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culturebusinesssports

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# Sinfo

**Climate change,  
cooperation in economy and  
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**Ten years  
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**Janez Potočnik:  
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A path of will, persistence  
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**Marjan Hribar** / Director-General of the Tourism Directorate/ **In the sphere of sustainable development in tourism, Slovenia certainly doesn't lag behind the most competitive tourist states**, Lipica, April 15: Perhaps in this sphere, it is in some things even a step ahead compared to others. Slovenia has recently taken numerous steps ahead towards an increasing ecological awareness, and the first certificates were recently awarded with regard to that. The analysis of the World Economic Forum on sustainable development in tourism placed Slovenia, among 130 countries, in 17th place in the world, which is good. The Slovenian invitation for applications for selection of the European Destination of Excellence 2008 this year received applications for 16 destinations. As the winning destination, which Slovenia will nominate to the European Commission for the title European Destination of Excellence 2008, the commission chose the Soča valley.



**Žiga Turk** /Minister of Development/ **Climate changes can also be good for business**, Brdo pri Kranju, April 16: Climate change don't only represent the costs needed to fight them or to adjust to them; at the same time they are a business opportunity. Namely, the combat against climate change accelerates growth and creates jobs in industries such as, for example, the building sector and renewable energy sources. Only the industry of renewable energy sources already provides around two million jobs worldwide; by 2020 it is expected to create another 700,000. But for the European economy to seize the opportunities brought by these changes, sustainable production processes, products, ownership and consumer patterns, lifestyles and indicators need to be implemented. That means the formation of appropriate policies, which will encourage the improvement of energy efficiency and development of clean technologies. Through that, the economy will experience a third industrial revolution, which will bring the transition from underground to above-ground energy, from fossil fuels to renewable sources, such as solar and wind energy, and biomass.



**Zofija Mazej Kukovič** /Minister of Health/ **Fighting cancer requires an interdisciplinary approach**, Ljubljana, April 17: The common denominator is the realisation that for a disease such as cancer, and of course, for other diseases, an interdisciplinary approach is necessary. We need to aspire to return the patients to their workplace, to their family, back to society, where they will have a life worth living. The interdisciplinary approach is well unknown, not only in individual countries, but also in Europe. Cancer is still the second most important cause of death in the EU as a whole, and the best way to fight it is prevention. Special attention therefore needs to be dedicated also to combating all risk factors, such as smoking, over-consumption of alcohol, obesity and lack of exercise. With timely detection, cancer is not death, but survival, and this is our task, the task of politics, to keep cancer high on the agenda of European policy.



**Joseph Daul** /Chairman of the European People's Party (EPP) group in the European Parliament/ **Slovenia presiding without much "pomp"**, Portorož, April 17: Slovenia is presiding over the EU discretely, without much pomp. The Slovenian Presidency has faced very difficult questions, such as the independence of Kosovo and the Galileo programme; it is an important achievement for a small country. Slovenia is using new technologies to its advantage; the economy is successful despite difficult conditions; unemployment is lower than ever before, but the problem of inflation remains. We are all going to face the challenge of higher oil and food prices; the socialists cannot put the responsibility for the problems which are not of European and national, but of a global nature, on our governments.



Anže Logar

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## THE RECURRING THEME

In the first half of 2008, the European Union will meet with third countries at four summits. At the end of April, the 17th EU-Japan Summit took place.

In the middle of May, Lima will host the EU-LAC Summit, and in June, Slovenia will be the host country of the EU-USA Summit. The last days of the Slovenian Presidency will be marked by the EU-Russia Summit, where top European political leaders will meet with their Russian colleagues. Although agendas are drawn up long before meetings take place and the central theme is adjusted to a specific relationship between individual partners, all these meetings have been informed by the issue of climate.

Marathon for protection of the environment, which already achieved a global media breakthrough with the film *An Inconvenient Truth*, is becoming a standard item at all important meetings at the EU level and beyond. Almost half of the joint declaration signed by the EU and Japan at the end of the summit in Tokyo is dedicated to measures against the negative consequences of climate change.

Considering the rising prices of agricultural products on the world stock exchanges and a lively discussion about what kind of influence average biofuel production has on this, it will be hard to avoid these questions at the summit in Lima and the EU-USA Summit. Recently, the President of the United States of America presented his own vision of how to fight climate changes, which means that at the beginning of June there will be two proposals on the table from two global actors.

Although the author of the aforementioned film expressed his disappointment on Earth Day about the slowness of the measures for an effective fight against negative climate change effects, it is the constant presence of this question in political discussions which raises hope for right and timely decisions. As an old Slovenian proverb says, "Where there is smoke there is fire."

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

# 2WEEKLYREPORT

Text: RAMÓN MIKLUS, Photo: Archive and STA



## KOSOVO DOMINATES RUPEL'S AGENDA ON HIS VISIT TO THE USA

The Slovenian Foreign Minister's visit to the USA, which Dr Rupel began on 12 April by delivering a lecture at Brandeis University in Boston, was dominated by the Kosovo issue. At their meeting in Washington, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and Foreign Minister Rupel shared similar views of the situation. »We want less tension and drama and a more coordinated solution to the crisis«, the Foreign Minister said after the talks, adding that the UN played a very important role in solving the Kosovo issue. Asked whether Kosovo could be divided along ethnic lines, Rupel said that was not an option. »It is necessary to know that the Serbs (in Kosovo) do not only live in Mitrovica...and we do not want any new ethnic cleansing«. The second part of Minister Rupel's working visit to the USA took place in Washington, where the Slovenian FM met US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on 15 April. The pair called for decisive and prompt action to avoid deterioration of the situation or problems on the border between Kosovo and Serbia.

»We want security, operative Kosovo institutions – and a successful operation of the EU mission, and we would like things to move forward as soon as possible,« Rupel asserted.

## PM JANŠA: ETUC JUSTLY HIGHLIGHTING FALLING SHARE OF WAGES IN GDP

Prime Minister Janez Janša received representatives of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) ahead of a protest in Ljubljana on 5 April, stressing after the meeting that he agreed with the unions that the trend of the decreasing share of wages in GDP needed to be addressed. »It is a fact that not only in the EU but in the world in general the share of wages in GDP has been falling in real terms in recent years. According to the latest Eurostat figures, it has fallen in the EU since 2000 by some 1.6%. This in itself is not a dramatic situation, but what calls for action is the trend,« Janša said. »The ETUC has justly been highlighting this. That wages should increase together with productivity is not only justifiable from the social point of view but also on an economic basis,« the current President of the European Council stressed. Turning to the ETUC's demand to secure appropriate minimum wages, Janša said it was very important that uniform criteria be created for the setting of minimum wages and that he was happy to be able to inform the ETUC representatives that Slovenia had recently raised the minimum wage. As regards gender equality, Janša said that there can be no justification for the fact that women in the EU on average are paid 15% less for their work than men. He said that the spring EU Summit had defined efforts addressing this inequality as being one of the key objectives

connected to the goals of the Lisbon Strategy. Thousands of members of European trade unions poured down Ljubljana's main thoroughfare on Saturday 5 April calling out slogans and blowing their whistles to demand a fair share of Europe's prosperity and growth. Leading union representatives addressed them in Kongresni trg, reiterating demands for wage increases and pay equality.

## TÜRK AND KING ABDALLAH II DISCUSS COOPERATION, MIDDLE EAST



President Danilo Türk and Jordanian King Abdallah II agreed on 8 April that relations between the countries were good and that Slovenia and Jordan should bolster ties, especially in business, as they met at Brdo pri Kranju. The pair also discussed the situation in the Middle East. Türk said that Slovenia appreciated Jordan's contribution to peace, stability and development in the Middle East, and the global contribution that the country provides within the framework of the UN and otherwise. Abdallah II meanwhile said that the Slovenian President and Slovenia were currently in a unique situation in the EU and that the bloc could play a key role in bringing closer partners for peace in the region closer. The pair agreed that economic cooperation between the two countries could be enhanced. Türk highlighted the possibility of Jordan utilising the Slovenian port of Koper. According to Türk, the countries could cooperate in numerous areas, including in the establishment of the Euro-Mediterranean University. Abdallah II also met Prime Minister Janez Janša, the President of the European Council, who thanked Jordan for its support for the Slovenian initiative to set up a Euro-Mediterranean university as a concrete project in the Barcelona Process.

## MINISTERS DISCUSS SLOVENIA-ARGENTINA SCIENCE COOPERATION

On 21 April Slovenian Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology Mojca Kucler Dolinar discussed efforts to advance Slovenian-Argentinean cooperation in science as she held talks with her visiting Argentinean counterpart Lino Baranao. The Slovenian Minister pointed out that 25 Slovenian-Argentinean research projects have been carried out so far, based on the 1997

bilateral agreement on cooperation in science and technology. A tender for new joint projects is open at the moment and the sixth meeting of the Slovenia-Argentina committee for scientific and technological cooperation will take place in the autumn, she added. Baranao, who visited Slovenia for the first time, assessed that scientific and technological ties between the countries were good. These ties can also help promote cooperation in other areas, he added. The Argentinean official visited the Joef Stefan Institute, Slovenia's premiere research institution, earlier in the day. He also visited the University of Nova Gorica and the MC Medicor cardiology and cardiovascular surgery centre later as part of his two-day visit.

## TRA OFFICIALS CALL FOR MORE COOPERATION IN ROAD TRANSPORT

The Transport Research Arena (TRA) 2008, a three-day conference on road transport development, opened in Ljubljana on 21 April. According to European Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potočnik, the event aimed to strengthen cooperation in the area of transport development. The conference slogan »Greener, safer and smarter road transport for Europe« demands a comprehensive approach based on technology, innovation, investment and legal regulations, Potočnik told the participants. He pointed to road transport as the main source of industrial development, economic income, jobs and technological development in Europe, but also warned of its disadvantages such as the death toll, traffic congestions and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. In the next seven years, the European Commission will devote over EUR 4bn to the development of new technologies to make European roads greener, safer and more profitable, Potočnik said. He added that in order to achieve these goals more cooperation is needed within the sector. Transport Minister Radovan Žerjav called for quick and efficient solutions to the challenges of current transport development. He pointed out that Slovenia's rapid economic growth has resulted in an expansion of road transport. The conference aimed at uniting research activities in the area of transport within the EU and thus at helping achieve the Lisbon Strategy target of devoting 3% of GDP for research projects by 2010.

## FUTURE OF YOUTH POLICY DEBATED AT BRDO PRI KRANJU



Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas (left) and Slovenian Environment Minister Janez Podobnik at the press conference following the Informal Meeting of EU Ministers.

The EU directors general for youth have underlined dialogue with youth as the main vehicle for improving the situation of young people in the EU. Meeting at Brdo pri Kranju on 21 April, the participants discussed the future of EU youth policy and the working methods for the next ten years. »Young people are key to our future and their voice must not only be heard but also taken properly into consideration,« proclaimed Slovenia's Zorko Škvor, the chairman of the meeting. The participants set out to develop guidelines which will be presented to the EU Ministers at the Education, Youth and Culture Council in May. Brdo's discussion was based on the outcomes of the Youth Event, a meeting attended by more than 150 young participants from the EU Member States, EFTA countries and Western Balkans countries, which took place at the weekend. »By connecting both events, we want to include youth and their ideas in the discussion of the directors general,« Škvor told the press after the two-day meeting. Apart from the debate, the officials were also addressed by Slovenian Education Minister Milan Zver. Odile Quintin, Director-General of the Education and Culture Directorate at the European Commission, commended Slovenia's focus on disadvantaged youth. »Unemployment among young people stands at 17%, which means that [EU members] failed to achieve improvement in the area of employability of young people. What is more, as much as one quarter of young people live on the brink of poverty, which is a very worrying fact for EU states,« she warned.

## MINISTER RUPEL HEADS CENTRAL ASIA-EU TROIKA PLENARY SESSION

Human rights, education, the rule of law, energy and environment, water resources, climate change, drug trafficking, Afghanistan and Iran were the main topics of the plenary session on 10 April of the EU Troika and the countries of Central Asia at the Ministerial level.

The framework document which served as the basis for discussion was the EU Strategy for Central Asia. The idea that this document be created was born two years ago on the initiative of Germany; it was designed during the German Presidency and adopted in May 2007. Now, almost a year later, the EU has decided it is time to take a step forward in implementing this strategy, which was actually the objective of the meeting in Turkmenistan. At the beginning of the session Minister Rupel pointed out that, based on the strategy document, the EU has already developed a list of priorities for each individual country, which was the subject of Ministerial talks on the bilateral level, while the plenary session was intended to address general standpoints concerning the region as a whole. The Slovenian Foreign Minister further pointed out the fact that the strategy is highly complex, and that individual EU Member States manage their own projects; thus, Germany and France are concerned with the implementation of the rule of law, Italy with water resources, etc. In implementing the strategy, the issue of dialogue on human rights is very important. The EU has already established such dialogue with Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and Rupel expressed his expectation that the same will also be possible with the remaining three countries of the region.

## SLOVENIA TO SUPPORT TURKEY'S PROGRESS TOWARDS EU

Slovenian parliamentary Speaker France Cukjati assured his Turkish counterpart Koeksal Toptan in Ljubljana on 15 April that Slovenia supported Turkey's progress in the lengthy, multi-step EU accession talks. Toptan expressed gratitude for Slovenia's

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support, which he said was especially important because Slovenia is now at the helm of the bloc. Turkey launched accession talks with the EU in October 2005 and has so far opened six out of 35 customary chapters, while negotiations on eight chapters have been suspended since the end of 2006 due to outstanding issues with Cyprus. Commenting on the disagreements with Cyprus, Toptan said that Turkey would find it hard to remove its embargo on southern Cyprus while the EU maintained an embargo on the northern part of the divided island. The Turkish parliamentary speaker welcomed the recent meeting between the Cypriot President and the leader of Cypriot Turks, calling it a step forward. Turkey needs to implement several reforms on its path towards the EU. Asked whether he supported constitutional changes or an early election to avoid a constitutional crisis, Toptan said it was necessary to reach consensus over changes to the Constitution.

### MATE DISCUSSING EUROPOL AND VISA WAIVER IN PRAGUE

Issues related to the European law enforcement organisation, Europol, and negotiations on the visa regime with the US topped the agenda as Slovenian Interior Minister Dragutin Mate met his Czech counterpart Ivan Langer in Prague on 16 April. Mate also attended a joint session of the committees on foreign and EU affairs of the Czech Senate. As he said after the meeting, he presented to the Senate the latest version of a compromise text of the draft Council decision establishing Europol which was drafted by Slovenia. »In our opinion it (the proposal) offers solutions concerning the positions taken by the Czech Parliament. I believe that now the senators will see the document in a more positive light,« Mate was quoted as saying in the press release. In April 2007, the Czech Senate passed a resolution urging the Czech government to ensure that the country's interests are considered in the negotiations on the draft decision founding Europol. The resolution suggests the preservation of Europol's financing by the EU Member States, unanimity as a precondition to adopting certain decisions and assurances that Europol will not conduct investigations and operational activities on Czech territory. During his visit to Prague, Minister Mate was also briefed on the latest developments regarding the visa-waiver programme which the Czech Republic is currently negotiating with the US. The debate also touched on the Czech position concerning approval by the Justice and Home Affairs Council of the Commission's mandate to start negotiations with the US in policy areas that fall within EU powers.

### EPP-ED GROUP LEADER SAYS LIVING EXPENSES EU'S PRIMARY CONCERN

Joseph Daul, the head of the European People's Party (EPP-ED) deputy group in the European Parliament, told the press on 18 April that one of the main topics of the party's two-day meeting was the increase in living expenses, which he believes should be of priority concern for the EU.

»Living expenses are increasing in all countries, including the poorest ones, and this will have a major impact on the poorest families and countries,« Daul said in Portorož, adding that the MEPs also discussed inflation with the Slovenian government. Daul said he had told Slovenian Agriculture Minister Iztok Jarc, who is currently the chair of the EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council, to »take the issue of inflation seriously and maintain the pace with which the EU is trying to solve this problem«. According to Daul, Kosovo was also discussed at the meeting, along with the funding of the Galileo satellite radio navigation

programme. He is convinced that the Presidency will make a major progress regarding climate change and energy by July. Regarding climate change, Daul called on the EU to remain a leader in implementing international goals, and to make sure that major polluters respect their commitments. He believes that it is important to find funds for reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and providing adequate food supply. The meeting featured 50 MEPs, European Commissioner for Education, Training and Culture Jan Figel, Prime Minister Janez Janša, six Slovenian Ministers and more than 150 guests from other countries. Its main topics were EU values, intercultural dialogue and climate change.

### TÜRK: EU MUST TAKE ON ROLE OF GLOBAL LEADER



Slovenian President Danilo Türk told the European Parliament on 23 April that the EU must take on the role of global leader. Among the main challenges faced by the bloc, he pointed to climate change, human rights, migration and EU enlargement.

»The European Union will remain a success story only if it stays dynamic and proves itself as an increasingly significant political player. In order to achieve this, it must move forward and at present this means the EU must take on the role of global leader,« Türk pointed out.

He warned of the many challenges the EU currently faces, especially enlargement. »It is clear, that the candidates will have to meet the set standards, but we should not let political problems or cultural prejudice prevent their accession,« said Türk. He also endorsed Turkey's bid to join the EU. In his opinion, the European perspective for the Western Balkan should be set down more clearly. The possibility of accession must also be made available to Ukraine and Moldavia, he said.

### CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS SPIRITUAL SIDE OF EUROPE

Organisers of a conference on intercultural dialogue, which got underway under the auspices of the Slovenian EU Presidency in Ljubljana on 10 April, called on the EU to build its future on a wider base of philosophy, religion and literature, instead of on economic power alone. The three-day »Europe, the World and Humanity in the 21st Century« conference was a major event of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue and was co-organised by an institute sponsored by Nova Revija magazine and the Ministry of Culture.



Culture Minister Vasko Simoniti and Jan Figel, European Commissioner responsible for education, training, culture and youth, at the opening ceremony of "Europe, the World and Humanity in the 21st Century" conference.

The programming head of the conference Dean Komel highlighted individuality as the key element that has formed European thought in history, which is why the participants will conclude the conference by sending out a joint message to the EU: that the national, linguistic, religious and cultural diversity of Europe should be tuned in with its economic power. Culture Minister Vasko Simoniti described the question of intercultural dialogue as a logical consequence of the historical process of the last 50 years. According to him, politics and civil society should help intercultural dialogue contribute to a balance, which cannot be provided by globalisation alone. Addressing the opening ceremony, Jan Figel, European Commissioner responsible for education, training, culture and youth, said that it is important that non-European countries also participated in intercultural dialogue and that while globalisation is a fact, Europe can help give it a humane face. It can do so on the basis of the values it has attained through history, Figel added. It is culture in the very sense of the word which is the basis of the EU, and the European project, which is a cultural project at its core, is in fact rooted in intercultural dialogue, the commissioner concluded.

## PARLIAMENT BACKS INTRODUCTION OF TOLLS STICKERS AND STIFFER TRAFFIC FINES

Slovenia is set to introduce vignettes as a means for paying motorway tolls as of 1 July, as parliament passed the needed legislative amendments in a 49:9 vote on 25 April. Annual and half-yearly toll stickers for the use of motorways will be mandatory for cars and vans and motorcycles, while the system for trucks will remain unchanged until the introduction of a satellite system of toll collection, expectedly in August 2009. Annual stickers will cost 55 euros and half-yearly 35 euros, while motorcycle riders will pay EUR 27.5 for their annual sticker. The fines for using motorways without toll stickers have been set at between EUR 300 and EUR 800. While Motorway company DARS will be the one issuing the fines, the collected money will be transferred directly to the state budget.

The much talked about amendments to the road safety act entered into force on 30 April introducing much stiffer fines for the severest traffic violations. The new rules increase fines for traffic violations that are the most common cause of traffic accidents in Slovenia, e.g. driving under the influence, exceeding speed limits for more than 30 km/h in 50 km/h zones, driving the wrong way on expressways, and reckless overtaking. Besides

higher fines, the amendments introduce new licensing conditions and a new customer-friendly licence application form that will incorporate greater protection against forgerers.

Under the amendments, a new credit card-sized driving licence will also be introduced by 1 October 2009. New vehicle categories, new age conditions for licenses, and new licence validity limitations are envisaged in the new regulation, but they will enter into force at a later date.

## PRESIDENTS PRAISE SLOVENIA-AUSTRIA TIES

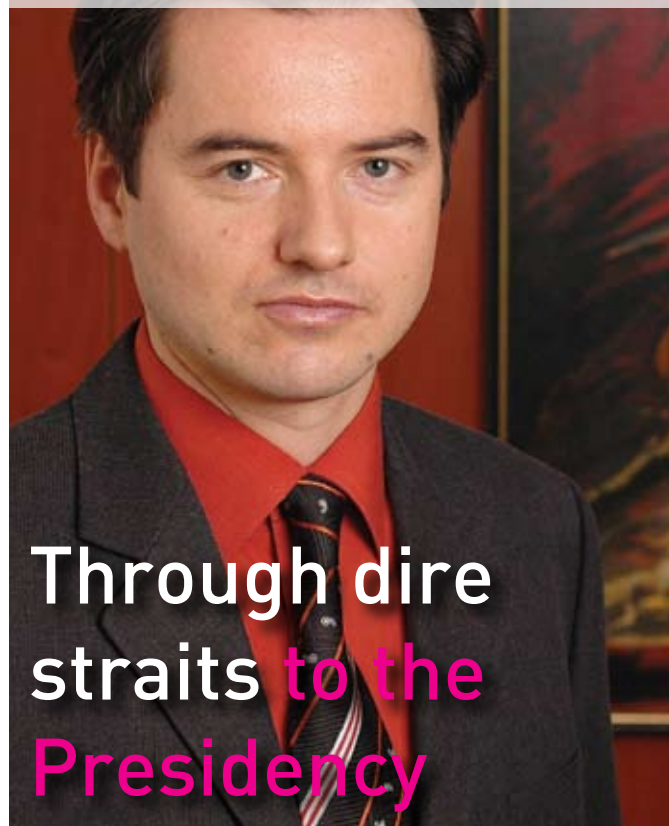
Slovenian President Danilo Türk and his Austrian host and counterpart Heinz Fischer agreed on 7 April that relations between their countries had never been as good as now. There are no problems in bilateral relations, however there are liabilities arising from the 1955 Austrian State Treaty, which among other things also deals with minorities, Türk noted during his first official visit to Slovenia's northern neighbour. Also remaining on the table is the unresolved issue of German-Slovenian place names in the bordering Austrian province of Carinthia. Türk thinks, however, this issue can be solved. The Slovenian President also called on the Slovenian minority to ponder a »new format of its activities«, adding that a new umbrella minority organisation might be necessary. Fischer underlined that endeavours to resolve the minority issue should head in the direction to allow the positive forces of society to overcome fears from the past.

Minorities should be seen as an asset and not a threat and should be approached with an open and respectable attitude, he added. The pair also touched on EU issues, especially regarding Slovenia's EU Presidency. The Slovenian President said cooperation between Slovenia, Austria and other countries in the region could provide a new image for Europe. He emphasised that the EU could become a global leader in climate change and energy. President Türk also met the Chancellor Dr Alfred Gusenbauer. The central topic of the meeting was the Slovenian Presidency to the European Union.

## SLOVENIAN, SLOVAKIAN PRESIDENT DISCUSS COOPERATION

President Danilo Türk met his Slovakian counterpart Ivan Gašparovič in Bratislava on 22 April as part of his first official visit to the country. The pair agreed that relations between the countries are outstanding, and highlighted the common history of both countries and their bright future in the EU. As Türk explained, the visit symbolised »the deep friendship between our countries and nations, and the great perspective this cooperation will bring in the future«. The Presidents agreed that trade between the countries had reached an extremely high level, and were now ready for strengthening mutual investment. Türk stressed the potential for cooperation in logistics and transports, and highlighted the role of Slovenian seaport Luka Koper in the freight of Slovakian goods. Presidents Türk and Gašparovič also exchanged views on the future challenges to the European Union and stressed the importance of pursuing further EU institutional reform outlined in the Lisbon Treaty.

The Slovenian and the Slovak Presidents also touched on the topical international issues. They devoted most of their time to the situation in the Western Balkans and although their views on the issue of Kosovo's status somewhat differed they supported a tolerant and patient approach to it to continue the dialogue on issue within the international community. President Türk was also received by Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico later in the day.



## Through dire straits to the Presidency

This year we are marking five hundred years since the death of a great Slovene, the Protestant reformer and founder of the Slovene literary language, Primož Trubar. His introduction to the Catechism from 1550 begins with the following words: "I implore for each and every Slovene, grace, peace and mercy, and let the truest godly knowledge of Jesus Christ passeth unto you.". The sentence is thought to be the first mention of the name Slovenes in print in their own language, who at the time lived scattered across Habsburg crown lands - that is, Carniola, Styria, Carinthia, and the Littoral (Goriška and Slovenian Istria). Because of this, common awareness concerning different lands was present. Then we could talk only of pockets of national awareness. The inhabitants were mostly of peasant origin, and only a few were church officials or lay intelligentsia. Therefore, it was only at the end of the 18th and the start of the 19th century that the awareness of the existence of a Slovenian nation matured among the folk. And this idea reached beyond particular state borders. At the time of the Spring of Nations movement, that is, in 1848, the Slovenes presented a national programme. The idea of a United Slovenia (Zedinjena Slovenija) was first clearly expressed by the Catholic priest Matija Majar Ziljski in March of the same year, when he wrote a petition to the Austrian Emperor Ferdinand I, demanding the unification of the Slovenes into a self-governing unit with its own provincial assembly. A month later Slovenes living in Vienna established the Slovene Society (Društvo Slovenija), and called for the unification of the Slovenes under one kingdom of Slovenia. Then there followed a petition in favour of the United Slovenia. A great many Slovenes signed it. Nothing came of it, though, due to the fact that the Spring of Nations was followed by a temporary "frost of nations". Yet the idea flourished and constantly developed. Our ancestors had most rights in the Carniola region, where the Slovenian population was in the majority. The Great War proved to be a great ordeal for the Slovenes. In the Western part of our national territory the Soča Front (more commonly known as the Isonzo Front) was fought. And only after the Austro-Hungarian monarchy fell apart in 1918 did the Slovenes find themselves in a situation where they were for a short time able to take hold of the reins themselves. In the short-lived State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, they enjoyed their own national government located in Ljubljana,

and for the first time in history had their own army. If General Rudolf Maister defended the border in Styria (the Štajerska region), then there were more tumultuous times in store for Slovenes in the Carinthia (the Koroška region) and Primorska regions. The major part of Slovenian Carinthia fell under Austria, following a plebiscite in 1920; and the major part of Primorska was annexed to the Kingdom of Italy following the unjust London Agreement. Due to the increasingly hostile environment surrounding the State of the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (the SHS), it united with the Kingdom of Serbia in 1918 to form the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later becoming the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Yet also under Yugoslavia the Slovenes did not achieve the sought-after independence. Belgrade became for us the Vienna of the past. It remained so under Tito's Yugoslavia during the socialist period. Only after the collapse of the Federation and the formation of independent Slovenia under the leadership of a centre-right coalition called Demos in 1991 did the Slovenes achieve their goal, of which our ancestors could only have dreamt. With membership of international alliances such as the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the European Union we became a part of the world, for once on a more equal footing with the others. The Slovenian EU Presidency that we managed to reach proved for us to be the highest achievement to date on our path of successful development, which has not been without some serious ordeals and difficult political confrontation. During the 2nd World War, we Slovenes found ourselves in the most difficult situation to this day. Slovenian territory was occupied and partitioned. A few Slovene communists made use of the uprising against the aggressor to start a revolution and fratricidal war, which at the close of hostilities ended in mass execution-style killings of political opponents who were said to have collaborated with the aggressor. Decades of communist tyranny and brain-washing followed in which they attempted to create a mentality surfacing also after the implementation of democracy and independent Slovenia. Only the members of the political nomenclature which came from the previous governmental structures were suitable to take over leadership, regardless of the fact that many of them expressed doubts about its independence. At present we are faced with an unequal allocation of wealth in society since the majority of capital is in the hands of people who come from post-communist structures. This can also be observed in the media, which are mostly controlled by them and settle scores with the government, which does not seem to be to their liking, on a harsh note. The story of the so-called petition against censorship which was sent to European addresses is related to this. Here it is not journalistic professionalism that is at issue or the request for pluralism of opinion, but on the contrary, that the unbalanced media space is maintained in the way it is. Attacks waged by the opposition, as well as journalist activists, are all concentrated on the Prime Minister Janez Janša as the President of the EU Council because he is the only centre (slightly centre-right) politician, who knows how to properly lead a centre-right government. He possesses charisma. Already in the Yugoslav communist regime he was an arduous critic of its Federal Army. Together with some others he was arrested and imprisoned, and this act caused heated protests and started the Slovenian Awakening – the process of democratization. As the first Slovenian Minister of Defence in charge of the Territorial Defense of the Republic of Slovenia (TO) and militia he managed to defeat the Yugoslav Federal Army. According to public opinion surveys, it can be seen that the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) he leads has great chances of winning once more in the September elections. Regardless of the inner political turbulences and the Agreement that was signed between the government and the opposition about keeping cool during the Presidency, the government has been constantly confronted with harsh attacks, making their work more difficult. Nonetheless, Janša's government has proven by successfully presiding over the EU that they have a vision, and that they are striving for the prosperity of both Slovenes and Europeans. And with this, it sends a positive image of Slovenia to the world.



Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša, Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda and President of the EU Commission José Manuel Barroso at the Press Conference after the EU - Japan Summit.



## Climate change, Cooperation in Economy and Trade in Focus During Prime Minister's Visit to Japan

**The first Slovenian Prime Minister ever to visit Japan, Janez Janša, started a three-day official visit to the East Asian country by meeting the Japanese Emperor Akihito in the Tokyo Imperial Palace on 21 April. The meeting mainly focused on climate change, a topic which is extremely important for the Japanese emperor, a great admirer of nature who is interested in efforts to reduce the impact of climate change on future generations.**

Janša said that Emperor Akihito, who visited Slovenia in 1976 when he was heir apparent to the Japanese throne, is well informed about Slovenia and the progress it has made in many areas over the last few decades. Prime Minister Janša was accompanied by his partner Urška Bačovnik, Economy Minister Andrej Vizjak and a group of 27 Slovenian executives. On 22 April, the delegation took part in a Slovenian-Japanese business conference aimed at boosting cooperation between Slovenian producers of automobile parts and the Japanese car industry. PM Janša also attended a working lunch with Keikichi Honda of Nippon Keidanren (Japan Business Federation), the most important business association in Japan, uniting more than 1,500 companies and organisations. Logistics, energy, production of auto parts and tourism are key areas where Slovenia is especially interested in expanding business ties with Japan. The talks with Keidanren representatives indeed focused on fostering economic cooperation between the two countries, as well as increasing the presence of Slovenia in the Japanese market. Later that day, PM Janša and Economy Minister Andrej Vizjak also attended a business conference in Tokyo. Vizjak, who delivered the opening address, said that chances were good for Slovenian-Japanese business cooperation to grow. Trade between Slovenia and Japan has been on the rise, reaching EUR 110m in 2007.

"Our economies complement each other, and I am convinced that we can make a breakthrough in the Japanese market with high-quality goods," said Vizjak. Prime Minister Janša and Minister Vizjak also visited the head office of the Sony Corporation and had a meeting with its management. A meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda and the EU-Japan meeting topped the final day of PM Janez Janša's visit to Japan. At the meeting Janša and Fukuda discussed cooperation between the two countries

in the economic field, welcoming the growing ties in science and technology. PM Fukuda welcomed Slovenia's upcoming membership of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The two dignitaries also spoke about the reform of the United Nations, where Janša reiterated Slovenia's endorsement of Japan's bid to win a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. The Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia and current President of the European Council concluded his visit to Japan by attending the 17th EU-Japan Summit Meeting, held in Tokyo on 23 April. The fight against climate change dominated the agenda. The EU and Japan announced they would work together to find a fair and effective global mechanism to replace the Kyoto Protocol after 2012. The post-Kyoto agreement would seek to involve all key global economies, including the US, which has stayed out of the Kyoto Protocol.

In a joint statement released after the summit, the EU and Japan indicated that fast-growing economies should participate in efforts to cut global warming to the best of their ability. While the EU has made it its goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20% and to raise the share of renewables in the energy mix to 20% by 2020, Japan has opted to set goals for specific industries first before forming an overall binding goal. European Commission President José Manuel Barroso, who also attended the meeting, said the EU would be willing to upgrade its efforts even further if other developed countries did the same. Barroso said that he was counting on an agreement in the G8, which will be presided over by Japan in 2008. "What we spoke about today is important for an agreement in the G8 at the summit in Hokkaido in July," he said. Japanese Prime Minister Fukuda said that one of the topics of the talks was rising food prices and that it was agreed that measures needed to be taken, as high food prices affect poor countries the most. He added that he had written to the UN and the World Bank on the issue, while the EU and Japan would in the future better coordinate their standpoints regarding key global challenges, especially in Africa. At the end of the proceedings, PM Janša assessed the fruitful EU-Japan Summit with positive words, stressing the importance of learning from one another in order to successfully respond to future challenges.



**Seeking to strike a balance between reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions with the use of biofuels and precluding adverse impacts such as deforestation, the EU is hard at work on sustainability criteria for the production of biofuels, Slovenian Environment Minister Janez Podobnik said on 12 April at Brdo pri Kranju.**

A special ad hoc group of the Committee of Permanent Representatives at the EU (Coreper) is expected to draft the criteria by its 7 May meeting. These criteria must be »universal, clear and provable,« Podobnik said after an informal meeting with his counterparts at Brdo pri Kranju.

Efforts to frame sustainability criteria were stepped up after the initial excitement of using biofuels to cut emissions of greenhouse gases was dampened by mounting scientific evidence that certain types of biofuels may actually produce more greenhouse gases than »dirty« fuels.

Moreover, as the popularity of biofuels grows, land previously used for food production is being converted to energy crops and forests are being cut down to expand agricultural production, further contributing to greenhouse gas emissions and hurting biodiversity along the way.

The details about the sustainability criteria are thin on the ground, but Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas said the European Commission's proposed target for savings of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions compared to fossil fuels was 35%. Social criteria would also be included, as well as the protection of biodiversity with the stipulation that biofuel may not come from land rich in biodiversity.

According to Dimas, the work of the ad hoc group is very important. »I'm sure they will do their best to achieve the best sustainability criteria in the world, taking into account the social and environmental impacts, and maximising the benefits from the use of biofuels.«

Also as part of the efforts to make biofuels truly sustainable, the Commission will shortly present two communications dealing with the EU's approach to reducing emissions and biodiversity loss from deforestation in developing countries, and a report on the economics of biodiversity loss.

One of the key issues here is the funding of programmes to prevent deforestation. Dimas said that various approaches were being discussed, including credits for avoiding deforestation, and using 20% of the estimated EUR 30-50bn that Member States will get from auctioning CO<sub>2</sub> emission permits for »good causes«.

German Environment Minister Sigmar Gabriel told reporters that Germany alone stood to make EUR 5-10bn beyond 2013 when 100% of all emission permits will be auctioned off (10% are currently being auctioned, the rest given away for free).

»These funds should be used to further national and international climate change goals,« he said, adding that the Commission and some Member States welcomed the proposal.

»At the end of the day, it is a question of whether we are willing to offer financial assistance to countries where these areas would be protected,« Gabriel said, pointing out that developed countries had previously made commitments to help preserve the rain forests, but they failed to honour them.

Sustainability criteria will also be crucial in the EU's ambitious goal of raising the share of biofuels in transport to 10% by 2020, which has come under fire from NGOs. Even the European Environment Agency has proposed that the target be suspended until further research is done.

Yet Dimas believes the goal can still be achieved, provided that the biofuels are sustainable and that 2nd generation biofuels (produced from cellulose rather than from sugar as current biofuels) are promoted. There are indications that this goal could be achieved, he said.

Photo: STA



## EU health Ministers discussed fight on cancer and health strategy

**EU health Ministers gathered at Brdo pri Kranju on 16 April for a two-day informal meeting dedicated to the fight against cancer and the bloc's new health care strategy.**

The meeting, chaired by Slovenia's Zofija Mazej Kukovič, was the latest in a series of informal meetings of EU Ministers held as part of Slovenia's six-month EU Presidency. Health Minister Zofija Mazej Kukovič said that her EU counterparts agreed interdisciplinary approach was required for a disease such as cancer, as well as other diseases. She said that ways must be sought to cure patients thereby allowing them to return to their jobs and families so that they could live a life worthy of a human being. Health Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou added that cancer was still the second major cause of death in the entire EU, and prevention was the best way to fight it. »This is why attention should be paid to fight against all risk factors, such as smoking, alcohol, obesity and inactivity.« If the EU wants to succeed, it has to actively include young people in these efforts, because people encounter smoking, excessive use of alcohol and unhealthy nutrition already at a very young age, she added. »If discovered on time, cancer is not terminal, it can be overcome, and...our task is that cancer remains high on the agenda of EU policies,« Mazej Kukovič said, pointing out that every fourth European is diagnosed with cancer.

### EU MINISTERS AGREE ON STRUCTURED COOPERATION IN HEALTH STRATEGY

Structured cooperation in implementing the EU health strategy topped the final day of a two-day informal. The Ministers backed a proposal by the Slovenian Presidency to have a group of officials deal with coordinating efforts in health between the Member

States and the European Commission. »This is an unexpected success for the Presidency,« Slovenian Health Minister Zofija Mazej Kukovič, told the press after Friday's proceedings. »We believe it is a major achievement that we floated this idea at the European level,« she said. She explained that the group would help form strategic guidelines in health in the broadest sense, including in health policies and the integration of the health sector with other sectors. This should help the Member States in implementing »those parts of the strategy setting down that health is an inherent part of all policies«. Mazej Kukovič said the group would primarily be made up of existing groups at the European Commission dealing with health, but instead of meeting only at the expert level, the group will be expanded to include officials from the Member States. According to the Slovenian Minister, the decision must still be confirmed by the EU health Ministers at a formal meeting. »We shall not succeed until we have structured cooperation and this high-level group, which will be in charge of promoting the strategy,« said European Health Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou.

The other topic of the session was the spread of superbugs, which have developed wide antibiotic resistance. Mazej Kukovič pointed to the danger of reckless use of antibiotics as well as the rapid spread of bugs around the world. »In dealing with resistance, we must be aware of the fact that bacteria can travel the world, that they know no borders.« She added that one of the main problems currently was that the pharmaceutical industry was not producing new antibiotics as quickly as new cases of resistance were appearing. She said other measures, such as hygiene and responsible use of antibiotics, were thus needed to deal with the issue. The Ministers were also briefed by head of the European Centre for Disease Control Zsuzsanna Jakab, who told them that 35,000 people die annually after contracting hospital bugs. This number is greater than the number of deaths on Europe's roads, Commissioner Vassiliou said citing the ECDC report.



# The Danish Court and Slovenia

The Danish royal couple attended a Slovenian concert in Copenhagen.

**The Danish court was connected to Slovenia twice in one week. The first time was when Mary, the Princess of Denmark, came to the official opening in Ljubljana of the European Immunization Week, which she sponsored, and the second time was when the Danish royal couple attended a Slovenian concert in Copenhagen.**

The purpose of European Immunisation Week, which took place from 21st to 27th April, was to make people aware of the importance of vaccination. During the immunisation week, there were various events, such as round tables, conferences, sport events and media events under the motto Prevent, protect, immunize. This year, 33 countries participated. The main event was hosted by Slovenia, which was sufficient reason for the visit of the Crown Princess Mary of Denmark, who is also a Patron of the WHO (World Health Organization) Regional Office for Europe. The Danish Princess and the Slovenian First Lady visited the Institute of Public Health and the Šiška Unit of Ljubljana Medical Centre, where they observed the vaccination of children. After spending quality time with six-year olds from a local elementary school, the Princess returned to Denmark. Only a few days later, the crown couple visited a Slovenian gala concert in the centre of Copenhagen performed by renowned flautist Irena Grafenauer, together with clarinetist Mate Bekavac and guitarist Klaus Jäckle. The concert was organised by the Slovenian Embassy in Denmark and the Government Communication Office of the Republic of Slovenia. His Excellency Rudolf Gabrovec, the Slovenian Ambassador to Denmark, said it was a great honour for Slovenia that Crown Prince Frederik and Crown Princess Mary had attended this event. After the concert, at which Irena Grafenauer, who is one of the first ladies of Slovenian musical art aroused great enthusiasm, they also attended a banquet, where they chatted with the artists and audience.

## HANDOVER OF COPIES OF J.V. VALVASOR'S CORRESPONDENCE AND EXHIBITION AT THE ROYAL SOCIETY IN LONDON

On 23 April, a festive handover of the copies of Janez Vajkard Valvasor's preserved correspondence and an opening of the exhibition *Slovene by Nationality and European by Birth, European in Spirit: J. V. Valvasor from Bogenšperk* took place at the Royal Society. The President of the Royal Society, Lord Martin Rees, handed over a copy of the preserved correspondence to Iztok Mirošič, Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia in London. The official speakers were Ambassador Mirošič, Lord Martin Rees, the

outgoing President of Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts Boštjan Žekš and Dr Trevor Shaw. With an exhibition on the occasion of the 320th anniversary of J. V. Valvasor's membership of the Royal Society, Valvasor's correspondence with the Secretary of the Royal Society is the centre of attention for the first time. So far, Valvasor is the only member of the Royal Society from Slovenian territory, and this was also the only acknowledgement of his achievements during his lifetime. At the exhibition in London, Valvasor's work, which was already at that time of huge significance for national and European natural scientific research, will be presented through quotations from his letters. Visitors to the first such exhibition about Valvasor at the Royal Society in London will have a one-time opportunity of having direct contact with Valvasor's correspondence and his handwritten letters. His life's work *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola (Slava vojvodine Kranjske)* will also be exhibited. Valvasor earned his membership of the Royal Society with his scientific opus and treatise on Lake Cerknica. The intermittent lake, which was first researched in detail and described by Valvasor, is therefore fully presented at this exhibition. The surviving archive sources on Valvasor are limited, but a special chapter of Valvasor's life – the correspondence with the English Royal Society - has remained almost entirely preserved. So far, this correspondence has been accessible to the Slovenian public only in book form. The originals are kept by the Royal Society in London. The purpose of digital copies of the original correspondence is to supplement and enrich the national archives of the following Slovenian institutions: the Ministry of Culture, National and University Library, National Museum, Archives of the Republic of Slovenia, Public Institute Bogenšperk etc. Copies of the correspondence were provided in the light of good cooperation with the Royal Society by the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in London, which also suggested the celebration of the 320th anniversary of Valvasor's membership of the Royal Society. In July this year, the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SAZU) will issue a scientifically and artistically demanding facsimile print of the whole of Valvasor's legacy, which comprises 17 volumes of the *Iconotheca Valvasoriana* collection. With this collection, Valvasor will symbolically return from Croatia, just as he is symbolically returning from England to Slovenia with this handover of correspondence copies at the Royal Society headquarters. The handover at the Royal Society was followed by a reception and a cultural and culinary event at the Foreign Press Association headquarters in London. A presentation of typical Slovenian dishes and drinks were accompanied by original Slovenian folk music performed by Ljuba Jenče, Marino Kranjc and Janez Jocif. Guests were addressed by the Director of the Slovenian Tourist Organization, Dimitrij Piciga, who also presented the Slovenian brand "I Feel Slovenia". This event is

# Do you think or do you know?

## On the tenth anniversary of the 'Slovenia. At Home in Europe' Communications Programme.

Text: NADA SERAJNIK SRAKA

### ON THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 'SLOVENIA.

When, at various opportunities, the media pose questions on European themes to people on the street, the answers vary widely. Some are knowledge based, others express ignorance, or doubt. By European themes, we mean everything related to the European Union, its politics and decisions. This includes European institutions, as well as the institutions of Member States. The former and latter are obliged to inform European citizens of the decisions they make and the consequences these decisions have on their lives and livelihoods.

Communicating Europe is an initiative aimed at improving communications between European institutions and European citizens, to communicate about Europe and for Europe more effectively. The task is far from simple. The European Union is a highly complex international system integrating various political, economic, cultural, ethnic, religious and other aspects. Many stakeholders are involved – from all European institutions to Member States' governing bodies, national professional institutions, NGOs and citizens. In the past, the EC and the Member States have worked on various principles and approaches to find the most effective means of improving communications and to find ways to work in synergetic partnerships.

### SLOVENIA. AT HOME IN EUROPE.

Slovenia has paid a great deal of attention to communicating European matters since 1998. Today, Slovenes feel very much at home in Europe. According to a Eurobarometer survey (Autumn 2007), Slovenia was the only member state in the EU27 where respondents answered that they believed they were well informed about European political affairs. With this result, Slovenia tops the EU27 list regarding that question. Behind this result, there lie ten years of continuous planned work.

Communication about the European Union and EU related matters officially began in 1998, when the Government of the Republic of Slovenia entrusted the former Government Public Relations and Media Office (today's Government Communication Office) with the task of preparing a public awareness programme. The programme of informing the public about the European Union and accession began under the slogan 'Slovenia: at Home in Europe'. Symbolically, the programme began on 9 May 1998 - Europe Day.

The programme lasted seven years, having many objectives, and included a referendum on accession at its conclusion. The purpose of the communications programme was to familiarise the inhabitants of Slovenia with all aspects of the European Union, Slovenia's accession process and to raise the general level of awareness and debate on European matters. The programme included all relevant stakeholders – not only government institutions and politicians, but also important social actors, chambers, trade unions, NOGs, and the

mass media. The programme not only improved public knowledge about the EU and its functions, as evident from the referendum results, but also assisted in developing various communication channels and tools such as Europhone - a toll free telephone line, a special web site, Europostcards, presentations and other public appearances - thereby establishing a solid communications infrastructure to be utilized in the years following accession.

### FOR INFORMATION ON THE EU, CALL EUROPHONE!

Accession to the EU has had a number of pragmatic effects on the work and lives of the country's inhabitants. Therefore, providing timely, reliable, and complete information remains of crucial importance. When seeking new approaches, we were pleased to discover that many communications approaches which had been recommended in communication strategies, (such as direct communication, using new technologies, and working with NGOs), were already being successfully used in our programmes. One of the vital tools was and remains the 'Europhone', a toll free telephone line that was transformed from an open telephone line to a contact centre. 'Europhone' not only provides answers to callers and visitors on the website, but sends out replies and publications gathered through 'Euro post-cards' as well. In addition, all presentations are available to Europhone. In this way, we not only distribute information, but also obtain feedback, which we use to try to adapt to the needs of target groups. 'Europhone' has proven to be a very useful tool, especially during communication campaigns.

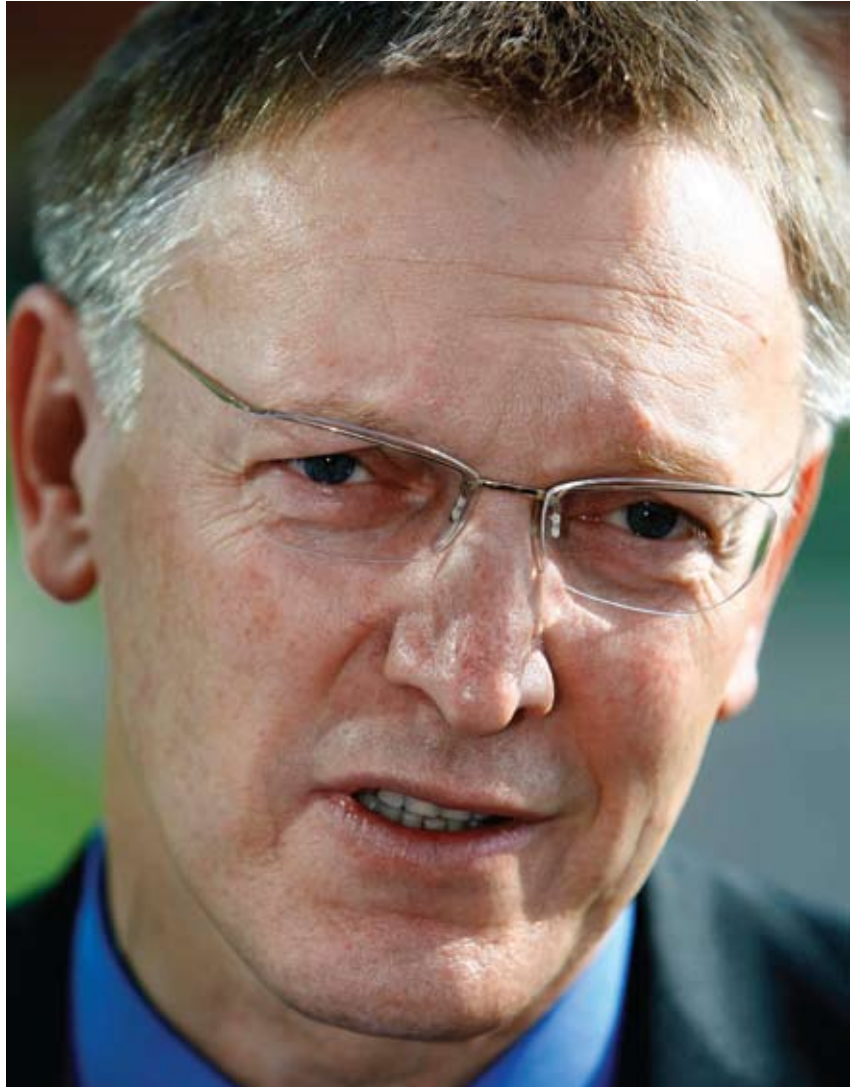
### THE RESULTS ARE IMPRESSIVE BUT DEMANDING

When summing up some of the results of the work completed in the past ten years, the figures indicate some impressive results: more than 19,000 questions were received and answered by Europhone, e-mails and postcards; on the topical web site <http://evropa.gov.si> 13,600 to 19,400 web-contacts per month were recorded; 53 different types of publications were issued through approximately 8 million copies. Eurobus, the travelling information centre, visited most primary and secondary schools, shopping centres, fairs and various events involved in the programme. By encouraging public debate, annual calls for tenders for non-governmental organisations were issued. Within this framework, 650 information-communications projects, with a total value of more than one million euros, were co-financed by the government.

However, there still remains a share of Slovenes who do not feel very much involved in European affairs, some 71%; 56 % of respondents believe that their individual voice does not count. Such figures indicate that there is still a lot of work to be done in the future. Working in close and fruitful partnerships with the European Commission and European Parliament provides us with confidence in keeping the figures of public perception and support as high as ever before.

## European Union Research

Commissioner  
Janez Potočnik:  
EU Ministers of  
Research launch  
the Ljubljana  
Process



**EU MINISTERS OF RESEARCH INITIATED THE SO-CALLED LJUBLJANA PROCESS IN THE MIDDLE OF APRIL AT AN INFORMAL EU COUNCIL MEETING ON COMPETITIVENESS THAT WAS HELD AT BRDO PRI KRANJU. THROUGH CONCERTED ACTION OF THE MEMBER STATES AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION THIS SHOULD LEAD TO A MORE UNIFORM AND EFFICIENT EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA. WHAT IS MEANT HERE BY »INITIATION OF LJUBLJANA PROCESS« OR WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?**

It should mainly offer an adequate answer to the crucial challenges that stand before Europe in this quickly changing world. I am optimistic concerning the future of the Ljubljana Process, on the basis of today's discussion we had on the awareness of

European politicians on the importance of knowledge for the future of Europe - to keep the quality of life of its citizens, as well as providing for the future competitive edge of its economy. I am glad that harmonious views by all participants governed the meeting.

**YOU DISTINGUISHED TWO GOALS REGARDING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMMON EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA: FORMATION OF THE VISION OF A COMMON RESEARCH AREA, TOGETHER WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ITS SUCCESSFUL MANAGEMENT.**

We more or less agreed that we might be able to form the vision to the end of the year, while managing the very procedure is on the other hand a more long-term goal, which is also more difficult to achieve. The next Presidency is to answer this very question, but it is too early to talk about it. We have set the compass, that is, the vision. As far as managing is concerned, it is by all means a more difficult matter. We are all very interested in relating the efforts with the Lisbon Process, in which all actors

should participate. The development of the European Research Area is taking too long, as was stated by the Irish Minister of Innovation Policy, Michael Ahern, who participated in the discussion as invited spokesperson. Furthermore, Ahern thinks that European Research Area policy must not become isolated, but has to be included in the broader policy of competitiveness, in particular to the Lisbon Strategy.

## WHEN COULD THE VISION OF A COMMON RESEARCH AREA BE FORMED AND WHAT WOULD IT INCLUDE?

The Member States hope that the first version of the vision for the common research area could be implemented by the end of the year. It would facilitate the quick formation of the policies and action plans required for its implementation. There will be ongoing discussions after it is adopted, so that it will be possible to renew and enhance it. The characteristics of the mentioned vision should represent the free flow of researchers and attractive jobs offered to them. This is based on the free flow of knowledge, or the so-called "fifth freedom". Furthermore, it should entail free universities and research organizations that would ensure excellence in science and technology across all Europe, as well as a coordinated strategy for international cooperation in science and technology. The vision should also mention access to high-performance research infrastructure. It would be the basis for a more long-term process, bringing about improvements in managing the European Research Area. In order to achieve this, the following principles need to be considered, such as closer relationships of the European Research Area with the Lisbon strategy and other policies, greater inclusion of all participants to the common Research Area, the implementation of control indicators and measures used in assessments, as well as a developed information system.

## WHAT IS THE LONG-TERM GLOBAL VISION FOR THE EU?

Expectations of the global public regarding the role Europe should have are great, and together with the common efforts, we have yet to fulfil them. Europe is a team made up of stars having potential of becoming a true dream team.

## HOW DO YOU COMMENT ON THE BRAIN DRAIN FROM THE EU TO USA?

We are trying to reshape the concept of the brain drain into a concept of so-called brain circulation. Brain circulation is of vital importance for the European Research Area and for the work of its researchers. It is just like their blood circulation. That is why we have implemented different measures for maintaining contacts with European researchers working abroad with their domestic environment, as well as for their cooperation on projects within the European Research Area itself. Furthermore, we are developing projects in order to attract foreign researchers to the EU such as research visas that Member States would already have to have integrated in their legislation but not all have done so. And this is not all. In the end it all depends on the cultural environment, tolerance in society, attractive salaries, possibility of the transfer of social and pension rights, that is, whether the person has the feeling they are wanted and that their profession is valued. This year we plan to focus on the following five crucial things: research passports, joint programming, infrastructure,

intellectual property in public institutions which carry out research, and international cooperation strategy.

## DO YOU THINK EUROPE HAS DONE ENOUGH FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMON RESEARCH AREA AND HUMAN RESOURCES?

Europe does not make full use of its potential in the field of human resources or in the field of institutions. That is, mostly when it comes to joint and synergetic cooperation between them.

Human resources are the most important field when discussing the common European Research Area. Now is a great opportunity for countries to prepare their national programmes for coordination, and for them to reach agreements on priority tasks with which they want to create international links and support them through their own budgets. It is crucial to bring in line the financial resources, so that countries that are nowadays at a lower development stage will also be able to compete for excellent projects.

A complex approach is needed for the EU to succeed in the field of science and research, which would include all crucial sectors of both the individual governments of the Member States and the European Commission as well - tax policy, forming of more flexible job markets, adequate intellectual property protection, the search for efficient financial instruments, etc.

Europe has the tradition and knowledge; however, the world is constantly changing. New economies surface and new strong scientific actors appear. At the same time, our societies are more vulnerable than in the past. Europe in the 21st century is faced by numerous new challenges.

## THE PATH TO REACH THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY IS COMPLEX. EACH REFORM OR CHANGE IS AT ISSUE. WHAT IS TRULY NEEDED BY THE EU IN ORDER TO REALIZE THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY TO THE FULLEST?

Each subject can establish two strategies: defending the current state or creating of a new one. And each of them has its consequences. We have to establish an adequate balance between them and constantly make efforts in order to correctly consider all the circumstances.

## WHAT IS YOUR TAKE ON THE SLOVENIAN EU PRESIDENCY HALFWAY THROUGH ITS TERM?

I think that the Presidency has, in general, been conducted well. The events in which I participated were also excellently organized. They represent a continuation of the traditional well-organized presidencies. It is, however, still too early for a final assessment, but at this moment we could already say that after the Presidency is completed, at least one of Slovenia's problems will be solved, that is, the issue of Slovenia's recognisability on the European and global map. This is probably the most important side effect the Presidency shall have.

## MEMBER STATES ENDORSE SMALL BUSINESS ACT, SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIAL POLICY



European Industry Commissioner Guenter Verheugen outside the EU Presidency congress centre of Brdo pri Kranju.

At an informal meeting of EU Ministers in charge of competitiveness the Member States voiced broad support for two initiatives being considered by the European Commission - the Small Business Act and sustainable industrial policy - which are considered the key drivers in the EU's effort to improve competitiveness. The Small Business Act involves measures and policy actions at the level of the EU and Member States to reduce start-up costs for companies, cut red tape, increase companies' participation in EU programmes, including public procurement, and relax rules for state aid to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). »We don't have enough enterprises in Europe and an enterprise that does not exist cannot create jobs. If we want to solve the unemployment problem in the long run we need to have more enterprises, more entrepreneurs and better conditions for doing business in Europe,« said European Industry Commissioner Guenter Verheugen, who expects the act to be adopted by the end of the year.

## JANŠA: EU THE ONLY SOLUTION FOR WESTERN BALKANS

EU accession is the only way to tear down the borders between Western Balkan countries, Prime Minister Janez Janša said on 16 April at the opening of Slovenian Business Week, a series of business conferences in Ljubljana. He told economists from the region that joining the EU was worth the effort. Numerous Slovenian achievements since the country joined the EU are proof that EU accession is worth the effort, said Janša adding that seven years ago Slovenia's exchange of goods with the EU stood at EUR 7bn, whi le



Prime Minister Janez Janša at the opening of the Slovenian Business Week conference.

Text: RAMÓN MIKLUS , Photo: STA

now the figure stands at EUR 14bn. Janša said that Slovenia presents a good point of entry for EU accession of the Western Balkan countries and called on them to increase investment in Slovenia. The future of the Western Balkans lies within the EU, and membership in the bloc represents the only realistic solution to the problems in the region, he added. Slovenian exports to the Western Balkans top EUR 3bn, the exchange of goods stands at EUR 5bn and the country's investments in the region total EUR 3bn, which is 60% of Slovenian investment abroad, the Prime Minister pointed out. In order for the Western Balkan countries to join the EU as soon as possible, it is imperative that they maintain the speed of their reforms, said Janša and added that Slovenia fully supported their efforts. The Slovenian Business Week was aimed at boosting ties among Slovenian economists and exchanging information on international business opportunities.

## EU AND ASIAN OFFICIALS CALL FOR FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

Senior officials for trade and investment from EU and Asian countries have called for progress in negotiations on free trade agreements between the two regions at a two-day meeting in Maribor. They exchanged views regarding some global issues and called for liberalisation of world trade. The meeting, which started on 17 April as part of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) dialogue, was an introduction to the ASEM Ministerial meeting which is to take place in Indonesia in June, according to the Economy Ministry. The officials exchanged views on economic cooperation between the regions, focusing on ways for enhancing it and removing barriers to free trade and investment. They expressed commitment to efforts for progress in the negotiations for free trade agreements and liberalisation of world trade, which were initiated by the World Trade Organisation.

## BAJUK CALLS FOR MEASURES IN PREVENTION OF FINANCIAL CRISIS

Speaking at a meeting of the UN Social and Economic Council in New York on 15 April, Slovenian Finance Minister Andrej Bajuk called for adequate measures for prevention of a crisis similar to the current one, and for the strengthening of the role of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) with reforms. Addressing the meeting on behalf of the EU, Bajuk said there was no doubt that global financial stability was a precondition for sustainable growth and a higher living standard, and thus it is in the interest of all to learn something from the current crisis and take adequate steps. Bajuk also called for more control over the functioning of financial institutions, more transparency of their work, more market discipline and early issuing of warnings. Regarding the latter, it would be necessary to strengthen the IMF's role, he noted. In his opinion, international cooperation is crucial for taking the necessary steps. Bajuk also welcomed the quota and voice reform that the IMF adopted at its spring meetings, which gave somewhat more power in decision making to less developed countries. Bajuk stopped in New York after attending the spring meeting of the IMF and the World Bank in Washington.

## GOVERNMENT AMENDS COMPANIES ACT

On 17 April the government amended the Companies Act, putting forward the second set of amendments to the umbrella act regulating corporate operations in less than three months. Economy Minister Andrej Vizjak told the press after the government's session that the amendments transposed four EU directives and introduced changes "that make sense considering the situation in Slovenia". The proposal





Slovenian Minister of Economy Andrej Vizjak.

raises the thresholds used for the determination of company size and classification into small, medium-sized and large companies, said Vizjak. Companies will be required to disclose off-balance sheet transactions in their annual reports. They will also be obliged to reveal transactions into which the company has entered together with associated companies. Listed companies will have to form audit commissions composed of supervisory board members, of which at least one will have to be an accounting expert. AGM resolutions which give management the mandate for the purchase of own stock will henceforth be valid for 36 months (up from 18). Companies will be allowed to purchase up to 10% of their own stock. If the threshold is exceeded the company and the responsible person may be fined, which has not been the case so far, said Minister Vizjak.

### TRIGLAV GETS ALL CLEAR FOR GOING PUBLIC

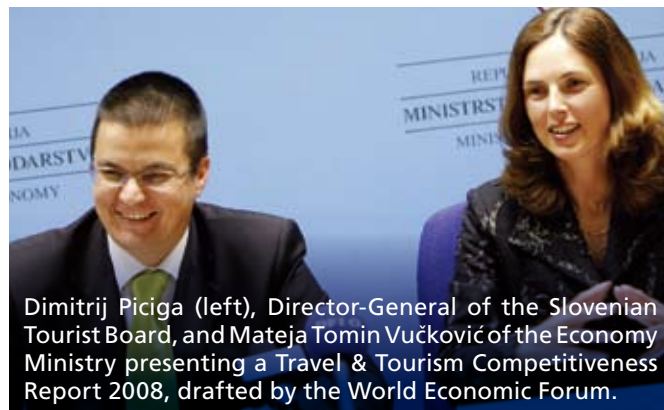
The shareholders of Zavarovalnica Triglav, the largest among the two state-owned funds, on 18 April endorsed the proposal to launch by 30 September proceedings for a stock market listing. The management supports the listing, but it does not wish to overtake the shareholders in projects concerning Triglav's future ownership structure, chief executive Andrej Kočič told the press after the annual general meeting. The management has also been given the clearance to increase share capital by 15% (EUR 3.5m) over five years, but this is less than the 25% originally proposed by the management and supervisory boards. "The decisions allow the implementation of Zavarovalnica Triglav's strategy," Kočič said, and added that the fresh capital would allow expansion to South East Europe as well as a possible tie-up with the bank NLB. The government has decided that Triglav would spend EUR 55.34m in the EUR 300m capital increase at NLB. But Kočič said the management and supervisory boards have not yet made the final decision. The share price is being analysed and if Triglav decides to subscribe the new shares, it will use the currently available funds. Yet Kočič pointed out that NLB and Triglav could become strategic partners only when Triglav is the sole insurer among the shareholders. The biggest shareholders of Triglav are the state-owned funds KAD and SOD, which hold a combined stake of 62.8%.

### PRIME MINISTER JANEZ JANŠA RECEIVES GAZPROM CEO

On 11 April, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, Janez Janša, held a meeting with Gazprom chief executive officer Dr Alexei Miller, who was visiting the Republic of Slovenia accompanied by a delegation. PM Janša and Dr Miller exchanged views on the issue of ensuring energy security in Europe and worldwide. They assessed

opportunities for cooperation in the fields of natural gas supply and identification of new transit routes. They agreed that there were good foundations, in this regard, for strengthening the ties between economic entities in Russia and Slovenia.

### SLOVENIA IMPROVES GLOBAL TOURISM COMPETITIVENESS RANKING



Dimitrij Piciga (left), Director-General of the Slovenian Tourist Board, and Mateja Tomin Vučkovič of the Economy Ministry presenting a Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2008, drafted by the World Economic Forum.

Slovenia placed 36th in the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report for 2008 published recently by the World Economic Forum (WEF). This improves Slovenia's ranking by eight places compared to last year, representatives of the tourism directorate at the Ministry of the Economy declared on 9 April. Mateja Tomin Vučkovič of the directorate explained that among the most important subindexes, Slovenia was ranked highest in the Travel and Tourism business environment and infrastructure, where it placed 33rd. Its regulatory framework sufficed for 42nd place, whereas the country's human, cultural and natural resources put it in 61st place. Slovenia placed 17th in environmental stability, and 20th in the security of tourist infrastructure. It is the leading country in the survey when it comes to the presence of major car rental companies, and seventh in terms of Visa credit card acceptance rates.

### NLB GROUP REPORTS NEARLY EUR 53M IN Q1 PROFIT



Nova Ljubljanska Banka.

The group around Slovenia's biggest bank, NLB, generated EUR 52.7m in pre-tax profit in the first quarter of this year, which is up 4% on the record figure posted in the first quarter of 2007, according to a press release from the bank. The NLB supervisory board concluded that the bank was operating successfully despite the hardened conditions on global financial markets in the wake of the US credit crunch. The supervisors set 30 June for the shareholders' meeting. One of the items on the agenda will be the distribution of profit.

»NLB operated very successfully last year, increasing its net profit by 50% to 118.8 million euros, which means the dividend will increase accordingly,« according to the bank's press release. The supervisors also assessed that last year's growth was very dynamic with the bank increasing its total assets by 27% to EUR 18.3bn.

## VIZJAK AND VIETNAMESE TRADE MINISTER DISCUSS GSP

Economy Minister Andrej Vizjak met Vietnamese Industry and Trade Minister Vu Huy Hoang on 14 April to discuss the proposal for a new EU regulation on the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) for the 2009-2011 period, which envisages the exclusion of footwear of Vietnamese origin from the GSP framework. According to the Ministry of the Economy, imports of Vietnamese footwear to the EU will enjoy preferential treatment until the end of 2008 (tax rates reduced by 3.5 percentage points) within the GSP. The EU provides this one-way support to developing countries for goods the share of which in EU imports does not represent more than 15% of exports of the respective goods. The statistics for the last three years show that the share of imports of Vietnamese footwear in the EU stands at about 20% of total footwear imports. The GSP working group is now examining the statistical data to decide if Vietnamese footwear should be excluded from GSP coverage in the next three-year period.

## MINISTERS: INVESTMENT IN RENEWABLES KEEPING SLOVENIA ON THE RIGHT TRACK

Slovenian Ministers participating at a symposium on renewable energy sources hosted at Brdo on 15 April expressed confidence that Slovenia was moving in the right direction and that it should be able to meet its renewables targets. Addressing the conference organised by the Slovenian-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the German Ministry of Economy and Technology, Environment Minister Janez Podobnik pointed out that Slovenia would invest EUR 7.5m into renewables this year encouraging for example the use of solar heating systems and energy efficient housing. »Besides encouraging investment in better insulation of buildings and mechanical equipment installations, subsidies will also be available for a part of the additional costs of construction related to quality,« Podobnik told participants of the conference.

Economy Minister Andrej Vizjak explained that Slovenia was committed to raising the share of renewables in its energy mix to 25% by 2020. »We are only 9 percentage points away from this goal; it is attainable provided that the amount of energy used also goes down by 2020,« Vizjak added. Development Minister Žiga Turk explained that global investment into renewables was estimated to have stood at EUR 74bn in 2006, whereas it is expected to increase to EUR 250bn by 2020 and to EUR 460bn by 2030.

## SLOVENES AT THE VERY PEAK OF INNOVATION

At an international invention fair, the Salon of Inventions in Geneva, which hosted 726 inventors from 45 countries, and presented no fewer than 1018 innovations, Slovenian representative Aleksander Polutnik received a gold medal for an original invention. He designed a special monocycle, which he named EniCycle. The advantage of his monocycle, besides the fact that one can learn to ride it in half an hour, is also that it is electrically driven, and that it is self-balancing, using a gyroscope. Aleksander Polutnik comes from the town of Malečnik in the Maribor municipality, he is a member of Active Slovenian Inventors (ASI), and for years he has been surprising

people with extraordinary, breathtaking inventions. This time, in addition to the gold medal awarded by the expert jury, Polutnik also received special acknowledgement from journalists for the most media-attractive invention. Despite its small size, Slovenia is a leader in the world in the number and uniqueness of innovations. The Slovenian Association of Inventors (ASI), with a registered office in Kamnik, unites Slovenian innovators and inventors, who are the designers of copyright solutions, technical, technological and service improvements in small businesses. In 2005, Slovenian inventors were among the best, and received most awards at the specialised invention fair in Geneva, while at IENA in Nürnberg, Slovenian inventors were the most successful among 39 countries. Membership of ASI is growing year by year. Currently, the Association numbers some 1186 inventors and 1268 small inventive companies.

## TELCO SUPERVISORS PROPOSE EUR 12.8 DIVIDEND

The supervisory board of Telekom Slovenije proposed on 22 April that the shareholders of the telco be paid out dividends at EUR 12.80 a share. The decision will be voted on at the annual general meeting, scheduled for 30 June, the telco indicated. The supervisors moreover called for tighter cooperation between the management and supervisory boards as the telco is facing serious business challenges that require better coordination. The telco group generated an operating profit of EUR 138.7m in 2007, down 2% compared to 2006, on operating revenues of EUR 785.9m. Shares of Telekom Slovenije added 0.64% to EUR 244.87 today.

## PERUTNINA PTUJ OPENS NEW FACTORY IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Perutnina Ptuj, Slovenia's largest poultry producer, officially opened a new factory in the town of Breza near Sarajevo on 23 April. The new factory is one of the largest greenfield investments in Bosnia-Herzegovina and concludes the company's EUR 20m investment cycle in the country. Perutnina Ptuj's chairman Roman Glaser said that this was one of the best equipped factories of its kind in Europe. He added that Bosnia-Herzegovina was a new country on the company's map where it has established a complete vertically organised system of poultry supply. Bosnian Minister of Foreign Trade Slobodan Puhalic said at the opening that the investment of Perutnina Ptuj was a unique gem on Bosnia-Herzegovina's path to European integrations. This is one of the largest foreign investments in the country. Gaser told the press that Perutnina Ptuj was aiming at becoming the leading poultry producer in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He added that the factory would at first sell its products in Bosnia-Herzegovina and later export mostly to Balkan and selected Middle East countries.



Chairman of Slovenia's largest poultry producer Perutnina Ptuj Roman Glaser at the opening of the company's new factory (STA).

Text: ANJA LORENZETTI, Photo: Neptune Digital, archives



**Neptune Digital**  
a finalist in the  
contest Start:up  
Slovenija

Neptune Digital, a company from Nova Gorica, was founded by Aljoša Pavšič in 2007 as a spin-off of the company Sreu, the manager of which is Matija Klinkon. In February this year, in collaboration with a foreign strategic partner, the company succeeded in entering the world market with a highly competitive low-cost product in the sphere of digital signage, and created much enthusiasm among potential clients. A regular member of the Primorje Technology Park, the company is a leading player in the digital signage market, which is the fastest growing advertising medium. With its product Larissa, it offers high reliability and meets all the current requirements of the market. Despite being a young company, they are ready for mass sales and a breakthrough in the big world market.

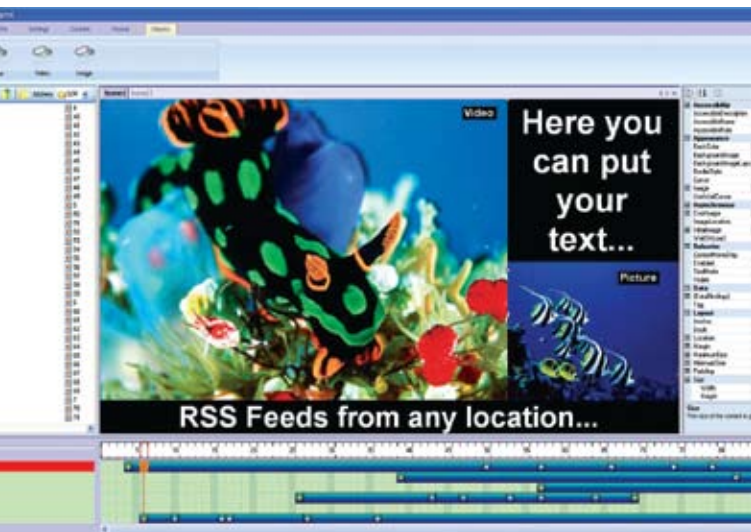
**THE VALUE OF THE DIGITAL SIGNAGE MARKET IS ESTIMATED AT 800 MILLION DOLLARS, AND BY 2011 IT IS EXPECTED TO RISE TO 3.5 BILLION DOLLARS. DISTRIBUTION WILL BE BUILT ON LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS**

Digital signage, also called dynamic signage, is a method of transmitting information or advertisements, or a combination of both to target viewers. Usually it is a combination of mechanical and software solutions, which enables the playing of various files on LCD or plasma screen, and represents an ideal solution for efficient advertising, which brings immediate return on the initial investment. The Neptune products used to control various screens (LCD, plasma video projector, etc.) have proved to be excellent, and are an important contribution to the world of advertising and the transmission of all types of information to end users.

They enable transfer by wire and wireless transfer of data from a central location (server) to an unlimited number of screens connected to the network. The product comprises a mechanical part - a device to control screens - and server software, which is the main programme located on the server to ensure the correct operation of the complete system, and a programme for editing content, in which users can edit content before sending it to particular screens.

The product is of high quality and sold at a very competitive price; the company is planning to sell around four thousand this year, and more than eleven thousand next year. To turn these numbers into revenue, they are planning to generate revenue of 1.1 million euro from the sale of their products, and next year as much as 3.2 million euro, which is a big leap.





## NEPTUNE DIGITAL IS STRATEGICALLY AND VERY DELIBERATELY FLOODING THE WORLD MARKET

"We will attack the world market immediately; in fact, we started attacking it already yesterday and the day before. We cannot afford not to enter all the most important markets at the very beginning," say the company, who presented their products to the Slovenian public in September last year. In marketing, which is strategically oriented and implemented very deliberately, they are aided by an English expert who was a strategist for a competitive company in Taiwan until he joined Neptune Digital last year. His long-term experience in the sale and marketing of similar devices on the world market was the key element in forming a long-term sales and marketing strategy, which includes setting up a reliable world sales network. Based on numerous contacts, all of them made even before the official launch of the product, they built an extensive database of potential customers, sent them the product for testing, and very quickly caught their interest. At the moment, they have agreements with more than twenty companies around the world, which are already testing the first samples. Both owners are convinced that these orders will be followed by new, bigger ones. Aljoša and Matija explain that, "Buyers of our products are found in all parts of the fairly developed world, where digital signage is a part of everyday life. So the largest potential market is found mainly in Europe, North and South America, Russia, South Africa and the Far East".

## NEPTUNE DIGITAL DOES NOT COMPROMISE ON QUALITY

In a world which is becoming increasingly dependent on transmitting more and more information to the market, the digital solution offered by Neptune Digital provides efficient transmission of messages to target clients. They also provide the possibility of upgrading mechanical and software equipment, today as well as in the future, which completely insures the investment and avoids possible complications in upgrading the software. Next to the top quality of their products, the company understands the importance of flexibility. Their products are designed in such a way that they can be installed anywhere, in confined spaces as well as on static or mobile objects such as buses, underground trains or taxis; in short, anywhere. An additional speciality of

their products is that, with GPS devices, it is possible to measure the exact position of the product in real time, and at the same time, using UMTS or WI-FI connection to upload content onto the product by wireless transmission.

The advantages provided by this company from Nova Gorica are obvious. Their products are built with the state-of-the-art technologies, in combination with completely adaptable software, which represents the most complete offer of products in the sphere of digital signage. The owners are convinced that all their products include a combination of unique functions, the most modern technologies and attractive design. The company also claim that their products are currently unique in offering high quality and numerous additional functions at a favourable price, which is revolutionary in the digital signage market, where currently all products are sold either at prices too high, or offer low quality and few functional possibilities.

## INSPIRED BY TITO

Both owners come from Nova Gorica, which among other things, prides itself on Sabotin Hill, on the border with Italy. After the end of the Second World War and the division of the town into Nova Gorica and Gorizia, the inhabitants of Yugoslavian Nova Gorica built the name TITO on the hill out of large rocks to honour the country's President. After Slovenia's independence, this inscription was changed from TITO to MIR ('peace') and back to TITO several times. This changing of the letters inspired Aljoša and Matija, and gave them the idea of a giant digital screen in place of the rocks, which they could control remotely, and manually change the content of the inscription from a distance. An excellent idea turned into reality, their product came into being, and it is already a hit around the world.

## PLAQUE FOR A FINALIST OF SLOVENIAN CONTEST START: UP SLOVENIJA

Next to numerous spoken endorsements from experts in the digital technology world, the company made it to the eight finalists at this year's contest Start:up Slovenija from among 43 registered companies, which is an excellent achievement. They received a special plaque, as they proved to be a company with a high-quality business plan and an extraordinary entrepreneurial idea. This contest is one of the more important parts of the PODIM conference, organised by Tovarna Podjemov – the entrepreneurial incubator at the University of Maribor, in partnership with the Public Agency for Entrepreneurship and Foreign Investment (JAPTI) and the Ministry of Economy. It is intended for companies that have been present in the market for less than three years, are independent, and trade in products or services based on their own knowledge and development. The head of the contest, Urban Lapajne, is convinced that it is an excellent opportunity for young, promising entrepreneurs, as in addition to awards, it provides attendance at special workshops, supports them in looking for investors, and helps in networking and meeting new people who can in any way help young entrepreneurs to achieve their goals more quickly.

In addition to this contest, the company also entered a contest for the best business plan in Primorje, and made it among the ten companies that still remain in the contest. The results will be known at the end of May, and until then the finalists are working with a consultancy to improve their business plan.

Text: JOŽE OSTERMAN, Photo: STA

Spring (Pomlad) by Grohar

Grohar's paintings are among the most expensive works on the Slovenian art market.

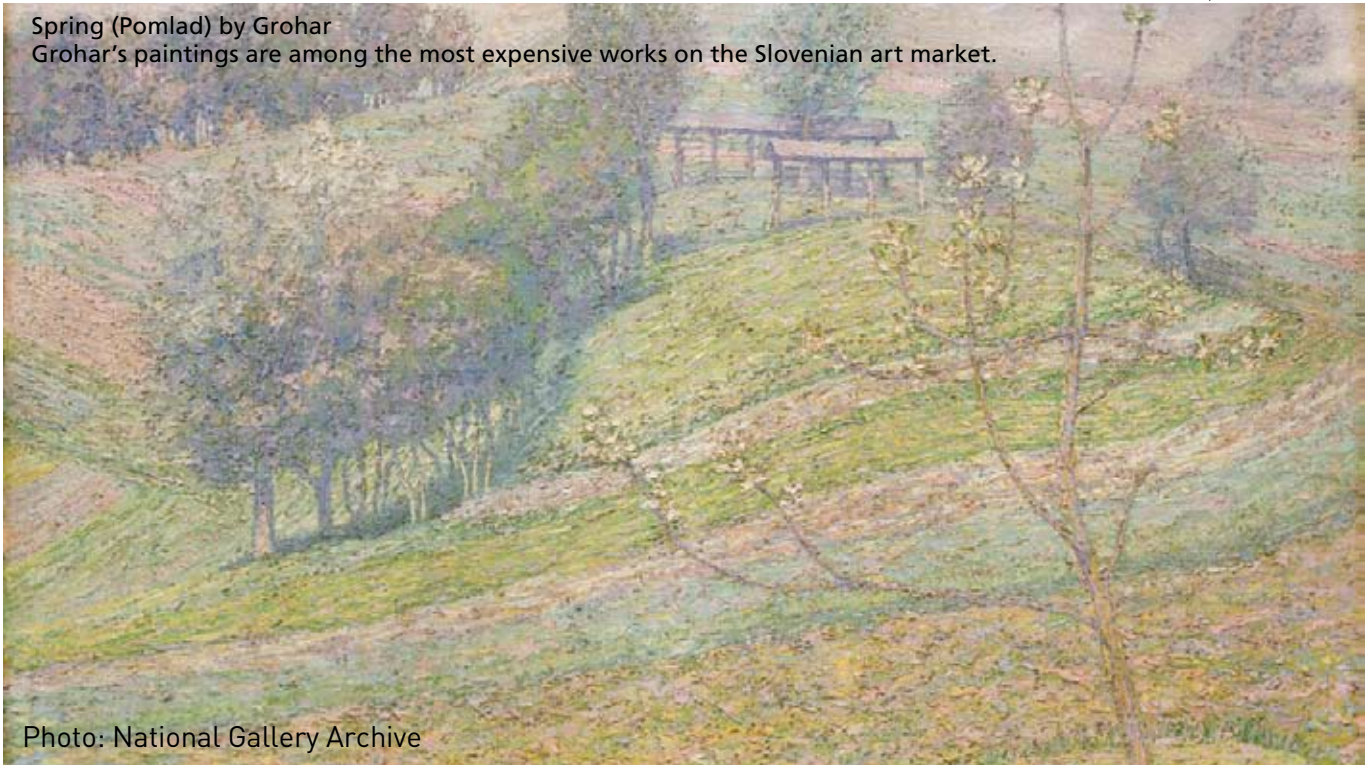


Photo: National Gallery Archive

## MEETING THE ICONS OF THE SLOVENIAN ART OF PAINTING

From mid-April, the National Gallery in Ljubljana, the guardian of Slovenian fine art since its beginnings to the first decades of the 20th century, hosts an exhibition of more than 150 of the most famous canvases painted by four Slovenian impressionists who are considered to be the founders of Slovenian national painting: Ivan Grohar, Rihard Jakopič, Matija Jama, and Matej Sternen. In addition, works of other renowned sculptors and fellow painters who are also very popular, but belong to other fine art styles, are also exhibited. The large-scale exhibition 'The Slovenian Impressionists and their Time 1890–1920' comprises a total of 400 exhibits and looks at other creative achievements in the field of photography, as well as illustration, book design, the first film frames and, especially, architecture. In 1895, Ljubljana was hard hit by a destructive earthquake, and after that year the city flourished due to the first urban solutions and construction of many important halls, institutions, hotels and private houses. A touch of Art Nouveau is most obvious if you take a walk from Prešeren Square down Miklošič Street to the Court House Palace near Miklošič Park. The exhibition, which is definitely the exhibition of the decade if we consider its extent and importance, was opened in honour of the Slovenian Presidency of the EU and will last till February 2009. Interesting information about the exhibition can be acquired at the central information point in the city – the summer house on the edge of Zvezda Park.

## BEAUTIFUL ANIMAL PICTURES IN TIVOLI PARK

On the central promenade in Tivoli Park in Ljubljana, 92 powerful animal photos contributed by 39 world-known nature photographers will be exhibited by the end of May. The 'Alive' exhibition is organised by the Slovenian Institute of Ecology,

which is connected to the world ecological organization Goodplanet.org established in Paris. Its founder and the main driving force is the photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand, who has become renowned in Ljubljana and other cities throughout the world with his photos of "The Earth from Above". Besides mostly endangered animal species whose very human features we get to see at the exhibition, there are also boards with worrying truths about how humans treat their planet that attract the attention. Beside the shocking information, there is a more optimistic good practice, explaining how somewhere in the world a wise solution has been found for this or that environmental threat. Thanks to the ecologist and director of the Institute, Dr Andrej Lukšič, who sees the connection of Slovenia with environmental traps, especially in the field of water and air, Slovenia is the third country after France and Switzerland to host this magnificent exhibition. After Slovenia, the exhibition travels to Canada.



Photo: Željko Kozinc

## GERMAN CULTURE IN NOVO MESTO

At the beginning of April, the Goethe Institute in Ljubljana and the Urban Municipality of Novo mesto organised some modest, but highly educational German cultural days, intended for a young public, with which they showed that in order to be successful, such projects need not be organised only in a metropolis, since smaller towns show even more gratitude. The programme comprised an exhibition of the best works from the photographic competition 'I Draw Myself a Friend' from Germany, and from a photography competition called 'What Makes Novo mesto Such a Nice Place?', which includes 42 photographs and will be touring schools in Novo mesto. There was also a special exhibition of UNESCO cultural heritage in Germany, which includes a presentation of numerous objects from Germany on the register of world cultural heritage, where Germany is one of the best represented countries; and a child and youth orchestra from the town of Lagenhagen played in the hall of Novo mesto cultural centre. The youngest public enjoyed the presentation of several German children's plays, and the older ones enjoyed screenings of the renowned movie 'The Life of Others' (Das Leben der Anderen), which won an Academy Award for best foreign film.

## WEEK OF SLOVENIAN DRAMA IN KRANJ CONCLUDES



One of the three most important Slovenian theatre festivals ended by choosing the best performance and a new play. The Grum Award winner for the best play was Rok Vilčnik, known under the pseudonym Rokgre, for his play 'Garbage on the Moon'; the best performance and Šeligo Award winner was Cankar's drama 'Romantic Souls' directed by Sebastijan Horvat and performed by Drama SNG Ljubljana. 'Romantic Souls' earned the award due to its precise consideration of the substantial and formal values of the text, although it is set in the modern period, the jury explained its choice for Šeligo Award. The comedy 'The Doctor in Spite of Himself' performed by Iztok Mlakar, directed by Vito Taufer and co-produced by Koper Theatre and SNG Nova Gorica, persuaded the public who always love simple stories and a good and exciting play that the popular Iztok Mlakar is always able to perform. Otherwise, there were 13 home-grown and three foreign performances of plays this year, all performed before full halls.

## CARINTHIAN CULTURAL DAYS IN LJUBLJANA

The Carinthian Cultural Days in Ljubljana, with which Slovenes from Austrian Carinthia present their culture, have become an indispensable part of Ljubljana cultural life, where more and more people participate every year. This year, the Carinthians presented themselves with an excellent selection of artistic works from the traditional meeting in Sveče, where a large number of highly distinguished artists from both sides of the border have been creating for 27 years; with a conference on the spiritual cultural heritage of Carinthia and Slovenia, which was part of the Year of Intercultural Dialogue; and of course, with performances by their cultural groups, where excellent choirs and music groups are still at the forefront (this year, the Podjuna Choir and the Foltej Hartman Quintet); writers, who were represented this year within the framework of the Celje Mohor Society, attract more and more attention, and the young Carinthian film-makers, of whom Andrina Mračnikar, Milena Olip and Štefan Reichmann presented their works this year. The concert by the Kranj music school and pupils from a Slovenian music school in Carinthia – a unique educational community that has musically educated Carinthian children for more than thirty years and is one of the strongest connections between Slovenian and Austrian Carinthians north of the Karavanke - also deserves a mention.

## BALLET DAYS IN LJUBLJANA

This spring is very special for Slovenian ballet – in the celebration of the 90th anniversary of the Ljubljana Ballet, World Dance Day and the Slovenian Presidency of the European Union, several events took place within ballet days in April.

The Slovenian National Opera and Ballet Theatre of Ljubljana hope that this marathon ballet event, which is intended for ballet and dance enthusiasts as well as Ljubljana residents and other visitors, will become a fixture in the future.

This year's event featured German choreographer Uwe Scholz, who has made a great contribution to the classical ballet formation of today. That is why the first ballet days were especially marked by the premiere of his ballet evening 'Mozart vs. Schumann'.

Ninety is a nice round anniversary even for Slovenian ballet. Although it may seem that institutional theatre, musical theatre and ballet in Slovenia have had a brief history compared to other European countries, we can proudly look to the future. Visitors



were able to admire lively events on stages in the past as well. The foundations were laid as early as 1892, when the Slovenian Provincial Theatre acquired a new building (today's National Opera), where drama and opera performances were put on. In spring 1918, the theatre began operating with the help of the Theatre Consortium, whose goal was the rebirth of the Slovenian stage in the 1918/19 season. And so the Slovenian musical stage came to life again as early as the fall of the same year, and in addition to the drama and opera theatre, Slovenian theatre was enriched with ballet theatre.

For more information, visit [www.balet.si](http://www.balet.si).

## CAMBODIA IN LJUBLJANA



Visitors to the Cankarjev Dom Cultural and Congress Centre who like Asian art have again been delighted. The main stage

hosted the Royal Ballet of Cambodia. It is a ballet which UNESCO recently declared part intangible human heritage, based on their many years' effort and fight for the freedom of art.

The Royal Ballet of Cambodia presented an amazing aesthetic of movement, posture refinement, costume perfection and Asian mythological tradition. Khmer dance is complemented by golden costumes which are sewn directly on the dancers' bodies before a performance. In short, an extraordinary experience of a distant Asian culture in the current European capital.

## SLOVENIA PRESENTED IN JENA

In the middle of April in Jena, Germany, a set of events was organised by the Slovenian embassy in Germany, presenting Slovenia as a cultural and tourist country. It began with a performance by the Slovenian group Terrafolk and the Jena Philharmonic; the next day, there was a concert of chamber music in the atrium of Jena town hall. Young artists - clarinettist Dušan Sodja, cellist Jaka Stadler and pianist Tatjana Kaučič - performed a concert entitled 'Honey Yesterday and Today'. In the Volkhaus Cultural Centre, the Greentown Jazzband from Ljubljana played a day later, and Lojze Spacal was represented by his photography exhibition entitled 'Painter's Eye and Photographic Camera'. There was an information fair about Slovenia throughout the week in the Goethe Gallery, where tourist, cultural and business information on Slovenia was available.

## PAINTER POLONA TRATNIK EXHIBITS IN BRUSSELS

On the premises of the European Commission, the European Commissioner for Science and Research, Dr Janez Potočnik, opened an exhibition entitled 'Micro Flesh' by the artist Polona Tratnik, which through five projects treats the microbiology of the human body in different ways. On this occasion, Potočnik designated Tratnik as the only Slovenian bio-artist.



Supported by microbiology, the author manipulates live material through the processes of fragmentation and reconstruction of the body. "My art deals with issues concerning broader society, whereby contacts with science are important, since matters in scientific areas are usually hermetically sealed," Tratnik said in explaining her creative concept to the national press agency. The exhibition is the fifth in the 'Gallery LJU cosinus BRX' series, a gallery concept established on the initiative of the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and intended for the exhibition of works dealing with science and technology through art.

## HUNGARIAN NATIONAL PHILHARMONIC IN LJUBLJANA

As part of the Slovenian Philharmonic's programme presenting the best achievements of contemporary musical creativity in Europe, the Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra under conductor Zoltan Kocsis appeared in the Gallus hall of Cankarjev dom. They presented music by the famous Hungarian composers Leo Weinre, Erno Dohnanyi, Bela Bartok, and Zoltan Kodaly.

The history of this famous orchestra goes back to 1923, when the Metropolitan Orchestra was established, and swiftly rose to become one of the main pillars of Hungarian musical life. It was founded by Deszo Bor, who was artistic director for fifteen years. After the war, it was directed by Ferenc Fracsay and Laszlo Somogyi, and conducted also by Otto Kleper and Antal Dorati, and later by anyone of importance in the European musical world: Zubin Mehta, Lorin Maazel, Claudio Abbado, and the soloists Svjatoslav Richter, Yehudi Menuhin and Ruggiero Ricci. Therefore, the Hungarian guests are certainly among the most eminent ever hosted by Slovenia.

## SLOVENIAN MUSICAL DAYS

Slovenian Musical Days, now in its sixth year, has become the most important festivals of contemporary Slovenian musical creativity. This year, the work of Vinko Globokar was at the forefront and his famous triptych 'Angel of History', a concert in three parts for two orchestras and two conductors, was performed for the first time in Slovenia. The original performance was by the Slovenian

Philharmonic Orchestra, longstanding interpreters of Globokar's works, under French conductor Diego Masson and his German colleague Michael Wanderberg, and live electronic realisation will be performed by Experimental Studio from Freiburg. The theme of the music is the disintegration of democracies, countries and connected war disasters. Due to its particular complexity and scenic elements, the composition was performed in Viba Film Studio.

## DAYS OF THE SLOVENIAN BOOK

The Days of the Slovenian Book, this year taking place for the thirteenth time, were opened in Ljubljana's Zvezda Park by the President of Slovenia, Dr Danilo Türk, thereby symbolically underlining the major significance that the Slovenes traditionally attribute to books. This cultural project has long been among the most important on the Slovenian cultural map and has attracted a considerable number of visitors, especially book buyers.

However, the statistics on Slovenians and books do not show trends that we should be very proud of - they indicate that while publishers publish many books and readers read them, less and less money is being invested in them. In 2006, 3306 original books and 1368 translations, among them 44% novels, followed by short stories, poems and plays were published. On average, every library member borrowed some 46 books. However, in the last six years the Slovenian household budget for books has fallen: in 2000, a member of a household spent 0.42% of funds on books; in the next two years, in 2004, 0.37%; and in 2005 only 0.32%. Obviously, more and more readers are resorting to libraries and spending their money on other purchases.







## Pri Boštjanu, Križna Gora

Joži Bernik gets up early in the morning and goes to bed late at night.

The beautiful old town of Škofja Loka in the Gorenjska region is the starting point for a refreshing trip and a good lunch at the Pri Boštjanu inn on Križna gora hill. When driving from Škofja Loka towards the Sevska dolina valley we arrive in Stara Loka, where we turn right at a road sign that cannot be missed. From that point, there are only five kilometres of winding and ascending road to Križna Gora, a village with a view. Above the village is the hill of the same name, with the well-known pilgrimage church of St. Cross. Visitors are inspired by the valued medieval frescos painted by the so-called 'master of frescos in Križna Gora' whose identity is unknown.

Now, when spring winds finally chase away the clouds, there will be a fantastic view from Križna Gora hill over the valley. Directly before you, you can see the Sorško polje plain, so evenly crisscrossed by fields and patches of woodland. Slightly the side, are the breath-taking Savinja Alps and the view over Šmarna gora hill, the patron of passionate hikers from Ljubljana, is just as beautiful.

Križna Gora (as well as the hill of the same name) is among goals which people want to reach at least once a day by walking or even running. Those who are not exactly passionate hikers, trick the slopes on two or four wheels and treat themselves to the famous Sunday lunch at the Pri Boštjanu inn.

Once your eyes are tired of looking and your lungs filled with excitement over the view, a sip of homemade brandy and a thick slice of homemade bread accompanied by homemade zaseka (minced lard seasoned with salt and spices) will do you good. Zaseka is all the more worthy of sin, since it is always

served with homemade sausage. Apart from zaseka, the most homemade dish in the Gorenjska region is definitely beef soup with homemade noodles, which I believe they roll out and cut with a sharp knife instead of a machine. But the inn is modern, and not only because of the new, bright and airy rooms where it seems that big Sunday groups like to sit. The menu is modern as well, since there is a lot of home-grown vegetables, different salads and even fine soups, such as garlic or mushroom on offer. Mushroom soup is worth trying in the summer and in autumn, when there are real mushrooms growing around every corner, since frozen porcini mushrooms can never be made into a real Gorenjska mushroom soup.



Rich Sunday lunch on a tree trunk platter.

# GOODSLOVENIANINNS

Krapi filled with cheese accompanied by grilled porcini mushrooms.



And now the key question: what is the trademark of the Pri Boštjanu inn?

It is not zaseka and sausages, nor home-dried lean meat in cold cuts. And neither is it homemade bread, as good as it is and although regular customers and friends get half of loaf on their way home. The trademark is the service of the main dish: a few centimetres thick trunk of a tree, including bark, varnished and prepared as a plate. On it, there are neatly arranged fried sausages, black pudding, sauerkraut, turnip, žganci (hard-boiled corn mush) and roast potatoes. If it is not a slaughtering season, sausages are replaced by nice pieces of roast meat roasted in an oven or a bread oven, as well as succulent minced meat. The ham tastes delicious, too. Roast potatoes and a salad round off one of the most genuine meat flavours in the Gorenjska region. But if you would like to eat ham, you have to order it in advance, since there is not always enough in the oven due to demand.

The specialty of housewife and chef Joži is cheese krapi, dough pads which would be also called žlikrofi in other regions of Slovenia. They are filled with homemade cheese filling and go perfectly with grilled meat and strong porcini mushrooms. Krapi accompanied by other mushrooms do not taste less good either. Joži Bernik and her husband take care that their inn stays traditional in all aspects: not only is the inn owned by a family which strives to feed and keep their guests satisfied, it is also family friendly, where families feel especially good. In the vicinity of the inn, there is a playground to take care of children's safety and fun.

The Delo central publishing house was organizing public cooking competitions for a decade and challenging experienced cooks to compete for gold, silver and bronze spoons and for the cook of the year blue ribbon award in the grand finale. In the semi-finals with twelve competitors, Joži Bernik won a bronze spoon she still likes to boast about. Now, there is not much time for competitions since they renovated the inn and kitchen, and there are not enough hands to help around lunchtime.

So she has to stay up until the early hours if she wants to bake a few loaves of bread and a potica or two. Such classics go like hot

cakes no matter how plentiful the lunch is. Joži is not satisfied only with potica, štruklji and pancakes; she also likes to try her hand at cakes. My personal favourite is her last confectionery invention: a dessert called Dreams. When waiting and thinking about what will come to the table, you have not the slightest idea what to expect; you prepare yourself for fluffy and sweet whipped egg whites. But what you get is really an invention: on a circle of soft, juicy and dark chocolate sponge cake there is a firm, cold and very delicious yoghurt custard containing fruit decorated with an extremely thin dried apple slice. This small tower is surrounded by apple puree containing almost no sugar, and is so fresh and delicious it almost makes you scream for another one, except you feel awkward since you have already eaten a typically large Gorenjsko lunch. With a few glasses of the home-made house wines. And now? Up onto Križna gora hill and then back for another round!



Refreshing Apple Dreams.

Text: MIŠA ČERMAK, Photo: STA



## Sara Isakovič, European Swimming Champion

### A path of will, persistence and success!

Behind this young but striking 19-year old is an incredible path of success, which she has paved with persistence, inherited talent, straightforwardness, courage, sacrifice and vision. Before her are the Olympic Games in China and afterwards her studies at Berkeley, which she postponed for one year due to her swimming training. With reason. A high school student who graduated from an international high school in Ljubljana with honours, despite hard five-hour training daily is the first Slovene to win a gold medal in swimming at a European championship. She is also a girl from Bled who lived with her family in Dubai for some time and started swimming before she could walk. And her name, written in gold letters among other national swimmers, is Sara Isakovič. It would be hard to say that she won the European swimming throne in Eindhoven expectedly, but considering her intensive training and the time she has devoted to swimming, the victory was not so unexpected either – at least judging by her previous performances. A few days before that, she won 8th place in the 100m freestyle and 100m dolphin crawl, but the third brilliant performance in the final brought her the long-expected gold medal. She won the European Champion title in the 200m freestyle, and set a new national record of 1:57:46. No, Sara did not know that she was going to win: "I knew that I was fighting for a medal, but I do not underestimate my opponents."

#### MOTHER'S GENES AND FAMILY SUPPORT

Modest and not even a bit star-like, Sara was born to achieve this kind of swimming success, so to speak. Sara's mother Rebeka (her maiden name was Porenta) was a Slovene as well as Yugoslav national record holder. She met her future husband Nenad, a pilot from Belgrade, while she was working as a flight attendant.

Together they travelled the world, got married, and when the twins Sara and Gal were born, she dedicated herself to them. Her love for swimming probably never died, since she first put her loving twins into the water to swim when they were only two months old. They both knew how to swim long before they could walk, and at the age of two they had already competed with each other for a sweet reward – candy. Sara's goals became related to water, and her path clearly established, although the family moved to Dubai, where her dad Nenad got a job as a pilot and Boeing 777 instructor. Her mom was determined that the twins would continue swimming in the UAE as well, and because there was no swimming club there, she started training her talented children by herself. As a former swimmer, she had the necessary knowledge, will and love. Nevertheless, she received help from a trainer, Miha Potočnik from Ljubljana. Six years ago, the family had to face a tough decision, since Sara who was 13 years old at that time wanted to swim and train on a more professional level (maybe she suspected the success awaiting her). Going to Slovenia and serious training would divide the family, since father was bound to his job elsewhere, and mother and her brother Gal were not so drawn to Slovenia either. Nevertheless, they decided to return to Slovenia: they left Dubai and build a wonderful home in Bled, where father spent as much time as he could. There is no need to talk about the fact that he watched his daughter swim no matter where in the world she was, but worries, organizational help, transport and constant support were still on her mother's shoulders. Sara still has no driving licence, and one can easily imagine what everyday transport to Ljubljana where the children were attending an international high school meant. Sara went to swimming training before school, and when she had two sessions in a row, she got up at half past four. Her days were filled with strict discipline.

## WORK, PERSISTENCE AND TALENT MAKE DREAMS COME TRUE

Her crazy schedule dictated an extremely organised life (the children sometimes slept in a car and often also studied there, since their indefatigable mother drove them at least 300 kilometres every day) for the entire family, which was disturbed only by her brother Gal when he skipped a few swimming trainings during puberty. A time of rest, idleness, sitting at a computer or lying in front of the TV and hanging out with her friends has not arrived yet. Sara's wish and will to follow her heart and pursue her goals have remained strong, even though it was not always easy ("I used to cry from exhaustion."). But her work has paid off. After winning European Youth titles she has been at the forefront of the Slovenian team. Already in 2005, she went to the final of the World Championship in Montreal, and she repeated her success last year in Melbourne. She was a finalist at the last European Championship in Budapest and also won medals at the Mediterranean Games and Universiade. "I made my dreams come true. I would not dare to foretell this kind of success even in my dreams. But I still enjoy it. I surprised even myself," explained Sara, who was modest as always before the competition. "My opponents had the same opportunity as I did and it was impossible to foretell the winner in this competition with 100 per cent certainty. It is different with personal wishes, of course. In this way, there is still a little bit of surprise for all of us." This is what Sara Isakovič thinks about her achievements this season, during which she dedicated herself only to swimming. Sara has achieved her greatest success so far: a gold medal in the 200m freestyle, two finals qualifications, words of congratulation from the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Danilo Türk, and from her father, who stood by her daughter at the European Championship as well ("Dad comes to every part of the world just to be able to cheer for me. His support really means a lot to me.") Her brother Gal, who studies in Denmark, and her mother, who standing by her during Sara's preparations for the Olympic Games in China were thrilled with the victory as well.

## OLYMPICS? WE WISH YOU ALL THE BEST

There is no doubt that Sara Isakovič will do her best at the Olympics in Peking. This year, when she took time only for swimming, is paying off wonderfully. She decided to start her studies at Berkeley (a brilliant high school student, she is going to study sports management or foreign languages), for which she received a scholarship of 50,000 dollars, one year later. Devoting all her time to training ("Now I have more time to rest, which is really important after hard trainings") has more than paid off. And the time during which she will devote herself to top professional swimming training (during training, she spends more than five hours a day in water) and preparations for the Olympics in Peking will bring changes as well: her cooperation with one of the best Slovenian coaches, Miha Potočnik, will come to an end. After she won the gold medal, her status changed: for the first time, the former European Youth Champion won first place in the membership competition as well. But Sara, who participated in the Olympics four years ago as a two-time European Youth Champion and won 18th place, remains reserved about predicting Olympic results: "My goal is to qualify for the final and achieve the best possible result. In the final, we will then see how and what will happen. Just like all sportspersons I, too, dream about winning the Olympic Medal." How does it feel to be a European Champion? Her answer is modest, as expected. "It is hard to describe. This title pays

for all the effort you invest during the course of your career." A top sportswoman, a swimmer and a European Champion in the 200m freestyle who beat all her opponents, is one of the few sportspersons who, despite being successful and well-known, remains natural and simple. And that makes her all the more ours.

**To win the European gold medal, Sara Isakovič had to beat the first favourite and the winner of several medals in this discipline, Josefin Lillhage, from Sweden, as well as the Olympic Champion, Camelia Potec from Romania and the rest of the competitors. For the first time since 1981 and swimmer Borut Petrič, Slovenia has a European Swimming Champion in a traditional 50m swimming pool.**

*"In the 200m freestyle and 200m dolphin crawl, I rank among the world's top and I can further improve in both disciplines. I have already swum the crawl here in a very good time and I will try to swim in this discipline a bit faster in the Olympic Games. Considering my current record, I think that I could swim in the dolphin crawl at least one second and a half faster, and I would have higher chances for a noticeable qualification, considering the competitors. I will persist in both disciplines, of course."*

*"After the 200m freestyle, I recovered my breath. I could not have wished for a better end to the championship. There were two finals behind me (100m freestyle and 100m dolphin crawl) and I was really proud of myself because I'd made it to the eight top short-course swimmers in Europe. I was happy about the new national records as well."*



Text: JOŽE PREŠEREN, Photo: Darinka Mladenovič



## Lipica undergoing renovation

### Miraculous preservation of the stud farm Lipica

Lipizzaner horses are one of Slovenian national symbols depicted on Slovenian euro coins, and some people would even like to see them on the Slovenian coat of arms. However, we have observed that we alone do not know enough about their origin. We can with certainty say that Lipica is one of the names of which every Slovene can be proud, since it represents the identification of Slovenia in many aspects, even internationally. The world-famous Lipizzaner breed was raised in a small Slovenian village called Lipica, which lies in the vicinity of the Slovene-Italian border, not far from Trieste. And another example of symbolism: lipa - the lime tree - is considered the national symbol of Slovenia, and lipica is a diminutive of this expression representing a place coming to existence near a village lime tree.

Today, the Lipica Stud Farm is one of the most beautiful cultural and historical Slovenian monuments, which is why it is given special attention by the Government and the Ministry of Culture, and the Slovenian public is carefully monitoring its development. It has to be mentioned that the idea of building a perfect golf course on the area of the stud farm, which was also related to ideas for financial restructuring, attracted a lot of attention. A large body of the public is striving to preserve Lipica in its existing form, which does not include a golf course under any circumstances. It is the only complete and intact agricultural holding in Slovenia to survive from the Middle Ages. The stud farm states the year 1580 as the year of its establishment, when the Austrian Archduke Charles II bought the estate from the Bishop of Trieste and started breeding a special horse breed for the needs of the court. Today, the Lipizzaner is an indigenous breed which resulted

from crossing Spanish, Neapolitan and Arab horses. This new breed was raised for the needs of the court, the military and the Spanish Riding School in Vienna. The special climatic conditions of the karst region, the rocky landscape and the Bora wind, are ideal conditions for breeding enduring and adaptable horses appropriate for training. A grown-up Lipizzaner is typically white, while stallions are fox or grey colour and become white not earlier than after six to ten years.

## SLOVENIA HAS NOT SEEN THE FILM ABOUT LIPIZZANER HORSES





The Lipica Stud Farm is kidney-shaped and surrounded by a karst dry stone wall which has been preserved for centuries. At more important entrance points there are trees planted on either side of the road and designed portals indicating an entrance to the estate. Today, there are fences on the road sides to prevent the horses from accessing traffic roads. In more than four hundred years, a distinctive form of cultural landscape varying from its surroundings has been formed here. In the past this was always a green oasis in an area of barren karst landscape.

Lipica can now successfully operate only with the help of state aid, which is not unusual, since its entire history has more or less been marked by control by the state to which it belonged. Today, many civil society groups are expressing their concern for the preservation of Lipica. Among them is the International Association for Lipica, which recently decided to issue a special picture-book about the place for young people. They are also trying to arrange for a copy of the Walt Disney film 'The Miracle of the White Stallion' to be brought, finally, to Slovenia. The film was made in 1963 and is about what the American army did after the Second World War to save the breeding herd of Lipizzaner horses. For reasons unknown, this film has never been shown in Slovenia. The film talks about the whole rescue operation of the horses as a miracle. In general, it can be concluded that it is a miracle that, after all the turbulent historical events which have occurred in centuries past, the Lipica Stud Farm even exists!

## NATIONAL SPATIAL PLAN

A national spatial plan for the organization of Lipica was formulated more than twenty years ago, but it is only now that its implementation has really started. On the highly protected area, measuring 260 hectares, new building is prohibited, and only renovation and repair are permitted, notably of the old dry stone walls and fences. There will be some alterations made to the existing tourist facilities. Nothing is said about the planned golf course anymore; but there is an impact analysis of the existing course on the karst in preparation and it is expected that the Karst Research Institute from Postojna will soon provide an estimate.

In accordance with the new plan, the entrance to the stud farm area will be reorganized, a different strategy of horse and heritage presentation will be introduced, and the restaurant and boiler house will also be altered. On most of the buildings, solar collectors will be installed, and stable manure will be used for heating, since fewer and fewer farmers buy it. A new main entrance is planned outside the protected area, in the vicinity of the former Lipica border crossing, where a bigger car park for buses and private vehicles will be arranged. Visitors will be able to walk to Lipica from the car park or be driven in carriages. From the new main entrance, visitors will first see neatly arranged pastures with typical oaks and then the old stables, the castle with the Avgust Černigoj Gallery, the Lipizzaner-Museum and the Carriage Museum. Then there is the courtyard (borjač), with the mares and stallions, the Velbanca Stable, with the most elite Lipizzaners, as well as a covered paddock and a hippodrome. The road from the new entrance and reception is intended only for pedestrians and horse-drawn carriages. There should be no cars or advertising; there will be only boards explaining about Lipica and its history.

Lipica will also become a real equestrian centre, where both horses and riders will be taken care of. The latter will be able to enjoy the existing Klub Hotel, which is to be renovated. In addition, a centre for expert meetings and consultations will be arranged in the old castle, as well as an educational centre for training horse veterinary specialists, where Lipizzaner owners' and horse fanciers' meetings, etc. will be held. The old mansion, with some arranged castle gardens on the outer side, will also host weddings and protocol receptions.

The administration board of Stud Farm Lipica has enough plans for the future. However, the preservation of this exceptional cultural monument of world importance in its original form is doubtless in the first place. The same applies to the financial stability and favourable business operations of the institution. Lipica is supposed to unveil its renewed image as early as 2010, on the occasion of the 430th anniversary of the only great royal stud farm in Europe.

Lacemaking days

Text: ANJA HREŠČAK, Photo: Darinka Mladenovič



## IDRIJA

### soon on the UNESCO World Heritage list

**Idrija, a town known around the world for its mercury mine, still attracts tourists from all parts of the world although the mine is now inoperable**

**Miners, called 'knapi' in Idrija, used to go down a 300 metre long shaft to the underground with a loud "Good luck!" farewell, day after day, almost for a half a millennium, digging out ores and then returning to the surface. At the Chapel of the Holy Trinity placed at the entrance to the mine, they used to say their prayers and asked God for a happy return and safe work, and then bravely went a thousand steps down the shaft. After almost a half a millennium of mining, the mercury mine in Idrija was inundated and turned into a tourist site. Out of the former thousand steps, only 116 are above water.**

Today the famous mine can be entered to a depth of 150 metres, while all deeper parts of the mine have been filled with concrete and water. Although miners will never dig out mercury again, scientists have established that, considering the current soil settlement, the mine, although it is constantly filled up, will have to be controlled for the next 20 to 50 years. They have estimated that there is still 10% of the total amount of the world's mercury under Idrija. The beginnings of Idrija reach back 500 years, and the main reason for its establishment is the profitable underground. According to a legend, a bucket maker was taking water out of the local creek, and when he wanted to lift up the bucket, he was barely able to move it. He caught mercury, a liquid metal so dense that a piece of iron floats on it like a cork stopper. Only few years later, around 1500, a town was established at the place of the discovery, with the majority of the population being miners. At the beginning of the 18th century, miners were taking out mercury already from a depth of one hundred metres. Even before, in 1575, the mine was so profitable that it was nationalised. A town was built on the surface.

In its best period the mine contributed to the purse of the Habsburg Monarchy up to thirteen per cent of the annual budget. Due to its great importance, the state gave freedom to the miners and relieved them of their commitments to their landlords. The majority of the extracted mercury was destined for America, where it was used in amalgam procedures for the extraction of gold. While Americans were discovering gold, the price of mercury was also extremely high.

At the end of the 18th century, at a time when mercury extraction was at its peak, diggers, natural scientists and doctors, because of the particular toxicity of the mercury ore, came to Idrija from all parts of Europe. They wrote books about their findings and distributed them around the world. In the south of the United States there is an abandoned mining town called New Idria.

Today, the oldest part of the Idrija mercury mine, called Antony's Shaft (Antonijev rov), is open to the public, but is not working. This shaft, together with some mining equipment, has been for years a part of the programme of the Idrija Municipal Museum, and Antony's Shaft is the main attraction which brings tourists from around the world to this small town. Primarily because of an original and realistic display of the history of mercury extraction in the Idrija mine and the presentation of the life of miners' families, the museum has managed to win the title of the best European museum of industrial and technical heritage. Famous drops of mercury running from black slate are still visible today in Antony's Shaft, which is open to tourists. Antony's Shaft, among other things, falls within the oldest preserved mine entrances in the world. The Idrija mine, together with the mercury mine in Spain's Almadén, for all five hundred years of its existence, was the biggest source of mercury in Europe.

The fact that the mine is inoperative in no way means that the good times for the mine are gone. Together with Spain, Mexico and Peru, Idrija has prepared a joint proposal for an expansion of the list of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The environment Ministers of the four countries and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) agreed in November 2006 to prepare a proposal for the transnational and transcontinental entry of the mercury heritage on the list of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The proposal includes the technical heritage of mercury extraction in the mercury mines in Idrija, Almadén in Spain, San Luis Potosi in Mexico and Huancavelica in Peru. What associates these countries and the reason for their joint candidacy for entry on the list of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites is the technical heritage of mercury extraction and the use of space related to this industry, non-material heritage and other particularities of those specific urban centres. The countries prepared a candidacy dossier last autumn, and the UNESCO World Heritage Committee will discuss it this summer.



**I FEEL  
SLOVENIA**