

# Sinfo

March-April

The Best from Slovenia

**IN FOCUS**  
Inspiring Stories

**I FEEL  
SLOVENIA**



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SLOVENIA**

# Sinfo

**SLOVENIAN INFORMATION**

March-April 2019

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Photo: Bruno Toič

## INSPIRING STORIES

In this issue we feature women, science and Slovenia's membership of the European Union and NATO. All of these themes are connected through inspiring stories, discovering new things and achieving goals. Even those that sometimes seem impossible.

Women are often the ones pushing the envelope, and the visionaries of their time. Need proof? Look no further than the life stories of botanist Angela Piskernik and poet Luiza Pesjak, who in addition to their love of nature and culture were both important personalities in their day. As are many other women in the present.

Fifteen years ago, on 29 March 2004, Slovenia became a member of NATO, and on 1 May 2004 it joined the EU. Both of these events will also be the starting points for stories that we will be running in our upcoming issues. In this issue we present Major General Alenka Ermenc, the most powerful woman in the otherwise predominantly male NATO. We Slovenes are undoubtedly an important part of the EU, although our views of various events within this community occasionally differ.

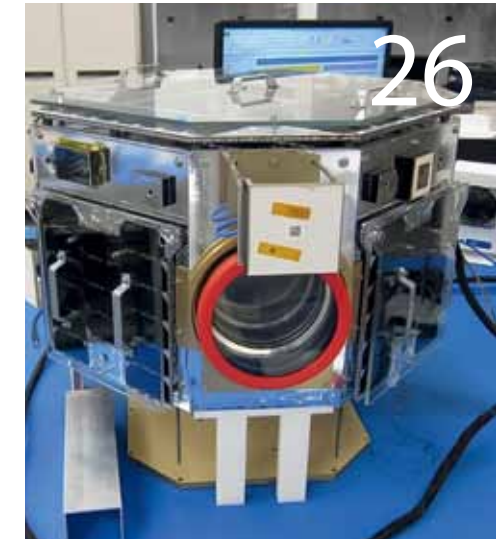
The fact is that we Slovenes are ambitious and we have vision. Therefore it is no surprise that we are capable of changing our circumstances and creating new opportunities in business and elsewhere.

But in addition to all of this, it is art in its various forms that most inspires us, and when the heart is present, it always draws attention.

We hope you are inspired when browsing through our magazine, and that you are delighted by the stories and accomplishments it presents. May they take you to new places, and give new ways of looking at the world.

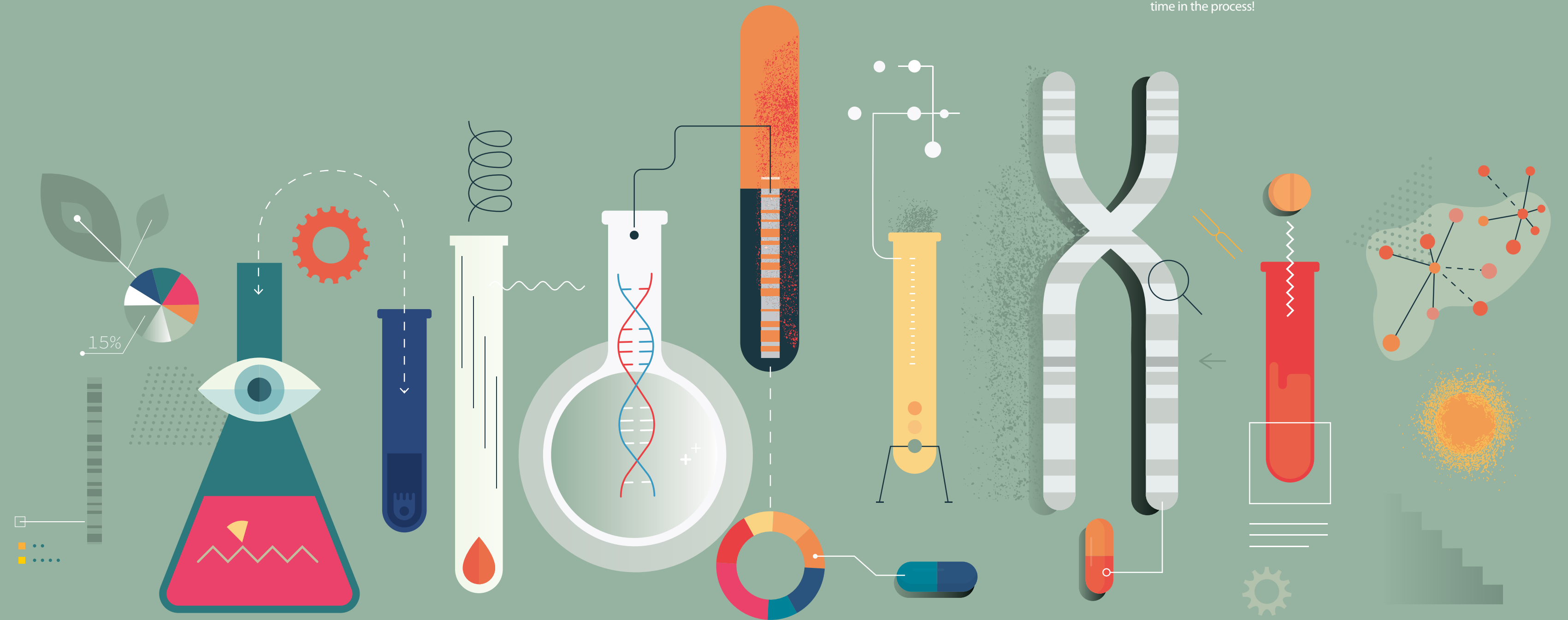
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## WE HAVE TO TAKE A CHANCE

Challenges are opportunities for new stories. Let us be the poets, writers, engineers and creators of new stories. And let's have a great time in the process!



## SECURITY CHALLENGES

# The NATO Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme

PETRA ZUPANČIČ



Flag of EU, flag of Slovenia and flag of NATO.  
Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

The NATO SPS Programme promotes security-related practical cooperation between allied and partner countries in addressing emerging security challenges. It connects scientists, experts, and officials from allied and partner countries, who work together to address these challenges.

Based on three pillars – science, partnership and security – the SPS Programme has been contributing to the strategic objectives and political priorities of the Alliance for more than 60 years. Today, it continues to be one of the largest and most important partnership tools used to address 21st-century security challenges.

## A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO SECURITY

The SPS Programme addresses contemporary security challenges of mutual concern to NATO and partner countries by supporting civil science, research and innovation, providing considerable scientific value for researchers from a broad range of disciplines.

**In line with the SPS key priorities, the programme facilitates international efforts to meet emerging security challenges, increases support for NATO-led operations, and raises awareness about security developments with a view towards preventing crises.**

In partnership with allied and partner institutions, the programme provides funding, expert counsel and support for security-relevant activities, in the form of workshops, training courses, or multi-year research and development projects. The SPS Programme also helps to promote the NATO's political dimension in terms of shared values and support for civil society.

The SPS Programme promotes dialogue and regional cooperation among partners. It provides the Alliance with separate, non-mili-

tary communication channels, and brings together experts from NATO countries with those from partner countries, often in situations where other forms of dialogue more directly focused on defence and security are difficult to establish.

The programme has evolved continually since it was founded as the NATO Science Committee in 1958.

**Over the past five years, the SPS Programme has initiated more than 450 collaborative activities among its 29 member states and 41 partner countries, ranging from cyber defence in Jordan to humanitarian demining in Ukraine.**

## THREE CORE DIMENSIONS OF SPS

All SPS Programme activities contribute toward the Alliance's strategic objectives as defined in the 2010 Strategic Concept. The programme promotes collaboration and cooperative security based on three core functions that define its identity:

**Science:** The SPS Programme helps to foster research, innovation, and knowledge exchanges in an effort to address mutual security challenges. SPS has a substantial network reaching out to hundreds of universities and institutions across the world. It provides international experts with the opportunity to exchange ideas through workshops, and to publish the outcome of these in the NATO SPS Series for the benefit of the global scientific and security community.

**Partnership:** The programme's collaborative framework brings together scientists, experts, and policymakers from allied and partner countries to address today's security challenges together. The SPS Programme is one of NATO's most important partnership tools available to all partners, proving that practical cooperation is achievable across political barriers through scientific exchange. It contributes to NATO's efforts to project stability and build defence capacity in partner countries.

**Security:** According to the scope of the SPS Programme and guidance from NATO nations, all projects developed under SPS must have a relevant security aspect.

#### WHAT SECURITY AREAS DOES SPS FOCUS ON?

The SPS Programme focuses on a growing range of non-traditional risks and challenges, including terrorism, defence against chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) agents, cyber security threats, energy security and environmental security concerns, as well as the human and social aspects of security, in particular the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

NATO celebrated six decades of scientific collaboration in 2018, and the SPS Programme is determined to remain on its successful path and continue to promote NATO's strategic objectives and partnerships, and to demonstrate its flexibility in a constantly changing world.

\* Source: Official NATO webpage, NATO strategic documents

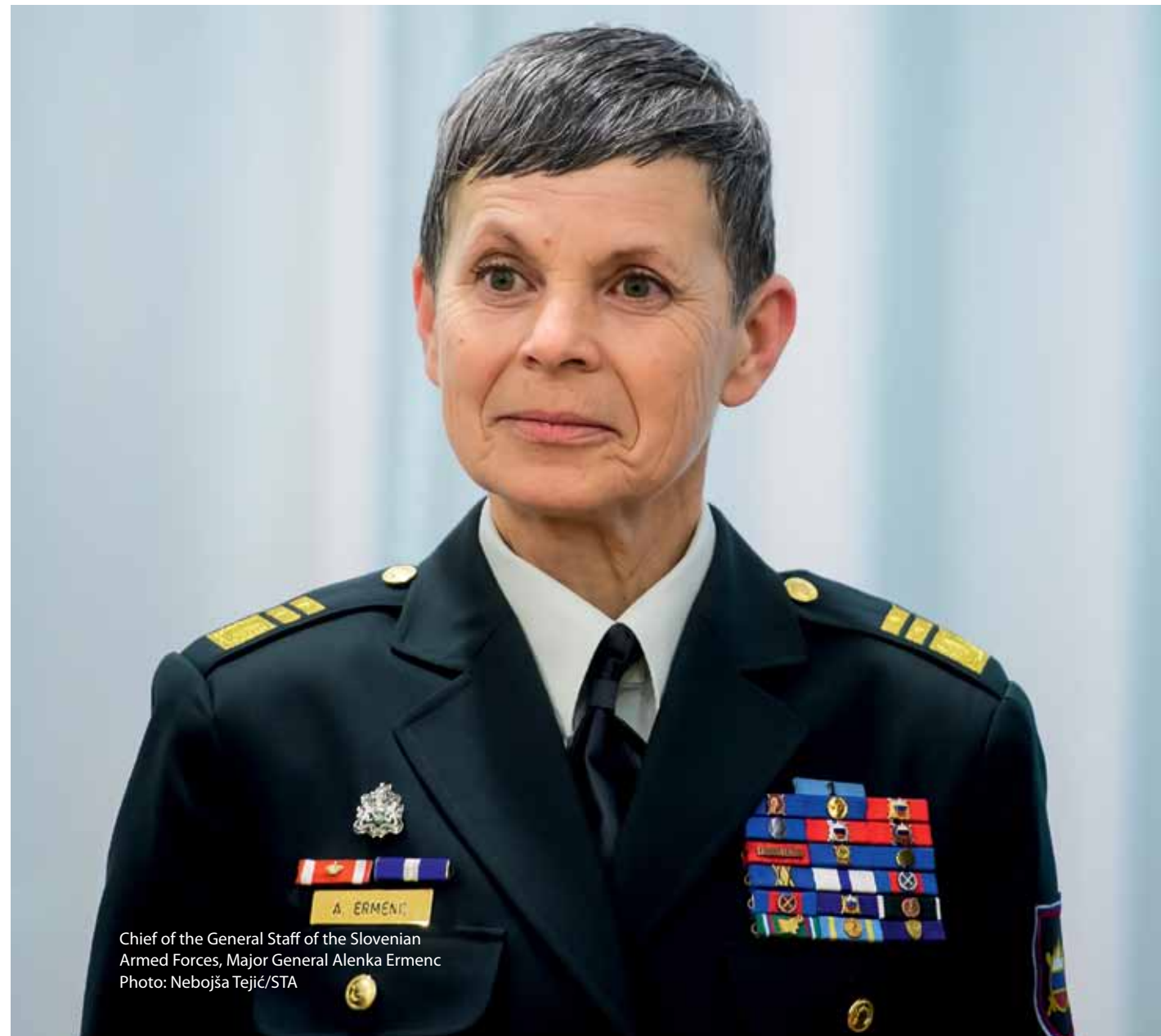


NATO Headquarters is the political and administrative centre of the Alliance. It is located at Boulevard Leopold III in Brussels, Belgium. It offers a venue for representatives and experts from all member countries to consult on a continuous basis, a key part of the Alliance's consensual decision-making process, and to work with partner countries.  
Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

## ALENKA ERMENC

# The woman in charge of the armed forces

NATAŠA MARVIN



Chief of the General Staff of the Slovenian Armed Forces, Major General Alenka Ermenc  
Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

Celebrating Slovenian general Rudolf Maister (1874-1934) Day on 23 November last year, the President of the Republic, Borut Pahor, promoted Alenka Ermenc to the rank of Major General with special military honours. She thus became the first woman in Slovenia with such a high rank and one of the few in the world.

Only four days later, the Slovenian Government headed by Prime Minister Marjan Šarec appointed her Chief of the General Staff of the Slovenian Armed Forces.

**She is the first female officer to take the highest position in the Slovenian Armed Forces, and the first female Chief of the General Staff among the country's NATO allies.**

The Chief of the General Staff of the Slovenian Armed Forces, Major General Alenka Ermenc, is thus making history as the most influential woman in a traditionally male organisation.

### AN EXCEPTIONAL PERSON AND OFFICER

On the occasion of her appointment, Prime Minister Marjan Šarec said that he never judges candidates by gender but by their abilities. Major General Ermenc is convinced that all have an opportunity to attain their goals, but it is hard work, motivation and positive thinking that enable a person to move the boundaries of what they think is possible. Alenka Ermenc has been raising the bar for 27 years; as a young graduate of political science at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana in 1991, she joined the Territorial Defence of the Republic of Slovenia, the predecessor of the Slovenian Armed Forces, and during Slovenia's secession from Yugoslavia actively participated in the war for the country's independence, being awarded the Bronze Medal of General Maister with Swords.

In 2008, she graduated from the Royal College of Defence Studies, and in 2009, she obtained her Master's degree in international studies from King's College in London.

**Her assignments in the Slovenian Armed Forces have included a tactical-level command duty and operational- and strategic-level staff duties related to operations, personnel and training.**

In the multinational peace-support operation NATO KFOR, she served as the Chief of the Personnel Department at KFOR Headquarters (NATO HQ KFOR), a substitute to the Deputy Chief of Staff, Support (DCOS SPT HQ KFOR), and an adviser on personnel matters to the KFOR Commander.

Since 2001, she has held several leading positions in the Slovenian Armed Forces. In May 2011, she was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General, and in March 2018 was appointed Deputy Chief of the General Staff, the first woman in this senior position in the Slovenian military and in a NATO member. Throughout her career, she has actively participated in a number of military exercises in Slovenia and abroad, as well as in NATO and EU crisis management exercises.

### PRESTIGIOUS AWARDS INCLUDE A NATO DECORATION

For her outstanding work in the fields of military and defence, the first Slovenian female Major General has received many domestic and foreign decorations: the Bronze Medal of General Maister with Swords; the Silver and Gold Medals of General Maister; the Bronze, Silver and Gold Medals of the Slovenian Armed Forces; the Service in the Peace Medal; the NATO Non-Article 5 Medal; and the Commander Cross with Swords of the Order pro Merito Melitensi.

She has gained the trust and respect of her colleagues, who consider her to be principled, strict, courageous, reliable and fully committed to her work and mission.

When she was promoted to Major General she highlighted the importance of knowledge and hard work, adding that they go hand-in-hand with professionalism, motivation, sacrifice and determination.

"These are the values of the Slovenian Armed Forces," she said. Visibly moved by her promotion to this high position, Major General Ermenc stressed that her actions are guided by love for her homeland.

**DEEDS, NOT WORDS**

"At the helm of the Slovenian Armed Forces I will focus on the status and equipment of Slovenian troops, capability targets, military infrastructure, and knowledge as the building block of the profession. Let me conclude by sharing with you my personal motto, which will become our guiding principle: *acta non verba*," Major General closed her speech.

She kept her word, and immediately following her appointment immersed herself in work.

In its statement for the Slovenian Press Agency, the NATO Press Office emphasised the important role women serve in the armed forces, which it has long recognised – the Committee on Women in NATO Forces was established in 1976. "For NATO, equal participation contributes to more resilient societies, more effective forces, and lasting peace." NATO is committed to gender mainstreaming, including in missions and operations. In the Alliance, Clare Hutchinson was appointed the Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security.

In one of her rare interviews, Alenka Ermenc, aged 55, revealed that she is an avid snowboarder, as well as an amateur gardener and herbalist. She has three adult children and lives in Kamnik. At her promotion ceremony, she also thanked her family: "My dear family, without your patience and support I could not have made it."



President of the Republic of Slovenia Borut Pahor and Alenka Ermenc, Major General.  
Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

DRAGAN BARBUTOVSKI,  
DIRECTOR OF THE THINK EUROPE THINK TANK

## The EU needs a new vision and mission to overcome its current crisis of identity

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ  
PHOTO: TAMINO PETELINŠEK/STA



Dragan Barbutovski

The greatest benefits of Slovenia's 15 years of EU membership, in Barbutovski's opinion, include tackling challenges together with the biggest and best, and the resulting accelerated economic, social and political growth. But he is convinced that the EU needs a new vision and mission in order to overcome its current crisis of identity. He misses a Euroconfident and more open Slovenia.

**You have been engaged with the EU for 20 years, which suggests that you are familiar with all the aspects of the Union. What are the membership benefits that Slovenians were not aware of prior to joining the club?**

It is in Slovenia's DNA to be an open country with an open economy and a forward-looking society. This is also the only way for a small country or a small member state to survive in today's global world, the only way to meet the challenges of the new century, be it climate change, the green economy, industrialisation, the digital revolution or migration. The greatest advantage, though, is tackling challenges together with the biggest and best.

**What has changed in these 15 years, for the EU and you personally?**

Changes are more than obvious. They range from personal – such as increased mobility, free flow of people, cross-border and EU-wide employment and study opportunities, research ties – to economic ones, access to internal markets, participation in the biggest trading bloc, security in business transactions between member states, recognition of technical standards, zero customs duties, and being part of supply chains and political ones.

**We are part of the biggest political process based on common values.**

What I miss, however, is more openness – 15 years ago Slovenia was much more future-oriented and its society more tolerant. Maybe we were just keeping up appearances at the time.

**How do you see the EU now, after 15 years of Slovenia's membership?**

The EU is our future, but we must make this ageing lady a bit more agile. Just like us, she is experiencing provisional difficulties with mobility and sometimes also with her memory. She has some problems with her health, but it is nothing that patience cannot cure. Above all she must think more positively.

**Has the EU lived up to your expectations?**

Slovenia would have been in a completely different position, and I think that its economy would have been worse off if it had not joined the EU in 2004.

**All the indicators show the positive effects of European integration, including the economic, social and political ones.**

However, Slovenia has not tapped into the potential offered by its membership as much as it could have in order to pursue its own interests or introduce them at the European level. I think Slovenia lacks *Euroconfidence*, a European reference point for carving out

niches for the functioning of the EU where we exercise *national interests*. Still, in some areas we have become so good that other member states turn to us for advice, and our upcoming EU Council Presidency in 2021 is an opportunity to create a more Euroconfident Slovenia.

**Are you still in favour of Slovenia's membership despite the fact that the EU has recently been affected by numerous crises, often collectively referred to as an identity crisis?**

Absolutely yes. Personally, I have evolved from a *Eurooptimist* into a *Eurorealist*, which I consider to be a natural process after having worked on EU issues since 1999. I know European integration processes from the standpoint of a candidate country, I saw the EU *from the inside*, including during Slovenia's Presidency in 2008. That is why I am now very critical of the EU – the EU needs a new vision and mission if it wants to overcome the current crisis of identity.

**Will you cast your vote at the upcoming European Parliament elections on 26 May 2019?**

So far, I have voted in all European elections. In 2004 when I was studying for my Master's in the UK, I did not apply in time to vote by post in Slovenia but was nevertheless able to cast my vote in Liverpool. This was thanks to my newly gained EU citizenship. I took part in all the other elections in Slovenia, as I will again this year.

**Which are the three main issues that the EU should pay special attention to?**

Firstly, the EU must undergo reforms and define its new vision or mission. Brexit and divisions among the member states are shaking

the very foundations of the Union, but new ones are not provided either by the European institutions or member states. If, upon the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome in 2017, the political will to reform the EU could still be found, it is today merely an empty political promise that even those expressing it no longer believe in.

**Secondly, the new vision of the EU must be built on a Europe tailored to its people, even if it sounds like a tired cliché.**

The gap between the EU (at the European and national levels, as the EU covers internal and not foreign policy) and its citizens has been widening, even the diehard optimists have lost their faith in the present-day EU. When even the Eurocrats lose enthusiasm, you know that something has gone terribly wrong. Thirdly, European institutions should stop being completely immersed in themselves and producing unnecessary work in the form of legislative proposals that do not benefit industry, European citizens, or even, last but not least, the EU itself.

**A few weeks ago, Siemens' CEO Joe Kaeser commented on the EU's approach, saying: "Those who love Europe should shape its future instead of losing themselves in backward formulas. It is no good to be technically correct but yet do everything wrong for Europe."**

Dragan Barbutovski has been communicating on European issues for two decades. From 1999 to 2003 he was the spokesperson of the European Commission's Delegation to Slovenia, and in 2008 worked in Brussels as the spokesperson for Slovenia's EU Council Presidency. He now runs Think Europe, a think tank analysing European public policies. He is a European Union affairs commentator for many Slovenian media outlets, and the co-founder of CurioCity, a sustainable tourism start-up.



# 15 YEARS TOGETHER IN THE EU

## Cooperation in all areas of life

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ



What are the advantages of joining the EU that we previously did not have? Did joining provide for you personally any changes? How was it 15 years ago and how is it today? Will you vote in the European Parliament elections? Should any issues be especially highlighted in public discourse?



Photo: Bor Slana

**Bogdan Gabrovec, President of the Slovenian Olympic Committee:** *"The EU opened up quite a few new opportunities for Slovenia, both in the political and economic spheres, as well as in sport. In many ways sports people can get to compete now more easily, with fewer bureaucratic obstacles, and this makes it easier for them to train and compete. At the same time Slovenian membership of the EU can be seen in the revenue from sport, since the EU offers numerous opportunities for co-financing projects in sport, especially for development. The EU must protect what is termed the European model of sport, which does not favour the desire for profit, but rather professionalism in sport. Since in many branches of sport we have already witnessed the intrusion of capital into the ranking of countries in major competitions, it is important for the EU to say something about the values that should prevail, and to enable for all countries an equal system for the development of their sporting cultures. I see the EU as part of my identity through the values we share. Including in sport. Sport is one of the rare areas that connect people across cultures. My expectations around Slovenia joining the EU have been fulfilled only in part, however, and I would like a bit more openness from the Union to hearing about the problems of small countries. I also believe that each individual must be socially responsible and politically active, rather than just whining about the status of Slovenia and the EU. The elections for the European Parliament are definitely the main opportunity for people to influence things for the better."*

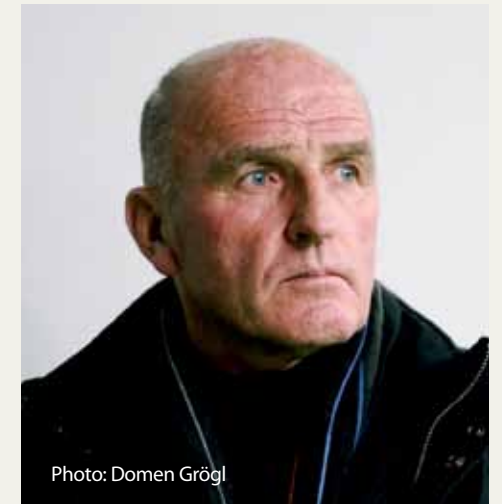


Photo: Domen Grögl

**Brane Oblak, former footballer and coach:** *"I think that for a small country like Slovenia, membership of the EU is very important. Particular advantages are the ease of crossing borders and the single currency. My expectations regarding the EU have been partly fulfilled, but there are still problems with low wages and pensions. Of course, I absolutely support Slovenia being a member of the EU. I'm not going to vote in the next European Parliament elections on 26 May, because there are too many candidates who are only in it for their own interests. The topics that the EU should focus on especially are water, solar and other alternative energy sources, and refugees. Otherwise joining has not affected my personal life in any crucial way. Slovenia gaining independence had a much bigger influence."*



Photo: UKOM archives

**Žiga Perovič, lawyer:** *"I would say that the biggest advantage is the much greater cohesion than we could imagine, with greater choice in products and services, more opportunities for education throughout the EU, and the simplicity of doing business. As a lawyer perhaps I appreciate this harmonisation of rules brought by the EU even more, since in other member states in many fields you can expect similar rules, and this is great for doing business. In 15 years of membership, progress can be felt. During this time I completed my studies, got my first job, and in between I took advantage of quite a few possibilities offered by the EU Erasmus exchange and doing my internship at the EU Parliament. Technological and economic progress can be seen, and in my opinion Slovenia's membership of the EU played a specific part in this. Nowadays I am often surprised in a positive way by the younger generation, where some of them even in secondary school are thinking about enrolling at a university abroad, and this in my opinion is also thanks to Slovenia's greater openness. It seems to me that in these 15 years we have clearly seen a gradual opening of Slovenia to the EU and the world. At the same time I think that all those who oppose Slovenia's membership of the EU do not properly understand the alternatives. The EU could of course improve many things, and Slovenia could be more influential within the EU, but just involvement and inclusion in the common economic area brings a lot. I will vote in the next European Parliament elections, just as I vote in all the national elections. Although I am not an advocate of the present-day mantra that every vote counts, I think it is very important for us all to have the chance to vote and be elected. Three major topics that the EU should focus on more are trade between the Union and the rest of the world, promoting technology, science and small businesses, and helping those countries and regions that border the EU."*



Photo: UKOM archives

**Katarina Arko, 1<sup>st</sup> year secondary school student:** *"The most important thing to me seems connection and contact with other countries, joint projects, and the development of infrastructure and knowledge. It's good that we have a common market and in this way greater choice, and that different cultures can connect with each other."*

**Dr Boštjan Žekš, scientist and winner of the Zois Award for lifetime achievement in the field of physics:** *"The main advantage of membership of the EU seems to me the equality of the Slovenian nation with other nations in Europe, and the equality of each individual Slovenian. We never had this in the past. Of course, this does not mean that as a nation we are just as influential and powerful as others. The second major advantage, which follows on from the first, is equal participation with groups or individuals from other countries, and cooperation in the areas of the economy, health, science, culture and so on. At least in some areas, what is becoming important in this cooperation is simply the abilities of the individual, and not where they come from. The third advantage I would point out is self-confidence, which we are woefully short of, but successful cooperation with others will undoubtedly strengthen it. I don't think I can honestly compare the situation 15 years ago with today, especially not on the personal level. In this period many things have changed, and not just as a result of joining the EU. The change in the social system has generated a crucial shift. An undoubted consequence of joining the EU is freedom of movement, which is a wonderful achievement that I hope we will maintain. It bothers me that the EU has become a bureaucratic creation, which does not see people and which people do not trust, and for this reason they do not wish to transfer their rights to it. Of course I support Slovenia being a member of the EU, and of course I will vote. It seems to me that the most important topic of public discussion is reducing bureaucracy, for the EU needs more direct contact with citizens. We also need a more connected Europe, which can decide jointly on important international and global issues. Only in this way can we get important local politicians to want to be a part of the EU leadership."*



Photo: Tamara Petelinšek/STA

**Primož Oberč, 1<sup>st</sup> year secondary school student:** *"For me and my generation, Slovenian membership of the EU is something self-evident. The advantages such as no customs and easy border crossing seem good to me. If we weren't members we wouldn't have these. I'm thinking about studying abroad, and in public discussion I miss topics that would emphasise the connections between young people who should be given a greater voice, since young people view the world differently and see what adults sometimes overlook."*



Photo: UKOM archives



Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

**Jure Košir, Alpine skier and businessman:** *"I see the EU today at quite a critical point, especially because of Brexit. The expectations around Slovenia joining the EU have and also haven't been fulfilled. Of course many areas of our lives have changed for the better. But I have been negatively surprised by the disunity over migration policy and by the arbitrary decisions of some countries. I support Slovenia being a member of the EU. I will of course vote in the European elections in May, since I try to be involved in all the elections. The topics that should be discussed more widely are migration policy, uniform transport tariffs and education. I really wish there were standardisation in transport in the member states, where there are differing road regulations and road toll stickers in force."*



Photo: UKOM archives

**Ana Mencin, 1<sup>st</sup> year secondary school student:** *"I can't imagine it being anything other than what it is, since Slovenian membership of the EU is self-evident to me, as it is to all my generation. I like it that we don't wait at the borders, that we no longer have to go shopping in Italy or Austria, as my parents had to do, and of course there are the study exchanges, which really encourage international cooperation. In primary school, in the ethics class we talked a lot about the EU, and I imagine that we will also learn about European topics in history."*

**Andreja Gomboc, Center for Astrophysics and Cosmology, Faculty of Science, University of Nova Gorica:** *"International integration is essential for top results, since modern science cannot flourish solely within a single country's borders. The same holds true for Slovenian scientists. Thus, for us scientists, the major advantage of EU membership is the possibility of even greater integration with other European researchers and cooperation in EU projects, ranging from obtaining individual scholarships and projects, to the inclusion in broad networks between institutions in different countries. There is currently much more cooperation in European science projects than there was 15 years ago. Slovenia is not an astrophysics superpower, owing among other things to its small size and the fact that it still has a rather low number of professional astrophysicists per capita than many other European countries. Nevertheless, according to my experience taking part in Horizon 2020 projects, Slovenian scientists are treated as equal partners. Since Slovenia is also an associate member of the European Space Agency (ESA), it has more opportunities for cooperation. I personally see the EU as an extended homeland. The free movement of goods and people, a common currency and common programmes in science and education, have significantly improved the links and mobility of researchers and students. And even than my own generation, young people today are likely to see the EU as their backyard, which is encouraging and gratifying. However, one disadvantage of the openness and many opportunities in other European countries is that Slovenia is experiencing a brain drain, with more young people leaving than arriving. While in general my expectations regarding Slovenia's inclusion in the EU have been, I expected more common sense legislation. In science and higher education, we often still have to deal with rather rigid systems and institutions, but I nonetheless believe that there is no alternative to EU membership for Slovenia. That said, I would like to see more debate on environmental issues, prevention of the spread of intolerance and populism while guaranteeing the right to privacy, in addition to efforts to stimulate economic competitiveness, promote scientific and technological development among those member states that are less developed in these areas, and raise public awareness about the importance of science for individuals and society as a whole."*



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

**Samo Bergant, 1<sup>st</sup> year secondary school student:** *"I view membership as good, partly because of the strong connections and solidarity among countries. Member states help each other through the European fund. But I think the restrictions that have prevented some countries from joining are excessive. I also like it that when I go abroad, I don't need a lot of documents. But I'd like better information on the working of the EU, and the education system should get more actively involved in informing young people about the work and advantages of the EU."*



Photo: UKOM archives

## SPACE TECHNOLOGY

## No longer just for superpowers

NATAŠA BUŠLJETA



European Space Agency  
Photo: ollo - GettyImages/GulliverFilm&Foto

As Slovenia celebrates 15 years of EU membership, it will take its place among the countries that have their own satellites in orbit. Thanks to European integration, space technology is no longer the domain of large space agencies, but is becoming an economic opportunity for all nations that are innovative, open and flexible.

Slovenia signed an Association Agreement with the European Space Agency (ESA) in Paris in July 2016. The ESA's fundamental mission is to provide for and promote, for exclusively peaceful purposes, cooperation among European states in space research and technology and their space applications. At the same time, in line with the existing space strategy, the European Union promotes the use of satellite data and applications in the implementation of EU policies and, by 2020, it will have allocated 12 billion euros to the development of space technologies.

**Slovenia's membership of the European Union has thus significantly contributed to the development of high value-added, high-tech products and opened up new opportunities for the private sector.**

With the launch of its first satellite, Slovenia will become one of the fifty countries that have operational satellites in space.

#### **TWO SMALL SATELLITES FOR SPACE, ONE GIANT LEAP FOR SLOVENIA**

Slovenian researchers and companies work and participate in various fields of space exploration, from the construction of the biggest astronomical observatory, the Cherenkov Telescope Array, which is an observatory for gamma-ray astronomy at very-high energies, to exploring the possibilities of colonising Mars. One of the most important areas of Slovenian work in this area is the production of satellites and satellite monitoring of the Earth.

From 2010 to 2018 the Centre of Excellence for Space Sciences

and Technology effectively linked the potentials of science, technology and applied research in the development and use of micro- and nanosatellites.

**It developed technologies for the first Slovenian microsatellite for remote terrestrial monitoring, constructed a ground station for satellite communication, and developed a laboratory for testing materials, components and systems in a simulated space environment.**

The next step is launching the abovementioned NEMO-HD Earth observation microsatellite and testing Slovenian space technologies in a real space environment. The satellite images provided by the NEMO-HD microsatellite will be of sufficiently high-resolution to facilitate their use in the implementation of EU policies. This satellite will complement the European Copernicus system, and provide its own data source for the needs of agriculture, forestry, urban planning, transport and ecology in Slovenia and other countries with similar needs.

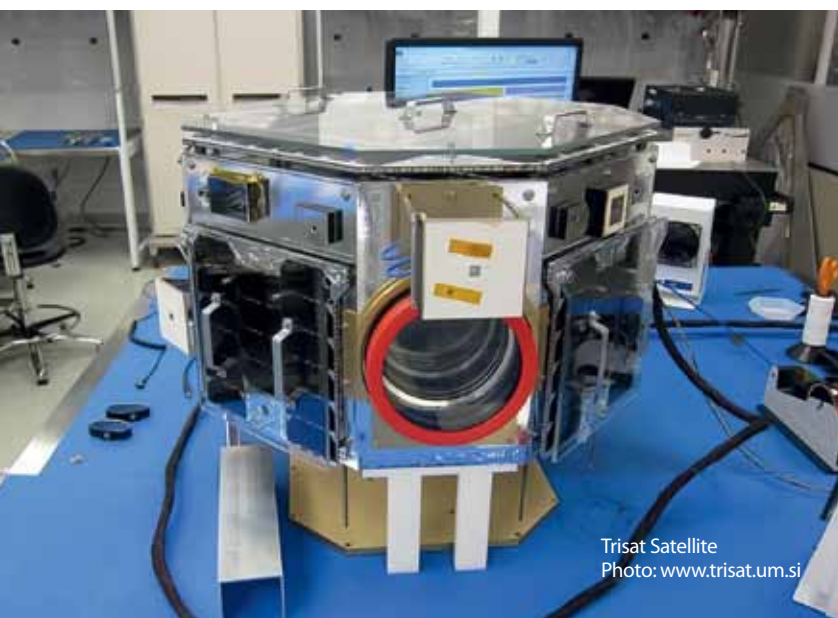
With the support of the ESA, the first Slovenian nanosatellite was designed by experts from the University of Maribor and the SkyLabs aerospace company, which specialises in the miniaturisation of space technologies. The project was called Trisat Mission. The nanosatellite, weighing just 5.5 kilograms, is equipped with an infrared camera based on the high-tech PicoSky platform, developed by SkyLabs. The multispectral camera will enable, among other things, the detection of volcanic dust, centres of large fires,

oceanic oil spills, and the discovery of valuable minerals below the Earth's surface. However, the mission's main purpose is not to collect data, since there are many other solutions already available on the market, but rather to test the robustness of the space electronics produced by the SkyLabs, as durability is currently the space industry's greatest challenge.

Sinergise, which develops geographic information systems, is also gaining increasing recognition in space technologies. Sinergise won the ESA's international competition within the framework of the 6.7 billion euros Copernicus project.

**The award was received for a solution concerning the time required to display and use satellite images, shortening it from several hours to just a few seconds.**

With Sinergise's winning application, the enormous amount of raw data sent by ESA satellites became accessible to everyone.



Trisat Satellite  
Photo: www.trisat.um.si

Dewesoft, a Slovenian manufacturer of hardware and software for measuring, has been cooperating with NASA for 15 years, and Slovenia's Association Agreement with the ESA enabled the company to work with the ESA, too. Their instruments test satellite behaviour in the simulation of realistic launch conditions. Dewesoft's customers include Boeing and Elon Musk's SpaceX, which used the firm's equipment to test its components.

**DEVELOPMENT OF SPACE TECHNOLOGIES BY SLOVENIAN COMPANIES**

In addition to Earth observation satellites, space medicine is an important field of Slovenian space development.

**The Planica Nordic Centre houses a hypoxia facility for simulating living conditions on Mars and the Moon.**

It creates conditions similar to those in space and explores how weightlessness and lack of oxygen affect the human organism. Astronauts face health issues similar to those affecting older people, i.e. the loss of muscle and bone mass. With the assistance of the ESA, the Planica Nordic Centre established a physiological laboratory and hypoxia rooms where experiments are conducted. The Planica space team, composed of experts from the Jožef Stefan Institute, has become the centre of global space medicine research.

The company Balmar acquired its first experience in aviation and then entered the space industry. The firm is involved in metal 3D-printing and thus in upgrading and producing components that can be used in aviation and space.

Last but not least, Duol and its partners are exploring the possibility of living on Mars. Together with a Japanese membrane producer, Duol develops membranes that could be used to construct modular habitats for crews. The advantages of Duol domes are lower volume and weight, which is important for transport to Mars. All other concepts include supporting structures, whereas Duol would send only its canvas and a fan to Mars. The solution is therefore an inflatable dome, whose walls would be made of ice, simultaneously providing insulation and protection against

cosmic radiation. The ice would be produced on Mars during the dome's construction. After dismantling, the ice would be used to produce hydrogen, i.e. the fuel needed to the return to Earth.

**PROMOTION OF SPACE TECHNOLOGY**

The Herman Potočnik Noordung Center of Space Technologies is another Slovenian organisation that works in relation to space. The Center is named after the Slovenian who is considered one of the five founders of space science, and who has an exhibit at the Smithsonian museum in Washington.

One of the concerns at the Center of Space Technologies is promoting a common European space policy and technological developments in other countries with highly developed space technology.

**At the moment, an extensive exhibition *Earth from Space* is under construction, to be opened in time to mark Slovenia's 15th anniversary of joining the EU, and will be based on the achievements of the Copernicus programme.**

The exhibition is being produced in cooperation with the ESA and, as an introduction to the project, we present the first article on Slovenia from the perspective of space: [https://www.esa.int/spaceinvideos/Videos/2018/12/Earth\\_from\\_space\\_Mount\\_Triglav\\_Slovenia](https://www.esa.int/spaceinvideos/Videos/2018/12/Earth_from_space_Mount_Triglav_Slovenia)



The Cultural Centre of European Space Technologies (KSEVT) in Vitanje.  
Photo: KSEVT archives

## THE PRESENT FOR THE FUTURE

# Slovenian experts among the global elite in developing artificial intelligence

ANA KRAŠEVEC  
PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVES



Marko Grobelnik

In 2021 Slovenia will host the Web Conference, the prestigious global gathering that each year brings together on the highest level researchers, developers, users and companies in the field of the world wide web. The conference, which is the primary and most important event in this field, enables and fosters discussion of the development of the web, the standardisation of web-related technologies and the impact of these on our society and culture. One of the exceptionally important technologies in this context is artificial intelligence (AI).

In recent times AI has become an increasingly hot topic. A lot is being written about it and enormous amounts are being invested in its development. Some regard it as extremely positive but others fear and caution against it. The fact is that the field of AI is still too new and therefore not the easiest thing to grasp, especially for the lay public. So what exactly is AI?

**One definition states that it is a field of information science that includes diverse interdisciplinary knowledge. It involves the capability of computers to function as if they were intelligent, meaning that in part they mimic human intelligence.**

And human intelligence means the ability to learn, generalise, plan, solve problems and draw logical conclusions. Scientists and developers are therefore working towards AI becoming more akin to human intelligence, so the field is interwoven with psychology, neurology, mathematics, logic, philosophy and other sciences.

Analysts predict that the market for AI will soon reach US\$ 89 billion. The majority of earnings currently come from the applications market, but projections clearly indicate that AI will transform all industry. This of course opens up many questions and considerations, but scientists assure us that there is nothing to fear. In their opinion, robots will not enslave us but will help to make many tasks easier – at home and in various jobs. A recent survey

by the PwC revealed that as many as 82% of managing directors on the global level are convinced that in the next five years AI will cause a major shift in the way their organisations operate. Two thirds of them believe that the impact of artificial intelligence will be even greater than that of the internet.

#### INTERCONNECTION OF THE WEB AND AI

The range of application of *all-knowing* AI is vast. When you are on the internet, computers record your every single click, and AI monitors and analyses the collected data. A website appropriately supported with this technology can know a lot about you even on your first visit: where you live, whether you have children, what your financial worth is, what interests you and how you resonate. If you add social networks, AI also has access to data on your emotions and feelings. Our smartphones constantly announce where we are and also who we are with, i.e. whose telephones are interacting with ours. With the right combination of a sufficiently large selection of digital data it is possible to predict, with a high degree of probability, diverse scenarios and even to steer decisions. Here scientists emphasise that AI technologies are still only in their infancy.

**Nowadays they can handle challenges that a person would need a few seconds to solve, but dealing with more complex and involved issues is still well beyond the scope of such technology.**

Given the high degree of probability with which AI predicts various trends, AI is already used in numerous areas, for instance on stock exchanges, in medicine, in the media, in the administration of cities and factories, in transport, farming, law and sport.

**SLOVENIAN SCIENTISTS INVOLVED IN AI FOR OVER FOUR DECADES**

In Slovenia the leading organisation in this field is the Jožef Štefan Institute, which began researching AI back in 1972 and set up a dedicated laboratory a few years later which is still operating today. The systems developed there are being used by numerous well-known companies, such as Microsoft, the British Telecom, The New York Times, various banks and press agencies. Among the most sought-after tools are those for automating the analysis of content, which extends beyond linguistic boundaries and thereby identifies events around the world in real time much more easily (as seen with the company Event Registry). They are also used by the Bloomberg media organisation.

**The leadership of the laboratory includes one of Slovenia’s most famous scientists, Marko Grobelnik. Grobelnik is the cofounder of five Slovenian companies associated with AI (Quintelligence, Cy-corp Europe, Event Registry, Qlector, and SolvesAll).**

“Such companies are the foundation for the very existence of the research group at the Jožef Štefan Institute,” says Grobelnik. They serve to facilitate the conditions for researchers to stay in Slovenia, and partly make up for the difference in earnings compared to earnings abroad. In his career, spanning more than 30 years, he has tutored numerous students who today occupy important positions at notable universities and technology giants around the world. His research is currently focused principally on the issue of how, with the

aid of AI, it is possible to predict the development of certain events in society, and how to explain the reasons underlying them.

**Marko Grobelnik is also Slovenia’s current Digital Ambassador.**

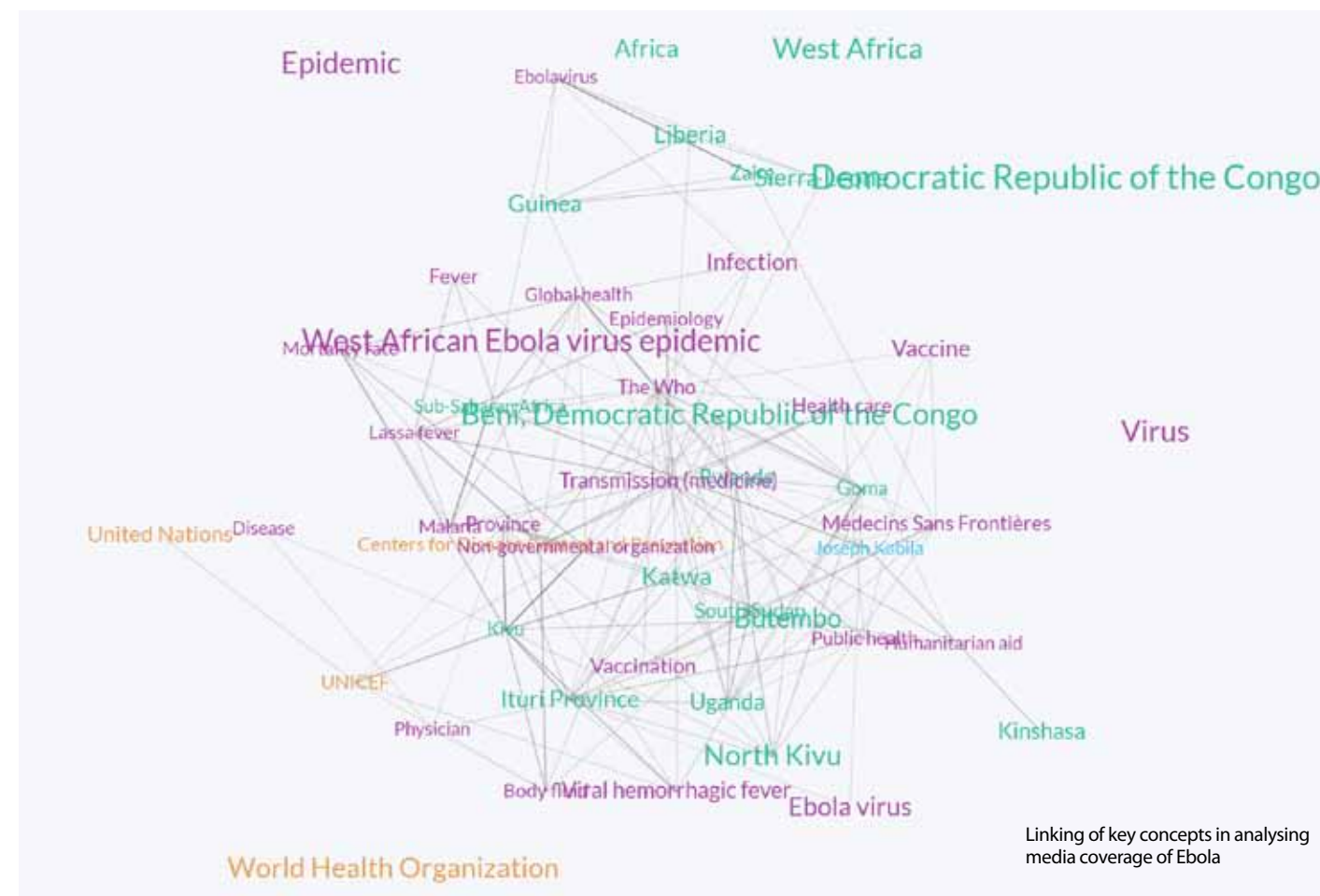
The government appointed him to this unpaid position in 2016 for a term of four years. Grobelnik says that the new position does not involve any major change to his established system of working. “What we have been doing to date was previously not called being a Digital Ambassador, but I and people like me have been doing this in one way or another the whole time. Whoever works at an institute or a university is by definition called to collaborate in the community and is some kind of ambassador for the field in which they work. For instance, for 23 years I have conducted computer competitions, we organised conferences at home and abroad and promoted digitalisation. The community is not just scientific and not just Slovenian, it is also European, global and professional. Being involved in this sphere is a permanent thing. This appointment to the position of Digital Ambassador does not signal any particular change for me. Perhaps it will give a bit more weight to my voice, but that voice is not just mine, it is the voice of the wider community, a wider circle of people.” One of the main tasks he has set himself is to calm the fears of the public regarding the pitfalls of technological progress. Like many other scientists, he says that AI can solve the problems of the modern world: “Just as artificial intelligence can be dangerous, however, it can also help us to neutralise that danger.”

**HONOUR AND OPPORTUNITY FOR SLOVENIA**

Given the outstanding achievements of Slovenian scientists in the development of AI, it is perhaps not surprising that in 2021 Slovenia will host the Web Conference. The world wide web was first designed in 1989 by Tim Berners-Lee at CERN in Geneva, Switzerland, where five years later (1994) the first such conference was held. Apart from in 1994 and 1995, when two conferences were held in each year, the Web Conference has become an annual event that is held at the end of April or beginning of May.

**It is a venue for lectures and discussions on the latest research and solutions, and its location rotates between North America, Asia and Europe.**

At the 2021 event in Ljubljana we expect 2,000 to 3,000 visitors from all over the world, and a number of accompanying events will be organised to make their week-long stay in Ljubljana both professionally and socially attractive.



Linking of key concepts in analysing media coverage of Ebola

LET'S TALK ABOUT SCIENCE!

## Should we go tonight to the cinema, for a drink or to a science talk?

IRENA KOGOJ

PHOTO: SCIENCE ON THE STREET ARCHIVES



The presenter and editor of the science programme Let's Bite the Science on TV Slovenia, Renata Dacinger, and a neurologist at The Ljubljana University Medical Centre, Blaž Koritnik.

One Tuesday this was the question that faced a young couple in Ljubljana. A lot of people would probably choose a drink or the cinema. So why, after a hard day, would they spend the evening hearing about serious and barely understandable subjects? But they did actually choose to go to the Union Café where they could enjoy a glass of wine and hear a lecture with a title that promised a fascinating evening. And they were not the only ones!

For the past years, lectures as part of the project Znanost na cesti (*Science on the Street*) have filled the Union Café, or Kavarna Union, and in the last year the Atrium of the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (ZRC SAZU). The organisers ensure a programme featuring lectures in diverse fields of science, ranging from biochemistry and physics to neuroscience and the humanities.

**There are discussions of the challenges presented to modern society by brain disease, nanoparticles in our lungs, the presence of illicit drug and pharmaceutical residues in waste and natural waters, the particle physics and exploration of the Universe, the promise of nanotechnology and even the production of beer.**

The listeners come from different age groups but are mostly young. They come because they like the atmosphere and are interested in the topic being discussed.

### GOOD COMBINATION OF A LECTURE AND A DISCUSSION

The organisers have clearly succeeded in creating a good mixture of scientific lectures and discussions between scientists and journalists. Namely, Science on the Street does not present the traditional kind of lectures.

**On stage, the scientist is joined with a journalist, who moderates the talk to ensure that the guest lecturer does not stray too far off into technical language and detail, and brings to the lecture the character of a chat.**

If needed, the moderator asks for further explanations. The preparation of a *conversational lecture* demands greater commitment from the two people on stage, but as can be seen at the events, the result is good. Why such a combination? The conceptual head of the project, Prof. Saša Novak, was aware of the trap into which scientists often fall – excessive technicality, which can reduce the attraction and comprehensibility of the lecture: “Researchers are used to present their results in their narrow academic circles, while they are not exactly skilled in presenting science to general public. In the desire to say everything that seems important to us, we sometimes go too far. Over the years I have learned that a different approach is needed with people who are not involved in science. If they ask me what I do, I now tell them that we are trying to develop a material that would withstand extreme conditions in a device that imitates the Sun, and I collaborate on a global format project. And sometimes the conversation starts to flow.”

She is of course very interested in how the invited scientists view the different set-up for lectures. So far they all see it as a challenge and a great opportunity to present their work to the public, while at the same time some have reservations at first about not being alone

on stage. *"It's much easier being your own stage director, being in the safe refuge of a terminological singularity of meaning, where spontaneity takes second place,"* is how such concerns were described by Prof. Helena Dobrovoljc of the Fran Ramovš Institute for the Slovenian Language at ZRC SAZU, who was invited to give a talk. After the event, however, she was enthusiastic about the pleasant and relaxed atmosphere. There were similar thoughts from other lecturers, who in six years now have already numbered nearly a hundred. They are especially enthusiastic about the audiences, who are eager to learn, curious and active. Prof. Luka Snoj of the Department of Reactor Physics at the Jožef Stefan Institute said that as a researcher

he usually feels isolated, since apart from a handful of colleagues no one is interested in what he is doing. Therefore, the feeling that the audience is curious about his work is more than good. Moreover, quite a few lectures have transformed into engaging discussions. Prof. Peter Križan, Faculty of Mathematic and Physics, University of Ljubljana, and Jožef Stefan Institute, said: *"A full café of listeners is something completely different from a lecture hall. The fact that the audience mainly consists of young people who have chosen to spend their evening in the centre of town at my lecture, and not somewhere else, adds to the magic. The interest in the lecture and the interesting questions were then the cherry on the cake."*



The interest for the lectures is growing.

The journalists are also enthusiastic about the project. The head and editor of the science programme *Let's Bite the Science* on TV Slovenija, Renata Dacinger, was one of the first to be invited to take part. She still remembers well the call from Prof. Saša Novak. *"It sounded great to me,"* she says. She had always been interested in science and did not hesitate for a moment in responding: *"Yes, of course I want to participate."* In response to the question why she wanted to take part, she answers that she could not think of a single reason why she wouldn't, given that she loves science.

#### SCIENCE THAT CONQUERS

All of the reasons set out above help explain why the Science on the Street events have become successful, although Prof. Saša Novak and Dr Kristina Žagar, who designed the project, did not imagine it would be so popular. It grew out of the idea that scientists themselves need to contribute to people recognising the need for science in society. The drastic reduction in science funding at the time the project was envisaged called for resistance. So the 'hit the streets' initiative gave rise to an action in which science

came to the streets. Not literally, but to cafés, bookshops and elsewhere among ordinary people.

**Since May 2013, when Dr Luka Snoj gave a lecture at Kresija Gallery on creating stars on Earth (i.e. nuclear fusion), the small Science on the Street team has organised nearly a hundred lectures, for the most part in Ljubljana, and occasionally in other locations: Maribor, Koper, Krško and Kranj.**

Interest in science is now spreading like a wave, and an increase in talk and writing about scientific topics can be clearly felt. It would be hard to assess realistically what the reason for this is, but Saša Novak says that if at least some small part can be credited to Science on the Street, then the objective has been achieved and the effort has paid off. The extremely positive feedback from both scientists and audiences gives them strong motivation to continue.



Prof. Saša Novak, the conceptual head of the project.

## KOČEVJE MAKES A BREAKTHROUGH

# Robots come to the land of the brown bear

TANJA GLOGOVČAN  
PHOTO: ANŽE MALOVRH/STA



Yaskawa Electric Corporation is the world's largest producer of industrial robots. Last year its sales amounted to more than 3 billion euros. The corporation is based in Kitakyushu, Japan and has a rich history. It was established in 1915 and in a little more than one hundred years it has grown into one of the leading multinational companies in mechatronics, drive technology, robotics, system engineering and industrial automation in the world, employing 15,000 people.

Kočevje received the 2018 Golden Stone award for the municipality with the greatest development achievements of the year. This once neglected municipality has created a vision that is posing a challenge to many a profession.

In its statement as to why it had received the 2018 Golden Stone award, Planet GV, the company behind the prize, said: *"There are not many places in Slovenia that have made such radical changes as Kočevje in recent years. Once a remote town battling many development challenges and an unenviable unemployment rate, it has made a complete turnabout."*

### YASKAWA EUROPE OPENS ITS DOORS IN KOČEVJE THIS YEAR

It is certainly one of the municipality's greatest achievements that Kočevje is to be the location of a robot factory, an investment worth 25 million euros. The factory will bring 200 to 250 new jobs with high added value (a rise of 20% for the area). This will make Slovenia an even more important player in the development and production of robots.

Yaskawa has installed more than 330,000 varied robots around the world, including those for a specific intended uses (welding, palletising, machine tending, painting and cleaning, turnkey welding systems, and so on). The company is perhaps best known for its Motoman brand of industrial robots.

**The factory in Kočevje will produce the 6-axis robot models most needed on the markets of Europe, the Middle East, and Africa (EMEA). This is the Yaskawa Electric Corporation's first industrial robot factory outside of Asia.**

The aim is to shorten delivery times and be more adaptable to buyers' requirements, thus increasing the Japanese firm's European market share.

The factory's arrival in Slovenia could present a challenge for many potential suppliers, as Yaskawa intends to set up a strong supply network in Europe for the components it needs to make its robots. It also intends to build another factory in Kočevje to produce servomotors and servo regulators. They will be supplied to the robot factory, and also distributed throughout the EMEA region and Russia.

### STRENGTHENING ITS STRATEGIC POSITION

A centre for robot research and development will also be built within the robot factory in Kočevje. Yaskawa already works with the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and the Jožef Stefan Institute, and this cooperation will be strengthened in the coming years. Yaskawa will offer its premises and equipment to the Kočevje Secondary School's mechanical engineering programme, as well as to other secondary schools and universities for lessons on mechatronics and robotics.

Production in Slovenia is expected to fulfil approximately 75% of market needs for Yaskawa robots in the EMEA markets. Slovenia will also serve as the central distribution point for the robots that will still be produced in Japan.

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION

Yaskawa's investment is not the only one bringing much-needed new jobs to this part of Slovenia. The sock producer Intersocks is building a new factory with the latest knitting technology to produce socks and sports apparel. Melamin and its German partner concluded an investment in SmartMelamine, which is the holder of an outstanding patent for synthetic fibre production. Rotes, a world-class ball bearing producer, is expanding its production, while Koles will build a new line for the manufacturing of glued laminated timber, and Grča is completely renovating and modernising its sawing line. All these large companies inspire smaller ones, which are recognising Kočevje as environment with a now flourishing economy.

**The abovementioned projects will increase the employment opportunities in Kočevje Municipality by nearly 50%.**

New people and new knowledge are coming to Kočevje. The story of this region, mostly known for its brown bear and the Krokar primeval forest, will likely encourage others to follow its example and find new ways to develop and grow.

## FEMALE ENGINEER OF THE YEAR – DORA DOMAJNKO

### An inspiring young woman

POLONA PREŠEREN, SOURCE: STA  
PHOTO: ANŽE MALOVRH/STA



Dora Domajnko

The title Female Engineer of the Year was awarded for the first time this year. The winner, Dora Domajnko, an engineer working for a company producing rotary and linear motion sensors (RLS Merilna tehnika), was selected from ten outstanding nominees.

No doubt a bright future is in store for this young woman who is eager to learn but, as she puts it, still lacks a lot of knowledge. *“Challenges inspire us all. It has been proven that dopamine, the reward hormone, is released in the brain when we solve complicated problems; in my case – mathematical tasks.”* Domajnko is currently a PhD student at the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Electrical Engineering. According to her, the pinnacle of knowledge is engineering wisdom, which is the ability to assess whether something that’s now impossible will become feasible in the future.

**Dora Domajnko is an inspiring young lady employed at RLS in the development of rotary and linear motion sensors.**

She copes well in a male-dominated world; she completed her undergraduate and master’s studies at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, where women were in a minority. *“If you work hard and are a positive person, attention is an advantage,”* the young engineer says.

During her studies, she participated in a number of extra-curricular, research and competition activities; she won the Dean’s Award for Academic Achievement four times. Undeterred by her far from easy job with RLS, she enrolled in a doctoral programme in electrical engineering in 2016.

She says that her decision to study electrical engineering was not easy; she was interested in physics as well, and throughout the first year of her studies constantly checked with her colleagues at the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics what was being taught there, and whether she had missed some important information. *“It was not obvious that my decision was the right one. But over time what seemed like incoherent and demanding pieces of knowledge began to fall in place, and then it started to get delightful,”* says the doctoral student. The theme of Domajnko’s doctoral thesis is magnetic hysteresis, a phenomenon occurring in ferromagnetic materials used in sensors. Ferromagnetism is a property that tells how a material responds to a magnetic field.

#### ENGINEERING

In Domajnko’s opinion one advantage of engineering is that it does not involve working with people, who can be rather difficult. *“There*

*are some life situations where I say to myself thank God for my professional work with sensors – they are more predictable. If a sensor doesn’t work, you locate the defect and solve the problem. No fuss!”*

But this does not mean that engineering is cold, and she does not agree with the belief that this field and other technical and mathematical professions allow no room for expressing creativity. *“It is true, physical laws are invariant, they cannot be violated, but they still allow for lots of possibilities. It is actually very important that we are able to find new approaches to problems in the context of these rules.”*

She believes that good engineers have the expertise needed to master mathematical principles and technical or scientific ways of thinking. *“We are aware that the facts need to be checked and nothing is certain until proven right or refuted. Progress cannot be made unless there is a desire to get to know new things, unless we listen to others and are able to work in a group; an individual alone can no longer achieve a lot.”*

#### SHE DEVOTES HER FREE TIME TO SPORT AND MUSIC

Besides being an engineer, Dora is also an athlete, competitor, and whitewater kayaking and skiing teacher, and does some other sports as a hobby. She is a musician as well; she finished music school for accordion, is a member of the Emona Folk Dance Group and plays in the Via Entropia group, where she expresses herself through music.

Domajnko says that, time allowing, she does all sorts of activities in her free time, with her favourite being most keen on sports. Engineering work is rather static and sedentary, so it is important for her to find some way to relax and improve my health.

**Overall, Dora Domajnko is distinguished for her expertise, versatility, high commitment and gentleness.**

Her statement about her job being a dream profession and about it being difficult for her to imagine doing anything else (at least at this moment) made the selection committee recognise that Dora is a woman who can inspire young people to study engineering and become the creators of the future, and thus a worthy winner of the award.

## ANGELA PISKERNIK

## An angel in the form of a woman

TANJA GLOGOVČAN



Angela Piskernik  
Photo: The Archives of the National Museum of Slovenia

She studied natural science in Vienna and, in 1914, became the first Slovenian female to obtain a PhD in the field of biological sciences (and second in the field of science). She was a botanist, an internationally recognised nature conservationist, a museum professional, lecturer and advocate for women's and ethnic rights. She can also be credited for the creation of Triglav National Park.

Angela Piskernik (1886-1967) was a native of Koroška, from Lobnik near Železna Kapla (*Bad Eisenkappel*). She was the second Slovenian woman to hold a doctorate in the natural sciences. She was employed as an assistant at the National Museum, and taught at Ljubljana and Novo mesto secondary schools, and was also the director of the Natural History Museum in Ljubljana. She wrote scientific botanical papers as well as popular texts, short stories and assessments, and sometimes even literary articles. She expressed her opinions publicly regarding social, women's and ethnic issues. But she is best known as a scientist and botanist.

#### RESPECT AND ADMIRATION FOR THE BEAUTY OF NATURE

The kingdom of the chamois, ibex and mountain eagles, Soča trout, capercaillie and other rare animal species, meadows and stone rock faces with rare flowers such as edelweiss, Triglav rose, Alpine toadflax and other plants. The sun reflects across the surface of the blue-green water, while the emerald green of the river and the translucent blue of the streams are enchanting. All of this is Triglav National Park, the only such park in Slovenia.

**This is the kind of beauty that was recognised in this part of Slovenia by Angela Piskernik and other Slovenians, who strove to have the magical land below Triglav become a national park.**

Triglav National Park was founded in 1961. In the very first year several articles and discourses were published concerning Triglav National Park, and especially its natural environment. The General Protection of Nature Act, something which Piskernik advocated, was passed in Slovenia only after her death.

Owing to her exceptional knowledge of botany, Piskernik is credited with the protection of numerous endangered plant and animal species. For this reason in 1967 she received the Van Tienhoven prize, which is awarded by the German foundation Stiftung F.V.S.

She can also take credit for the fact that during her time the mountain watch was established; initially in 1945 among scouts, while today it is part of the Alpine Association of Slovenia. In 1955 Slovenia became a member of the International Commission for Alpine Rescue, and Piskernik was an honorary member. She also worked with the Monument Protection Institute.

After the Second World War, as director of the Natural History Museum, she advocated the conservation of the Juliana Alpine Botanical Garden in Trenta and the protection of 56 endangered plant species, followed by several animal species. She achieved a legal ban on the export of songbirds from Yugoslavia. Piskernik also spearheaded moves to protect the first important nature conservation areas in Slovenia, such as the forest Krakov, Rakov Škocjan and Robanov kot.

**After several years of preparation and collaboration with fellow botanists, the first edition of her handbook Ključ za določanje cvetnic in praprotnic (*Key to Identifying Flowering Plants and Ferns*) was published in 1941.**

The first edition contained a census of 2,222 plant species and subspecies and quickly sold out. The second, supplemented edition with 2,618 plants was published after the war (1951). This was her greatest achievement as a botanist. She also had material prepared for the third edition, but did not live to see it published.

**WRITING RECIPES TO OVERCOME HUNGER**

“When we were hungry we told each other recipes, and it seemed to us that this helped against hunger,” are the introductory words in the transcript of recipes from fellow internees at the Ravensbrück concentration camp in a compilation put together by Angela Piskernik.

**Thinking about preparing food in fact often helped the prisoners survive, representing a withdrawal from the cruel reality, dreaming of home and a reason to survive.**

The recipes are accompanied by the names of their authors, and in places also sketches of the methods of preparation or of serving. Alongside the recipes there are also occasional notes on what food could be served alongside the cooked dish, or there

is the suggestion of an entire menu. The recipes written down in the camp are very varied in type and method of preparation, for these were dishes from homemakers of different nationalities. The method of noting them down also differed widely, with some being very precise, all the ingredients measured exactly and the procedures precisely listed, while others were very simple, requiring some previous knowledge of preparation to complete the missing details. Not everyone knows how to make a roast goose or goose liver today either, while mulled wine, polenta in one of five ways, various dumplings and rotolo, stews or homemade stock are things that anyone could still turn their hand to nowadays. The book also contains some unusual homemaking advice, such as how to refine rancid oil. This is followed by an inventory of letters and packages from relatives and friends that contained sugar, dried fruit, marmalade, sausages and other foodstuffs vital for the survival of the internees. The collection of recipes does not demonstrate Piskernik’s love of cooking, for she had none, but it represents an expression of defiance against the camp system, which cruelly suppressed any form of writing, while at the same time it is a souvenir and *aide-memoire*.



Botanical diversity of Triglav National Park. Photo: Aleš Zdešar

**GIVEN OF ANGELS**

This description of Piskernik derives from her first name, Angela, and her work was truly a form of *protection* in various fields. In addition to botany, she is known for her work with grammar, for she wrote several books on German and German verbs. She systematically collected ethnological material, stories of folk customs, habits, legends, fairy-tales, and also wrote short stories and articles, while before the war she had her own lectures on the radio twice a week.

Piskernik was an exceptionally spirited woman. In many photographs she is the only woman among her male professional and student colleagues, as well as in pictures taken during her leisure time.

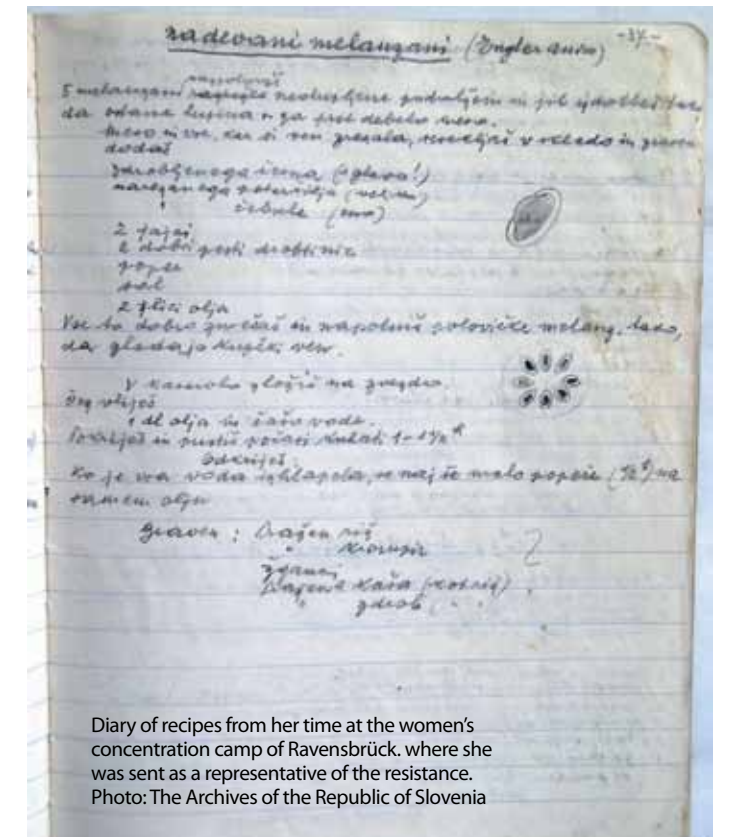
**Her strong-willed nature also came to the fore in political demonstrations. In the Koroška region she held such political and historical importance that she can be ranked alongside General Rudolf Maister (1874-1934), who championed the northern Slovenian region Styria.**

She was also the only woman in the Ljubljana intellectual circle in the 1930s called the Copata (*Slipper*) club. She was also a muse for intellectuals who gathered around the priest Fran Saleški Finžgar (1871-1962). Her rebellious nature was evident in the fact that she would frequent cafés without male accompaniment, which at the time was not acceptable, especially since Angela was an exceptionally attractive and eye-catching young woman, and had no lack of admirers. Nevertheless, she rejected men and was not troubled by the notion of it being proper and seemly to get married. She wrote about this sincerely in one of her feminist articles: “It seems to me that my concept of the natural calling of a woman differs widely from that of many other people. To be a married woman and bear children, in my eyes these are just one part of a woman’s natural calling; the third thing is what is most important for me: the culture of one’s own spirit. To sacrifice this and live off the crumbs of soul food that might happen to get mixed in with the ashes of my fireplace, would be hard for me. Hence you have already observed that I have not, for instance, sacrificed much for science or my profession,

since the second and third parts of a woman’s natural calling have remained with me. My current profession grants me the awareness that I am doing something necessary and useful; I am satisfied and happy.”

**SHE WAS A VITAL PART OF HER TIME**

Angela Piskernik was a person whose life helped to shape the character of the intellectual milieu of Slovenian thinkers in the dramatic first half of the 20th century. Her long-term romantic partner was the art historian and conservator France Stele (1886-1972), and she rubbed shoulders with General Rudolf Maister, the priest Izidor Cankar (1886-1958) and the literary historian France Kidrič (1880-1950). Until the end of her life she remained single and devoted to scientific and teaching work.



Diary of recipes from her time at the women’s concentration camp of Ravensbrück, where she was sent as a representative of the resistance. Photo: The Archives of the Republic of Slovenia

## LUIZA CROBATH PESJAK

## A lady, Ljubljana socialite and a literary woman writer

URŠKA PERENIČ



The portrait of Luiza Pesjak by Mihael Stroj, oil, canvas, 1850, 103.5 x 82 cm, private property. Photo: Personal archives

In Slovenian literary history, the bilingual German-Slovenian poet, writer and translator Luiza Pesjak (1828-1898) is especially renowned as the daughter of court and judicial attorney Blaž Crobath (1797-1848), who was a classmate to and, between 1834 and 1846, also the employer of the greatest Slovenian poet, France Prešeren (1800-1849). She is also known as *Prešeren's favourite* (e.g. Fran Erjavec). As a child, Prešeren held her in his arms and, later as his pupil, taught her foreign languages and poetics together with teacher historian Peter Petrucci (1799-1875).

Luiza Pesjak is remarkable in many respects and she can also be seen from a different perspective. She is one of the few Slovenian women who, in the middle of the 19th century, were writers and translators, taking part in cultural activities and actively participating in Ljubljana's public social life. Luiza Pesjak was a salon lady, a Ljubljana socialite and a multi-faceted literary creator.

### LUIZA CROBATH PESJAK AS A WOMAN, UPPER-CLASS SOCIALITE AND ARTIST

She wrote her first poems in German at the age of sixteen but from the mid-1860s on her poems were simultaneously published in both German and Slovenian in respective newspapers in Slovenia, Austria and Germany. Although she wrote poetry her entire life, she also wrote narratives and contributed to the legacy of Slovenian literature with the first edition of the diary novel entitled *Beatin dnevnik (Beata's diary)*, written in 1882, but not published until 1887 by the publishing house Janez Krajec in Novo mesto.

**She wrote the first Slovenian libretto for the operetta *Gorenjski slavček (The Nightingale of Gorenjska)* (1872), composed by Anton Foerster. She also enriched the Slovenian reading public with Slovenian translations of German comedies to be staged in national reading clubs.**

Her cultural involvement includes frequent visits of the German Theatre of the Guilds to Ljubljana about which, among other

things, she thoroughly reports in the first of the preserved diary (1844), which is a valuable source for theatrical history in Slovenia. Luiza Pesjak was a regular visitor to the Kazina Club, which in her youth was the centre of the town's social life and had brand new headquarters on Kongresni Trg (*Congress Square*). She was a fan of social dances, for which she always carefully groomed herself, dressed impeccably and neatly, and neatly arranged her hair. She was particularly keen on *quadrille*. Her appearance and lifestyle gave the impression of a true lady.

Her regular strolls around Ljubljana, from Rožnik to Tivoli or Golovec, on which she was accompanied by mixed-company peers from other noble and bourgeois families from Ljubljana, were a vital part of Luiza's social life. The topics discussed on the walks also included books and there, Luiza just had to have her say. Her favourite writer to talk about was the Swedish novelist Fredrika Bremer (1801-1865). She took her best-loved walks at evening through the *star shaped park* (Zvezda park in Ljubljana), located at a stone's throw from the Crobaths' house, which is now turned into the main post office building.

**Luiza's diligent reading of pieces from European and other literary traditions was, besides visiting the *House of Thalia* theatre and socialising with Ljubljana socialites, an extremely important activity in the period when she was growing up and educating herself.**



The portrait of Luiza Pesjak, to date unknown to the general public and attributed to author Jurij Šubic, oil, canvas, dated from the mid-1880s, 70 x 58 cm, private property. Photo: Personal archives

#### LUIZA SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF FINE ART

When we talk about crafting the image of a wealthy bourgeois and educated lady, we cannot ignore three portraits of Luiza Pesjak, one of which was, until the publication of this article, completely unknown to the general public.

**All portraits highlight the outward appearance of the portrayed lady – serious hairstyle, fancy dress made of expensive fabric, jewellery and decorations – which served as a signifier of a social status and femininity.**

The general public is most familiar with the portrait of Luiza Pesjak that was painted by Mihael Stroj (1803–1871) and has been kept at the National Gallery of Slovenia. For quite some time, the portrait was dated from around 1855 but not long ago a new date before 1848 appeared.

The predating of the writer's renowned portrait, in which Luiza wears a beautiful white dress with ruffles, blue flower garland, earrings, a breastpin and a Biedermeier bouquet in her waist, is probably connected with the finding of another portrait of her, also signed by Stroj.

It is a portrait painted in oil on canvas, dated 1850, on which Luiza is evidently a few years older than the *white Luiza*. The first to draw attention to this fact was the painting's owner, Marko Koršič from Ljubljana, who bought Stroj's painting dated 1850 at auction (he came to find out that the painting had been previously bought at the Dorotheum Auction House in Vienna). Koršič, who in the autumn of 2018 gave the painting to the National Gallery of Slovenia to be examined and documented for the drafting of a restoration plan (the painting is currently being restored elsewhere due to the damage on the lower edge caused by moisture), questioned two already accepted conclusions about the *white Luiza*. Firstly, he refers to the conclusion that the *white Luiza* wears a golden wedding ring (if the painting had been created before 1848, when Luiza had

Her reading list included Edward Bulwer-Lytton, James Fenimore Cooper, Joachim Heinrich Campe, Eugène Sue, August von Kotzebue, George Payne Rainsford James.

#### TRAVELLING AND KEEPING THE DIARY

Travelling and writing a diary (and later letters) play an important role in creating the image of a salon lady. It follows from her private diaries that Luiza in her youth, and mostly as a companion to her father, travelled a lot around Carniola (also making visits to the estate at Brdo pri Kranju, owned by Baron Zois, and to Snežnik Castle in the Notranjska region), around other Slovenian provinces, and Croatia (Karlovac, Zagreb). She also travelled later as a married woman, for example, when accompanying one of her daughters on a singing tour to Germany. Writing a diary and letters was a common practice among educated women in the bourgeois public sphere of the 19th century. The diary served as a medium through which Luiza narrated her life story and created her feminine identity or subjectivity.

not yet been married, then she is wearing at most an engagement ring) and, secondly, he refers to the (fashionable) single-eye glass attached to the golden bracelet, which she raised to her eyes if necessary. He draws attention to the fact that the lens is not a monocle but an eyeglass or a type of corrective lens, because Luiza allegedly had an eye defect, which the painting deftly hides.

The portrait of 1850 is without the eyeglass. The portrayed Luiza wears a stunning black dress with lace, expensive earrings, a necklace (jade or emerald), a bracelet with an embedded snake (aquamarine) and a hand fan, which also balances the composition of the image. Her hair is smoothly combed back and sleek, with braids on either side of the head that are joined at the nape of her neck.

If Romanticism could embellish inelegancies, the later Realism was not allowed to. The last or the third portrait, also owned by Marko Koršič, again reveals the reading accessory, namely the eyeglass that is hanging around Luiza's neck and resting on her chest. This painting is unknown to the general public. In the interview for this article, Koršič said that in the mid-1970s he bought the painting from the daughter of a pre-war gallery employee and collector in Ljubljana. He took it to restorer Kemal Selmanović, long-term associate of the National Gallery of Slovenia, for cleaning. The painting, which is not signed or dated, was attributed to Jurij Šubic and dated in the mid-1980s, when his portraits of Ivan Tavčar, Franja Tavčar and Ivan Hribar Junior were created. In comparison with the earlier portraits, Luiza is now a mature and full-figured lady. She is portrayed holding a red book, a kind of cultural symbol, her right-hand forefinger with a ring placed in a book as a bookmark.

#### NOBLE, DIGNIFIED AND RESPECTED

Fine art portraits of such an important female figure of the Slovenian literature, her opus of poems, narratives and translations, manuscript material that is kept by the Manuscript, rare and old print collection division at the National and University Library and that enables the reconstruction of her life and work, have definitely created an image of the bourgeois salon writer and cosmopolitan.

**Although initially Luiza Pesjak did not cross the borders of the Carniolan and Slovenian provinces (she visited the northern Italian cities, the Ger-**

**man provinces and Switzerland later with her daughter), she entered the world from the very beginning through books and theatre.**

Her actions and lifestyle reveal her tendency to create an image of a beautiful, well-kempt, educated, active and emancipated woman.



*White Luiza*  
The portrait of Luiza Pesjak by Mihael Stroj (1803–1871), oil, canvas, before 1848. Photo: National Gallery of Slovenia archives.

## CELEBRATION OF SLOVENIAN CULTURAL EXCELLENCE

# Winners of this year's Prešeren Awards and Prešeren Fund Awards

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ



Award recipients  
Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

The Prešeren Awards are Slovenia's highest accolade in the arts. This year's recipients are the costume and set designer Bjanka Adžić Ursulov, and director and screenwriter Filip Robar Dorin.

Both are creative professionals with extraordinary artistic achievements. In the opinion of the jury, their lifetime's work has permanently enriched the treasury of Slovenian culture.

### **BJANKA ADŽIĆ URSULOV: A LUCID READER OF DRAMATIC LITERATURE**

**Costume and set designer Bjanka Adžić Ursulov – an extraordinarily articulate interpreter of literature – has the rare gift of knowing how to decode in dramatic texts the invisible web of theatrical meaning and to channel that in an original way into costumes, according to the citation for her award.**

In her own words she is delighted and proud to have been singled out by the board of the Prešeren Fund for the country's highest award in the arts, thereby placing her alongside the greatest names in her profession. She is honored to be placed next to the biggest masters in this profession, such as Mia Jarc, Maria Kobi and Alenka Bartl. Until now, the latter was the only costume designer to have won the Prešeren Prize. Until then, costume designers hadn't even been mentioned in the list of artists at the end of films. "I am extremely proud to have received this award, which is at the same time an award for the entire profession, for the theatre, the workshops and all the people involved in the flow of staging a production. For me personally, and for my profession, the Prešeren Award is an unimaginable achievement. I didn't even imagine in my dreams that I would receive such a prestigious prize. I am very grateful for it."

### **A LUCID READER OF DRAMATIC LITERATURE**

The citation for the Award states that Bjanka Adžić Ursulov, an academic painter by original, is very familiar with historical styles and can easily play with them. "She adds to period costumes a modern, original signature to complement the casual details and bold tailoring that always remain within the stylistic frame. On the other hand she is also drawn to play inventively with materials. Her costumes are made of paper, metal, rubber, polyurethane, feathers and other incredible materials, as well as the finest silks, velour and gabardine. The most important facet of her costume design is that it always serves the psychology of the characters and events on stage. It never promotes itself outside the conceptual framework of the production." Bjanka Adžić Ursulov is also very active as a set designer, and regarded as a top ambassador of Slovenian theatre abroad. As well as designing costumes for more than 170 theatre productions and multiple films, she has also been credited with the set design for around 40 productions.

### **BEYOND THE TRADITIONAL LIMITATIONS OF PERIOD COSTUMES**

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#### A FRIEND OF SLOVENIAN FILM AND THEATRE

Since 1982 Bjanka Adžić Ursulov has been a presence in Slovenian film-making, and since 1985 in Slovenian stage productions. Her costume designs for theatre and opera productions have linked

her most often with the directors Ljubiša Ristić, Dušan Jovanović and Mateja Koležnik, and in recent years also to Matjaž Zupančič and Janusz Kica. She also made notable contributions to the films *Eva*, *Butnskala* and *Hudodelci*.

She has received numerous awards for her work. In 1997 she received the Prešeren Fund Award for achievements in theatre costume design, and also received a Vesna Prize for costume design in the anthology film *Neke druge zgodbe* (*Some Other Stories*, directed by Ivona Juka, Ana Maria Rossi, Ines Tanović, Marija Džidževa and Hanna Slak, 2010). In 1994 the respected German magazine *Theaterheute* ranked her among the ten best



Bjanka Adžić Ursulov  
Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

such designers in Europe. At the Nicosia International Film Festival in Cyprus, she received a Gold Aphrodite for her costume design for the Slovenian film *Prehod* (*Transition*, 2008) directed by Boris Palčič.

#### THE PROCESS OF CREATING COSTUMES, FROM START TO FIRST PERFORMANCE

*"The process varies in length. Abroad it is generally the case that you need to submit sketches a year or even two before the first night, or half a year in advance at the latest. The first thing I do is read the text, or the libretto for an opera or ballet. Then I talk to the director about the text and the cast, since I always tailor the costume to the person. I don't just deal with a character in a production, I focus on the actor playing a specific role. Then I draw the first sketches and show them to the director. When we are in agreement, I draw the final sketches, then comes matching this with the budget. In the workshops, too, there are plenty of things to coordinate, and sometimes this can lead to quite heated situations. Apart from a knowledge of fashion from earlier periods, a costume designer needs a lot of other skills."*

*"For example," she adds, "you need exceptional breadth, as a costume designer needs to know literature, drama, general history and also the history of music, dance, classical and modern opera, musicals and new media. Sometimes you also get involved in areas that are not closely tied to the arts, such as quantum physics or philosophy. Additional knowledge is always welcome, and can also offer inspiration."* As the citation for her Prešeren Award noted, she often reimagines period styles. *"I really love to play around with them, since I want the production to have its own time. As a student I focused a lot on stylisation. One assignment I had was the stylisation of horse-riding attire from the early 19th century, so we could adapt it for opera, ballet, modern dance and evening wear for the theatre. And even then I learnt about the idea interplay and combinations. The costume then has the effect of being the costume of a certain style, but the tailoring is completely different. Mainly I want to achieve a sense timelessness, which is in fact the hardest thing, and I also prize minimalism."*

Bjanka Adžić Ursulov was born in 1950 in Nikšić, Montenegro. In 1978 she graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Belgrade. During her career she has collaborated with all the major the-

atres in the former Yugoslavia and with numerous others in Italy, France, Austria, the UK and Germany.

#### FILIP ROBAR DORIN: DIRECTOR AND SCREENWRITER, WRITER AND TEACHER

The citation for Filip Robar Dorin's Prešeren Award states: *"He is a committed creative professional who reveals the full complexity of the material in hand, and in doing so does not hide his own viewpoint. His distinguishing feature is the feature-length documentary format, which presents a synthesis of the unknown and imaginary that seeks to extract the truth. In his work this pioneer of independent film production has supported young, not yet established, directors, and been committed to the development of screenwriting while also promoting the development of creative documentary film."*

As a director of the Slovenian Film Fund he also mapped out numerous cultural and political guidelines for the development of film production in the country.

**As a screenwriter and director, Robar Dorin has been a pioneer in introducing the format of documentary and documentary feature films, in which the film creator becomes an active participant in the material being presented.**

He is a truly ground-breaking filmmaker, a researcher and interpreter dedicated to an exploration of his entirely singular cinematic expression, but also of neglected social groups, minorities and the hidden dimensions of important movements and personalities in Slovenian culture.

#### THE FOUNDER OF PRODUCTION HOUSE FILMSKE ALTERNATIVE

In the 1980s Robar Dorin founded Filmske alternative (*Film Alternatives*), one of the first independent production houses in what was then Yugoslavia, and later known as Filmal Pro. As stated in the citation, the Filmske alternative production company *heralded the development of strong independent Slovenian film production.*

He also actively shaped the fate of Slovenian film from 1998 to 2002, when he was director of the Slovenian Film Fund. In this role he mapped out numerous cultural and political guidelines that are important for the development of film production. As the citation also notes, he made an indispensable contribution in particular through his support for young, emerging directors, through the systematic production of debut films, drawing attention to the need to support the development and refinement of screenplays and show support for creative documentary films.

Filip Robar Dorin is credited with at least 30 documentary and feature films, has crafted 15 portraits of Slovenian poets and writers, musicians and painters, and ten full-length feature and documentary films. He brought seasoned actors together with strong non-professional actors, and enriched the feature film format with documentary approaches.

His film *Veter v mreži* (*The Windhunter*, 1989) earned him a Prešeren Fund Award in 1990. He won widespread acknowledgement for his film trilogy *Opre Roma*, which comprises the films *Opre Roma* from 1983, *Opre Roma II - Aven čavora* or *Come, Children* from 2003, and *Opre Roma III - Pot v gaj* (*Path to the Grove*) from 2011.

*"His exploration of cinematic expression is an important step in Slovenian film creativity, while being at the same time one of the more interesting chapters in the world history of film: the active creator, the common field of expression of the creator and of the subject of treatment in documentaries and feature documentary format, where the boundaries between reality and its interpretation are erased, have become widespread and important creative approaches in modern film."*

#### THE METOD BADJURA PRIZE AND CELEBRATED AT PULA ARENA

Robar Dorin has received numerous awards for his work, both in Slovenia and abroad. Alongside the Prešeren Fund Award, in 2010 he received the Metod Badjura Prize for lifetime achievement in film creativity and culture, and the France Štiglic Prize for the same in film and television directing. Between 1985 and 1990 he received three Golden Arenas at the Pula Film Festival, and his awards also include top prizes at festivals in Belgrade (1983) and Mannheim (1985). Mention should also be made of the following short and medium-length documentary and feature films: *Posebna šola* (*Special School*, 1972), *Xenia na gostovanju* (*Xenia*

*on Tour*, 1975), *Si videl* (*You Saw*, 1977), *Pogled stvari* (*Perspective Of Things*, 1978), *Ristanc* (*Hopscotch*, 1981), *Kmetijskega proizvajalca Mikolaša prvi dopust* (*First Holiday of Agricultural Producer Mikolaš*, 1984), *Novomeška pomlad* (*Novo Mesto Spring*, 1988), *Ljudnica* (1989), *Nebo nad Ženavljami ali dan, ko nam je Evropa padla na glavo* (*The Sky above Ženavlje, or the Day Europe Fell on our Heads*, 1994), *Alternativna terapevtska skupnost* (*Alternative Therapy Group*, 1996), *Bogdan Borčič* (2009), *Zmago Jeraj* (2010) and *Merimase* (2010). He has also shot several film portraits of Slovenian poets, writers, musicians and painters.

*"You had to know how to do everything, and only later did you go into a specialisation there,"* Robar Dorin says of his time studying in Chicago, where he shaped his specific cinematic view of the world and people, especially people in hardship, a view which left a mark on his rich body of work.

#### A STUDENT WHO OFFERED A MIRROR TO AMERICANS

For his diploma at Columbia College he had to make two films, a documentary and a feature film. He shot the 80-minute documentary *Skid Row* about life in a hidden-away part of Chicago inhabited by poor people on the margins of society – the destitute people whom global capitalism had cast aside: the homeless, winos, prostitutes and vagrants. He approached the story in an analytical way, with exceptional sensitivity. He drew the city's attention to its shame, which its inhabitants and especially the authorities in Chicago did not want to see.

*"Later on something shifted there, and maybe my film even contributed to that. Most probably some better mayor, more aware of humanity, got into power,"* the director recalls in telling the story of his first film.

He shot his second in northern Chicago, where members of America's middle and upper classes lived in a sterile suburb in large houses surrounded by parks. He made us of various women in the neighbourhood ladies who had an interest in acting, some of whom had even performed in amateur theatre. He filmed them doing such things as browsing for baby clothes in stores and picking out jewellery, in this way drawing attention to the sharp difference between two entirely opposite worlds in the same city.

Filip Robar Dorin, born 8 September 1940 in Bor, Serbia, graduated in Ljubljana in philosophy and comparative literature, then

in screenwriting, directing, camera operation and editing at Columbia College in Chicago. He taught film at a private institute in Switzerland and at the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television (AGRFT) in Ljubljana.

#### PREŠEREN FUND AWARDS

This year Prešeren Fund Awards were presented to the poet Jure Jakob, conductor Martina Batič, composer Tomaž Svete, actress Maruša Majer, animator Dušan Kastelic, and the architects Aljoša Dekleva and Tina Gregorič Dekleva.

Jure Jakob received the Prešeren Fund Award for his fifth poetry anthology for adults, *Lakota* (*Hunger*, LUD Literatura), choir conductor Martina Batič for her performance achievements in the past three years, composer Tomaž Svete for his *Koncert za dve violini in godala* (*Concerto for Two Violins and Strings*) and the operas *Ada* and *Antigona*, the actress Maruša Majer for her role in the film *Ivan* directed by Janez Burger and for several other roles created for her in the past three years, the creator of animated films Dušan Kastelic for his short film *Celica* (*Cell*), and the architects Aljoša Dekleva and Tina Gregorič Dekleva from the Dekleva Gregorič architecture office for their achievements over the past three years.



Filip Robar Dorin  
Photo: Rasto BožičSTA

## BRIDGE IN GDAŃSK DESIGNED BY SLOVENIANS A BIG SUCCESS

# An almost invisible bridge

GORAZD HUMAR  
PHOTO: PONTING ARCHIVES



Bridge in Gdansk

A new drawbridge for pedestrians and cyclists in the centre of Gdańsk, Poland, officially opened in June 2017. The city thus acquired a much needed connection between the old centre and Ołowianka Island in the Motława River, and Slovenian engineers won a new award and an exclusive reference for their work.

As many as 68 of the best structural engineering companies and bridge builders around the world were invited to participate in the design competition for a new footbridge in Gdańsk. The contract was awarded to a group of Slovenian engineers headed by an experienced structural designer, Dr Viktor Markelj, from the Maribor-based company Ponting.

### A SIMPLE, ELEGANT, REASONABLY PRICED AND TECHNICALLY REFINED STRUCTURE

The Slovenian project was selected for its modern bridge structure that is simple, elegant, reasonably priced and technically elaborate. These outstanding features aroused the interest of people in Gdańsk and elsewhere in Poland.

The city authorities paid a lot of attention to preparations for the construction.

**A bridge connecting the old city centre with Ołowianka Island was long overdue, and would span the river in a sensitive urban and unique architectural ambience.**

The investor, the Municipality of Gdańsk, was looking for a minimalist structure, as a more distinctive shape would visually encroach upon the surrounding historic architecture. In other words, the city authorities envisioned an almost invisible yet fully functional bridge. The footbridge crosses a river channel that is part of a busy navigation route. To meet the city's request, the engineers decided to design a drawbridge.

### A COMPLEX STRUCTURE CONNECTED BY NUMEROUS MECHANICAL MECHANISMS

Drawbridges like this one in Gdańsk are above all complex structures connected by many mechanical mechanisms. The competition dossier included the city's request that the bridge be lifted in just two minutes.

**This means that, within just 120 seconds, it must be lowered from its nearly vertical position to a horizontal one for pedestrians and cyclists to cross.**

The main bridge structure, spanning 40 metres and weighing 90 tonnes, is an extremely slim and elegant steel girder on rotating bearings with a hydraulic opening and closing mechanism. Two large hydraulic cylinders, each with a thrust of 300 tonnes and stroke of 4.5 metres, are used to pull the bridge up. The entire machinery, including the electro-hydraulic lifting mechanism, is built

into the bridge axis below the water surface, and is therefore invisible. The only visible part is the control building on top of the foundation cassion. The electro-hydraulic equipment used is the result of Slovenian engineering expertise.

### ONE OF THE BIGGEST ATTRACTIONS IN GDAŃSK

Despite the harsh winter weather in the Baltics, the bridge's construction took only 13 months and was just as interesting as the planning phase. The city installed cameras at the construction site, enabling the engineers in Maribor to monitor the construction process by webcam. By live-streaming construction, the city also wanted to draw the attention of the general public and tourists to the bridge and other sights in Gdańsk. Even now you can watch the bridge live on webcams.

Soon after its opening, the bridge became a popular tourist attraction in the city, which proves that the right decision was made. As the number of pedestrians and cyclists crossing the bridge soon became significantly higher than expected in both directions, the

city authorities had to change the opening intervals. During the navigation season it operates in 30-minute intervals except, during the night when it is pulled up on request. The bridge thus operates 24 hours a day. The lifting mechanism is controlled by teams working three shifts. In its first year of operation the bridge was raised around 3,000 times without a single malfunction.

### AMONG THE CITY'S MOST SUCCESSFUL INVESTMENTS

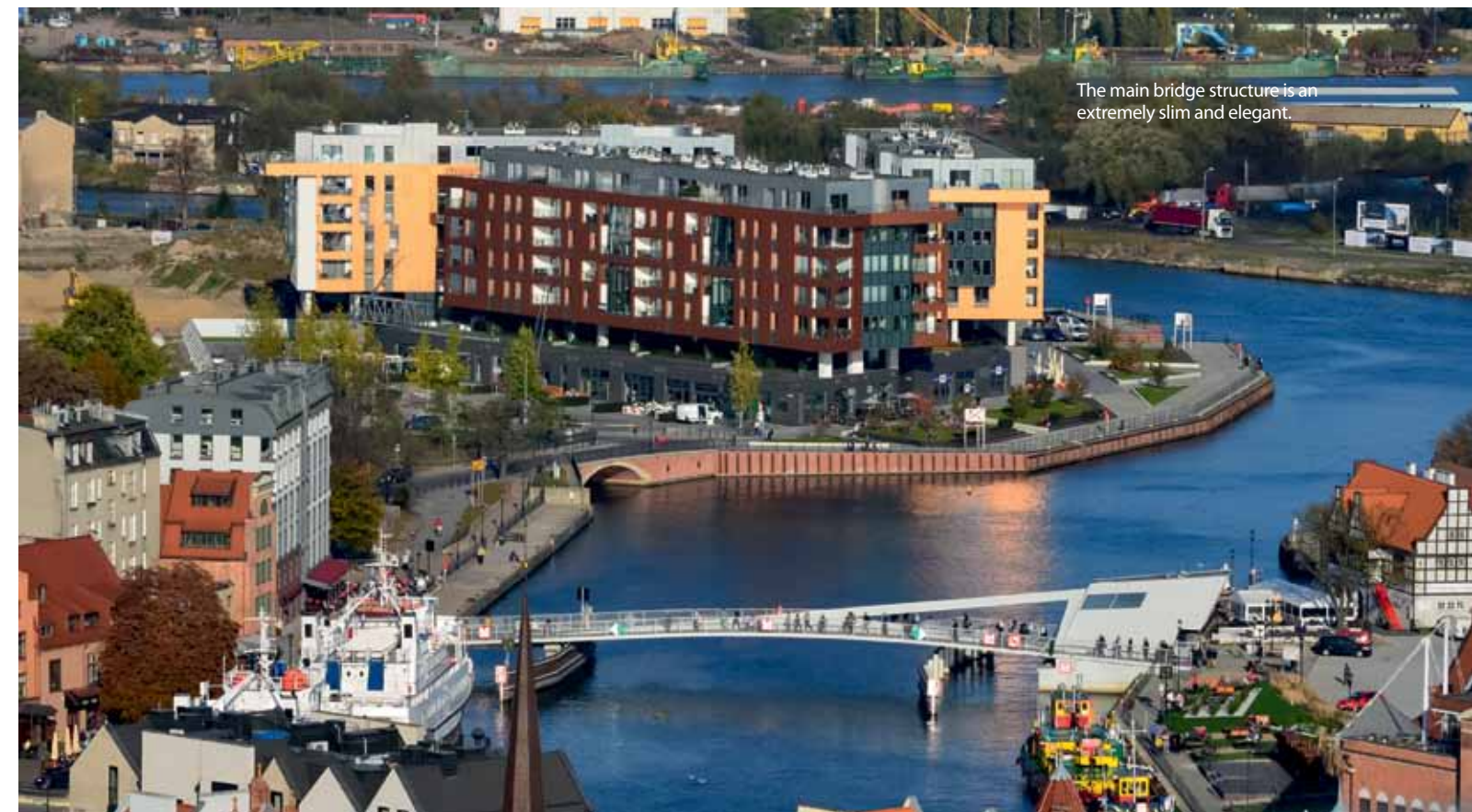
The Municipality of Gdańsk was satisfied with the proposed solution for the bridge, proclaiming it one of the five most successful investments in Gdańsk in the period 2016-2017. The city paid only three million euros for the bridge, making it, according to the authorities, the most cost-effective investment in the city. The engineering team from Ponting received an award for this project in October 2018. The rich programme at the award ceremony in Gdańsk included a performance by opera singers. At the event the Polish people demonstrated their respect for the work of Slovenian engineers on what is now one of the main attractions in Gdańsk.

**Moreover, the Polish Ministry of Investment and Economic Development Jerzy Kwieciński presented them with an award for a successfully implemented project, as every year the Ministry awards outstanding achievements in architecture and construction.**

The group of engineers from Maribor, specialising in bridges, works for Ponting Consulting Engineers, a company with more than 20 years of experience and several internationally acclaimed bridge projects. The Ada bridge over the Sava River in Belgrade, a composite cable-stayed bridge that boasts the world record in size in its category (one pylon and a span of 376 metres), and the bridge connecting the Croatian mainland with the Pelješac Peninsula (2,450 metres long), to mention but two.



The winners



The main bridge structure is an extremely slim and elegant.

## WITCHES AND CRONES, ALONG WITH KURENTS, AT HOME IN SLOVENIA

# Behind the veil of women's Carnival figures

TANJA GLOGOVČAN



Gypsy women  
Photo: Gregor Mlakar/STA

Slovenian costumed figures are dominated by male characters, and the best known is definitely the *kurent*. In contrast, there are few women's characters or costumed figures, and those that exist are usually portrayed by men.

Yet despite the predominantly male Carnival processions, Slovenia's history of masked figures includes female characters, which are quite fascinating and appear in all regions of the country. The biggest of these is the Cerknica witch *Uršula*, while the oldest is probably *Pehtra*, who is depicted in the cult children's film *Srečno, Kekec!* (*Mountain of Fear*), the story of the brave young boy *Kekec*, from 1963.

### WILD PEHTRA

She appeared where the Bavarian and Slavic lands meet in the Eastern Alps, somewhere on the border of Carantania in the 8th century. This is a female demon, a costumed figure especially typical of western Slovenia (the Soča Valley and Slovenian Carinthia, the upper Sava Valley, the Karavanke mountains to Tržič and in part of the Gorenjska region). The name *Pehtra* also appears in the versions *Pehta* or *Pehtrababa*, along with certain other forms. She is dressed in a sheet and is holding a club. It is usually young men who dress up as her, ringing large bells.

In the film *Srečno, Kekec!*, *Pehta* is some kind of wild woman who knows all about healing plants and how to make magic potions, including one to heal blindness. The film's brave hero, a young boy called *Kekec*, obtains this potion from *Pehta* after overcoming her initial distrust and unfriendliness, and cures his friend *Mojca* so she is no longer blind.

### GRANNY CARRIES GRANDPA

This Carnival figure originated in Haloze, and started appearing more frequently in the Slovenian regions after 1950.

Few people know that this ancient Carnival character portrays an old woman and old man who return as spirits from the next world

and bring to the good your house, while taking away the bad.

**A more comical version of the story tells how Haloze women used to put their husbands in baskets since they were incapable of making their way home after working in the vineyards.**

The costume figure is created so that the man steps into a basket without a bottom. Affixed to the front of the basket is the upper part of an old woman created as a mannequin (the head is usually made of stockings with a face and scarf attached, the torso being an old stuffed cardigan with a large bosom). The man then wears a long dress, and in this way it appears that *granny carries grandpa*. The man also smears soot on his face or puts a mask on, along with an old hat and some tattered clothes, resting his arms on the back of the basket.

The man carries an old umbrella, and the woman a basket. It was once the custom for them to walk from house to house, dancing and singing and speaking in a strange voice. They would receive food and drink as a gift, be teased by children, and the old man would shoo them away with his umbrella.

### THE OLD MAN AND OLD WOMAN

These two derive from a group of ancient figures, they are a couple and always walk together in processions. The old man is the head of a *laufar* family. He is dressed in old Cerkno peasant holiday clothes. He wears a wide-brimmed hat, and walks supported by a cane. He has the expression of a kindly old man who still has all



Granny carries grandpa  
Photo: Marko Cenčič/STA

his powers. He is the only *laufar* who can speak. On the morning of Carnival Shrove Tuesday, when he digs up the club with which he will end the Pust Carnival, he no longer cares about the old woman, but just watches out for Pust. The old woman is thus lonely, worried and passive. Just one tooth projects from her mouth. She carries a birch broom, sweeping at the head of the procession in front of Pust, in order to sweep away winter and all the transgressions it represents.

#### CRONE'S MILL

Among the female characters or female-associated Pust scenes is Babji mlin (*Crone's Mill*). Most commonly this scene appears on painted beehive panels depicting a devil carrying an old and ugly woman into a mill, then brining out of it a young and beautiful woman.

In Carnival processions this feature first appeared around 1850 in the processions of Cologne, and some time later in the Slovenian lands. To begin with it was typical mainly of the Dobro Polje costumed characters, although it also appeared elsewhere in Slovenia. In the years leading up to the First World War, this Carnival scene was set up on a sleigh or cart. On this was placed a container with two large openings.

**On top of it sat a costumed figure inviting old women among the crowd to come into the mill. If they declined, the other costumed crones in the processions went in, then emerging rejuvenated.**

On the side was a typical mill winch that was turned by one of the figures. The cart (or sleigh) was also pulled by the figures.

#### MARJETICA HOLDS THE IVY MAN'S HAND

She appears as an escort for the Ta bršljanov (*The Ivy man*). Both are part of the *laufarija* tradition from the Cerknica area. *The Ivy Man* got his name from the Slovenian word for *bršljan* (ivy), from which his clothes are made. He has a happy and smiling face and represents the complete opposite to Pust, as well as spring and all the good that comes with it. He carries an ivy branch in his hands. Each year his costume is made from scratch, and it requires from 8,000 to 10,000 ivy leaves. He is accompanied by Marjetica, who joined the *laufar* characters in 1968. Her green outfit is strewn with daisies (the meaning of her name in Slovenian). Both figures represent spring.

#### URŠULA THE WITCH

This figure from the Cerknica area appears in the writings of polymath Janez Vajkard Valvasor (1641-1693). He wrote: "At Slivnica there is a hole that makes a storm. At its peak witches, sorceresses and hags hold their dances and meetings. They appear as tiny flying lights. This entire region is very well stocked with witches. For this reason they are frequently set on fire and many burned, and occasionally more witches are brought there to the stake than were put on wood stacks throughout the land since time immemorial and reduced to ashes. For this reason they also carefully conceal themselves. This infestation has not yet been entirely stamped out, and beneath the huge mound of ash are the remnants of some sparks that could ignite this or that stack."



Marjetica and the Ivy man  
Photo: Marko Cenčič/STA

***Uršula the Witch* is now a kind of queen of the Shrovetide Carnival in Cerknica. She is the first large-scale figure in Slovenia.**

She was designed by painter Milan Rot, and first appeared in 1978. She measures 12 metres in length and is almost four metres high.

Men have never been of any particular interest to *Uršula*. And truth be told, men themselves have not exactly flocked around her, with her hunchback and hooked nose making her a not especially desirable witch. *Uršula* does however have a first-born child, *Liza*, who is much more alluring to men, who also interest her. In contrast to *Uršula* on her broom, *Liza* rides a pig.

#### **MAY TOMORROW BRING ANOTHER SMILE TO YOUR FACE**

In addition to the figures described above, Carnival processions also include the *Drunk Woman*, the *Gypsy Woman* and a few other elegant ladies. In Slovenia the Carnival is indeed a living thing. Although some characters, including female ones, are constant features, the costumed figures are always being joined by new ones. In the Cerkno area there is *Butale*, home to the *Butalci* people, who are at odds with good sense, and each year some new *Butalec* or witch is born. And in Štajerska there are some little *kurenti*. Certainly there are Slovenian women of a certain age who would wish for a *Crone's Mill* or some young *Ivy Man*.

**All of this is possible, but the most important thing is good cheer, doughnuts full of jam and crisp pastries. Here's to the joyful characters and Carnivals!**

And let there be much laughter throughout the year. Even though we may be bewitched or not wish to understand everything, as is the custom among the *Butalci*.

Source: *Slovenske ljudske maske*, Boris Kuhar; *Maske in maskiranje v Sloveniji in zamejstvu*, Jurij Fikfak and Aleš Gačnik



Although costumed figures are most commonly mentioned in connection with Pust, the Shrovetide Carnival, dressing up is a Slovenian custom throughout the year; from Advent (*St Nicholas*) to the Christmas and New Year period (*The Magi*, *Pehtrababa*), St George's Day (*Green George*), midsummer bonfires, certain kinds of work (*corn husking*, *harvesting*, *slaughtering*), weddings (*wedding announcer*, *false bride*) and on certain special occasions (*college matriculation*, *stag nights*).



THE PHOTOGRAPHIC PERFECTION OF MATJAŽ KRIVIC

## Slovenian photography among the best in the world

ANA KRAŠEVEC  
PHOTO: MATJAŽ KRIVIC

Matjaž Krivic receives the prestigious LensCulture Visual Storytelling Award 2019, Travel Photographer of the Year Award 2018 and Malta International Photography Award 2018.

The Travel Photographer of the Year (TPOTY) competition has been held since 2003. Last year more than 20,000 photos were submitted by photographers from 142 countries. With images mainly portraying everyday life in Africa, the Middle East and the Far East, the Slovenian photographer Matjaž Krivic won in the Travel Portfolio category. The British newspaper *The Guardian* published on its website three of the photographer's shots: a pilgrim in front of the Golden Temple, Indian boys training in a traditional discipline, and mist over the Yemeni village of Shugruf in the Haraz mountains. The prize-winning photographs will also be on display in the UK, USA and United Arab Emirates. TPOTY is not Krivic's only major prize in recent months.

**For his story *Lithium Road*, which he produced with his friend and journalist Boštjan Videmšek, he won first prize in the Malta International Photography Award and second prize in the Istanbul Photo Awards, and in February this year it won him first prize in the Documentary Storytelling Award category in the highly respected LensCulture competition.**

Matjaž Krivic is a documentary photographer who has been capturing stories of people and places for decades. He is particularly well known for photographs of poverty-stricken yet culturally rich parts of the world and the people who live there. He is the recipient of numerous prestigious prizes at home and abroad, and

in addition to those mentioned earlier we should note his Photographer of the Year prize from Britain's Royal Geographical Society for 2002 and 2003, while in 2016 he won a prize in one of the categories for the renowned World Press Photo competition, and in 2010 at the TPOTY he also won first prize in the category Amazing Places. First and foremost, Krivic says himself that such competitions are his passion, while at the same time they create an opportunity for the editors of major international publications to notice his work.

### EXTRAORDINARY TALENT AND ABUNDANT ENTHUSIASM

His photos of moments in the lives of people from other continents are in fact so expressive that they do not require any additional commentary.

**His photographs bear all the characteristics of good photography and when one observes his intense, message-laden images of ordinary, yet extraordinary, individuals, it is hard to believe that Krivic has never formally studied photography.**

Instead, he has been immersed in exploring the world since he was very young. In order to travel as much as possible, he worked as a tour guide when he was a student. He spent all his earned money for travel and photo equipment, although at that time photography was still just his hobby. He reached a turning point in 1998, when he went on a one-year journey overland to India.

He took a hundred rolls of film and brought back a lot of material, which resulted in a very successful exhibition and multimedia project after his return. It was then that he ultimately decided to pursue photography as a profession.

Although photography has long since grown from his hobby to his work, Krivic says that it has never stopped being his greatest passion and an inexhaustible source of enjoyment. He has visited countless places and got to know many cultures. He always seeks out what is unknown and not yet told. His most far-reaching and unique work is his stories, which have left an indelible mark on him. One such story is a series of panoramic photographs of *Earth temples*, which took him from Morocco via Tibet and all

the way to Chile. In these places he created soul-stirring photo stories which he later compiled into an international art project, *Urbanistan*.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF TRUST

Such unique photographs of people can only be created on the basis of trust. Krivic says that mutual respect is very important, therefore he offers sincere respect to everyone he encounters. He often stays in touch with the people he photographs, revisiting the same locations and bringing people prints of photos with their images. He likes working in difficult conditions because they challenge him.



Winning photo at 2016 World Press Photo contest (from the story »Digging the Future«): Arzuma Tindano leads an eight-member crew of miners in Djuga, an artisanal mine in north-eastern Burkina Faso. He takes a smoke break before going back into the pit. Miners in Bani face harsh conditions and exposure to toxic chemicals and heavy metals.

**In Burkina Faso he took an iconic photograph of a miner lighting a cigarette, an image that won him second prize in the People category in the famous World Press Photo competition.**

The photograph is a moment captured from the days he spent with miners in awful conditions, and he titled it *Digging the Future*. An outstanding photograph involves a lot of knowledge, a lot of waiting for the right moment, and also a bit of luck. Krivic himself believes that a good portrait photograph is one that tells a story.

Even when you turn your eyes away from the photo, you still hear the story of that individual.

#### RETURNING TO PEOPLE

Krivic remains friends with many of his 'models'. Apart from the fact that he often brings or sends them prints of photos, he also helps them in other ways. He says that many people in underdeveloped countries simply cannot grasp the concept of a *prize-winning photo* or a *photo competition*, and have trouble imagining that some photos can also earn a cash prize. He frequently uses money from the sale of his photographs (or, for instance, postcards) to help the people he meets in his work and who live in



Winning photo at TPOTY 2018: A portrait of Onno, a teenage girl from the Arbore tribe in the Omo Valley in Ethiopia. Like other women of the Arbore tribe, Onno enjoys decorating herself with hundreds of beads, which she believes makes her more attractive. Her hair is cut short, which is a symbol of virginity. Soon Onno will marry and as part of the wedding process she will have to be circumcised. This process will be done by her mother and like all Arbore women she will have to follow the tradition.

what for us are unimaginable circumstances. As an example, he describes a school for orphans in the town of Dege in eastern Tibet, for which a few years ago he gathered more than €3,000 at the *Earth Temples* exhibition.

#### LITHIUM - THE DRIVING FORCE OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

The original concept on which this remarkable photo story is based was documenting how various raw materials are obtained for smartphones, including gold, cobalt and coltan. On completing a story on African gold diggers, Krivic wanted to continue in the same direction. In 2016 he was considering a trip to Bolivia, when during a photo festival in the French town of Arles he was

called by the representative of a German agency offering him work. He was able to choose two countries from the list of places from which they needed photographs – and one of them was Bolivia. The very next week he travelled to Colombia and then on to Bolivia, completed the assigned work, and then in ten days he took the first shots for his story on lithium. Back home he showed them to his friend, the journalist Boštjan Videmšek, and a few months later the two returned together to Bolivia. Then followed the first publications, the first prizes to one and then another, and they built up the story in China, where they were sent by *Le Figaro*, and then in the USA and Norway. They are now gradually bringing it to a conclusion, but they say that they will continue the work they have already charted out in a similar direction.

Winning photo at TPOTY 2018: Torn shoes belonging to a Fula boy in Diafarabe in Mali, where Fulani are known for their herds of cows. When they met, the boy was carrying shoes in his hands and Krivic realised they were so clapped-out he couldn't use them anymore. However, travelling prepared makes a big difference and with a sewing needle that he always carries with him on his travels and some dental floss, they patched them up so the shepherd could follow his herd.



Enormous lithium evaporation pools near the Llipi production plant in Bolivia. Brine is pumped in to these large evaporation pools, where it is left to evaporate for many months. It is then processed at a lithium process plant nearby.

TPOTY described Matjaž Krivic as *"a documentary photographer capturing stories of people and places. For 25 years he has covered the face of the Earth in his intense, personal and aesthetically moving style, one that has won him several prestigious awards, including World Press Photo in 2016. He has portrayed poor parts of the world characterised by traditions, social unrest and religious devotion. His photographs sensitively reflect the images of the marginal world – the voices of the neglected. Because of the artist's directness and respect for individuals, the people photographed are spontaneous, natural and open. Their soul is captured and the viewer is encouraged to observe and think."*

SLOVENIA UNIQUE EXPERIENCES

## Slovenia brings inspiring experiences to the fore

MIŠA NOVAK  
PHOTO: STB ARCHIVES



Fonda Fish Garden

To achieve the vision of Slovenia as a green boutique destination for five-star experiences – which is also a strictly binding promise – the Slovenian Tourist Board (STB) has set up a national development and marketing platform defining clear criteria for five-star experiences and guidelines for developing them.

By including a product in the carefully selected group of five-star experiences, the STB will give the product provider marketing support in foreign markets under the Slovenia Unique Experiences brand. The group includes unique and authentic premium-quality that support the story of a green boutique Slovenia and the I feel Slovenia brand.

### THE NEW LANGUAGE OF LUXURY

Trends in various tourist markets indicate that today travellers value authentic experiences that give them an opportunity to connect with the place they are visiting on many levels – physical, emotional, experiential, spiritual, intellectual and social.

**They want special moments that create strong emotional connections and memorable experiences that are anything but generic products.**

They should be personalised and not standardised, unique and not generic, managed but with a sense of individuality, exclusive but accessible, transparent but including elements of surprise, and respecting tradition but taking into account modern consumers' needs.

In line with the new language of luxury, such experiences address demanding, open and curious visitors, who do not want to see only the most high-profile sights and hurry from one attraction to the next, but who seek a genuine connection with the local community and interesting stories that touch the heart, inspire and create memories for life. In short, a visitor that Slovenia has also defined in its vision.

This is also the main idea and approach in the new communication platform and refreshed creative solution to be launched by the STB in March 2019 on foreign markets under the brand I feel Slovenia and the campaign slogan My way, which highlights experiences and invites everyone to *feel Slovenia* in their own way.

#### THE FIRST NINE FIVE-STAR EXPERIENCES ALREADY IN THE CURATED COLLECTION

The first nine five-star experiences of the new Slovenia Unique Experiences brand are already known. An expert committee selected them from among the seventeen submissions in response to the first call for applications for creating five-star experiences published last year by the STB. The call is open throughout the year, with spring and autumn deadlines for assessment.

The applicants may be accommodation providers or tourist, sports and DMC agencies and other providers that ensure the or-

ganisation or implementation of an experience. The product must be designed as a product for sale, guided in at least one foreign language, already supplied by the applicant (and thus a tried and tested product) and presented with the applicant's key marketing tools. The application must be supported by high quality photos. In order to be awarded the Slovenia Unique Experiences label, a product must fulfil forty criteria classified into ten thematic groups.

**When applying, the provider must sign a declaration that as a future member of the Slovenia Unique Experiences group it is ready to meet the quality requirements and ensure that the product is supplied in appropriate manner.**



#### SLOVENIA UNIQUE EXPERIENCES

Recommended by Slovenian Tourist Board



The vintage gourmet tour

#### WHAT IS A FIVE-STAR EXPERIENCE LIKE?

- 1. LOCAL**  
Based on local identity, it is faithful to nature, culture and people in the area, and it supports the brand and destination's identity through a story.
- 2. AUTHENTIC**  
It offers a genuine, original experience, and does not copy or take these from others.
- 3. UNIQUE**  
It has an element of individuality and adds value to the unique selling opportunities of the provider or destination.
- 4. EXPERIENTIAL**  
It has a strong experiential note, and it addresses visitors at the emotional and experiential levels.
- 5. GREEN**  
It ensures all the basic elements of sustainable operation.
- 6. BOUTIQUE CHARACTER**  
It offers visitors a feeling of individuality and a boutique character.
- 7. PREMIUM**  
It ensures premium quality, with high-quality implementation throughout the customers' experience.
- 8. ADDED VALUE**  
Owing to the strong experiential note and engagement of people, the product generates higher added value and addresses demanding visitors from abroad who are prepared to pay a little extra for something special.
- 9. DE-SEASONALISATION**  
It has good content that attracts tourists in seasons other than summer.
- 10. FIVE-STAR CHARACTER**  
It contributes to fulfilling the promise of making Slovenia a green boutique destination for five-star experiences.



#### MEET THE FIRST NINE

##### **Kayaking adventures under Mount Peca**

Take part in an underground adventure, paddling through the flooded tunnels of the largest lead and zinc mine in this part of Europe. Feel the dark and sense the silence in the middle of the abandoned mine where engines once roared.

##### **The moustache tour**

A four-hour cycling tour through the most beautiful streets and parks of Ljubljana, where you get to know the great moustachioed men of Slovenian culture. An experience that will help you understand the soul of the nation and the capital that put a statue of a poet, not a warrior, in its main square.

##### **Bled Garden Village: a night in a treehouse with its own gardens in the middle of a forest**

Luxurious camping in the treetops with all the comfort of a hotel room. A journey back to nature, so you'll never want to sleep in a hotel room again. A very green story of a mini landscape park where you're taught to work with your hands through gardening.

##### **The vintage gourmet tour**

A nostalgic journey with legendary old-timer vehicles visiting Istrian olive groves. Have fun tasting premium olive oils and traditional Istrian cuisine. Your guides are members of the Lisjak family, one of the greatest olive-oil producers in Slovenia.

##### **Ljubljana Castle for you – a private castle experience**

A private tour through nine hundred years of history in this medieval fortress. A unique castle experience in the company of a personal assistant and actors, who will bring history to life before your eyes.

##### **An unforgettable day at the Fonda fish farm**

Get to know a fish boutique in the middle of the sea, where the fish eat like a royalty better than most people. A very personal story of a family of biologists that decided to raise the finest fish in the world. During your voyage through the field in the sea you can listen to their passionate and ultimately delicious story.

##### **Following in the footsteps of Luka Čeč**

An adrenaline-filled adventure in the hidden tunnels of the most famous karst cave in Europe that transforms tourists into explorers. In the darkness and silence you will learn about the incredibly rich biodiversity of the karst underground. The highlight of the adventure is meeting the olm, or human fish, in its natural habitat.

##### **The story of a soldier from the Isonzo Front**

An unforgettable experience for all history lovers searching for human stories of the soldiers who fought on the Isonzo Front and the memories of their relatives. A moving story of history and cheese, which is a key part of the economy for locals.

##### **Short natural science holidays in Slovenia – an extended outdoor weekend**

Exploration holidays for serious nature lovers. Visit a boutique reserve of rare plants and endangered animals. Witness the splendour of silence and primal nature. Trade sleeping in hotel rooms for the experience of staying on a holiday farm. Cuisine will include a *backpack lunch* featuring carefully selected seasonal local products.



**SLOVENIA UNIQUE EXPERIENCES**

Recommended by Slovenian Tourist Board

Kayaking adventures under Mount Peca



Aged cabbage, yeast and cheese

## SLOVENIA 2021 – EUROPEAN REGION OF GASTRONOMY

### Restaurateur Luka Košir swears by Slovenian tradition

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ  
PHOTO: MATEVŽ KOSTANJŠEK

Gastronomy is an important part of Slovenian tourism, and foreign guests enthuse about the outstanding chefs and winemakers they find here. The high quality is confirmed by the country's rankings on lists of attractive gastronomic destinations, and last year saw the publication of the Slovenian version of the food-lovers' guidebook Gault & Millau. So it is no surprise that in 2021 Slovenia will bear the title of European Region of Gastronomy.

The title will help to emphasise the rise of boutique tourism with five-star experiences and high-quality cuisine. Moreover, the promotion of gastronomy also includes culinary diplomacy. In March 2019 there was a consultation with economic advisors and experts on the importance of serving Slovenian food and beverages abroad. This great project of presenting Slovenia as a European gastronomy region brings together both the producers of food and its consumers, who prioritise locally produced items and short supply chains.

#### YOUNG HOPE OF SLOVENIAN CUISINE

One of the ambassadors of the European gastronomy region project is Luka Košir, one of the young hopes of Slovenian cuisine, who swears by local tradition in his restaurant.

*"First of all you have to know how to cook grain mash, then you can make meringues," he says with conviction.*

This chef is young, experienced, ambitious and creative. He thinks about each dish separately and is developing a culinary philosophy entirely his own, where he uses local ingredients which he produces almost entirely by himself in his own field. At his home on the hill of Šentjošt he creates dishes from local ingredients out of the home barn, the nearby gully, neighbouring farm, the Škofja Loka hills, surrounding forest, home field and greenhouse, with home-produced lard and forest jams delighting the senses. He uses what is closest to hand, first and foremost what is local, then from the Adriatic. He

rates among his greatest culinary successes this use and production of local food and its traceability.

#### NA GRIČU RESTAURANT

The restaurant is a family operation in the village of Šentjošt nad Horjulom, just 20 km from Ljubljana. For the last 10 years it has been run by chef Luka Košir, the father of four children. The menu changes daily, and depends on the season and fresh food available at that time. The team there are proud of the fact that they can offer guests food that moves directly from the field to plate.

**The surrounding natural environment, encouraged by the helping hands of the entire family, is very generous. Throughout the year they use an abundance of wild plants and traditional and modern methods of storage, from pickling, salting, drying, smoking and fermenting, to jams, compotes, homemade spirits and more.**

They store foodstuffs fully ripe and then offer them in months when they are not in season. The cuisine includes a lot of foraging, and every day they go into the forest, meadow and field to gather what they can. They have two big fields and two forest fields, which produce Jerusalem artichoke, wild leek, shiitake and pleurotus mushrooms, and so forth.



Luka has a simple philosophy: "Good ingredients make good food, and you do not need a silver spoon to eat it".

### KOŠIR'S DISHES ARE A TRUE ADVENTURE

The outstanding result of such efforts are confirmed by the delight of their customers. The boneless pork ribs from pigs raised on the Opale farm in Žiri have a glaze of sweet and sour house birch syrup, and are roasted to a crisp shell that makes the fat beneath it an even sweeter treat. Popular dishes include home cured bacon, kid, pheasant, lamb or trout from Medvedov graben. Rumeni muškat (Muscat) wine goes well with the hazelnuts, goose liver in a grated parfait with pickled sweet fennel; the bread is hot, the fillet of trout is baked to perfection and set up in a little tower in a trapeze form. There is a delightful combination of local goat and sheep cheeses from the Orešnik farm, the fresh goat roulade is rolled in ash, feta is made from ewe's milk and there are three homemade jams to add to the mix. Borage blossoms have the taste of oysters. The sashimi is correctly sliced, and served on a plate with meadow flowers and raw porcini shaved thinly, and alongside the birch syrup the spruce vinegar is a house speciality. The terrine of Krško polje pork with homemade oils is a rustic treat, as befits the backwoods. The leaves and buds of nasturtiums balance the rich food with their pleasantly piquant acidity, something enhanced by the grainy mustard made by hand. They offer an exquisite maize polenta with porcini, a combination of maize and the forest, of hay, the aroma wafting from the cast iron pot, and of raw porcini, all tiny with the same caps, the aroma floating over a thick sauce of boletus amidst the polenta.

### INGREDIENTS WITH KNOWN ORIGIN

And there is another distinguishing mark – ingredients with known origin.

*"I am lucky because I have fully traceable suppliers from the surrounding farms,"*  
Luka says with satisfaction about his neighbours.

His neighbour Tone opened a slaughterhouse and butchers, and it is he that collects meat from surrounding farms. "Previously I cured a lot of meat at home, but now Tone does this for me, since he has a lot more space. But in line with my philosophy we offer meat as season-

ally as possible, for instance veal and lamb, so we only offer cured meat – which matures for up to 150 days – when there is no other," he adds. The chef considers each plate separately, and this is a combination of flavours for which fresh herbs are not just decorative, and the presentation of the dish is not just an artistic impression.

### EMPHASIS ON VEGETABLES

Although meat was once his main ingredient, today Luka offers a tasting menu in which meat, fish and vegetables have the same importance. "In fact I want vegetables to take precedence. I create a lot of entirely vegetable dishes, and this fascinates me because it's not easy. And if you grow the vegetables yourself, you value them differently than if you went to the shop for them," emphasises the young chef. But many of the ingredients can gain a lot of flavour if they are preserved differently, in the old way. "We make miso pastes from various beans and peas... we have a version like soy sauce, except we make it from local sivček beans and barley. We serve it, for instance, with trout sashimi." They dry beets, carrots and herbs at home. What about a traditional winter stores? "We pickle in vinegar, we do lactofermentation and make kimchi with Chinese cabbage and beet. We also have a distillery and make our own liqueurs. My dad makes the spirits, my sister Barbara, who is also a sous chef, this year made all the liqueurs, my mum and sister Maruša make the jams and I contribute a little bit myself. The whole family is involved in the business, and we work like they did a hundred years ago. And we include all this in the food."

Alongside Japanese food he is also inspired by Scandinavian and Nordic cuisine, and in obtaining birch syrup (a hundred litres of birch sap for six decilitres of syrup) he follows the lead and collaborates with the Swedish culinary master Magnus Nilsson.



The restaurant has its own vegetable gardens.

### A SWEDE TAKES CARE OF THE DUCKS

He also has his own organic farm with ducks cared for by the Swede Peter Blombergsson. He got to know him via Twitter, after posting about the first successful distillation of birch syrup from harvested birch sap. *“Peter would visit Slovenia a few times each year, and then on one visit he announced he was going to stay. The Swedish climate did not suit him. For a while he worked for the winemaker Janko Štekar in Brda, then my father-in-law gave up raising Boer goats and I asked Peter if he would raise ducks for me,”* recounts Košir about this odd turn of events. Duck became a house speciality (prepared from St Martin’s Day until Christmas, since duck meat is best then), although he does not want to brag about it.

**Since there are few good ingredients and they only offer what is best at that time, the menus are constantly evolving. If necessary, if ingredients are lacking, they will even put out a new tasting menu twice a day.**

*“For this reason I also study recipes practically every day. This is in line with our philosophy. Which includes taking time for oneself and not being slaves to work in the restaurant. I am happy that we have found a balance between work and family life,”* he says.



The cuisine served at Grič has strong connection with local tradition and historical heritage, fused with modern cuisine.



Veal sweetbreads and winter truffle

## THE AMERICAN SLOVENIAN EDUCATION FOUNDATION

# Investing in knowledge for Slovenia's bright future

NINA TROHA, MARIJA KOMATAR  
PHOTO: JANEZ KOTAR



IN December last year the VTIS (Impression) Association presented the Impression of the Year award to the ASEF at a ceremony held in the President's Office.

In these times of global interconnection and interdependence, the idea that the so-called *brain drain* of excellent Slovenian students and researchers abroad means a loss to Slovenian society is already an outdated concept. With the accelerating pace of globalisation and the continuously increasing mobility of the global economy, what counts is the connectedness among Slovenes around the world, and their participation in high-quality programmes.

The American Slovenian Education Foundation provides scholarships and stipends to the best Slovene students and professors in the USA, and promotes cultural and economic cooperation.

**It seeks to expand the educational possibilities of young Slovenes, to connect them all over the world and thus expand Slovenia's boundaries.**

It supports a diverse group of highly talented future PhDs, in order to develop a community of academics, researchers and leaders in excellence; at the same time it contributes to both culture and professional ethics. The Foundation's honorary sponsor is none other than the Slovenian President Borut Pahor.

Over the years, the ASEF's basic mission has been joined by several new objectives, and its operations have become global. It has

become a Slovenian academic hub, satisfying a clear need in the Slovenian academic and research community for the development of various skills and disciplines on the path to a doctorate, or post-doctoral research and academic work at world-renowned universities such as Stanford, Princeton, Harvard, Cambridge, UC Berkeley and many others. Recently, it has expanded its operations to include the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

In its four years of operation, 50 scholarship recipients have been given the chance for personal and professional development, with the aim and intention that they will return to Slovenia and help others with their knowledge and the numerous advantages that they gained along the way, including those provided by the ASEF. *"We strive for academic excellence, the development of the culture and committed work in service of the community. This means that the ASEF keeps its alumni connected and helps them continue to grow and develop even after the end of their scholarship programme. We have begun holding regular seminars*

*"We make it possible for Slovene students to study with Slovene professors over the summer. We find them accommodation with Slovene families, who receive them with open arms. These new connections are creating a Slovenian expat community, and at the same time show the scholarship recipients that the Slovenian community and culture are alive all over the world. Many of the research trips have borne long-lasting fruit – forming connections and long-term joint research work,"* says Dr Jure Leskovec, one of the Foundation's founders.



Dr. Jure Leskovec

and forming study groups in Slovenia, in which ASEF alumni meet regularly to connect and study," says another of the Foundation's founders, Dr Peter Rožič.

The Foundation's fifth annual gala fundraising dinner in the USA will be held on 16 March of this year at Stanford University. For more visit <https://www.asef.net/gala>. And this year, the ASEF will be holding its first annual gala dinner in Slovenia.

**The Foundation's activities have received wide recognition among Slovenes both at home and abroad. Last December, the Association of Slovenes Educated**

**Abroad (VTIS – which means *impression in Slovene*) awarded the ASEF the title of Impression of the Year, through which the VTIS Association recognises excellence in the area of knowledge sharing and showcases individuals and groups that have proved to be outstanding in promoting this.**

The stories of the scholarship recipients are a good illustration of the unforgettable and unique connections and experiences that enrich both Slovenia and the community of Slovenes around the world.



Nobel Prize Laureate Prof. Duncan Haldane receiving the ASEF Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2018 ASEF Gala.

**FROM THE USA TO SLOVENIA**

**Matthew Fitzsimmons** (Academy of Music, University of Ljubljana, advisor Franc Kosem): "My visit to Slovenia was a dream come true. Reconnecting with my Slovenian roots while building up my music career in the unbelievable city of Ljubljana made one of the best years of my life. The last time I was in Slovenia was the summer of 2001, and it was amazing to meet relatives that I hadn't seen in 17 years, and I got to know the culture and the language through their eyes. My advisor, Franc Kosem, the principal trumpeter with the Slovenian Philharmonic and a Professor at the Academy of Music in Ljubljana, immediately got me involved in the music scene, introduced me to his Sloveneian students at the Academy and allowed me to practice with the Philharmonic."



**Franc Kosem** (advisor): "These types of exchanges are an invaluable experience not just for students, but also for professors. I fully support the development of the project."

**FROM ARGENTINA TO SLOVENIA**



**Cecilia Urbancic** (Zemanta, advisor Zala Kurinčič): "I come from Buenos Aires and I lived and worked in Ljubljana for two months. While I was here I worked on a brand recognition project for the Zemanta brand, at the Data Science company in Ljubljana. I improved my professional knowledge, enriched myself culturally and experienced personal growth. Slovenia has a special meaning for me. All four of my grandparents are from here. Slovene was the first language I learned and now it is the language I use best. I feel so comfortable here; it's like Slovenia is my homeland."

**Zala Kurinčič** (advisor): "A fantastic experience. With her freshness and enthusiasm she brought new and different perspectives to our already existing projects."

**FROM SLOVENIA TO THE USA**

**Jože Rožanec** (UC Berkeley, advisor Dr Dawn Song): "The ASEF provides excellent scholarships, including mine to UC Berkeley. I had the honour of conducting research under the mentorship of the famous Dr Dawn Song and learned a great deal in the process. While studying at the university I was able to audit several courses, participate in reading groups and meet famous researchers such as Ian Goodfellow. The experience I gained due to the ASEF didn't end after the scholarship, as I regularly keep in contact and conduct research with professors, institutions and Slovenes around the world. Since the ASEF has been so valuable to me, I am happy to dedicate my time to activities that allow me to pay back to the ASEF community and that will be available to future scholarship recipients. This is how the ASEF becomes reality: by promoting excellence in knowledge, culture and commitment."

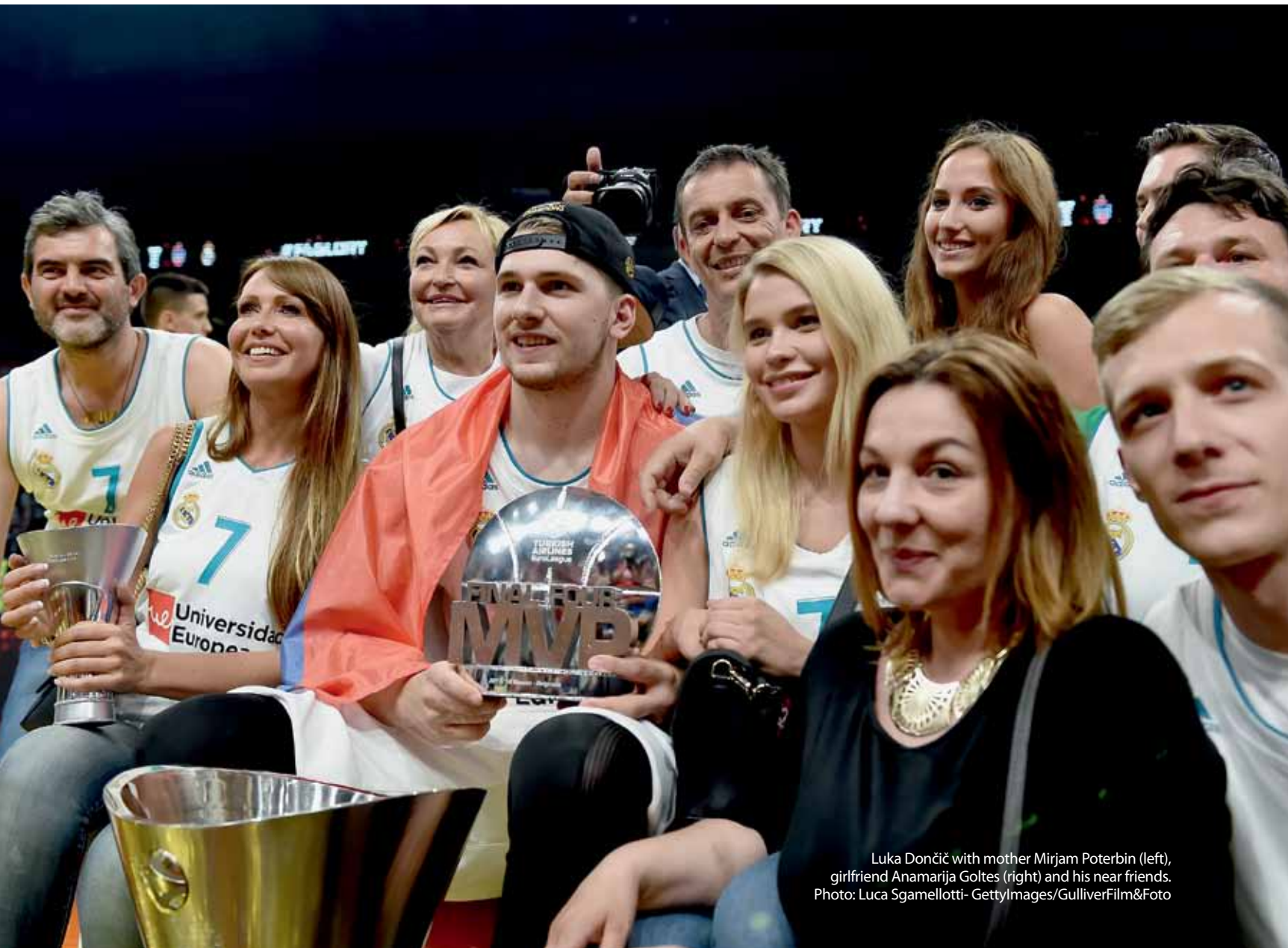


**Dr Dawn Song** (advisor): "I am really happy to have been a part of the ASEF exchange programme for the last few years. I am impressed by the quality of the scholarship recipients; it's fun to work with them. We have made long-term contacts with the majority of the scholarship recipients, and continue to work with them."

LUKA DONČIČ

## Slovenian basketball superhero

POLONA PREŠEREN



Luka Dončić with mother Mirjam Poterbin (left), girlfriend Anamarija Goltes (right) and his near friends. Photo: Luca Sgamellotti- GettyImages/GulliverFilm&Foto

Never before has Slovenian basketball had such a big star as Luka Dončić. This young lad, who took his first basketball steps in Ljubljana, Slovenia's capital city, reached the top while still a teenager.

Not a day goes by without him being in the news or one of the giants of basketball talking about him. Luka Dončić is a star, a hero, an idol and role model.

**He simply enjoys basketball, and you can see this in every move he makes – he lives for the moment, and each moment gives his all.**

In December 2018 Slovenian sports journalists selected him as sports person of the year, and on that occasion, owing to Luka's duties in the NBA, the award was received on his behalf by his mother Mirjam Poterbin, who said: *"Luka is very adaptable. Moving away didn't even seem to be difficult for him. He plays, trains, travels and that's that. Of course he keeps up with events in Slovenia. The media interest is something normal for him. He knows that it comes with success. For this very reason I am so proud of him – because he's kept his feet on the ground."*

She also recalled the moment when the fresh-faced 13 year-old went to Real Madrid. *"It was terribly hard. I can't describe the feelings when your boy, who is truly still a child, leaves home and goes abroad. I was in Madrid each week, but still. On the other hand, because of what happened, he is so grown up now,"* said Mirjam, who since then has accompanied her son everywhere.

### EUROPE

Luka Dončić inherited basketball genes and talent from his father Saša Dončić, a former basketball player and today a coach. He took his first steps on the court at Miran Jarc Primary School in Ljubljana, and his first club was Union Olimpija, at which he attended the youth basketball school. He stood out everywhere, so it was no surprise

that he quickly became a target for scouts from the royal club from Madrid – Real – who lured him, when he was barely 13, to join the in 2012. There he honed his basketball skills and went to school. Luka's debut appearance in the top Spanish league came when he was 16, making him the youngest player in the history of the league.

**His breakthrough season was 2016/17, when he first played in the starting five for Real, shining in the EuroLeague and proving his talent, and his performance on the court earned him the Rising Star Trophy.**

In September 2017 Luka made it to the top of Europe with the Slovenian national basketball team. At the European Championship he and his teammate and major NBA star Goran Dragić showed some amazing moves, and for the first time in history Slovenia's basketball players became European champions.

### NBA

Luka Dončić passed a special milestone on 21 June 2018, when he was selected as the third player in the NBA draft by the Atlanta Hawks, who then immediately sent him to Dallas in exchange for their 5th choice.

**Luka is the 12<sup>th</sup> Slovenian to join the NBA, and to date he is the highest ranked in the draft.**

Before him, Boštjan Nachbar was 15th in the draft, playing for the Houston Rockets in 2002.

Luka has been outstanding in Dallas, and not a day goes by without his exploits on the court being reported. Records are being broken as if on a conveyor belt, and the great stars of this sport are singing his praises. Across the entire NBA, sales of Luka's shirt are currently second only to those of the legendary LeBron James.

**Meanwhile Slovenian basketball fans are looking forward to 28 March, when they**

**will travel in large numbers to Miami to see Goran Dragić and Luka Dončić face off.**

Goran with Miami Heat, and Luka with the Dallas Mavericks. The Miami event promises to be a proper Slovenian holiday, with the promotion of Slovenian wines and the wider promotion of Slovenia.



Luka Dončić gave his legendary red basketball sport shoes to the little boy as a gift.  
Photo: Adam Pantozzi - GettyImages/GulliverFilm&Foto



Luka Dončić magical plays.  
Photo: Ronald Martinez - GettyImages/GulliverFilm&Foto

