouse, at the literary café in the same city and the book fair in Le Mans. In November, another Slovene writer will present his work to French readers, the Trieste-based Boris Pahor, who after becoming recognized in Italy, is becoming more and more acclaimed in Western Europe. Touring France with the two Slovene writers are also great names such as Caludio Magris, Imre Kertesz, Colum McCann, Lidia Jorge and Daniel Kehlmann.





Jure Robežnik, the composer

Sea of modesty in breadth of creativity

Jure Robežnik, who has dedicated all seventy-five years of his life to music, is a gentleman and above all a musician. As a gentleman he expresses himself loudly and clearly, he never speaks ill of other people, and he offers his visitors the best place at the table. He likes to help with the "little-big things", as only a gentleman would. But most of all, he is a musician – there are more than nine hundred adaptations of his copyright songs in the Slovene radio archive and we still cherish and sing his evergreens – 'Orion', 'Lastovke', 'Človek, ki ga ni', 'Maja z biseri', and others. Sometimes he still takes a seat at the piano to play his wife's favourite song, brighten a day for his friends or simply to catch between his fingers a new melody, creating in his mind.

IT SEEMS AS THOUGH YOU ARE A BIT EMBARRASSED BECAUSE THE 'VAL 202' RADIO ORGANISED A CELEBRATION FOR YOUR SEVENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY. CAN YOU TELL US WHY? THEY EXPRESSED THEIR RESPECT AND PAID TRIBUTE TO YOUR MUSICAL WORK.

Well, of course, I was delighted when 'Val 202' paid such great attention to my anniversary. Many of my fellow musicians were with us, along with my family and friends. It is a pleasure to know I did something useful in my life. But every anniversary brings with it a bitter memory of many of my late friends, excellent Slovene musicians, who sadly no longer can enjoy this moment with us.

THE YOUNG GENERATION, NEISHA AND MAGNIFICO AMONG OTHERS, PERFORMED YOUR OLD SONGS IN NEW

ARRANGEMENTS. HOW DID YOU FEEL AS THE AUTHOR - DID YOU LIKE THE NEW STYLE AND THE NEW PERFORMERS, WERE YOU PROUD OF YOUR WORK?

The kindest gift I received was the opportunity to hear these prominent young musicians, Neisha, Magnifico, Mary Rose, record some of my work from previous times in the new style. Songs like 'Presenečenje' (lyrics by Dušan Velkavrh), 'Ti si moja ljubezen' (lyrics by Elza Budau) and 'Vikingi' (lyrics by Miro Košuta) were transformed and reinvented.

It could be said that you are a man, who doesn't love the stage - you are not addicted to the stage, even though you played the piano and vibraphone and wrote a number of songs.

Maybe the path of my life really was a bit different. When I was young, I wasn't even sure I was going to be a musician. But then it happened that way, and although I must say I'm not unambitious, it is not my nature to push myself to the front. I never felt good at the front of the stage, but some of my colleagues were born for that spot (cheerfully).

WERE YOU NEVER JEALOUS OF YOUR MUSICAL COLLEAGUES WHO CONDUCTED AN ORCHESTRA THROUGH THEIR OWN SONGS? YOU NEVER WANTED THIS OPPORTUNITY FOR YOURSELF?

Never, the idea never even crossed my mind, even though there would be no technical problem to conduct an orchestra. I was always – and still am – quite satisfied with my songs being conducted by others.

DID YOU RECEIVE A MUSICAL EDUCATION?

I did study the piano, but it's not the kind of musical education to brag about. Basically, I taught myself most things. Well, my father was an amateur pianist, even though he was a banker, and it was his wish for me to become a pianist – a great pianist, like Dubravka Tomšič Srebotnjak (smiles) – or a doctor. His wish was never fulfilled, but it was he who introduced me to piano, to music, from a young age: we went to the Opera, to music school. Interesting, how the obligatory piano never caught my attention: in those strange years during and after the war I stopped playing the piano completely. And then one day, all of a sudden, I just sat at the piano and played for days. My mother even brought me food to the piano (smiles).

WERE YOU IN LOVE? EMOTIONS CAN GIVE BIRTH TO CREATIVITY.

I was in love with music (laughter)! Well, I did fall in love here and there, but nothing serious. It truly was a love for music, actually a love for jazz, as it was in those days after the war, when we expressed our aesthetic and world view through jazz.

WAS THIS WHEN JAZZ WAS PROHIBITED? WHERE DID YOU GET THE RECORDS?

True, this kind of music had to be hidden. It was actually unofficially undesired. The records used to come over the border; older colleagues had them and we used to listen to radio stations at night. There were no tape-recorders yet, so we used to write down jazz themes from memory and teach each other harmonies. Bojan Adamič was mainly responsible for jazz winning recognition; he belonged to the circles with the actual power to decide. And he was very open to us young ones, very supportive.

THIS GOOD FELLOWSHIP, HELP AND DISTRIBUTION OF KNOWLEDGE IS RARELY SEEN THESE DAYS, DESPITE THE EASIER METHODS OF EDUCATION TODAY. WHY?

Obviously, because of the new system, the competitiveness enforced today, which is not good. This is what the new era has brought. We used to share knowledge and experiences a lot; some older colleagues, like the late guitarist Mitja Butara who died very young and was a great theorist, taught me a great deal.

YOU HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING THE PATH OF MUSIC ALL YOUR LIFE: YOU WERE THE DIRECTOR OF THE 'ZALOŽBA KASET IN PLOŠČ' PUBLISHING HOUSE, YOU WERE AND ARE A SUCCESSFUL COMPOSER. IS THE MUSIC WE LISTEN TO TODAY GOOD?

Well, there was a long period in my life when I wasn't active as a composer,

although I stayed in touch with music all the time as a director. Even in my retirement years I used to own a music store with Mojmir Sepe, so I was in tune with notes and words. Today's music can not be generalized – it is so diverse and the quantity is enormous! I can not stop to wonder how all these people manage to live on music. Quantity really doesn't necessarily mean quality, but something good can always be found among them. There are some great composers in the Big Band today, and also Rok Golob and Patrik Greblo are excellent. I find it strange that these people are almost nowhere to be heard, even though they are similar to my generation, which made the transition from jazz to popular music. There are also some pretty good vocalists, but interestingly, there are fewer and fewer men among them.

HOW DO YOU REACT WHEN YOU HEAR A BAD SONG ON THE RADIO, IN A CAFÉ OR AT AN EVENT, WITH PLAGIARISED MUSIC, A BAD ARRANGEMENT AND BANAL LYRICS THAT DON'T EXPRESS ANYTHING? DOES IT HURT YOU?

If I hear a song like that in a café, I don't agree with it, but it doesn't hurt me. It does hurt me to hear this kind of song on radio stations or even on national television. This shouldn't be happening! Although it is true that music editors must have it hard these days, because of the quantity of music and the aggressiveness of over-exposed groups and individuals in the media. But music editors should maintain their integrity and say loud and clear that some songs and performers just don't belong there! Not everybody can be good, not everybody can make it to the BBC. But in Slovenia, everybody with a little persistence and some help from his mom and dad, who buy a studio and musicians for him, can "make" music.

BUT MUSIC HAS ITS CULTURAL MISSION. WHERE IS THE SOLUTION?

The solution lies in the knowledgeability of music editors and their personal integrity – one shouldn't be afraid to be resented by others (laughter). Music is a cultural image of the nation. Music programs on the radio are full of some kind of talk; years have passed since the national television had a music editor – Urban Koder and Dušan Hren were the last musicians who worked there. I think this is a disgrace and an undervaluation of music! At the same time, music is much exploited, and its professional value, quality and cultural mission are not recognized. Although it's true that too much music today is made without a hint of musicality and that lyrics are beyond criticism. But this is my personal opinion.

YOU ARE STILL COMPOSING FOR ELDA VILER AND ANA DEŽMAN; FOUR YEARS AGO YOU HAD A GREAT CONCERT. HOW DO YOU CREATE MUSIC – SPONTANEOUSLY?

Not as spontaneously as I used to in the old days, I don't have that much music "stashed" in my head (laughter). But I do sit



behind the piano from time to time and surprisingly, melodies do appear. I also play 'Strangers in the Night' to my wife - it's her favourite song (smiles). My older granddaughter Tejka is learning to play the flute, and my younger granddaughter Kristina, the piano. They are always asking when my next concert will be (smiles)...

YOU AND YOUR WIFE LIKE TO TRAVEL, AND OFTEN DO, AND DESPITE THE FACT THAT YOU SPEND YOUR LIFE IN ART, YOU ARE ONE OF THE FEW COUPLES WITH A HAPPY AND SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE. WHAT IS YOUR RECIPE?

Probably some tolerance (smiles) and good humour. But I protest against saying ours is one of the few happy marriages: we do alright in our circle of friends and family. We have been married... well, about forty-five years - we were classmates at university. She doesn't talk much about music, but she can hear very well if a piece is good or not. Sometimes, in previous years, I often asked her advice on songs and lyrics; she has a good musical ear - but she doesn't praise me (laughter); no, we don't talk about that much.

WHICH OF THE SONGS YOU WROTE IS YOUR FAVOURITE?

My opinion on that was changing. I never really stuck to one style; they have been changing: there was 'Orion', which was my beginning; then 'Lastovke', a very untypical song for me. I tried

to write in a more modern style, but one of my typical songs, one that I consider well done in all aspects, would be 'Če bi teden štel osem dni'. But that was written later.

YOU ARE VERY MODEST. ONE HAS TO STRUGGLE TO GET YOU TO TALK ABOUT THE THINGS YOU COULD PRAISE YOURSELF WITH. WHY?

(Laughter) I don't know - it's probably my nature. Deep within me I'm probably not that modest (laughter); one gets used to being praised.

HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR TIME - BESIDES HELPING THE YOUNGER GENERATIONS?

Very actively. For the past nine, ten years, I have been going to fitness four to five times a week. One of the things I can be very grateful for is that I always had many friends. And although many of these wonderful people have already gone (pauses) I still find new company. I'm a sociable person. I spend a lot of time, a lot of days in kind company - mostly male company (laughter). And it's not just musical company: for twenty-five years we had a table tennis club, only Mojmir Sepe and I were musicians, the others were doctors, painters, writers,... We used to compete and spend time together with our families. It is very pleasant to step out of the narrow circle of your profession; one can get limited by the same conversations all the time. You have to step out, it makes you less stressed.

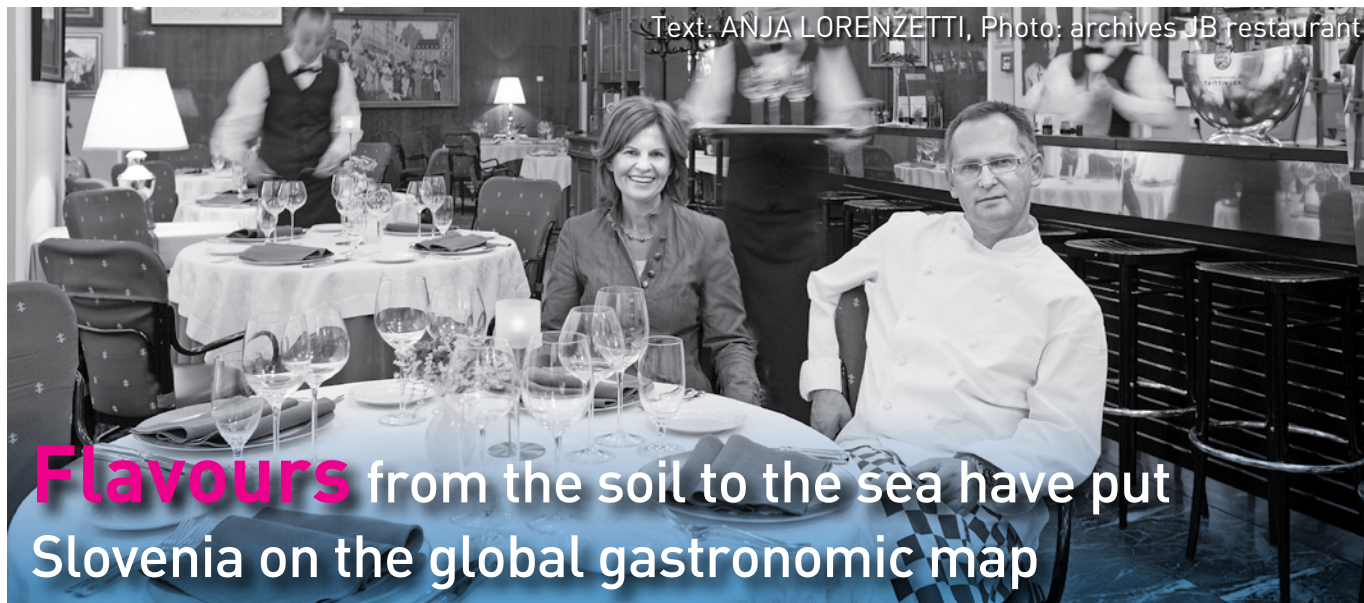
YOU HAVE BEEN RETIRED FOR THE LAST EIGHTEEN YEARS - NOW YOU HAVE TIME FOR LIFE, FOR TRAVEL.

This has been my passion since I was young. As a freshman at university I hitch-hiked to Stockholm with my friends, the actor from the movie 'Vesna' Janez Čuk, who was a close friend of mine, and the musician Janez Gregorc. It was far from easy in those days - even passports were difficult to obtain. These days I travel with my wife, sometimes with other people. I travel by myself, too, because there are places my wife doesn't want to go to. Travelling broadens a man's horizons. I like to visit Paris for a few days to see the galleries - as an art collector I have always been interested in the fine arts. Exotic countries are opening their boundaries, those we couldn't even dream of in the old days (smiles). And, of course, I am interested in art and the history of civilizations we never knew of, that is why I travel. Besides, as I get older, it is getting harder and harder for me to cope with winters in Ljubljana (smiles)...

AS YOU GET OLDER? WITH YOUR INVESTIGATIVE SPIRIT?

True: whether you are young or old depends on the way you are inside. On the outside though, the picture is a bit more sad (laughs)...But one has to look at oneself and at the world around as positively as possible. Think positive, they say! It's also good for your health. And good humour is a part of your health. One always desires more than one achieves, and many things in life fail, but you have to go on - with a smile on your face and in your heart...

GOODSLOVENIANINNS



Ema and Janez Bratovž.

This year, besides managing one of the most excellent restaurants in Slovenia, the owner and founder of JB restaurant, Janez Bratovž, has put the seal on the knowledge of cookery that he has collected since he was young, with the book *Flavours from the Soil to the Sea*. The volume by the master of flavours, crispy snacks, original sauces, delicious meat slices, aromatic purées, creams, risottos and tempting desserts, has already won the Slovenian advertising festival (SOF) main award in Portorose, the great Creativity Annual Award in the USA, and the platinum award for best cover design. As the Slovenian ethnologist, Professor Dr. Janez Bogataj wrote in the foreword, this perfect image of Bratovž's cookery studio puts Slovenia on the global gastronomic map. In the book, recognizable and unique masterpieces from the rich natural and cultural resources of Slovenia, produced by Bratovž, who travels to the heights of gastronomic Olympus, have found their place. His cooking results from the ratio of four basic elements – saltiness suits water; bitterness suits fire; sourness and piquancy suit air; and sweetness suits soil. In addition to two previously presented restaurants, Pikol and Hiša Franko Casa, the JB restaurant is also part of the Circle Association, which includes the six best Slovenian restaurants.

Janez Bratovž met real cuisine in the Šporn Tavern in Radomlje and since then, his cooking pathway has sharply risen. In 2000, after marrying Ema and after the birth of his daughter Nina and son Tomaž, the young family opened JB restaurant on Miklošičeva Street, opposite the central railway station in Ljubljana. During this time, Janez trained to be a sommelier, and he now boasts more than 300 most excellent wines in his collection. By opening a restaurant almost in the centre of the capital, they approached a wider range of people and thereby a higher number of critics, who proved to be positive. As Bogataj summarises the cuisine - the dishes are designed as sculptures and pictures on the plate, and at the same time, are well-considered blends of flavours: chocolate with tuna fish, courgettes with sea bass, shrimp with aniseed. From the sea to the soil!

During the years, he has joined the kitchens of great masters from all around the world. He spent some time in the Alain Ducasse restaurant in Monte Carlo, Louis XV., which was one of his most prestigious restaurants, awarded Michelin stars. He also gained practice at Da Vittorio in Bergamo; he held lectures at the Alpe Adria Cooking event in Udine and at the Fusion Congress in Madrid. Because of his wide international experience and the fact that he was three times the finalist of the Cooking Academy of Delo

publishing house, he also assists with Slovenian official events. For a welcome, in JB one is always served with a welcome snack, carefully and aesthetically prepared, which changes according to the season. If it is the season of flap mushrooms and chanterelles, they add fresh seasonal vegetable, and serve this with a dry sparkling wine, but never with spirits, since they burn and paralyze the taste buds, and the following dishes then offer no delights. Janez is an everyday visitor to the central market in Ljubljana, where he selects the vegetables according to the daily menu. He also buys meat there, which he later vacuums and matures by himself in a cold room at two degrees Celsius. Roast beef matures for up to three weeks, and Simmenthal heifer tenderloins, beef cheeks and shoulder of foal for up to two weeks. Prior to that, the shoulder is marinated in olive oil, with rosemary, laurel leaf, cloves of garlic and a little salt. He is very precise in choosing the salt, as each dish has a specific salt to fit. He only uses salt from Piran, and salt flour from the Sečovlje salt-pans, which is for him the best and the most savoury salt, and a success in many elite restaurants around the world. "When you spread some grains of this salt over just baked meat, you get an entire palette of flavours - even sweet ones sneak in. This is a drop-dead delight. It is almost everything you need, except for a glass of wine," explains Bratovž.

Fish from the Adriatic Sea are in their regular offer, and in JB, they get most excited by spiny lobsters, which are delivered live from Dalmatia, always from Vis Island. Among his greatest old fish successes is garlic soup with shrimp tails. This soup happened by coincidence, when no-one wanted to eat only garlic soup, and



Soil – sea Flavours of Slovenia Janez Bratovž Book.

GOODSLOVENIANINNS



Black risotto with olive air.

he added shrimp tails. A lot has changed in the culture of eating shrimps. They used to be prepared a la buzara or grilled; today, they are served almost raw, only marinated for an hour in olive oil with salt, white pepper and a little lemon. The current global trend of seafood cuisine is to serve and eat the dishes raw, or almost raw, which is something that the Japanese, the greatest masters of seafood, have always done. For the last few years in JB, they have also prepared fish like that, and if they bake it, they try to keep it juicy; therefore they do not exceed 160 degrees Celsius.

"There are more and more guests who appreciate genuine, elementary flavours. Even when roasting meat, we should keep it from being overdone, as it loses its juiciness," says Bratovž.

In the rooms of JB, the homeliness of aromas and senses echoes, probably also due to the baker's oven, in which they bake their own bread from ecologically produced flour. They also prepare small bread rolls of different shapes, with the addition of olive, onion, rosemary, pine nuts etc. For the bread to be good, they say, the dough has to be kneaded three times: the first time, when it is kneaded ready, the second time, when it rises and the third time, when the rolls are formed. They also make their own tortellini and ravioli, while the noodles and spaghetti are Italian, as well as the olive oil produced in Dolina near Trieste, which is excellent for cooking roast meat and fish.

Another special feature of JB, is the use of low cooking temperatures to give the dishes even better flavour. By slow, 12-hour cooking at 65 degrees Celsius, they prepare beef cheeks and shoulder of foal that have enough for the meat to end up juicy and tender, but not too much, in order to maintain the structure. During this slow cooking, the juice drips out of the meat and a jelly substance is produced, which is the best basis for the sauce that needs to be added to olive oil, shallot, red wine, balsamic vinegar and aromatics and spices, if necessary. Thus, they also cook vegetables in bags, in a vacuum cooker, for two hours at the same temperature and they remain firm and full of healthy flavour. Slow cooking at low temperatures is a type of molecular cuisine and is no different than our grandmothers used to cook, when they set a pot on the edge of kitchen-range in the morning and let it cook slowly.

Bratovž promises to devote his next book to the good old cuisine and forgotten popular Slovenian dishes, prepared in a new, modern manner, and he emphasises that our past hides real

culinary wealth. Here, different cuisines, different influences and traditions have come together. In this spirit, exquisite barley soup was made, which unites the past with the present. Bratovž got the idea for this soup in Primorska, where they add tomato to the traditional barley soup to give it some freshness. Janez has added his pinch of culinary masterpiece. He cooks half of the vegetables together with the barley, while he cuts the remainder, particularly carrot, celery bulb and courgettes, into small pieces and spreads them over the soup when it is served. The vegetables thus remain fresh and firm, and the barley soup is fresh and full-flavoured at the same time.

In addition to the flavours, presentation is also very important, so they keep to the principle that good and beautiful things are extremely simple. They follow this principle in preparing plates that inspire guests with beauty. Their most important guiding principle in designing the plate is that everything should be edible and in accordance with the flavours of the dish. The other guiding principle is minimalism, thereby following Japanese masterpieces.



Veal medallion in pork mesh with noodles and artichoke.



Text: JOŽE PREŠEREN, Photo: Darinka Mladenovič



90th Anniversary of the National Gallery of Slovenia in Ljubljana

Works that have formed the national identity

The National Gallery of Slovenia is one of the most respected cultural institutions of the Slovene capital, since it is the central National Gallery of Slovenia for older Slovene visual arts, and of other European artists. This year, the National Gallery of Slovenia is celebrating the 90th years since its founding, although this is above all the jubilee of the society that strove to establish it. In 1918, a group of educated people from various ways of life met and established the National Gallery of Slovenia society. The idea for establishing the National Gallery of Slovenia had already come from Ljubljana mayor Ivan Hribar, and soon after that the painter Rihard Jakopič published a plan for the Gallery, and in 1910, in a gallery of visual arts that he established at his own expense, later known as the Jakopič Pavilion, prepared the first distinct Slovene exhibition of visual arts.

FROM SOCIETY TO NATIONAL INSTITUTION

The National Gallery was therefore established as a society in 1918, and its first president was Janez Zorman. The society immediately started collecting fundamental Slovene visual arts by purchase, legacies, gifts, and thus complementing Slovene art fund. The newly established collection was set out for viewing for the first time in 1919, on the premises of the Kresija city building, and the first actual exhibition was held in 1922 on the premises of Tehnična srednja šola (Technical High School). In 1925, the National Gallery of Slovenia took over the building of Narodni dom (National House) which was built in 1894-96; in 1928 were rebuilt Narodni dom five rooms opened for the public in which a collection of works from the 19th century was exhibited, and in 1933, the entire collection

CULTURAL TRAILS

was exhibited, and this is still the core of the permanent collection of Slovene art. In all this, of extreme importance was the acquisition of Slovene and European art works from Strahl's collection which was acquired by bequest, donations from the most important patron, Dr Fran Windischer, who was for years the president of the society, and donations from some other supporters of Slovene art.

The National Gallery from its early beginnings achieved exceptional professional success and was highly esteemed by the entire Slovene public.

The first head of the National Gallery with permanent facilities in a new dwelling was Janez Zorman, who managed the institution until 1950. He was responsible for carrying out all the renovation works in Narodni dom, and forming and constantly complementing the permanent collection with the help of the most prominent Slovene historians of art, among them Dr Izidor Cankar, Dr France Mesesnel, Dr France Stele and others. After him, the Gallery was run by Dr Karel Dobida until 1964; his successor was Dr Anica Cevc. After her retirement, the post was taken over by Dr Andrej Smrekar; the current director is Dr Barbara Jaki.

EACH EXHIBITION – AN EXCEPTIONAL EVENT

The National Gallery has always organized exhibitions which are exceptional events. Together with accompanying publications, these events are placed between fundamental Slovene history of art's works. The most important distinct exhibitions were Historical Exhibition of Slovene Paintings (1922), Portrait Paintings since the 16th century till today (1925), Classicism and Romanticism in Slovenia (1954), The Beginnings of Slovene Impressionism (1955), Medieval Frescos in Slovenia (1959), Baroque in Slovenia (1963), The Art of the 17th Century in Slovenia (1968), Gothic Plastic Art in Slovenia (1973); similar distinct exhibitions take place each year. Experts especially appreciated the exhibition of the Gothic plastic art prepared by Dr Emilijan Cevc, because it presents the area of art and its positioning in all the Slovene provinces in the Middle ages. Every type of Gothic art in Slovenia was presented in 1995, when the new facilities of the National Gallery in the extension of the Narodni dom were opened. In 2001, the Gallery acquired a new entrance hall, which concluded its extension and renovation. In 2008 this new entrance hall received the original of the famous baroque Robb's fountain that earlier stood in front of Ljubljana City Hall (a copy now stands here).

Today, the Gallery has three exhibition places, where two permanent collections are housed. The entire building complex now encompasses 12,130 square meters, of which 2040 square meters are dedicated to the permanent collections, and for non-exhibited works of arts there is optimal storage place assured with 810 square meters of depot space. In addition, there are areas for accompanying activities – a library, phototeque, lecture room, restoration studio, service activities and offices.

ACCOMPANYING THE PRESIDENCY – IMPRESSIONISM

To honour Slovenia's presidency of the European Union Council, when numerous renowned guests from all over the world visited Ljubljana, the National Gallery mounted 'Slovene Impressionists and Their Time' (1890-1920), which will remain open until 8th February 2009. It should be mentioned that American first lady Laura Bush visited the exhibition with her escorts.

In addition to the extremely fruitful period of Slovene art marked by the great Slovene artists Rihard Jakopič, Ivan Grohar, Matej Sternen, Matija Jama, Ivana Kobilca, Ivan Ažbe and others, the exhibition also

strives to present the period when Ljubljana, and with it the whole of Slovenia, formed into a modern urban centre and a country where all the features of civilization were reflected. That was a period of Ljubljana's reform, and at the same time, a period of a new country's beginning, to which we Slovenes joined after the First World War, after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. At that time, Ljubljana finally formed itself as the political, cultural and educational capital of Slovenes.

In September, to honour its 90th anniversary the Gallery opened an exhibition entitled 'The Beginnings of the Art Collection' that presents the decades of the extremely intensive life of this central national institution for collecting, protecting, preserving, studying and exhibiting the older Slovene visual arts, namely that part of the spiritual and material culture that has in many ways helped form the national identity. It was stressed that the Gallery since its establishment in 1918, has preserved the autonomy and professional integrity that was outlined already at its founding and in its first years, in different historical circumstances, political systems and changes to the state structure. The Gallery has substantially co-shaped Slovenia's art historians.

The history of the National Gallery of Slovenia in many ways differs from other European national galleries, since it was necessary to start – one could say – from nothing, and for its success and constant growth, a lot of creativity, vision, determination, skill and reasonableness from its initiators was necessary.

Interestingly, the National Gallery of Slovenia has all the time of its formation, for its art collections completion to a large extent depended upon the donations by the individuals and also by the domestic and foreign institutions. The Gallery's management is convinced that donations of individual works of art and larger collections will help them complement their collections in the years to come, since state grants are often not sufficient for the acquisition of important works.





The Lipizzaner – symbol of the Lipica Stud Farm, the Karst region and Slovenia

The Lipizzaner, one of which was presented recently as a gift to Queen Elizabeth II, holds a special place in the history of Slovenia. The beginnings of horse breeding in this area reach back to the year 1580, and the name 'Lipizzaner' was taken from the name of the nearby village of Lipica.

The year 1580, when the Archduke Charles bought the stud farm and Lipica village, marks the beginning of systematic breeding and the selection of horses based on stud books.

The Karst region with its native horses in those days was one of the more important horse breeding areas in the world. Through the centuries through selection and crossbreeding with Andalusian and Arabian stallions the so-called 'Karst horse of the Lipica breed' was developed, and is known today as the Lipizzaner. Later, this breed of horse was developed at other stud farms, especially in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire.

As Marko Marc, the head professional at the Lipica Stud Farm, explained, theirs was one of the first stud farms in the world to breed systematically, using stud books. Thus the stud farm represented a technological advance, enabling the development of a high quality breed of horse, today's world-famous Lipizzaner.

In 1619 the Lipica Stud Farm became the royal stud farm of the Habsburg family, but the managers and the caretakers of the stud were always Slovenes, thus one could say that the Lipizzaner is a Slovene horse. The Lipizzaner has great symbolic value for Slovenia, being one of only a few living symbols of Slovenia's technological and cultural heritage. It could be said that the Lipizzaner was the

first Slovene brand, more than four centuries old.

Although only 6,000 pureblood Lipizzaners exist in the world (a thousand of them in Slovenia), the Lipizzaner is a very well known breed. It is renowned for being very docile, and able to learn various movements of classical dressage.

The Lipizzaners are of medium size, compact and muscular, standing to approximately 156 centimetres high. The head and tail bear dense, yet silky thin hair. Their legs are strong, joints distinctive and wide, hooves solid and beautifully formed. These characteristics are especially enchanting when the horse is in movement.

In addition, the Lipizzaners are exceptionally good-tempered, patient and enduring, suitable for learning to ride. Their steady stride also makes them good carriage horses. Visitors to Lipica can enjoy a carriage ride, a museum collection of 17 horse carriages on display, and every year, competitions and other carriage riding events. Each year more and more international horse dressage competitions are organized here.

In Vienna a horse dressage school has existed for several centuries. At first, Spanish horses were used, hence the name of Spanish Riding School. Later, they began to use Lipizzaner horses, first from Lipica and later from the stud farm in Piber.

The Lipica Stud Farm encompasses its own riding school as well, the Classical Lipica Riding School, which was developed after the Second World War, and gives regular performances at home and abroad. The classical riding school promotes the Lipizzaner, Lipica village, the Karst region and Slovenia, in the world.



**I FEEL
SLOVENIA**