

Sinfo

The First EU

Summit under the Slovenian Presidency, EU leaders launch new phase of Lisbon Strategy

Matevž Tomšič:

Slovenia has extensive experience with formal and informal but still very effective monopolies

A tribute to Trubar paid at the National Museum

Planica step further towards nordic centre



QUOTES OF THE FORTNIGHT



Janez Janša / Prime Minister and current President of the European Council/: **EU well-equipped to keep tackling current challenges**, Brussels, 14 March (The press conference at the end of the spring European Council meeting):

The conclusions confirm the tasks we have set ourselves in three key areas. With them we have given the European Union the wherewithal to continue to tackle the most pressing challenges we face at the moment. The new three-year Lisbon Strategy cycle has been launched, fundamental principles for the adoption of the energy and climate change package have been confirmed and responses to current challenges relating to increasing the stability of the financial markets have been agreed.



Jose Manuel Barroso /The President of the European Commission/: **I congratulate Slovenia on its first Presidency at the EU Summit**, Brussels, 14 March. I congratulate the Slovenian Prime Minister, Janez Janša, and his team for the very professional Presidency. The success of a Presidency is best judged on the basis of decisions – not by the number of pages, but by the content. If you read the decisions, you will agree that they are very substantive and that they deal with very difficult issues. The Presidency has clarified the decisions and achieved major progress in all those areas in comparison to the general agreement a year ago. This was a general agreement on goals which now have to be realised.



Danilo Türk /President of Slovenia/: **Europe can become well managed mosaic**, London, 12 March: Europe cannot ever become a melting pot for different nations, religions and other communities, it can however become a well managed mosaic. The way in which this is to be done, how we need solve the problems time is facing us with - these are the topics discussed at the conference Living Together Summit which I attended as one of the keynote speakers.



Andrej Bajuk /Finance Minister/: **Globalisation, ageing main EU challenges**, Berlin, 12 March: Faced with the twin challenges of globalisation and the ageing population, EU countries must figure out how to ensure the sustainability of their welfare models. Preserving and improving the welfare models would require alternative taxes, more efficient taxation and »broad and just structures« on the income side. On the revenue side it is necessary to improve efficiency of spending and place greater emphasis on human resources and education. There are different welfare models and political priorities across the Member States, but all countries ultimately face the same challenges. Hence the consensus on how to tackle them in the form of the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs.



Žiga Turk /Development Minister/: **Europe could in fact lead a third industrial revolution**, Brdo pri Kranju, 11 March: Europe could in fact lead a third industrial revolution, transforming its economy from carbon-based to being based on renewable energy. The key to the success of measures to cut carbon emissions and move toward renewable energy was a change in mindset. It is time for »going from words to actions« to undertake the reforms that would make Europe more competitive, including by supporting small and medium enterprises, curbing protectionism and bolstering market mechanisms.



Anže Logar

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GREEN GUIDELINES

The 14 biggest retail European companies have made a bold decision. They have committed, on their own initiative, to follow green guidelines, similar to the ones that were recently endorsed by the European Council. Until 2020 they will, at their own cost, reduce energy consumption at their premises by 20%, and increase the share of renewable sources. They will provide an exchange of experience and good practices in the sphere of energy savings, and set up a system of informing consumers about the energy efficiency of products. This last is most interesting. In view of future consumer patterns, the 'greenness' of a particular product will become an increasingly appreciated added value, and consequently also the area of developing new marketing approaches. Other companies in the business chain will be forced to follow; otherwise, consumers will go elsewhere.

The strong political message of the spring European Council, conducted by the Slovenian Presidency, also points in this direction. The European Union has embarked on the route of sustainable development, and is becoming a world leader in the sphere of energy and environment issues. In this issue, Sinfo offers a double interview with the Ministers of the Economy and of the Environment, who are also presidents of the line Councils of Ministers, where the European energy and environment policy will be unfolding until the end of the Slovenian Presidency.

The President of the European Council said, prior to the beginning of the summit meeting, that the EU needs to understand the energy and environment commitments as a challenge, not a cost. The 14 companies mentioned earlier have already done that. Others will follow. After all, the media magnate Robert Murdoch recently accompanied the first 'anniversary' of changing the direction of his empire towards encouraging green production with the words: 'Acting on this issue is simply great business'.

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EUROPEAN POLICE COLLEGE BOARD ADOPTS 2009 BUDGET

The governing board of the European Police College (CEPOL) adopted a EUR 8.8m budget for training in 2009 at the conclusion of its two-day meeting at Brdo pri Kranju on 20 February. The budget still needs to be passed by the European Parliament. Nevenka Tomovič, the chair of the board, told the press that the participants decided to carry out 84 trainings for senior officers on different subjects. The emphasis will be on cross-border crime, economic and financial crime, human trafficking, drugs and terrorism. Another important part will be the training of teachers, with the aim of improving training methods at police academies and cooperation between them. Slovenia has launched an initiative for training on financial crime. CEPOL director Ulf Göransson said that this was a good idea, as financial crime is an important issue which has cross-border dimensions and is often a source of money for terrorist organisations. Slovenia also proposed cooperation with Balkan countries, and a conference on the matter will be held at Bled in March. Göransson added that a step forward was made regarding talks on cooperation with Russia.

SECURITY TOPS EU TROIKA-AFGHANISTAN MEETING



The EU Troika discussed the situation in Afghanistan as they met Afghan Foreign Minister Rangin Dadfar Spanta at Brdo pri Kranju on 21 February. Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel said there was encouraging information on progress, but also lingering concern over the security situation there. The Afghan Foreign Minister said the situation had improved in the six years since the fall of the Taliban, but there were still problems with terrorism, drug production and trafficking, and weak state institutions. European External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner noted that the security

situation had deteriorated since last year's meeting, but the EU and Afghanistan share a common goal: making efforts for the general stabilisation and consolidation of the country. The EU's special representative to Afghanistan, Francesco Vendrell, announced today that an EU police mission in Afghanistan is expected to be ready for full deployment by April. Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel said the mission was important in order to improve policing. Talks also revolved around an international envoy to coordinate efforts to help stabilise and rebuild the country. As Minister Spanta noted, the envoy would have to contribute to peace and stability in Afghanistan and improve coordination between Afghanistan and the international community. This is the only condition that Afghanistan has - the envoy's name and nationality are not important, he said. The situation in Afghanistan was also in the focus of the UN Security Council session on 12 March. Speaking on behalf of the European Union, Slovenia's representative, Ambassador Sanja Štiglic supported proposed changes to the mandate of the UN mission in Afghanistan, which would strengthen the organisation's role within the international community's efforts in this country. Ambassador Štiglic furthermore called upon the Afghan authorities to make headway in the areas of human rights and good governance, implementation of the national strategy for combating corruption as well as in adopting the new media legislation. She also called the Afghan Government to ban the execution of the death penalty.

HIGH REPRESENTATIVES DISCUSS NEW GUIDELINES FOR MINORITY POLICIES



High representatives of the EU, Muslim communities and experts discussed new guidelines for better inclusion of minorities, especially Muslims, into social and political life in the EU, as they met in Mengeš near Ljubljana on 22 February in a conference titled "Inclusive Citizenship in Europe: Do We Need New Guidelines?" Experts, including Jorge Sampaio, High Representative of the UN Secretary-General for the Alliance of Civilisations, and OSCE Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, agreed that the EU must set up guidelines, while measures should be carried out on the local level. Also taking part in the conference were Italian Interior Minister Giuliano Amato and the Foreign Ministers of Austria and Slovenia, Ursula Plassnik and Dimitrij Rupel. Rupel explained that in this informal meeting they were trying to find a way that would allow Muslims in Europe a more important role on all levels of life in the EU. Numerous "new" minorities living in the EU do not feel comfortable in their alternative homelands. This holds true especially for some 15 to 20 million Muslims living in the EU, who are subject to different levels of alienation.

AHERN: DECISION ON KOSOVO SHORTLY, LISBON TREATY REFERENDUM IN JUNE

Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern told his host, Slovenian counterpart Janez Janša, on 26 February that Ireland would decide on whether

to recognise Kosovo's independence in the coming days, while a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty is expected to be held in Ireland in June. He meanwhile explained that Ireland actually needed to adopt the Lisbon Treaty twice: it first needs to pass a law in parliament, which is expected to happen in April, and then to hold a referendum, possibly in June this year. Asked whether there was a danger that the



Prime Minister Janez Janša receiving Irish counterpart Bertie Ahern (left).

referendum would turn into a confidence vote for himself, Ahern told the press that he did not see such a danger. Adding that practically all Irish parties supported the ratification, Ahern said that what was needed was the awareness of the responsibility that the few million Irish have towards other Europeans. Given the approaching spring EU summit, Ahern and Janša discussed several European topics and also devoted special attention to the European future of the Western Balkans and the situation in the region following Kosovo's declaration of independence.

FORMER PRESIDENT LAID TO REST



The funeral of Slovenia's late leader Janez Drnovšek.

Former President Janez Drnovšek was laid to rest on the afternoon of 26 February in his hometown Zagorje. Even though the funeral was private, an estimated 1,000 people gathered at the cemetery to pay their respects to Drnovšek. Before the funeral, the three top Slovenian officials paid their last respects to Drnovšek. President Danilo Türk, Prime Minister Janez Janša and Parliamentary Speaker France Cukjati also offered their commiseration to Drnovšek's relatives. Drnovšek, who served as Slovenia's president between 2002 and 2007 after holding the office of prime minister for more than a decade, died on 23 February at the age of 57. He had been suffering from slowly progressing cancer for nine years. Slovenes paid their last respects to their former leader by signing the numerous books of condolence that have been opened at major cities around the country. For days, thousands have been queuing for hours to sign books of condolence in all major cities, while well over 30,000 have signed an online version found on the website of President Türk.

COUNCIL OKAYS 24,600 WORK PERMITS FOR FOREIGNERS

The Economic and Social Council, an industrial relations forum, confirmed on 27 February a Labour Ministry proposal for issuing 24,600 work permits to foreigners in 2008. The decision now needs to be endorsed by the Government. Employers demanded during the debate that the number of permits be raised to 29,000, while Slovenia's largest trade union said 20,000 permits would suffice. The remaining trade unions agreed with the number put forward by the ministry. According to Jože Smole, Secretary General of the Slovenian Employers' Association, the number of permits should be raised to 29,000 because of the needs in construction, catering, transport and communication. The higher quota would enable the country to maintain its current level of economic growth, which is a precondition for the social status, Smole added. Last year's original quota for permits stood at 18,500; it was then raised in June to 24,500 and to 29,500 in November, despite trade union protests.

DANISH, SLOVENIAN FMS ON KOSOVO AND EU ISSUES

Topical EU issues and the situation in Serbia following Kosovo's declaration of independence topped the agenda as Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel received his Danish counterpart Per Stig Møller in Ljubljana on 28 February. Discussing the recent developments in Serbia, Møller expressed his hope that the situation in Serbia calms down and that the country makes efforts to sign the Stabilisation and Accession Agreement (SAA) with the EU. The door to the EU



Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Møller (left) and his Slovenian counterpart Dimitrij Rupel.

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is open, but the question is whether Serbia is ready to enter, the Danish Minister said. The pair also discussed ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, the climate package, and intercultural dialogue in light of the recurring caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad in the Danish media. The ministers moreover touched on Turkey's EU accession efforts and its relations with Iraq.

GOVERNMENT DECLARES BRDO PRI KRANJU MONUMENT OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE

On 28 February the government adopted decrees proclaiming the Brdo pri Kranju estate and the Orpheus monument in Ptuj cultural monuments of national importance. The Brdo mansion is a Renaissance fort built on top of the remains of a mediaeval building. It was used for ceremonial purposes already in the times of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (between WWI and WWII), and has kept this role throughout the 20th century until now. The Brdo pri Kranju estate and its newly built congress centre are also the main venue of the majority of EU Presidency events taking place in Slovenia. The mansion has a well-stocked library, which also holds a copy of the first edition of the Bible in the Slovene language. Three traditional



Brdo Castle, built in the beginning of the 16th century, plays host to many prestigious events.

hayracks on the estate were also proclaimed a cultural monument of national importance; however, some of the buildings on the estate, such as the congress centre and Hotel Kokra, are excluded from the decree. The Orpheus monument is the popular name for a Roman gravestone in Ptuj, which was put up in the first half of the 2nd century. The relief on the monument shows the ancient Greek singer and lyre player Orpheus.

MINISTER: INVESTMENT IN PEOPLE, MODERN LABOUR MARKETS A PRIORITY

The Minister of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, Marjeta Cotman, stressed at a session of EU labour ministers that an increasing number of young Europeans are left unemployed. "Priority must be given to investing in people and modern labour markets," she said at the meeting in Brussels on 29 February. Cotman, who chaired the

meeting, said that the Lisbon strategy was "entering its final stage, as we are starting to carry out its last in-depth review before 2010. ... At the beginning of the new cycle of the Lisbon Strategy, we wish to continue focusing on its implementation in each Member State." The ministers also adopted a number of documents related to the Lisbon Strategy, which will be submitted to the European Council. These documents are extremely important, as they show the employment strategy is already yielding results, although not all targets have been reached, Cotman explained.

11TH EUROPA FORUM AGREES WESTERN BALKANS NEEDS EUROPEAN PROSPECT

Participants at the 11th Europa Forum, taking place in Lech, Austria, agreed on 1 March that there is a consensus in the EU that the countries of the Western Balkans need a prospect for joining the bloc. The Slovenian Prime Minister and current President of the European Council, Janez Janša, stressed that the EU has, in contrast to the 1990s, this time responded in a timely and appropriate manner to the very difficult situation in the Western Balkans that is unfolding at the moment. Janša thus expressed his hope that the region will soon emerge more stable than it is now, and that its countries will be able to devote their efforts to continuing their path towards joining the EU. The Prime Minister also stressed that the 27-nation bloc must remain firm in its commitment to help solve the situation in the region, as it is time that »the story is wrapped up, so that attention can be given to other EU neighbours«. Among the positive sides of recent developments in the Western Balkans, Janša underscored a visit by Serbian students to the reopened Slovenian embassy in Belgrade, which was ransacked some weeks ago by protesters angered by the EU's support for Kosovo. The students made it clear that their future lies in the EU, Janša said.

CONFERENCE: REGIONAL COOPERATION STRONG FACTOR IN LISBON STRATEGY

An international conference on regional cooperation, entitled "Territorial Dialogue 2008", highlighted on 4 March that synergies between regions and cities could greatly contribute to the success of the Lisbon Strategy. The participants also underlined the importance of the EU cohesion policy, transfer of best practices, and innovation. "We strive to achieve a stronger synergy between the institutions, Member States and citizens, as well as in the implementation of individual EU policies," Local Government and Regional Policy Minister Ivan Žagar said. Slovenia credits the cohesion policy with great importance, and thus strives "to do everything in its power to enable cohesion policy and its concrete results, to implement best practices and transfer innovative solutions developed in individual regions and cities," he said. The Minister also stressed the policy's role in achieving the goals of the Lisbon Strategy. "Structural



From left to right: European Regional Policy Commissioner Danita Huebner, Local Government Minister Ivan Žagar and President of the Committee of the Regions Luc Van den Brande at the "Territorial Dialogue 2008" international conference on regional cooperation

funds provide the necessary funding channels and coordination mechanisms which contribute to achieving territorial cohesion and the Lisbon objectives," he explained. Meanwhile, President of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) Luc Van den Brande said that the conference was an opportunity for representatives of the CoR and European cities and regions to demonstrate their commitment and support for achieving the goals of the Lisbon Strategy. European Regional Policy Commissioner Danita Hübner meanwhile stressed, "Slovenia's investment in innovation over the years 2007-2013 is a strong signal that Member States have grasped the link between European cohesion policy and the Growth and Jobs Agenda." "It is now time for results, and I believe Slovenia is on the right path," she said.

JANŠA, MEDVEDEV WANT TO IMPROVE EU-RUSSIA DIALOGUE

Prime Minister Janez Janša told the press that his conversation with the newly elected Russian President Dmitry Medvedev on 3 March focused on the approaching EU-Russia summit. According to Janša, the pair agreed to carry out all necessary steps to move ahead in talks on the Russia-EU partnership. Janša expressed his hope that the summit, expected to take place at the end of June in the Russian city of Khanty-Mansiysk, could result in a "step forward towards an agreement on a new Russia-EU partnership". "Slovenia is trying very hard to coordinate the negotiating framework. If we succeed in a feasible time frame, then we have the possibility to make a step forward, but I would not want to risk predicting whether talks could be concluded by then," he explained. Janša already congratulated Medvedev for his victory and spoke to him over the phone. The pair also discussed Slovenian-Russian relations and assessed them as good, while agreeing that new opportunities for boosting ties should be sought.

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH FACILITIES

A developed research infrastructure is key for meeting Lisbon objectives, as it creates an attractive environment for researchers and high-tech companies, participants of a two-day conference on research infrastructure agreed in Brdo pri Kranju on 6 March. The participants stressed that the development of such infrastructure must be coordinated, a view also conveyed to the press by Higher Education, Science and Technology Minister Mojca Kucler Dolinar at the close of the "Research Infrastructures and Their Structuring



From left to right: Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potočnik, Higher Education, Science and Technology Minister Mojca Kucler Dolinar and Development Minister Žiga Turk at a conference on research infrastructure.

Dimension within the European Research Area" event. According to Kucler Dolinar, efforts must be directed towards boosting the development of research with the focus on human resources and research infrastructure. This is highly dependent on Member States and partnerships within the EU, she added. Another topic on the agenda was the uneven distribution of science and research facilities in the EU. "Cities and regions are the driving connecting force in the creation of a knowledge-based society, but science itself is poorly distributed," said Kucler Dolinar. Minister Kucler Dolinar also said that "only through active regional partnership can the EU become the most competitive economy in the world", while Development Minister Žiga Turk said that research structure was needed to prevent brain drain to the United States.

PRESIDENT TÜRK MISQUOTED IN AN INTERVIEW FOR DER SPIEGEL

On Saturday, 8th of March 2008, the online edition of the German weekly Der Spiegel published an interview with the President of the Republic of Slovenia Danilo Türk. In this interview, the President among other talked about the media freedom in Slovenia and the issue of the so called erased, but the answers that Der Spiegel magazine published very much differ from what the President actually said, which was later on also published by the Office of the President published on its website as a reaction to the manipulations of the magazine.

During the interview German journalists raised the issue of the 18,000 inhabitants from former Yugoslavia that were "eliminated" from the Slovenia's Public register. The statement that magazine published was: "In fact, it was an injustice and we must solve the problem - our constitutional court has made that clear. It is now the duty of the government to implement this." In fact President Türk in his extensive reply stated that the measure used was unjust, but that it has to be understood in the context. He said that Slovenia has offered possibility of everybody living in Slovenia to gain Slovene citizenship and around 160,000 people did so, while around 18,000 people at that time for various reasons did not do so. His personal opinion is that they were wrongfully erased from the Register of permanent residents of Slovenia. However, he also pointed out that the previous government and previous parliaments did not solve the problem, therefore he is urging both to do so. On the question, whether the so called Erased is an issue of violation of human rights, President Türk answered that we could talk about a case where the element of discrimination could be claimed, however whether this is a violation of human rights or not, remains to be seen.

When asked about the complaints of Slovenian journalists considering media freedom and censorship President Türk allegedly replied: "It is true that out journalist are placed under certain pressure - through the owners of publishing houses, through politics..." However the transcripts of the interview published by the President's Office reveals much broader and substantial different answer. President Türk answered that the media are always exposed to pressure: pressures of public authorities and very importantly, pressures of owners. Since these issues are relatively new for Slovenia it is not a surprise that we are faced with a situation in which large number of journalists feel they are exposed to pressures that amount to censorship. In President's opinion this may or may not be the case. The focus of the problem in his opinion is in the fact that a large number of journalists feel this way. It is necessary to have a proper wide-ranging and civil society based discussion about this issue the President also stressed in the interview.



MONOPOLIES

Photo: STA

Slovenia has extensive experience with formal and informal but still very effective monopolies. The situation is not necessarily improving. The Slovenian media has actually seen a process of re-monopolization recently. It did not occur under the leadership of the current government, although many people reproach it for this kind of tendency, but under the leadership of the opposition. This has manifested itself in the political 'pacification' of the *Mag* weekly magazine. It was carried out very efficiently, since it was already obvious from the first issues of the 'renewed weekly' that appointed employees holding correct opinions had taken complete control of it and established its ideological 'correctness'. One of these staff 'reinforcements' wrote an article about the Prime Minister's speech in the European Parliament, saying that many people regret their support for Janez Janša in the fight for his rights during the demonstrations in 1988 since, 20 years later, they feel that the former political prisoner is creating an atmosphere where the same protestors are wondering if time is going backwards. It is a typical example of ideological propaganda, which has no arguments whatsoever, but is nevertheless full of insinuations and imputations. Some 'authorised' writers obviously know what other people think and feel or what they should think and feel, since they hold 'objectively correct positions'.

Whoever has a monopoly on 'symbol production resources' can ensure that a certain 'inappropriate' topic does not appear on the public agenda. This is also connected with exclusivity in characterising and interpreting events, people and their characteristics, and especially in defining criteria for the adequacy or inadequacy of certain ideas and views. In this way, some central media protagonists believe that the evaluation of journalists' and commentators' political views and viewpoints is illegitimate. They are supposed to be divided into two groups: professional, critical and skilled, and unprofessional, uncritical and unskilled respectively. If we put aside the fact that in commenting

it is impossible to disregard ideologically charged elements, the division in practice 'matches' the left-right division. In this case, commentators whose views are close to the transitional left political are as a rule evaluated as positive ('objective', 'critical' etc.) and those whose views are close to the transitional right as negative ('subjective', 'politically motivated' etc). Thus a kind of 'normal discourse' has imposed itself upon the Slovenian public whereby anything associated with the political and ideological left is considered normal, while anything associated with the political and ideological right is abnormal.

There are strong reasons for simply not dealing with certain aspects of 'sensitive' areas, such as the media. Some questions are obviously supposed to remain taboo subjects. According to the opinion of the head of the journalism studies department, it is not decent of researchers to study journalists' political beliefs as it compromises their status as scientists. These kinds of standpoints coming from the academic world arouse great concern. It is not merely the distress of certain 'dedicated' people who believe they have the exclusive right to deal with a certain field. This kind of disqualification is reminiscent of some other times when people were excluded from the scientific and research spheres precisely for dealing with 'wrong' questions and taking 'wrong' starting points as their basis.

The only way to dismantle the monopolies threatening Slovenia's development potential and posing a problem to a democratic state alone is through so-called 'institution building', which means the establishment of new institutions in fields ranging from science and education to media. These would, under the necessary consideration of quality and professional standards, bring the required dynamics and consequently bring about changes in an area where inertia, self-evidentness and taboos are still very much present.

WHAT MAKE THE NEWS

Source: STA



The EU leaders set into motion in Brussels on 14 March a new three-year cycle of the Lisbon Strategy setting out reforms aimed at keeping the Member States on the reform path. In the draft conclusions of the EU summit, the leaders stated that the reforms were all the more necessary to shore up Europe's economy in the face of global economic turmoil.

Confirming that the previous cycle of the strategy has brought results, including 6 million new jobs and EU economic growth of nearly 3%, the leaders called on the Member States in the conclusions to »set out detailed and concrete« reform actions in light of recommendations from the European Commission and national aims. Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša, who is the president of the European Council, was confident after the summit that the strategy would continue to deliver results. The document deals with »new challenges and opens new possibilities,« Janša told the press. According to the conclusions, the focus of the new cycle will be on implementing the four priorities set down by the EU in 2006: innovation, care for people, care for the environment and support for enterprise. The document reiterates the need for the Member States to live up to their commitment of investing 3% of GDP in research and development, including by calling upon them to present more detailed plans on how they plan to achieve this. The new cycle of the strategy also introduces a »fifth freedom«, involving open borders for research, which Janša has said is a key new feature and one which enjoys broad support. The proposal furthermore emphasises the need to continue improve the functioning of the single market and avoid protectionism. Among the key social features, focus has been placed on educating young people, foremost dropouts, and social cohesion. One of the proposals is to have all schools in the EU equipped with broadband internet by 2010. The development of flexicurity, the mix of labour market flexibility and security, is also highlighted in the document. Unofficial sources have said that the new social dimension, as officials have termed it, won support among many members. European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso has stressed that while there was skepticism to the Lisbon Strategy three years ago, there is none now. Barroso told the press conference after the conclusion of the summit that the decision on Lisbon Strategy was one of two reality checks passed by the EU at the summit - the other being that on ambitious climate change goals. »The debate confirmed that we should without complacency keep our line in the phase of the Lisbon Strategy,« said Barroso. The leaders also pointed to the importance of pursuing economic reforms in the face of turmoil on global markets. As an important feature for

stabilising markets, they called »for the prompt and full disclosure of exposure« of financial institutions to the subprime credit crunch. Despite the growing instability related to the credit crunch and fears about the strong euro, EU leaders remained confident that the bloc would be able to respond accordingly to further deterioration on markets. Barroso said he was confident that »there was a real reason for confidence in Europe's ability to weather the storm« because of the ongoing modernisation efforts in markets and industry in line with the Lisbon Strategy. Moreover, he said that the European Central Bank has helped the markets with a »timely provision of liquidity«, which he said was »evidence that the ECB will do what is necessary to secure financial stability«. Among the response measures to the current turmoil, the leaders listing efforts to boost transparency for investors, improve valuation standards and reinforce risk management in the financial sector. Janša meanwhile said that the leaders also proposed the creation of an international code of conduct for sovereign wealth funds, which would help address growing concerns about transparency in this field. The leaders furthermore backed a plan for the shaping of a European and international early warning system to deal with future economic crisis. Asked about the achievements of the Slovenian-led summit - the first time that a country from the 2004 round of enlargement headed this event - Janša said that the leaders managed to take decisions which had been floating around for some time. According to him, the council went as planned because of the effort of all those involved. Barroso added that the summit had grappled with »defining issues« - and made a lot of progress. He congratulated Janša on a »professional EU Presidency«.

EU LEADERS WANT CLIMATE CHANGE DEAL BY END OF 2008

EU leaders have come out of an extensive debate on how to achieve ambitious goals in energy and climate change with an agreement that the European Commission's legislative proposal in the area is an »excellent starting point« and basis for agreement by the end of the year. The leaders overcame some differences on the costs of the package to confirm a timetable for the legislative proposal envisaging a 20% cut in CO² emissions and a 20% share of renewables in the energy mix by 2020, which Slovenian officials have said would help set in motion »the third industrial revolution«. A visibly happy Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša and European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso hailed

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the agreement as a big step in confirming the EU's global lead in fighting climate change. While efforts in fighting climate change will not be cheap, the «cost of action will be substantially lower than that of non-action,» Janša stressed. Barroso, who has warned EU leaders against backtracking on commitments they agreed to a year ago, said that, with the decision, the bloc had passed «a test of reality». He said the leaders confirmed that even risks associated with global economic uncertainty could not derail the ambitious plans. The Slovenian Prime Minister pointed to the importance of cooperation at all levels of the EU in setting in motion measures to tackle climate change. According to him, close cooperation with the European Parliament will be required to get the package passed before the end of the parliament's current term, another goal set by the leaders. According to the conclusions of the summit, the final package should take into account «the principles of transparency, economic efficiency and cost-effectiveness, and fairness and solidarity in the distribution of effort between the member states». Meanwhile, a key point of the conclusions states that the EU will continue to strive for an international agreement on fighting climate change, which the leaders said remained «the best way of addressing» fears of «carbon leakage». The fear that companies will flee Europe to countries with less stringent environmental rules - Germany was said to be among the most vocal in raising this issue - was confirmed as being real. According to Janša, such a threat is «dual», as carbon leakage could lead to both increased emissions and a loss of European jobs. In order to deal with the issue and the associated concerns, the leaders stressed that, in the absence of an international agreement for the post-Kyoto period, the risk needed to be addressed in the new Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), which would form the basis for further measures in acting against carbon leakage. Barroso hailed the solution as a «very credible response to the problem». According to him, the important thing is «that industry has been given assurance that their concerns will be addressed». Janša added that the final solution in this area was «not very different» to that discussed at lower levels. He thanked the commission for its «strategic assistance» in finding a way to address «both sides of the coin». The conclusions also confirmed the interconnected nature of measures related to tackling climate change, additional liberalisation of the gas and electricity sectors and stable energy supply. the best way of achieving this goal.

PHILHARMONICS PERFORM JUBILEE CONCERT IN BRUSSELS

The Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra marked its centenary with a gala concert in Brussels on 12 March in a ceremony that the Slovenian Presidency staged as a prelude to the spring EU summit. Conducted by George Pehlivanian, the orchestra performed Gustav Mahler's Symphony 2, «The Resurrection». The composer embarked on his career in Ljubljana as a conductor in a theatre. The concert also featured the Slovenian Chamber Choir and the



Consortium Musicum Choir. The solos were preformed by soprano Sabina Cvilak and mezzosoprano Bernarda Fink, both acclaimed and award-winning musician Officials at the Brussels Palais des Beaux Arts, where the concert was held, labelled Fink's voice as one of the best mezzo-sopranos currently. The Slovenian Philharmonic was founded on 23 October 1908 and performed its first concert on 8 November that year, but its precursor was established two hundred years earlier.

SLOVENIA DONATES PLEČNIK REPLICA CLOCK TO EU



To permanently mark its 2008 EU Presidency, the Slovenian government donated a replica of a long-case clock designed by Slovenia's greatest architect Jože Plečnik to the headquarters of the Council of the European Union in Brussels. The Justus Lipsius building, which has been the headquarters of the Council of the European Union since 1995, will thus house a copy of the work of this legendary Slovenian architect. Plečnik designed the long-case clock in Vienna. The clock belongs to the late phase of Art Nouveau, of which Plečnik was one of the pioneers. As the original has been lost, the clock was carefully re-created by Slovenian master clockmaker Jurij Huebscher. It is safe to say that it is therefore as close to the lost original as possible. The Ljubljana-born Plečnik (1872-1957) studied at the Vienna Art Academy and got his first job in a bureau headed by Otto Wagner. He not only transformed Ljubljana with his designs for new bridges, waterfronts, banks, market buildings, kiosks and parks, but also made his mark in cities such as Prague and Vienna.

EU LEADERS DINING ON ŠTRUKLJI AND WINING ON SLOVENIAN VINTAGES

Apart from its skills at coordinating varied opinions on key European issues, Slovenia was also showcasing some of its culinary delights at the first of two EU summits during its EU Presidency. European leaders were dining on the Slovenian delicacy of štruklji (cottage cheese dumplings) with a wild mushroom duxelles as part of their starter at Thursday's dinner. The sweet teeth among the participants were not disappointed: mouthwatering walnut parfait, peached pair and honey sauce rounded off the dinner prepared by a Slovenian chef from the Vila Podrožnik protocol catering service. And the leaders were downing it all with some of the most prestigious names in the Slovenian wine business: Bric's 2004 Sladki Muškat, Goriška Brda's 2004 A Plus Belo and Simčič's 2005 Modri Pinot. For the teetotalers, a wide selection of Slovenian juices and mineral water was available. The venue for the summit has also been given a Slovenian touch with a creative flower display. Thousands of white tulips and red carnations in blue water - representing the colours of the Slovenian flag - are gracing the European Council building for the event.

CERKOVNA ORDNINGA.



A tribute to Trubar paid at the National Museum

Text: POLONA PRÉŠEREN Photo: STA

This year we mark half a millennium since the birth of one of the great Slovenes, Primož Trubar. He played the role of one of the main protagonists on the stage of Slovenian history. On this occasion an exhibition on the life and work of Primož Trubar, who in the nation's history is reckoned to be the father of the Slovene written language, was opened in Ljubljana at the National Museum of Slovenia. Trubar is the author of the first Slovene book, the Catechismus, which was accompanied by the Abecedarium. The exhibition is of extraordinary importance for the Slovenes, since an exceptionally invaluable exhibit is on view: the sole remaining copy of the book *Cerkovna ordninga* (Church Ordinance), which the Vatican Library lent to the National Museum for this very reason. Trubar wrote *Cerkovna ordninga* in 1564, and this is the first time in history that this publication has left the Vatican, which obtained it from one of German libraries. It was long thought to have been lost until it appeared in the Vatican. *Cerkovna ordninga* is of extreme importance for Slovenes, since it is held to be the first legal text written in the Slovene language. With this, Trubar proved that one could express oneself in terms of expert texts in the Slovene language, as in any other. The book describes ecclesiastical teachings, life and the ecclesiastical calendar, as well as the sacraments. It is also important because it speaks to all Slovenes – not only the people of the Carniola region, but also those living in Carinthia and Styria. With this book Trubar set out a comprehensive church order for Protestant believers, regulating basic issues on ecclesiastical organization: worship, schooling and the liturgy. The instructions in *Cerkovna ordninga* were intended for all social strata. What is special in it is the chapter on schooling, where learning to read and write was particularly urged for children, as well as its emphasis on the Slovene as a language used in the liturgy. The Archduke of Austria, Charles I, condemned its publication as an encroachment on his authority, and hence he ordered it to be burned and, ultimately, for Trubar to be banished.

After the year 1945, when the last known copy of this book was destroyed in the bombing of Dresden, it was thought that the book had been lost. In 1971, the German researcher Cristoph Weismann from Tübingen found an additional copy in the Vatican library – currently believed to be the last surviving copy. And now the book *Cerkovna ordninga* has left the Vatican's glass cabinets for the first time. In order for the National Museum to exhibit the book for the Slovenian public, the President of the

Republic of Slovenia, Dr Danilo Türk, interceded during a recent audience with the Pope. Another work, which bears two titles, that of the translation of Dalmatin's book *Karšanske lepe molitve* ("Beautiful Christian Prayers") and a hymnal containing pieces by Protestant writers, will be exhibited together with this above precious volume. The inauguration of the Primož Trubar exhibition, the museum story dedicated to his life and work and the achievements of the Slovene Reformation in the fields of literature, fine arts and music, was performed by Dr Vasko Simoniti, the Minister of Culture. It can be visited until the end of this year, although *Cerkovna ordninga* is returning to the Vatican on May 6th. The exhibition, with its 150 exhibits, represents the stations of Trubar's life, himself as a person and the circumstances which either inspired and supported his work or, on the other hand, obstructed it.

The various methods used in the exhibition (brief texts, photographic material, maps, illustrations, items, reconstructions, copies, audio-visual devices, atmospheres) take the visitor to one of the ground-breaking periods in the Slovenian history. As well as trying to represent an outline of the environment in which Trubar lived and worked, it also features Trubar's letters and the prefaces he authored for other books. A list of related events will also be published on a website www.trubar2008.si will be constantly updated, where it will also be possible to track news and announcements of all the events in connection with Trubar Year. With this exhibition, which is at the same time one of the main national events at the time of the Slovenia EU Presidency, the museum acknowledges a great man, and one of the main protagonists in the history of Slovenia.





Text: VESNA ŽARKOVIČ, Photo: STA

Planica Step Further Towards Nordic Centre

Planica hosts the greatest Slovenian sports event

From 13 to 16. March, Planica hosted the greatest Slovenian sports event, the finale of the ski-jumping world cup 2007/08. The International Ski Federation (FIS) again entrusted the Organisational Committee Planica with the organisation of three ski-flying competitions – the individual, the team competition and another individual on Sunday.

The organisers of the World Cup flying as well as Prime Minister Janez Janša expressed pleasure over the course of the five-day event and the mulled developments at Planica. Janša said that a contract was signed on the transfer of ownership of the Planica area from the Kranjska Gora municipality to the state. "The 2010 World Championship will take place here on new facilities, new infrastructure and with new achievements," Janša said. Janša's words were echoed by Education and Sport Minister Milan Zver. "I'm positive that our modernisation efforts will bear fruit and that we will witness even better events in the future". Zver, who was hosting a delegation of EU ministers, responsible for sport, who staged an informal meeting on Monday, added that Planica would develop into a centre that would be among the best in Europe. Janša added after the event that Planica was a part of the Slovenian national identity. "Ski flying is moreover a sport for courageous nations," he stressed and congratulated the organisers as well as Slovenian jumper Robert Kranjec, who finished fourth. According to the organisers, some 50,000 people came to see the ski flying finals, with the largest number arriving for Saturday's team competition.

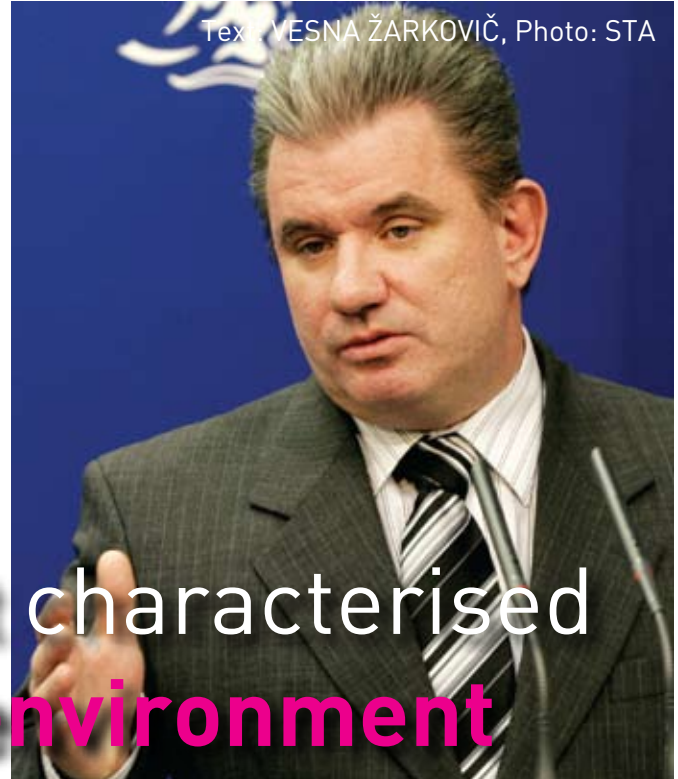
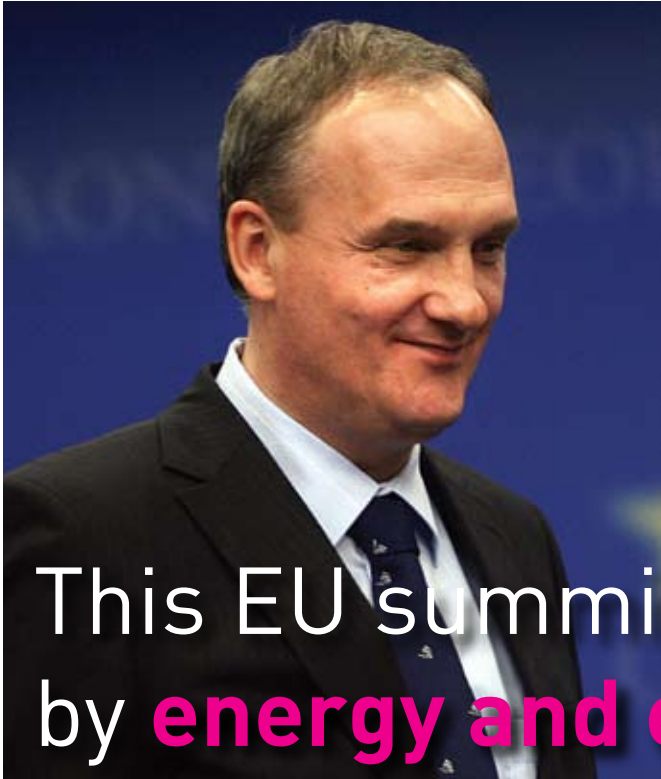
However, the Slovenes are not rejoicing only at the ski-jumps in the valley under the Ponce mountain range, but also at the new Nordic Centre, which will supposedly have been finished by 2013. The Government of the Republic of Slovenia introduced the plan for a new Nordic Centre and started the first procedures to develop plans for renewal and construction several years ago. This Government's sports National Development Project was assessed at 100 million Euros. In March, the Government decided to list the

project in the Plan of development programmes for 2008: the land for the construction of the Nordic Centre Planica worth 3 million Euros. The work is to be split into several phases. According to the initial financial scheme for the new centre, 25 million Euros are to come from the Slovenian budget, 40 million Euros from European Structural Funds, and the rest from private sources.

The Ski Association of Slovenia has also taken an interest in the centre and announced that it will contend for the organisation of the World Cup in 2013 or 2015. The Association also wishes to build a museum of ski-jumping and ski-flying, following the example of some other great centres. The project comprises the renovation of jumping hills (the 'Letalnica' ski-flying hill, the great Olympic jumping hill, the old Bloudek's giant jumping hill, and the small jumping hill for training), equipment for jumping hills (plastic and ceramics, artificial snow, lighting, machines for preparing ski-jumping hills); construction of a running track; artificial snow facilities, ropeways, athletic and football stadium, cycling and walking tracks, cultural heritage park, and an information point with supporting catering services. The complete renovation of Planica will also ensure new jobs resulting from increased sports activities, and, even more so, the sports-recreational, and tourist industry. Given the predominant sports and sports-recreational activities in the area, it is reasonable to expect an increased number of visitors in Planica and the surrounding places throughout the year, which will stimulate the further development of the entire valley of Zgornjesavska dolina.



Construction model of Nordic Centre



Text: NESNA ŽARKOVIČ, Photo: STA

This EU summit characterised by **energy and environment**

The spring summit of the European Council, the first under Slovenia's EU Presidency, will be dominated by three topics: the launch of the new cycle of the Lisbon Strategy, the energy and environment package, and the stability of financial markets. The Slovenian Presidency of the EU is expected to receive political guidelines for the further work, and the time frame is also expected to be confirmed. Previous work in different formations of the EU Council has been a good reference for the summit, while good coordination and the negotiation work of the Presidency has also been an added value for the summit.

The interview with the Minister of Economy, Andrej Vizjak, and the Minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning, Janez Podobnik, was carried out two days ahead of the spring EU Summit in Brussels

THE ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT PACKAGE WILL BE ONE OF THE MAIN TOPICS OF THE SUMMIT. WHAT IS THE ADDED VALUE OF THE SLOVENIAN PRESIDENCY?

Janez Podobnik: The added value of the Slovenian Presidency is that it has carried out excellent coordination and negotiation work and that the EU goes united along that path. We have kept key elements, which are justice and solidarity, in the conclusions for the summit, while all EU Member States have endorsed the ambitious approach of the package. The EU Member States are aware that there is no way back. Agreements and coordinated action in the European Parliament and in the Commission are necessary, otherwise the adoption of the energy and environment legislation package, for which ministers of the EU Member States have been constantly calling, could fail this year. The ministers have also been calling for support for the principles on which the legislation package

is based, and it is also very important to create mechanisms which will ensure the implementation of the set goals and prevent carbon leakage, such as the relocation of energy-intensive industry and jobs to the proximity of the Union. National support schemes, technological progress and research and development in energy continue to be very important for reaching those goals.

Andrej Vizjak: On the basis of the previous efficient work, the EU heads of state and government at the summit will give clear signals for further work. Concrete solutions for individual EU Member States were presented in January, and the Slovenian Presidency then had to coordinate the positions of the EU Member States on the set goals only a month after they »faced reality«.

BOTH DOSSIERS – THE ENVIRONMENTAL PACKAGE AND THE THIRD PACKAGE FOR LIBERALISING THE ELECTRICITY AND GAS MARKETS – ARE CURRENTLY AMONG THE MOST TOPICAL ISSUES IN THE EU. REGARDING THE ENERGY MARKET, THE MAJORITY OF COUNTRIES SUPPORT THE PROPOSAL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, WHICH ENVISAGES THE SEPARATION OF OWNERSHIP AS THE MOST EFFICIENT SOLUTION, BUT OTHER PROPOSALS SHOULD ALSO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT. WHAT ARE THE DEVELOPMENTS WITH

INTERVIEW

THE THIRD PACKAGE FOR LIBERALISING THE ELECTRICITY AND GAS MARKETS?

Andrej Vizjak: The Slovenian Presidency has managed to resolve an uncertain and somewhat controversial situation. The prevailing position is that the only possible way is the solution proposed by the European Commission and which goes towards ownership separation of production and transfer. Eight countries have compiled an alternative proposal and the issue is expected to be resolved by this June. The Presidency does not favour any solutions ahead of others and is in the role of coordinator. Energy will be in the focus of the EU Summit, not only as part of the energy and environment package, which presents Europe as a driving force in the fight against energy and climate challenges. It is important that the discussion is continued while countries are united in the opinion that political agreement should be reached by the meeting of the EU Energy Council in June. It is encouraging that all EU Member States are willing to build forward and look for the basis for a political decision, which is expected to be made by the June meeting of energy ministers. The Slovenian Presidency has also adopted the Strategic Energy Technology Plan, and its essence is creating opportunities out of problems. Economy ministers discussed the legislation package at three councils, at the Council on Competitiveness, the Council on Energy and the Council of Trade Ministers, because we are convinced that foreign trade is also closely connected to this issue.

WHAT WILL BE SLOVENIA'S COSTS FOR ACHIEVING THE GOALS OF THE ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT PACKAGE?

Andrej Vizjak: About 0.86% of GDP a year. Agreement and cooperation between the executive branch of power and the economy are of a key importance for the set goals to be achieved, because the package is a great challenge, in particular for energy-intensive industries. It must not be forgotten that both dossiers – the environmental package and the third package for liberalising the electricity and gas markets – are currently among the most topical issues in the EU. The countries are negotiating on both dossiers, but negotiations are still in the initial phase.

DRAFT CONCLUSIONS ON THE REDUCTION OF CARBON DIOXIDE EMISSIONS AND INCREASING RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES ARE THEREFORE EXPECTED TO BE FINALISED, WHILE THERE ARE MORE DILEMMAS REGARDING BIOFUELS.

Janez Podobnik: The key element is the application of sustainable criteria for biofuels. The Slovenian Presidency has set an ambitious goal: concluding negotiations by the end of 2008, so that the European Parliament could do its job by most probably the April session, which will be the last session before the 2009 European Parliament election. I expect the countries to put forward guidelines for further negotiations. I also expect that we will send a clear message to the EU summit that we will reduce CO₂ emissions, because the EU has the technological and financial capacity to do so. With reconfirmed commitments, the EU will preserve its credibility in third countries. Respect

for sustainable criteria is very important for biofuels, and the proposal on carbon dioxide capture and storage will be of key importance after 2020. The work on all proposals of the energy and environment package should be continued at the same pace. The countries have committed themselves to the fastest possible progress, so that the EU Council in the cooperation with the European Parliament could reach a definite agreement at the beginning of 2009 at the latest.

Andrej Vizjak: Slovenia has been preparing thoroughly for the action plans which will have to be created. Regarding the reduction of pollution and increasing renewable energy sources, I expect calls for the prompt adoption of the package, therefore, by the end of 2008, during the current term of the European Commission and the European Parliament. In future negotiations the EU will seek a 30% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, although the EU environment ministers committed last March to achieving a 20% reduction. This is the basis on which we are working. The Commission has already prepared provisions to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 30% if necessary. In this case, the highest value within the Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) would have to be »amended and adjusted«, and the sectors not included in the ETS would also have to be adjusted. There is enough time before 2009 for the adjustment, as the rest is to remain unchanged. The key part of the package is a scheme of greenhouse gas trading. This is a scheme in which the producers of emissions trade emission coupons. The new scheme of greenhouse gas trade, which includes all major industrial polluters, envisages the total amount of emission coupons at the EU level and not for each individual country separately, and the sale of the majority of permissions at auctions in EU Member States, which have to be open to all potential buyers. Households, construction, transport, the agriculture sector and waste are not included in the ETS. The ETS includes all major industrial polluters – there are currently about 10,000 such plants. According to the new proposal, plants which emit less than 10,000 tonnes of CO₂ will not be included in the system.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS INCREASED BY 70% BETWEEN 1970 AND 2004 AS A CONSEQUENCE OF HUMAN ACTIVITY. THE YEAR 2007 WAS EXPECTED TO BE A TURNING POINT IN THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE.

Janez Podobnik: It is important that both developed and third world countries have agreed on the necessity of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Climate change is at the same time a developmental issue. The objective of reducing the number of people living in poverty by half by 2015 will not be achieved if we do not pay attention to natural resources and the environment which we all depend on. I admit that achieving development goals and the simultaneous reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is not an easy task. Climate change is high on political agendas, because of scientific evidence and increased public attention, and the UN has presented an adequate multilateral framework for tackling the issue.



Text: RAMÓN MIKLUS, Photo: STA

Economy Minister Andrej Vizjak commenting on the adoption of a legislative package on the internal market in goods by the European Parliament.

MINISTER WELCOMES PASSING OF INTERNAL MARKET IN GOODS PACKAGE

Economy Minister Andrej Vizjak welcomed on 21 February the passing of a key legislative package on the internal market in goods, which the European Parliament adopted in first reading earlier that day. Vizjak told the press in Ljubljana that the package mainly benefited small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). According to the Ministry of the Economy's Peter Vrtačnik, the package eliminates national legislation that has so far hindered the flow of some EUR 500bn worth of goods in the presently non-harmonised market. The impact of national legislations regarding the proof of conformity of products was mainly felt by SMEs, which had to prove that their products conformed to rules in various Member States. This limited some 80% of SMEs to selling their products only on their domestic markets, Vrtačnik said. The package meanwhile transfers the burden of proof to authorisation bodies in Member States. Vizjak assessed that the package eliminated a type of protectionism that was harmful to consumers as well as the level of competition. The European Commission meanwhile said that if mutual recognition of goods worked, the EU's GDP would rise by 1.8%.

BAJUK: NEW LAWS AND FINANCIAL STABILITY SLOVENIAN EU PRIORITIES

Finance Minister Andrej Bajuk highlighted progress in European Commission legislative proposals and financial stability as he presented the priorities of Slovenia's EU Presidency to the executive committee of the European Banking Federation (EFB) in Ljubljana on 22 February. Bajuk singled out the Solvency II directive on insurance from the legislative proposals contained in the Commission's White Paper on financial services policy for 2005–2010. He said Slovenia planned to cooperate closely with other Member States, the Commission and the European Parliament when drawing up the wording of the law. According to him, the directive is to protect holders of insurance policies and to increase the competitive edge of Europe's insurance industry, while at the same time taking into account its diversity. A debate on changes to the investment funds directive (UCITS II), the financial insurances directive, and the directive on settlement finality in payments and securities settlement systems is meanwhile also planned to get underway during Slovenia's Presidency. In the field of infrastructure, Slovenia plans to closely

monitor the progress made on clearing and settlement and the Target 2 Securities project related to these issues. A debate on financial education for EU citizens and mortgage banking is planned for May's meeting of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council. "Questions of financial stability are among Ecofin's key priorities during Slovenia's Presidency," Bajuk stressed.

RAIFFEISEN FORECASTS SLOVENIAN GROWTH AT 5%, INFLATION AT 3.5%

Analysts at banking group Raiffeisen Bank expect Slovenia's economy to expand by 5% and inflation to stand at 3.5% this year, according to its Strategy Slovenia 2008 publication. The 5% growth figure exceeds the expectations of the central Slovenian economic think tank, the Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development, which has forecast growth of 4.6% for this year. Raiffeisen analysts expect growth to be fuelled by expanding investment in infrastructure, chiefly motorways, the report says. Meanwhile, the bank also expects a cooling of the inflation rate (currently above 6%) to 3.5% for the year. Prices of domestically produced food are expected to stabilise over the next two years, the report adds. According to the analysts, there could be a slowing in the pace of privatisation in Slovenia as other issues, such as the EU Presidency and the general election, are given priority among political circles. Delays in privatisation could dampen the mood on the Ljubljana Stock Exchange, Raiffeisen adds.

SLOVENIA'S SAVATECH RECOGNISED FOR PRESERVING HEALTH AT WORKPLACE

Industrial rubber and tyre manufacturer Savatech has been recognised by the EU for improving work conditions, the Labour Ministry said. Savatech is one of the nine companies that were honoured at the close of the "Lighten the Load" campaign, organised by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. The ministry added that Savatech has embarked on a comprehensive campaign for reducing the risk of bone- and muscle-related diseases. The company set up an interdisciplinary team for analysing workplaces, which drafted proposals for numerous successful improvements. The European Commission meanwhile said that 25% of the EU's workforce complains of back aches and 23% suffer muscle pain. According to the ministry, the Kranj-based Savatech and the Murska Sobota General Hospital were the two Slovenian representatives vying for the award. They were awarded the 2007 national award for best practice in safety and health at work. The campaign, which closed with an awards ceremony in Bilbao on 25 February, was organised with the aid of the European Commission and the Slovenian EU Presidency. The awards were conferred for the eighth time.

FLAGSHIP CARRIER INCREASES REVENUES BY 17% IN 2007

Flagship carrier Adria Airways generated EUR 180m in revenues in 2007, a 17% rise over 2006 and 7% above plans. Net profit amounted to EUR 425,000, six times more than in 2006, the company wrote in a press release on 28 February. Operating profit surged by 560% to EUR 4.7m, meaning that Adria's management worked well, the supervisory board agreed today. Chief supervisor Branko Franc Grosi said that the results have to take into account the 50% increase in the price of crude oil. Servicing airplanes for foreign partners greatly contributed to the business results, as the company generated EUR 13.3m from such services. The company

transported 1,136,431 passengers last year, a rise of 12%, and increased the number of commercial flights by 11% to 23,727. Adria Airways bought two CRJ900 passenger jets and boosted the number of employees by 15% to 679.

SI.MOBIL'S OPERATING PROFIT UP THREE-FOLD

Si.mobil, Slovenia's No. 2 wireless operator, nearly trebled operating profit in 2007 to EUR 29.7m on revenues which were up almost 30% to EUR 170.3m. "This was one of the best years in our history," CEO Dejan Turk told the press on 28 February. Profit before income tax, depreciation and amortisation soared 58.3% to EUR 53.2m, the company said. The number of users expanded by 18.2% to 497,300, with subscribers accounting for nearly 63% of the total. Si.mobil's market share increased by 2 percentage points year on year to 26.9%, according to chief financial officer Milan Zaletel. Si.mobil's GSM signal covers 99.6% of Slovenia's population, and the third-generation UMTS network, launched in September, has 25% coverage. The UMTS network will be expanded and its capacity increased this year, Chief Technology Officer Walter Goldenits added. Si.mobil had for years been complaining about lack of competition in Slovenia and the domination of state-owned market leader Mobitel, whose share has, however, been steadily shrinking. Asked about the present state of competition, Turk said it has improved, but a lot needs to be done to truly create a level playing field. One operator still has over 65% of the residential market and almost 80% of the business segment, and the state has not done all it can to provide conditions for successful work for smaller operators, he said. Si.mobil is a member of the Mobilkom Austria group, the mobile arm of Telekom Austria.

ITALIAN BUDGET CARRIER LAUNCHES MILAN-LJUBLJANA ROUTE

Italian budget carrier Volareweb will start operating on the Milan Malpensa – Ljubljana route on 6 May, Aerodrom Ljubljana, the operator of the Ljubljana Jože Pučnik Airport, said in a press release. "This is an important project for business travellers as well as tourists, as it opens up an entirely new market," Aerodrom Ljubljana Chairman Zmagoslav Skobir said. Though Slovenia and Italy are neighbouring countries, they are not connected by scheduled flights. Volareweb, the low-cost subsidiary of Alitalia, will operate the 180-seat Airbus 320 on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Fares start at EUR 20 one way, excluding taxes.

TOURIST INDUSTRY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT 2008

The Slovenian tourism trust index, based on a poll among Slovenian tourism professionals, shows the country's tourism industry achieved above average results in 2007. Similar results are expected for 2008 as well, the Slovenian Tourist Board (STO) said on 3 March. The Slovenian tourism trust index is the first study on how different groups from the private and public sectors view the development of tourism in Slovenia. The index was calculated by the Institute of Tourism at the Ljubljana Faculty of Economics in cooperation with the Tourist Board, based on the results of an electronic poll. The study was initiated at the end of 2007, while polls are carried out every four months. The annual tourism trust index for Slovenia in 2007 is below the European and global average, while the index for 2008 is above the average. The

panel of Slovenian tourism professionals nevertheless marked 2007 as successful for tourism. Expectations regarding the future development of tourism are much more positive in Slovenia than they are in Europe and the rest of the world. The year 2008 is thus expected to bring new opportunities for Slovenian tourism, its potential exceeding regional and global potential. Experts primarily listed the Slovenian EU Presidency as something that might boost the country's tourism.

SMALL SLOVENIAN FIRM DEVELOPS NASA SOFTWARE

A small software company from the industrial town of Trbovlje, some 50 km east of Ljubljana, has proved that even a small firm in a relatively remote place can score an important international contract. Dewesoft's team of 12 young experts started working on the project together with Austrian data acquisition solutions provider Dewetron in 2003, three years before the two were commissioned to help develop new shuttle monitoring systems for the U.S. space agency, Finance writes. Dewesoft Director Andrej Orožen said that the project was a great achievement, proving Slovenia's technological resolve. He is very proud that Dewesoft's entire team was educated in Slovenia. The new software enables real-time data transmission from space and detects automatically if the signal from a shuttle is lost. The team also met NASA's request to display results not from left to right, but from top to bottom, as the space agency's engineers have grown used to this from their previous system involving print-outs. Dewesoft technical manager Jure Knez said that the system developed together with Dewetron involves 25 measuring devices, which receive up to 3,000 parameters of data from 20,000 km away. NASA tested Dewesoft's software for six months before putting it into operation in the summer of 2007. Knez added that NASA is using Dewesoft's software not only for its space shuttle programme, but also on all of its flights. The contract with NASA is worth about USD 1m. Dewesoft was founded eight years ago and topped EUR 1.4m in sales revenues in 2007. Dewesoft also works with other renowned organisations such as Audi, BMW, Ferrari, Bosch, Siemens, Philips, Lockheed Martin, Boeing and Honeywell.

PRIME MINISTER SAYS GOVT TO CONTINUE PURSUING TELCO SALE



Prime Minister Janez Janša said on 5 March in Ljubljana that the government would push ahead with the privatisation of nearly 50% of the national telco and that »all options are still open«. The announcement comes two days after the commission overseeing the sale of the stake proposed to the government not to sell to either of the remaining bidders in an ongoing public tender, Iceland's telco Skipti and the British-German consortium Bain Capital & Axos Capital & BT.»I haven't read the recommendations by the privatisation commission,« Janša said. »We will decide after reviewing all our options.« He added that all options remained on the table, including a sale of the shares to the public, similar to that carried out with shares of NKBM, Slovenia's second-largest bank, late last year.Janša defended the government's actions in withdrawing from the business, saying that the telco privatisation showed that it had adopted a »well-weighted approach«.»We are acting like a good manager should. We accept good offers if we get them, otherwise we don't accept them,« he said.Speaking about the privatisation of Zavarovalnica Triglav, Slovenia's largest insurer, Janša said that the government was still trying to reach a compromise between the available options.

ADRIA AIRWAYS TO FLY TO FOUR NEW DESTINATIONS

Slovenian flagship carrier Adria Airways will launch services to four new destinations in Europe as of the end of March. The airline will fly from Ljubljana to Athens, Bucharest, Oslo and Stockholm. The carrier will fly to Oslo and Athens three times a week and to Bucharest and Stockholm four times a week. A Canadair jet with 84 seats will fly to Athens every Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. Adria Airways added it would work with Aegean Airlines to provide onward connections to the Greek islands. A 50-seat Canadair jet will service the route to Bucharest on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. The carrier will fly to Oslo on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Saturdays, while it will fly to Stockholm each Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Adria Airways already has a partnership with SAS Scandinavian Airlines on a route to Copenhagen and will continue to provide good connections to all parts of Scandinavia, the company added in its press release.

GOVERNMENT MOVES TO INTRODUCE MOTORWAY VIGNETTES FOR CARS



Transport Minister Radovan Žerjav speaking to the press after the government session.

The government decided on 6 March to introduce motorway vignettes for cars and leave the tolling of lorries unchanged until the introduction of a satellite-based tolling system. "This is the most rational and sensible decision, and it also ensures the financial sustainability of the motorway company, DARS," Transport Minister Radovan Žerjav told the press on Thursday. Žerjav said the details of the plan would be laid out in two weeks. "Next year trucks will be on satellite and cars on vignettes," he said. According to the government's action plan, satellite tolling would be introduced by August 2009 for trucks and by the end of 2010 for cars.

TELEKOM SLOVENIJE TO EXPAND TO CROATIA, SERBIA



Telekom Slovenije holding a press conference; CEO Bojan Dremelj.

Telecoms incumbent Telekom Slovenije said it intends to expand to Croatia and Serbia this year. "We are keeping an eye on these and other markets in the region," chief executive Bojan Dremelj told the press on 6 March. Dremelj would not divulge the details of the expansion. "We will not disclose the hows and whens at this point," he said. Telekom is already present in the Republika Srpska entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina with Internet service provider Blic.net, but now it plans to expand to the rest of the country as well. Its other markets in the region, Macedonia and Kosovo, were in the focus in terms of broadband development last year. This year it is the turn of Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, said the vice president for international operations and carriers, Dušan Mitič. In Macedonia as well as Albania, where it owns the ISPs On.net and Ipko respectively, Telekom will seek to expand to mobile telephony provision as a virtual mobile network operator, said Mitič. In addition, Telekom has started building an international optical network which will connect all of its subsidiaries. Certain parts of the network are already operational, according to Mitič. Telekom saw sales increase 5% to EUR 786m in 2007, with net profit down 15% to EUR 87.8m. Dremelj said the results were good considering the trends affecting all European operators. He said the company was not surprised with lower profit, as the group earmarked EUR 380m for investment, whereas sources of financing had gotten more expensive. Profit is expected to increase this year, but not if a big potential investment appears, said Dremelj, pointing to the possibility that Bosnian telecoms incumbent BH Telecom may be put up for sale. »If we see opportunities for further growth ... we believe it is right to invest for the future, even at the expense of lower short-term profitability,« Dremelj said.

EUR 832M EARMARKED FOR MOTORWAY CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION

The government adopted on 6 March the annual plan for motorway construction and maintenance for 2008, which projects spending of EUR 832m, up 13% over last year and the biggest sum since motorway construction began in the 1990s. Some 80 kilometres of motorway sections will open for traffic this year, as well as 11 kilometres of expressway and 3.1 kilometres of connecting roads. Construction work will continue on a total of 46.5 kilometres of motorway sections around the country. Transport Minister Radovan Žerjav told the press that the bulk of the funding will come from loans (EUR 175.8m), followed by EU funds (EUR 130.7m). Budget funds will amount to only EUR 15.5m, with licence fees projected to account for EUR 124.6m and VAT return EUR 84.6m.

ECONOMY EXPANDS AT RECORD 6.1% IN 2007

Driven by exports, the Slovenian economy expanded at an annual rate of 4.7% in the last quarter of 2007, while GDP growth for the whole of last year is estimated to have reached 6.1%, the highest rate since 1991 independence, the Statistical Office said on 10 March. Gross domestic product (GDP) at current prices amounted to EUR 33,542m (up 10.2% on 2006), or EUR 16,616 per capita (up 9.6% on 2006). "This was a year of exceptional achievements and record results," Karmen Hren, who is responsible for national accounts at the office, told reporters in Ljubljana. She said the period of stable and robust growth began with Slovenia's accession to the EU in 2004. Growth peaked at 7.2% in the first quarter of 2007, but then slowed down to 4.7% in the last quarter, which Hren said was the level before 2006. In its reaction, the Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis



Genovefa Ružić, deputy director of the Statistical Office, at a press conference on economic growth for 2007.

and Development (IMAD), a government think-tank, said the cooling off in Q4 was expected. Slovenia experienced its fastest growth since gaining independence and also beat IMAD's 2007 projection of 5.8% growth, IMAD director Boštjan Vasle said. Finance Minister Andrej Bajuk is sanguine about the projected slowdown, saying that the economic climate was positive and there was no cause for alarm. The government is ready, as the IMAD predicted this trend last year, he told the press. Data also show that domestic consumption increased in the second half of last year, but both private and public domestic consumption remained modest and lower than in the past years. The growth of employment meanwhile did not cool off as economic slowdown impacts employment with a time lag. Meanwhile, Slovenian economists said last year's lively economic expansion was a result of the strong performing foreign markets and a big bout of investment at home. They believe the cooling of the growth rate will also bring with it a cooling in inflation. Exports remained the most important factor for the GDP growth for the fourth year in a row. They increased by 13% in 2007 on 2006, contributing 8.8 percentage points to the GDP growth, the Statistics Office said.

SLOVENIA HAS ADVANCED TWO PLACES

The Centre for European Reform, in a publication entitled "The Lisbon scorecard VIII Is Europe ready for an economic storm?", has published among other things a table on the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy by EU member states. Slovenia has advanced two places since 2006 and is also the best EU newcomer in terms of implementing the Lisbon Strategy.

The Lisbon league table: Overall Lisbon performance

	Rank 2007	Rank 2006
Denmark	1	1
Sweden	2	2
Austria	3	5
The Netherlands	4	3
Finland	5	6
Ireland	6	8
UK	7	4
Germany	8	9
France	9	11
Slovenia	10	12
Estonia	11	15
Luxembourg	12	7
Belgium	13	13
Czech Republic	14	10
Cyprus	15	14
Spain	16	17
Latvia	17	18
Lithuania	18	20
Greece	19	22
Slovakia	20	23
Portugal	21	16
Hungary	22	19
Italy	23	21
Romania	24	25
Bulgaria	25	24
Poland	26	27
Malta	27	26

Text: ANJA LORENZETTI, Photo: Instrumentation Technologies archives



Instrumentation Technologies, the company with two big prizes in 2007

This company which began life in 1998 has become a real magnet for leading experts from all around the world. In only nine years, this young company from Solkan, a small but historical place near the border with Italy, has swept away the world competition and is setting new standards in science. Instrumentation Technologies is one of the world's leading companies in the development and manufacturing of beam position monitors and elementary particle accelerators. The owner and director of the company Rok Uršič is convinced that every innovation comes about through inner faith. "If you are passionate about it, you begin to bring it to life." The company's explosive growth and outstanding business nature was recently rewarded with two prestigious awards for special business achievements in 2007 – the Silver Gazelle and the prize of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia.

WHO IS ROK URŠIČ?

Rok Uršič, the owner and director of Instrumentation Technologies, began his business career when he worked as an electrical engineer at the synchrotron particle accelerator in Trieste. He gained experience in Italy and later accepted an invitation from the US Department of Energy and went to Virginia for five years where he helped build an accelerator worth almost one billion dollars, and in the end he participated in the construction of the Swiss Light Source. In the USA, he caught the business bug and upon returning to Slovenia he founded his own company but kept returning to Silicon Valley, to fuel his business spirit as he says. That's where they taught him three important facts. Number one: think big; number two: when it comes to great stresses which accompany the rapid growth of the company, you must know how to react to changes and unite the knowledge of all involved, and number three: you must never stop believing in yourself. After all these years of experience, Uršič became a successful and dynamic businessman, and his company is nowadays not only financially successful but also boasts very convincing concepts for development, a long-term development strategy and a presence on

the most demanding world markets. "Tackle those niches where you can become a world leader; work with passion, understand and constantly improve your business concept," is his slogan, which also applies to his company. Uršič decided to develop this very activity because the market niche in the field of accelerators is just big enough to allow his company to become a leading world provider. Nowadays, the company exports 100% of its products, and is one of a handful of companies around the world which offer similar products. Besides being exceptionally successful in his work and having received numerous science and business awards, Uršič is also a husband and father of three sons.

SYNCHROTRON ACCELERATORS AND LIBERA

What exactly does this company - which between 2002 and 2007 grew explosively from EUR 0.24 million worth of sales to an incredible EUR 5 million - produce? Many Slovenian and foreign experts work together under the same roof in Solkan, at tables covered with various wires, plates, integrated circuits, switches and other technical accessories, searching for ways to further improve their products, to perfect them and make them focus the ray as accurately as possible, while also searching for innovative approaches for new products. The Libera came onto the market in 2004 and is unrivalled in the world. We can say for certain that it is a real selling success - despite the fact that "only" a few thousand have been sold so far, they are bringing the company a breakneck rate of income growth. To better understand the functioning of Libera, we must return to nature. Elementary particles - electrons, protons and ions are accelerated in nature to achieve exceptional energies, causing numerous problems in determining and measuring precisely their position but being of paramount importance for use in human science. This is the most important reason why the inventions of this company from Solkan are so unique on the accelerator market (the construction of



which can reach prices from several hundred million euros to over a billion euros) and so necessary for humanity. These expensive accelerators are nowadays used intensively for research in particle physics, and they are particularly useful in medicine where they can be used for the early diagnosis and treatment of cancer. They are also indispensable for achieving other medical diagnoses and are also used to establish the age of archaeological finds, study the structure of proteins and unravel the human genome. Scientists also use them as tools for studying viruses – recently the well known virus “sars”.

The exceptional nature of this product is proven by the fact that this Slovenian company has signed contracts to cooperate with the largest foreign institutions, which purchase the Libera product from it. The risks for the company at the beginning were very large. A key role in the initial investment was played by the first two clients, the accelerators Soleil and Diamond. The contracts were signed, even before Libera was finished, and were the basis for a loan of almost EUR 300,000, provided by the French bank SKB. This enabled the final development of Libera. The deal with Soleil – one of the world’s largest accelerators worth EUR 1.5 million – could take effect straight away. To this day, contracts have been signed for the supply of Liberass to some of the largest accelerators in the world. They include Alba in Spain, Petra III in Germany, ESRF in France, Sinchrotrone in Trieste (Italy), SSRF in Shanghai (China) and many others. All this goes to show that the Libera concept really is outstanding.

SOLKAN HAS BECOME A MAGNET FOR WORLD EXPERTISE

The company currently employs just over 30 young people, 30% of them have doctorates, masters degrees or are young researchers. Due to the rapid growth of Libera sales and new plans for the future, the need for new staff is considerable so they are intensively employing new technical experts and experienced managers from near and far. Last June, the company was joined by the top scientist and doctor of molecular quantum dynamics Carlo J. Bocchetta, who spent the last years developing the synchrotron in Trieste. Bocchetta, who has over 30 years of valuable experience on scientific research projects, described working for the company in Solkan as “standing on a cliff and breathing in the fresh air.” Uršič, meanwhile, described Bocchetta’s joining the company as a quantum leap for the development of the company. At the end of last year, the company was also joined by the experienced US manager Allan Weeks, who has lived in Slovenia since 1994. He is an expert in creating business models. The company also has other external collaborators from all over Slovenia and abroad.

GIVING THE EMPLOYEES ENOUGH FREE TIME SO THEY DON'T BURN OUT

The team is young, dynamic and perfectly organised. Uršič shows understanding for the employees, allowing them rest and rewarding them financially as well as sending them to various training courses in Slovenia and abroad. He is aware that it is essential to offer people work which attracts them and to give them a flexible working timetable, which means a much to him and his employees. Uršič is convinced that employees must be given enough time off to prevent them running the risk of burnout.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD IN STORE FOR THE COMPANY?

The company does not wish to reveal all its plans for the coming years. They are by all means ambitious – at the end of this year they will present the world market with an innovation, which has not been seen before. The company is convinced that with this product it will reach entirely new market niches, which aren’t directly connected with accelerators but nevertheless belong to the scientific research area. According to the company, these new markets are even greater than the present accelerator market. Everything written above shows at least a part of this company’s excellence. Besides great successes in its field, relations among the company’s employees and its external relations are also exemplary. The company has no defined boundaries. Instrumentation Technologies has in recent years been cooperating with the Japanese and other countries. Its clients include scientific institutions from all over the world. The Libera workshops, which are organised in Solkan and are attended by experts from the world’s most renowned scientific research institutes, bring together global expertise. Only last year, 27 leading experts from 13 countries attended a workshop – something which undoubtedly enables a very colourful exchange of experience.

2007 – A YEAR OF EXCELLENCE AND PRIZES

There is no doubt that both Uršič as an individual and his company, fully deserve both prizes with which they were crowned in 2007. Uršič received a Business Award of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, while the company as a whole received the Silver Gazelle Award in the competition for the fastest-growing company. All this further proves that this is a company with great potential. The company encourages both the professional and personal development of its employees, and enables the realisation of quality business ideas which is unquestionably proven by the fact that Instrumentation Technologies is already today a globally recognised corporate trademark with a great future. Rok Uršič also sees the prizes as an opportunity for the company to promote values in which it believes, thereby helping the surrounding area to grow together with the company, creating an environment which will stimulate larger, more courageous business moves. These efforts are reflected in its suggestion to the Slovenian government that Slovenia should join the FAIR project which is one of the first in the ESFRI (European Strategic Forum for Research Infrastructure). This would enable Slovenia, which as a small country does not have the possibility of acquiring important research infrastructure, to have access to important projects at the very outset.

Text: JOŽE OSTERMAN, Photo: STA

Boris Pahor about Slovenes on RAI

The well-known, almost 94-year old writer Boris Pahor, a Slovene from Trieste who spent his whole life in this littoral town, where the Roman and the Slavic space meet intensely and the German begins not far away, was a guest of the reputable show 'Che tempo che fa' on Italian public television RAI 1. In front of almost five million viewers, which was the audience of the show, he talked about the Slovenes who have been living on the Western side of the border between Slovenia and Italy and about their history. If we know that even today relatively few Italians south of Milan know where Slovenia is and also very few know about the Slovenian minority, this was truly a special event for the Slovenes living in Italy, which will no doubt contribute to a better understanding between the two nations which, despite the growing coexistence sometimes is still disturbed by misunderstanding.

Pahor spoke very openly about some historical events, especially about the ethnic cleansing that the Slovenes in Italy were exposed to during the time of fascism from 1920 to 1944 and about the painful events that culminated especially during the Second World War and immediately afterwards, when the maelstrom of war first hit the Slovenes and the post-war revenge later the Italians. Italy had a chance to listen to the story which filled the past with death and violence, but which the new era, in which both nations and their countries are in the European Union, is turning into a warning not to be forgotten, but by all means forgiven.

BIZET'S CARMEN IN MARIBOR

The ambitious Maribor theatre prepared as the height of its opera season the famous Bizet's opera Carmen. The opera was directed by Italian guest Alessio Pizzecchi, while the baton will be time be in the hands of a woman – the artistic director of the Maribor opera

house, Karmen Kamenšek. It is understandable that the solo parts were taken by the best that the Maribor opera house has to offer: Carmen will be sung by guests Rita-Lucia Schneider and Karine Ohanyan, while in different parts appear Sabina Cvilak (Micaela), Matjaž Stopinšek (Jose), Jože Vidic (Escamillo) and Jaki Jurgec (Morales). The stage-director is Michelle Ricciarini, the costume designer is Sandra von Trauttmansdorff, and the choreographer is Valentina Turcu; all the guests are from abroad.

The director designed the opera as a play with an accentuated contrast of the Mediterranean world between violence and sexuality, love and death. This most well-known of Bizet's opera, which started its triumphant journey on the stage in 1875, is one of the key projects for the Maribor theatre, with which they intend to present internationally, as well as at most of Slovenian cultural festivals.



MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY AND THE FIRM POSITION OF THE SLOVENE LANGUAGE

The purpose of International Mother Language Day is to warn of the necessity of preserving the cultural and linguistic differences of particular environments, which enables intense flows of creative energies and preservation of the whole spectrum of the energies embedded in humankind, which draws its best creative achievements primarily from diversity. On this occasion, one of the best known younger experts in the Slovene language, Dr Marko Stabej, who is a sharp observer and analyst of the social role of language in Slovene and world relations, discussed the role of Slovenian.

The question its dying out (along with similar small) languages is often a topic of expert debate, especially with regard to the progress of global English, but Dr. Stabej is very optimistic: "The Slovenian language will not die out for at least several generations, and if it happens, it will happen together with all other European languages," and he adds that Slovenian is not one of the smallest languages in the world at all, as only 5 per cent of languages in the world have more than 2 million speakers. With regard to current Slovenian language policy, which has also left a strong mark in the Slovenian parliament, Stabej thinks that it is still too orientated to preserving and protecting the language, and too little to 'equipping' and offering Slovenian in the form of various language and translating tools, single- or double-language electronic dictionaries and terminology sources; especially important is the offer of Slovenian for foreigners and immigrants. He reminded that it has been established elsewhere that immigrants and their languages are not a barrier, but a potential, and not only in the cultural, but also in the economic sense. "A successful and satisfied immigrant who knows both languages will become a mediator between their current and former environment, which can be only good," believes Stabej.

SLOVENIAN ART IN BRUSSELS

It is understandable that Slovenia is using its Presidency of the European Union in order for other Member States to get to know as much as possible about us and Slovenia's attractions. The presentation of Slovenian art and culture has become a constant in Brussels, where all the paths of the increasingly connected European community meet, and it is recording satisfactory interest and a friendly response. In Brussels town hall an exhibition was opened where the biggest Slovenian bank, Nova ljubljanska banka, presents a part of its collection of fine arts created after the second World War, which the bank has been systematically acquiring since its inception. The exhibition was prepared by art critic Stane Bernik, and he chose around 50 pieces, including work by Andrej Jemec, Tone Kralj, Gabrijel Stupica and Metka Kraševc. The exhibition was, among others, opened by the mayor of Brussels, Freddy Thielmans, and the Slovenian ambassador in Brussels, Borut Trekman.

At the beginning of March a small film festival was organised in Brussels, in collaboration with Creative Media Business, where some recent Slovenian movies were presented to the audience. It started with the showing of the new record-breaker – the most seen Slovenian movie, 'Rooster's Breakfast', directed by Matjaž Naberšnik, and it continued with a movie by Franci Slak, who recently passed away, 'The Felons', and a family drama directed by Igor Šterk, 'Tuning', which is taking place in Brussels and Ljubljana. Before each showing, an animated movie, where



Slovenia has a rich tradition, was shown: 'Beezes' directed by Gregor Mastnak, 'Lovesick' by the young director Špela Čadež, and 'Vertigo Bird' directed by Sašo Podgoršek.

The presentations were also accompanied by literature, as Lucija Stupica, Boris A. Novak, Gorazd Kocijančič and Aleš Sterger introduced themselves in the Slovenian House in Brussels at the beginning of March. Prior to that, the same authors, together with Nejc Gazvoda and Mitja Čander, were also presented at an evening of modern Slovenian art in the interesting Brussels bookshop/ international house of literature called Passa Porta, as well as in Ghent and Antwerp, which was organised by Student Publishing House and the lectureship of Slovene language at the University of Ghent. The philosopher and translator of philosophy, Gorazd Kocijančič, commented that responses to his literary/philosophy evenings around Belgium were really exceptional.

SLOVENIA LINKING THE SLAVS WITH A BRIDGE OF PROSE

From the end of February until the first half of May a festival of Slavonic cultures takes place in Slovenia called Slavonic Bridge, which also be the central literary event of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue in the country holding the Presidency of the European Union. The organisers of the festival, which connects mainly creators of prose, are the Forum of European Cultures, magazine Apokalipsa and Cankarjev dom. The festival was opened by Serbians Mihajlo Pantić and Gordana Čirjanić, and since then the festival has continued each Thursday in the Club of Cankarjev dom with readings and meetings of writers from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Russia, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Belarus, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Croatia and Ukraine. In ten literary evenings one male and one female author from each country presents themselves; only the Russians and Poles will present one author. The organisers have invited authors of various ages; the only criteria was recognition in their own environments.

The project is largely the work of the Forum of Slavonic Cultures, which was formed on the incentive of political encouragement from cultural ministers of Slavonic countries some six year ago, and the quickly growing cultural and economic contacts between Slavonic countries, some of which are members of the EU (and the others are not (yet)). This was an additional motive to organise the festival, which thereby adds a wider dimension to the year of intercultural dialogue.

ZAGREB THEATRE IN LJUBLJANA

The good old relations between the Gavella Theatre in Zagreb and the central Slovenian theatre house SNT Drama from Ljubljana have strengthened again in recent years. In October last year the Ljubljana team performed in Zagreb at the 22nd Gavella Evening with Moliere's 'Tartuffe' directed by Dušan Jovanović, and at the beginning of March a company from Zagreb returned the visit with 'Midsummer Night's Dream', directed by the Macedonian director, Aleksandar Popovski, which the critics upon its premiere reviewed as one of the biggest of Gavella's successes in recent years. The hall was full and the audience enthusiastically applauded the Zagreb performers. Special attention was – in the otherwise very young team – attracted by actor Pero Kvrđić, who is an undisputable legend of the Zagreb theatre.



Zijah Sokolović

Ljubljana, again the hall of SNT Drama, was also chosen as the venue of an almost unbelievable jubilee – the 1500th performance of the monologue 'An Actor... is an Actor... is an Actor' by Bosnian actor Zijah Sokolović, who now lives in Vienna, but has performed many times in Ljubljana. Sokolović made a great introduction to the jubilee already at the well-attended press conference, where in an hour and a half he made everybody laugh by sharing numerous anecdotes related to the show. A master that knows his work ...

THE FINEST COMEDY IS 'A FLEA IN HER EAR'

The theatre festival Comedy Days 2008, which offered eight performances in the competition part and four plays in the accompanying part, ended in Celje on 9 March and was attended by approximately 3700 spectators. That, of course, means that all shows were sold out, as the theatre in Celje seats 300 people; but the fact is not surprising, as it is similar every year.

Each year an award is presented for finest achievements in comedy. The finest performance this year according to the critics was Feydeau's 'A Flea in Her Ear', performed by SNG Nova Gorica, while the audience selected the comedy 'The Doctor In Spite of Himself', jointly produced by SNG Nova Gorica and Koper Theatre. The finest comic actors are Barbara Vidovič from SLG Celje and Iztok Mlakar from SNG Nova Gorica, while the finest director is Boris Cavazza for his production of 'Taking it Over', performed by SNT Drama Ljubljana.

THE GREAT WAR IN THE KRN MOUNTAINS

Among the cultural events organised by Slovenia during the time of its Presidency of the Council of the EU is also the exhibition 'Hell in the Mountains above Soča'. The first in the series of these exhibitions (which will be on display also in Belgian Ypres, in Rome, Paris and London) was opened on 26 February in Vienna. It was set up in an imposing building complex called the Arsenal, built in the middle of the 19th century, where the Austrian military museum is now located. The exhibition displayed photographs and documents from the permanent collection of the Museum of the Soča Front in Kobarid. This is a clear and soul-stirring report of the suffering and difficult ordeals of soldiers of different nationalities of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and their opponents, the soldiers of the Italian Kingdom. They fought on a 90 km long battlefield called the Soča Front. Here, from May 1915 to October 1917, eleven Italian and one joint Austro-German offensive took place. In violent encounters, mainly in the difficult mountainous world, more than three hundred thousand soldiers lost their lives. More than ten thousand inhabitants of these places by the side of one of the most beautiful European rivers, Soča, had their homes destroyed. The museum in Kobarid, which received a Council of Europe award in the third year after its opening in 1993, has an important place among Slovenian institutions. It is well known also abroad, and in highest circles, as kings, presidents, prime ministers and generals are among its average 60,000 visitors per year. In July 2007 they registered their one-millionth visitor. The many very well preserved traces of the war ninety years ago in Posočje are an inheritance of European significance. For their protection and authenticity of presentation, a special foundation was established in 2000. By 2007 it had set up six open-air museums. Linked by a 109 km long Path of Peace, they include numerous historical, cultural and natural sights in Posočje, where its dark past is merged with the beautiful natural environment. The Austrian military-historical museum with its rich collections of arms and military equipment is a place of memory of the Austrian monarchy soldiers, which fought under its flag on many European battlefields, and also of soldiers and sailors of Slovenian origin. Recent research showed that many of them had high positions in the army; as many as eighty were generals and admirals. For example, the head of the general staff of the land forces, later the commander-in-chief of the navy during the 1st World War, was the only person with the rank of a 'Grand Admiral' in the Austrian navy history. He was from Tolmin, a town not far away from Kobarid. His impressive grave is in Vienna.



Photo: Željko Cimprič

Andrej Škufca and Katarina Venturini, our best dancers bid farewell

Beautiful conclusion to a rich dancing career

Text: MIŠA ČERMAK
Photo: Igor Lapajne



There are seventeen years of dancing behind them, twelve years at the top, several world championship titles, an excellent career on the professional dancing floor, collaboration in the dance performance of Goran Bogdanovski, a personal crisis after ten years of love, from which they managed to continue their career, last year's performance of Petdeseta and a dancing farewell on 2 March in a sold-out Gallus hall in Cankarjev dom. Seventeen years together of breathing, training, dancing, successes, happiness and tears have passed into history, which also illustrates their future. "With peace in our hearts, we said that this is it. We have accomplished more than we ever hoped to expect. We are grateful for the whole journey. The end is beautiful, because the journey was rich." And that is why they are artists, even of their own lives.

KATARINA VENTURINI

DANCE IS LIKE AN EMBRACE OF LOVE: TWO ARE IN ONE AND ONE IS IN BOTH; IT'S AN INTERTWINING OF TWO DIFFERENCES INTO SOME KIND OF SAMENESS, WHICH BRINGS OUT THE EXCELLENCE ALSO IN BOTH OF YOU.

Absolutely. Some years ago, we had a period when we were saying: Two is one. But that doesn't mean that we are the same - we are very

different! And intertwining this difference into one is an art.

WHAT ARE THE CONSTRUCTIVE DIFFERENCES THAT LEAD TO SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL?

THE SEARCH THAT CAN REACH THE ESSENCE?

Andrej is more passionate; I am not, but he cools down faster and is quicker to forgive. I can bear a grudge for a long time. And that is why he is the one who is the first to want to resolve a conflict and talk about it, although we both like to talk and get to the bottom of things. Andrej is skilful with words and he talks a lot, and I find that soothing. I get to the point quickly and say things in a few sentences.

A RELATIONSHIP WHICH IS BEING BUILT WITH SOMEONE WITH THIS KIND OF WIDENESS AND DEPTH AND IS SURELY ALSO LOVE – THE ENERGY, WHICH IS ALIVE AND FLOWING?

That is right. Some time ago we were also intimate partners – today, we are separated, but when we came to dancing, we were both aspiring to the same goal. Which is good. We both wished to be better, the best. We weren't just aiming for first position in the world

championship; we wanted more. We also don't want others to praise us; we just want to prove to ourselves that we can be better today than yesterday. I am not perfect, and I know that there are a lot of things that can be improved – physically and mentally. Only when you arrive somewhere can you see where you can go forward.

EVEN FOR SPIRITUAL ADJUSTMENT THERE EFFORT IS NECESSARY – THIS GROWTH IS PREPARED FOR US BY LIFE ITSELF, AND ONLY IN DOSES WE CAN MANAGE – HOW DOES THAT WORK FOR YOU?

It is always the way in these things, that you get a lesson depending on your level, which means that the lessons get harder every time. I cope with this as I go along. Of course, if I am very sad, I rummage through my past, but when I look back, I see that we were saved by optimism and the belief we placed in the same goal. We subjected everything to this goal. Although we are very different, we have the same goal. And that is why I sometimes say – we.

WHEN DOES THIS 'I' SEPARATE ITSELF FROM THE 'WE'?

Although we were as one on the dance floor, I am a unique personality which differs from the personality of Andrej: I am Katarina, and a woman; he is a man, and this is the first difference between us. 'We' always became 'I' in the evening, when I closed the doors of the studio and went home, or to say it differently - in the part of life that wasn't dance. Which is an art in itself; it wasn't easy, especially because we were dating for ten years, and when we weren't a couple anymore, I still talked about 'we'. I had to learn to say 'I'.



DO YOU SOMETIMES MISS THIS 'WE'?

I do not miss it, because I got on with my life. And also, I have that intimate 'we'. I don't miss it.

HOW MANY SLEEPLESS NIGHTS SPENT IN CONTEMPLATION WERE NEEDED FOR SOMEONE WHO IS IN THE PUBLIC SPOTLIGHT (WHICH CAN ALSO CREATE ONE'S SELF IMAGE) TO SET BOUNDARIES FOR AND NEVER FORGET WHAT IT IS ALL REALLY ABOUT?

You are strong, when you are weak. All these tears, hopelessness, doubts, moments and periods of helplessness, crisis...Only when I accept this, can I do something about it. It is not easy. Life for me was dance; I had no personal life. Only then when our intimate relationship ended, did I start to look on life from a wider perspective. However, the experience I gained through dance – to achieve excellence and cooperate, adjust, sometimes even subject yourself to another person, are great, and they influence even my personal life. I am sure that this was and is a great lesson in relationships.

WHEN I LOOK INTO YOUR BRIGHT EYES, WHICH ARE OFTEN MOIST, I AM REMINDED BY THE TENDERNESS OF BEING A MOTHER. I SEE YOU IN THIS ROLE.

I want to be a mother. I can't say when, because I don't know. But this is something I want, and I know that when I become a mother, I will be 100% mother – I will not be dancing and carrying the baby to competitions, no; then I will be a mother. I am very, very critical and strict, I expect much of myself, and I do not want to be average at anything. And that is why I don't do many things, but whatever I do, I do it in a way that I am satisfied with myself; in a way that meets my standards.

THEREFORE, GIVING EVERYTHING AND DOING YOUR BEST IN A GIVEN MOMENT – IN ALL THE AREAS IN LIFE?

Yes. I am hard and relentless on myself, but I think that is the key to excellence.

ANDREJ ŠKUFCA DOES YOUR FIERINESS WORK FOR OR AGAINST YOU; ARE YOU, BECAUSE OF IT, MORE SUCCESSFUL AND PENETRATING, ARE YOU PUSHED BY IT TO WHERE ONE MUST FACE ONESELF AND FIND CAUSES FOR SOME REACTIONS?

All of the above (smile). Some personal trait is not altogether good or bad. Why do you think of me as fiery? Well, it is true actually. I can be fiery - it gives me extra energy, but under some conditions this can be quite inconvenient for me and the people around me.



AND YOU SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES?

Yes, but I am the kind of person who doesn't leave problems unsolved. This is hard, especially if the problem is of a personal nature, or if it represents troublesome work in advance, but it doesn't work any other way. There were a lot of problems in our career which resulted from this, and it was usually me who took the first step in solving problems and wanting to clear up the misunderstandings.

YOU TWO KNOW AND ACCEPT EACH OTHER; HOW IS IT GOING FOR YOU TWO NOW THAT YOU ARE NOT A COUPLE ANYMORE?

Its different, that is for sure. In the last few years that we haven't been intimately together anymore, a lot of things have changed for the better. But honestly, our dancing even then was much stronger than our personal relationship. But the two worlds – personal and professional – were interwoven and had an impact on each other. I tried very hard.

WHEN ON THE DANCE FLOOR, THE MAN TAKES THE LEAD; WHEN TRAINING, IS THE RELATIONSHIP EQUAL?

This often leads to conflict. People who don't dance together cannot really imagine the frustration of dancers who dance together. Physical contact can be quite a problem if it is very strong, very physical; everybody thinks that they are doing it right; and if no one yields, there is a problem right away. When we come to that, my fieriness is not an advantage. While training, the relationship should be equal, but all men are a bit chauvinistic – especially when it comes to the role where we are supposed to lead. But I don't see myself in that sense. I am trying to see myself as an excellent partner, who gives support, who has demands and expectations, but applies the same standards to himself. I am hard on myself, which can be difficult, because I am as hard on others and I expect a lot – of myself, too.

ON STAGE YOU SHONE WITH EMOTION.

Every successful dancing couple has something special – I do not know what we have - maybe our polarities, our differences. This can be something special, if you are a team and support each other, but this kind of polarity can also be divisive. We always had powerful strength that held us together, although sometimes it was really hard!

IS THIS DESTINY?

My former training instructor and my good friend said to me once: "Andrej, you can run away as you wish; if you are meant to get it, you are going to get it one way or another." I, too, believe that there are no wrong choices; any gets you somewhere. I try to think as positively as I can, and yes, take responsibility for my actions. When I know I've made a mistake, I accept it and thus it is easier to go on.

DO YOU BASE YOUR DECISION ON INTUITION?

Of course, I concern myself with reason, but I am not a mathematical type. I believe in intuition, which can guide us, encourage us and create us. Intuition exists, but we are still not capable of listening to it, because of our way of life. I am the kind of person who needs a lot of time to come to a decision; I doubt, wait for the right moment, which always comes. But when I decide, I decide for good. As a matter of fact, I just go with the feeling. When dancing, I have to train myself as a human, not only as a dancer, because I want to be an artist, not only become brilliant at dance steps, but leave my mark on dancing - the mark of Andrej, who dances in a particular and unique way. And if you want to be an artist, you have to be concerned with yourself, because you have to be able to express your personality.

DO YOU FOLLOW THIS PHILOSOPHY ALSO IN PERSONAL LIFE? IS THERE EVEN A WISH TO DO SO?

It is; I do have it. But in my case, dance is the top priority, and my partner understands that. I always seek a balance and try to understand things. In that way it is easier to cope with them – I also bear that in mind when I train. I want people to understand me.

HOW DO YOU COPE WITH PAIN? DO YOU LET IT OVERWHELM YOU?

Sometimes I do. But most of the time I take action and solve the problem. The pain exists mostly because of emotions, and emotions can be efficiently managed through a conversation with someone involved in the conflict. I speak of people, who are close to me, of course. I do not believe people can change; it is more an acceptance of our faults, which can be thus better understood and controlled. Only when you are reconciled with yourself, can you live with ease. This is my experience and, thanks to God, I am dancing, which demands the whole person, mentally and physically. Dance is love.

IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH KATARINA, THIS ALL-ROUND BOND YOU SHARE, SOMETHING INDESTRUCTIBLE – ALTHOUGH WE KNOW NOTHING LASTS?

I think it is. I think the hardest trial is already behind us. People were shaking their heads, asking how we could manage. When we were separated and still dancing together, we went through rough times, it was really difficult...But when I look back, I can understand people; I know that we had to be really strong and determined to live through that period, which was quite rough for us. And if we survived that...

Text: BOGI PRETNAR, Photo: TOMO JESENIČNIK
Ada with white milk bread rolls

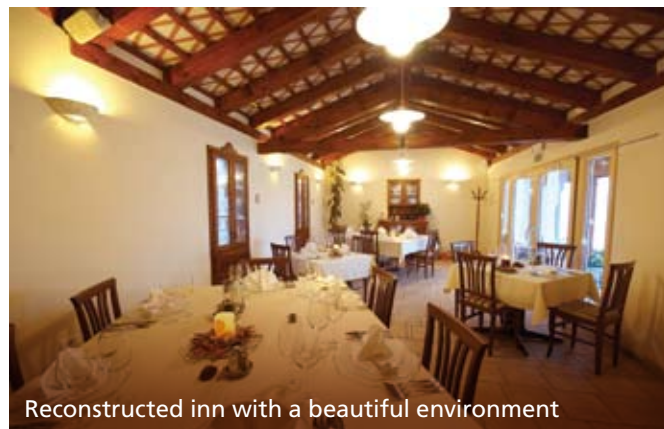


Špacapan Inn, Komen in the Karst region

Komen is one of the central towns of the Slovenian Classical Karst, or the Komen Karst. Although the Bora wind is very strong here, it is a really nice town. The easiest way to find Komen is by taking Sežana near the former Slovenian-Italian border as your starting point. And if you decide to go there, do not forget to visit the nearby village of Sveto, where you can find one of the most interesting churches in Slovenia. The church of St. Tilen has an octagonal nave (1576) covered by an umbrella-like roof construction resting on only one pillar. Since the village of Sveto is only one and a half kilometres away from Komen, or the other way around if you like, it is best if you eat at Špacapan's. Right on the main road in Komen, there is a distinguished inn which was upgraded into a nice boarding house with the help of EU funds.

The Špacapan family moved to Komen nearly three decades ago. It was supposed to be 'only temporarily', but they struck roots and bought the hired inn. Today, their daughter and son help Ada and her husband. It was the son's idea to build a brewery under the restaurant, which is very popular especially among younger

generations. Unique to the house is an old renovated deep Karst well, which was converted into a picturesque wine cellar for the distinguished tasting of wines from near and far.



Reconstructed inn with a beautiful environment

CULTURAL TRAILS

Ada belongs among those elite cooks who have beaten off rivals in the traditional cooking competition for the blue ribbon award given by the Delo publishing house and become Cook of the Year. It is true that seven years have passed since then, but Ada's ambitions have not changed. She was the head of the Sežana catering section at the Chamber of Commerce for several years and a Karst cuisine driving force of the month. Unfortunately, there were not enough persistent partners in the neighbouring towns, so she ended up developing and upgrading the typical Karst cuisine in this area alone. For some years now, a professional chef, Marko Tavčar, has helped Ada in the kitchen. Like Ada, he was trained at the catering school in Izola. They both write down their ideas in two thick recipe notebooks bearing traces of all kinds of menus and are therefore a trustworthy source of inspiration. Working with wine, preparing homemade sausages according to the recipes of Ada's father-in-law and maintaining the garden are the jobs of Ada's husband. He is known for getting up early on Sundays and baking enough fresh bread for several days before 10 a.m.: white bread, corn bread and grain bread, brown bread with walnuts, onion bread or herbal bread roulades.

Ada has remained true to the local cuisine tradition. She was born in the Karst village of Črniče and still remembers many recipes followed at home. Together with Marko she adjusts the menu to seasonal vegetables and the fields nearby, where they get locally bred small livestock. She became Cook of the Year due to the exquisite taste of her breast of lamb roll filled with young nettle leaves and curd cheese, a bit of spicy žvarcet (goulash) with red sweet pepper and basil, duck breast in cranberry sauce and, of course, - Karst jota. Jota is a widespread stew, whose basic ingredients are usually sauerkraut and beans. The granish is provided by different pieces of pork meat or, even better, a sausage. And if you say Karst jota, it is understood that it is made from kisla repa (sour grated turnip) or a mixture of kisla repa and sauerkraut at most. It contains some brown beans as well. Potatoes cut into cubes and pieces of salted, smoked ham, which are actually the leftovers from a pork leg, dried by the Bora wind, are an absolute must.

Today, we would like to serve lamb in a slightly different manner: as decorative medallions on rosemary twigs. They will be accompanied by a well-cooked but firm Karst cornmeal polenta and mushrooms. The Karst is a region rich in mushrooms. You have not tasted a genuine Karst cuisine yet, if you have not eaten frtalja as a starter. And you will have to become familiar with the following Karst terms: frtalja is a kind of omelette, žvarcet is goulash, šelin is celery, juha iz šelina na oblič is a soup made from grated celery, njoki are small potato dumplings and štraube are short-crust flancati. We could go on, but let us get back to frtalja. It is an omelette, but a real frtalja contains one egg per person (and a small spoonful of flour) and a mixture of aromatic herbs and sometimes even dried ham cut into fine pieces. It goes perfectly with dandelion leaves and potato, or young chicory with beans, which are already in season. The njoki season, on the other hand, never ends. Njoki are soft dumplings made from white flour and hot mashed potato quickly cooked in boiling water. When they are done, they can be served with goulash, truffles, butter or melted cheese. Mushrooms, Gorgonzola or fried pancetta, dried bacon spicy due to pepper and salt, are also excellent choices. A genuine Karst female cook can prepare njoki so quickly that you cannot follow her fingers.

Have any modern cooking methods been introduced to the Špacapan kitchen, despite their loyalty to the local Karst ingredients? Ada: »Of course. I replaced lard with olive oil a long time ago. I use a lot of fresh herbs, such as dill, marjoram, thyme, laurel, and white wine and Parmesan cheese. Nowadays, we offer less beef and pork. We prefer young lambs and goats bred around here, where the animals can graze in the pastures. Božo breeds lambs and we

get goats, fresh homemade curd cheese and ripe goat cheese from Tomaž Žerjav, who lives in nearby Tomaj. My husband is a hunter. So we also prepare pheasants, ducks or other game from time to time.« Kid meat must hang in a refrigerator at two degrees Celsius for approximately two weeks before it is ready. Meat from the back is grilled, and finer pieces of meat are fried quickly in a frying pan and finished in the oven. Meat rolled in bread crumbs and fried in olive oil is very delicious as well.

Teran wine is indigenous to these parts. Without it, nothing happens. It is heavenly with all Karst dishes. And so are the local Vitovska Garganja and Malvasia white wines. They serve savoury homemade štraube, savoury short-crust flancati with the wine. »Nowadays, new production and cellaring approaches have raised the premium wine quality,« realizes Ada. She is not very talkative, since she has to run between the kitchen and the tables. This does not mean that she is not nice to her guests or that she does not chat with the regular guests, but only after the main wave of hungry visitors has calmed down. Do not refuse when she offers you a homemade digestif produced by her husband – homemade tropinovec (a strong spirit made from half-dried grapes), gin, homemade common rue brandy, gentian brandy and Teran liqueur. Their homemade cognac, vinjak strictly speaking, has received a gold medal. Cheers!

Lamb medallions on rosemary



Frtalja with fennel



Sweet štraube – short-crust flancati with vanilla mousse



Slovenes as maritime nation

The Maritime Museum as a symbol of centuries-old ties with the sea



Text: JOŽE PREŠEREN, Photo: Darinka Mladenovič

On different occasions, especially when Slovenes need to make important decisions regarding the sea, we publicly ask ourselves if we are a maritime nation at all. Recently, there have been enough such occasions, since our Government is adamantly against the introduction of the Croatian Ecological and Fisheries Protection Zone since it would mean free access to the world's seas would be impaired. And when it is already perfectly clear that we are a maritime nation, a question arises as to whether we are actually aware of it. Although Slovenia has its own piece of the sea and coast, its own port, an extremely important window to the world, as well as a strong port company and seaside resorts, Slovenian maritime history – evidence that Slovenes have been connected with the sea for long centuries – is generally less known. The task of documenting and informing Slovenes about lesser known historical facts is carried out by the experts employed at the Maritime Museum "Sergej Mašera" in Piran, which is one of the most beautiful towns along the entire Adriatic Sea coastline.

MARITIME HISTORY

Among the important documents on show at the museum there is also evidence that Slovenes were already important ship owners in the 14th and 15th centuries. Of course, we have to take into consideration that they did not have their own country at that time. This was only their contribution within the Austro-Hungarian Empire to which they belonged. That is why the Slovenian archives have also preserved elements of Austro-Hungarian history. It is

well-known that, in the 19th century, Austria-Hungary started developing a military navy in addition to its merchant fleet, especially after the defeat of Napoleon's army. At first, naval headquarters were in Venice and, later on, in Trieste. After 1856, the most important military port was in Pula, and two naval bases were located in the ports of Šibenik and Boka Kotorska. The personnel of the Austro-Hungarian navy, like the navy of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia later on, were multi-ethnic, and Slovenes played a significant part in it. Many men were drafted, and many decided to study at military-naval academies. Several Slovenes in the merchant marine as well as in the military navy prove that Slovenes, too, have a long tradition and a special place in the





maritime trade. The North Adriatic ports of Trieste, Koper and Piran were involved in shipping wood, citrus fruits, salt and ore. At the Museum in Piran, there are several documents concerning these trading activities, and the many models of warships and civilian ship from previous centuries bear witness to maritime affairs. In addition to the models, there are many nautical items, uniforms, souvenirs and personal objects pertaining to individual sailors. The collection tells the story of Slovenian sailors and their lives. Visitors can thus get acquainted with the captain of the battleship 'Anton Dolenc', a naval officer, Ivan Koršič, a ship's clerk, Ivan Rupnik, and others through their personal belongings. It should be noted that up to 1918, approximately 45,000 Slovenian sailors, 9,000 non-commissioned officers, 100 senior officers, 66 admirals and 25 people holding senior positions (11 doctors, 7 superintendents, 6 priests and one shipbuilding engineer) and others served in the Austro-Hungarian navy. After



the dissolution of the imperial navy, many sailors transferred into the newly founded navy of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. After the Second World War, when after a short transitional period of partisan naval operations, a strong Yugoslav navy was founded, in which Slovenian sailors and officers played an important role an independent Slovenian merchant marine was also founded. An independent military navy began developing as late as 1991, following independence.

LIFE WITH THE SEA

The Maritime Museum in Piran not only presents their maritime tradition, but also Slovenes' with the sea today. Apart from the model ship collection, there is also a painting collection with maritime themes, and nautical instruments, among which there are old nautical maps and precious atlases found in Slovenia. An underwater archaeology collection is also presented in a unique way. The museum boasts a special exhibit, the yacht of the renowned Slovenian ballet dancers Pia and Pino Mlakar.

The Museum has some interesting annexes in the hinterland of Slovenian Istria: an ethnological collection, with an ancient *torklja* – an oil mill, with an olive press. The Salt Museum, in the centre of the working salt- pans in Piran, has been part of the Sergej Mašera Museum since 1991. The Museum has many plans for the future. It is attempting to acquire the old Montfort salt warehouses in Portorož and to extend its activities while preserving Montfort's original functions. Some 30,000 visitors per year come to see the collections.

WHY IS THE MUSEUM NAMED AFTER SERGEJ MAŠERA?

The Maritime Museum in Piran was named after the Slovenian naval hero from the beginning of the First World War Sergej Mašera. And who was Sergej Mašera? He was a Slovenian naval officer who was born in 1912, in Gorizia, and educated in Ljubljana and later on at the naval academies in Dubrovnik and Boka Kotorska. When Italy attacked the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Mašera was a lieutenant on board the naval vessel 'Zagreb'. After the Yugoslav army surrendered, the crew received orders to abandon ship. Lieutenant Mašera and a lieutenant Milan Spasić were the only men on board. On 17 April 1941, they blew up the 'Zagreb' to prevent her from falling into enemy hands, going down with the ship. They were declared National Heroes in 1973.

Text and Photos: ANJA LORENZETTI



Slovenian pilgrimage centres excellent for a Sunday trip

“Pilgrimage means that we have not quite arrived at the end, but we are still on the road towards it; to the fulfilment of our humanity, our being” are the introductory words of author Jože Dolenc in his book *Slovenski Romar*¹. People have been visiting pilgrimage sanctuaries for ages, seeking peace and expressing their deep yearning for salvation and closeness to God. As Dolenc puts it, people have been going to these holy places again and again to ask and pray for help with their burdens and worries, for good health and good fortune. Sacred routes have been known for ages. They are also mentioned in the Bible; pilgrimage, in fact, played an important role in the rise of higher culture. Because of these routes, people built bridges, roads, and crossroads; cities and churches grew. There are also several ‘holy mountains’ in Slovenia, which are visited by hundreds of thousand pilgrims from Slovenia and foreign countries every year. Among the most popular are Sveta gora or Skalnica above Solkan; the Parochial Church of the Virgin Protectress above Ptujška gora in Styria; the basilica of the Virgin Mary in Brezje; marna gora near Ljubljana; the Church of the Assumption on the Bled Island; and two pilgrimage centres abroad - the pilgrimage church of the Mother of God in Monte Santo di Lussari, and Castelmonte near Cividale del Friuli.

SVETA GORA OR SKALNICA ABOVE SOLKAN

One of the most beautiful churches (and among the three largest in Slovenia) is Sveta Gora (Skalnica) above Solkan. It is located at a height of 685 meters above sea level and has a magnificent view of the Adriatic and the Friulian lowlands and Mt Triglav, across the Vipavska valley inland and the Istria hills. In Antiquity, Skalnica was a very important strategic point, because of its geographical position. Some even believe that there was a pagan temple here. The founding of this pilgrimage site is connected with the miraculous appearance of St Mary who ordered a shepherd girl named Urška in 1539 to build her a church there. Urška was accused of lying and thrown in jail, but was always miraculously rescued. Finally, the governor-general of the province of Gorizia Hieronimus Attems donated the land and allowed the building of a church, which has a well-known altar of Mary and Jesus. Many consider Sveta Gora to be the most important pilgrimage centre, because, as the legend goes, St Mary herself chose this place for her worship. Despite battles with the Turks, the Soča battles, and the explosion of a grenade during wartime, the local people have always managed to restore and repair the church. This is also indicated by the inscription above the entrance door which reads: I am standing on the mountain, as

before. Today, the pilgrims who visit Sveta Gora are Slovenes, Italians and Friulians. This is a place where nations shake hands, although their past was not always friendly. St Mary connects everybody and everything.

THE BASILICA OF THE VIRGIN MARY IN BREZJE, DEDICATED TO ST VITUS

On Slovenian soil there are at least three thousand churches, and 400 are proudly allied with the name of Mother of God. Amongst them, the ‘mother’ of churches dedicated to Mary is in Brezje in upper Carniola. Slovenes abroad and those living on Slovenian soil are under her protection. We can see her image in a mine somewhere in Australia, we can worship her in the chapel of the largest American church in Washington, and missionaries carry her picture wherever they go. »Carniola country holds no more pleasant a place than this second Eden, full of charm and grace,« are the words of the great Slovenian poet Prešeren, who was born only a few kilometres away. The church, which was first documented in the 11th century, lies on the upper Carniola plain below the forests of the Karavanke Mountains - Jelovica, Pokljuka and mighty Triglav. At first a modest church of St Vitus stood there, until 1800, when the priest, Ažbe, installed an image of the Virgin. The turning point in the history of the image of Mary in Brezje is the year 1863 with the occurrence of miraculous healings. Rumours about Brezje reached beyond the Slovenian border and this Franciscan church has become an official House of God of the Virgin Mary. The most important recognition was given to it by Pope John Paul II, when he bestowed on it the title of honour basilica minor (smaller basilica).

PILGRIMAGE CHURCH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

Monte Santo di Lussari in neighbouring Italy belongs to the oldest, highest and one of the most popular Slovenian pilgrimage destinations. Slovenes from ‘three Slovenias’ visit this pilgrimage centre - those from the mother country, from abroad and exile. This is a place where three worlds meet - Slovene, Romanic and German. For years these holy paths dedicated to Mary have brought Slovenes, Italians and Germans together.

¹ Translator's note
Slovenski romar (Slovenian Pilgrim) 1987, Mohorjeva družba



EGO AVTEM STETI IN MONTE SICUT PRIVS

**I FEEL
SLOVENIA**

Sveta gora or Skalnica above Solkan