

# Sinfo

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The latest from Slovenia

IN FOCUS: **An escape route from crisis has been mapped out**  
IN FOCUS INTERVIEW: **The Prime Minister Janez Janša**  
IN PERSON: **Slovenian missionary Pedro Opeka**

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The first year under the leadership of Prime Minister Janez Janša  
**An escape route from the crisis has been mapped out**

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek / STA



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The Prime Minister Janez Janša  
**We are behaving responsibly**

Photo: Archives of PM of RS



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Slovenian missionary Pedro Opeka  
**Slovenian – a Nobel Prize Candidate**

Photo: Stane Kerin



**SINFO – SLOVENIAN INFORMATION**

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## The Best Ambassadors

The Government Communication Office of the Republic of Slovenia began promoting the I Feel Slovenia trademark five years ago, a well-chosen play on words which exploits the comparative advantage of the country on the sunny side of the Alps. Slovenia is the only country in the world which contains the word 'love' in its name.

Just like any promotional activity, the marketing of a country also requires suitable promoters. The successes of a responsible policy improve the geo-political position of a country and open doors to business. In this edition of Sinfo, Prime Minister Janez Janša talks about this topic and the successes of the Government's first year in office. Economic projects create success stories and attract attention. A good business deal is frequently the best guarantee of even more business deals. More can be read about Slovenia's plans in this field in the article on action plan International Challenges 2013. Art strengthens the diversity of what a country has to offer and places it on the global map. Who were this year's recipients of the highest national awards for art? Find out in this edition of Sinfo. Because it is winter, and because Slovenia is known as a country for winter sports, we cannot overlook the snow-laden slopes, which have turned each and every citizen into a sports enthusiast due to the great successes of Tina Maze and the ski jumping team. Sportsmen and women are becoming recognised as trademarks in their own right, something a smart country should be able to turn to its advantage. Anyone who follows the success of our sportsmen and women probably agree that nothing is more pleasing than to see Slovenian flags raised high in the crowd of enthusiasts who follow winter sports and cheer on their favourites. If you know that a live television transmission of the skiing races is at that point being watched by millions of viewers around the world, you can conclude without a doubt that these sportsmen and women are the best ambassadors of the country. And when the national anthem is played at an award ceremony, one can honestly and proudly say, I feel Slovenia.

## A political consensus on three key projects

**Party presidents have reached a political consensus on three key projects: they will endeavour to ratify Croatia's EU Accession Treaty in time, change referendum rules and adopt the labour reform.**

This is a message to the people that agreement can be reached despite the differences and the deepening distrust, said Slovenian President Borut Pahor. Prime Minister Janez Janša voiced the hope after the meeting that the agreed measures would be adopted, which could happen next month provided that everyone sticks to the deal and the dispute with Croatia over Yugoslav-era bank deposits is resolved by then. However, he pointed out that another issue – amending the Constitution with a balanced-budget rule – would have to be resolved as well after having been deferred last year.



Party presidents meet with the Slovenian President Borut Pahor

## Government to Sell off State-owned Companies

**The government adopted a classification of investments in line with which state capital assets are to be transferred onto the Slovenia Sovereign Holding. The document slates Telekom Slovenije, Abanka and part of energy company Petrol for sale.**

According to Finance Ministry State Secretary Andrej Šircelj, the sale of investments will be conducted in different ways, but all will be transparent. Other factors besides the price will be taken into account in the decision making.

The document differentiates between strategic, important and portfolio investments. In strategic investments the state will keep 50% plus one share, in important ones 25% plus one share, while the holding is not obliged to preserve a controlling stake in portfolio investments. The government plans to preserve 25% plus one share in the NLB Bank, while Telekom Slovenije, Abanka have been classified as portfolio investments, as has Petrol although the energy segment of the company is exempt as an activity of strategic importance for the country. The KAD and SOD funds and the SID export and development bank are to remain 100% state-owned.

The document will be available to the public after the government submits it for debate and adoption in parliament. No deadlines for the sale have been set. Beside the price, the ratings of the buyer, the business plan, the number of jobs and long-term plans will be considered.



Finance Ministry State Secretary Andrej Šircelj

## Not "Aspirins"!

**The Public Administration and Justice Ministry marked the beginning of the new legal year by saying that the Slovenian justice system needed strong and efficient medications not "Aspirins" some had been feeding it with.**

State Secretary Mojca Kucler Dolinar said that inefficiency of the justice system was one of the main obstacles to Slovenia becoming a just and law-governed state. "To improve the situation the courts presidents' efforts as well as the efforts of judges and other staff is expected," she said. The Public Administration and Justice Ministry added that changes to several laws were in preparation in a bid to boost the functioning of the rule of law.



State Prosecutor General of the Republic of Slovenia Zvonko Fišer, State Secretary Mojca Kucler Dolinar and President of the Constitutional Court Ernest Petrič

## Slovenian President Borut Pahor receives recipients of science awards

Slovenian President Borut Pahor hosted a reception for the recipients of the Zois Award, the Zois Distinction, the Ambassador of Science Award, and the Puh Award for 2012. He congratulated the recipients on their outstanding achievements, and emphasised how topical their work is for the country and for science. In his address, the president pointed out the necessity of being aware that without constant research there will be no progress and improvement in human development, be it in medicine, natural sciences, humanities and social sciences, the introduction of new technologies, education or the business sphere, and added that 'this is why it is so urgent that young people have adequate support and encouragement for their development'. President Pahor concluded by wishing all the recipients of science awards every success in their future work.



Slovenian President Borut Pahor with recipients of science awards

Photo: Archives of Office of the President of the Republic

## Saving a life is humane

**The Minister of the Interior, Dr Vinko Gorenak, and the Director General of the Police, Stanislav Veniger, awarded police medals for bravery and self-sacrifice.**

The police medal for bravery was awarded to officers Mirela Čorić and Blaž Zidanski, while the police medal for self-sacrifice was awarded to Ana Glumac, Rihard Kovač and Gregor Horjak, and also to two residents of Ajdovščina, Evgen Vidmar and Dragoslav Breclj. In his speech, Minister Gorenak highlighted that "saving a life has a deeper meaning; it is an act of humanity and not everyone is able to do it". At the end, he thanked the recipients for their acts and congratulated them.



Minister Vinko Gorenak with the policemen

Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

## Double Tax Avoidance Agreement

**The State Secretary at the Ministry of Finance, Marko Pogačnik, MSc, and Botimir Rahmatovič Parpijev, the President of the State Tax Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan signed the Agreement for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income and on Capital.**

Conventions on avoiding double taxation are international treaties concluded in order to encourage economic growth by eliminating tax barriers in international trade and investments, and by reducing the possibility of tax evasion. By means of various mechanisms, double taxation is being eliminated, the taxpayers' security improved, tax rates lowered, the costs of meeting tax obligations reduced, tax evasion and tax discrimination prevented, and the exchange of tax information and resolution of tax disputes facilitated.



The State Secretary at the Ministry of Finance, Marko Pogačnik, and Botimir Rahmatovič Parpijev, the President of the State Tax Committee

Photo: Archives of the Ministry of Finance



Prime Minister Janez Janša with the heads of EU Member states

Photo: Thierry Monasse/STA

## Slovenia's net position in the EU is improving

**The heads of EU Member States, Prime Minister Janez Janša among them, agreed in Brussels on a multi-annual financial framework for 2014 to 2020. The budget summit ended with a compromise agreement on 960 billion euros for the next seven years. Thus the heads of the EU Member States succeeded to reduce the common budget for the first time in history.**

The Slovenian Government is reasonably satisfied with the outcome of the negotiations. Slovenia's net position is set to improve. So far, compared to its contribution, Slovenia has benefited to the tune of 0.87 per cent of its gross national income. In the coming period, this share will amount to 1.03 per cent. In seven years, i.e. by 2020, Slovenia will have acquired 5.3 billion from the common budget and 2.5 billion euros with its net position.

According to the Prime Minister, Janez Janša, the recent negotiations were very similar to those in 2005, the difference being that they were not successful in 2005, while this time an agreement was reached. No one was very satisfied, as the funds were reduced for the first time. This is "an ideal compromise for all involved", estimated the Prime Minister, who added that the budget was not ideal, but considering the current state of affairs in Europe, "it is a substantially better approximation to the ideal than if the structure were to remain the same as in the current financial perspective".

## Slovenia will resolve the crisis of government

**The President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, visited Austria at the beginning of February. He met the President of Austria, Heinz Fischer, the Chancellor of Austria, Werner Faymann, and the President of the National Council, Barbara Prammer.**

On his visit, the Slovenian President emphasised that Slovenia would find a way out of the crisis, and open "a new chapter of a politically more profound Europe" together with Austria and other Member States which comprise the healthy core of the euro zone and European Union. Another theme of the discussion was the progress and success in seeking a solution to Ljubljanska banka issue. He stressed that both parties were interested in finding a favourable solution.

The presidents also discussed the Slovenian minority in Austria. President Pahor said that both countries were obliged to protect their citizens, Austrian citizens of Slovenian descent and Slovenian German-speaking citizens, respectively. He added that responsibilities to minorities are not an obligation in a democratic society, but a privilege – "for them to deeply feel and live their identity". The Austrian President said that he had the same or a similar opinion as President Pahor on several issues which have influenced the positive relations between the two countries.

Relations between Slovenia and Austria are considered friendly and profound. Austria, first among foreign investors in Slovenia, is one of Slovenia's most important foreign trading partners. Regarding mutual relations, the Austrian President expressed his pleasure at the end of the meeting that President Pahor had chosen Austria for his first official trip abroad.



Slovenian President Borut Pahor and his Austrian counterpart Heinz Fischer

Photo: Daniel Novokovč/STA

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



State Secretary at the Slovenian Ministry of Finance, Andrej Šircelj at the press conference

## Non-executive directors named

The Slovenian Government has appointed Carl - Johan Lindgren, MSc, Andrej Šircelj, MSc, Arne Berggren and Lars Nyberg as non-executive directors of the Management Board of the Bank Assets Management Company (BAMC) for the lifetime of the company.

The Management Board of the BAMC will have four non-executive and three executive directors. The Government appointed the aforementioned non-executive directors on the day the BAMC was established; they will hold their posts until the BAMC is wound up. Carl - Johan Lindgren holds a Bachelor of Economics from the Swedish School of Economics and Master degree in Economics. As an independent financial sector policy advisor to international financial institutions, state administration and private sector since 2002, he has been dealing with financial sector reforms, including regulation and control, banks restructuring and search of appropriate solutions. Andrej Šircelj, MSc, graduated from the Faculty of Economics in Ljubljana and completed his Master's Degree at the Faculty of Law in Maribor in 2004. In 2005, he was appointed State Secretary at the Office of the Prime Minister with a mandate at the Ministry of Finance. Currently, he is a State Secretary at the Ministry of Finance. Arne Berggren was proposed to the Government by the Ministry of Finance and supported by the International Monetary Fund. Dr Lars Nyberg was proposed as a non-executive director by the Ministry of the Economy and Sustainable Development, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development supported his appointment.

## The Government agrees to the classification of investments of the SSH

The Government of the Republic of Slovenia agreed to the classification of investments of the Slovenia Sovereign Holding and proposed it for passage by the National Assembly

The classification of investments was undertaken by the management of the Slovenia Sovereign Holding (SSH), and includes a definition and classification of all capital investments owned by the SSH at the moment of the transformation of the Slovenian Compensation Company (SOD) into the SSH, and all capital investments that represent a non-cash contribution to the SSH. The classification also includes all procedures according to which the SSH could dispose of its investments in the transitional period. Pursuant to Article 32 of the Slovenia Sovereign Holding Act (ZSDH), the classification of investments is to be adopted for the period until the entry into force of the strategy drafted pursuant to Article 9 of the ZSDH. The strategy will define in more detail the objectives to be attained by the SSH when managing an individual investment.

A draft of the strategy with an elaboration is to be prepared by the management of the SSH and forwarded after confirmation by the Supervisory Board of the SSH to the ministry responsible for finance no later than at the end of the fourth month of the last year to which the strategy applies. The Ministry of Finance will send a harmonised draft of the strategy to the Government. The strategy, which is confirmed by the Government for a period of five years, is subject to approval by the National Assembly.



Government meeting

Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

Photo: Thierry Momasse/STA



At the meeting of Eurozone finance ministers

## Meeting of Eurozone finance ministers

The meeting was chaired for the first time by the new head of the Eurogroup, the Dutch Minister of Finance, Jeroen Dijsselbloem. The meeting was also attended by the Irish Minister of Finance, Michael Noonan, the State Secretary at the Slovenian Ministry of Finance, Andrej Šircelj, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia to the European Union, Rado Genorio, and the European Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs, Olli Rehn.

## New Year reception for the Diplomatic Corps

At the beginning of the new year, the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, hosted a traditional reception for the Diplomatic Corps. In his speech, he emphasised the significance of economic diplomacy and Slovenia's interest in foreign investment. He also pointed out the significance of the ratification of the treaty on the accession of Croatia to the EU. This topic was also mentioned in the speech of the Doyen of the Diplomatic Corps, the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Juliusz Janusz. The diplomats were welcomed by the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, and his partner, Tanja Pečar, and the Slovenian Prime Minister, Janez Janša, and his wife, Urška Bačovnik Janša.



Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša, and his wife Urška Bačovnik Janša

Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



The handover between the then Minister, Dr Senko Pličanič, and the Minister of Infrastructure and Spatial Planning, Zvone Črnač

## Handover of duties

The handover of duties due to the withdrawal of the Civic List from the coalition took place in February at the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration, and at the Ministry of Finance.

The handover at the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration was performed between the then Minister, Dr Senko Pličanič, and the Minister of Infrastructure and Spatial Planning, Zvone Črnač, who will temporarily undertake this job. The handover was also attended by the new State Secretary, Mojca Kucler Dolinar, and the former State Secretary, Helmut Hartman. The Minister of Finance is replaced by the Prime Minister, Janez Janša, while Andrej Šircelj and Andrej Pogačnik have become state secretaries.

## The Government Has a Plan for Slovenian Enterprises to Enter Foreign Markets



Photo: Stanke Cruden/STA

A Japanese-Slovenian technology meeting.

It is a fact that the 'crème-de-la-crème' of world growth will not be distributed equally. Some regions will enjoy more benefits than others, and some economic sectors will expand more than others.

The Government is planning the entry of Slovenian companies into the economic sectors of Eastern markets where positive synergies with the Slovenian economy are possible.

The economy is changing rapidly; therefore, globalisation is not a question for Slovenian companies, but more a necessity and reality. Patterns of global competition and the business of enterprises are changing; the balance of economic activity is shifting to markets with high economic growth and markets that are opening to foreigners and developing intensively. It is a fact that the 'crème-de-la-crème' of world growth will not be distributed equally. Some regions will enjoy more benefits than others, and some economic sectors will expand more than others.

### THE INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGES 2013 ACTION PLAN – PARTNERSHIP TO PROMOTE INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS OF SLOVENIAN ENTERPRISES

Many different organisations, in addition to the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, were included in the preparation of the International Challenges 2013 Action Plan (MI 2013) – the Partnership to Promote International Business of Slovenian Enterprises, drafted by the Slovenian Government. The launch of the project included the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, the Office of the President of the Republic of Slovenia, the Public Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Entrepreneurship and Foreign Investments (now known as

SPIRIT Slovenia, public agency), SID Banka, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, the Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia and the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce.

The achievement of goals focuses on priority sectors which foreign or international organisations furnish with features of added value, as well as on those sectors that have traditional significance for the Slovenian economy.

Key goals of the MI in 2013:

- harmonise the operations of all national institutions involved in the international expansion and promotion of Slovenian economy,
- increase growth in Slovenian exports,
- increase the number of entries of Slovenian enterprises into

new foreign markets and increase the share of overall exports to selected priority markets,

- increase the number of exporters, especially to markets outside the territory of the former Yugoslavia and European Union,
- increase the recognition of Slovenia as a good location for foreign investments and reduce obstacles to foreign investments,
- increase direct foreign investments in Slovenia to 33 per cent of GDP.

### KEY MARKETS

The selected key markets which will receive special attention in 2013 are Azerbaijan, India, Kazakhstan, China, the Russian Federation and Turkey. These markets have shown economic growth and are rising and developing; at the same time, they have economic sectors where positive synergies could be achieved with the Slovenian economy. Well-selected foreign markets will not

affect already initiated, anticipated and planned activities in other traditional markets (the EU and the Balkans), since these activities will also continue in 2013.

Slovenia should strengthen its role in the global economy, mainly in the framework of new global markets; however, to achieve such goals, it should support an open economy. The openness of the economy and guarantee of free competition (free movement of goods, services, capital and labour force) enables companies to increase their competitive abilities due to simpler access to modern technologies and knowledge, and also eases access to foreign markets, increases sales possibilities, enables the exploitation of economies of scale and the search for new opportunities in niches.

### THE MOST PROMISING INDUSTRIES

The following have been identified as the most promising industries in the Slovenian economy: biomedicine and biotechnology, energy and environmental tech-

nologies, advanced materials and technologies, nanotechnology, information-communication technologies, wood processing industry, automobile manufacturing, transport and logistics, metal processing, tourism, and food.

Promoting the competitiveness of Slovenian companies in selected markets abroad in 2013 involves the stimulus to enter and do business in remote foreign markets, the stimulus of the first appearance in a foreign market and the stimulus of enhanced forms of internationalisation.

The MI 2013 defines the guidelines for direct foreign investment. In this field, the following activities will be implemented in 2013: improving the business environment, investment projects, establishing 'one-stop-shop' agency operations, the resolution of problems related to land and business zones, improving Slovenia's profile as a location for TNI, financial support for investments, promoting the expansion of existing foreign enterprises in Slovenia.

Slovenia should strengthen its role in the global economy, mainly in the framework of new global markets; however, to achieve such goals, it should support an open economy.

The Prime Minister Janez Janša during his visit in Azerbaijan with Shahin Mustafajev, Minister of Economy.



Photo: Tanino Petelinšek/STA

The selected key markets which will receive special attention in 2013 are Azerbaijan, India, Kazakhstan, China, the Russian Federation and Turkey.

**RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT DEVELOPING WORLD MARKETS AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES**

To stimulate Slovenian enterprises to do business in foreign markets means raising the awareness of companies about developing world markets, and the opportunities and challenges of these markets, in order to guarantee the possibility of competitive operations in foreign markets and the appropriate security in accordance with internationally agreed rules and conditions, as well as undertaking other approaches to stimulating internationalisation. The Government is aware that Slovenian enterprises require assistance when competing in 'foreign' markets, and at the same time, the companies have to be enabled to exploit the international expansion of their businesses and the transfer of knowledge and technologies to the best extent possible, since all of these attract investments in the Republic of Slovenia.

The Ministry of Economic Development and Technology has made the conclusion of contacts with countries mentioned below one of its core activities: Germa-

ny, India, Russia, Turkey, Slovakia, Hungary, France, Azerbaijan, the People's Republic of China, Croatia, Japan and Bulgaria.

In its economic review of Slovenia, the OECD recommendations emphasise that in order to strengthen progress in the field of technology and efficiency, reforms in the education system and policies for promoting innovations, opportunities in the labour market and the business environment should be implemented.

**GO INTERNATIONAL SLOVENIA**

Along with the decline in domestic demand, especially in investment, Slovenia must pay more attention to promoting and supporting the internationalisation of the economy, especially small and middle-sized enterprises. For this reason, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia has been implementing the 'Go International Slovenia' programme for the second year; its purpose is to enhance the presence of the Slovenian economy in foreign markets (increasing export and the number of exporters), to diversify export markets

and, consequently, to strengthen the competitiveness of Slovenian exporters. The programme is included in the Partnership to Promote International Business of Slovenian Enterprises, or the so-called International Challenges 2013, which is being drafted and coordinated at the Tourism and Internationalisation Directorate of the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology.

The first part of the 'Go International Slovenia' programme lists the activities planned for individual markets to which the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia will dedicate most attention in 2013. Activities are divided into five groups: rapidly developing markets, European markets, SE European markets, other developed markets (emphasis on technological cooperation) and other developing markets. The second part of the programme includes activities by individual topic: education, preparation of branch and market analyses, connection of exporters and legal aid, as well as support in the internationalisation of Slovenian enterprises.

Government gives special attention to the regions and regional enterprises.



Photo: Stanko Cruden/STA

Jayakar Jerome

Indian Ambassador to Slovenia

**The Government of Slovenia should make a concerted effort to attract Indian businesses**



Photo: Archives of Indian Embassy

At the end of January Slovenian Minister of economic development and technology, Radovan Žerjav, accompanied by a strong business delegation, visited India. As Slovenia has also become interesting for the Bollywood film industry which shot a film here last year, we asked H. E. Jayakar Jerome, Indian ambassador to Slovenia, for an interview.

Slovenia is strategically very well placed, not only in respect of the EU but more particularly in respect of the Western Balkans. It would certainly be an attractive base from which Indian companies could operate.

**Recently, Slovenia's Minister of Economic Development and Technology, Radovan Žerjav, visited India together with a large business delegation. How do you assess the possibilities of cooperation in this field among Slovenia and India?**

The visit of Mr Radovan Žerjav was exceptionally well received in India. Important ministers of the Government of India, the Minister for Commerce, Industry and Textiles, the Minister for Heavy Industry and the Minister for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises received him, and they had decidedly fruitful and productive discussions. Very productive B2B meetings were organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry and the Federation of the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry – two highly prominent organisations. As a follow up, members of the

delegation propose visiting India again; therefore, we have issued each of them a six-month business visa.

**Slovenia could be also a port of entry to European Union of Indian companies, with many areas of cooperation. Where do you see the strong points for this kind of cooperation?**

Slovenia is strategically very well placed, not only in respect of the EU but more particularly in respect of the Western Balkans. It would certainly be an attractive base from which Indian companies could operate. However, this would require brand building of Slovenia in India. The Government of Slovenia should make a concerted effort to attract Indian businesses.

**Some Slovenian companies are already doing business with In-**

**dia. What would you recommend to Slovenian companies that would like to do business with India?**

India is a vast market, and many Slovenian companies have realised the opportunities it offers are limitless. The demand in Indian markets is so immense that no Slovenian company would be able to meet it. What I would advise Slovenian companies is to enter niche areas. Slovenian companies should be open to set up joint ventures and transfers of technology, because that is what India is looking for.

**Regarding cooperation in science and technology, India and Slovenia identified 18 projects each for implementation during 2010 and 2013. Could you explain what kind of projects these are? And what are the prospects after that period?**

Initially, eighteen projects were identified under the Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement. After joint deliberations, eight projects were selected which are under various stages of implementation. The areas of cooperation are in the fields of metal sciences and new materials, mathematics, health and biomedical science, and alternate renewable sources of energy, including solar energy. These projects are being jointly researched by eminent scholars from India and Slovenia in prestigious institutions of higher learning and research in our two countries.

**India-Slovenia bilateral relations have always been excellent. India recognised Slovenia as an independent state in May 1992. Soon after that, the then Foreign Minister of Slovenia Dimitrij Rupel visited India. India granted sup-**

**port for Slovenian membership at the UN and guest membership of the Non-Aligned Movement. How do you assess these relations, now, after more than 20 years?**

Indo-Slovenian relations have matured in the last 20 years. There are no open issues between India and Slovenia. Our countries have been mutually supportive of each other. As a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, Slovenia supported India in the Civil Nuclear Agreement. In many international bodies, such as the United Nations Security Council, Slovenia has supported us. One of our priorities is reforms in the United Nations that should reflect today's realities. Fortunately, Slovenia has been extremely supportive of this move. Mr Ernest Petric (Yugoslavia's last Ambassador to India and current President of the Constitutional Court)

and his wife were guests of the Government of India for a week. The State Visit of Prime Minister Pahor to India in 2011 established beyond any doubt our respect for and friendship with Slovenia.

**Last year in September a Bollywood production was filming a movie 'Najak' (Leader) at tourist locations and significant landmarks in Slovenia. This was the first Bollywood movie to be filmed in Slovenia. What was the role of the embassy? What was your input?**

We facilitated the entire operation. We maintained particularly close contact with the entire production crew which came and encouraged them about different locations in Slovenia.

**Do you have information which Slovenian companies took part at the production and filming**

What I would advise Slovenian companies is to enter niche areas. Slovenian companies should be open to set up joint ventures and transfers of technology, because that is what India is looking for.

**process? Was this cooperation profitable?**

The Slovenian company that played an active role was RTA.

**Do you have any feedback of the impressions of the team, while they were filming?**

The team was extremely impressed with the locations in Slovenia and the excellent cooperation they received. The fact that the film has grossed 25 million euros so far speaks volumes.

**Do you think this might encourage Indian tourists to visit Slovenia? How could we increase the number of Indian tourists to our country? India is namely quite exciting destination for Slovenia tourists who visit India in a substantial number.**

Shooting Indian films in Slovenia will certainly promote tourism. Indian film goers prefer movies

that are shot on locations and not in studios. The large Indian audiences that watch these on-location movies visit the countries where the films were shot. Indians are now frequent travellers abroad for holidays and tourism. Slovenia is certainly an extremely exciting country that is small but extraordinarily beautiful. What is required is an aggressive tourist campaign.

**Slovenia's entire population could easily fit in a suburb of New Delhi. The lifestyles in our countries are remarkably different. How do you, Mr Ambassador, see Slovenians?**

Yes. Our lifestyles truly are remarkably different, not to mention the sizes of our countries, as you have rightly pointed out. My impression in the last two-and-a-half years is that Slovenians are friendly, warm and helpful.

Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA



Slovenian President Borut Pahor with first lady Tanja Pečar welcomed the Indian ambassador to Slovenia H. E. Jayakar Jerome and his wife at a reception for the diplomatic corps

Photo: Archives of RTA



Filming at the Bled lake, main actors Ram Charan and Kajal Aggarwal (the Bled castle in the background).

## An escape route from the crisis has been mapped out

A year has passed since the formation of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia under the leadership of Prime Minister Janez Janša, which took place on 10 February 2012. At that time, the coalition consisted of the following parties: the Slovenian Democratic Party, Civic List, the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia, the

Slovenian People's Party and New Slovenia. The main issue of the first year of the term was the consolidation of public finances. The first and crucial task of the newly-appointed Government was the preparation of the most urgent measures needed to overcome the difficult financial and economic situation in the country.



From left to the right: Dr Žiga Turk, Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, Dr Senko Pličanič, Minister of Justice and Public Administration, Zvonko Černač, Minister of Infrastructure and Spatial Planning, Dr Tomaž Gantar, Minister of Health, Dr Vinko Gorenak, Minister of the Interior, Dr Janez Šuštaršič, Minister of Finance, Aleš Hojs, Minister of Defence, Karl Viktor Erjavec, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ljudmila Novak, Minister for Slovenians Abroad, Janez Janša, Prime Minister, Dr Gregor Virant, President of Slovenia's National Parliament, Radovan Žerjav, MSc, Minister of Economic Development and Technology, Andrej Vizjak, MSc, Minister of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, Franc Bogovič, Minister of Agriculture and Environment

It was necessary to act quickly and decisively. The first action of the Government was related to the Government itself.

By reducing the number of ministries (by four), government services (by six), organs under the responsibility of ministries (by three), and by abolishing a number of state bodies and offices, including those abroad, the administration became slimmer and cheaper. At the end of 2012, the state administration had about a thousand of employees less than at the beginning of the year. The number of employees decreased from 33,343 to 32,336. The total wage bill decreased by 18 million euros in September 2012 compared to May 2012.

Immediately after being sworn in, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia (hereinafter

referred to as the Government), set the objective of reducing public spending. After lengthy negotiations with social partners, the Government managed to reach a consensus on the implementation of the so-called act on saving, which, together with savings in material costs, substantially reduced the budget expenditure by about 800 million euros.

Three packages were then adopted to stimulate the economy. With the first package of measures, investors received a clear sign that the Government supports a society of development and knowledge (reduction of corporate income tax to 15 per cent, the introduction of unlimited 40 per cent investment tax reliefs, increasing relief for research and development from 40 to 100 per cent). The second

package of measures consisted of 75 measures to boost economic growth, including public invitations for tenders worth 377.5 million euros. The third package of measures to stimulate the economy was adopted last autumn. It consisted of 155 concrete solutions, amendments to the acts and executive acts in the area of labour legislation, rehabilitation of the banking system, the broader business system and agriculture and the environment.

With the help of numerous improvements in the drawing of EU funds, the Government succeeded in making significant progress in this area in comparison to previous years. On average, the state received 44 million euros on a monthly basis from EU funds (before, the average was 22 million per month).

The adoption of the Slovenia Sovereign Holding Act established conditions for the comprehensive, transparent and efficient management of state property, with the aim of transparent withdrawal of the state from the economy. The act on measures for the stabilisation of the banking system laid the foundations for the rehabilitation of the banking sector and the elimination of the credit crunch resulting from inconsistent banking operations in the past.

The Government has intensified economic diplomacy, while changes in tax legislation (primarily the relief for investments) improved the attractiveness of the domestic economic environment for foreign investments. In particular, the 100 per cent tax deduction for investments in research and development allowed the higher education research sphere to gain open opportunities to become more intensively linked with the economy, and to replace the reduction of funding from the direct budget through this mechanism. The Parliament has also unanimously passed pension reform which, unlike the previous attempt, was not referred to a referendum by social partners. In one year, the Government succeeded in laying the foundations for Slovenia to successfully confront the consequences of the crisis. This is thanks to all the ministers and their col-

leagues, who have persevered despite the many obstacles they encountered.

Due to successfully executed Governmental projects, macro-economic indicators started to improve. It is also essential to point out that interest rates on government bonds in international markets began to slowly but steadily decline.

Rating agencies are again closely watching developments in Slovenia, which makes it even more important that the work on key projects across ministries continues successfully. Results are the only way to convince the international community of the seriousness of intentions to exit the crisis.

Therefore, some of the key projects of individual ministries of the first year of the Government of Janez Janša are highlighted below.

### MINISTRY OF FINANCE

Providing a strong and stable banking and financial system is a key starting point for all the activities of the Ministry of Finance.

Therefore, the ministry focused on medium-term consolidation of public finances and accelerated work on budget amendments for 2012, with the aim of reducing the budget deficit to 3 per cent of the gross domestic

product. Budget expenditure or consumption was substantially reduced by about 800 million euros. The Government achieved this by first starting the implementation of cost-cutting measures for material costs, and subsequently by amending the legislation on budget expenditure and public funds.

In the light of the commitment to reduce the budget deficit below 3 per cent of GDP, the Ministry of Finance also prepared the budgets for 2013 and 2014. The Government has incorporated economic incentives in the budget proposals and provided 600 million euros of funds more for investments already in the proposed budget for 2013 than in the budget amendments for 2012. This is largely related to the drawing of European funds. The budget for 2013 consists of a combination of cost reduction and additional revenue generation, all of which provides an opportunity for development incentives. The Government can thus plan a fiscal deficit of 2.8 per cent of GDP in 2013, while also providing approximately 800 million euros as incentive for the economy, investment projects and tax reliefs.

In this context, it is also necessary to mention the systematic measures in the banking sector to address the credit crunch and the Measures of the Republic of Slovenia to Strengthen the Stability of Banks Act. With the Slo-

One year ago, the tenth Slovenian Government took office. Coalition partners have signed the Agreement for Slovenia 2012-2015. A joint commitment of the coalition was to stop the negative development trend and improve the competitiveness and growth of the Slovenian economy. This is a prerequisite for ensuring the welfare state, the development of Slovenia as a whole, and for greater prosperity for all.



Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša with former Italian Prime Minister Mario Monti

The main issue of the first year of the term was the consolidation of public finances. The first and crucial task of the newly-appointed Government was the preparation of the most urgent measures needed to overcome the difficult financial and economic situation in the country.

venia Sovereign Holding Act, the Government provided a stable and efficient framework for the management of state property.

Last year, Slovenia successfully took on a new debt, since it issued a reference ten-year government bond worth 2.25 billion USD in the American market. The gradual changes in the tax system have led to the establishment of business terms and conditions, which will have a stimulating effect on the rapid economic recovery.

A very important package of measures for the consolidation of public finances consists of activities to reduce tax evasion. According to the European Commission, Slovenia has a relatively high share of grey economy.

The priorities of the Ministry of Finance include: ensuring the stability and consolidation of public finances, the implementation of the Measures of the Republic of Slovenia to Strengthen the Stability of Banks Act, the establishment of a stable and effective framework for the management of state property, undisturbed financing of the state budget, raising sovereign ratings of the country and continuation of the project of joining the Tax Administration with the Customs Administration of the Republic of Slovenia.

**MINISTRY OF LABOUR, FAMILY AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

The greatest achievement of the ministry is undoubtedly the passing of the pension reform. The Pension and Invalidity Insurance Act (ZPIZ 2) was passed unanimously in the National Assembly and was also almost entirely harmonised with social partners. The ministry can also be proud of the passing of the Act Amending the Act Concerning the Pursuit of Foster Care and the Guarantee and Alimony Fund of the Republic of Slovenia Act.

The priorities of the ministry include: labour market reform, the drafting and adoption of the Family Code, the drafting and adoption of the Parental Protection and Family Benefit Act, Agreement between the Republic of Slovenia and the Russian Federation on cooperation in the field of child adoption, Act on Assistance for the Disabled, Scholarship Act, Act Amending the Social Security Act and the Act on Long-Term Care and Insurance for Long-Term Care.

**MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY**

Under the watchful eye of the ministry and in collaboration with other ministries, the so-called "second package of measures to stimulate the economy"

was formed. The ministry also coordinated the preparation of the third package of measures to stimulate the economy. The measures that have been realised from this package so far include the rehabilitation of the banking system, changes in tax legislation, changes in the field of public procurement and pension reform. All of these have a significant and positive impact on the economy.

The ministry has carried out key changes to the legislation for the relief of the economy, drafted important strategic documents that are the basis for further economic development of Slovenia, and also helped the economy with very specific incentives. For example, 1.5 million euros were assigned in 2012 to promote internationalisation and more than 13 million euros to promote foreign direct investments.

The Government has set up a public agency SPIRIT, which combines the Public Agency of the RS for Entrepreneurship and Foreign Investments (JAPTI), the Slovenian Tourist Board (STO), and the Public Agency for Technology of the Republic of Slovenia (ITA).

The ministry's plan for drawing European funds was exceeded by 112 per cent, which makes this ministry the most successful

in this respect, considering also that the absolute sum of EU funds drawn was also the highest so far.

This year, the ministry will continue to remove administrative barriers, and some strategic documents are already being drafted (e.g. Action Plan of the Small Business Act from 2014 to 2015 and the concept of a comprehensive supportive environment for entrepreneurship), as well as new calls to stimulate the economy (approximately 467 million euros will be available).

**MINISTRY OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND SPATIAL PLANNING**

In 2012, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Spatial Planning strengthened public transport with cheaper monthly tickets for young people, facilitated activities in the field of spatial siting of infrastructural projects of national importance and drew twice as much in EU funds for projects than in 2011. And in this year's budget, it is expected to draw six times more EU funds than in 2011.

Among the projects in the energy sector, most of the activities concerned the adoption of regulations for hydroelectric power plants on the lower and middle Sava River. A contract for over the billion euro South Stream

project was also finally signed. The ministry is also continuing to build the Šoštanj thermal power plant. The National Housing Programme for the next ten-year period is also closing. Its purpose is to provide long-term residential care with the regulation of cost rent, promotion of legal renting of apartments, etc. 2013 will be marked by a boost in economic growth through a number of investments and changes in the regulations. The budget for 2013 made 408.5 million euros available for investment, which is almost twice as much as in 2012, when 206.7 million were available for this purpose.

**MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

The Ministry of Justice and Public Administration focused primarily on the rationalisation and reduction of costly public sector and on jurisdiction in the past year.

The Ministry of Public Administration and the Ministry of Finance successfully led negotiations with social partners and thus contributed to the adoption of the Public Finance Management Act. In order to increase the quality, availability and efficiency of jurisdictional services, notaries' fees have been reformed, the proposal of the amendment to the Notary Act

has been prepared and judicial reform has been drafted. Some 79 per cent of the measures to eliminate administrative barriers and improve legislation were already realised in 2012.

This year, the ministry is focusing on two main challenges: public sector reform and reform of the judiciary.

**MINISTRY OF HEALTH**

In the first year of this Government, the Ministry of Health followed the outlined tasks and priorities, among which it is necessary to mention the completion of investments in healthcare, work on the eHealth project and the drafting of proposals to change healthcare legislation that are required for the improvement of the health system.

The general agreement for 2013 was also adopted. It determines the scope and value of health programmes covered by the Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia. And so at the beginning of this year, prices of health services were already additionally reduced by 3 per cent and a change in the dynamics of the payment of advances to hospitals was also introduced.

The priority of the ministry is to generally improve the quality of healthcare services. Hence,

The Government adopted the Slovenia Sovereign Holding Act and the Act on measures for the stabilisation of the banking system. The Parliament has also unanimously passed pension reform.

Dr Vinko Gorenak, Minister of the Interior, Mojca Kucler Dolinar, State Secretary at the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration, Dr Žiga Turk, Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, Andrej Vizjak, Msc, Minister of Labour, Family and Social Affairs



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

State secretary at the Ministry of Interior Barbara Brezigar and Dr Vinko Gorenak, Minister of Interior

the ministry will also strive to realise the emergency centres network. This project is expected to be completed by the end of 2014. Significant advances in the treatment of patients are also the reference family medicine clinics, which increase the access of the population to quality and safe healthcare.

In the first year of the current Government, the Ministry of Health continued with the establishment of an accreditation system for Slovenian hospitals. International accreditation means that the hospital or a health institution obtains a certificate for standards of quality and safety.

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE, CULTURE AND SPORT**

Changing the school calendar brought about the reintroduction of winter holidays distributed over two separate weeks, starting with the school year 2012/2013, while the adoption of the School Meals Act led to a significant increase in the number of school children who will receive free or subsidised school meals from now on. The ministry has started a trial implementation of the first foreign language in the first year of primary school and supported the initiative to introduce Chinese as an optional subject in primary schools.

In the area of legislation, the Amendment of the Higher Education Act was drafted. Three important documents in the field of culture were referred

to public debate: a draft proposal of the Act on Amending the Act Regulating the Realisation of the Public Interest in Culture; draft of the National Programme for Culture 2013 – 2016; and the Draft of the National Programme for Language Policy 2012 – 2016.

A cultural project, Maribor, the European Capital of Culture 2012, was successfully completed, as well as the exhibition of Slovenian Impressionists in Paris, a European tour by the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra, etc.

In the field of cultural heritage, the ministry achieved its goal of placing Idrija and its technical heritage on the UNESCO list, with the joint nomination of “The creative synthesis of tradition and the avant-garde – the controversy of (the architect) Jože Plečnik with rationalist tendencies in architecture and urbanism of the first half of the 20th century” (in cooperation with the Czech Republic). The ministry can also pride itself on the declaration of the Škofja Loka Passion Play as a live masterpiece of national importance and the opening of the Cultural Centre of European Space Technologies in Vitanje.

Much of the ministry’s attention is also devoted to the information society and sport. In connection with the latter, it is necessary to mention that activities for the European Basketball Championship are already underway and that the restoration of the Bloudek ski jumps has been completed.

This year, the ministry will focus primarily on the following: amending the acts on higher education and religious freedom; care for culture and language; strengthening the role of Slovenia in Europe and the world; measures for quality, independent and creative schools; actions for doctoral and post-doctoral programmes and the introduction of broadband in every Slovenian home.

**MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

After a year of working as a new organisation, it is clear that combing the agriculture and environment under one roof makes it easier to trace the principles of sustainability, multi-functionality, protection of nature and the environment, food safety and integrated rural development.

In agriculture, the ministry sought to promote a greater degree of self-sufficiency, especially with quality, locally produced food, and to improve the food security of the population. In the field of the environment, the Decree on Waste Management is particularly notable.

This year, the ministry plans the following: effective implementation of the measures of the Common Agricultural Policy and Cohesion Fund projects; the transformation of the field of water use and regulation; promotion of international year of cooperation on waters under the slogan “Waters Connect”; the drafting of the National Strategic

The Government has intensified economic diplomacy, while changes in tax legislation improved the attractiveness of the domestic economic environment for foreign investments.

Left: Prima ballerina Regina Križaj, Mezzo soprano Bernarda Fink and Dr Žiga Turk, Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport

Right: Agriculture and Environment Minister Franc Bogovič visits the Primorsko region to assess damage caused by drought.



Photo: Taminio Petelinašek/STA



Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

Plan for the Development of Aquaculture 2014–2020; Operational Programme for Fisheries 2014–2020; the Rural Development Programme, and measures to implement the Resolution for the period 2014–2020.

**MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR**

The ministry has achieved closer contact between prosecutors and the police, prepared new systemic police legislation and adopted the Resolution on the National Programme for the Prevention and Suppression of Crime for the Period 2012 – 2016. The Strategy for controlling economic crime and the proposal for the amendment to the State Prosecutor Act have also been adopted.

The priorities of this ministry are the rationalisation of business and improvement and reorganisation of work.

**MINISTRY OF DEFENCE**

The ministry focused its work on ensuring the adequate preparedness of the Slovenian Army and security system against natural and other disasters.

Key achievements include: starting the procedure of transformation which aims to further develop the defence system, which includes both the Slovenian Army and the administrative part; adoption of the Defence Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia; the participation of the Slovenian Army in international operations and missions, with the focus on Slovenian Army’s

activity in KFOR forces in Kosovo and ISAF in Afghanistan.

Furthermore, the ministry will adopt a Medium-Term Defence Programme 2013–2018 and continue transformation processes. In future, the Slovenian Army will continue to participate in international operations and missions, and take care of the security of the Republic of Slovenia. The objective of the ministry is also the preparation of a new concept of functioning of civilian functional experts and ensuring the adequate response of the system of protection against natural and other disasters.

**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Key achievements include: intensive and productive cooperation with neighbouring countries, also in resolving urgent issues such as the preparation of the defence before the arbitral tribunal and the search for resolutions to the issue of Ljubljanska banka in Croatia. The ministry devoted a lot of attention to economic diplomacy, and also formed the Strategic Council for International Economic Cooperation.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs mainly stimulated activities contained in the strategic document International Challenges 2013, in which the following countries are defined as the target markets: Russian Federation, India, China, Turkey, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan.

In the past year, the ministers of foreign ministries of Slove-

nia, Austria, Denmark and Ireland signed a public letter stating that the case of Syria should be referred to the International Criminal Court.

The first priority of the ministry is to determine the maritime border between Slovenia and Croatia and a constructive solution to the burning issue of the Ljubljanska banka, which is a prerequisite for Slovenian’s ratification of Croatia’s EU accession treaty.

**OFFICE FOR SLOVENIANS ABROAD**

Last year, in light of the penetration of the Slovenian economy in foreign markets, the office organised a number of events to strengthen economic ties and cooperation between the homeland and the Slovenians abroad.

The priorities and objectives of the office are to promote economic, scientific and cultural cooperation between Slovenians abroad and the home country, the implementation of the Action Plan of cooperation with Slovenian scientists and other top experts, and the implementation of the Action Plan regarding cooperation and support to young Slovenians living in the neighbouring countries and abroad.

In the interests of preserving the Slovenian language among Slovenians living abroad, the office will continue to co-organise Slovenian language summer schools and conduct seminars for teachers of Slovenian language and culture from overseas.

Left: Minister of Interior Vinko Gorenak receive Slovenian Olympic athletes

Right: Slovenian Defence Minister Aleš Hojs receives his Chinese counterpart Liang Guanglie.



Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA



Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

## Janez Janša

The President of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia

### We are behaving responsibly



Photo: Archives of Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia



Photo: Nebojša Stojilj/STA

**After considerable efforts, the European Financial Framework 2014–2020 has finally been agreed on. Do you consider Slovenia to have been a successful negotiator?**

I certainly do. I am proud of Slovenia's negotiating team. We made sure that Slovenia will remain a net recipient of EU funds in the next European financial framework. Moreover, we managed to improve our position, despite opposite expectations at the start of the negotiations. We have reached an agreement which will bring us the gross sum of 5.4 billion euros in the next seven years. Of course, Slovenia will be a contributor to the EU budget as well. However, in terms of net inflows this means at least 370 million euros of new funds per year. This is an important source of funding for the future development of the country and new jobs in the framework of the common European market. Particularly worrying within the existing unemployment structure is the share of young people, which is critical in some parts of the country. This was also defined by the European Union, which set 25 per cent unemployment among young people in a region as a critical limit. We therefore welcome the establishment of a

special fund amounting to 6 billion euros as a part of the new perspective; resources from this fund will be earmarked for institutions in regions that exceed the mentioned limit and that are concerned with the elimination or mitigation of the problem of young people lacking employment. It is in everybody's interest to create opportunities for the young.

**The future rests with the young. But they are the ones who are moving abroad and expressing their dissatisfaction with the situation. What are the reasons for this?**

The financial crisis has affected all EU member states. As a small market, Slovenia is even more susceptible to international economic trends. But a deeper reason for dissatisfaction is a result of long years of uneven development. The East Cohesion Region with Maribor stands at 73% of the EU average development rate, while the West Cohesion Region with Ljubljana can boast 106%. The living standard in the east is thus lower by a third. And this is confirmed by the unemployment statistics. But despite this, as much as 60 per cent of state aid went to the easily most developed Ljubljana region last

year. All other eleven statistical regions of Slovenia were granted a mere 40 per cent of state aid. The situation was not much better in previous years either. This is precisely why the funds from the new European financial framework will be of key importance for the elimination of discrepancies and enhanced wellbeing in the country. Young people are right to seek experience abroad. But the important thing is to come back and use the knowledge thus acquired to boost our economy. In its history, Slovenia has too often suffered the loss of its most creative and capable people, for various reasons. Certain parts of the country can still feel the consequences of the brain drain in the past. International cooperation is of key importance for the future. This is precisely why the Government is striving to adopt long-term measures to create an environment to which the young will be happy to return.

**Have the projects for which Slovenia will draw the negotiated funds from the next financial framework already been drafted?**

It is clear, above all, that these resources will be crucial for the necessary infrastructural proj-

"Raise your voice and expand this network," said Prime Minister Janša to encourage the young to take part in active citizenship at the Tartini Theatre in Piran.

Young people are right to seek experience abroad. But the important thing is to come back and use the knowledge thus acquired to boost our economy.



"In order to revive the economic growth, the government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted numerous measures to consolidate public finance, revitalise lending into the economy and improve the business environment," Prime Minister Jansha assured the Secretary General Angelo Curria in OECD Bled.

ects in the country. Our Government is striving to promote awareness of the importance of the EU funds for the development of less developed regions through government regional visits. We started with the least developed regions, those that will find their best opportunities in the new financial perspective. Insofar as they prepare the projects with which to stand for these resources well, of course.

On his last visit to Dolenjska and Bela Krajina, Zvone Črnač, the Minister of Infrastructure and Spatial Planning, brought good news by declaring that the Government had accelerated the procedures for obtaining location permits for the so-called third development axis and that the construction of the road is scheduled to already begin at the end of next year. Of course, this road could not be built without EU funds, which are expected to cover a third of the investment. The rest will have to be provided by us, including by granting motorway concessions. It is clear that foreign investments are directly related to good infrastructural connections. One may say that these are projects of vital importance for the less developed parts of the country. Until these areas are well connected, this envi-

ronment will be less attractive to foreign investors and the quality of living in such regions will unfortunately remain lower.

**When starting your term of office, you said that, besides European funding resources, foreign investments were the only resources available to Slovenia. European negotiations have been successfully completed. What about the opening up of the Slovenia's business environment to attract foreign investments?**

Before the end of last year, we adopted four out of five reforms that are the key to overcoming the crisis in which Slovenia has mired after months of blockades due to the collapse of the previous Government. We successfully negotiated the budgets for 2012 and 2013 through government and parliamentary procedures and adopted the pension reform without a single opposing vote. I am particularly pleased that the two most important laws, that is the law setting up a so-called bad bank and the law regulating the management of state-owned assets, have successfully navigated all the obstacles, even the referendum threats. The law on state-owned assets provides the basis for the establishment of

the Slovenia Sovereign Holding and ensures a greater transparency and efficiency of the management of state-owned assets. Dispersed state ownership is often seen an obstacle for foreign investors who are interested in entering the Slovenian market. With the establishment of the holding company, we will ensure a counterpart for potential investors to discuss prospective investments. The law governing the rehabilitation of the banking system, as the bank balance sheet restructuring mechanism, is also of crucial importance for the recovery of the Slovenian economic sector. Currently, implementing regulations that are required before this instrument becomes operational are being brought into line with the European Central Bank. The moment the so-called bad bank becomes operational, the Slovenian financial system will enter a new era. A better financial service will improve the productivity of the economic sector and create better jobs.

Furthermore, the talks with social partners on the labour market reform have recently reached their final phase. This is the last of five key measures that the present Government outlined at the beginning of its term of office. It is imperative to

We are making every effort to prevent the political crisis from blocking a normal functioning of the public administration – something which would usually happen in such situations – and from making people feel this vacuum. We are behaving responsibly.



render labour law more flexible. Firstly, it will be easier for the domestic economy to adjust to market conditions. And secondly, this will improve Slovenia's competitiveness as measured by the international rankings that each foreign investor first looks at when considering investments in another country.

**Which particular markets present opportunities for the Slovenian economy and are at the same time lucrative for foreign investors?**

Every market, in my opinion, has potential. We should always bear in mind that the small size of Slovenia does affect its capacity, but still, Slovenia can be more efficient and competitive if it clearly defines its objectives. This year, special attention will be paid to selected foreign markets, such as Azerbaijan, India, Kazakhstan, China, the Russian Federation and Turkey. These markets are recording economic growth in a period when the European Union's economy is stagnating or even shrinking. This, of course, does not imply that these are the only interesting markets for Slovenia or that we are not considering other markets as well.

The Government has defined the areas where Slovenia excels in know-how and has rich nat-

ural resources, which enables it to compete on the global market. With the recently adopted Industrial Policy of Slovenia, the Government has once again put the manufacturing sector at the forefront. For the purposes of international trade, the following economic sectors have priority: biomedicine and biotechnology, energy and environmental technologies, advanced materials and technologies, nanotechnology, information-communication technologies, the wood processing industry, the automotive industry, transport and logistics, the metal processing industry, and tourism.

**It seems that owing to domestic political unrest, the atmosphere in Slovenia is, despite the winter, rather overheated: there are even an increasing number of calls for you to step down. The loudest, however, appear to be incapable of offering an alternative. What does the future hold for us?**

Slovenia is a democratic country with a constitution and laws that facilitate a democratic change in the Government. My mandate, as I have pointed out several times before, is available to anyone who believes themselves to have the potential to

lead the country better than I can. The Slovenian legal order provides for the mechanism of a constructive non-confidence motion enabling the new parliamentary majority to institute a new government in a democratic manner.

The Government that I lead has adopted a series of measures, thus laying solid foundations for Slovenia and its economy to recover and regain its prosperity. Those who are trying to bring down the Government through excesses and media agitation will have to take the responsibility for their actions. As for me, I will not seek a vote of confidence in the parliament, because I do not believe this would be good for the country. My predecessor did this at the end of September 2011 and failed to win the vote of confidence. The result was that it took Slovenia four and a half months before obtaining a new government. Perhaps we could still afford this in 2011, but the price was nevertheless very high.

Currently, Slovenia has a government holding full political power. Therefore, we are making every effort to prevent the political crisis from blocking a normal functioning of the public administration – something which would usually happen in such situations – and from mak-

"The Slovenian national interest is for good companies which create new jobs," said Prime Minister Jansha at the opening of a Swiss investment project which will benefit the Slovenian economy.

Every market, in my opinion, has potential. We should always bear in mind that the small size of Slovenia does affect its capacity, but still, Slovenia can be more efficient and competitive if it clearly defines its objectives.



Photo: Nobejla Teličič/STA

"Slovenia is a reliable partner," Prime Minister Janša assured the Secretary General of NATO, Anders Fogh Rasmussen.

ing people feel this vacuum. We are behaving responsibly.

**In recent years, referendums have turned out to be the single greatest problem for Slovenian governments. Can the state remove the blockades?**

It seems that all political parties have reached a very broad consensus regarding the implementation of projects which are crucial to Slovenia. One of these projects is to change the referendum rules. Frequent referendums were an important cause of political instability in the past. A constitutional amendment will make the institution of people's legislative corrective action more up-to-date and practicable. The talks on the content of changes are already at an advanced stage. The objective is to depart from the current situation, in which the institution of a referendum initiative has become a political tool used all too often. The effect of this can be considered as particularly harmful to our citizens, who are witnessing a constant obstruction of measures and, especially, deterioration in their standard of living.

A similar story is the inclusion of the golden fiscal rule in the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia. By ratifying the international treaty, Slovenia undertook to do this. And indeed this represents an important assurance that we will not spend more than we have. What is more important is that as a result of resolving this issue at the constitutional level, the young generation will not be obliged to pay our debts.

**Will Slovenia ratify Croatia's EU accession treaty?**

For the time being, things look good. The only worry is increased political instability and a resulting period without an effective government, a situation which could prevent the last barriers from being removed. On the other hand, Croatia's accession to the EU is certainly in the interests of Slovenia.

**In recent months there was a broad-based campaign in Slovenia and across the world to support the nomination of Father Pedro Opeka for the Nobel Peace Prize. The nomination is also supported by the Govern-**

**ment. How do you see the significance of this nomination?**

Father Pedro Opeka deserves to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize because of his longstanding charitable activity in one of the poorest corners of the Earth. In Madagascar, he helps those who are most in need of charitable assistance. Pedro Opeka is a Slovenian and a world figure of whom we can be justly proud.

The campaign in support of his nomination in recent months has indeed been broad-based and intense. The support articulated by several heads of state and various respected international institutions from Europe, Africa and other continents is really impressive. I am particularly pleased with the level of unity demonstrated in Slovenia on this occasion. The statement of support was signed by a number of distinguished persons from political, cultural and scientific walks of life. The nomination was also supported by all national branches of power, including the President, several deputies from various political parties, Slovenian MEPs and many others.

## Slovenia has all the conditions to become a successful country again

Photo: Personal Archive



I worked at the World Bank for over thirty years. After ten years, I moved to Slovenia for two years as the Chief Economic Adviser to Slovenian Prime Minister. At that time, Slovenia had achieved political independence and economic sovereignty. We built state and economic institutions and implemented basic economic reforms of transition. After two years, we achieved positive growth, surplus in the budget, a stable and convertible local currency (the tolar), and minimal external debt. I then moved back to the World Bank. After about twenty years, I returned to live in my home country, Slovenia. The successful initial economic reforms, which were implemented to achieve the independence of Slovenia, and the subsequent accession to the EU had performed miracles. I found a much higher standard of living, well-built infrastructure, including highways, and much nicer cities resembling those in developed neighbouring countries like Austria and Italy. However, I was surprised to find out that economic reforms had stalled. Although Slovenia was the first

transition country to join the euro zone, it has benefited remarkably little from foreign investment and the common market for capital, has had (until recently) a pension system in the brink of going bankrupt, has inflexible labour laws that keep young workers under- or unemployed, has rules that curtail competition and repel new investors and job creation, has poor governance, non-competitive tax legislation, a cumbersome and oversized bureaucracy and, above all, badly managed state enterprises and state banks. With all these limitations, Slovenia was poorly prepared to face the global financial crisis that started in 2008. The fall in economic activity has been the second largest in the euro area, just below Greece. Unemployment has been high and remains high because of the inflexible labour laws. The enterprises that were 'privatised' (by semi-legal means), using loans from the state banks, went bankrupt, and cannot service their debts to the same banks, as they had no real capital and too much debt. The banks and then the government lost access to global financial markets, forcing the government to adjust its finances in order to be able to roll over the stock of debt, pay for a moderate deficit and recapitalise the state banks that could not recover their loans. The current government identified key economic reforms that we all knew needed to be done and that should remain a priority regardless of who is in power: we need them for Slovenia to grow so that Slovenians can have jobs. These include more flexible labour laws, a better investment climate and business regulations so

that capital can come in and help to start new employment, the privatisation of many companies that are certainly not 'strategic' (such as beer), a correction of the fiscal imbalances, pension reform and a clean up of the state banks to be able to sell them and have the new owners instil a commercial culture in them. Thus far, the government has succeeded implementing pension reform, which is commendable, although this will need more work in the future because of the rapidly ageing population. The current government has also been able to substantially lower the budget deficit. These efforts also need to continue in the same direction in future years. The external debt of Slovenia is relatively low, less than 60% of GDP. The rapid increase of debt, which went for social transfers and inefficient subsidies in recent years, was not sustainable. Therefore, the implemented savings plan and decrease in the budget deficit was necessary, and this needs to continue. The external debt may, however, increase to 70% or more as part of needed bank restructuring and clean up of old debts.

It seems that there is some political consensus to continue with some reforms, especially a change in labour laws and improvement in the investment climate. However, there seems to be a deep resistance in some political circles to clean up state banks, to better manage state enterprises and state capital, and/or to sell badly managed state enterprises to the private sector. All this is happening despite the government's appointment of three first-class foreign experts as directors of the bank restructuring agency. The

political situation is highly divisive, using irrelevant ideological arguments dating from issues from World War II, attempting to split the electorate and continue with the status quo, stagnation and increasing corruption. Another stumbling block to reforms are the non-constructive leaders of labour unions, which do not want to accept best practices of neighbouring countries like Austria, Germany and/or Scandinavian countries. There is insufficient constructive and professional debate about substance of reforms. The needed reforms were reviewed by international financial institutions and received strong support from them. Whatever constructive comments were received from these institutions are easy to follow since they concentrate on transparency and a professional approach to the implementation of the reforms. Slovenia should be able to implement the needed reforms by itself, as it did so twenty two years ago without the official help from the IMF and the World Bank. Slovenia has all the conditions to become a successful country again. It has a well-educated and hard working population, diversified industry and services, and an excellent location with a beautiful landscape suitable for successful tourism. Whatever government will hold power in the future, it will have to continue with well-considered reforms. What is needed politically is to find consensus on the priorities and their quick implementation. Whatever delays may happen in implementing the needed and essential reforms, they will be extremely costly and will deepen and unnecessarily prolong the economic crisis.

**Dr Boris Pleskovič** is the President of the Slovenian World Congress. He graduated from the University of Ljubljana, receiving a Master's Degree at Harvard and PhD at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He held several posts at the World Bank in Washington: Vice Chair

of the Research Committee, Administrator of the Research Department for Development Economics, Research Department Manager, chief organiser and co-editor of the books for annual global conferences of the World Bank on development economics, conferences and books for

the Berlin Workshop Series and head of the World Bank's macro-economic consulting missions. In 1991 and 1992, he served as Chief Economic Adviser to the Prime Minister of Slovenia. He frequently lectures as a guest professor at renowned universities in the US, Europe and China. He

has authored and co-authored numerous books and scientific papers. In 1998, he was decorated on the occasion of the 650th anniversary of the Charles University in Prague, and received the Golden Order for Services in 2006 from the President of the Republic of Slovenia.

## A Poet Is Born!

Prešeren's work is a necessary, inevitable and eternal part of Slovenian cultural tradition

France Prešeren – poet, writer, thinker – won a position in Slovenian society more reminiscent of a natural phenomenon than of a person of flesh and blood. It is impossible to remove him from the collective Slovenian spirit, since he is practically one with this spirit. The presence of his name and image everywhere – on squares, streets, awards, bank notes, the theatre – is only a superficial manifestation of the poet's influence.

Photo: Rasto Božić



Nowadays, we can hardly imagine what the decision to write poetry in Slovenian meant in the first half of the 19th century. Primož Trubar laid the foundations for Slovenian literary language in the Reformation; however, the rich tradition of folk literature during the Enlightenment was joined by the first, yet frail and artistically clumsy attempts at literary poetry. Protestantism contributed to the idea of a national state, and the French revolution 200 years ago contributed to the establishment of the Illyrian provinces in Slovenia in the age of Enlightenment. And this was also when the young Prešeren was schooled. Romanticism favoured the idea of a national state, and Prešeren with his verses held a leading position in this movement. He was

the first Slovenian whose writing was good enough to compete with his contemporaries around Europe, where Romanticism was flourishing.

In that historical moment when the pressures on patriotism dangerously increased, France Prešeren (1800-1849) took to the stage of European culture. He took the language of Slovenian peasants and elevated it to the level of the European spirit and international literature. The language which was not meant to survive. The language which passed through the eye of the needle of history, so that we can speak it today and on which we founded our independent and democratic state. Therefore, we celebrate this historical miracle with great gratitude and optimism.

The 19th century was very important for the development of the Slovenian nation. Prešeren and his circle of literates lifted the Slovenian language and literary creativity to the highest European level. Since then, the development of the Slovenian nation has reached new levels of culture, and finally, it reached the political development which led us to our statehood. Slovenian culture and poetry accompanied all the most important moments in the development of the Slovenian nation – the rapturous and victorious moments, as well as moments of uncertainty, and sometimes even of tragedy and grief. Culture is a comprehensive system of values that merge us into a nation, community and state.

Therefore, a cultural holiday is not only a holiday, but it also celebrates our patriotism, our patriotic awareness and our state. Among all the national holidays, 8 February is probably the most sincerely felt by everyone, as it connects us into a single culturally defined family. Independent, sovereign Slovenia was created with pen and weapon, thought and deed. In a symbolic way, the path to Slovenian independence began in the village of Vrba in the birth house of France Prešeren on 3 December 1800. 8 February is the holiday when we remember Prešeren's death, which presents the conclusion of his creative life but also the beginning of his path to immortality. Prešeren's work is a necessary, inevitable and eternal part of Slovenian cultural tradition.

France Prešeren was born 3 December 1800 in Vrba in the Gorenjska region, the third of eight children and the first son to Mina and Šimen Prešeren. When he was eight years old, he went to live with his uncle Jožef, a priest. France was educated by Jožef for the first two years and then entered the primary school in Ribnica. Prešeren continued his schooling in Ljubljana. It was there that he realised that he had not been born to be a priest, which was his mother's wish. Against his parents' wishes, France applied to the Faculty of Arts in Vienna. He graduated in the spring of 1828, and soon after, found his first job as a lawyer in Ljubljana. He also worked pro bono as an apprentice; however, this work brought no success, since he was not regularly employed. He gave up his career as an official and started working regularly as an apprentice. For a long time, he tried to become an independent lawyer, but his applications to practise law were constantly rejected. Interestingly, Prešeren, who was registered in the golden book of excellent students and passed all exams with honours, could

not get a job. It became clear to him that honesty would not take him far. It is also interesting that Prešeren only accepted cases of those wrongly accused or victims of injustice.

He was unhappily in love with Julija Primic, to whom he dedicated *Sonetni venec* (Wreath of Sonnets). He had three illegitimate children with his common law wife Ana Jelovšek. Many of his friends died, even his best friend, Matija Čop, who drowned in the Sava River. Prešeren blamed himself for Čop's death, and dedicated his epic poem *Krst pri Savici* (The Baptism on the Savica) to him. His children went into foster care, so he sought comfort in inns, which became his second home. Five applications to practise law were rejected. On the same day that his sixth application was approved, he also received approval for the publication of the only book published in his lifetime, the collection *Poezije* (Poems). He moved to Kranj and finally found some luck. At first, he did quite well, he even opened his own office as a lawyer.

He was known as Doctor Fig among children, since he always carried a fig or other sweets in his pockets. He also liked to invite groups of children to lunch at inns, where he observed how they eat and play and their conversations. They inspired him and filled him with joy. He also gave money to the poor. However, the lucky life did not last long. He was killed by drink and poverty. He died on 8 February 1849 of liver cirrhosis, caused by alcoholism. He was buried in Kranj.

He had many problems with the first publication of *'Zdravljica'* ('A Toast'). Due to the 'controversial' content, he omitted the third stanza; when the censor rejected publication of the fourth stanza, he omitted the entire poem, since he did not want to publish an incomplete poem. In 1994, Prešeren's *'Zdravljica'* became the Slovenian national anthem. Prešeren has been represented in the form of various statues, on bank notes (SIT 1000.00) and two euro coins. Various plays are staged in his honour and there are also the highly regarded Prešeren Awards. He has also been the subject of a TV film.

### FAMOUS WORKS:

'Povodni mož'  
'Sonetni venec'  
'Krst pri Savici'  
'Zdravljica'  
'Turjaška Rozamunda'  
'Apel in čevljar'  
'O, Vrba'

### LESS KNOWN LOVE POEMS:

'Zvezdogledam'  
'Dekletam'  
'Dohtar'  
'Ljubezni Sonetj'  
'Gazele'  
'Je od veselga časa teklo leto'  
'Kam?'  
'Ribič'  
'Prosto srce'  
'Ženska zvestoba'  
'Mornar'  
'Nezakonska mati'  
'Sveti Senan'  
etc.

### The seventh stanza of 'Zdravljica' ('A Toast') is mostly renowned as the Slovenian anthem:

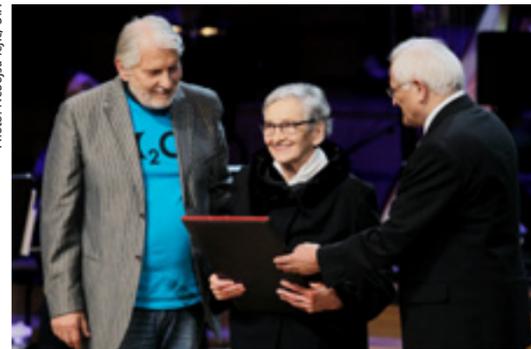
God's blessing on all nations,  
Who long and work for that bright day,  
When o'er earth's habitations  
No war, no strife shall hold its sway;  
Who long to see  
That all men free  
No more shall foes, but neighbours be.

## People Need Art and Culture to Survive

On the evening before the Slovenian national holiday celebrating the National Day of Culture, i.e. on 7 February, a government-sponsored event entitled 'Kultura osebno' (Culture Personally) was held at Cankarjev dom, where the Prešeren Awards were presented. "Tonight is a festive and celebratory moment, when we can forget about the bitterness of the times in the world and Slovenia; it is a holiday celebrating Slovenian culture. In order to survive, people need art and culture; they have to fuse all aspects of human actions and creation," said the President of the Management Board of the Prešeren Fund, academic Jože Trontelj.

The peak of the event was the presentation of six Prešeren Fund Awards and two Prešeren Awards. The principal guest was the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, and numerous esteemed representatives of the public. There were performances by many musicians, actor Boris Cavazza and dancer Bojana Mišič. The national anthem 'Zdravljica' was interpreted by actor Boris Cavazza,

which was followed by the presentation of Prešeren Awards. Lifetime achievement awards were presented to writer Zorko Simčič and painter Marlenka Stupica. The Prešeren Fund Awards were awarded to Ljubljana prima ballerina Regina Križaj, mezzo soprano Bernarda Fink and bass baritone Marcos Fink, poet Gorazd Kocijančič, baritone Jože Vidic, translator Marija Javoršek and film director Metod Pevec.



Actor Boris Cavazza, painter Marlenka Stupica and President of the Management Board of the Prešeren Fund, academic Jože Trontelj



Writer, dramatist and essayist Zorko Simčič



The celebration in Cankarjev dom

## Prešeren Awards Winners

### PAINTER MARLENKA STUPICA: ILLUSTRATION IS MOSTLY A WORK OF ART

Painter Marlenka Stupica received the Prešeren Award for lifetime achievements and her extensive creative opus. She has been continuously co-creating the solid core of Slovenian illustration for many years. She sets herself the highest standards which can be identified in her contemporary expression and compared with her idols from history.

Stupica's illustrations feature an ambitious platform, a painter's bravura and an extensive range of feelings, as well as solid construction and great attention to detail, which can be best characterised by the term 'book painting', as described by painter and graphic artist Črtomir Frelih.

She designs a clear and open space according to a principle especially attractive to children – i.e. the principle of maximum clarity. Tables, chairs and architecture are illustrated in a way that they do not limit the view. Purity of colour is maintained with flat layers. She avoids additional polishing and dropped shadows, because she knows that they would screen the glowing power of colour. Her contour drawing is never black, but a colourful painting. Therefore, her forms have more possibilities to merge with the environment or clearly separate them from it, depending on what she is trying to achieve. She has received many national and international awards and acknowledgements for her work, including the Prešeren Fund Award in 1972.

She sees a text as a beautiful artistic libretto for thinking about composition, tone and colour spatial proportions and as potential from which to realise her own imagination. She has been drawing her whole life. As a very young child, she was given a pencil and paper, she started to draw and has never stopped since. Drawing was her time to play. She used to make up stories and drew them, because she did not know how to write. This type of play became an addiction. She always carries a pencil and paper, although her habits have changed over the years.

She has illustrated more than one hundred children's books. She sees an illustration as a beautiful artistic libretto for thinking about composition, tone and colour and spatial proportions and as giving away her own imagination.

She prefers stories with motifs that offer the opportunity to express a fairylike, mysterious, surreal atmosphere, and which do not limit her artistic composition. Her reply to a question about what is easiest and hardest to draw was that everything depends on problems which are solved simultaneously. She mostly favours setting scenes in nature, which is an inexhaustible source of beauty, and inspires numerous variations. She likes to draw animals and is even more fond of drawing fairy creatures. She often faces decision-making moments during her work – this is quite arduous sometimes, and she always faces many doubts. She took quite a lot of time to develop. Initially, she went through some kind of 'learning period'. She was influenced by various artistic styles and learned from them. This is mainly evident in the first picture books. Later, she developed her own style, and continued to develop it from book to book.

She views the Prešeren Award as a beautiful and surprising response to her many years of work, as well as an award given to illustration, which is frequently overlooked as an art form. Illustration is small format painting with specific motifs. However, she says that large and small paintings can only be good or bad.

### WRITER, DRAMATIST AND ESSAYIST ZORKO SIMČIČ: A MAN GIVES NOTHING IF HE DOES NOT GIVE HIMSELF

Simčič's literary works are among the most important in Slovenian literature of the 20th century. His recently published *Poslednji deseti bratje* is a great novel of Slovenian literature of the 21st century.

His extensive and diverse literary output includes novels, short prose and poetry, as well as plays and essays. Among his novels, *Človek na obeh straneh stene* (Man on Both Sides of the Wall) stands out, which is one of the first Slovenian modern Romanesque novels. In 1993, he received the Prešeren Fund Award for this book, i.e. with its first publication in the homeland and 36 years after it was first published in Argentina. The many reprints of the novel confirm it as a fundamental work of post-war Slovenian literature, as described by the literary historian and essayist Matevž Kos.

Zorko Simčič is a central figure in Slovenian émigré literature. His works have not only stubbornly preserved his mother tongue, but investigated the existential positions of a man in the turbulent 20th century. He was also marked by living abroad, searching for new things and homelessness. The foreigner motif has been mentioned by Simčič in almost all his interviews since his return to Slovenia. "When you go out into the world, you are thrown out of your 'normal life'. You become different from those who are born and die in the same room or even the same bed. At home, you meet people who are different from you, but abroad, you also meet something completely foreign – the character of different nations, different cultures, sometimes even a different civilisation. If you are a thinking being, you cope, you verify, you take over, you negate, but at the same time, you become part of the new environment, which is not necessarily a negative one. It is negative if you uncritically take over something that is not yours, and thus root yourself out," said Simčič, confirming that exile is fundamental to his literary works.

Living abroad strongly influenced his novels *Človek na obeh straneh stene* (1957) and *Poslednji deseti bratje*, which according to Čander will permanently affect the map of Slovenian literature. The novel *Človek na obeh straneh stene*, for which he received the Prešeren Fund Award in 1993, is the first modernist and existentialist Slovenian novel.

Simčič's work reached its peak with the novel *Poslednji deseti bratje*. This exceptionally extensive text took a few decades to emerge, and we can call it Simčič's lifetime achievement: with his original polyphonic structure and carefully elaborated complex narrative strategy, he draws the subtle fresco of the fugitive lives of Slovenians in the decades at the end of the Second World War. He speaks of universal dilemmas in life, which are at the same time the specific dilemmas of individuals, displaced persons set in different periods and in different geographic locations from Trieste to Montevideo, from Tokyo to Toronto. The citation for the Prešeren Award described the work as the 'great novel of Slovenian literature of the 20th century'.

The play *Zgodaj dopolnjena mladost* (1967) is justifiably considered Simčič's most important drama. This mysterious play, which has been reprinted many times, addresses the issues of salvation and reconciliation connected with events in Slovenia during the Second World War and the revolution. Literary historians have called this work the 'greatest achievement of modern Slovenian drama'.

## Prešeren Fund Awards Winners

**The Ljubljana Ballet prima ballerina Regina Križaj** received the Prešeren Fund Award for her ballet work in the last two years, especially for performances in Classics and Tango, The Fusion of Centuries and La Bayadere. Križaj is a virtuoso on the ballet scene, and has set a new milestone in Slovenian ballet with her recognisable dance aesthetics and high level of technique.

**Mezzo soprano Bernarda Fink and bass baritone Marcos Fink** received the Prešeren Fund Award for their CD Slovenija! and an acclaimed series of concerts in Slovenia, including the main performance on 8 February 2012 at the Opera in Ljubljana. Their performance is exceptional and technically complete; the music is sincere and honest, imbued with deep musical narration and sensitivity to the Slovenian language.

**Poet Gorazd Kocijančič** received the Prešeren Fund Award for his collection entitled Primož Trubar zapušča Ljubljano. Kocijančič does not write in first person in his lyrics. The voice, the poet's voice, which speaks through its persona, i.e. Trubar, brings from its depths a magmatic compound of feelings which are crystallised into

words and articulated in a spiritual struggle.

**Baritone Jože Vidic** received the Prešeren Fund Award for the roles of Duke Lorenzo in the opera Black Masks, and Gruden in the opera Ljubezen kapital. Both roles took him to the peak of his artistic career, according to the citation of the award.

**Translator Marija Javoršek** received the Prešeren Fund Award for the translation of Pierre Corneille's Roman political tragedies. According to the citation for the award, with her exceptional sense for classical poetics and Roman historical themes, Javoršek recreated the atmosphere of the fratricidal war in Horace, the immortal emperor's monologues in Cinna and political dialogues in The Death of Pompey.

**Metod Pevec** received an award for writing and directing the documentary Aleksandrinke. The film was the first to show the complexity of this specific Slovenian phenomenon, and the director managed to integrate it into a universal framework of diverse destinies of humans.

*The design of this year's event was by author and director Ivana Djilas.*



Prima ballerina  
Regina Križaj

Mezzo soprano  
Bernarda Fink

Bass baritone  
Marcos Fink



Poet  
Gorazd Kocijančič

Baritone  
Jože Vidic

Translator  
Marija Javoršek



Director  
Metod Pevec

Photo: Nebojša Tajić/SIPA

## President receives representatives of Slovenian minorities

The President of the Republic of Slovenia, Mr Borut Pahor, hosted a reception for the representatives of Slovenian minorities from Austria, Croatia, Italy and Hungary. This is a traditional event celebrating the Slovenian Cultural Day.

The minorities' representatives, who were also greeted by the Minister for Slovenians Abroad, Mrs Ljudmila Novak, outlined their current position and the difficulties they are facing. In his address, President Borut Pahor thanked the guests for their unselfish commitment to minority organisations. He also assured them that Slovenia was well aware of its responsibility towards Slovenian national communities in other countries. Despite the current crisis, Slovenia is doing its utmost to minimise the effects of cuts on autochthonous minorities in Slovenia, while it expects the same of the neighbouring countries.

The President emphasised the exceptional importance of culture for the preservation of national identity and the role culture played in building an independent Slovenia. By way of conclusion, he extended his congratulations on the Slovenian Cultural Day. In the evening, President Borut Pahor also attended the state ceremony where the Prešeren Awards and Prešeren Fund Awards are conferred for outstanding achievements in culture.



President Borut Pahor and Ljudmila Novak, Minister without Portfolio for Relations between the Republic of Slovenia and the Autochthonous Slovene National Organisations Living in Neighbouring Countries with the minorities' representatives

Photo: Nebojša Tajić/SIPA

## Prime Minister Janez Janša congratulated Slovenian citizens on the cultural holiday

**Prime Minister Janez Janša, who could not attend the national celebration in Cankarjev dom due to the EU Summit negotiations on the multi-annual budget for 2014 to 2020, congratulated Slovenian citizens on the cultural holiday and the winners of the Prešeren Award in a written message.**

He summarised a few verses from Prešeren's 'The Baptism on the Savica' which he said testified to an atmosphere similar to the present. The path he saw ahead was "a path to a world of greater fairness" on which the Slovenian nation should embark. At the same time, the Prime Minister warned that the path was steep and difficult.

He wrote that it held "a good many tests and battles" for Slovenians, but that the Slovenian people would be able to deal with it.

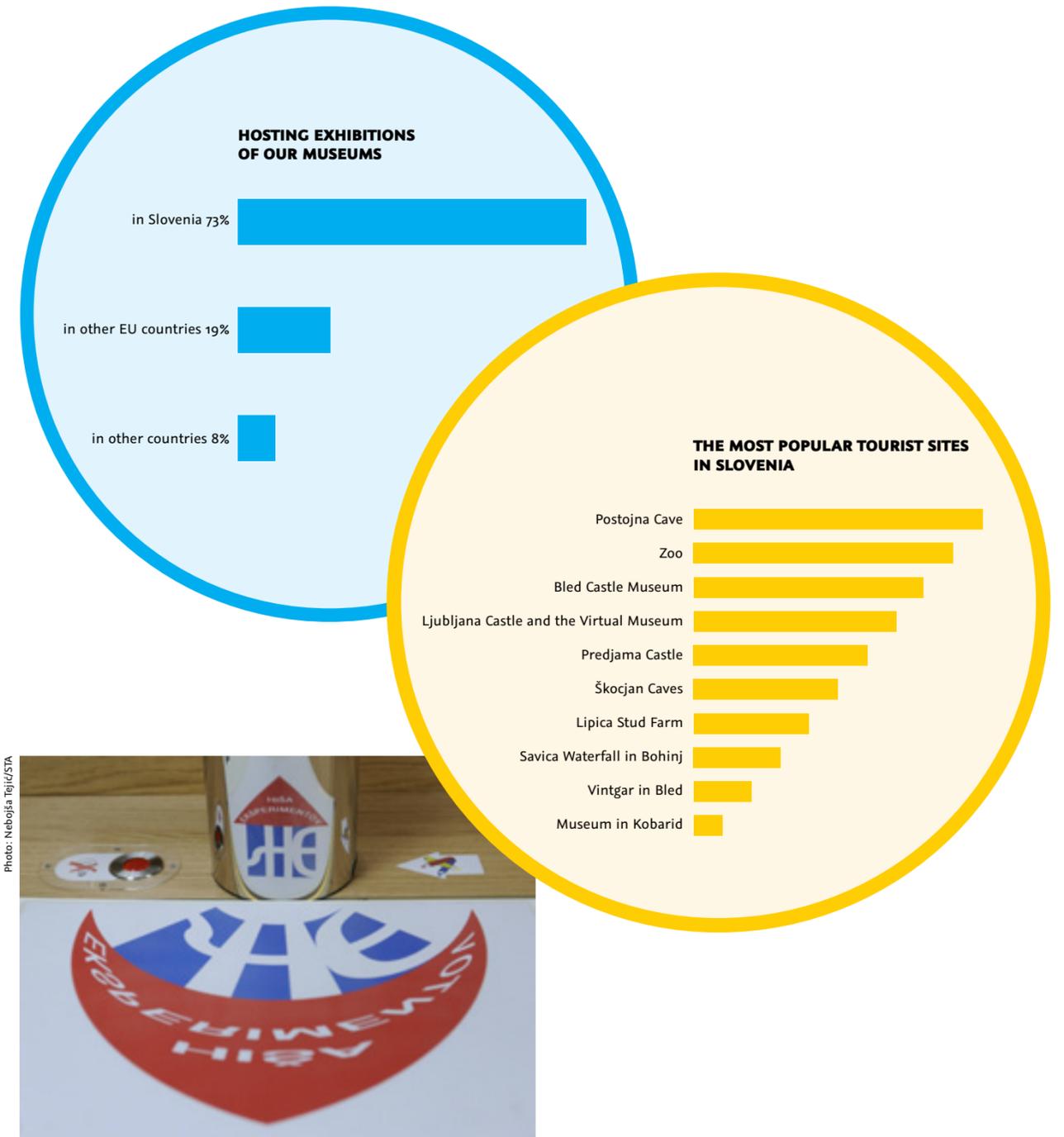
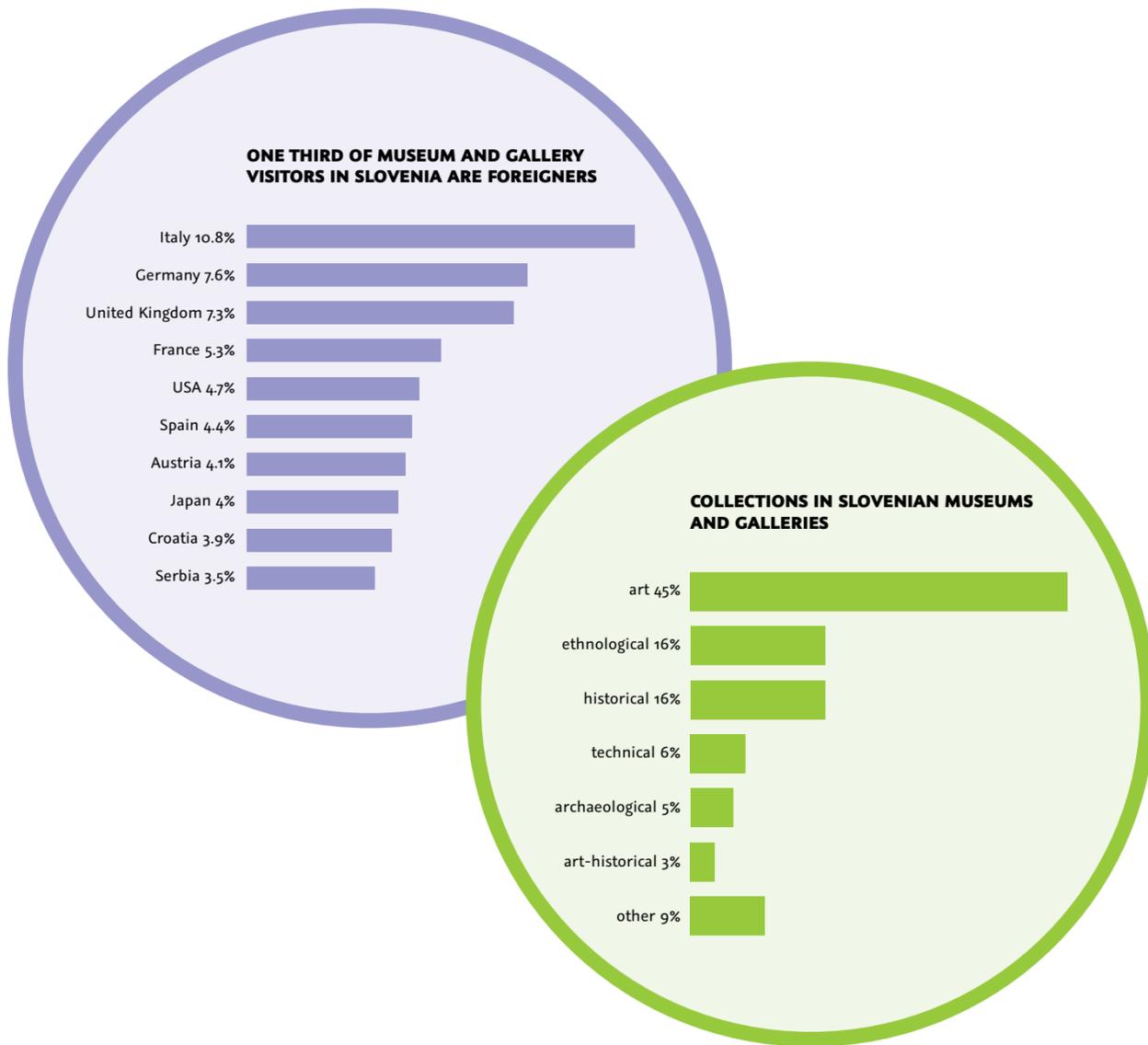
The Prime Minister also congratulated illustrator Marlenka Stupica on her Prešeren Award for lifetime achievement and wrote that it was difficult to explain in a few words why, when looking at her fairytale illustrations, some images from our childhood have such a profound impact on us, while others do not. He thanked this fine world-class artist for helping Slovenians enter the world of fairytales with her work, which helped people to see the world beyond everyday life at this difficult and dark time.

The Prime Minister also congratulated writer Zorko Simčič, winner of the highest national award in the field of culture, in words which indicated the diversified course of the winner's life, during which "he refused to be divided between his homeland and foreign countries with such enthusiasm and perseverance that he could be a role model to all of us battling the seemingly trivial problems within our own borders". He thanked the winner for his work in preserving Slovenian identity outside our borders and added: "I am honoured that independent Slovenia opened the door to patriots who, during the period of totalitarianism, could not and were not al-

lowed to act within the borders of their own country due to their attachment to the idea of Slovenian identity."

Mr Janša also congratulated other Prešeren Award winners, Bernarda Fink Inzko and Marcos Fink, Marija Javoršek, Gorazd Kocijančič, Regina Križaj, Metod Pevec and Jože Vidic. He wrote that, as supreme creators of Slovenian culture, they are contributing to the realisation of France Prešeren's words in his 'Wreath of Sonnets': "Our hearts burn for the honour of the country". He also said that "at this moment, every high-quality work of art is worth more than we dare admit".

# Museums and their curious visitors



Museums are institutions that preserve memories and mediate them in various forms and allegories; they also present stories. General and specialised museums, national, regional, local and city museums, museums of different expertise, fields of work, periods and many others prove the diversity of museum materials. If we consider and understand the intangible heritage of material subjects and

immaterial heritage of spiritual and social culture, the diversity of the material becomes even greater. A museum is a living organism which continuously adapts to its society.

We usually take more time to visit museums when we are abroad, but this does not happen merely due to museums and their popularity, but largely due to another social role – abroad,

we take on the role of a traveller or tourist, and this role also involves visiting museums.

Museum entrance fees in Slovenian museums are still considered an embarrassment, as if the arts and heritage do not have a general value in society. Although the fees are substantially lower than abroad, low in comparison to entrance fees for some other cultural events, and

most certainly ‘undervalued’ in terms of the professionalism and efforts invested in the offer, we often receive negative views from visitors.

Days when admission is free usually attract many visitors to museums. These days are usually 8 February, which is a Slovenian Cultural Holiday, 18 May, International Museum Day, during the Summer Museum Night

campaign on the third Saturday in June, and 3 December on “Taveseli dan kulture” (This happy day of culture).

Free visits along with open museum days are also offered during other events, e.g. during student culture week, family week, children’s week and festivals. Many museums have free admission once a month, which is specified in the articles of as-

sociation of specific museums. Free visits account for approximately 50 per cent of all tickets issued.

**Last year, the House of Experiments was declared the best museum in Slovenia.**

There are more than 60 museums and galleries in Slovenia which are members of the Association of Slovene Museums.

Museums have the best results on 8 February and on Summer Museum Night, although museums offer one admission-free day each month and also promote various campaigns during the entire year to encourage people to visit them. The great promotion of free days is also proven by the fact that five museums and galleries in Ljubljana, which are always free, have significantly more visitors on the four key days.

On average, Slovenian museums and galleries create 12 per cent of their annual budget from their own income.

## Slovenian – a Nobel Prize candidate!

At the end of January, when the news broke that the Slovenian missionary, Pedro Opeka, was to be nominated for the Nobel Prize, this came as a surprise to the majority of the Slovenian public. For numerous others who had proposed him, made efforts and even prayed for this in the months before the decision, this was only a logical outcome.



Photo: Stane Kerin

Photo: Stane Kerin

His example also shows that being tested, living abroad, suffering and the work one does, can shape someone into a person capable of extraordinary achievements.

I came under enormous pressure after the first screening of the film *Pedro Opeka, dober prijatelj* (Good Friend, Pedro Opeka), which was seen by a record half a million viewers and stirred the Slovenian public. Many people, after seeing the film, wrote to suggest that we organise ourselves and nominate him. And that is exactly what happened. The efforts of Slovenians around the world came together. The people involved included Edi Gobec, Lojze Peterle MEP and ministries responsible for Slovenian affairs around the world and, last but not least, the Prime Minister, Janez Janša, who decided nearly a year ago that preparation of the nomination and diplomatic activity to support it would be one of the priorities of his administration. In addition to the Prime Minister, the President, ministers, MPs, and the President of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, supporters included such esteemed names as the Prince of Monaco, the Presidents of Madagascar and France, as well as hundreds of other prominent individuals.

### A FRIEND TO THE POOR

Around a decade ago, on a spring day in Ljubljana, I met the man who with his devoted associates over the last two decades has saved more than 23,000 homeless people who had been completely stripped of their humanity from the rubbish dumps and streets of the Malagasy capital Antananarivo. He left a strong impression on me and it was then that we came up with the plan to make a film about him. This was a man with his own special language, who impressed me with simplicity and clear messages. However, a real understanding of what Pedro Opeka is really all about is only possible through understanding his work. In 2009, I was in Antananarivo with my team for the first time. We made great strides in understanding this Argentine Slovenian, who is in fact a citizen of the world. A story unfolded before us of a magnificent model of how to help the homeless and people living on garbage dumps. He and his associates help adults who have completely lost their

self-respect to get decent jobs, while they also help children who lived on garbage dumps to attend school. They help families to move into decent housing in arranged residential areas of Akamasoa that offer health care services, parks and playgrounds. The assistance comes full circle when these people are able to live completely independently.

His aim and message became clear to me, and they need to be urgently presented to the world; his model for fighting poverty is a beacon in this darkness of global inequality. It represents true hope, and shows by example that a different world is possible after all. With his movement, Pedro Opeka is a charismatic monument to fairness and moderation in today's world – a monument which makes us understand that making the world a better place first requires us to change our own ways. The path to humanity also demands respect for creation. In the village – the name means 'Gift of the Creator' – where a colony of homeless people live in the

idyllic Malagasy countryside, he began a widespread movement of reforestation and forest protection, as 70 per cent of the forests in Madagascar have already been destroyed. His work is highly important for the world also because resolving the problems of poverty and inequality is the only way to lasting peace and general progress in individual countries as well as the entire world.

### A CITIZEN OF THE WORLD

And what is his story? Where was this hero of our times born? His example also shows that being tested, living abroad, suffering and the work one does can shape a man into a person capable of extraordinary achievements. Pedro, known as Peter at home, grew out of an amazing personal experience. He was born into a family of Slovenian political emigrants in Argentina. His father miraculously escaped the killings in Brnica near Hrastnik, where revolutionaries murdered around 5,000 innocent people in 1945. Out of fear for her life, his mother fled the Partisans, escaping to Koroška. From an early age, he was used to being patient, humble and hardworking. He learned this from his father, a mason, who would take him along to his work. He sees work and the right to work as the starting point for the self-respect of every human being. He also became involved

in social work in his locality very early on. Even as a young man, he fought for the rights of the Mapuche people in the south of Argentina. As an adolescent, he became an excellent football player, but when weighing sports and spirituality, he decided to become a priest. However, he retained his love of football and sports in general, as nourishment for the body and soul.

When he was twenty years old, he came to Slovenia (which was part of Yugoslavia at the time) to study for two years. And later, he went to Madagascar for the first time. Once there, he would build tirelessly as a volunteer and work with the locals in the paddy fields, to the general amazement and indignation of others. This was a journey that would eventually bring him close to the Malagasy people – one that has already borne fruit and still not come to an end. He then returned to Europe and completed his theological studies in Paris. At the time, he travelled through Europe as a humble traveller, visited Russia, the United States and the Muslim world, and finally returned as a priest in 1975 to his beloved Malagasy people in the town of Vangaindrano in the southeast of the island. Faced with the problems of living in the Malagasy countryside, his belief in work and education being the only way to elevate people spiritually only received

further reinforcement. He was extremely successful and progressive in his work, which is why he was appointed Rector of the Vincentian (Lazarist) Seminary in the capital Antananarivo in 1989. This was a fine, demanding, and at the same time unduly comfortable appointment for Father Opeka. Soon after his arrival in the capital, when walking in the outskirts of the city, he came upon a vast waste dump and witnessed something that deeply moved him and changed him; in the infectious, foul smell and smoke, he saw thousands of adults and children living together with dogs and pigs. The conditions were appalling. Opeka then asked himself what his role model, Jesus Christ, would do. He quickly decided – at first without the knowledge of his superiors – and fought his way, even physically, into the unruly crowd of poor people who had been completely stripped of their humanity.

This is how the Malagasy miracle began, and if you are still not familiar with it, find the book *Bojevnik upanja* (A Warrior of Hope) or see the film *Good Friend, Pedro Opeka*. After seeing the film, Dr Fridl wrote that this was a story that had shaken her and her children to the very core. Yes, Pedro Opeka is indeed fighting the good fight for a more righteous and better world, and he says that any one of us can join this endeavour.

Yes, Pedro Opeka is indeed fighting the good fight for a more righteous and better world, and he says that any one of us can join this endeavour.



Photo: Stane Kerin

Slovenian missionary Pedro Opeka and Jože Možina, journalist

**Jože Možina** was born in Dobravlje in the Vipava Valley. He graduated in history and the sociology of culture from the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana. He is the author of some highly-acclaimed documentaries: *Dosje: Slobodan Milošević* (Dossier: Slobodan Milošević), *Zločin ki ne zastara* (The Crime That Does Not Become Statute-Barred), *Zamolčani – moč preživetja* (Silenced Victims – The Power of Survival) and others. He served as the Director of TV Slovenia from 2006 to 2010; before that, he was a journalist covering domestic politics. Možina has twice received the

Jurčič Award conferred by the Slovenian Writers' Association and the *Nova revija* publishing house, and has also received the *Gong ustvarjalnosti* (Gong of Creativity) and *Gong popularnosti* (Gong of Popularity) awards conferred by *Delo* newspaper. In October 2012, he received the award for best documentary film director at the ITN Film Festival in Hollywood for his film about Pedro Opeka. Možina lives in Ljubljana with his wife and three children.

The award-winning film was released on DVD by Družina publishing house: [www.druzina.si](http://www.druzina.si)

## They had a Queenly poise

National costumes started to develop in the mid-nineteenth century in bourgeois society; the costume were established in the 1870s as a special way of displaying Slovenian identity among the rural population and are still worn by all social classes.

Photo: Archives of Slovene Ethnographic Museum



The Trieste Slovenes in mandereias (mandereia - national costume)

Cultural heritage is not an unquestionable endowment. It is a way of seeing the past from the present perspective, designating a society as 'us'. It involves creative processes in which selected elements which have a certain value for contemporaries arise from a complex past reality; through selection and stylisation, these elements acquire new symbolic meanings. They are often attributed with seemingly unquestionable characteristics of an ancient era and immutability, originality and uniqueness. Irrespective of their historical authenticity, they give strong support to the self-confidence and identity of a group.

### EXHIBITION IN THE SLOVENE ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM

A national costume is a distinguishing feature of affiliation. In many families, it was a family treasure maintained with loving care. In this way, many originals have been preserved, particularly in the Trieste area. They mainly include festival costumes, as working clothes have long disappeared. Women's costumes are most common, while only some parts of male costumes have survived and their descriptions are far from complete.

The exhibition "They Had a Queenly Poise" was opened on the celebration of the 90th anniversary of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum (SEM) which was also this year's Slovenian Culture Day. The exhibition was designed by the amateur researcher and costume collector Marta Košuta from Contovello near Trieste. It was opened by Ljudmila Novak, the Minister for Slovenians Abroad.

The exhibition presents a comprehensive image of traditional Slovenian costumes in the Trieste area. More than twenty costumes are on display – winter, Sunday, girls, wedding and everyday costumes. Most are female costumes that are still worn in the villages of Basovizza, Prosecco, Opicina, Banne, Croce, Contovello, Barcola and in the Trieste hinterland. Some selected accessories are also exhibited – kerchiefs, decorations, embroidery and gloves. However, the exhibition offers not only an insight into the development of the clothing heritage of the particular area, but also provides insight into the history of the demonstrative use of national and narrower local costumes. Modern reconstructions of mostly female costumes based on examples from the last decades of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century can be seen. They were created as a result of the author's workshops on national costume making, during which the participants have made several hundred new costumes for their own needs in recent years.

### AFFILIATION-BASED COSTUME

Visitors who like rich and diverse clothes will enjoy the colours of the materials, the precision of execution and decoration and the consistency of detail (costume rules are more precise than the rules for ordinary clothes), and the aesthetics of folds and pleats; they might be thrilled by the gaily-coloured embroidery motifs, to which the author dedicates special attention and love.

The image of modern national and locally affiliated costumes is being constantly created (and gradually changed) during performances and public events, local celebrations, museum exhibitions and similar. The costumes constitute a substitute experience of 'being us', which can also be understood as a modern 'glue' of local, ethnic and also minority national communities, which in globalised everyday life would have difficulties surviving as informed communities. Finally, the reflection of the visitors should focus on the completely contemporary concept of the fashionable, even prestigious ownership of such costumes, and on the individual experience of the creative use of heritage, reproducing activities and affiliation-based costuming.

Marta Košuta's story

The designer of the exhibition, Marta Košuta, tells her story: "Slovenians from Trieste have a special attitude to our traditional costume. Until the end of the 17th century, Trieste was a small coastal town with three thousand inhabitants, surrounded by a Slovenian population, mostly farmers and stockbreeders, for whom a particular outfit, a uniform of a sort, was prescribed at the time, which made them distinct from other social classes. It had to be tailored according to specific rules and with simple fabrics, but the people were still able to express their taste and create what we now consider the national costume."

Trieste is also interesting for its geographical position, which was a connecting and a dividing point between two entirely different clothing cultures. In the eastern area, rural women wore the Mediterranean type called Škedenj or Breg. This is how the women in Škedenj, in the villages of Triestine Breg and Slovenian Istria used to dress. The costume is basically very old, tailored in the style of ancient Balkan tunics, known as dalmatics. Over this tunic or



John Paul II's visit to Trieste in May 1992.

Photo: Archives of Marta Košuta

shirt, they wore wide sleeveless *kamižotas*, worn one over another if necessary. In the western part of Trieste, Slovenian women tailored their costumes according to the Alpine type, known in the town as *manderjera*. This type, with a wide skirt sewn to the bodice, is also known in other parts of the Slovenian area. Under the skirt, the woman wears a Slavic shirt, *opleče*, which has preserved all the elements of traditional design, including the prescribed embroidery decorations.

#### MIRROR

The Slovenian minority in Italy lives in the Trieste, Gorizia and Udine areas, in three of the four provinces which make up the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region. The area historically settled by Slovenians encompasses, partly or completely, 36 municipalities. In its indigenously settled area, the Slovenian community accounts for less than twenty per cent of the entire population. The Slovenian minority was officially recognised with the adoption of Law No.

38 of 23 February 2001. Between 1797 and 1866, all the Slovenian ethnic territory was under the Austro-Hungarian Empire, except for the brief period of the Illyrian Provinces. In 1866, Resia and Veneto regions were the first to join Italy. After the First World War, Val Canale, Gorizia and the Gorizia area, Trieste and its surroundings – in other words, all of Primorska, Istria and a part of Kvarner – were transferred to the Kingdom of Italy. At the Paris Conference in 1947, after the Second World War, the Slovenians of Val Canale, Resia, Veneto, Gorizia and its surroundings were incorporated into the Republic of Italy, followed by the Slovenians of Trieste after the signing of the London Memorandum in 1954. In addition to economic and natural characteristics, historical events in the different provinces have therefore left a deep impression on both the life and popular traditions of the Slovenian minority in Italy.

The national costume is thus a mirror that reflects our national consciousness. It will be preserved so long as Slovenian hearts beat in our chests.

A national costume is a distinguishing feature of affiliation. In many families, it was a family treasure maintained with loving care.

A national costume is thus a mirror that reflects our national consciousness. It will be preserved so long as Slovenian hearts beat in our chests.



An exhibition in SEM.



Ljudmila Novak, the Minister for Slovenians Abroad, Costume collector Marta Košuta and Bojana Rogelj Škafar, Director of SEM at the opening of the exhibition

## Happy Carnival

Although carnival characters, especially the scariest ones, the so-called 'kurenti' from Ptujsko polje, are supposed to chase away the winter and herald the spring, this year's Carnival Day was quite snowy, a day when winter showed its teeth.

But only a few days later, we celebrated Valentine's Day, named in honour of the saint who gives the keys to the roots, according to Slovenian tradition, so the forces of spring might defeat the winter cold and melt the thick layer of snow.

Many customs and superstitions associated with carnival festivities date to the pagan era. According to tradition, the first person to come to a house on Ash Wednesday should be a woman, who should dance a little. The house would then have a good turnip crop. Another folk belief is that on Shrove Tuesday or Carnival Day, all the people, cattle and spirits have to be well fed, which is why the table must be laden with many good things to eat.

There is no doubt that this time has always been celebrated with plenty of good food and drink. This is probably why the day was followed by fasting. Even today, we tend to forget all about our diets at this time of year and indulge in a delicious doughnut sprinkled with sugar powder. At least enjoy 'flancati' or 'miške' (pastry).

The doughnut is the most typical food at carnivals – and there has always been some competition over size and jam filling. The most famous are made in Trojane, where an old traditional inn is located, although the doughnuts there are quite popular all year round and not only during the carnival season.

'Flancati' may be made from the same dough, but they take a different form. The 'flancati' made of short pastry are especially delicious. They are made from short – rather than leavened – dough, which can be shaped in various ways before being carefully fried in oil. 'Miške' can be made from the same dough as doughnuts, but are smaller and not filled with jam. Cottage cheese or other ingredients can be added to 'miške' dough, which makes them lighter and even more delicious.

#### CARNIVAL TIME

"Laugh, joke, eat and drink – turn the world upside down!" That is the motto of Carnival. At least one hundred and fifty traditional

masks have survived in Slovenia. This is quite a lot for such a small country; many places even have their own traditional types. Traditional carnivals take place in various Slovenian towns at this time, the most famous events being in Ptuj, the hometown of the 'kurenti', and in Cerkljica, where a witch is the most typical mask.

The 'kurenti' or 'koranti' are among the most famous and recognised masks; they come from Ptujsko and Dravsko polje, as well as from Haloze. In the past, only single men would dress as 'kurenti'; today, the mask is worn by young men, married men and even women.

From their appearance, 'kurenti' seem to be very frightening characters. But how could they chase winter away if they were not frightening? The heavy load of the mask and jumping require the maskers to be in good physical condition. 'Kurenti' are dressed in white or black sheep's skin, and wear a leather belt or chain from which they hang large (and heavy) cowbells and handkerchiefs. While the bells are inher-

ited, passed from generation to generation, a 'kurent' (according to tradition) is given the handkerchiefs by girls. He wears a hairy cap on his head, with an embroidered red tongue. Two cow horns and two thin sticks decorated with wisps of feathers stick out of the cap. Usually, a 'kurent' carries a so-called hedgehog stick, which is a pole wrapped in hedgehog's skin at one end. The handkerchiefs were formerly hung on the stick. The most popular 'kurent' had the most handkerchiefs. If there was or is any envy, 'kurenti' resolve problems among themselves.

In some parts of Slovenia, many masks which are typical of certain places, have survived. Tradition is still very much alive. Thus, Uršula, the witch from Cerkljica, 'laufarji' from Cerkljica, and 'selma' from Kostanjevica na Krki in the Dolenjska region, as well as 'škoromati' from Brkini, and 'pozvačin' from Prekmurje, who once invited people to attend weddings and gave them drinks and sweets, come to life during the Carnival, which also used to be a time for weddings.



The "kurenti" or "kuranti" are among the most famous and recognised masks; they come from Ptujsko and Dravsko polje, as well as from Haloze

## Where are the limits?



Photo: Personal Archive

Hundredths of seconds seem so trivial in everyday life. But when Tina Maze, currently the best woman skier in the world and leading in the FIS World Cup, is racing down the slopes, they are decisive. They change everything. They demonstrated their power at the recent Alpine World Ski Championships in Schladming. And so did Tina Maze, who won a gold medal in super-G, and a silver in the super combined and giant slalom.

Tina Maze is extraordinarily talented. Sports connoisseurs will agree that her results are close to impossible. Why? Tina Maze, and her coach and partner, Andrea Massi, have established a small team with low financial resources, but they still manage to accomplish miracles, and in doing so, know no boundaries. Tina's talent, fighting spirit, working habits and the dedication of Tina and the entire team come first. Just think how incredible it seems that a nation with two million souls can achieve and even outdo global (sporting) forces in such a small territory. And Tina Maze is not alone.

Among individual sportspeople who have fascinated us with their incredible success are biathletes like Jakov Fak, snowboarder Žan Košir, and ski jumpers like Jaka Hvala, who won his first gold at a World Cup event. Although ski jumping is an individual sport, our jumpers function as a team. They have also been winning team events. Their coaches know how to create a team spirit in this greatly individual sport, where each person actually beats him or herself.

But let us look back over the month and address the team spirit. When, at the end of January, our handball players surprised us by coming fourth in the World Championship in Spain, it seemed that they had only triggered a series of outstanding sporting successes. "You are proof that no one is so small that they cannot reach the stars with their effort, talent and mature personality. This moment is extremely important for all our people," said the President of the

Republic, Borut Pahor, to the handball players at a reception after this unexpected success. He probably had in mind the hardest and most critical moments of the matches, when the Slovenian players acted with outstanding unity.

And now that the Slovenian ice hockey team has qualified for the Winter Olympic Games for the first time in the history of our small country, which means that our hockey players will compete at one of the most prestigious ice hockey tournaments with the most powerful ice hockey teams in the world, we can only say: Outstanding!

Just think: two million inhabitants and so many sporting successes. Can you imagine being able to put together an entire ice hockey, football, handball, basketball or other team that could achieve extraordinary international successes in the suburbs of New York, London, Paris or Moscow; and finding and raising such remarkable people in individual sports.

It is understandable that the state supports top sportspeople, and this is the right thing to do. They represent Slovenia, enhance its recognisability, promote it, and ensure that the Slovenian flag and anthem appear at the greatest events. And equally important, they are role models for the young and future generations. With their success and values, they are also bearers of social progress, since they show that success comes only with one hundred per cent dedication. Without complete focus, success may be elusive. It is also important to believe in yourself. At a time when crisis rears its ugly head and it is difficult to believe in a brighter future, this is really important. This demonstrates that things can be done and can be achieved, either by individuals or in a team. And when two million people in our country under the Alps are keeping their fingers crossed for our sportspeople, national awareness is reinforced, and faith in the future and the belief that we set our own limits is strengthened. So let us move them. They do not have to limit us.

## The 49th Golden Fox Event Marked by the Best Woman Skier in the World

At the 49th Golden Fox FIS Ski World Cup in the women's giant slalom and slalom, Tina Maze, the best female skier in the world, won the slalom competition and came second in giant slalom, thus joining the famous Slovenian skiers Rok Petrovič, Bojan Križaj, Mateja Svet and Špela Pretnar as the fifth Slovenian to win the small crystal globe.



Photo: Nebojša Terzić/STVA

Slovenia ski star Tina Maze (center) is joined by second-placed Frida Hansdotter from Sweden and third-placed Kathrin Zettel from Austria in the finishing arena at the Golden Fox competition.

The Golden Fox is a traditional international skiing competition for women's Alpine Ski World Cup. The event has been taking place at Pohorje ski centre in Maribor since 1964. Usually, it encompasses slalom and giant slalom races, the total time of both races being added together to give an overall winner. For many years, the first three on the victory podium had fox-skins draped around their necks, but the skins were replaced in 1995 by golden brooches of yellow, white and red gold. Due to many problems in the preparation of the tracks, the

competition was moved to Kranjska Gora several times, and not held at all in 1998 and 2011. Even this year, the organisers remained uncertain for quite some time, since the 49th Golden Fox event on the Pohorje ski slopes in Maribor was threatened by a shortage of snow.

On 17 January, nine days prior to the first race, Filip Garner, the FIS snow inspector, performed the anticipated inspection of the track and gave the go-ahead for the 49th Golden Fox event. The combination of the recent cool-

ing, which allowed the organisers to fully engage all the snow cannons, quite a lot of new snow and a very good weather forecast put smiles on the organisers' faces. Due to the low altitude and mild climate, the people in Maribor had many problems in organising competitions in the past, and in the last six years, the event had to be held elsewhere on three occasions, or even cancelled.

Due to the exceptional results of Tina Maze, who convincingly holds the lead in women's World Cup alpine skiing, the expecta-

On Saturday, 26 January, Tina Maze was second in the giant slalom, winning the small crystal globe and becoming the fifth Slovenian skier after Rok Petrovič, Bojan Križaj, Mateja Svet and Špela Pretnar to win this award.

tions of fans for this year's Golden Fox were as high as they could be. With her giant slalom and slalom skiing, as well as overall win at the 49th Golden Fox event, she completely justified those expectations.

On Saturday, 26 January, Tina Maze was second in the giant slalom, winning the small crystal globe and becoming the fifth Slovenian skier after Rok Petrovič, Bojan Križaj, Mateja Svet and Špela Pretnar to win this award. "This was my goal before the season started. I worked really hard with my team in order to win the globe. This is why

I am even happier. I am proud of the globe. After many years in the World Cup, it was about time to win this award," Maze commented. Andrea Massi, the leader of Maze's team, said that the situation changes completely with such great public interest: "I admit that it is quite hard to control everything. The pressure is very high. But this needs to be exploited and understood as a major advantage. The spectators are really phenomenal." Tina Maze came second after the American skier Lindsey Vonn; third place went to Austrian Anna Fenninger. Along with Tina Maze, another Slovenian skier,

Ana Drev, managed to enter the second run of the giant slalom, coming 22nd.

On Sunday – the second chapter of the 49th Golden Fox – more than 20,000 spectators welcomed a new, smooth slalom win by Tina Maze, the eighteenth in her career and her second slalom win. Due to Tina's predominance in the World Cup and the skiing-related euphoria, the passion of the fans has never been so strong. With her third win in front of the Slovenian crowd, Tina Maze won the Golden Fox title, since the total time of both races (giant slalom and slalom) guaranteed her first

place. After a smooth win, even the most unruffled spectators of the World Cup had to bow to the Slovenian champion and absolutely the best lady on the white slopes. After racing across the finishing line, Maze was 0.07 of a second faster than Frida Hansdotter of Sweden, while Kathrin Zettel placed third for Austria. By winning, the enthusiastic Tina Maze once again mentioned the exceptional audience at Pohorje in Maribor. "The support was phenomenal. It was hard to focus. I had to fight. It is nevertheless true that a win like that is very special", said Maze after one of the highlights of her season.



Urška Bačovnik Janša, wife of Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša, with Tina Maze

This year, Tina Maze has achieved many exceptional results. At the beginning of the year, she took second place in the parallel slalom in Munich; by winning the World Cup giant slalom in St. Anton, she became the sixth female skier in history to win in all alpine disciplines. Last month, Maze was second in the downhill as well as third in the World Cup giant slalom in Cortina d'Ampezzo in Italy. On Tuesday, 5 February, she won the gold medal in the giant slalom, the first discipline of the 32nd FIS Alpine Ski

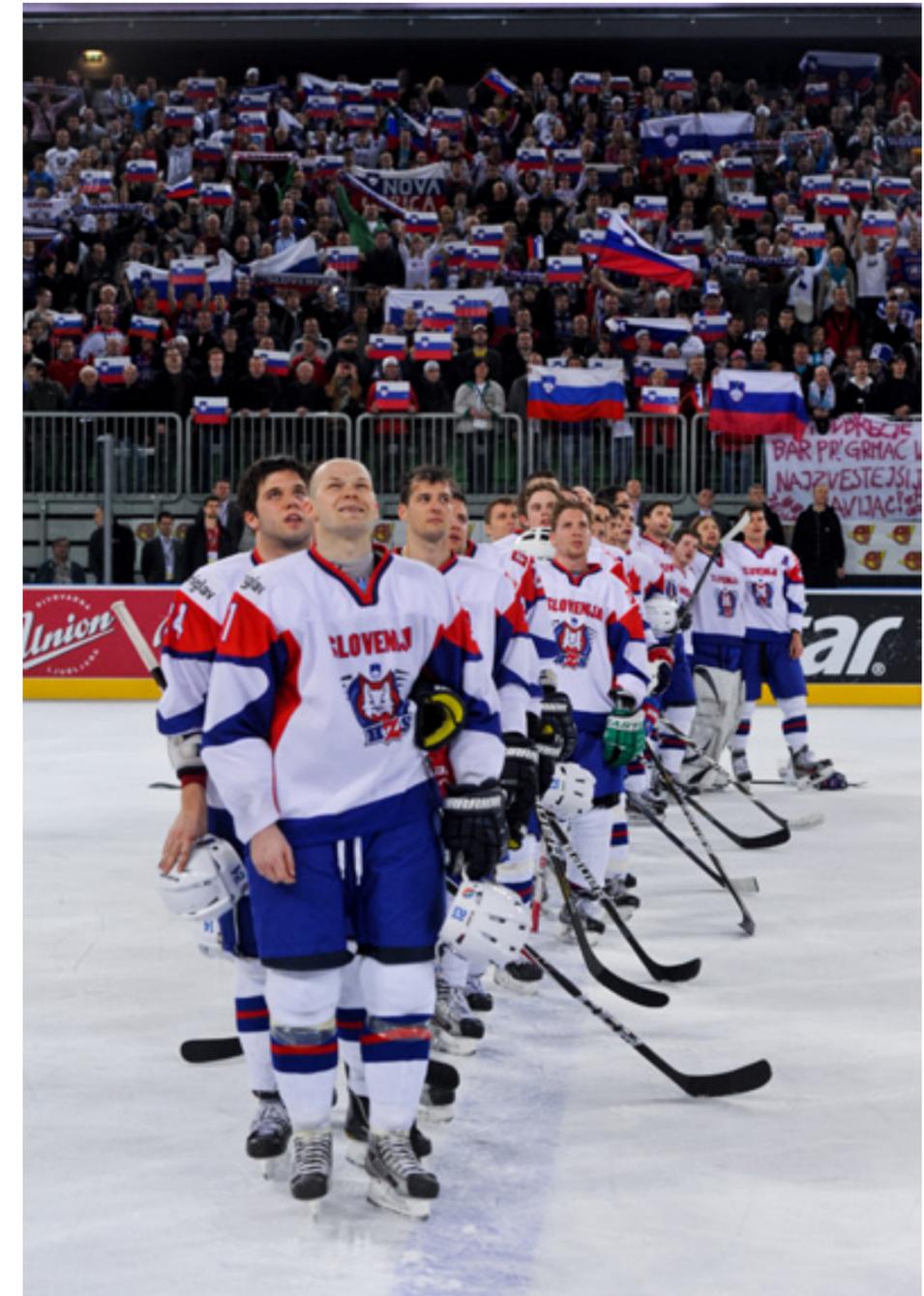
World Cup in Schladming. Ilka Štuhec from Maribor completed the Slovenian success by coming sixth. Besides Tina Maze, Slovenian winter sports fans were also enthused by the ski jumpers who won the Ski Jumping World Cup in Zakopane, Poland and the team ski jumping competition in Willingen. On 27 January, ski jumper Robert Kranjec won the Ski Jumping World Cup in Vikersund, the 32nd victory for Slovenian jumpers. A week later, he took silver at the Ski Jumping World Cup in Harrachov in the Czech Republic; Jurij Tepeš

came third in the second jumping competition. Robert Kranjec also took second and third places at the Ski Jumping World Cup competitions in Sapporo. Along with Kranjec and Tepeš, Jaka Hvala also achieved great results, since he became the junior ski jumping world champion. Slovenian fans were also pleased with the results of biathlete Jakov Fak, who came second and third in the World Cup Biathlon competitions in Anterselva; he topped his success by winning bronze in sprint at the World Championship in Nove Mesto in

the Czech Republic. Snowboarder Žan Košir won the World Cup parallel slalom in Bad Gastein. Rok Marguč took the gold in the World Cup parallel slalom in Stoneham, thus becoming the best Slovenian snowboarder of all time. The exceptional successes of Slovenian sportsmen and women were completed by the men's ice hockey team, who achieved one of the greatest results in Slovenian team sports at the Olympic Qualification Tournament in Vojens in Denmark, qualifying for the Winter Olympics in Sochi 2014.

## This Is No Dream: Slovenian Ice Hockey Players Qualify for Sochi

The Slovenian national ice hockey team surprisingly took the second round game of the Final Olympic Qualification Tournament in Vojens in Denmark, beating the Danish home team 2:1 (0:0, 2:1, 0:0) and securing a place in the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.



Best wishes guys!

Only a little over a year separates us from the Olympic Games in Sochi which have been a dream of the Slovenian national ice hockey team. After the qualifiers from 7 to 10 February in Denmark, the dream became reality.

The Slovenian national team garnered first place in Group F, which included Belarus, Denmark and Ukraine, and thus earned a place in the Winter Olympics in Sochi in 2014. Even before the start of the qualifying tournament, national team manager Matjaž Kopitar emphasised that they could qualify for the Olympics only if they believed in their ability to succeed: "The most important thing is that both I, all my associates, and last but not least, the players

possess the great desire to make our dream come true. There is no doubt in my mind that the players will give their all. If we believe enough, we can dream the Olympics into reality. Commitment is a factor that will also play an important role in the tournament."

The first great stride towards a placing for the Olympics was taken by players handpicked by Matjaž Kopitar as early as in the first game against the favourites, Belarus, whom they defeated 4:2 (1:0, 1:2, 2:0) to everyone's astonishment. The key day for the Slovenian side was Friday, 8 February, when they tested their skills against the home team in a historic match. Even before the game, it was already clear from the statistics that a victory

for the Slovenian team in the qualifiers would yield a place in the Olympics, as such an outcome would have made it impossible for anyone to outstrip them. With the stadium packed to the brim, the Slovenian team emerged victorious over the home team with a 2:1 victory (0:0, 2:1, 0:0) and so achieved one of the greatest successes in Slovenian team sports. After the game, David Rodman, who scored both goals, vividly explained Slovenia's qualification for the Olympics in Sochi: "I am sure that no one is truly aware of what we have achieved. We have one professional club in Slovenia and some 150 professional players, and the fact that we have secured a place for ourselves in the Olympics with so little is truly special."

Only a little over a year separates us from the Olympic Games in Sochi which have been a dream of the Slovenian national ice hockey team.

The most important thing is that both I, all my associates, and last but not least, the players possess the great desire to make our dream come true.

The Slovenian national hockey team



Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

## Bloudek Awards

The most honoured Slovenian national sports awards, the Bloudek Awards, were presented for the forty-seventh time at the Grand Hotel Union in Ljubljana. The recipient of a plaque for a lifetime achievement and contribution to the development of sports was the chairman of the Association of Slovenian Sport Clubs in Italy, Mr Jure Kufersin.

The most honoured state awards for achievements in sports, the Bloudek Awards for 2012, also went to the combined biathlon relay team (Andreja Mali, Teja Gregorin, Klemen Bauer and Jakov Fak), disabled sportsman Franjo Izlakar, judo coach Marjan Fabjan, and sports climber Mina Markovič. In addition to four awards, three of which were presented for top international sports achievement, and one for exceptional contribution to the development of Slovenian sports (Marjan Fabjan), eleven plaques were also awarded to Iztok Durjava, Jure Kufersin and Mirko Šeruga for lifetime achievements in sports and to alpine climbers Nejc Marčič and Luka Stražar jointly for an important international achievement in sports, and to Filip Flisar, Anja Klinar, Benjamin Savšek and Matevž Lenarčič. The plaques for important contributions to the development of Slovenian sports were awarded to Andreja Razlag, Flip Piran Club and Uroš Velepec.



Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

Filip Flisar, one of the winners of the Bloudek Prize for achievements in sports in the past year.

Photo: Archives of Finance



## Celtra is the most innovative

This year's award for daring future plans presented by Manager magazine went to the founder and chief executive officer of Celtra, Mihael Mikek.

The company convinced the committee with its technological solutions for mobile advertising, with which it has been successfully competing in the global market. Users of their Ad-Creator platform include great media portals and mobile application providers (The New York Times, NBC Universal, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, Rovio – Angry Birds, MTV, Skype, Zynga), large advertising networks (Google, Microsoft Advertising, Yahoo, AdMob, Amazon) and agencies (Starcom, Digitas, Havas, Carat). In September 2012, Celtra was named one of the most innovative technological companies of 2012 in the world and received the Bronze Award at the American Business Awards.

## Slovenia ranked 19<sup>th</sup> on the Global Innovation Index

In a ranking published by Bloomberg, the American business news agency, the USA, South Korea and Germany are among the most innovative countries in the world; Slovenia was ranked 19th. Bloomberg evaluated the innovativeness of 200 countries and published a list of the top 50. It considered seven criteria: the intensity of research and development activity, productivity, the concentration of researchers, percentage of GDP dedicated to research and development, patent activity, production capacity and the distribution of advanced technology and efficiency.



Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

Photo: Miha Krivic/STO



### Postojna Caves Mark 800 Anniversary of First Visit

This year marks the 800th anniversary of the first visit to the landmark Postojna Caves, the evidence of which is an inscription found on one of the walls. Experts have yet to establish what tool the first visitors used to leave their mark in the caves. The anniversary celebration was launched with the issue of a memorial two-euro coin and will continue with a joint memorial stamp to be issued by the Slovenian and Austrian postal services. The latter will mark the oldest underground postal office. The underground office operated at the time of Austria-Hungary but the Postojna Caves achieved that the postmark was both in Slovenian as well as in German, which was quite unusual for Austrian postmarks. At first only the front parts of the caves were known, until 200 years ago local Luka Čeč discovered the inner parts. Since the cave first opened to the visitors, 36 million visitors have been recorded.

### The Slovenian Woman of the Year is Urška Žolnir

The Slovenian Woman of the Year 2012, selected by readers of Jana magazine, is a top athlete, the only Slovenian woman of the year who has won an Olympic gold medal. According to the readers of Jana, Urška Žolnir deserved this award for her achievements as well as her personality. Urška Žolnir is conscientious, responsible and dedicated; she never misses a training session, is always sincerely kind with a smile on her face.



Photo: Nebojša Tajič/STA

### Exhibition by craftsmen from Gorenjska

Making gingerbread

DUO Crafts Centre from Škofja Loka

The DUO Crafts Centre is located at Mestni trg 34 in Škofja Loka. In the centre of this medieval town, you can see products made by craftsmen, attend various courses and learn various crafts. At the hosting exhibition presenting different craftsmen, a diverse range of crafts products from Gorenjska is on view – leather products, ceramics, knitwear, stained glass, embroidery, crocheted products etc. The exhibition is open from 15 February to 15 March 2013.



Photo: Tomo Jesenčnik/STO

Photo: Dunja Wedam/STO



### ApiSlovenia

Beehive panels

17 March 2013

The true poetry of agriculture is created in Slovenian beehives. Already more than 200 years ago, Slovenians were quite active in beekeeping. It is no wonder that beekeeping is becoming more and more interesting, not only to people who buy honey and bee products, but also people interested in beekeeping. The ApiSlovenia fair will present the entire offer of products and services related to beekeeping; visitors will be able to buy products at the 'honey market'. Expert lectures will be held and various examples of best practices for beekeepers presented.

Photo: Bobo/STO



### Easter Show Presented by the Lipica Riding School

Lipica horses

31 March 2013

We invite you to this year's first festive show presented by the Lipica Riding School at the riding grounds of the Lipica Stud Farm. Lipica Stud Farm is the cradle of all Lipizzaner horses in the world. Today, it is one of the most beautiful cultural and historical monuments in Slovenia; its rich history dates back to 1580. For centuries, it has been proud of its thoroughbred horses breeding and selection. In the 1960s, the Farm opened a classical riding school which attends numerous equestrian events around the world. The rich natural and cultural heritage of the unique Karst environment have been successfully merged with a modern tourist attraction.



Photo: Klemen Kunaver/STO

### Easter Egg Hunt at Bled Castle

Bled, the Castle, with Triglav in the background

31 March 2013

According to written sources, Bled Castle is the oldest castle in Slovenia, since it was first mentioned in 1011 as castellum Vel-des. The Castle stands on a mighty steep rock, rising 130 meters above Lake Bled, as the symbol of Bled and Slovenia. The image of the Castle above the Lake with its romantic island and church is a feature of Bled which over the centuries has become recognised in Slovenia and around the world. The panoramic terraces along the Castle offer a magnificent view of the Lake and island, the nearby towns of Lesce and Radovljica, and over the hills and mountains of the Karavanke and the Julian Alps. The Castle hosts an Easter egg hunt on Easter Monday. We still do not know the details of the event, so it remains a secret of the Castle. Contact: [www.blejski-grad.si](http://www.blejski-grad.si)



Photo: Mirko Kunčič/STO

### Flora Fair in Celje

Gorenjska carnations

15 to 17 March 2013

People were familiar with the symbolic meanings of flowers already in ancient Egypt, although on a completely different level. The Flora Fair is a special horticultural, floricultural and landscape architecture event organised by the Municipality of Celje each March immediately before the 'official' start of spring. The Fair is a great opportunity to present gardening, floriculture and landscaping. The Fair is intended for people engaged in these activities either as amateurs or professionals. It is also an ideal event for anyone wishing to find out which flowers are indigenous to Slovenia.



### Easter Egg Chopping in Kokrica near Kranj

31 March 2013

The local tourist association in Kokrica near Kranj organises the traditional event entitled Easter Egg Chopping on Easter Monday. The event features numerous Easter games, including a competition for the most beautifully painted eggs and tablecloths and an egg blessing ceremony. The most famous game is the so-called 'egg chopping'. The visitors can also compete in poking or rolling eggs on rakes ('valicanje'), carrying wicker baskets etc.



### First Slovenian Trekking League Competition

23 March 2013

The Vaitapu Sports Association is organising the first Slovenian Trekking League Competition in 2013 in the hills above Škofja Loka and the Selca Valley. Since this is the first such competition this year, the distances and differences in altitudes will be somewhat smaller. The active track will offer an interesting walk of somewhat more 8 kilometres; the hiking track will be around 20 kilometres and simpler in terms of orientation; the ultra track (around 40 km) will test the orientation and condition of the participants. [Applications and further information at www.trekking.si](http://www.trekking.si).

### 52<sup>nd</sup> Vitranc Cup, FIS Ski World Cup 2013

9 to 10 March 2013

Kranjska Gora undoubtedly acquired its international reputation as a ski centre because of the alpine FIS Ski World Cup. Every winter, the slopes of the competition polygon below Vitranc host two alpine skiing World Cup competitions for men. The giant slalom takes place on Saturday, 9 March, and the slalom is on Sunday, 10 March.



### Carnival culture of Slovenian towns and markets

12 February to 31 March 2013

The exhibition presents the rich Carnival culture of Slovenian towns and markets of the 20th century. The photographs highlight Carnival events in six Slovenian towns; the preserved photographs have become excellent visual evidence and records of actual social and local events. This exhibition and its masks take us to a so-called 'topsy-turvy' world.

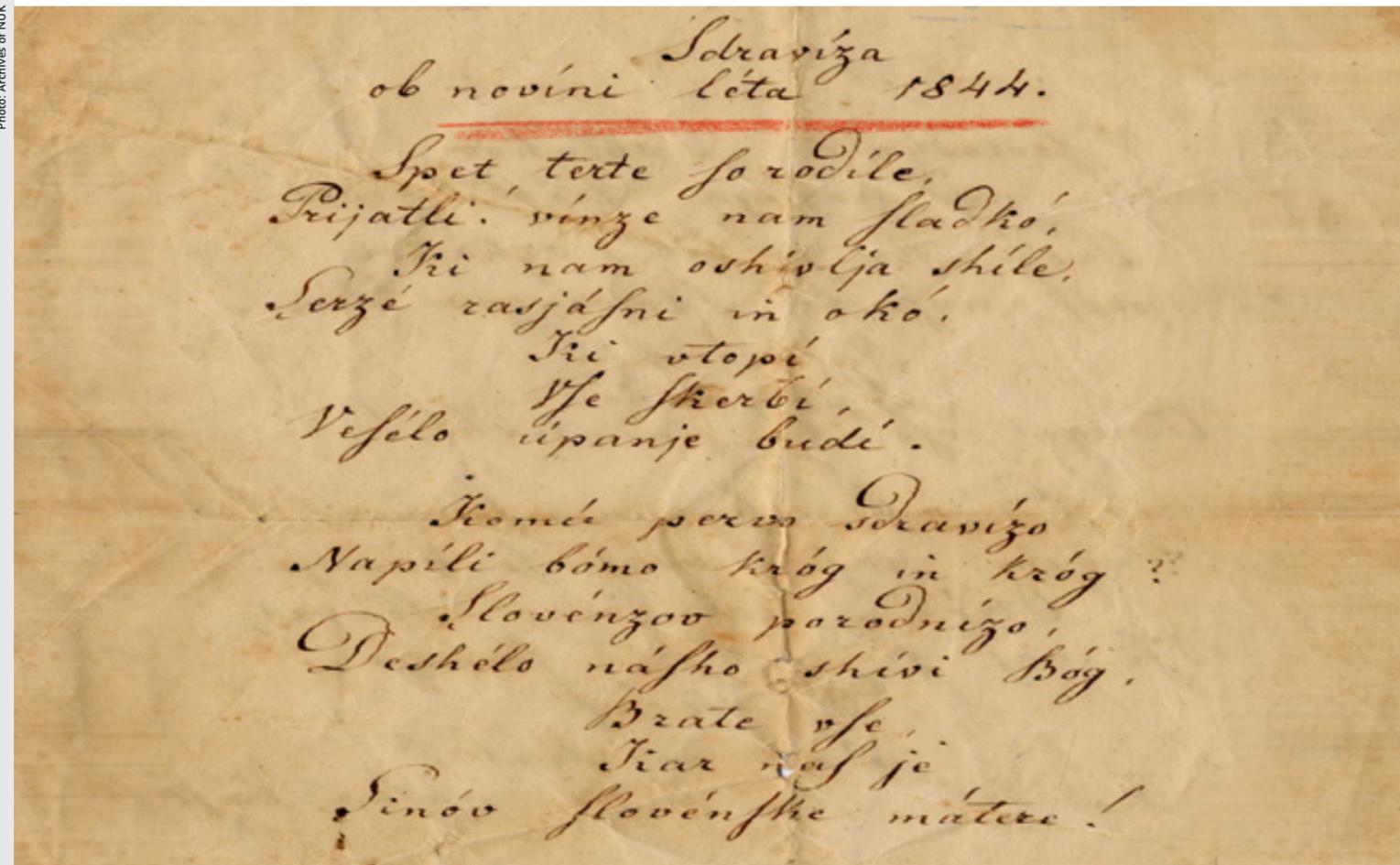


### Ski Jumping World Cup Finals

21 to 24 March 2013

When winter is already saying goodbye, Planica with its natural beauty in the Pod Poncam Valley, honours the ski jumping elite. More than 100,000 visitors are expected for the three-day ski jumping spectacle and closing of the season.

Planica is known for the longest jumps and flights. The first jumps over one hundred metres and two hundred metres were made here in Planica. Which records will be broken this year?



Original handwriting of Prešeren's Zdravljica is in the possession of National and University Library

Tanja Glogovčan

### The power of Prešeren's political thought

In the historical reality of the first half of the 19th century, Prešeren was not, and could not only have been, a disengaged poet, solely because he committed himself to the Slovenian language and thus to the Slovenian nation.

The national political idea in 'Zdravljica' ('A Toast') is loud and clear: » God's blessing on all nations, who long and work for that bright day, when o'er earth's habitations, no war, no strife shall hold its sway; who long to see, that all men free, no more shall foes, but neighbours be.«

The words of Zdravljica contain the then impossible and unimaginable idea of Slovenian national union, freedom, the idea of United Slovenia, which was first publicly expressed as a nationalist politi-

cal programme in the 1848 March Revolution. The radical idea of national independence and sovereignty is expressed in 'Zdravljica' within a framework of equality, respect and friendship among all nations. Some dub Prešeren's 'Zdravljica' the Slovenian 'Marseillaise', as it expresses a fighting spirit.

The peak of 'Zdravljica' is in the seventh stanza, which is also the Slovenian national anthem. Prešeren arrived at this productive political and cultural formula on the basis of the liberal and democratic traditions of thought in which he was raised, particularly from the 18th century and the French Revolution onward.

If we cannot characterise Prešeren as a politician in the usual meaning of the word, we can say that he was a 'pure-bred' democrat, such as had not been seen before in Slovenia. The power of Prešeren's political thought lay in the fact that it resonated long after Prešeren was

unable to tackle political issues through his own personal engagement, and also long after he was gone. With his political visions, Prešeren became the founder of Slovenian national policy for the following one hundred years and more – up to the establishment of the Slovenian state, which is the realisation of what was initially merely a poetic phantasm. Prešeren's linguistic view undoubtedly contributed to the fact that Slovenians in Yugoslavia fought to preserve our language, and that we persisted in Yugoslavia until equality and harmony between Yugoslav nations was possible.

We could thus say that Prešeren's political idea had most resonance at three (the most) crucial moments in history of the Slovenian nation: the March Revolution, the National Liberation War and Slovenian independence.

Source: Matičetov, Marko (2008): Prešeren's political idea. Ljubljana: Faculty of Social Sciences.



*Žive naj vsi narodi,*

GOD'S BLESSING ON ALL NATIONS,

*ki hrepene dočakat dan,*

WHO LONG AND WORK FOR THAT BRIGHT DAY,

*da, koder sonce hodi,*

WHEN O'ER EARTH'S HABITATIONS

*prepir iz sveta bo pregnan,*

NO WAR, NO STRIFE SHALL HOLD ITS SWAY;

*da rojak*

WHO LONG TO SEE

*prost bo vsak,*

THAT ALL MEN FREE

*ne vrag, le sosed bo mejak!*

NO MORE SHALL FOES, BUT NEIGHBOURS BE.