

# Sinfo 06

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The latest from Slovenia

ON THE POLITICAL AGENDA: **The European Commission** evaluated the reform and budget plans of Slovenia  
IN FOCUS INTERVIEW: **Dr Senko Pličanič** SPORTS: **Matevž Lenarčič**



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1 – 3 September 2013  
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### ON THE POLITICAL AGENDA 9

Slovenian government

#### The European Commission evaluated the reform and budget plans of Slovenia

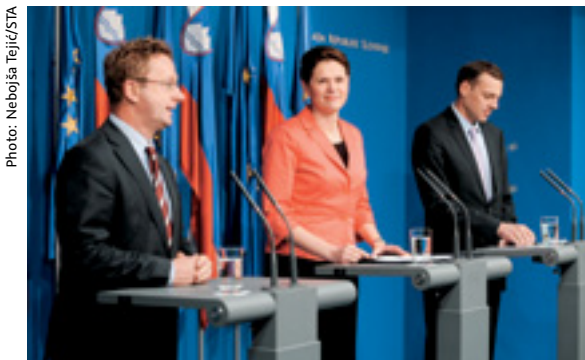


Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

### IN FOCUS INTERVIEW 21

Dr Senko Pličanič

#### We have clear objectives we want to achieve and measures to attain them



Photo: Personal Archive

### SPORTS 41

Matevž Lenarčič

#### Between the sky and the ice



Photo: Stanko Cruden/STA

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Photo: Bruno Toič

Tanja Glogovčan, editor

### Courage, persistence and a clear objective

We celebrate Statehood Day this month, and therefore we have included messages of congratulations in this edition from the Prime Minister, the President of the Republic and the President of the National Assembly. Everyone working on Sinfo join in their congratulations. We congratulate all Slovenians, and invite all who love Slovenia to celebrate, even if their homeland is elsewhere. We have another national holiday in June, Primož Trubar Day. Trubar played one of the most significant roles in the formation of the Slovenian nation. As well as being the author of the first printed books in Slovenian, a Protestant priest and translator, he was among the first to begin raising awareness about the unity of the Slovenian cultural, linguistic and political space.

We also present a book for children entitled An Illustrated Guide to the Constitution issued by the National Assembly. Some illustrations will surely make you laugh, which is as it should be: it's good to cheer you up.

The Slovenian Government received an evaluation of its measures to overcome the crisis. In this edition, we also include the recommendations of the European Commission, its findings and advice. In addition to the recommendations, the Commission also urges Slovenia to take measures to make the judicial system more efficient. So we focused particularly on that and interviewed Senko Pličanič, the Justice Minister.

Other important events include the recent constitutional amendments on referendums and the inclusion of the fiscal rule in Constitution.

To see better, we sometimes have to look 'from above'. Matevž Lenarčič successfully completed his flight over the Arctic – the cover photograph was taken by his hand, eye and heart. We can say without exaggeration that Matevž Lenarčič is an exceptional person; a pilot, whose latest flight has added a scientific and ecological note to his aviation adventures. As a traveller and a man, he sent all of us an important message: you need courage, persistence and a clear objective. And then, anything is possible. We introduce him with great pleasure and pride. Sunita Williams, an astronaut with Slovenian roots, has seen Slovenia from even higher – from space. And she said that it was beautiful.

This issue of Sinfo offers you many more interesting stories and interviews. Take your time. Don't just browse through it. And once again – congratulations on the Statehood Day. Our homeland is where we feel good.



Photo: GCO

## Tonight, dreams are allowed. Tomorrow is a new day

June is a special month for Slovenia. On 25 June, we celebrate Statehood Day, a holiday which marks the founding of the independent Slovenian state. At the solemn declaration of independence in front of an excited crowd, the first president of the republic, Milan Kučan, almost prophetically uttered words that went into history: "Tonight, dreams are allowed. Tomorrow is a new day." That same night, the tanks of the Yugoslav Army occupied Slovenian roads and attacked the new state, which successfully stood its ground and thus proved itself in the best possible way that it was truly sovereign. That was twenty-two years ago, since when Slovenia has been on a very turbulent and successful journey. I deliberately stress success, because we are often too despondent due to the current economic and financial crisis. Slovenia is undoubtedly experiencing serious trials, as we have to prove that we can maintain our economic sovereignty; nevertheless, we have every chance of success.

Confirmation that we are on the right path came from the European Commission, whose report on Slovenia states that the Government led by Alenka Bratušek has decisively approached the economic and financial problems, and extends the deadline to eliminate the budget deficit by two years. The political unity of the National Assembly - where the Deputies, with almost the same majority as at the Plebiscite, passed amendments to the Constitution which require a balanced budget (the fiscal rule) and change the rules on calling a referendum, which in the past have frequently been used as a political tool that paralysed decision-making - has certainly contributed to the credibility of the government measures. Thus the Government has enough options to develop and realise its measures to improve the situation in various fields. One of the major issues in the judicial system is efficiency, because proceedings take too long. The Government and the leading judicial authorities signed a special commitment which ensures

that court proceedings will take much less time than at present. The Government has already submitted amendments to the two key acts to the National Assembly which will enable the realisation of ambitious objectives, and is preparing several other changes. You can read more on this in the interview with Senko Pličanič, the Justice Minister.

But there is more to life than just politics, and you can find many more articles on interesting events in Slovenia. We are proud of the achievement of our pilot, Matevž Lenarčič, who flew over the North Pole in an ultralight aircraft made by the Slovenian manufacturer Pipistrel. On his journey, he recorded concentrations of black carbon in the atmosphere with measuring devices also made by a Slovenian producer. The data will be useful for researchers on the causes of climate changes. On the subject of pilots, Sunita Williams, a NASA astronaut with Slovenian roots, visited Slovenia. She has travelled into space twice and spent 322 days there. Because Sunita's mother is Slovenian, she likes to visit the country. She is welcomed with open arms, and always has interesting stories to tell about her space adventures. In a way, basketball - one of the most popular sports in Slovenia - is also linked to flying. Eurobasket 2013, the European Basketball Championship, will be held in Slovenia in September. This will be the largest sporting event in Slovenia thus far; it is a challenging organisational task, which is also an opportunity to demonstrate and prove our capabilities. I am certain that the organisation of the championship will be excellent and further reinforce the reputation of good Slovenian organisers known to visitors at competitions in Planica, Kranjska Gora, Maribor, Ljubljana and elsewhere. To conclude, allow me to invite you to visit the exhibition 'The Wheel: 5,200 Years'. The exhibition features the oldest wooden wheel with an axle in the world, which was found near Ljubljana. This is yet further proof that creative people live in this region, and we are therefore not afraid of the future.

Dear Slovenians at home and abroad, dear friends of Slovenia, dear citizens,

Accept my congratulations on 25 June - Statehood Day - a day when we can look back with pride at what we have achieved. Twenty-two years ago, the unanimity at the Plebiscite united us in belief that our destiny depends on us and our determination to take the path of democratic values, respect for human rights, peace and freedom. The present also offers an opportunity to draw from that historic moment and create our future with solidarity and trust in our abilities.

*Borut Pahor*  
President of the Republic of Slovenia

Photo: Archives of Office of the president of the RS



## Dear Citizens and Friends of Slovenia,

On Statehood Day, we remember the day when Slovenia formally gained its independence. The Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Slovenia and the Basic Constitutional Charter on the Sovereignty and Independence of the Republic of Slovenia were passed on this day. At this time, we are facing the issue of belonging. We should not allow Statehood Day to be merely a ritual and display of the symbols of state. It should primarily be a personal holiday.

In addition to our shared past, Slovenians at home and abroad are also committed to a shared vision of the future. I am certain that we all want a successful Slovenia. However, we need to be aware that we ourselves are the country. When I took office, I swore that "I shall uphold the constitutional order, that I shall act according to my conscience and that I shall do all in my power for the good of Slovenia." The same oath was taken by ministers of the current Government that I lead, and I can assure you that everyone meant it.

In my view, Statehood Day is a day of joy and a wonderful holiday. It takes all of us to create a friendly country. We have proven throughout our history that we can make the impossible possible. This is what we have to believe now. At the moment, there are many negative ideas in the media, among the public and in politics. Nevertheless, we should not despair. The coalition Government has a vision and is working with the welfare of our citizens in mind. We are not an estranged elite; we are all citizens. And we have only one homeland – yours, mine, ours.

Although this holiday is primarily a day of joy for Slovenians, I invite anyone who lives in Slovenia or is connected to it in any way to celebrate with us.

With best wishes and congratulations,

*Alenka Bratušek*  
Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia



Photo: Taminio Petelinšek/STA

## Esteemed Citizens of the Republic of Slovenia, Esteemed Slovenians, Dear friends of Slovenia,

Long and warm days in June create a pleasant, magical atmosphere, filled with beautiful and exciting prospects. Twenty-two years ago, the month of June in Slovenia was overwhelmed by an extraordinary energy, the indestructible force of a united nation looking forward to making its dream of an independent state come true. It was a time when we looked ahead into an uncertain future with great optimism. We succeeded because we firmly believed that we had taken the right path. In a short period of time, Slovenia achieved outstanding results in both economic and political areas and, as the most successful newly established state in the region, proudly received the recognition of the international community, and, most importantly, ensured its citizens a high quality of life.

The global financial and economic crisis has warned us that not all has been accomplished with the necessary level of quality. We have an unenviable situation on our hands: times are difficult, the measures are unpleasant, and values have been undermined. Nevertheless, I am convinced that we will once again take the right path, if only reason, courage and determination will prevail, with a view to uniting together in a solid, honest commitment towards a common goal that we must strive for, regardless of our political belief and world view; for a just state that will be autonomous, democratic, and based on solidarity, achieving high standards of human rights; a legal and social state, with a thriving economy and a dedicated concern for health and the environment. For the country of which we are proud and in which we so pleasantly live. It is my firm belief that we will succeed again.

My sincere congratulations on Slovenian Statehood Day.

*Janko Veber*  
President of the National Assembly



Photo: Taminio Petelinšek/STA

## Emonika project and the Port of Koper have key importance

**The President of Hungary, Janos Ader, paid an official visit to Slovenia, where he was hosted by his Slovenian counterpart, Borut Pahor. This was the last in President Pahor's series of meetings with the presidents of four neighbouring countries.**

President Ader and President Pahor expressed their desire for deepening economic cooperation between the two countries. In this context, the Hungarian president mentioned the Emonika project. In his words, this project is in the interest of the company Trigant and of Hungary in general. The project involves the construction of a passenger traffic hub, including a new Ljubljana bus and railway station, for which Trigant is the contracting authority. On this occasion, President Pahor asked his Hungarian counterpart to ensure that, in the context of enhanced economic cooperation, Budapest would not overlook the keen interest of Slovenia for the Port of Koper to remain a seaport of importance with respect to Hungary. Later, the Hungarian president met with the Slovenian Prime Minister, Alenka Bratušek, and the National Assembly Speaker, Janko Veber.



Photo: Staniko Cruden/STA

The presidents also discussed the opportunities offered through the accession of Croatia to the EU, future cooperation within Višegrad group, the Central European Initiative and the reawakened Brdo Process.

## President Pahor opens the Lumar active house

**President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, inaugurated the Lumar active house for experimental dwelling, which is entirely the result of Slovenian know-how. According to Pahor, this house has demonstrated that Slovenians have enough knowledge, diligence and ambition to be successful.**

In designing the active house, which is currently the most technologically advanced house in Europe, the Lumar company paid particular attention to the quality of living in the house; the second crucial factor was energy efficiency. Consequently, the house is fitted with an above average number of glass surfaces. The active house is distinguished by a solar power station, thermal collectors for heating water, skylights, a rainwater collection facility for sanitary purposes and gardening, and intelligent installations.



Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

Lumar's director, Marko Lukič, explained to President Pahor that the house is built from ecological materials, which are the least harmful to the environment in the production phase. "This is something that has enormous importance for the future," said the director and added that after their use these materials can be used again or recycled into other products.

## Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek was on a two day visit to Rome and Vatican

**She met Prime Minister Enrico Letta and some other senior Italian and Vatican officials. At the Holy See, Bratušek was received for an audience by the Pope Francis, during her visit she met also Slovenian cardinal Franc Rode.**

Prime Minister Letta said the meeting was a step forward in Slovenia and Italy's tight cooperation within the EU. He also said Italy was very much interested in the planned privatisation of Slovenian companies. The visit to the Vatican has been described as a continuation of the dialogue between Slovenia and the Holy See and an opportunity to deepen relations. For the first time ever, a Slovenian and Italian prime ministers held a joint meeting with representatives of the Slovenian minority in Italy and of the Italian minority in Slovenia.



Photo: Staniko Cruden/STA

Slovenian prime minister invited Pope Francis to visit Slovenia.

## New stage in Ljubljana – Klagenfurt relations

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Karl Erjavec, in Ljubljana hosted the new Governor of Austrian Carinthia, Peter Kaiser.

Slovenia's hopes in connection with the newly elected Austrian Carinthia government, led by Peter Kaiser, refer, above all, to a better understanding of the situation of the Slovenian national minority in the province.

In the light of possibilities for deeper cooperation, Erjavec and Kaiser agreed on the re-launching of the so-called contact committee. This move is intended to strengthen cooperation in the areas of economy, transport, infrastructure, tourism, culture and schooling. According to Kaiser, the contact committee will be given a new structure for the future. Alongside representatives of Carinthia, the Austrian side could also include the Republic of Austria's representatives, state secretaries and members of parliament from both houses of the Austrian parliament.



Governor of Carinthia Peter Kaiser, Minister for Slovenians Abroad Tina Komel and Minister Karl Erjavec.

Photo: Stanke Guden/STA

## Slovenian reading room in Austria

Karl Erjavec, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, attended the opening of the first Slovenian reading room in Graz. The room houses over two thousand books by Slovenian authors, translations in German and the biggest circulation Slovenian newspapers Delo, Dnevnik and Večer.

Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek met representatives of the minority before the opening of the reading room; together they stressed the importance of close cooperation which is fundamental to the efficient promotion and protection of Slovenian minority rights. During the visit, Minister Erjavec also met Franz Voves, the Governor of the Austrian province of Styria.



Photo: Tamino Petelinsček/STA

The idea of establishing a Slovenian reading room sprang from the wish of the Slovenians living in the Austrian province of Styria for many years to found an institution for the promotion of Slovenian culture and language in the second largest town in Austria.

## Reception of representatives of the Slovenian minority in Italy

Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek met representatives of the Slovenian minority in Italy.

During the discussions, Prime Minister Bratušek highlighted the importance of cooperation and dialogue at national and international levels, which are fundamental to the efficient protection of minority rights. She particularly stressed the significance of cross-border regional cooperation. She noted that there are many projects at this level which could also be of great value to the Slovenian minority in Italy.



Tina Komel, the Minister for Slovenians Abroad, also attended the meeting with representatives of the minority.

Photo: Nebojša Trifu/STA

## The European Commission evaluated the reform and budget plans of Slovenia

Slovenia thus acquired additional two years to eliminate the excessive deficit. At the same time, the Government must also take urgent measures to eliminate imbalances and regulate the banking sector. The recommendation on the judicial system is new. Slovenia must also ensure better competitiveness and create new jobs.

Photo: Thierry Monasse/STA



According to Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek, the evaluation of Slovenian measures by Brussels proves that Slovenia can succeed without aid. "But this is merely the beginning. We will have to deliver on our commitments," commented Bratušek on the decision of the European Commission to recommend that Slovenia eliminate the deficit in two years.

### ADDITIONAL TWO YEARS TO ELIMINATE THE EXCESSIVE GENERAL GOVERNMENT DEFICIT

The excessive general government deficit must be reduced to below three per cent of GDP by 2015, but Slovenia must also consistently implement existing fiscal measures, and define and implement new ones. Efficient measures must be adopted by October 2013.

On this subject, Janez Potočnik, the European Commissioner for the Environment, said: "The evaluations from Brussels of the Slovenian budget and reform plans show directly that Slovenia has done its work in the past month accordingly; however, the commitments prove that we understand the gravity of the problems and serve as a good basis, but the actual work is only beginning." Prime Minister Bratušek summarised the words of Olli Rehn, the European Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs, saying that "Slovenia decisively approached solving problems that the Government recognised when it took office".

The Minister of Finance, Uroš Čufer, said that the recommendations comply with expectations. In his opinion, this shows that the Slovenian Government and the

European Commission have the same view of the situation and evaluation of urgent measures. The Minister believes that the recommendations demonstrate that we are heading in the right direction. As the first measure, the Minister pointed out the cleaning up of bank portfolios.

In order to eliminate the excessive deficit in additional two years, Slovenia's general government deficit in 2013 should be 4.9 per cent of GDP, or 3.7 per cent if the one-off effect of converting the hybrid loan in the capital of Nova Ljubljanska banka (NLB) and Nova Kreditna banka Maribor (NKMB) is discounted.

In 2014, Slovenia will have to reduce the deficit to 3.3 per cent of GDP and 2.5 per cent of GDP in 2015 i.e. below the limit of three per cent. According to statements

"In my opinion, Slovenia will not be a country that requires financial aid. With the decisions it has made, Slovenia is taking decisive measures to renew the resilience of the financial system and sustainability of public finance, and it is also solving problems related to the labour market and pension system," stressed Olli Rehn, the European Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs.

The European Commission proposes additional two years for Slovenia to eliminate the excessive general government deficit, which should be reduced below three per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2015. Slovenia must also consistently implement existing fiscal measures, define and implement new ones.

The recommendation on the judicial system is new.



Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

Minister of Finance Uroš Čufer gave Olli Rehn, the European Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs, several guarantees. Among others, he expressed a willingness to undertake further quality checks of the assets of Slovenian banks and to cover possible additional capital needs. The Minister also provided guarantees on privatisation.



Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

The Slovenian Government intends to focus primarily on three priorities: boosting economic growth by rehabilitating the banking system, increased care for young people to restore trust in their future in the country and the establishment of the rule of law and justice.

from Brussels, this complies with the annual structural improvement in the public financial situation (i.e. while not taking account of the effects of economic conditions) of 0.7 per cent of GDP in 2013 and 0.5 per cent of GDP in the following two years.

According to the Commission, Slovenia will have to take additional fiscal measures amounting to one per cent of GDP in 2013 and 1.5 per cent in 2014 and 2015 in order to reach these objectives. Slovenia will also have to consistently implement existing measures to increase revenue from 'primarily direct taxation' (including VAT), to reduce wages in the public sector and reduce social transfers.

The Slovenian Government will also have to take additional measures if those already in place prove less efficient than expected. Prime Minister Bratušek announced three important tasks of the Government in the coming weeks: "We must boost the economy; the rehabilitation of banks will greatly contribute to this. We will initiate several schemes within SID Bank. Cheap resources will be the key solution for our economy." The Government intends to pay special attention to the 'green' sector of the Slovenian economy: the energy-saving restoration of buildings and the wood industry. In particular, Bratušek stressed: "Young people will be our greatest concern: we have to restore their hope."

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia agreed with the recommendations from Brussels and commented: "The Government should particularly concentrate on structural reforms which will enable us to restart the economy." The recommendations from Brussels also met with the approval of the Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia.

**DEADLINE FOR FISCAL MEASURES**

As the deadline for Slovenia's adoption of efficient fiscal measures, the Commission mentioned 1 October 2013. By then, Slovenia should also report on the strategy for achieving the objectives for consolidating public

Prime Minister Bratušek said: "Everyone support our efforts to succeed in solving our problems on our own. None of the EU Member States wants another state to become the subject of any kind of programme."



Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

**RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO THE REFORM AND STABILITY PROGRAMMES FOR 2013 AND 2014**

- Slovenia should:
- take structural measures to reduce the excessive deficit by 2015,
  - adjust the pension system,
  - ensure trends in wages which stimulate competitiveness and create new jobs,
  - engage an independent external adviser to check the quality of bank assets by June 2013,
  - develop and implement a strategy for independent bank management by June 2014,
  - prepare a schedule for the sale of state shares in banks by September 2013,
  - reduce court backlogs,
  - adopt a legal framework for out-of-court restructuring of companies in difficulties by September 2013,
  - prepare a strategy and divide state resources into key and non-key resources by September 2013.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ELIMINATING THE EXCESSIVE GENERAL GOVERNMENT DEFICIT**

- Slovenia should:
- eliminate the excessive deficit by 2015,
  - achieve a deficit of no more than 4.9 per cent of GDP in 2013,
  - supplement existing measures to increase revenue and reduce wages in the public sector,
  - define, adopt and implement new measures to eliminate the excessive deficit,
  - take efficient measures and report on the consolidation strategy for attaining objectives by 1 October 2013.

finance. Biannual reports are envisaged until the excessive deficit is eliminated.

According to the Prime Minister, now is the time for the proposed measures to be enacted, but it is unrealistic to expect that all the mistakes made in previous years or even decades could be eliminated within a few months. Thus the Slovenian Government intends to focus primarily on three priorities: boosting economic growth by rehabilitating the banking system; increased care for the young to restore trust in their future in the country; and establishing the rule of law and justice. "We have proven to ourselves and Europe that we are aware of our problems, and that we also know how to solve them," said Prime Minister Bratušek, and

thanked her team which participated in drafting both documents.

**THE GOVERNMENT IS SERIOUS ABOUT BANK REHABILITATION AND PRIVATISATION**

The banks are the European Commission's greatest concern. The Commission asked Slovenia to continue its preparations for the announced privatisation of NKBM and to prepare "an ambitious plan for the sale of direct and indirect state shares in banks" by September 2013.

In his talks with Olli Rehn, the European Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs, Minister of Finance Uroš Čufer expressed a willingness to undertake further quality checks of the assets of Slovenian banks and to

cover possible additional capital needs. The Minister also provided guarantees on privatisation. Regarding privatisation, the Government is committed to selling all its shares in fifteen companies, which were named when the stability and national reform programmes were published. The Minister also announced that measures to rehabilitate banks will be followed by a phase of consolidation. Regarding the management of state-owned assets, the Minister noted that a strategy would be prepared by the end of this September. With regard to aid for corporate repayments of indebted companies, the Minister stated that each use of public funds to restructure companies will be compensated with measures relating to other items of general government revenue.

## Indians keen to invest in Slovenia



Photo: Daniel Novokovč/STA

Speaker Meira Kumar was happy to meet the President of the Republic of Slovenia Borut Pahor.

### VISIT BY SPEAKER OF INDIAN PARLIAMENT MEIRA KUMAR

At the end of May, the Speaker of the Lower House (Lok Sabha) of the Parliament of India, Mrs Meira Kumar, accompanied by a parliamentary delegation, paid an official visit to Slovenia. This was the first visit to Slovenia by a top-level parliamentary representative of India. As part of the visit, Mrs Kumar met with senior representatives of the Slovenian state, visited Bled and Postojna Cave, and was received by Ljubljana Mayor Zoran Jankovič. Mrs Kumar also opened an exhibition of Indian paintings at Ljubljana Town Hall.

### INTER-PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION BETWEEN SLOVENIA AND INDIA

Speaker Meira Kumar, accompanied by a delegation, visited the Slovenian Parliament at the invitation of the President of the National Assembly, Janko

Veber. Mr Veber said that Mrs Kumar's visit was a great honour for Slovenia, and Mrs Kumar expressed her belief that parliaments played an important role in strengthening relations between countries since, in her words, "Parliament reflects the will of the people".

### BUST OF THE FIRST PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA, JAWAHARLAL NEHRU, IN GORIŠKA BRDA

Over the course of past visits to Goriška Brda, the Ambassador of India to the Republic of Slovenia, Mr Jayakar Jerome, on several occasions expressed his wish for a bust of Jawaharlal Nehru to be erected in Dobrovo in Goriška Brda. The Mayor of Goriška Brda, Franc Mužič, endorsed the idea and, a year later, a bust of the first Indian Prime Minister was unveiled in the courtyard of Dobrovo Castle. The unveiling ceremony was also attended by Speaker Meira Kumar. At the ceremony,

Mr Mužič said that the municipality was thinking of moving the bust to Vipolže Castle when the refurbishment of the castle was completed. Vipolže Castle will be a venue for various congresses and study consultation sessions and is therefore a more appropriate location to pay tribute to the great Indian statesman.

The visit by the Indian delegation to the wine-growing region provided an opportunity for discussing closer cooperation between Goriška Brda and India. The citizens of Brda are particularly interested in exporting high-quality Brda wines, and thanks to the unveiling of the bust of Jawaharlal Nehru, more Indian tourists are expected to visit the region.

An interesting fact is that, besides the bust of Nehru, there was another bond between India and Goriška Brda in the past – poetry. Alojz Gradnik, a Slovenian poet from Brda, trans-



Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek assessed the cooperation between the two friendly countries as increasingly important in strategic terms.



Photo: Rosana Rijavec/STA

Bust of the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, in Goriška Brda.

lated the poetry of the Indian poet and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore.

### INDIA AND SLOVENIA HOPE TO FURTHER STRENGTHEN THEIR FRIENDLY RELATIONS

During her visit to the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia, the Indian guest repeatedly emphasised that the visit by the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, to India in 2011 (at that time in his capacity as Prime Minister) had significantly influenced the bilateral relations between the two countries. In the course of Mr Pahor's visit, a friendship group between Slovenia and India was established in India.

That is why Mrs Kumar was delighted to accept the invitation from President Pahor, who was eager to arrange a meeting. In their talks, Mrs Kumar and Mr Pahor assessed that recently the two countries had seen increased business cooperation, while agreeing that more could be done in this respect. Their talks focused mainly on cooperation in tourism, higher education and research, with the Indian side saying that it was very favourably disposed towards making investments in Slovenia. Captivated by the beautiful Slovenian landscape, Mrs Kumar expressed her belief that Slovenia would be a very attractive destination for Indian tourists in the future.

### THE DISTINGUISHED INDIAN GUEST MEETS THE SLOVENIAN PRIME MINISTER

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, Alenka Bratušek, was also delighted to receive the Speaker of the Lower House of the Indian Parliament, Meira Kumar. The Prime Minister stressed that Slovenia saw this visit as confirmation of the friendly relations between the two countries. She advocated the continuation of regular dialogue including at the highest political level. Ms Bratušek and Mrs Kumar were pleased to note that, despite the global economic and financial crisis, bilateral economic cooperation between the two countries has been strength-

On meeting Speaker Meira Kumar, the Slovenian Prime Minister, Alenka Bratušek, stressed that Slovenia saw this visit as confirmation of the friendly relations between the two countries. She advocated the continuation of regular dialogue, including at the highest political level. Among Asian countries, India is the third most important country for Slovenia in economic terms.

The Indian guest is given a tour of the Slovenian Parliament by the President of the National Assembly, Janko Veber.



Photo: Tamino Pevelinšek/STA

The exhibition “Kalpana – Masterpieces of Figurative Indian Contemporary Paintings” presents the masterly expressions of figurative forms as seen through the works of fourteen of India’s best known painters. In India, figurative forms can be seen everywhere: in sculptures, on the walls of temples, on the paintings and frescoes of architectural wonders, and even in the countless attempts to express the divine.



Photo: Nik Ročan

On the occasion of the visit to the Mayor of Bled, Janez Fajfar, Speaker Meira Kumar wrote in the visitors’ book: “I was moved by the beauty of this place, the mountains, and the lake. The Parliament and the people of India wish all the best to the people of Bled.”

ened and deepened. Last year, India occupied 26th place on the list of Slovenia’s most important trading partners, accounting for 0.7% of Slovenia’s foreign trade, with the volume of trade between the two countries standing at EUR 289.7 million. Among Asian countries, India is the third most important country for Slovenia in economic terms. Ms Bratušek and Mrs Kumar said they hoped to see this trend continue in the future. They advocated strengthening cooperation between the two countries in other fields as well, particularly in tourism and culture.

**LJUBLJANA MAYOR HAS MANY FRIENDS AMONG THE INDIANS**

These were the words of the Director of the RTA Agency, Katarina Karlovšek, who, among other things, has specialised in cooperation with Bollywood: “The practice of Indian movie stars meeting the Mayor of Ljubljana, Zoran Jankovič, when shooting takes place in Ljubljana has already become a tradition.” Hence it is not unusual for Ljubljana Town Hall to have hosted the exhibition “Kalpana – Masterpieces of Figurative Indian Contemporary Paintings”. The

exhibition, which was on display from 27 May to 2 June 2013, presented the masterly expressions of figurative forms as seen in the last 120 years through the works of fourteen of India’s best-known painters.

On welcoming the Indian guest to the capital of Slovenia, Ljubljana Mayor Zoran Jankovič said a few words about Ljubljana, highlighting it as one of the venues of EuroBasket 2013, which is being hosted by Slovenia in September this year. Mr Jankovič took the opportunity to present Mrs Kumar with a rep-



Photo: Archives of RTA

In the photo, from left to right, are RTA Agency Director Katarina Karlovšek, a producer from the RTA Agency, the Indian actor Akkineni Nagarjuna, Ljubljana Mayor Zoran Jankovič, Saran Raparthy, manager at Film Tourism – Travel Masters India Corporation, and the Ambassador of India to Slovenia, His Excellency Jayakar Jerome.



Photo: Valter Leban/STA

Her Excellency Meira Kumar was delighted to visit two Slovenian jewels: Bled and Postojna Cave. In the photo: Mrs Meira Kumar in Postojna Cave.

lica of a work by the Slovenian architect Jože Plečnik depicting a dragon eating its own tail. Mr Jankovič pointed out that the works of Jože Plečnik (1872–1957) had left an important mark on three European capitals: Ljubljana, Vienna and Prague. The dragon, which is also depicted on the Dragon Bridge on the River Ljubljanica, is the emblem of the city of Ljubljana.

**I WAS MOVED BY THE BEAUTY**

On the occasion of her visit to the Mayor of Bled, Janez Fajfar, Speaker Meira Kumar wrote in the visitors’ book: “I was moved by the beauty of this place, the mountains, and the lake. The Parliament and the people of India wish all the best to the people of Bled.” The Mayor of Bled commended the Bled municipality on recently having organised, in cooperation with the RTA Agency, the shooting of the

Indian movie Naayak there. Mrs Kumar was also fascinated by the mysterious beauty of Postojna Cave, which this year marks the 800th anniversary of its first recorded visit. She was received by the owner and CEO of the Postojna Cave company, Marjan Batagelj, and the Executive Marketing Manager, Katja Dolenc Batagelj. Mrs Kumar said that her visit had been an extraordinary experience and that Postojna Cave was a unique gift of nature to Slovenia. She was also very enthusiastic about the careful preservation of natural heritage.

Throughout its rich history of tourism, Postojna Cave has hosted many eminent guests from the Indian subcontinent. One of the cave’s first distinguished guests, who was closely linked to the history of the development of the cave’s underground railway system, was the

Maharaja of Dharampur, who, travelling with his wife in June 1924, made one of the first rides on the newly refurbished underground railway line. In the chronicles of Postojna Cave, it is written that just a short decade later, in October 1933, the beauty of the cave was also admired by Princess Rajkumari Amrit Kaur (1889–1964) from Kapurthala in Northern India. Wearing a six-metre-long silk sari with golden embroidery, the princess attracted the attention of all the people present and could not believe the beauty of the cave, which she hailed as one of the wonders of the world. Postojna Cave has hosted many distinguished visitors, heads of state and government, representatives of noble families, artists and scientists, including the then Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, who visited Slovenia in 1955.

On welcoming the Indian guest to the capital of Slovenia, Ljubljana Mayor Zoran Jankovič said a few words about Ljubljana, highlighting it as one of the venues of EuroBasket 2013, which is being hosted by Slovenia in September this year.



Tomaž Vesel

## A time which demands new approaches and solutions

**Tomaž Vesel**, born in 1967 in Ljubljana, graduated from the Faculty of Law at the University of Ljubljana in 1997. He continued his education in 2007 with postgraduate studies at the Faculty of Law of the University of Maribor in the field of European commercial law, which is also the subject of the Master's thesis that he is currently working on. He obtained the titles of state auditor and certified state auditor in October 2012 and has also trained and studied abroad.

Mr Vesel began his career at the Government Centre for Informatics of the Republic of Slovenia in 1997 and between 1999 and 2004 was a member of the National Review Commission of the Republic of Slovenia. At the end of 2003, he was elected First Deputy to the President of the Court of Audit of the Republic of Slovenia and held this office from 1 February 2004 until 1 February 2013, when he was appointed Supreme State Auditor for auditing non-commercial public services. The President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, proposed Tomaž Vesel to be elected President of the Court of Audit of the Republic of Slovenia to a nine-year term of office. On 24 April 2013, Mr Vesel was elected in a closed ballot, with 62 votes, at the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia. He will assume his office on 1 June 2013.



Photo: the RS Archives

**Congratulations on your appointment. What is your programme of measures to improve the efficiency of the Court of Audit and which priority fields do you plan to address first?**

It will be necessary to select priority fields, since there are so many. Firstly, the internal organisation will have to be optimised. A fresh view of matters is necessary also because the requirements of the present time have changed drastically and they demand completely new tasks from us. The Court of Auditors Act also has to be considered, because the distribution of roles of members of the Court needs to be revised. Remedial measures, which are currently not being considered, and questions on how to systemically regulate such actions also by amendments to the act, are also priorities.

**What do you think is expected from you most at this point?**

The situation in public finance dictates that we need speedier mechanisms for taking action. But we must be careful, because the procedure must allow auditees sufficient participation for the procedure, clarification, objections and the application of legal remedies; on the other hand, we want tools to achieve faster results. An auditing procedure is not a superficial review; we implement audits thoroughly and with a series of verifications according to internationally applicable auditing standards. This requires a lot of time, but this is governed by the law. This will also have to be reconsidered. This situation is found not only in our court; all other comparable European institutions have been facing similar challenges, especially in recent years when the needs for information and the expectations of the public have been

increasing. Revising budgets, which used to be unusual, has become normal in recent years. Verifications of estimates, resources, etc. all happen much faster than before. The Court of Auditors Act is also rigid regarding suspensions and expansions of audits, which means the tools need to be updated. The act is the challenge which has absolute priority at the moment, and new jurisdictions which will require our full attention.

**A lot of your attention will undoubtedly be devoted to auditing the bad bank, the holding, the current wave of privatisation, the public-private partnership...**

That is true, and all of the above means that we have to strengthen internally. A new challenge will be the anticipated auditing of political parties and their business operations. The fiscal rule will also compel us to monitor adherence to this rule on an annual basis. The monitoring will have to produce results in practice, as it is not only a point of reference in the Constitution. An act will be passed to substantively regulate this issue, and the Court of Audit will have to forward its evaluations on compliance with the rule. The new act will determine in what manner this new task will be considered and re-evaluated. The management and auditing of non-performing assets are also new for us. The new tasks undoubtedly present a great challenge.

**Impartiality and independence are essential for public trust in the Court of Audit as a supervisory institution. It is very important for the President of the Court to treat all auditees equally.**

What you say is true. We have to protect and stress this constantly. We have good safeguards in the law regarding these issues.

However, there is a real risk that funds for our work will be reduced, which would reduce our ability to exercise certain powers and, above all, development for new tasks. It is clear that there must be no direct influence from the political sphere on audits and the creation of the programme. These are our responsibility.

**The public have great expectations about the regulation of financial discipline and removal of tycoons, which makes the significance of supervisory institutions even more relevant. What is your opinion on this?**

Public financial discipline is a continuous challenge for all of us, not only for the Court of Audit. The problem arises in implementation. The meeting point of public and private funds in the field of public procurement and public-private partnerships is the most sensitive area, where we must all do more. Slovenia's problem lies in the regulation of public finance with the act on the implementation of the budget, where systemic solutions are sometimes possible, and which should eventually be included in the umbrella act. If we wish to approach public financing comprehensively, the Public Finance Act is not enough, but a series of other acts is also necessary.

**Public procurement is the most sensitive aspect of conducting business between the public and private sectors, because a lot of money is transferred directly to private companies.**

We have noted that the advisory function at the national level does not function well. The client requires support in the preparation phase and the implementation of public calls. The complexity of public call procedures has been growing over the years. General knowl-

The situation in public finance dictates that we need speedier mechanisms for taking action. But we must be careful, because the procedure must allow auditees sufficient participation for the procedure, clarification, objections and the application of legal remedies; on the other hand, we want tools to achieve faster results.



Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA

At the handover, the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, stressed that the former President of the Court of Audit, Igor Šoltes, had performed his work with extreme dedication, conscientiousness and professionalism.

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edge of public procurement has been mastered, but problems appear with technical specifications, the insolvency of companies, levels of bank guarantees and suitability of guarantees; all these questions are difficult for the client, and they need consultations at this stage. However, this is not provided at the right level. Unfortunately, we do not have institutions that provide consulting or to implement public procurement. We do not have a strong information base. Clients do not receive proper advice. And repeating procurements is very expensive.

**According to the statistics, 90 per cent of auditees comply with your calls. The most difficult cases are undoubtedly those in which you require the responsible persons to resign. Do you anticipate such cases during your term?**

Based on my practice so far, I can say that such cases are the exception rather than the rule. It is nonetheless advisable to realise remedial measures. In

practice, we do not have major problems with that. Perhaps minor misunderstandings arise sometimes. In cases of severe violations of the obligation to practise sound management when an auditee throughout the entire auditing procedure does not eliminate deficiencies, we are obliged by law to file a request to begin the procedure to dismiss the person responsible.

**Public procurement relating to national and local levels and to commercial and non-commercial public institutions presents a special problem. It is believed that the legislation presents one problem and the institutional framework another, because we do not have an institution to manage the system, development and supervision. Formalities are supposedly given preference over substance, although public procurement is an opportunity for the state to manage many fields with its aid. Somehow public procurement got out of control, because everyone was concerned with**

**whether a procedure had been implemented correctly, and not if the goals had been achieved.**

This impression undoubtedly exists; but the question is how to fix it systemically. Public procurement of lesser value is a special problem. In procurement with strong competition, the solution is achieved by the competition itself. There are many problems when there is little competition; or where a specific market is in question, the client is a 'victim' of limited competition. Small bidders who wish to enter the market have no references to give them access and also do not join forces with others. The issue of public procurement is closely connected with competition protection. And special attention has to be paid to it.

**In the field of non-commercial public institutions, numerous irregularities have arisen in the health system: purchases and the maintenance of medical equipment, overpayments, purchases of unneces-**



Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA

In the photograph: Igor Šoltes, the former President of the Court of Audit, Borut Pahor, the President of the Republic of Slovenia, and Tomaž Vesel, acting President of the Court of Audit



Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA

At the handover, Tomaž Vesel noted that the institution has good foundations and that the public can expect it to provide accurate and independent information on the situation of public finances in the country.

**sary equipment dictated by the medical market. How will you set standards to prevent this?**

The Court of Audit makes recommendations which will have to be upgraded into taking remedial measures. The standards and norms for individual supplies must be carefully formed by the client.

**In the previous term, special attention was given to the environment, efficient water management, tangible property management and the successful drawing of European funds.**

**Some claim that you are too often involved in formalities and not with measuring efficiency and verifying the achievement of goals.**

It will not be possible to avoid auditing environmental fields, because this constitutes a significant part of public financing, especially for local government. We are currently auditing systemic questions in this field. We will also audit the drawing of European funds for water and waste management projects; generally speaking, we have dedicated a lot of at-

ention to the environment in recent years. The public respond much more to audits on these issues, because the findings concern everyone. This field is far from exhausted, as is the case of arranging agricultural issues, which certainly does not receive enough attention. These two topics will be connected through audit consideration, because a lot of funds in the EU are earmarked for the common agricultural policy, which is an important field for the functioning of public finance.

It will not be possible to avoid auditing environmental fields, because this constitutes a significant part of public financing, especially for local government. We are currently auditing systemic questions in this field.

## Common path towards the rule of law is clearly outlined

The Slovenian Government has confirmed the commitment to improving the situation in the judiciary branch. That commitment was signed by the President of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Slovenia Branko Masleša, on behalf of the judiciary branch, Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek and Minister of Justice Senko Pličanič, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia.



Photo: Archives of Ministry of Justice

The session of the National Assembly Committee on Justice discussing the proposal for the decision on the situation in the judiciary branch. In the photograph: The President of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Slovenia, Branko Masleša, and the Minister of Justice and Public Administration, Senko Pličanič.

Minister Pličanič said with regard to the commitment undertaken that his task as the Minister of Justice was to ensure effective legislation and good conditions for the functioning of the entire judicial system. According to him, these two tasks are "a prerequisite for the functioning of the rule of law".

The signing of the commitment marks another successful step towards the rule of law, as the two branches of power have both very clearly committed to improving the functioning of the rule of law. Despite the signing of the commitment, the judiciary branch and the Government face a year of hard and dedicated work. Their aim is to restore the trust of the Slovenian public and the trust of the institutions of the European Union, as the European Commission's recommenda-

tions also stressed that Slovenia needs to improve the efficiency of its judicial system.

The commitment clearly establishes that the present situation in the judiciary branch is not satisfactory (a 2 percent annual increase in the number of pending cases of major importance and an average length of proceedings of between 13 and 20 months); the objectives are set for each type of court and case specifically and are objectively measurable. The envisaged measures are aimed at streamlining the trial process, legislative changes and at providing staffing and spatial conditions for the functioning of the courts.

The Government has already implemented some legislative changes, while others will be

implemented soon. The amendments to insolvency legislation have already been adopted by the National Assembly, while legislation regulating systemic deleveraging is being drafted. Some legislative amendments to the Courts Act and the Judicial Service Act are in legislative procedure, while others are likewise being drafted.

The Government's objective is to increase the efficiency of the judicial system, increase accountability in management and improve the quality of the supervision over court administration, optimise the network of courts, strengthen the judicial district and establish judicial education and a judicial exam. According to the Government, a common path has been clearly and specifically outlined. Both sides emphasise that the results will follow soon.

Dr Senko Pličanič

## We have clear objectives we want to achieve and measures to attain them



Photo: Archives of Ministry of Justice

**Dr Senko Pličanič** is an associate professor of law at the Faculty of Law in Ljubljana, lecturing on environmental and administrative law. He also lectures on spatial law and legal bases at the Biotechnical Faculty and the Faculty of Civil and Geodetic Engineering, University of Ljubljana.

Prior to his appointment as Minister of Justice and Public Administration in 2012, he was Director of the Institute of Public Administration at the Faculty of Law at the University of Ljubljana. He is the author of the book *Temelji ekološkega prava* (Foundations of Ecology Law) and a number of articles on environmental protection and other topics (public service, access to public information, water etc.). He participated in the drafting of the Environmental Protection Act, Waters Act, Spatial Planning Act, Access to Public Information Act and many other statutory provisions, regulations, legal opinions and studies for various clients.

In 1996, he was a visiting researcher on a Fulbright fellowship at Berkley School of Law, University of California. In 2006, he was also a visiting professor on a Fulbright fellowship at the Golden Gate University School of Law in San Francisco.

He has two children. In his spare time, he likes hiking; he is interested in photography and is fond of traveling. He also enjoys playing the piano, as he completed ten years of study at music school.

The situation in the judicial system is not satisfactory. In its latest recommendations, the European Commission also pointed to the acceleration of judicial procedures, and I agree with the view that the Slovenian judiciary has to become more efficient.

**As Minister, you proposed the signing of a joint commitment by the Government and the judiciary. The consent for this was given only recently. What is its purpose, how were the discussions conducted and what was the result?**

The commitment to improve the situation in the judicial system was signed on behalf of the judiciary by Branko Masleša, President of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Slovenia, and by Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek and myself as the Minister of Justice on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, which had endorsed the content.

This is a joint commitment made by the judicial and executive branches of power to the Slovenian people, with concrete measures and measurable objectives. Although the signing came about after several months of dialogue with the judiciary, the commitment is a successful step towards improving the functioning of the rule of law. By signing the commitment, the judiciary clearly confirmed that it understands that the people and the economy require an efficient judicial system, and assumes full responsibility to improve the situation.

**The commitment includes many legislative measures to improve the efficiency of the judiciary. Can you tell us what they are?**

The first package anticipates measures in the field of insolvency legislation, systemic deleveraging, alternative resolutions of disputes, the courts and the service of judges, and inheritance.

The first step was very successful. Last week, the National Assembly received the amendments to the Financial Operations, Insolvency Proceedings and Compulsory Disolution Act (ZFPPIPP). At first glance, the amendments only anticipate changes in several articles, but in fact these are quite significant advances in thinking. The Government has passed and submitted for passage the amendments to the Courts Act and the Judicial Service Act, with which we aim to strength-

en the efficiency of the judicial system. The remaining draft amendments will be forwarded to the National Assembly in the next two months.

The first package will be followed by a second, on civil and criminal procedure legislation, free legal aid and other questions.

Accelerated computerisation is also included in the changes and will ensure fewer errors in practice. The digitalisation of judicial records, e-serving and the like will be an efficient measure to prevent the loss of documents.

If we wish to change people's way of thinking and increase professionalism, we must also include education. The Judicial Training Centre at the Ministry will provide additional classic and e-training on enhanced personal responsibility and concern for efficiency for all officials and staff of the prosecution service and judicial administration.

The measures planned for the judicial system are also supported by the Slovenian public. A public opinion poll conducted by one of the main Slovenian newspapers revealed that 70 per cent of respondents support these measures. And I am very pleased to know that, as it supports our work and also increases our responsibility to achieve our objectives.

**The general public opinion is that the Slovenian judicial system is not efficient enough. According to the latest reviews, this is no longer only a local impression. How do you evaluate the current situation?**

The situation in the judicial system is not satisfactory. In its latest recommendations, the European Commission also pointed to the acceleration of judicial procedures, and I agree with the view that the Slovenian judiciary has to become more efficient. The text of the commitment clearly establishes the current situation in the judicial system: on average, it takes over one year to resolve an individual case. The joint finding states that administrative processes in the judicial system are relatively well-organised in some fields (electronic executions, compa-

nies register, land register) and their efficiency is improving every year. The situation is more complex regarding important cases which comprise the core of the judicial branch of power and timely trials. In 2012, 2.4 per cent fewer cases were resolved than in the previous year (and fewer cases were also resolved in 2011 in comparison to 2010). On average, court proceedings took between thirteen and twenty months.

The content of the commitment proves that we are aware of the situation, but we also have clear objectives of what we want to achieve and the measures to attain them. A year from now, the average time required to resolve a case in court should be less than one year. In some procedures and in some courts, it should take only three months. The objectives have been set for each type of court and case and measured objectively.

**In June, the Government also confirmed the so-called small judicial reform, and submitted the amendments to the Courts Act and the Judicial Service Act for enactment. What are the essential objectives of the proposed amendments?**

The main objectives of the proposed amendments are firstly, to enhance efficiency and strengthen the autonomy of the judicial branch of power; secondly, to enhance quality control of the judicial administration, and thirdly, to enhance the responsibility of the judiciary.

The autonomy of the judiciary is enhanced by transferring staffing responsibilities from the Ministry of Justice to the Supreme Court. We are extending the authorisations and responsibilities of court presidents. The Ministry will receive additional authorisations on the supervision of the public administration and may request an extraordinary evaluation of judges' work. The proposed amendments are intended to make the judiciary efficient, whilst still protecting judicial independence and autonomy.

The legislative amendments are the first phase. The second phase will include the optimisation of the court network, the en-

Photo: Archives of Ministry of Justice



hancement of court districts, the implementation of training for judges and an examination for judges. There is still a lot to do.

**The amendments to the Courts Act and the Judicial Service Act also include the establishment of a special service to monitor judicial administration. Will this be a service with inspection authority?**

The main objective of amendments to the Courts Act and the Judicial Service Act are to increase the efficiency and strengthen the autonomy of the judiciary, to increase quality control of the judicial administration and to increase the responsibility of the judiciary.

For example, to enhance the efficiency of the judiciary, all courts will undertake to implement projects which produce positive results (e.g. the Triaža (triage) project). New time standards (shorter deadlines) will also be determined in agreement with the Minister of Justice. The improved autonomy will also contribute positively to the efficiency of the judiciary,

where some responsibilities will be transferred from the Ministry of Justice to the court.

Control of the operation of the judiciary entails only controlling the functioning of the judicial administration, and is in no way an intervention in the substantive functioning of courts or individual judges. The service that supervises the organisation of the courts' work will thus prepare reports to which the courts will respond with reports on the elimination of possible irregularities. Furthermore, as an extreme measure, the supervisory service will be able to propose that the judicial council dismiss the president of a court.

The purpose of the proposed amendments is to make presidents of courts assume greater responsibility in conducting judicial administration. The president of a court can thus be dismissed if he or she does not implement matters of judicial administration in accordance with the regulations, the quality standards set for the work of courts or in due time, and if the court does not meet the results

planned in the annual work programme in two consecutive years.

**You mentioned the so-called Triaža (triage) project. What is that – what is the project about?**

The Triaža project was launched at the Commercial Law Department of the Ljubljana District Court in July 2012, and transfers the introductory phases of the administrative process in the preparations for main hearings to a 'triage' office led by a 'triage' judge. Data on resolving commercial legal cases in this court show remarkable results; among other things, the time expected to resolve commercial legal cases was reduced from 18 to 15.3 months. The purpose of reforming the administrative process was to relieve judges of non-judicial tasks. The judge receives a file only when it has been prepared for fixing the date of the main hearing. The 'triage' also enables judges to specialise within a department or the posting of judges according to entries in registers, while noting the experience and knowledge is ob-

As Minister of Justice, how could I not feel it as a personal mission? If we do not wish to be subject to one person or one subjective opinion, then we have only one alternative – to be subject to the law. We are, or at least we should be, all equal before the law. And if this is not the main mission of each minister of justice, I don't know what is. I also absolutely believe in this principle personally as a citizen of the Republic of Slovenia.



Photo: Nobejla Teliz/STV



Photo: Archives of Ministry of Justice

tained. The posting according to register entries thus enables the specialised resolution of cases, but does not intervene with the principle of a natural judge.

**You've recently said that "If the Slovenian judiciary does not function more efficiently, i.e. faster, then we will have problems with all other measures related to overcoming the crisis. The measures are useless if the situation in the Slovenian judiciary doesn't improve quickly." Is that really so important?**

Of course, without the rule of law in the real sense of the word, there is no real prosperity. What is the point of economic growth if the courts do not carry out their job efficiently? One of the key objectives is to eliminate court backlogs and make the judiciary more efficient. These objectives are essential to the rule of law and important for the trust of people and the business sector in the legal order and the rule of law.

**The National Assembly has endorsed the amendments to the Financial Operations, Insolvency Proceedings and Compulsory Dissolution Act (ZFPPIPP). What are the fundamental changes?**

Considering the current economic situation, the proposed amendments are extremely important and necessary to reverse the negative trends. The amendments to insolvency legislation, passed by 84 Deputies in the National Assembly, enter into force on 15 June 2013. They will enable the restructuring of insolvent companies, accelerate procedures within these companies and strengthen the position of their creditors. It will also completely change the legal background for over-indebted companies. Some solutions for companies which have not yet reached the threshold of insolvency will be provided by the act on systemic deleveraging, which is also being drafted. The amendments to ZFPPIPP

are thus only the first stage. The Ministry of Justice is also preparing the act on systemic deleveraging. Together they will contribute to maintaining as much of the Slovenian economy as possible.

The main novelties in the amendments to ZFPPIPP can be divided into several sets. Firstly, preserving healthy cores in already bankrupt companies; secondly, preventing inappropriate relationships between insolvent debtors and associated subjects; thirdly, improving the position of creditors; fourthly, improving the position of workers, and finally, the efficiency of procedures.

Although, at first glance the amendments only anticipate changes to several articles, they represent significant progress in thinking. That these are important changes is also evident from the exceptional number of proposals, which the Ministry of Justice as the proposer has tried to consider to the greatest

extent possible. The discussions, which took several months, thus involved all the important stakeholders in the economy, the banking sector or creditors' organisations, the judiciary, receivers, lawyers and, of course, the legal profession.

**In addition to the amendments to insolvency legislation, the Courts Act and the Judicial Service Act, you are also preparing an act on systemic deleveraging? What will that include?**

At the end of April, the Government appointed the Ministry of Justice, in cooperation with the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, the Ministry of Finance and the interested expert public, to draft a law in order to make it easier for creditors in procedures of deleveraging insolvent debtors to become more actively and efficiently involved. Those creditors who are interested and meet other conditions

will be able to continue the operations of an insolvent debtor or by converting their claims into the equity of the insolvent debtor. In accordance with the proposed legislative provisions, creditors would be able to intervene in a company which is over-indebted, but not yet insolvent, and exchange their claims for shares in the company. After rapid financial restructuring, such companies would have a positive cash flow, workers would keep their jobs, and contributions and VAT would be paid. In the case of insolvency, the entire system will not be sustained, but it would somehow be saved; it would survive and be ready for rehabilitation and revival at a later time.

**In brief, what is your opinion on alternative dispute resolution?**

Since it is always good to have choices in life, and because as the Minister of Justice I am responsible for providing effi-

cient ways to resolve disputes, I want to substantially enhance alternative dispute resolution. Citizens should have the right to free choice: court or mediation, court or arbitration, court or notary.

**A more philosophical question to conclude: as the Minister of Justice, what is your personal view of how the law is applied, and of the rule of law and justice? Do you feel it is a personal mission?**

Of course. As Minister of Justice, how could I not feel it as a personal mission? If we do not wish to be subject to one person or one subjective opinion, then we have only one alternative – to be subject to the law. We are, or at least we should be, all equal before the law. And if this is not the main mission of each minister of justice, I don't know what is. I also absolutely believe in this principle personally as a citizen of the Republic of Slovenia.

Last year, Minister of Justice Senko Pličanič climbed Mount Triglav with his Croatian colleague, Minister of Justice Orsat Miljenić. Both are very keen mountaineers. They were accompanied by the Presidents of the Slovenian and Croatian Supreme Courts, Branko Masleša and Branko Hrvatin.

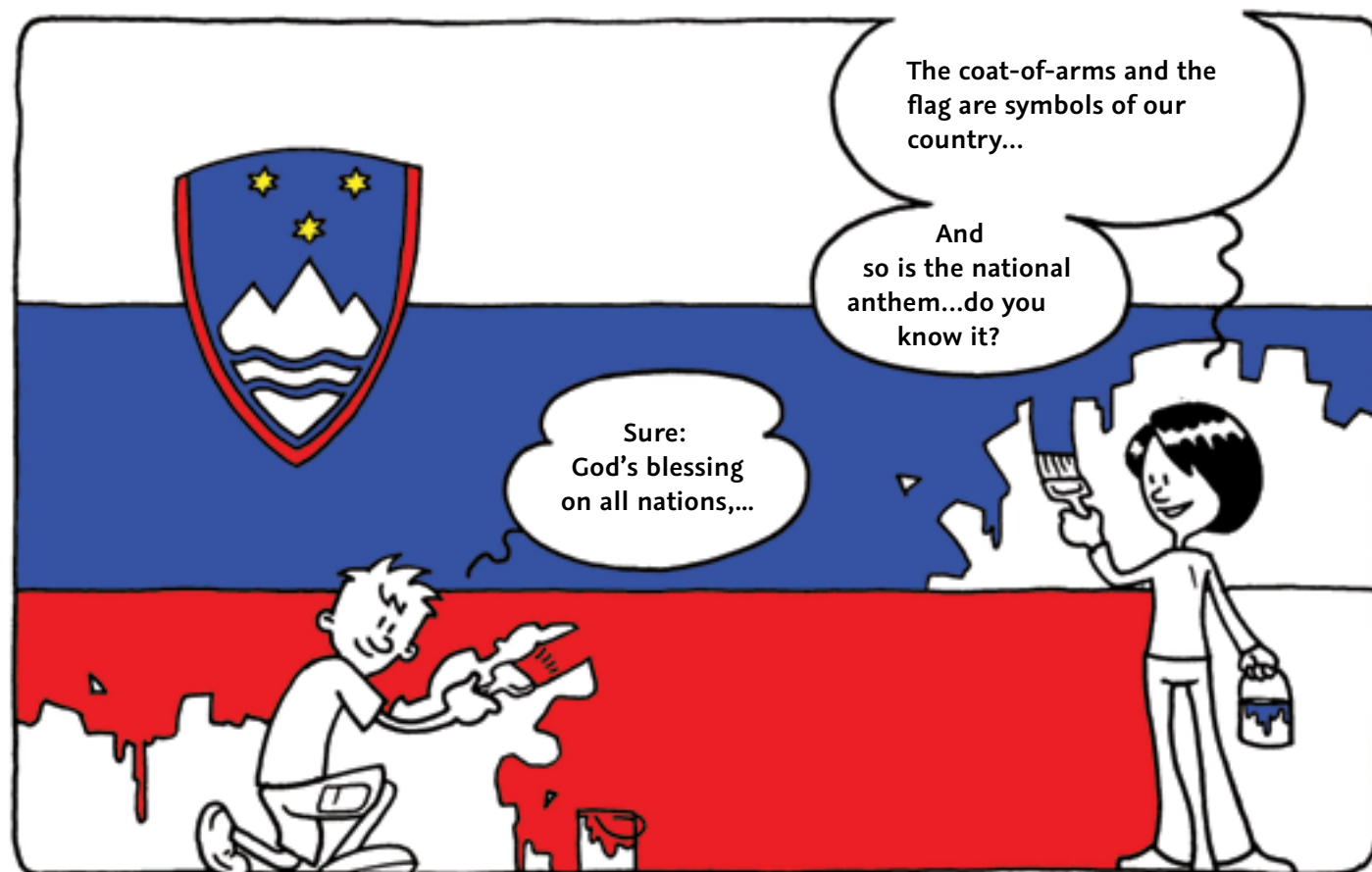
The service that supervises the organisation of the courts' work will thus prepare reports to which the courts will respond with reports on the elimination of possible irregularities. Furthermore, as an extreme measure, the supervisory service will be able to propose that the judicial council dismiss the president of a court.

# The development and importance of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia

Have you ever wondered what rules govern the appointment of the President of the Republic of Slovenia? Or why the police may take measures during a riot between sports fans? And from where does the right of children to attend school derive? The answer

can be found in the legal rules which we call the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia. In December 2012 twenty-one years have passed since we established a new democratic Constitution. We frequently refer to this legal document, but few people really know it.

## STATE SYMBOLS



With independence and the adoption of the Constitution, Slovenia became a constitutional democracy, which legally limits the power of the parliamentary political majority or authorities with constitutional principles, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Constitution is the general legal act of a state which has the highest authority, an act on which statehood is based and which expresses the identity of a nation. The Constitution defines the foundations of the legal and political arrangements of a state on the basis of historical, cultural, political and other social factors which affect the organisation of national authority and social relations and the role of the individual in these relations. Regarding distinctions between the legal power of the Constitution and its provisions, the Constitution is dual in its formal and material meaning.

The first aspect concerns the Constitution as the hierarchically most superior act, which differs from other acts in manner and procedure of passing, amending and abrogation. In some countries, the Constitution is adopted by a special constitutional assembly elected solely for this purpose. In other countries, it is endorsed by citizens at a referendum or, as in Slovenia, the Constitution can be passed (and amended) by a legislative authority according to a special advanced procedure which is not used to pass other acts. The other aspect refers to the content included in the Constitution and what

fundamental issues it addresses. Today, two types of content in particular can be defined as standard content i.e. the rules on the organisation of the state and provisions on human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Constitution adopted on 23 December 1991 by over a two-thirds majority vote by the multi-party Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia includes this standard constitutional content. With independence and the adoption of the Constitution, Slovenia became a constitutional democracy, which legally limits the power of the parliamentary political major-

ity or authorities with constitutional principles, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In the twenty-two years of its implementation, certain provisions of the Constitution (a total of 174 articles) have proven deficient; thus nine constitutional acts have been passed amending thirteen articles, and an article added. The first amendment concerned the initially very strict conditions under which foreigners could obtain ownership rights. The second amendment constitutionally determined the electoral system and raised the threshold for entry to the National Assembly.

Probably the most crucial amendments were passed due to the accession of Slovenia to the European Union (and to a lesser degree to NATO). In addition to giving citizens of the European Union the right to purchase real property and the possibility of extraditing Slovenian citizens to a foreign country, the Constitution was amended by Article 3.a, which permits Slovenia to transfer some sovereign rights to international organisations which are based on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law, or to enter into defence alliances by in-

ternational treaty with countries which respect these values. Recent constitutional acts also amended several constitutional provisions; among others worth mentioning are amendments relating to local government and the method of establishing regions and their jurisdiction.

On 24 May 2013, the National Assembly passed two constitutional acts to amend Articles 90, 97, 99 and 148 of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia on referendum legislation and the introduction of the fiscal rule.

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### THE NEW ARTICLES OF THE CONSTITUTION READ (UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION):

#### Article 90 (Legislative Referendum)

The National Assembly may call a referendum on the enactment of an act which it has passed if this is required by at least forty thousand voters.

The following shall not be subject to referendum:

- acts on emergency actions to guarantee national defence or security, or to eliminate the consequences of natural disasters,
- acts on taxes, customs and other compulsory charges and on the act passed to implement the national budget,
- acts ratifying international treaties,
- acts eliminating unconstitutionality in the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms or other unconstitutionality.

The right to vote in a referendum is held by all citizens who are eligible to vote in elections.

An act shall be rejected at a referendum if a majority of voters vote validly against it, on

condition that at least one fifth of all voters vote against the act.

#### Article 97 (Powers of the National Council)

The National Council may:

- propose to the National Assembly the passing of laws;
- convey to the National Assembly its opinion on all matters within the competence of the National Assembly;
- require the National Assembly to decide again on a given law prior to its promulgation;
- require inquiries on matters of public importance as referred to in Article 93.

Where required by the National Assembly, the National Council must express its opinion on an individual matter.

#### Article 99 (Decision-making)

The National Council may pass decisions if a majority of members are present at the session.

The National Council decides by a majority of votes cast by those members present.

#### Article 148 (Budgets)

All revenues and expenditures for financing of public spending must be included in state budgets.

Revenues and expenditures of state budgets must be balanced in the medium term without borrowing, or revenues must exceed expenditures. This principle may be derogated from only temporarily in exceptional national circumstances.

An act passed by the National Assembly by a two thirds majority vote of all Deputies shall determine the manner and time-frame for implementing the principle in the preceding paragraph, the criteria for determining exceptional circumstances and method of action upon their occurrence.

If a budget has not been adopted by the first day it is due to come into force, the beneficiaries financed by the budget are temporarily financed in accordance with the previous budget.

**On the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia in December 2011, the National Assembly introduced several interesting projects to make the Constitution an interesting and accessible tool to learn about democracy and active citizenship:**

- **An Illustrated Guide to the Constitution** (<http://www.dz-rs.si/wps/portal/Home/PolitichniSistem/URS/UstavaVStripu>),

which features some sixty articles from the Constitution. The author is Zoran Smiljanić, whose witty illustrations make the constitutional content interesting, educational and fun also for children, but not only for them,

- **the Constitution in Braille and the audio version of the Constitution** (<http://www.dz-rs.si/wps/portal/Home/PolitichniSistem/URS/UstavaZvocniPosnetek>)

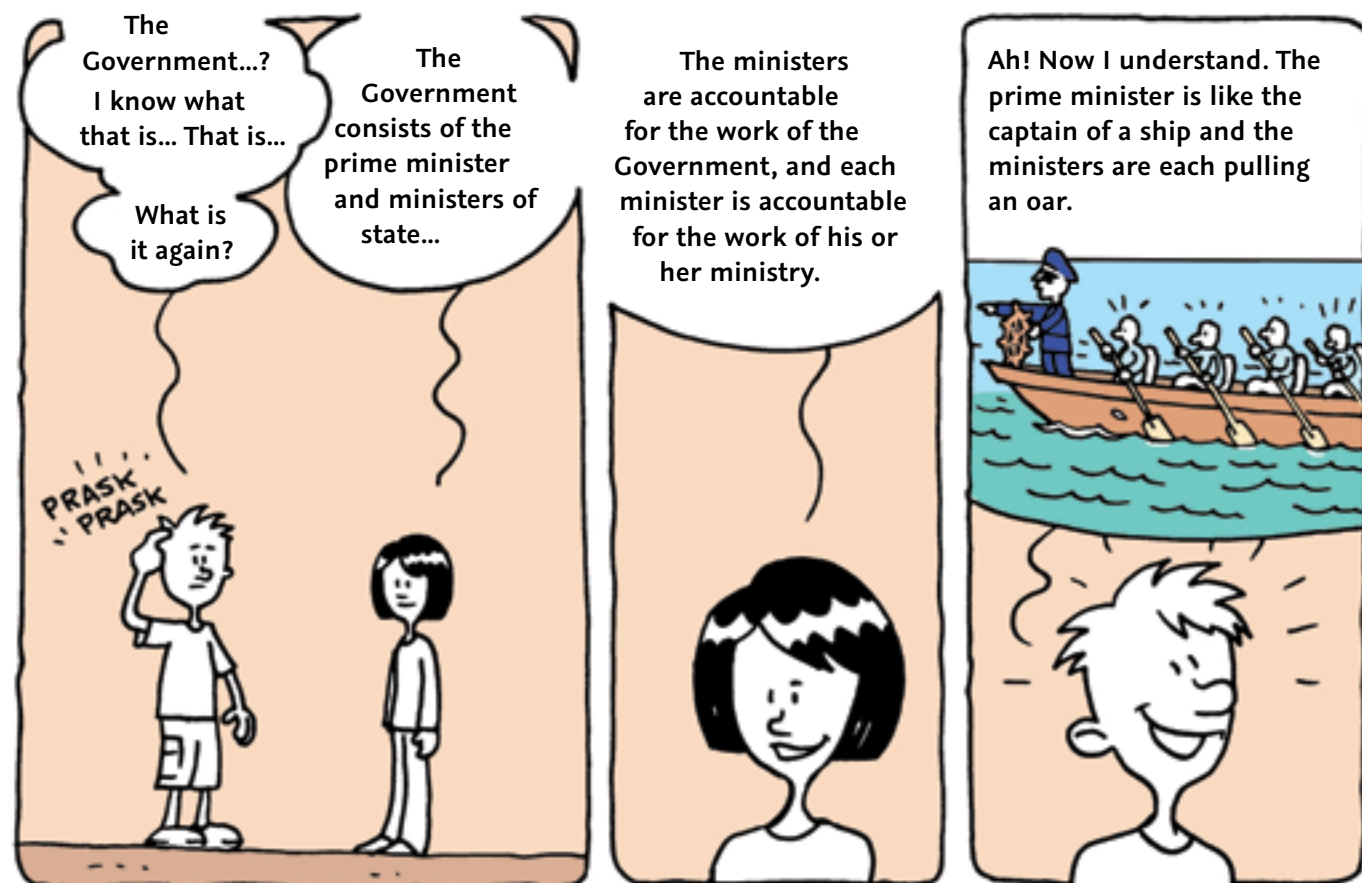
for the blind and visually impaired with which we are contributing to implementing Article 21 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,

- **translation into Slovenian sign language for the blind and visually impaired** (<http://www.zveza-gns.si/zakonodaja/ustava-republike-slovenije>), which, with adapted e-content, improves the accessibility and inclusion of sensory-impaired persons.

**THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC**



**THE GOVERNMENT**



**Slovenia still remains a state of social solidarity**

“The high level of political consensus today about including the fiscal rule and constitutional amendments relating to referendums in the Constitution is a victory for us all,” stressed Slovenian Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek. This so-called joint victory also resonated strongly and positively in Brussels.

Photo: Stanke Cruden/STA



The fiscal rule will be applied for the first time in 2015. The details on the method of balancing public finance will be defined by an implementation act. After the fiscal rule has been incorporated into the Constitution, the National Assembly must pass the implementation act within six months. The act will define timing, method, supervision and exceptions to implementing the fiscal rule.

According to the European Commission, this is a strong signal that Slovenia is committed to ensuring healthy public finances, which is the key foundation of sustainable growth and creation of jobs. About the decision passed by the National Assembly on 24 May, the Prime Minister said, “The only way to overcome the crisis is to overcome political blockages.”

Regarding the inclusion of the fiscal rule in the Constitution, both the coalition and opposition agree that this alone will not solve anything and that the Government must take numerous measures to normalise the situation for the Slovenian economy and boost growth. Only through growth and successful entrepreneurship can Slovenia retain its economic sovereignty.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF INCLUDING THE FISCAL RULE IN THE CONSTITUTION**

In compliance with the amendments to Article 148 of the Constitution, which is the highest legal act of the state, the fiscal rule requires the revenue and expen-

diture of state budgets to be balanced in the medium term, without borrowing, or revenue must exceed expenditure. State budgets include the national budget and the health and pension insurance funds, with over 50 per cent of the budgets of local communities and direct beneficiaries of state and local budgets being financed from central government funds. This principle may be suspended only temporarily in exceptional national circumstances. The criteria for determining exceptional circumstances and method of action when they arise will be laid down in an implementation act drafted by the Government and passed by the National Assembly by a two thirds majority.

In accordance with the European intergovernmental treaty on the fiscal compact, exceptional circumstances are defined as an extraordinary event which the state cannot influence and which has important consequences for public finance (e.g. natural disaster), or a period of serious decline in economic activity. In such cases, any temporary suspension must

not pose a threat to medium-term fiscal sustainability.

**FISCAL RULE AND IMPLEMENTATION ACT**

The implementation act will also include the formula for applying the fiscal rule to annual budgets and, in compliance with the political agreement that was the basis for Deputies' decisions, also the method of balancing public finance in a reasonable and endurable manner.

The fiscal rule and the implementation act will be applied for the first time in the drafting of the 2015 budget. Until then, budget policy is to be conducted in a way that facilitates the attainment of that objective.

In the stability programme, the Government committed to structurally balanced public finances by 2017.

**END OF POLITICAL MANIPULATION**

Speaking about the constitutional amendments to the law on refer-

Prime Minister Bratušek particularly stressed that a referendum is still a democratic tool in the hands of the people, because politicians or Deputies will no longer be able to call referendums.

Relating to the decision on constitutional amendments, the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, warned that the amendments to the Constitution alone would not solve the crisis, but it would be significantly more difficult or hardly possible without them.

Prime Minister Bratušek stressed: "Slovenia must normalise the situation for its own sake, and not because of foreign requirements."



Photo: Tamino Pelešnik/SIPA

endums, the Prime Minister said that we have reached the end of political manipulation. She particularly stressed that a referendum is still a real tool in the hands of the people, because politicians or Deputies will no longer be able to call referendums. She also noted that the conditions under which voters may call a referendum have not been amended. A legislative referendum may now be called by 40,000 voters, but no longer by one third of Deputies and National Counsellors.

The Constitution now also stipulates issues that are to be excluded from referendums. Thus referendums may not be called on acts on taxes, customs and other compulsory charges, and on the act passed to implement the national budget, on acts on emergency actions to guarantee national defence, security or to eliminate the consequences of natural disasters, on acts ratifying international treaties, and on acts eliminating unconstitutionality in the field of human rights and other unconstitutionality. The amendments also introduce the so-called referendum rejec-

tion model, in which an act is rejected at a referendum if a majority of voters vote validly against it, on condition that at least one fifth of all voters vote against the act. After a proposal in the National Assembly, the act would no longer be subject to the results of the referendum and a better act could be proposed immediately after the rejection.

#### RESPONSE OF THE PUBLIC AND OPINION MAKERS

Relating to the decision on constitutional amendments, the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, warned that the amendments to the Constitution alone would not solve the crisis, but it would be significantly more difficult or hardly possible without them.

The lawyer and long-standing adviser to the National Assembly, Dr Miro Cerar, believes that the amendments to the Constitution on referendum arrangements are very professional and politically mature. He believes that the process of introducing the fiscal rule into the Constitution with

the participation of experts was given sufficient time.

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia welcomed the amendments to the Constitution. "This was a necessary step to strengthen the Slovenian economy. A strong economy is the best guarantee of more jobs and the enhancement of the social state," they stressed. They also expressed their certainty that the fiscal rule and the passage of the implementation act would contribute to a speedier recovery from the crisis.

#### SLOVENIA REMAINS A SOCIAL STATE

To the criticism of trade unions and several representatives of the civil society who expressed their disappointment at the National Assembly's decision, Prime Minister Bratušek responded: "Slovenia still remains a state of social solidarity." She also assessed that the amendments had not been presented sufficiently to the public. She gave an assurance that they would be beneficial to Slovenia.

Since 23 December 1991, when Slovenia acquired its own Constitution, the document has been amended six times, excluding the last two amendments. In 1997, the constitutional amendment allowed foreigners to purchase property in Slovenia; the proportional electoral system was introduced in 2000; in 2003, the Constitution was amended due to the accession of Slovenia to the EU and NATO; three constitutional acts were amended in 2004; amendments enabled the regionalisation of Slovenia in 2006, and in 2013, the fiscal rule and limitations on calling referendums were introduced.

## Significance of the brand and national image of a country



Photo: Archives of GCO

A country's brand is the most powerful marketing tool of the modern state. In a time of globalisation, countries also encounter increasing competition. By presenting themselves abroad, countries, like business organisations, try to increase their recognisability and improve their symbolic and actual position to increase tourism potential, attract new investments, achieve broader cultural cooperation, increase sales of products and services and improve their international reputation. The potential advantages of a country are not merely functional (for example, preserving the natural environment and providing advanced infrastructure), but also symbolic and emotional. According to Leslie de Cheratony, brands are very powerful tools because they incorporate func-

tional values based on quality, which are evaluated intellectually, and emotional values evaluated according to emotional criteria. Thus, with the creation of a brand, we communicate who we are, who we want to be, what our positions and values are, what we believe and trust in.

#### SLOVENIA'S BRAND

The 'I feel Slovenia' brand was created in 2007 in order to contribute to enhancing Slovenia's competitiveness in various fields. The process of creating the brand involved representatives from various fields: civil society, business, tourism, culture and the arts, science, sport and politics. Following the first research, it was established that the 'I feel Slovenia' brand was well received by

Slovenians, which is an important condition for its success. The brand is also seen as agreeable and promising by foreigners.

All fields of activity share the identity elements of the brand and combine the common denominator of Slovenians and Slovenia. It is no coincidence that the Slovenian brand is 'I feel Slovenia' because the country cannot be presented with an image alone: it must be felt and experienced. And this distinguishes it from other national trademarks.

Some of the elements of the brand's identity are similar to the characteristics of other nations and states, and some are typical only of Slovenia. What makes Slovenia unique is the combination of all the aforementioned el-

Visitor of Slovenia House at 2010 Winter Olympic Games





Photo: Archives of GCO

“Managing the national reputation is by any standards a gigantic task, demanding a rare combination of vision, authority, patience, consensus, creativity and organisational skill; but it is no longer a matter of choice.”  
Simon Anholt

ements that through endless intertwinement create harmonious stories and experiences, which we are already living to a certain extent, and which partly represent our common goals regarding the country’s development.

The core of the brand represents ‘Slovenian green’, which expresses a balance between the calmness of nature and the diligence of the people. It denotes our beautifully preserved countryside and our determination to keep it that way, or to plan our development in harmony with it. Brands usually tell stories. The basic elements of the Slovenian brand story are:

- Passion for everything we love.
- Slovenia is different, and you can feel it.
- Slovenia encourages you to take up things that excite you.
- Our vision is a green resort.
- Our mission is a clear move forward with nature (sustainable development).

The power of the brand lies in its content and in the motivation of citizens to live it. It gains its power through its promotion and frequency of use. So far, Slovenia has systematically used the ‘I feel Slovenia’ brand in the field of tourism. It has also been gaining recognition in sport, while additional activi-

ties to establish it in other fields (especially in business) are still required.

**THE NATIONAL IMAGE OF SLOVENIA**

Brands which are well received by their consumers (i.e. visitors, tourists, investors, media etc.) are powerful and successful. The success of a brand is inseparably linked with the image or credibility of the country at home and abroad.

In the current situation, the management of a country’s brand should be viewed somewhat more broadly than in the past. In addition to constant long-term efforts to establish the image of the country and its national brand, Slovenia launched activities, particularly communications, whose objective is to improve the country’s image. Recently, Slovenia has been referred to in the foreign media and in public only as a European country affected by the financial and economic crisis more severely than its EU counterparts. The country has established itself as an interesting tourist destination, and its name is more and more frequently carried around the world by our sportsmen and women who can compete against the largest countries with their accomplishments, but unfortunately, Slovenia is not recognised

abroad as an attractive country economically or for investment.

In a globalised world, a country’s good image is an advantage which contributes to its success in the international environment in politics, business, technological development, science, culture and society. Nowadays, a country has to be aware of its comparative advantages. Instead of the term ‘nation branding’, Simon Anholt, the leading international expert on national brands, has recently adopted the concept of ‘competitive identity’, which he says denotes a plan for mobilising strategies, activities, investments, innovations and communications in all possible spheres, public and private, for joint efforts to prove to the world that a country deserves a different, broader and more positive image. So it is important how the country acts, functions and presents itself to other countries.

With a relatively poor image at the moment, Slovenia is striving for better recognisability and to improve the country’s reputation by presenting positive stories, events and accomplishments. Because we want positive information about Slovenia to reach as many people as possible, the aid of heralds or ambassadors of Slovenia will be very valuable. Perhaps you, dear Sinfo readers, can also lend us a hand. Do you feel Slovenia?

## From Slovenia with love

The Good Voda company has recently presented to the American market a product which is the result of joined efforts on the part of the Slovenian companies Fructal, Steklarna Hrastnik and Feroplast and two internationally acclaimed artists, the actor and comedian Bill Murray and the dancer and actor Mikhail “Misha” Baryshnikov.

Photo: Archives of Good Voda, LLC



Developed from an idea that occurred to renowned American chef Peter X. Kelly almost four years ago, Slovenian vodka from under the Slovenian Alps is currently being presented to the American market and in September will also be launched in Slovenia. Two weeks before its official launch in the USA, SLOVENIA VODKA had already been awarded a gold medal at a prestigious competition in San Francisco, a double gold medal at the Fifty Best Imported Vodkas competition and a special recognition of the profession, the 2013 strong recommendation accolade.

When in 2009 Peter X. Kelly came to Slovenia at the invitation of Emil Gaspari, an American businessman of Slovenian origin, he did not imagine that the country would fascinate him so much in a little more than 72 hours. Ever since that visit, he has been look-

ing for ways to bring Slovenia’s warmth, culture and unblemished beauty to America. The flagship of Kelly’s cuisine, the wonderful New York restaurant X20, is furnished with custom-made Slovenian chairs. When visiting his restaurants, his demanding and critical guests enjoy the flavours of many unique products from Slovenia, among them an excellent selection of quality Slovenian wines, salt flower from the Sečovelje salt-pans and Kocbek’s pumpkin-seed oil. At the launch of SLOVENIA VODKA, Kelly said, “The expertly made SLOVENIA VODKA contains not only the whisper of Slovenian buckwheat and water from under the Slovenian Alps, it also contains love, which is trapped in the very name of SLOVENIA.”

When the story of Slovenia and rumours about the creation of the smoothest vodka reached the renowned actor and comedian Bill

Murray and the ballet dancer and actor Mikhail Baryshnikov, they enthusiastically joined the team, which in addition to chef Peter X. Kelly includes Bruce Duhan, Emil Gaspari and sommelier Billy Rattner.

Slovenian companies Fructal, Steklarna Hrastnik and Feroplast played a special role in the SLOVENIA VODKA project, adding, through their development and know-how, another important segment to the beverage, which successfully presents it on the American market.

The incredibly smooth vodka was developed at Fructal in cooperation with acclaimed ethnologist Janez Bogataj, who came up with the idea to make it from buckwheat, and the Biotechnical Faculty of the University of Ljubljana. The vodka has already received its first awards in the profession. Two weeks before the official

New York restaurant Oceana with a Slovenian atmosphere – this was the location of the reception for the launching of the Slovenian vodka with a hint of buckwheat on the American market.

Guests at the New York reception were able to taste two cocktails made from the new vodka, which were named after Peter X. Kelly’s main business partners – ballet dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov and actor Bill Murray.



Photo: Archives of Good Voda, LLC

In the photograph: Mikhail Baryshnikov, Nina Gaspari, Emil Gaspari

“The name of our company is good water, because every vodka is good water. The wine that Gaspari brought from Slovenia was already an awakening for me. I was extremely surprised that something so good came from a part of the world that I, unfortunately, did not know,” said sommelier Billy Rattner.

launch in the USA, at the San Francisco World Spirits Competition on 24 March 2013, SLOVENIA VODKA, one of the 1,400 entrants in the competition, received a gold medal. In the same month it was awarded the strong recommendation accolade at the 2013 Ultimate Spirits Challenge. On 6 May 2013, a double gold medal was added to these awards at the Fifty Best Imported Vodkas competition, where the best imported vodkas on the American market are evaluated.

Sommelier Billy Rattner lent his taste buds to the quest for the right formula and together with the experts from Fructal and the ethnologist Janez Bogataj, who advised the use of buckwheat as a Slovenian speciality, participated in the development of this exceptionally smooth vodka. “The range of aromas and flavours of pure vodka is very narrow compared to wine. This vodka, however, has a wonderful aroma, taste and texture. Buckwheat is one of the main crops in Slovenia and we thought it would be splendid to incorporate it in the heart of the new product,” said Rattner.

After the launch at the restaurant Oceana in Manhattan in April, Andrej Božič, Director General of Steklarna Hrastnik, said: “I believed in the SLOVENIA VODKA project from the very beginning. This project has great potential. The launch event was skilfully organised. Everybody attending the party in New York was impressed, not only with the taste of the vodka, but also with the bottle – its design and craftsmanship.” The shape of the bottle, which resembles an ice cube, was a great challenge for glass engineers of Steklarna Hrastnik.

They had to create a bottle with four identical sides and uniform wall thickness. The bottle also has even wall thickness at the transitions to the shoulder and the thicker bottom. It was important that the bottle walls had no irregularities, because the name of the vodka is written on the back of the bottle and is read through the front wall and the contents. Special attention was devoted to the outer cap, made by Feroplast from Sežana, as it had to be applied to the bottle in such a way as to take the weight of a full bottle.

At first, SLOVENIA VODKA (marketed in the USA by Good Voda) will be sold in restaurants, bars and shops in the states of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, and in the following months also in other USA states and elsewhere. “We would like first to establish the brand. By the end of the year we will start selling the vodka in Slovenia and six or seven other USA states. I believe that, in the next few years, we will be present throughout the USA,” said chef Peter X. Kelly, the father of the project, at the vodka’s launch in New York.

Guests at the presentation in the restaurant Oceana were able to taste two cocktails made with the new vodka and named after Kelly’s two main business partners and investors in the project – Mikhail Baryshnikov and Bill Murray. “The first cocktail contains peach and blackberry and is called the Bill. It is sweet like him. The second, the Misha, contains lemon and ginger, because these Latvians like a little spice,” explained Kelly playfully.



Photo: Archives of Good Voda, LLC

“This is indeed an extraordinary product. The vodka is pure and smooth, but has a nice bite. It has character. Probably a Slovenian character, which I would like to experience one day,” said Mikhail Baryshnikov, as he expressed his belief that SLOVENIA VODKA will sell well. “There is a silly joke about vodka – there are no bad vodkas, only good and very good vodkas. Well, SLOVENIA VODKA, is an excellent vodka,” said the ballet dancer, also known to Slovenians from his role in the series *Sex and the City*.

“Bill and Misha helped a lot with spreading the news about SLOVENIA VODKA. Of course, they both love a good cocktail,” said Kelly jokingly of Baryshnikov and Murray.

“A special emphasis is put on its presentation as a culinary vodka. This means that it goes well with good recipes. This vodka is the first of the kind on the market,” explained Emil Gaspari, one of the proponents of the idea of a Slovenian vodka with a hint of buckwheat. He impatiently awaits the specialities complemented with the new vodka that Kelly will reveal in the coming months.

#### BILL MURRAY

The internationally acclaimed comedian Bill Murray attracted the attention of the American public

with his Emmy Award-winning performance on *Saturday Night Live*. He has since appeared in some of the funniest and best-known films of all time. He received Best Actor Golden Globes for his roles in *Ghostbusters* and *The Royal Tenenbaums*. For the leading role in *Lost in Translation*, he was nominated for an Oscar. He has appeared in many films, recently including *Moonrise Kingdom* and *Hyde Park on Hudson*. In the latter he plays the leading character, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in a performance which has earned him yet another Golden Globe nomination.

#### MIKHAIL BARYSHNIKOV

The internationally renowned dancer, choreographer and actor Mikhail Baryshnikov was born in Riga, the capital of Latvia. He began studying ballet at the age of nine. When still a teenager, he moved to Leningrad and entered the Vaganova Choreographic School. After graduation in 1969, he became the principal dancer in the Kirov Ballet. In 1974, he left the Soviet Union and danced with major ballet companies around the world, including the famous New York City Ballet, where he worked with internationally acclaimed choreographers such as George Balanchine and Jerome Robbins. In 1980, he

assumed the position of Artistic Director of the American Ballet Theatre, where he stayed 10 years and nurtured a new generation of dancers and choreographers. From 1990 to 2002 he was director of and danced with the White Oak Dance Project, which he co-founded with choreographer Mark Morris. In 2005 he opened the Baryshnikov Arts Center (BAC), a creative home for local and international artists to develop and present their work. Mr Baryshnikov has appeared in many films and has worked in television and on Broadway, which has brought him Oscar and Tony nominations. Among the many awards he has won are the Kennedy Center Honors, the National Medal of Honor, the Commonwealth Award, the Chubb Fellowship presented by Yale University, and the Jerome Robbins Award presented to outstanding artists by the foundation established by the American theatre director, producer and choreographer Jerome Robbins. In 2012, Mr Baryshnikov received the Vilcek Prize, which is presented to immigrant artists who have made outstanding contributions to the development of American culture. In 2010, he was named an Officer of the French Legion of Honour. His name is a very synonym for dance and he is often referred to as one of the best ballet dancers of all time.

Promotional Campaign for Slovenia Vodka with Bill Murray and Mikhail Baryshnikov.

“We would like first to establish the brand. By the end of the year we will start selling the vodka in Slovenia and six or seven other USA states. I believe that in a few years we will be present throughout the USA,” asserted the father of the project, chef and owner of several top restaurants Peter X. Kelly.

Vodka is one of the most popular beverages in the USA. At present, it has a 33% share in the spirits market and projections show that this should rise to 42% in the next few years.

## The Wheel, 5200 years

The City Museum of Ljubljana has developed an extremely appealing exhibition – The Wheel, 5200 – which opened on 24 May 2013. This exhibition was long-anticipated, in fact ever since the oldest wooden wheel (with and intact axle) in the world

was uncovered in the Ljubljansko Barje. The exhibition links ancient heritage, technological and scientific development with culture and art in an original manner and even escapes the limitations of the planet.



Photo: Archives of the City Museum of Ljubljana

The human desire for knowledge, exploration and creativity is unstoppable and even expands beyond our home planet. The exhibition's broader concept encourages visitors to develop their own thoughts and emphasises the indivisibility of science, art and heritage.

“The exhibition not only speaks about the times this wheel was made but attempts to show how incredibly powerful the invention of the wheel had been”, Blaž Peršin, Director of Museum & Galleries of Ljubljana, said at the occasion of the exhibition, adding that ‘many people believe that this invention was the most important in human civilisation’. He added that this wheel brought together several institutions, resulting in the implementation of this outstanding project. The exhibition was created through the cooperation of several partners

in the areas of culture, preservation of heritage and economy and will be accompanied by a diverse programme adjusted to different groups of visitors.

‘The exhibition surpasses all our other events to date. The exhibition was prepared in cooperation with a large group of experts from different areas’, said the creator of the exhibition, Irena Šinkovec, at its opening. She presented the history of the wheel in three sections: the first places the wheel into its primary context – in the space and time of pile dwellings

on Ljubljana Barje, with special emphasis on the conservation and preservation of the rich cultural heritage. The second section showcases the wheel as one of the most significant technological inventions, with emphasis on the fields of industrialisation and the industrial revolution, which fundamentally changed the economic, scientific, political and broader social development of Western civilisation. The third section presents the wheel on the symbolic level, revolving through different dimensions of time and space. The human de-

Photo: Archives of the City Museum of Ljubljana



The President of the Republic, Borut Pahor, Minister of Culture, Uroš Grilc, and Ljubljana Mayor, Zoran Jankovič, also attended the opening ceremony.

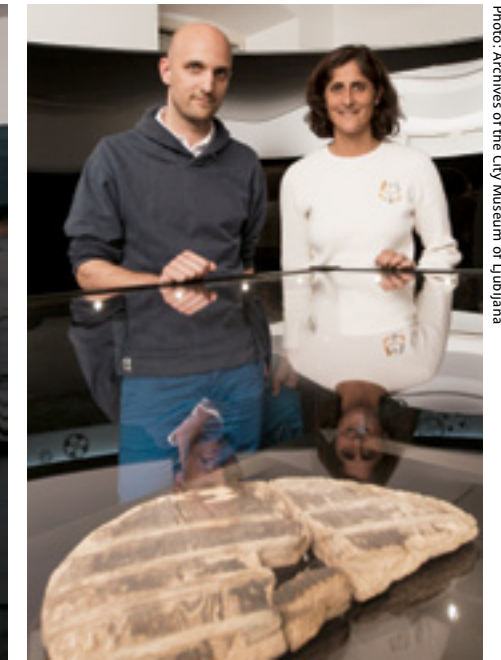


Photo: Archives of the City Museum of Ljubljana

The exhibition was also visited by the astronaut Sunita Williams.

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At the exhibition, it will be possible to experience life in the pile dwellings, since this, combined with the inspiration of the wheel, will also be a starting point for a number of associated events for kindergartens, schools, families and adult visitors from both Slovenia and abroad.

The Cultural Centre of European Space Technologies also participated in the exhibition, which prompted Sunita Williams, the US astronaut of Slovenian descent, to attend the opening of the exhibition, which she found extremely appealing.

### UNCOVERING THE WHEEL - PILE-DWELLINGS IN THE LJUBLJANSKO BARJE ON THE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE LIST

In the spring of 2002, archaeologists of the Institute of Archaeology headed by Anton Velušček carried out preventive cleaning of a drainage channel in Stara Gmajna pri Vrhniki, during which they uncovered several rich finds.

In addition to two wooden canoes, they found the remains of a wooden wheel at the bottom of the channel, and after widening it, they also found the axle, which had fallen off the wheel. Thus, the efforts of many archaeologists who have been carrying out demanding archaeological research in the marshy environment since the pile-dwellings were first discovered at the Ljubljansko Barje in 1875 were rewarded.

### OUTSTANDING VALUE OF PILE-DWELLINGS

The pile-dwellings at the Ljubljansko Barje dating back to the period from the 5th to the 2nd millennium, i.e. to the times of the first farmers, have been preserved due to earth layers having been constantly soaked with water, which provided for preservation of organic remains, including wooden items, over thousands of years. Knowledge and understanding of the lives lived by these first permanent inhabitants of the wider Ljubljana area are based exclusively on material remains of abandoned villages, since that period did not leave behind any written documents. The importance of protecting and preserving such sites was also recognised by UNESCO, which in 2011 confirmed the group nomination of Alpine countries (Austria, France,

Italy, Germany, Slovenia and Switzerland) and added the pile-dwellings on the World Heritage Site List.

### PRESERVING THE WOODEN WHEEL WITH THE AXLE

The exhibition is also noteworthy because it posed a specific restoration challenge. This find was distinct and singular as none had been before. ‘The enthusiasm over the find was combined with an element of fear, because these are extremely sensitive materials, which demand specific preservation’, said Irena Šinkovec. The items from the so-called wet wood are heavily degraded and exposed to a rapid decomposition process after being lifted from the earth, due to the presence of oxygen and accelerated activity of microorganisms. After consultations with several experts, the wheel and axle was sent from the City Museum of Ljubljana to the well-known conservation workshop of the Roman-German Museum in Mainz, where the items were conserved by using the melamine method. Simultaneously with this operation, a special microclimate chamber was manufactured, which will facilitate the exhibition and preservation of valuable items for the future generations.

The pile-dwellings at the Ljubljansko Barje dating back to the period from the 5th to the 2nd millennium, i.e. to the times of the first farmers, have been preserved due to earth layers having been constantly soaked with water, which provided for preservation of organic remains, including wooden items, over thousands of years.

The Cultural Centre of European Space Technologies also participated in the exhibition, which prompted Sunita Williams, the US astronaut of Slovenian descent, to attend the opening of the exhibition, which she found extremely appealing.

## On astronaut Sunita Williams: She would be called 'Sunshine Girl' in Slovenian

"Sunita Williams is an inspiration to all with dreams and visions."



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



Photo: Staniko Gruden/STA

Sunita in Indian means a well-behaved girl (a good girl; it also means a reliable one, righteous or courteous in Sanskrit). In Slovenian, such a girl would be called sonček (sunshine), which is not very different from Sun-ita.

Sunita Williams is a Master of Engineering Management whose impressive military career took her to NASA's astronaut programme in 1998. She was born in Cleveland in 1965; her mother, Bonnie Zalokar, is of Slovenian descent, while her father, Deepak Pandya, is of Indian origin. Williams became known to the Slovenian public when she revealed her Slovenian roots several years ago, since her maternal great grandmother, Marija Bohinjec, was from Leše near Tržič. After graduating in physical science at the United States Naval Academy in 1987, she joined the U.S. Navy. She was first trained in diving and spent nine days in the underwater habitat. She then reported to a helicopter unit and participated in a support squadron in the Persian Gulf War in 1991. She has made over 3,000

flights in thirty different types of aircraft and has flown missions in the Mediterranean, Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. In 1992, she participated in the Hurricane Andrew relief operation in Miami, Florida.

Williams began her astronaut candidate training at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas in 1998. In the last 16 years, she has flown into space twice; in 2006, she stayed in space for 195 days aboard the Space Shuttle Discovery, setting a new record for female astronauts which has not been beaten. In 2012, she went into space again, this time with a Russian Soyuz spacecraft launched from the Baikonur Cosmodrome, and became the second woman to take command of the international space station. With 29 hours and 17 minutes,

she also held the spacewalking record among female astronauts for a while.

### A WELCOME WITH AVSENIK'S "NA GOLICI"

A plane from Moscow landed at the Airport. And then an accordion was heard playing Avsenik's most famous tune, "Na Golici". Sunita Williams, an astronaut with Slovenian roots, had arrived at Jože Pučnik Airport. Sunita in Indian means a well-behaved girl (a good girl; it also means a reliable one, righteous or courteous in Sanskrit). In Slovenian, such a girl would be called sonček (sunshine), which is not very different from Sun-ita. Upon her arrival, Williams said, "I was looking at the beautiful mountains and countryside from the plane. I'm really happy to be

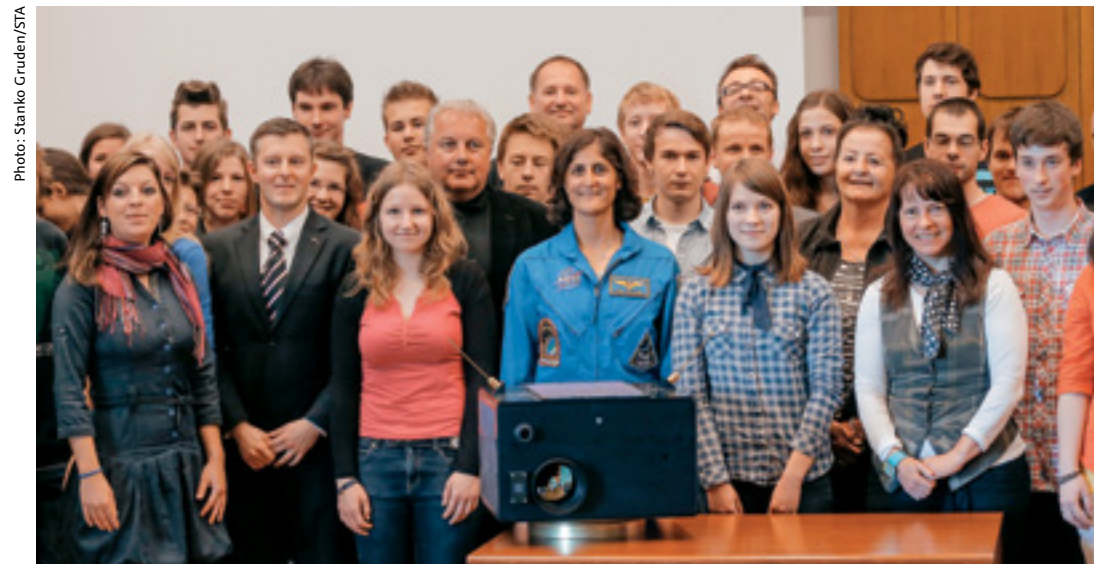


Photo: Staniko Gruden/STA

here." According to her, Slovenia is great and exciting, and the people are nice and happy.

### WILLIAMS VISITED SLOVENIA AT THE INVITATION OF THE INSTITUTE OF SLOVENE ASTRONAUTS

The Institute was founded in Leše near Tržič, where her ancestors lived. Williams came to Slovenia for the first time with her sister and mother to look for her roots and visit the places where her great grandmother and great grandfather came from. In 2009, she came for a second time and stayed here for over a week. On that trip, she visited the birth place of her ancestors and her living relatives and explored Slovenia as a tourist.

She was received by Janez Fajfar, the Mayor of Bled. She met many people, including the Olympic rowers. She was taken to Bled Castle and to Bled Island in a pletna (a traditional boat at Lake Bled).

### IT IS RIGHT FOR SLOVENIANS TO CONSIDER HER ONE OF US

The President of the Republic of Slovenia awarded Williams a Medal for Services for her contribution to fostering the natural and technical sciences and their promotion among young Slovenians. On conferring the award, President Pahor said that he was honouring an outstanding personality, an astronaut and an expert who, with her knowledge and courage, almost literally breaks down the boundaries

of human knowledge and existence. "Ms Sunita Williams is of Slovenian descent; she regularly visits Slovenia, and is connected with Slovenian science, and in particular with the Slovenian Science Foundation. She transfers knowledge on the latest developments in the field of space travel, particularly technology and research in space, to Slovenia. Due to her Slovenian roots, which she carefully maintains and preserves, it is only right that we consider her one of us," said President Pahor. He also noted "that Slovenians are exceptional people who, in spite of their small number, have managed to preserve and develop their culture and identity and finally managed to obtain their own state."

### A STORY THAT LEADS MANKIND FORWARD

Williams gave several lectures during her visit. She spoke about her personal and professional experience and the experience of space and science. She mentioned several times that she feels at home in Slovenia. Her visit was part of the promotion of Slovenian scientists and understanding of science aimed at encouraging more young people to opt for natural and science studies.

When she spoke about her personal career, she said, "The idea of becoming an astronaut had never crossed my mind when I was a child. I never even knew anyone who could fly a plane or anything like that. I always wanted to be a vet."

She continued, "I tell children who ask me what to do if they want to become astronauts to study maths and engineering, to do sports and to take care of their health. I also advise them to be scouts and spend time in nature. In this way, you learn to live for yourself and for others, and this is just as important as being interested in science."

Her main message at the lectures was that the success of a mission depends on team work and the relationships between the astronauts. She also spoke about female astronauts at the Slovenian Science Foundation. She stressed that "each gender contributes its ideas, which help in the development of science. It is important to do your best at work and to be an active member on the mission." On the significance of her visit to Slovenia, she mentioned that she wanted to share her experience in space with people where her roots lie. So she has made close connections with Slovenia and India, where her father comes from. Her relationship with both countries was also evident at the space station, where she had the flags of both countries. She said that she has taken qualities from both cultures that helped her in her career. Williams added that, in spite of the country's small size, Slovenia and its geographical characteristics are also nicely visible from space, especially the mountains and lakes and the Ljubljana Basin. "The view of our planet from space is extraordinary. The Earth looks so peaceful and wonderful," she said.

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Photo: Stanke Cruden/STA

At her farewell, Williams said, "I've had a fun visit and got to do all sorts of things. For you Slovenians, these are ordinary, but for me they are quite the opposite." She added another important message, "In life, you must always do what would make your mother happy and give her a reason to be proud."

After the official award presentation of the Medal by the President of the Republic, Williams gave a lecture entitled "My Journey into Space". She presented a brief history of space travel and her life story. She also invited young Slovenians to become part of the space programme, a story that leads mankind forward. On that note, she added, "You feel at home in space; our bodies are amazing machines."

#### IT IS IMPORTANT TO PERSEVERE AND LIFE THEN TAKES US ALONG INTERESTING PATHS

In conclusion, she emphasised that young children do not need to know what they would like to do in life. "It's important to persevere, and life will then take us along interesting paths. When we find something we enjoy, we have to make an effort. And in this way, we can achieve higher levels and objectives."

#### AN ASTRONAUT VISITING A BAT

During her visit, Williams also met one of the most successful businessmen supporting the Matevž Lenarčič project. She visited the Pipistrel company and met its director, Ivo Boscarol. They tested two Pipistrel

aircraft. "Both planes are great and give you a feeling of safety." Ivo Boscarol noted that Williams is very communicative and down-to-earth. Regarding Pipistrel's cooperation with NASA, Boscarol said that NASA had recently bought three systems of electrical aircraft drives for testing. "Pipistrel is slowly finding its way into space technology." Boscarol expressed his certainty that this would not be the last time Williams would fly their aircraft. Going through a kaleidoscope of emotions

Williams described her encounter with space in the following words: "Your mind goes through a kaleidoscope of emotions: from surprise to happiness, and frustration when something isn't working; it can be very hot and very cold. Like down-hill skiing: sometimes a bit scary, sometimes crazy fun; you pick yourself up, you freeze, you get excited and you're happy when you finally reach the finish line. But physically and mentally, you're completely exhausted."

#### IN THE VILLAGE OF HER ANCESTORS

The astronaut of Slovenian and Indian descent concluded her stay

in Slovenia with a visit to her ancestral village, Leše near Tržič.

At the end of the 19th century, Sunita Williams' great grandmother left Leše for America. The people of Leše thus had many reasons to shake her hand. The ethnologist Janez Bogataj presented Williams with a monograph on the most famous Slovenian sausage, the Kranjska sausage, or as he put it, 'the queen of sausages'. Sausage-making has been an important festive occasion for Slovenians over the centuries and the preservation of the custom is a significant part of Slovenian cultural heritage. The guest noted that the food was exceptionally good during her visit. In order to taste the quality of Kranjska sausage, the villagers gave her Kranjska sausages made by the award-winning Arvaj meat company.

At her farewell, Williams said, "I've had a fun visit and got to do all sorts of things. For you Slovenians, these are ordinary, but for me they are quite the opposite." She added another important message, "In life, you must always do what would make your mother happy and give her a reason to be proud."

## Matevž Lenarčič: Between the sky and the ice

Matevž Lenarčič, Slovenian biologist, photographer, alpinist and pilot, resumed the GreenLight WorldFlight project on 22 April 2013 and concluded it on 26 May 2013. This time, he did not circumnavigate the globe but flew over the North Pole in an ultra-light plane. Once again, his venture has been a unique one.

Photo: Stanke Cruden/STA



After landing at Ljubljana Jože Pučnik Airport, Matevž Lenarčič said that there had been more difficulties accompanying the flight than expected. The unfavourable weather conditions somewhat extended the journey. He returned home after more than a month. The air route took him from Ljubljana to Tromsø, over Svalbard and the Arctic to Canada and then across the Atlantic Ocean to Ireland and on to Nantes, France, and ended back in Slovenia. People have traversed the Arctic on foot and skis and travelled it by air and sea, but ultra-light aircrafts are still extremely rare in the area.

Matevž Lenarčič has become the first man ever to cross the Arctic, flying an ultra-light plane over the North Pole.

Through this project, Matevž Lenarčič again demonstrated his exceptional skill as a pilot and proved that the aircraft of his choice – a Virus SW914 from the Slovenian producer Pipistrel – is a particularly economical and environmentally friendly high-technology product. He tested the aircraft, which is the result of Slovenian research and development, in extreme conditions, and it delivered an average speed of 280 kilometres per hour and

fuel consumption of 6 litres per 100 kilometres, which took even the producer by surprise. Presently, this aircraft is unique in the world and by far exceeds the performance of other ultra-light aircrafts.

Besides the ambition to set extreme and technological milestones, the project was also distinguished by its scientific character. During the flight, black carbon concentration measurements were performed. Black carbon (or 'soot') is released from chimneys and exhaust pipes. It is harmful to human health and is the second

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Photo: Stanjo Cudenčič

The 'I feel Slovenia' slogan was featured on the aircraft flown by Matevž Lenarčič. Slovenian green expresses the balance between the calm of nature and the diligence of Slovenians. Undoubtedly, this brand was a perfect fit for his ecological project.

The project has attracted much interest from foreign media, the aviation community, and scientists. This was also evident at the 'Destination Green' ICAO Symposium on Aviation and Climate Change, where Lenarčič presented the project, and spoke about vast opportunities for scientific research and the need for appropriate international standards enabling broad use of environmentally friendly technologies in monitoring air quality.

largest cause of climate change. The Arctic area is especially vulnerable, as the warming continues after black carbon aerosols are deposited on ice and snow making them darker; as a consequence, they melt more rapidly. Ice melt caused by climate change opens up new waterways; this will prompt an increase in traffic producing higher emissions in the Arctic. Accelerated climate change occurring in the High North will influence the climate in Europe and the global climate system.

Measurements were performed with a miniature prototype of a device – an Aethalometer – produced by the Slovenian company, Aerosol. For the first time,

black carbon concentration measurements were performed over a large Arctic area and at 3 000 metres above sea level. This achievement is extremely beneficial for the Arctic region.

Matevž Lenarčič is a pilot with rich experience in negotiating long distances. He has set numerous milestones in the area of ultra-light aviation by flying small and ultra-light aircrafts. Besides being the first to fly over the Arctic, which he did this spring, he circumnavigated the globe in 2012, claiming the lowest fuel consumption on record and was also the first to fly over the highest mountain in the world (Mount Everest) in an ultra-light aircraft.

His bold venture combines Slovenian knowledge applied to high-technology achievements and products, which also demonstrate environmental awareness. He personifies spirit, vision and courage. He conveys a message to the world about a successful Slovenia and its people, who are competent and knowledgeable and have courage and vision. He proves that we have enthusiasm, knowledge and ability. This also gives cause for optimism at home.

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Photo: Archives of Ministry of Foreign Affairs

When explaining the data gathered during the flight, Matevž Lenarčič pointed out that the North Pole is warmer than he anticipated. 'The temperatures recorded below the North Pole are much lower than those recorded on the Pole and the ice melts faster on the Pole, which indicates that there is really something going on in the Arctic,' he said. The Arctic is an indicator of climate change, which is more clearly seen there than anywhere else.

Change, where Lenarčič presented the project, and spoke about vast opportunities for scientific research and the need for appropriate international standards enabling broad use of environmentally friendly technologies in monitoring air quality.

GreenLight WorldFlight strengthens Slovenia's recognisability and reputation and promotes care for the environment. It also emphasises the importance of understanding and facing climate change as one of the greatest challenges of the modern world and points to a turn from being wasteful to being thrifty under the slogan 'THINK SMALL - THINK LIGHT - THINK GREEN'. The

project shows that Slovenians have the vision and knowledge needed to efficiently face these challenges. We are delighted and proud that the project has been carried out under the 'I feel Slovenia' brand as it places Slovenia on the environmental science map, links it to the world and vice versa, and joins all Slovenians.

Matevž Lenarčič explains that the GreenLight WorldFlight project has been driven by the enthusiasm of a group of people who have mainly used their own resources to turn an idea (researching our planet by using small-light-green and largely domestic technology) into reality; besides the relatively mod-

est participation of sponsors, the promotion campaign included the Slovenian Agency for Entrepreneurship, Innovation, Development, Investment and Tourism, the Government Communication Office, and, very successfully, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through its Global Challenges Department and embassies. 'The project was a success thanks to a good idea, knowledge and energy of all participants, and I would like to sincerely thank them,' said Lenarčič.

We congratulate Matevž Lenarčič and the GLWF team on their remarkable achievement, wishing them safe and successful hours in the sky.

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## Together we can set our goals higher and higher



Photo: Stanjo Gruden/STA

Compared to its counterparts in Europe and elsewhere in the world, the company Pipistrel is too small to afford high-profile media campaigns, the design and recognisability of a trademark and resounding, but expensive marketing campaigns.

Therefore, all the funds that might otherwise have been earmarked for marketing have been directed towards innovation, originality, energy efficiency and, above all, research and development for almost fifteen years.

And that is why, today, we have reached a point where our aircraft are significantly better than our competitors'. Due to our planning philosophy of using as little energy as possible for as much efficiency as possible, they are also essentially more efficient than comparable competing aircraft. When we started building this philosophy a while ago, fuel prices were low and the noise factor irrelevant. Competi-

tors viewed us as dreamers who were wasting time and energy (not to mention money) on a change in aviation which would not have any long-term results. But our vision was correct. Fuel prices started to rise drastically and demands to reduce noise were becoming louder every day. The advantage acquired by Pipistrel with its experience in recent years is now of the utmost importance for us and unattainable for our competitors.

Because our aircraft use far less fuel than others, they have a much greater range than the aircraft of our counterparts. Extreme pilots such as Matevž Lenarčič or the French science couple, Wings for Science (Clementine Bacri and Adrien Normier), who flew around the world with our aircraft, simply have no option but to choose Pipistrel.

Pipistrel's Virus aircraft, the same type used by Matevž Lenarčič, is the only sports aircraft which

can fly across the Pacific without stopping (as it has a range of 4,500 km), over Mt. Everest and in temperatures between +50°C and -50°C.

But for such extreme achievements, the aircraft alone is not enough. It also takes an experienced, mentally strong and calm, but also adventurous and fearless pilot such as Matevž Lenarčič. After flying around the globe twice and crossing the North Pole, Pipistrel and Lenarčič have proven that there are no obstacles to the right symbiosis between aircraft and pilot, and that together we can set our goals higher and higher.

With such extreme achievements, recognition of Pipistrel is growing in the world. More and more important people and organisations which wish to cooperate with us, and recognised buyers who are important references for us, visit us on a daily basis.

The visit by Sunita Williams, one of the most distinguished astronauts in the world, and her wish and readiness to personally test the advantages of our aircraft, is yet another confirmation of the quality of our aircraft. It means that a small company, with the right vision and planning approach, can create globally successful products, which not only promote the country or its technological knowledge to foreign experts, but can set new standards in the technology which until recently were exclusively the domain of the big superpowers in aviation.

Pipistrel has certainly not had its final say in this field yet. We are planning some large projects, particularly in the field of electric and hybrid aircraft drives, where we will be setting new standards in the years to come and help replace the current wasteful aviation technology and transport logistics with cleaner and more environmentally friendly.

## Celje, the Princes' Town



Photo: Archives of Municipality of Celje



Photo: Archives of Municipality of Celje

Celje, with a population of about 40,000, is the third largest town in Slovenia. It will host the C Group in the first and second rounds of Eurobasket 2013, from 4 to 9 September. All matches will be played at Zlatorog Hall. Basketball fans visiting Celje will certainly see that it is an appealing town, where they can do much more in addition to seeing the matches and cheering their teams.

Of course, Celje will live and breathe basketball during the championship in September. Celje is a town with a heart for sport, boasting one of the most modern football stadiums in Slovenia – Arena Petrol – as well as the extraordinary Zlatorog Hall, which will host the teams of Slovenia, Poland, Spain, Croatia, Czech Republic and Georgia.

Basketball fans will be drawn to the old town heart with its charming streets and hidden corners. A walk through 'the Town beneath the Town', down the old Roman Road, can take you back to the times of ancient Celje. The Princes' Palace, former home of aristocrats, invites you

to see the outstanding exhibition 'The Counts of Celje'. The counts come alive, and this is why Celje is strongly aware of its medieval history. Climbing the Castle Hill dominated by the mighty Old Castle is recommended, as it offers a beautiful view over Celje and its surroundings. Every summer weekend, history is brought back to life with medieval camp, jousting, archery and fencing.

An ideal spot for relaxing moments is Šmartinsko Lake. Situated just a few minutes from Celje, it is a true green paradise for recreation or just lying in the sun. It will undoubtedly prove a very pleasant spot to spend the free hours between matches. Those who love to exercise will be attracted by Celjska koč with its array of sport activities.

It should also be mentioned that Celje is also the centre of the 'Dežela Celjska' Regional Destination Organisation, which has united the comprehensive offer of the tourism services of 21 neighbouring municipalities since 2008. Visitors are charmed

by its open and friendly people, by cultural and historical stories, culinary experiences, top-class thermal spas and unspoiled nature (more information on: <http://www.dezela-celjska.si/>).

### CELJE AND SPORTS

Celje is the home of several top Slovenian athletes and clubs.

The 'Z dežele Sankaku' judo club was established in the 1990s. It has about 340 members, mostly young people who have yet to experience major competitions. In 2012, as many as five of its members competed at the London Olympics, where Urška Žolnir won a gold medal.

### CELJE PIVOVARNA LAŠKO HANDBALL CLUB

Celje has a solid handball tradition. Their most successful season was 2003/04, when the club won the European Champions League and then went on to become the winners of the European Super Cup. They are thus far the only Slovenian male team to win the most important European cup.

Celje, with a population of about 40,000, is the third largest town in Slovenia.



Photo: Archives of Municipality of Celje



Photo: Archives of Municipality of Celje

#### THE VENUE

Zlatorog Hall is a multi-purpose sports hall and home of Celje Pivovarna Laško Handball Club. It is one of the biggest and most beautiful sports halls in Celje, with a capacity of 6000. It is situated in the immediate vicinity of the Arena Petrol football stadium, as well as a shopping centre and several bars and restaurants. Zlatorog Hall is located not far from the Ljubljana–Maribor motorway and 3 km from the old town heart.

#### How to reach Zlatorog Hall:

Zlatorog Hall in Celje is easy to reach regardless of your means of transport.

By car, take the exit CELJE CENTER on A1 motorway, then turn left to Mariborska cesta (430). After 750 metres, turn right to Podjavorškova ulica. After about a kilometre, when you reach the second roundabout, you will see Zlatorog Hall on your left.

A train or a bus will take you to the centre of the town; from there, you can take a public bus or taxi, or walk. Zlatorog Hall is about 3 km from the railway station.

#### KLADIVAR CELJE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

Numerous Slovenian and international successes, national records, 19 competitors at the Olympics and one world record made Kladivar Celje the club that brought athletics in Celje to the world level. At the 2012 Olympics in London, AA Kladivar was represented by Martina Ratej (final in javelin) and Martina Tomič (semi-final in 100m hurdles). Robert Renner became the world junior champion in pole vault in 2011.

#### CELJE BOWLING CLUB

The female section of the Celje Bowling Club has been among the best in Europe and the world for over 30 years. They have won nine world team cups, four European champions leagues, and 29 medals in total. They have won 27 national champion titles.

#### WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CLUB ATHLETE CELJE

Athlete Celje has been the driving force of women's basketball in Slovenia for the last decade, and

one of the most well-regarded clubs in the region. The club raised many excellent players who are now members of the most highly regarded European teams.

#### CELJE FOOTBALL CLUB

FC Celje is one of the three clubs in Slovenia that have been members of the first division of the national league ever since the independence. Their plans for the next seasons are to rank higher in the national championship of Slovenia, and to attract many spectators as possible to the stands of Celje's municipal stadium.

## Presentation of Slovenia in Belgrade and Sarajevo

Photo: Archives of GCO



Anyone who wanted to show their basketball skills, their love for the game and fair play, could participate in the special street basketball court in the colours of the 'I feel Slovenia' brand in Belgrade.



Photo: Archives of GCO

There was something for everyone in Sarajevo: entertainment for children and adults, Lipko, the mascot, shooting hoops etc. The acrobatic group Dunk Kings also participated in the promotion of the 2013 EuroBasket.

The national brand is a very emotional brand and the emotional link is of key importance. And nothing stirs more emotions than sport. Since Slovenia is hosting this year's European Basketball Championship, we have prepared a series of events that connect sport and the brand. EuroBasket is important for Slovenia, and Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek is the President of the Honorary Board.

All countries of Western Balkans have qualified for the European Championship. And since we used to be a part of the same country, we set up a special street basketball court in the colours of the 'I feel Slovenia' brand in all capitals. After Zagreb, we went to the capital of Serbia, Belgrade, where Republic Square breathed for a day in the spirit of 2013 EuroBasket with the 'I feel Slovenia' brand and Ljubljana Tourism. In addition to the entertainment for children and adults, Lipko, the mascot, shooting hoops where passers-by were able to participate, and three-on-three games, the event included a performance by the acrobatic group Dunk

Kings, one of the best acrobatic groups in the world. As part of the events taking place in Republic Square, Ljubljana was also promoted with the Pustotnik Orchestra.

The platform in front of the BBI Centre in the centre of Sarajevo also turned green by the 'I feel Slovenia' brand during the third event organised as part of the open-air promotion of the European championship in the participating Balkan countries. Podgorica and Skopje followed in the second half of June. Lipko, the championship mascot, is popular everywhere.

A well-received brand and presentations are reasons to be confident in the decision that Slovenia should be presented with the 'I feel Slovenia' brand abroad. The idea of the brand is based on emotion, and it would be difficult to find anything more emotional than sport and cheering. In addition, the story behind the national 'I feel Slovenia' brand is closely connected to Slovenians' relationship with sport and their attachment to it. With

their outstanding results, Slovenian sportsmen and women have often shown that they are the country's best ambassadors and promoters.

"In the past, Slovenian fans carried the name of Slovenia all around the world. With their good-natured cheering, good will and sporting attitude, they have set an example for fan support to national teams."

"Our sporting successes were truly exceptional, which is why Slovenia decided to run for the organisation of the 2013 EuroBasket, which will be the largest sporting event in Slovenia so far. This will also be an opportunity to prove ourselves as excellent hosts and organisers. We are certain that this championship will be special. Proof of that was the draw for the qualifying round in Postojna Cave, where the first underground basketball game was played. In this way, we hope to attract as many basketball enthusiasts as possible to Slovenia," says Boštjan Lajovic, Acting Director of the Government Communication Office.

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Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



### Matevž Lenarčič receives the Bloudek Plaque

Jernej Pikalo, the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, received Matevž Lenarčič, recipient of the Bloudek Plaque for important international achievement in sport. Miroslav Cerar, President of the National Committee for Awards in Sport, presented the well-deserved Bloudek Plaque to Lenarčič.

On this occasion, Minister Pikalo stressed that Matevž Lenarčič is an exceptional man who is dedicated to ecology and science, referring to the scientific and ecological research which Lenarčič did during the recent flight over the Arctic. Lenarčič recorded concentrations of black carbon, the second largest cause of climate change in the region. His flight was carried out in an aircraft built in Slovenia and with a measuring device which is the product of Slovenian knowledge, the Minister noted at the reception.

Photo: Corenje archives



### Plus X Award for the best product of 2013 goes to Gorenje

Gorenje received the international Plus X Award for the best product of 2013 in the home appliance category for its IQcook induction hob. The expert jury awarded Gorenje's IQ sensor technology also for innovation, superior quality, design and user-friendly control.

Gorenje is proud that the expert jury awarded the unique IQ sensor technology of their IQcook induction hob, the first hob to allow automatic steam cooking while enabling safe, controlled, energy- and time-saving cooking with the aid of intelligent IQ sensors.

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



### Slovenian Venice Biennale Exhibition Draws International Praise

The Slovenian pavilion at the ongoing Venice International Art Exhibition, featuring the "For Our Economy and Culture" project by Jasmina Cibic, has received international praise. The ArtReview magazine has listed it among the top twenty at the Biennale, while the British paper The Independent describes it as one of the highlights.

Jasmina Cibic has covered the entire interior of the Slovenian pavilion with wallpaper printed with the motif of a beetle named in honour of Hitler. First discovered in a Slovenian cave in the 1930s, the beetle points to the acceptance of Fascism in the nation's past, says The Independent. Praise for Cibic, who redesigned the entire pavilion to resemble Slovenia's parliament building, also came from the Austrian daily Der Standard. The paper is excited about Cibic's concept, based on questions of what state art is and what role the artist plays in it, as well as about the use of space in the project.

Photo: Nebojša Tajić/STA



### Slovenian company Hidria among 10 winners

Slovenian company Hidria, a leading European and global provider of integrated solutions for climate technologies and automotive technologies, won the UKTI Award for Innovation.

This award acknowledges the importance of innovation as a strategy to influence ongoing business development. The European Business Awards recognises and rewards excellence, best practice and innovation in companies throughout the European Union.

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



### 'Shanghai' declared the best film and the film with the best music

At the SEE, a Paris film festival, Marko Naberšnik's film 'Shanghai', an adaption of a novel by Feri Lainšček, received the grand prize for the best film and the best music composed by Saša Lošić.

The international jury was impressed by the story of four generations of a Roma family and their undying longing for happiness. The main male role is played by the Macedonian actor Visar Visha, while other characters in the film are featured by Bojan Emeršič, Senad Bašić and actress Asli Bayram. The prizes that the film received at the Paris festival join the Best Screenplay Award received at the International Film Festival in Montreal and the Golden Roll granted by the Association of Slovenian Filmmakers and Kolosej.

Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA



### 10th 'Desetnica' award for the story of a Roma girl

This year's award for the best children's or youth literature went to Janja Vidmar's novel 'Kebarie', a story of a Roma girl.

This astounding story depicts three weeks in the life of Kebarie, a Roma girl nicknamed 'Kedi'. This means 'to read' in the Romany language. Each chapter represents one day, while the story subtly touches upon the importance of human tolerance. When congratulating Ms Vidmar, the Irish writer John Boyne said that he appreciates writers who question and write about reality, though this can sometimes be painful. Ms Vidmar, who has already written 57 books, writes in the socio-psychological and socially engaged genre of youth literature.

Photo: Archives of COO



### Cycling on a wire across the River Ljubljana

A scientific and educational spectacle, the 'Cycling Bridge', took place within the 'Znanstival' (Knowledgefest) held in Ljubljana; visitors were able to ride a bicycle across the River Ljubljana on a wire. This was the first time that anyone in the world had organised such an event.

Any sober adult visitor who believed in science could cross the Ljubljana by bicycle on a wire. As explained in the House of Experiments, such an event had never been organised before by anyone else in the world, and 'it is only right that we Slovenes are – now and then – the first ever in positive achievements, this time in a promotional scientific and educational event'.

Photo: Daniel Novokovč/STA



### A Slovenian university among the best

The University of Ljubljana has been ranked among the best universities in the world in several areas, according to the British company Quacquarelli Symonds (QS).

Its place among the 200 top universities has been recognised in the fields of accounting and finance, communication and media studies, and studies of political science and international relations. The QS Survey covered 2,858 universities, analysed 68 million citations and reviewed 8,391 study curricula.

Photo: STO



### 61<sup>st</sup> LF – Ljubljana Festival

27 June – 10 September 2013, Congress Square

Until 10 September, Ljubljana Festival will once again be the centre of your summer adventures. Excellent musicians such as Béjart Ballet, the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra with conductor Riccardo Chailly, the Mariinsky Theatre from St. Petersburg with conductor Valery Gergiev, Russian choreographer Boris Eifman and his eponymous ballet ensemble, outstanding performers from London's West End, the Buena Vista Social Club with Omara Portuondo and others are featured in this year's programme. The programme of the 61st Ljubljana Festival will commemorate the 200th anniversary of the births of two musical giants, Richard Wagner and Giuseppe Verdi, and also focuses on Russian culture.

Photo: Jurij Pivka/STO



### Festival Lent

21 June – 6 July 2013, Maribor

This year's 21st Festival Lent will feature more than 400 shows and about 1,200 events at some 40 venues, with performers from 38 countries. You will be able to enjoy ethnic and folk dancing groups and various types of music from all around the world. The festival will also include comedy, stand-up, street theatre and many other events. More at <http://www.festival-lent.si/>

Photo: Matej Vrančič/STO

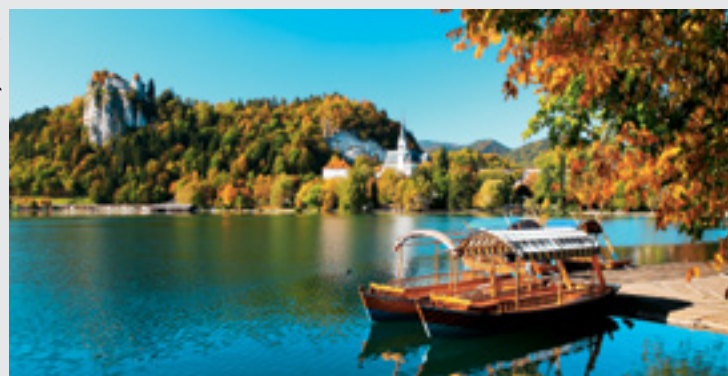


Photo: Lili Pušnik/STO

### Beer and Flowers Festival

11 July – 14 July 2013, Laško (several venues)

"Beer and Flowers" is the largest tourist festival in Slovenia. More than 26 small and large catering facilities come to life during the festival in the city centre. Visitors can enjoy music by the best Slovenian and foreign ensembles. A glass of cool Laško beer is on offer at almost every step you take. The festival reaches its peak on Saturday night with magnificent fireworks and a water symphony.



Photo: Dunič Medani/STO

### Ana Desetnica 2013

3 July – 7 July 2013 – streets, parks and squares in the centre of Ljubljana

Many street artists, clowns, circus performers, jugglers, rope dancers, fire-eaters, musicians, street speakers, dancers and actors from Slovenia and abroad will be performing at various venues. Ana Desetnica is an international street art festival, now in its sixteenth year, which presents modern creative trends in street theatre.

### Bled Days and Bled Night

19 July – 21 July 2013, Bled

On Bled Days, the town is full of tourists, who come to see demonstrations of the production of local arts and crafts and enjoy concerts along the promenade. But most visitors come to the traditional Bled Night, when the lake and castle are illuminated. Boat crews place about 15,000 lights in eggshells in the lake (made by Andrej Vidic from Bled), which illuminate the lake and its surroundings, and magnificent fireworks in an endless array of colours can be seen above Bled Castle.

Marija Skočir, deputy commissioner

## Jasmina Cibic, For our Economy and Culture

### The Slovenian Pavilion

The 55th International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale is open to the public in Giardini, Arsenale and several other locations throughout Venice from June 1 until November 24.

The Slovenian Pavilion in the A+A Gallery near the Palazzo Grassi is represented by the work of Jasmina Cibic and produced by the Museum and Galleries of Ljubljana and the Škuc Gallery. Cibic's project, For our Economy and Culture, was commissioned by Blaž Peršin, Director of the Museum and Galleries of Ljubljana, and curated by Tevž Logar, artistic director of Ljubljana's Škuc Gallery. Already during the preview days and at the opening, the project was very well received by press, professionals and visitors alike and proclaimed as one of the 20 or even 10 most recommended national pavilions at this year's Venice Biennale. It is open to the public until 24 November, Tuesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. till 6 p.m.

For our Economy and Culture continues the artist's interests and methodologies and takes the curatorial directive of the 55th International Art Exhibition, The Encyclopedic Palace, as a starting point to further explore systems and hierarchies of knowledge and presentation. Using the architectural specificity of the Slovenian Pavilion, a repurposed private residence, and referencing state architectural strategies, Cibic created an immersive multi-media installation that appropriates the entire space and explores issues around national representation and framing. Into this context, Cibic places a variety of elements which further examine modes of exchange, reception and constructions of identity. Approaching the gallery from a typically narrow Venetian street, the visitor is already confronted with the key that unlocks the reading of the whole installation. Eleven still-life paintings from the art collection of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia are floating more than hanging behind the gallery window, underlined by the title of the exhibition handmade by Slovenian smiths from Kropa. By utilising these apparently neutral and decorative paintings, otherwise routinely selected to decorate current government offices, presenting a particular ideal of state image, within the context of her installation, Cibic articulates her interest in art as souvenir, a token of national identity.

As a further framing device, the interior of the pavilion is entirely covered with wallpaper bearing obsessively repetitive scientific illustrations of an endemic Slovene beetle, a failed national icon that has almost been completely exorcised solely because of its ideologically charged name, Anophthalmus hitleri.

In her installation, Jasmina Cibic also included two films shot on official state locations – the Slovenian national Assembly and the Vila Bled, which underwent numerous redesigns concurrent with national cultural and political imperatives. The first, Fruits of Our Land, is a recreation of a 1957 parliamentary debate set up to decide which artworks might be nationally representative enough to decorate the newly built People's Assembly, the work of architect Vinko Glanz. The second, Framing the Space, shows a staged interview between an architect and a journalist. In each film, the re-imagining and re-contextualising of such issues dramatises not only the power paradigms inherent in systems of authority, but also the explicit contradictions present in the transmutation of a national identity from past to present, place to place.

Jasmina Cibic, currently based between London and Ljubljana, is one of a new generation of Slovenian artists whose practice, although acutely conscious of a specific national political, cultural and artistic lineage, creates a very distinctive language of its own. Her work is generally site- and context-specific, performative in nature and employs a range of activity, media and theatrical tactics to redefine or reconsider an existent environment or space.

More information is available at [www.slovenianpavilion.net](http://www.slovenianpavilion.net).

