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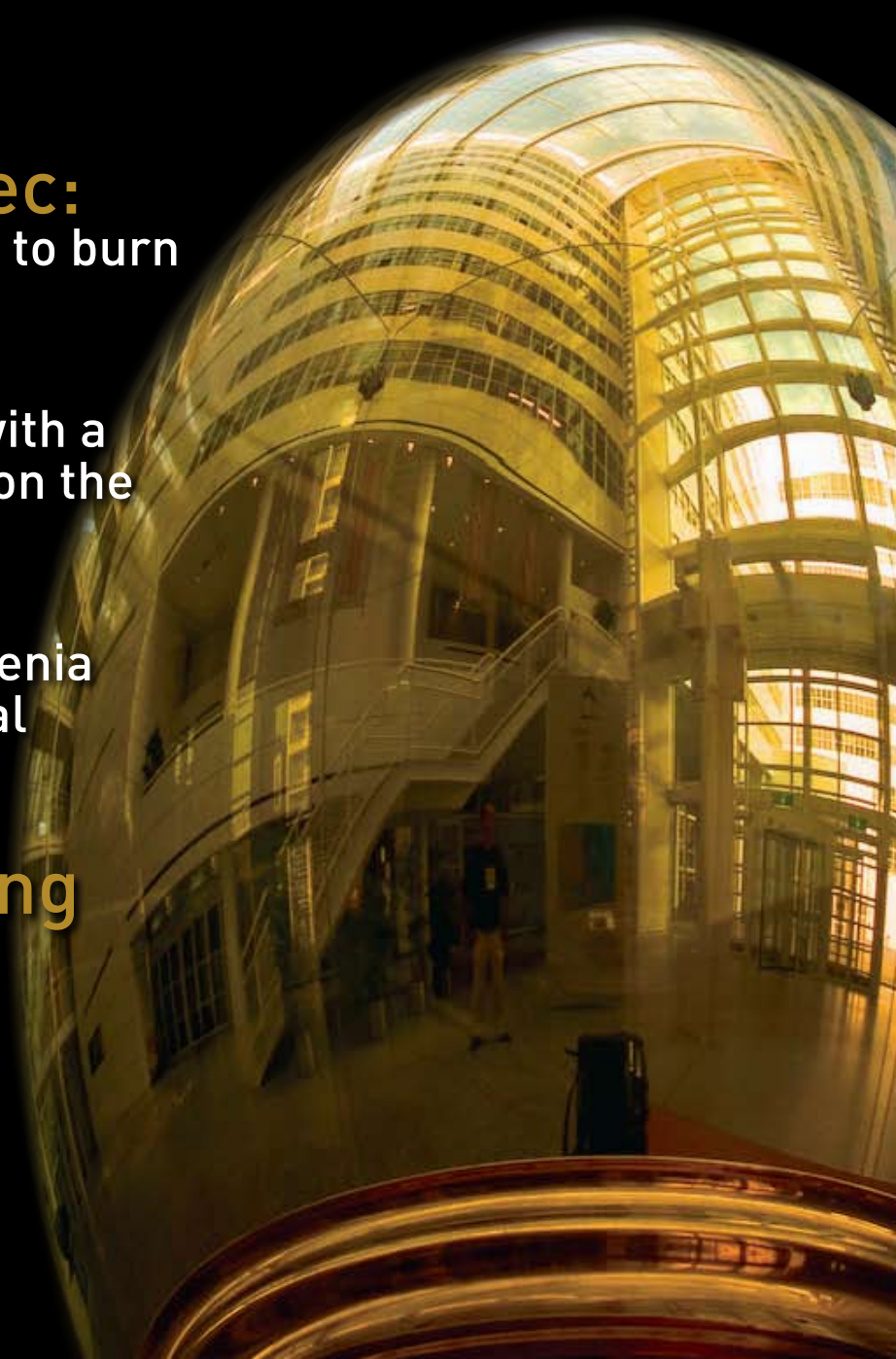
# Sinfo

**Prof Emil Erjavec:**  
Grain: to feed people or to burn  
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**Europa Forum** with a  
number of discussions on the  
EU's future

**Ljubo Sirc:** In Slovenia  
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**Ekliptik – A Young  
Company** with new  
approaches in surgery



# QUOTES OF THE FORTNIGHT



**Peter Novak** /Dean of the College of Technologies and Systems (Vites) in Novo Mesto /: **Not only human kind can be blamed for climate changes** Ljubljana, 11 May: The climate change we are witnessing are not a short-term occurrence and not only the activities of human kind can be blamed for its development. I see the solution for the warming of the Earth in the use of solar energy and not in the revitalisation of nuclear energy. The sun gives much more energy than we can use. We need only a little more than 0.045 promile of the solar energy to cover all our needs for energy. We also know that the mean temperature on Earth would only be -18 degrees Celsius if there were no atmosphere and greenhouse gases. Water vapour, clouds and dust particles are among major factors in the warmer temperatures on Earth.



**Mitja Petkovšek** /Double World Champion on the parallel bars /: **Slovenian gymnastics confirmed its place in the world Lausanne/** Ljubljana, 12 May: This year's season is going to be long and hard and the main goal are of course the Olympic Games. All these successes represent no reference for the Olympics. I am going there to do my best; however, the Asians are so strong at the moment that it is going to be really hard to get a medal. Before that, I am going to test my form in the World Cup in Moscow (1 June) and Barcelona (7 June), and later in an exhibition competition in France, where I was invited by my friend and rival Cucherat. After two free weekends, final preparations for Beijing will begin.



**Zofija Mazej Kukovič** / Minister of Health and President of Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs /: **On the EU priorities in health** Geneva, 20 May: We are witnessing an extraordinary increase of burden in non-communicable diseases that are no longer an issue only in the developed world. The priority topic during the Slovenian EU Presidency is cancer treatment, where managing cancer and other non-communicable diseases requires a comprehensive approach that includes disease prevention, early detection, treatment, rehabilitation, palliative care, and also research. The EU promotes the achievement of the health-related development goals of the millennium, as well as progress in the field of AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis prevention.



**Dimitrij Piciga** /Director of the Slovenian Tourist Organisation/: **Slovenia presents itself in National Geographic Traveller magazine** Ljubljana, 20 May: Slovenia is presenting itself with its tourist offer in the May/June issue of the National Geographic Traveler magazine, which was published in 850,000 copies - 738,907 of them are sold in the USA. This is one of the key presentations of Slovenia in overseas markets. From 7 to 8 per cent of overnight stays in Slovenia are created by overseas markets. The USA is already in 11th place after the last year's 5 per cent increase to 27 per cent in comparison to 2006. These are 5-star guests enquiring about the products Slovenia has to offer, guests that are prepared to pay more for so-called free, natural products. Depending on the segment, they willingly pay from 15 to 50 per cent more.



**Jacques Barrot** /European Transport Commissioner/: **The sooner it comes into force, the better** Brdo pri Kranju, 6 May: Slovenia's plans to introduce a motorway toll sticker are a transitional measure on the way to the speedy implementation of electronic tolling. The Slovenian project aims at introducing fully automated distance-based tolling by 2009 for trucks and 2010 for cars, both are brave and excellent.



Anže Logar

## 10-11 PROF EMIL ERJAVEC:

GRAIN: TO FEED PEOPLE OR TO BURN FUEL?

## 17-19 LJUBO SIRČ:

IN SLOVENIA JUDGES STILL PASS POLITICAL JUDGEMENTS



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PROFESSOR AND SPECIALIST IN NEUROLOGY AND INTERNAL MEDICINE



contents

## GENUINE DILEMMAS

In the first four months of this year the price of rice on world food stock markets increased by 54 per cent. A rice chocolate bar contains approximately 10 per cent of rice. We will therefore pay 5% more for a quick chocolate snack today than in January. We will say to ourselves that everything is getting more and more expensive, but will still indulge ourselves with a treat.

At the other end of the world, in Yangon, the capital of Myanmar, where GDP per capita amounts to approximately 1,200 Euro, a father of two children will queue for his daily quantity of rice. For the same money he will get today less than two thirds of the quantity he got at the beginning of the year. The difference was taken by inflation in the agricultural produce market. 'To burn crops or feed people with them' is therefore a question posed by the agricultural economist Emil Erjavec in his comment in the Sinfo May issue.

Is Slovenia a state governed by the rule of law? It is. But despite that, some people have not achieved justice in Slovenian courts, even 18 years after the first democratic elections. Ljubo Sirc, honorary freeman of Kranj and a member of the Government Strategic Council, is still waiting for justice; to get back what was taken from him by force during and after the 2nd World War. He speaks about his battle with the wheels of judicial, lasting more than half a decade, in an interview for the present Sinfo issue.

Recently we have witnessed two destructive natural disasters which have claimed numerous human lives. Nature has showed its teeth, and combating the climate change is becoming one of the most serious tasks of world leaders. Among others, the 5th EU – LAC summit meeting in Lima in Peru was dedicated to that, where 60 leaders discussed the new global challenges. 'Together we have the power and knowledge to find efficient, sustainable and just answers to the challenges of the 21st century.' These were the closing words at the summit of the Prime Minister of Slovenia and President of the European Council, Janez Janša. The words fill us with hope. But they should also, as soon as possible, give hope to the father who is still queuing for his daily portion of rice.

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: RAMON MIKLUS, Photo: Archive and STA



Press Conference after the informal meetings between the European Union and the religious communities

## JANŠA: ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION IS NECESSARY

Participating in a meeting of EU officials and religious leaders in Brussels on 5 May, Slovenian Prime Minister and President of the EU Council Janez Janša pointed out that climate change is a fact and that it is high time to act. What Pope John Paul II called an »ecological conversion« is crucial, he told a press conference.

According to Janša, it is necessary to encourage governments, companies and citizens all around the world, since it is necessary to work together. To fight climate change successfully, it is necessary to change habits, philosophies and world views. Consumer society creates artificial needs and increases pollution by increasing consumption, Janša explained.

Climate change does not only call for change in science, research and innovation, but also in educational systems, he stressed. »Slovenia wants to see the realisation of the Euro-Mediterranean University project as an actual result of its EU Presidency and the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue,« Janša said.

The university, which will be based on the Slovenian coast, should become a juncture of the Islamic, Hebrew and Christian worlds, Janša said. He announced the signing of the agreement establishing the Euro-Mediterranean University for 9 June in Portorož, and thanked the presidents of the European Commission and the European Parliament for their help in realising the project.

The second part of the debate was dedicated to reconciliation. Janša said the differences in views are bigger than in the debate on climate change, but he pointed out that Europe is a very positive example of achieving consensus through tough negotiations, allowing for a great degree of differences.

## SLOVENIAN, CROATIAN PMS SAY SIMILARITIES OUTNUMBER DIFFERENCES

The Slovenian and Croatian Prime Ministers, Janez Janša and Ivo Sanader, met briefly on 30 April at the Obrežje border crossing as part of a Labour Day meeting organised by the trade unions. They stressed the need to build on mutual interests.

Janša said after the meeting that the countries should follow the example of the trade unions from the two countries, which joined hands in hosting the meeting, instead of heeding calls against cooperation. Sanader added that friendship between the countries outweighs the differences in bilateral relations.

The two Prime Ministers addressed the cross-border meeting, organised by the Slovenian and Croatian trade union federations, the ZSSS and SSSH, whereupon they mixed with the trade unionists but held no bilateral talks.

Janša said that following the trade unions' example does not mean that »problems would be solved on their own – a lot of work and patience will be required to close these issues in the future«. He believes that the European framework will greatly aid the countries in their efforts.

The meeting was also attended by Slovenian Economy Minister Andrej Vizjak and Labour Minister Marjeta Cotman, as well as Croatian Economy Minister Damir Polančec.

## TÜRK AND MESIĆ BACK EFFORTS OF JOINT BORDER COMMISSION

Attending a summit of presidents of Central European countries in Ohrid, Slovenian President Danilo Türk held several bilateral

meetings on 3 and 4 May. He also met his Croatian counterpart Stipe Mesić, with whom he expressed support for the latest joint efforts to solve open issues between the two countries. In their first meeting following informal talks in February, Türk and Mesić discussed the situation in Eastern Europe and topical bilateral issues. Türk also met Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin, Bosnia's Haris Silajdžić and Albania's Bamir Topi. Silajdžić presented to Türk the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, expressing concern over the postponed signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU. The pair expressed their wish that the agreement be signed as soon as possible. The meeting with the Albanian President focused on bilateral relations, with Topi highlighting Albania's interest in strengthening economic cooperation and an increase in Slovenian investments in Albania. He also invited Türk to an official visit to Albania. Later, on 4 May, meetings followed with Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov, Montenegro's Filip Vujanović and Turkey's Abdullah Gül.

## PM: FACING UP TO GLOBAL CHALLENGES NEW CRITERIA FOR EU SUCCESS

While peace and prosperity formed the basis on which the success of the EU was measured in its first 50 years, the coming 50 years will be measured by how successfully the EU takes on key global challenges, Prime Minister Janez Janša told the Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC) on 7 May.

Addressing representatives of parliaments from EU members and candidate states at Brdo pri Kranju, the current president of the EU Council highlighted the preservation of the environment, the fight against world poverty, and peace and security as the main global challenges.

Stressing that these key challenges are interrelated, Janša said that globalisation is showing new faces and that ignoring bleak forecasts is even more irresponsible than it was in the past. In his belief, the EU has all the instruments it needs to protect itself from most of the negative consequences of globalisation.

The environment and energy, rising food prices, measures that show Europeans that the openness of the EU increases their security, and closure of the »network« of Stabilisation and Association Agreements in the Western Balkans are some of the key areas the EU will deal with in the near future, according to Janša. He meanwhile pointed out that European parliamentary democracy is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. While the dynamics of cooperation is continuing to grow, additional progress in this respect is heralded by the Lisbon Treaty, Janša added.

»The extent to which the role of national parliaments is enhanced by the Lisbon Treaty largely depends also on you yourselves. The more you cooperate, the more you will be effective in controlling the principle of subsidiarity,« Janša told the parliamentarians.

## MAYORS OF EUROPEAN CAPITALS SIGN LJUBLJANA DECLARATION

Mayors and other representatives of 18 European capitals, meeting for a two-day conference in Slovenia's capital, adopted on 8 May the Ljubljana Declaration on the relationship between states and their capital cities. They also signed a declaration on the role of capitals in intercultural dialogue.

The participants in a panel agreed that capitals should be granted a status that would give them enough room to act efficiently on the local as well as regional level, and a strong financial basis that

would give them long-term stability.

Therefore the status of capitals should be defined in the constitutions of individual countries, granting them the highest possible level of autonomy.

Capitals should also engage in commercial activities in order to generate resources needed to provide good public services; however, their funding from the states should be determined in legislation and not only in agreements.

The declaration also stresses the necessity for clear division of different authorities, taking into account the needs of modern capitals and countries, and their cooperation.

The document in seven points will be presented to mayors of other European capitals who did not take part in the conference, as well as to the European Parliament.

## GYMNASTICS: PETKOVŠEK TAKES THIRD EUROPEAN TITLE IN A ROW



Slovenian gymnast Mitja Petkovšek won gold on the parallel bars at the European Gymnastics Championships in Lausanne on 11 May with a 16.025-point performance. He defended his 2007 title from Amsterdam and took his third consecutive European gold. Aljaž Pegan meanwhile came in third on the high bar with 15.3 points.

Petkovšek (31) won his seventh medal at the European championships, after golds in 2000 (Bremen), 2006 (Volos) and 2007 (Amsterdam), silvers in 1998 (St Petersburg) and 2002 (Patras), and a bronze in 2005 (Debrecen).

The only European championship he participated in without winning a medal was held in Ljubljana in 2004, when he finished fifth following an error.

Pegan (33) meanwhile took his fifth medal at the European championships after two golds in 1994 (Prague) and 2004 (Ljubljana), last year's silver in Amsterdam, and a bronze in 2000 (Bremen).

## TÜRK CALLS FOR PRESERVATION OF FRANJA WWII HOSPITAL

The Franja WW II hospital is one of the most noble Slovenian symbols, and its destruction last year was a great tragedy, President Danilo Türk said in Sežana on 9 May, as he attended a fund-raiser for the reconstruction of this monument.

The President is certain that there are many people in Slovenia



Runners compete in triathlon race as part of the 52nd annual hike following the track of barbed wire around Ljubljana in WW II.

who would like to see the hospital reconstructed so it will again symbolise humanitarianism, solidarity and honour, which were demonstrated in the resistance and got their most obvious manifestation in Franja. "That is why it needs to be preserved for future generations," Türk said.

The reconstruction of the hospital, which was destroyed in the torrential rain and floods in September last year, and the establishment of an information centre are expected to cost some EUR 5m and should be finished in 2010.

The Idrija City Museum, which is collecting money for the reconstruction, has collected some EUR 100,000, most of the money coming from Slovenes living abroad, museum director Ivana Leskovec said.

She explained that despite the renovation, tourists will be able to visit this WWII monument already this year.

The Franja hospital is located in the narrow, barely accessible Pasica gorge. It opened on 23 December 1943. The hospital was among the best equipped clandestine partisan hospitals during World War II. It boasted an operating room, X-ray apparatus, a disabled care facility and a small electrical plant.

## THOUSANDS JOIN LJUBLJANA HIKE

As many as 30,000 people took part in a 35-km hike around Ljubljana on 10 May to commemorate the liberation of the capital 63 years ago. The hike follows the track of the barbed wire which enclosed the city during World War II.

As is tradition, hikers embarked on the 52nd hike from various points around the city. The fittest among them ran in threes on 12- or 28-km tracks. Organisers say some 4,000 people registered for both races.

Ljubljana was occupied by Italian forces in April 1941, when a very strict regime was introduced, and then fenced in February 1942. During the war, the 34-km wire cut the city off from its surroundings, turning it into a kind of concentration camp.

## SOCIAL INSURANCE DEAL WITH BOSNIA TO ENTER INTO FORCE IN JULY

Foreign Ministry State Secretary Andrej Šter and Bosnian Ambassador to Slovenia Izmir Talić on 12 May exchanged documents on the ratification of the agreement on social insurance between Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is to enter into force on 1 July. The agreement covers health, pension and

disability insurance, maternity protection, occupational injuries and diseases, and insurance in the event of unemployment, the Foreign Ministry said in a press release. Under the agreement, employed insured persons who are citizens of one country and have a permanent residence in the other country will be provided with health care services in the country in which they work. The agreement also regulates the issue of adjustment of pensions and insurance periods calculated in accordance with the legislation of the former Yugoslavia on pension and disability insurance for soldiers. The agreement was signed in February last year during a visit by Prime Minister Janez Janša to Bosnia. Similar agreements have been signed with Croatia and Macedonia.

## SLOVENIA, CROATIA SIGN AGREEMENT ON WAR GRAVES

Labour, Family and Social Affairs Minister Marjeta Cotman and Croatian Minister of Families, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity Jadranka Kosor signed on 12 May a reciprocal agreement on war graves. "We have added a piece into the mosaic called historical truth," said Kosor. The document outlines how mass graves of victims of both world wars and the killings that followed will be marked and managed. "We pledge to mark the graves on both the Slovenian and Croatian sides in accordance with international law, in order to pay respect and devotion to the dead," Cotman said. The graves will be marked by special signs, and a monument in the shape of a charnel house for soldiers and civilians alike will be erected in the Tezno forest near Maribor, Cotman explained. The remains of some 15,000 mostly Croatian victims of post-war killings are thought to lie in a former anti-tank ditch in the forest there. The agreement applies to around 500 mass grave sites in Slovenia. "So far, we've discovered 110,000 bodies, but excavations and probes are still ongoing," Cotman said. She also announced the formation of an intergovernmental commission which will oversee the implementation of the agreement. Slovenia and Croatia will appoint three commission members each.



Slovenian Labour Minister Marjeta Cotman (left) and Croatian Deputy Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor sign an agreement on war graves.

## JANŠA, PÖTTERING DISCUSS TOPICAL EU ISSUES



European Parliament President Hans-Gert Pöttering (left) shaking hands with Prime Minister Janez Janša.

Prime Minister Janez Janša and European Parliament President Hans-Gert Pöttering discussed topical issues on Europe's agenda during Slovenia's stint at the helm of the EU, as they met in Ljubljana on 13 May. Janša presented to Pöttering the presidency's preparations for the June EU Summit, while Pöttering assessed Slovenia's term so far as positive. Pöttering said the meeting had been very fruitful and touched on numerous key topics that are to be discussed at the summit. These included ratification of the Lisbon Treaty and cooperation between institutions, which is necessary for preparing new mechanisms envisaged in the treaty. Pöttering emphasised the importance of the presidency's initiatives aimed at strengthening intercultural dialogue, especially in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EuroMed). The pair also talked about the EU-Latin America Summit (EU-LAC), which was to take place that week in the Peruvian capital, Lima. According to the European Parliament's Information Office in Slovenia, Pöttering welcomed Slovenian efforts for launching talks on a new strategic partnership between the EU and Russia. He underlined the need to find a solution that would allow the EU to bolster its ties with Russia and at the same time consider Lithuania's energy needs.

Pöttering also met with Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel and participated in the conference entitled »New Models, New Paradigms – Culture in the EU External Relations«.

## SLOVENIA DISAGREES WITH BOYCOTT OF BEIJING OLYMPICS, SAYS PM

As the presiding EU country, Slovenia has voiced disagreement with calls for a boycott of the Olympic Games in Beijing, Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša said on 12 May as he received the top Chinese political advisor, Jia Qinglin. Janša, however, highlighted the international community's greater attention and heightened expectations from China in the Olympic year, the Prime Minister's Office said in a statement after meeting with Jia, the chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. The pair also exchanged views on the dynamic of Sino-European relations, agreeing that intensive dialogue needs to be preserved in bilateral as well as regional and global issues. Janša is reported as having underlined the importance of dialogue in issues where the EU and China do not see eye to eye, and he welcomed the recent restoration of dialogue between China and representatives of the Dalai Lama on the situation in Tibet. As for bilateral issues, Janša and Jia

agreed that the trend has been positive and said there is mutual interest in the intensification of all-round cooperation, according to a press release from Janša's Office. Janša also expressed solidarity with China in the aftermath of the earthquake that hit the southwest region of Wenchuan, in Sichuan province, on Monday. Reports suggest between 3,000 and 5,000 people have been killed. Jia, the fourth most senior member in the Chinese government hierarchy, also held talks today with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GZS) and the Public Agency for Entrepreneurship and Foreign Investment (JAPTI).

## FIGEL: BIGGER ROLE FOR CULTURE IN EU FOREIGN POLICIES

Culture and intercultural dialogue must play a bigger role in the external relations of the EU, as they are crucial for cooperation and mutual understanding, EU Commissioner Jan Figel' said at the opening of a two-day international conference in Ljubljana on 13 May. The EU promotes cooperation among institutions and artists from different countries and different cultural backgrounds, Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel said at the opening of the conference, entitled »New Models, New Paradigms – Culture in the EU External Relations«. According to Rupel, EU foreign policies promote intercultural dialogue wherever it is necessary and possible: in the Western Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus, and others, while Slovenia has set intercultural dialogue as one of its priorities for its EU Presidency. But there is still much to be



European Commissioner Jan Figel, at the opening of the conference entitled "New Models, New Paradigms - Culture in the EU External Relations".

done, he believes. Beneath the formal, democratic structure of some European countries, there is a »deep state«, a system of institutions, groups and pressures which calls for confrontation with the modern world and international solidarity, pushes archaic patterns, and especially undermines the European spirit, Rupel explained. The economy is like the bread of our survival, but the culture is what gives our lives meaning, said Jan Figel', European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth. The commissioner hopes that the conference in Ljubljana will help achieve »fewer conflicts and more dialogue«. He also thinks that it is necessary to encourage the mobility of artists and works of art, and to strengthen cooperation among fields such as culture, education, youth, sports and languages.



Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša at the start of the WDR Europa Forum.

## EU LEADERS: BLOC FACES BIG CHALLENGES, BUT READY TO DEAL WITH THEM

The leaders of the main EU institutions see the fight against climate change, the Lisbon Treaty and intercultural dialogue as the EU's main achievements over the past year, but they told the WDR Europa Forum on 8 May that these were also areas where the 27-member bloc faces its biggest challenges.

The EU has made headway towards the goal of becoming a key global player. This aspect has been strengthened this year, in particular after the Lisbon Treaty, which gives the EU new momentum in acting on international issues, said Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša, the incumbent President of the EU Council. European Commission President José Manuel Barroso also highlighted the Lisbon Treaty, which he says increases the EU's capacity to act, which will allow more to be done for citizens. »We have global challenges ... it is obvious that our member states cannot tackle them alone, but together we can make a difference, not only for our citizens but for the world,« he said. Janša also pointed to the importance of the external dimension of the EU, as he believes the key challenges are not confined to Europe; they are global. Foremost among them is the fight against climate change, where Europe is leading the world by setting binding emission targets. »This gives the bloc good footing for talks with India, China and the United States,« Janša said. The need for Europe to tackle the main challenges facing it and the world was also echoed by President Danilo Türk in his keynote address. He stressed that Europe needs to assert itself as a global player, which is also something the world expects of it.

»The EU is not and is not seeking to be a military force; all this gives it the precondition to be a key global player,« said Türk, who is optimistic about the prospects of this happening, considering that the EU is not an empire. »Its DNA is democratic, geared towards cooperation and the sense of the global good.«

## DECLARATION ON E-HEALTH ADOPTED

A two-day conference on e-health, dubbed »e-Health without Frontiers«, concluded in Portorož on 7 May with the adoption of the Portorož Declaration, which will form the basis for future work by the EU and its members in the field of e-health and contribute to improving the quality of health and social care for EU citizens. At the conference, organised by the Health Ministry in cooperation with the European Commission, the EU Members and the Commission committed to develop advanced information services in the health care and social care, the Slovenian EU Presidency said in a statement. Experts from 38 countries presented examples of best practice from and initiatives on the main health challenges the EU is set to face in the next ten-years. They also pointed to the need for telemedicine and innovative information and communication tools in the treatment of chronic diseases. The conference also pointed out the need for a transparent legal framework, which could help determine the responsibilities, rights and obligations of national authorities, health care workers, patients and insurance companies in the e-health process. Health Minister Zofija Mazej Kukovič said that health care management supported by information technology meant better involvement of patients and more effective health care providers. Telemedicine enables us to eliminate all boundaries and boost the quality of health care, said the Minister.

Slovenia was represented at the conference by eight lectures and an exhibition presenting main achievements in the field of e-health. The pilot projects on the monitoring and treatment of chronic lung diseases, the e-depression project, and the partly-implemented e-birth and telemedicine projects were also presented.

## STATE SECRETARY LENARČIČ APPOINTED OSCE HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE BOSS



State Secretary Lenarčič



European Affairs State Secretary Janez Lenarčič was endorsed by the 56 members of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to win the post of its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

Lenarčič, who is to take the post on 1 July, was accepted over five candidates from Belgium, Italy, Greece, Switzerland and Turkey. The silent procedure for his appointment ran out at noon on Wednesday and by that time none of the OSCE members opposed his appointment, the office added.

Lenarčič has already served as the head of the Slovenian mission to OSCE between 2003 and 2006, and chaired its Permanent Council during Slovenia 2005 stint at the helm of the organisation. He will replace Austria's Christian Strohal.

Lenarčič is to continue performing his duties as European Affairs State Secretary until the end of Slovenia's six-month stint at the helm of the EU. Thereafter he will assume the highest-ranked post that any Slovenian had so far held in the OSCE.

In presenting his bid, Lenarčič said that ODIHR must remain impartial and cannot serve as a tool in the hands of an individual participating country.

»It is and can only be the tool of the OSCE as a whole. It can only fulfill its mission when it acts professionally and with equal determination whenever and wherever in the OSCE region its mandate requires.«

»ODIHR should be fully responsible and cannot be ambivalent in relation to its mandate and its mission. It cannot and must not be ambivalent in the face of human rights violations, erosion of democracy or of the rule of law,« stressed Lenarčič.

## THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE DANGERS OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

On May 1st, the UN Security Council held a debate on the issue of small arms and light weapons, which each year kill approximately half a million people across the world. Among more than 50 other speakers, the Slovenian UN Ambassador, Sanja Štiglic, spoke on behalf of the European Union. In the opening session, Hannelore Hoppe, Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, presented the UN Secretary-General's first-ever report on small arms and light weapons to the Security Council. The report finds that these types of weapons are used in most global conflicts, including civil wars, terrorism, organized crime and criminal warfare. The reports emphasize the need for co-operation between the Security Council and the UN General Assembly to end the flow of arms to conflict regions. "We have all witnessed how these weapons have been used to maim and kill; plunder and rape; install fear and insecurity; block humanitarian aid; hold communities to ransom; destroy the social fabric of entire countries; and how their excessive accumulation and misuse has hindered stability and development in every way possible," said Hoppe. Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon's report offers some suggestions for more efficient work, such as connecting individual economic embargoes with arms trade and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and the greater use of Interpol capabilities, among others.

The Slovenian Ambassador stated that the vast majority of global conflicts are fuelled by easy access to small arms and light weapons. The EU believes that states must focus on strengthening physical safety and improving the management of arms stocks, destroying arms surpluses, marking and tracing arms, strengthening export controls and the control of intermediary activities within the arms trade. It is especially important that a stop be put to the black market in arms. According to the Ambassador, the

European Union, in December 2005, developed a strategy for the fight against illicit arms and stockpiling of small arms and light weapons. The EU is also the largest financial supporter of a program for the destruction of arms in Africa and continues to be prepared to assist states, regions and non-governmental organizations with respect to all aspects of the fight against the illicit trade and misuse of this weaponry. Most other speakers emphasized the need for co-operation among states and various organizations that are involved with these issues. Some speakers also emphasized the lack of international legally binding agreements, and expressed the hope that progress in this area would be made at the Review Conference on the Implementation of the Program of Action taking place in July.

## UN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ON FOOD SHORTAGE

On 6 May the two-week session of the Commission on Sustainable Development began in the UN Headquarters in New York. Among other issues, the session also discussed the current food shortage and high global food prices. The Slovene Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, Iztok Jarc, participated in part of the session.

The session lasted until 16 May, when the high-level final meeting, where fifty ministers participated, took place. Representatives of non-governmental organisations and civil society also participated in the event. The participants launched a two-year cycle of seeking a solution to the global food supply issue and connected problems in the field of agriculture, land use, rural development, desertification and drought. All these issues are essential for reaching development goals from the Millennium Declaration. At the beginning of the session the UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Sha Zukang, said that the international community has become aware of the current food crisis threatening a major part of humankind.

As Mr Sha said, the source of the problem is the slow-down in food production in the 1970s and at the same time the rising need for food. He called for long-term planning and analysis in order to avoid such a crisis in the future.

The UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, said that the world could face the current crisis, as we have resources as well as knowledge. He said, "We should consider this not only as a problem, but also an opportunity to eliminate the roots of the problem for the poorest people in the world; 70 per cent of them are small farmers. The Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the United Nations, Sanja Štiglic, said at the opening of the session that agriculture and rural development are significant developmental issues that the EU is dealing with.

At the end of the session a declaration was adopted to support the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation adopted by world leaders in 2003.

Challenges in the field of agriculture and use of land are becoming even greater due to soil degradation, drought, and desertification, especially in Africa. The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) announced that by 2020 fifty million people will be pushed into hunger because of climate changes. Although food production somewhere in higher locations could grow due to high temperatures, it will cause production to decrease in other parts; in the tropical areas of Africa and Asia, for example, where by 2050, there will be an additional 1.8 billion people to feed.



## Grain: To feed people or to burn fuel?

The United Nations reports that high grain prices will adversely affect 82 countries in the world. Serious social unrest has broken out in 38 of the world's poorest countries. The price of wheat, milk and butter has tripled, while the price of corn, rice and poultry has nearly doubled since the year 2000. After a number of decades, agriculture and rising food prices have again emerged as the subjects of meetings at the highest levels. These issues have already been discussed by the IMF, and will also be discussed at the highest levels of G-8 and the OECD. The institutions of the European Union are also sharing their perspectives. The proposed changes in the Common Agricultural Policy that were suggested by the European Commission on May 20th are to contribute to the resolution of this most serious and pressing issue. Let us now attempt to analyze the causes, to assess the longevity of this phenomenon and to discuss what the European Union is, or could be, going to expedite the resolution of problems associated with high food prices around the world.

The price of food, (according to the index of The Economist), fell 75% between 1974 and 2005, but has risen back to the 1974 level in the past three years. The increase is a consequence of complex trends and phenomena that can not be singly identified. Thus, the international community is not in agreement on the causes. Sadly, interpretations are often also politically motivated. The price increase is an economic consequence of commodity markets decreasing their supplies of wheat and corn stock to one of the lowest possible levels. Due to low elasticity, supply rigidity and chain market reactions, and due especially to speculation in commodity exchange markets, excess demand has led to skyrocketing prices. The causes vary. Food production has fallen behind the needs of population growth - never in history have we produced such a small amount of food per inhabitant. Crop growth is at a lower level than it was during the 1970's. Due to changes in climate, Oceania and parts of Europe are experiencing droughts. Some one hundred million people in Asia have begun

consuming grain restructured from animal proteins, (milk and meat proteins), which results in a worse nutritional conversion and less grain for other purposes.

But all of this was known and has already been taking place for a number of years. The basic cause of the current shock are rising energy prices and the decision of the United States, and prior to this, of Brazil, to produce additional energy from bio-products - that is, primarily, from sugar cane, corn, wheat and oilseed rape. The high price of fossil fuels has encouraged the production of biofuels, while at the same time it has increased the cost of food production and began to phase out, and in doing so, to increase the cost, of producing other cultures. The original sin lies in America's decision to create nearly one hundred chemical biofuel factories over the next few years, thereby designating 25% of all its domestically produced corn for this purpose. The reason is clear - the issue is not to devise solutions for climate change, as is popularly sold - but to produce energy; to decrease dependency on undependable Arab oil sources and at the same time, of course, to feed the rational economic greed for profit. This decision triggered a chain reaction in food markets and also in stock exchange speculation that, with the fall in the value of the dollar, substantially contributed to the situation where hundreds of millions of people from the slums of the undeveloped world actually remained without food.

According to forecasts from global institutions, (FAPRI, OECD/FAO), the current situation is not short-term. Food production will be renewed, but only in the developed part of the world and in some undeveloped states with growth potential, (Brazil, India, China), where, due to wage levels in at least some sectors, food will increasingly compete with energy. The high level of food prices will be lasting and in addition to climate change and questions on water supply, the world must now also face the next global issue - that of nutritional security. The international

community does not know what to do with images of homeless people. It sends food, but the fundamental causes of their condition are not eliminated. A number of these causes exist; they are inter-related and not well recognized. The point is that the poorest countries in the world do not have the capacity to feed their own populations. Traditional agriculture has not evolved in its development, but has instead, as a consequence of political crises, natural catastrophes, corrupt governments, and the policies of the developed towards the undeveloped world, largely decreased in its potential. Excess supply in developed countries lowered food prices and with dumping policies (policies supporting European exports), gratuitous food assistance programmes (the American programme), destroyed pricing mechanisms made the development of domestic agriculture impossible. For years, African, Asian and South American rural populations have been gathering in city slums. Slavoj Žižek warns us that this is becoming a particularly worrying phenomenon in global affairs and represents one of the largest and most threatened population groups in the world today. If there has been any agricultural development, it has occurred in the area of multinational monoculture. The exceptions to this are China, and increasingly, India, which provide substantial support for smaller farms and, in this way, raise national production levels. If nothing else, these states have become increasingly more efficient at solving rural poverty. An important provision was also in their strong market-price protection policies, which resulted in preserving domestic processing and production.

The developed world remains closed to the commodity markets of the undeveloped world, if not with tariff, then with non-tariff protection policies. This has remained a fundamental cause of undeveloped states' difficulties for many years. Today's high prices indicate that high prices do not, with the exception of some net exporters like Brazil, benefit the undeveloped world, but instead destroy even existing fragile balances. The roots of the problems lie in agricultural development, while solutions are found primarily in investing in small farms production, in the new 'green revolution' - thus, in the development of adaptive knowledge and technology. Attaining nutritional security for undeveloped nations is one of the fundamental human development questions and it is not possible to resolve without the support of the developed world. International market liberalization is not, in and of itself, able to solve very much.

The European Union is attempting to respond to these changes, but it is quite flustered and Eurocentric in doing so. There is clearly a shortage of clear thinking and a clear approach. In its analysis, the European Union correctly defines its current position, but underestimates the importance of biofuels and, of course, defends its decision that 10% of its energy requirements, on average, will be met by the agricultural sector. In different measure, this translates into more than 30% of its area being designated for this purpose. This would not threaten the nutritional security of Europe, but due to lower production of food in agriculturally developed parts of the world, it would aggravate the international position as a whole. Europe must not assume this responsibility. The biofuel decision was singly motivated and incorrect. It is necessary to change the energy package. The European Union must, at least during the first phase of broaching the nutritional security problem, produce more food and, in this way, alleviate the position of the international community. Unfortunately, the European Commission, whether intentionally or unintentionally, is allowing itself to be led astray by chemical-energy lobbyists, who are releasing public notices that state they are not in any way to blame for this issue. It is true, that they are not the only ones to blame, and there is especially little to criticize with

respect to European lobbying. The EU did not contribute to the rise in biofuel prices, but it will, if it gets on this bandwagon and chooses to solve energy questions through the burning of grain and oil generating plants. The EU shares part of the blame for the price rise to the extent that it perseveres with political agricultural concepts that are based on high subsidies, which have only profit generating attributes and that support the extension of agriculture. At least a portion of the European agricultural sector is stimulated to produce as little as possible. If the state did not involve itself in this area, European agriculture would certainly better respond to market signals and would, therefore, produce more. Herein lies a large problem in the current proposals for changes to the Common Agricultural Policy. The simplification of direct payments coupled with the preservation of salary ranges will contribute to a redirection into the harvest of energy producing crops - thus, away from food, also away from milk and the breeding of livestock - the food sources that Asia is asking for. Dispatching fallow soil will not raise food production, because energy-producing crops are already being grown in these areas, and will continue to be grown in the future. The movement of resources into rural development through market-price policy is related to the structure of agricultural economies and available funds, which means that this will occur primarily in Germany and Great Britain. Agricultural development will not be sufficiently supported in new Member States, while alleviating and adjusting to climate change is for now clearly more a popular political idea than the serious intent of Member States.

The European Union is not capable of responding quickly to these changed conditions. It thinks and functions too much in set paths. Large farmsteads in France want to preserve their support mechanisms. There is no vision for the development of European agriculture. Agricultural politics is above all, a politics of interest. The suggested proposals of the European Commissioner for Agriculture demonstrate that Europe lacks long-term direction. We are speaking in the language of a time when there still existed food surpluses and when it was especially necessary to deregulate agricultural politics. Ten agricultural lobbyists are more important than 100 million hungry people, who press against the doors of Europe. Why does the European Union not create a Marshall Plan for Africa and the Near East? Why does it not assist by investing in small farmsteads for these regions, in the development of traditional, but eco-friendly production systems; why not invest in institutions that would serve in shaping and transferring knowledge, that would assist in developing the rural areas of undeveloped nations? Why is it so difficult to admit a mistake, that the energy package is a sinful strategy? Why encourage energy extraction agriculture in the European Union, if the world market demands a greater amount of food? Why so limited, so confined and irresponsible in its interests, especially in the unwise actions of elite states?

If the issue of international nutritional security will be resolved, there will also follow greater peace, less terrorism and less expenditures afforded to solving catastrophes. The world will more easily devote itself to the issues of climate change and permanent development. This is the responsibility of the well-fed, and especially, of their leaders. Slovenia is presiding over the EU. Because it is not very involved in interest group politics, does not possess an extensive bureaucracy and is better equipped to encourage more responsible discussion, it could at least move some pebbles in the search for a mosaic of greater rights and global development - even if this appears as conflictual and unfavourable to its big brothers.



## EU and LAC

### leaders meet in Lima to join forces against the food crisis and climate change

The 5th EU-Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) Summit, organised in Lima on 16 and 17 May, gathered in the Peruvian capital Heads of State and Government from the EU and 33 Latin American and Caribbean countries.

An important issue discussed at the EU-LAC summit, was the fight against poverty and climate change. The summit, chaired by Slovenia and Peru, also aimed at strengthening the strategic partnership between the two regions with a view to increasing economic cooperation between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean.

A day before the launch of the EU-LAC Summit, one of the largest EU events involving third countries during Slovenia's Presidency, the foreign ministers of the participating countries discussed migration, intercultural dialogue, regional integration and drugs, four of the key topics marking relations between the EU and LAC and their cooperation. At the meeting, the foreign ministers worked out the final details of a draft declaration later adopted by the leaders at the two-day summit.

The EU-LAC Summit was officially opened on 16 May by Peruvian President Alan Garcia, who welcomed the participants to Lima and called for fruitful debate on ways to improve the life of people in both regions. Garcia added that Latin America could look up to united Europe, which has lived in peace and prosperity for decades. Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša, current President of the EU Council, who also delivered a speech at the opening of the summit, stressed how the alliance between the regions

should not be underestimated, and how by working together the regions could obtain "global leverage".

The food crisis and climate change dominated the first day of the proceedings. In the Lima Declaration, adopted by the leaders on the first day of the event, the 60 participating countries expressed "deep concern" for rising food prices, in what they termed a crisis.

In the declaration the leaders stressed that immediate measures were "needed to assist the most vulnerable countries" in dealing with soaring food prices.

They added that a lasting answer to the issue would require coordinated action from the international community aimed at raising agricultural capacities and rural development to meet growing demand.

The declaration also expresses support for Haiti, where rising food prices sparked unrest recently.

European External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner told at a press conference that rising food prices were "a regional challenge." She pointed out that the EU had approved a EUR 120 mio package to provide food aid around the world.

The Lima Declaration also includes the fight against climate change. The leaders issued a call for global agreement on an action plan to deal with climate change after 2012. They say in the Lima Declaration that they are "determined to conclude an ambitious and global agreement no later than 2009" for the post-Kyoto period.

At the summit, the leaders also discussed the importance of transferring knowledge and technology between the continents. According to Prime Minister Janša, the Latin American countries “appealed for a transfer of knowledge and technology, and the tearing down of barriers in this field,” those balancing EU wishes which promoted the tearing down of trade barriers at the event. The meeting also aimed at balancing views within the LAC countries, where major differences exist.

The Lima Declaration, according to Prime Minister Janša, represents indeed a great convergence of views, although some issues could not be ironed out. The leaders also debated the use of biofuels. “The EU tried to bring sobriety to the debate by presenting concrete data to dispel claims that increased biofuel production is causing the rise in food prices”, Prime Minister Janša told the journalists. The main reason for soaring food prices is the rise in demand, and the only answer is an increase in production, Janša stressed. He added that Latin America has great potential to bolster sustainable production of food. The second day of the summit consisted of a series of meetings of the EU Troika, headed by Janša and European Commission President José Manuel Barroso, with regional organisations in Latin America and the Caribbean. Prime Minister Janša assessed with positive words the talks held with Mexico, which expressed full support of the EU efforts in arriving at a sustainable post-Kyoto agreement for tackling climate change.

According to Janša, Mexico’s approach is very similar to that of the EU, which is leading a global effort to reach a post-Kyoto agreement with ambitious goals for cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 2020.

The Slovenian Prime Minister added that the meetings with the Andean Community, Chile, Mexico, MERCOSUR, Central America and Cariforum have given the EU an incentive to consolidate its global lead in fighting climate change.

Prior to the Summit, the EU-LAK Economic Summit also took place. 25 Slovenian representatives from the economic sector were among the 400 participants (business people from both regions) who participated in the event. In addition to participating in this event, the Slovenian Premier and Peruvian President also met at a separate meeting. The Slovenian President also met with Slovenian business people and with Slovenians living in Peru. Prior to the Summit, the EU-LAK Economic Summit also took place. 25 Slovenian representatives from the economic sector were among the 400 participants (business people from both regions) who participated in the event. In addition to participating in this event, the Slovenian Premier and Peruvian President also met at a separate meeting. The Slovenian President also met with Slovenian business people and with Slovenians living in Peru.

Photo: STA



## Europa Forum with a number of discussions on the EU's future

On 8 May at the 11th Europa Forum meeting at Ljubljana Castle, prominent European politicians in a number of discussions addressed the future of the EU and the challenges it faces, as well as the current issues of European Security and Neighbourhood Policy. Much attention was paid also to Serbia and Turkey. The President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, the President of the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering, and the President of the European Council, Prime Minister Janez Janša, agreed that the EU’s main turning points in the past year were the agreement on the Treaty of Lisbon, intercultural dialogue and climate change. According to Mr Barroso, the enlargement of the Schengen area and the start of a new Lisbon strategy cycle also represent important turning points. Mr Janša added that in the past year the EU has strengthened its leading role as a global actor in the fight against key world issues – climate changes, poverty and migration. Turkey has been striving to become a member of the EU for several decades, but as Mr Barroso pointed out, it

can become a Member State only as a democratic and secular country. The Turkish Foreign Minister, Ali Babacan, emphasized during his address that the accession of Turkey to the EU was a process which would benefit both parties. “Us, because we are upgrading our system, and the EU, because a country like Turkey wants to join the EU instead of entering into other associations,” he explained. According to his words, Turkey wants to become an EU Member State and will carry out the reforms in order to become a first-class democracy.

Another topic of the discussions at the first Europa Forum’s day was Serbia. “The citizens of Serbia have the opportunity to decide whether they want to be part of Europe or not,» said Mr Barroso, three days before the Serbian parliamentary elections. He expressed the belief that a European future for Serbia and the Balkans was possible only if they chose the path of democracy. Mr Pöttering described the struggle between the pro-European and the nationalist forces in Serbia as “the issue of peace and war”.

## WHATMAKESTHENEWS

Mr Janša pointed out that the extradition of the Hague indictees Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić was of key importance for peace and security in the region.

Mr Babacan also expressed the wish that the Serbs would decide to become part of Europe at the elections and said that "the EU cannot afford for Serbia to be the missing link".

The European spirit, which after 1990 spread to the Communist countries of Eastern and Central Europe, stopped at Serbia's borders, emphasized the Foreign Minister, Dimitrij Rupel, at the Europa Forum. "Serbia is currently fighting itself in order to let this European spirit begin to live," assessed the Minister in the light of the parliamentary elections, which some people see as Serbia's referendum on the EU. At the same time, he warned that the forces of history were still a significant factor in Serbia, acting from the background like a country within a country.

At one of the round tables at the Forum, the thesis that EU enlargement also represents the enlargement of a secure and stable area was supported, although that is not the only purpose of the EU's Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy. It was also agreed that for the time being the EU did not need its own armed forces. On the occasion of Europe Day, European villages were erected in many towns across Slovenia, in which students presented the variety, diversity and recognisability of EU countries and cultures. A one-day Eurocine 27 Film Festival was held in Brussels, Paris, Rome, Madrid, Lyon and Strasbourg, at which films from all 27 EU Member States were presented, including a Slovenian film, the first feature by Janja Glogovac, 'L Like Love.' May 9 is EU "day", a celebration of the beginning of European integration, when on 9 May 1950 the French Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman, read the declaration or call to merge the coal and steel production of the European countries.

### TÜRK: LJUBLJANA AS THE SYMBOL OF EUROPE'S NEW BEGINNING

In several ways, the capital of Slovenia symbolises the topic of this year's 11th Europa Forum, "Europe's New Start", pointed out Slovenian President Danilo Türk in his introductory address to the Forum, which is organised every year by the WDR German television station and was this year held in Ljubljana.

In 1821, Ljubljana, as the venue of the Holy Alliance Congress, symbolised conservativeness and preservation of the old order. A

hundred and seventy years later it became the symbol of a new era of the self-determination of nations, and this year it has been presiding over the European Union. "I hope that from this year onwards the names Ljubljana and Slovenia will be associated in the consciousness of people with a vision of the future of Europe and its role in the world", said President Türk.

The Director-General of WDR German television, Monika Piel, and the President of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), Fritz Pleitgen, also agreed in their speeches that this year's Europa Forum in Ljubljana was an exceptionally symbolic moment. As Mrs Piel pointed out, Slovenia has undergone extraordinary development in a very short time - in just four years it joined the EU, adopted the Euro, entered the Schengen area, and as the first new Member State, took over the steering wheel of the EU - and is a symbol of dynamic Europe.

The Slovenian President pointed out in his speech that the fundamental challenge of Europe is how to constitute itself as a global player in the globalised world of today. "The European Union, which is the heart of today's Europe, is no longer a mere group of countries wishing to be closely integrated, but a developed community from which the world expects a leading role", he emphasized.

He added that Europe has excellent opportunities for a constructive role on the global scene because of its specific, typically democratic nature, as well as its real power. "However, if the European Union wishes to be successful in the global sense, it must be able to mobilise firm political will", warned the President and said that the Treaty of Lisbon would contribute to this, but it would certainly not suffice.

"The creative urge characteristic of Europe is undiminished; nevertheless its potential will be exploited only if Europe makes progress on the key fronts here and now", pointed out the President. Among the main EU "fronts", he mentioned the fight against global warming and world poverty, fulfilment of the millennium development goals, and an articulation of a clear policy towards the Balkans and the Middle East.

"Progress, forward movement, has always been the motto of Europe...Therefore it is right that the discussion about Europe's new start held here in Ljubljana thoroughly determines all the key factors driving Europe forward and in the right direction," concluded President Türk, summarising the main purpose of each year's Europa Forum.



Photo: STA



## EU seeks ways to bolster transport infrastructure spending

**EU transport ministers heard a strong call from the European Commission for additional spending to be provided for priority transport infrastructure projects at their informal meeting at Brdo pri Kranju on 6 May.**

European Transport Commissioner Jacques Barrot told the session of the meeting, dedicated to the progress in building the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), that additional spending was needed to complete the TEN-T priority projects in time. Barrot warned that spending on transport infrastructure in the EU had dropped from 1.5% of GDP in 1980 to 0.5% today. In his opinion, the successful completion of projects requires spending to rise to »at least 1%«. He said the timely completion of the network was essential for the achievement of EU's ambitious goals to curb greenhouse gas emissions. In seeking to adopt the energy-climate package »the EU Council must be aware that in order to reduce CO<sup>2</sup> emissions by 20% by 2020...it must be possible to set up the infrastructure by then«.

Slovenian Transport Minister Radovan Žerjav, who chaired the meeting, stressed that Barrot's department had prepared a thorough report on progress in TEN-T, with the aim of highlighting delays, which the ministers examined at the meeting. According to Žerjav, the EU had to be aware that a high-quality transport network was needed to promote trade with the rest of the world, including with the rapidly developing Asian economies. The exchange was part of an ongoing debate in the bloc aimed

at finding a way to balance the environmental and economic interests in transport. Cargo transport is an area of particular concern for the bloc, as experts have warned that failure to act in lowering greenhouse gas emissions in the sector could threaten the EU's ambitious goals for cutting overall emissions by 20% by 2020. Asked about how the Commission would go about enforcing that the Member States push ahead with projects on time, Barrot said that for the 2007-2013 budget period the countries have committed EUR 150bn for the cause in writing. He explained that the Commission would push for the goals related to sustainable mobility to be included in the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy as a means of putting pressure on the Member States. Moreover, Barrot hopes that the spring summits of EU leaders would in the future include a review of the progress on the TEN-T. Better monitoring was a crucial means for making sure that the Member States are living up to their promises, said Barrot, who presented the first report on progress on the 30 priority transport projects. He said that the document shows that a third of the projects had been completed, while another third would be completed by 2013. The final third would be finished by 2020. A key tool for raising investment in transport infrastructure is private public partnership and the ministers were briefed by European Investment Bank President Philippe Maystadt, who presented a new long-term loan guarantee tool aimed at attracting private investors to projects.



## »Secrets« of Oskar Kogoj in The Hague

**The formal opening of »Secrets«, an exhibition of work by well-known Slovenian industrial designer, Oskar Kogoj, opened on Wednesday, April 14th, in the Gallery of the City Hall Atrium in The Hague and will be on display until June 3rd of this year.**

With the exhibition »Secrets«, that was organized by the Government Communication Office of the Republic of Slovenia and by the Slovenian Embassy in The Hague in the framework of promoting Slovenia during the Slovenian presidency of the Council of the EU, we wish to present to the Dutch public the legend of Slovenian design that finds its inspiration in the history of Slovenian nationhood, in Slovenian myths and legends, in distinguished Slovenes, and in the indistinguishable connection and co-existence of the Slovenian individual with nature and the domestic environment. Over the course of eighty years, Kogoj's ecological awareness has contributed to the conception of natural design, i.e. nature design with soft anomalous shapes, through which we recognize life energy. Through its designs – sculptures of large dimensions – the »Secrets« introduces Kogoj as a designer who moves skillfully between sculpture and industrial design. Here is an artist who connects Slovenian mythology with the mythology of other nations. He wishes to penetrate the secrets of nature and to uncover, once again, the forgotten knowledge of ancient and traditional cultures. Central to the exhibition is the seahorse, the symbol of the University of Primorska. The seahorse lives in the deepest and cleanest waters of the Slovenian sea and is representative of its treasure. The exhibition is complemented with a short informative presentation of Slovenia and its geopolitical

place in the European space. Dance Theatre Igen from Celje performed for the Dutch public at the opening of the exhibition with a presentation of the ballet House 22'. Following their premier in New York, the Theatre has already been hosted by nine countries with this performance. The distinguished speakers at the exhibition were Dr Tea Petrin, Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia in Haag, Jozias van Aartsen, Mayor of The Hague, and Dr Peter Krečič, Director of the Architectural Museum of Ljubljana. Valley of Soča candidate for EU Destination of Excellence The valley of the Soča River (NE) is the first Slovenian tourist destination to be nominated for the European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN) title. The alpine valley will compete against 20 other EU-wide nominees. A total of 16 Slovenian destinations applied for the project, out of which a commission selected three finalist: the Soča valley, the Idrija Lace Festival and the »Prešernov smenj«, a festival emulating a 19th century fair.

According to the commission, all three candidates have achieved EU standards in the area of sustainable development, proving that the economic, social, natural and cultural aspects can constitute an integral part in the development of a destination.

The commission then unanimously selected that Slovenia will be represented by the »Stories of Soča«, presented by the municipalities of Bovec, Tolmin and Kobarid. The initiators of the project, based upon the Isonzo Front during the First World War, have meanwhile enlisted the cooperation of the public, private and civil sector of the entire valley of the upper Soča. The EDEN project tender, in which the European Commission will select the best traditional events promoting intangible cultural heritage in less visited tourist regions, was presented by the STO in February.



Text: VESNA ŽARKOVIČ, Photo: Archive Gorenjski Glas and Demokracija



## Ljubo Sirc: In Slovenia judges still pass political judgements

Is Slovenia a state governed by the rule of law? It is. But despite that, some people have not achieved justice in Slovenian courts, even 18 years after the first democratic elections. Ljubo Sirc, honorary freeman of Kranj and a member of the government strategic council, is still waiting for justice; to get back what was taken from him by force during and after the 2nd World War. He speaks about his battle with the wheels of judicial, lasting more than half a decade.

IN ALL THESE YEARS SINCE INDEPENDENCE YOU HAVE BEEN TRYING TO GET BACK THE PROPERTY THAT WAS CONFISCATED. YOU EVEN DECLINED A STATE DECORATION A FEW YEARS AGO BECAUSE THE SLOVENIAN STATE HAS NOT RETURNED THE PROPERTY TO THIS DAY. THE EUROPEAN COURT HAS ALREADY AWARDED YOU MONETARY COMPENSATION DUE TO

THE SLOW RULINGS OF THE SLOVENIAN COURTS IN THE PROCEEDINGS TO RETURN CONFISCATED PROPERTY. YOU COME FROM A FAMILY OF PRE-WAR INDUSTRIALISTS. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN SLOVENIA AT THAT TIME?

At the end of 1930s, conditions were good. The standard of living was improving, and workers' wages were rising. In Kranj, where my family lived, industry was spreading; numerous companies came into existence, providing enough income and enough jobs. It was an era when rural poverty was coming to an end. Development was at that time going in the right direction.

AND THEN CAME THE 2ND WORLD WAR, WHICH HAD A STRONG IMPACT ON YOUR FAMILY.

The Germans took away our factory. They turned the company into a factory for missile component production. With few

# INTERVIEW

exceptions, the Germans confiscated all the factories in Kranj and started deportation – they wanted to deport most Slovenes to Serbia and Germany. At the end of the war, what was left of our factory was burned down, so that only ruins were left.

## PURSUANT TO THE LEGISLATION IN FORCE AFTER THE WAR, THE PROPERTY CONFISCATED BY THE OCCUPIERS SHOULD HAVE BEEN RETURNED TO THE OWNERS IMMEDIATELY. DID YOU GET BACK YOUR LOST PROPERTY?

The authorities after the war did not hurry with restitution, as they were anticipating re-confiscating, or nationalising everything as soon as possible. They returned the land where the factory used to be, but the machines remained scattered all over Slovenia. Then the restitution process stopped. Still more, I was charged with espionage and everything was confiscated from my family in an after-war trial - that is, from my father and me, as we were convicted.

Ljubo Sirc was born in 1920 in Kranj into a well-known family of industrialists. He graduated from the Faculty of Law in Ljubljana, where he joined a group of left-wing intellectuals. At the beginning of the 2nd World War, the occupiers confiscated the family's textile factory, which at that time employed 250 workers, and turned it into an arms factory.

Ljubo joined the Liberation Front and saw the end of the war as a partisan. After the war he started working at the government presidency press office, where he was responsible for foreign journalists and translating agency news. Due to his freethinking – he was one of the initiators who set up a non-communist opposition – he soon personally experienced the brutality of the communist regime in post-war Yugoslavia. In August 1947 he was proclaimed an English spy and sentenced to death. The verdict was later changed to 20 years in prison. He spent 7 and half years there, and in 1955 he secretly escaped from the country. His uncle and father were also sentenced to prison for espionage, and the latter also died in prison.

Ljubo Sirc took his doctorate in Switzerland and lectured at the University of Glasgow until his retirement. In 2001, Queen Elizabeth II personally made him a CBE (Companion of the British Empire) for spreading democratic ideas in Eastern Europe. In 2003 he became an honorary freeman of Kranj, and he is currently a member of the Slovenian Government Strategic Council. In his various teaching posts, including twenty years at the University of Glasgow, Sirc has been a leading expert on socialist economics and communist regimes. He is one of the founders of the Centre for Research into Communist Economies (CRCE) in London and as of 2006 its current director. For many years, he lectured in Political Economy at Glasgow University.

## WHAT WERE YOU CONVICTED OF?

After my beginnings in the Liberation Front, I was with the partisans in 1944-1945. After the war, I worked as an interpreter and therefore met many foreigners. I obviously did not behave as expected by the communist authorities. We were not supposed to have contacts with foreigners. I thought that was ridiculous. I still did not understand communism very well, but on the other hand, such a stand seemed dangerous to me – it expressed hostile conduct towards the British, French and other nations. That was very stupid and it cost us the possibility of alliances. As I was associating with foreigners more than I was supposed to, I came under close scrutiny. But there was another reason. I was one of the people who started to establish a democratic opposition. The authorities at that time did not expect anybody to do such things. It wasn't forbidden, but it also wasn't desirable.

## YOU AND YOUR FATHER WERE OFFICIALLY JUDGED INNOCENT BY THE SUPREME COURT ONLY IN 1991.

New times came – times of setting right past injustices. The Court admitted that the trial was a fake; that ordinary relations with foreigners were turned into espionage and every attempt to act outside the communist party was considered high treason. The verdict was overturned. As the sole survivor, I should also get back all the confiscated property. But the process started to stall and everything went wrong.

## WHY?

I suddenly got the feeling that the court was functioning according to some principle of the silent use of court procedures. Legislation was changing, and these changes had a retroactive effect. That is prohibited in normal democracies.

## YOU RECENTLY WROTE THAT IN SLOVENIA, JUDGES STILL PASS POLITICAL JUDGEMENTS, AND JOURNALISTS AGREE WITH POLITICAL JUDGES AND STILL WRITE BIASED EDITORIALS. ARE YOU CLAIMING THAT WE HAVE POLITICAL JUDGES IN SLOVENIA?

It is true that I wrote that. Looking at my case, I can confirm that once again. Things were running according to the will of the communist party in power – only what the party says is right and just. Later we tried to implement the principle of legal certainty, but the court still defined the facts incorrectly, deformed them and used the laws arbitrarily. It was a case of old judges. Even worse are the Constitutional Court judges, which have been working since 1998. They were selected by the former president Milan Kučan, whereby he was careful to select only communists. They only knew how to do their job in the old way.

## YOU ARE ALSO A MEMBER OF THE GOVERNMENT STRATEGIC COUNCIL. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE EXECUTIVE, LEGISLATIVE AND JUDICIAL BRANCHES OF POWER FROM THE INDEPENDENCE OF SLOVENIA TO THIS DAY?

The legislative power changed in accordance with the elections. The elections reflected the mood and will of the people, and the executive power arose from that. But the judicial power and the judges remained the same as before. An exception was the Constitutional Court, which was appointed after 1989 from a broader range of judges. But in the appointment in 1998 the selection of constitutional judges was limited to members of the former communist party, with constant appeals to respect the judicial power. In Slovenia, it by no means deserved that, as it was completely politically defined, selected to suit only one political party.

## DO YOU CLAIM THAT IF THE STRUCTURE OF THE JUDICIAL BRANCH OF POWER WAS DIFFERENT, YOUR CASE WOULD NOT BE COLLECTING DUST IN THE COURT FOR ALL THESE YEARS?

Yes, if the courts operated as elsewhere, if the initial approach, the ambition to improve conditions in the courts in the years 1991-93 had continued, I would definitely get back via the court what was taken from me by force. Then it would not happen that the court would refuse things that it previously returned. A rule in the EU is that the main pillars for the functioning of the market economy are the rule of the law and protection of private property. Slovenia has not yet achieved European standards in this sphere.

## IN 1992 YOU STOOD AS A CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENT OF SLOVENIA, ON THE INITIATIVE OF THE LIBERAL-DEMOCRATIC PARTY (LDS). THE RESULT WAS POOR, AND MILAN KUČAN WON. WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN IN THE ELECTIONS IN THE FIRST PLACE?

In the 12 years of the Liberal Democratic Party rule, the word 'liberal' became incomprehensible. I was misled by the word at that time. I misunderstood their wishes and approach. I thought they had learned from the decay of communism. With the arrival of democracy, Milan Kučan descended from power as the president of the communists, and presented himself to the public with some sort of new approach. In fact, LDS was his supporter from the very beginning, but they only told me 2 weeks before the elections that they simply didn't support me any more, that there was no money for my campaign. LDS also had all the media under control. They made sure that not many people knew about me, and my books were banned.

## HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE CURRENT SITUATION IN SLOVENIA?

We are still divided. The left wing is extremely hostile towards anybody who thinks differently. A normal country cannot function like that. Of course, there is difference of opinion, but that is no reason to suppress each other. It prevents creating circumstances which are of vital importance for the functioning of democracy. We should allow each other to express these opinions, and hold on to the foundations of democratic structure. I anticipate that a real change will come when the left wing loses the elections so badly that they will have to drop their doctrine of division and disqualifying those who think differently.

Slovenia was lucky that, alongside Yugoslavia, it fell out of the so-called Stalin circle. In contrast to other Eastern block countries, our people were able to go work abroad, it was possible to travel and we also received support from Western countries. Despite that, we were unfortunately lagging behind our developed neighbours, mainly due to the lower productivity of the economy. Slovenia needs to hold on to the European market economy rules, and above all, encourage the creation of small and medium-sized companies.

## DO YOU STILL BELIEVE THAT YOU WILL GET BACK EVERYTHING THAT WAS TAKEN FROM YOU DURING AND AFTER THE WAR?

That is a major question, which depends on the administration of justice in Slovenia. I hope that ultimately a state governed by the rule of law will prevail.



Text: RAMON MIKLUS, Photo: STA



Economy Minister Andrej Vizjak and President of the European Patent Office Alison Brimelow.

## PATENT FORUM FOCUSES ON INNOVATION IN ENERGY

The role of innovation in improving energy efficiency and fighting climate change topped the agenda as the European Patent Forum kicked off on 6 May, featuring more than 350 innovators, intellectual property experts and government representatives. As Slovenian Economy Minister Andrej Vizjak noted, greater demand for energy and higher prices are driving the search for new energy sources and innovation in this field. Such innovations are now becoming economically viable, Vizjak said, but added that the European patent application is too bureaucratic and nine times as expensive as in the United States. Since this is one of the priorities of the Slovenian EU Presidency, measures to simplify the procedure will be announced next week, according to Biserka Strel, the head of the Slovenian Patent Office. European Industry Commissioner Günter Verheugen said that the EU is aware of the importance of innovators in the "new industrial revolution". He said that at the end of this month the Commission would release a new strategy on the sustainable development of enterprises and sustainable production/consumption. Moreover, the energy efficiency rating of appliances would be extended to products, such as doors or windows, which are not direct consumers of energy but nevertheless affect consumption. The programme would eventually be extended to products which affect the consumption of raw materials, Verheugen explained.

## EUROPEAN INVENTORS HONOURED IN LJUBLJANA

Innovations in antiviral treatment, car manufacturing, eye examination and robotic surgery were honoured on 6 May as top inventors received the European Inventor of the Year Award for 2008 at the European Patent Forum in Ljubljana. Erik De Clercq from the University of Leuven in Belgium received the lifetime honour for "landmark contributions to antiviral treatment", including the development of the standard drug cocktail for AIDS. The award in the industry category went to a team of scientists working for German car maker Audi, who revolutionised automotive manufacturing by

making frames lighter and safer through the use of aluminium. The development of a new laser scanning technology for the eye, which allows pain-free examination of the retina, earned Douglas Anderson, Robert Henderson and Rogar Lucas of the British SME Optos the award in the SMEs and research category. The award for non-European inventor of the year meanwhile went to Philip S. Green of the U.S. company SRI International, who developed a robotic surgical system that allows surgeons to perform complex procedures with the highest precision. The awards were conferred by Slovenian President Danilo Türk, European Commission Vice-President Günter Verheugen and the President of the European Patent Office, Alison Brimelow.

## BIGGEST SOLAR POWER PLANT IN SLOVENIA OPENS IN NAKLO

Power distributor Gorenjske Elektrarne opened in Naklo on 7 May the biggest solar power plant in Slovenia. The 90-kilowatt power plant will generate 92,000 kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity a year, enough for 30 households. Installed on the roof of the stable of the Naklo biotechnology centre, this is the third solar power plant operated by Gorenjske Elektrarne. The company is the smallest Slovenian power distributor, but it has the biggest share of energy from renewable resources, its director Marko Čarman told the press. Čarman said that the three-month testing run of the EUR 470,000 power plant has already resulted in the offset of 21.3 tonnes of CO2 emissions, even though it was only running at 83 kilowatts. According to Čarman, Gorenjske Elektrarne is constructing a smaller power plant in nearby Preddvor, and another one is in the works on the roof of the Tržič primary school.

## GOVERNMENT ADOPTS SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET, PLANS EUR 70M SURPLUS

The government adopted on 8 May the supplementary 2008 budget bill, cutting expenditure by almost EUR 50m, while revenues are projected to grow by EUR 250m. This will change the EUR 230m budget deficit planned for 2008 into a EUR 69.4m surplus. The supplementary budget envisages revenues to the tune of EUR 8.88bn, with expenditures standing at EUR 8.82bn, Finance Minister Andrej Bajuk told the press after the government session. Expenditure will be cut by EUR 49.7m, Bajuk said, and added that the number includes the 3.4% wage hike in the public sector that was brought about by the unexpected inflation spurt in the second half of 2007. Cuts will be made at all ministries, mainly in investments. The biggest cut will hit the Defence Ministry, the expenditure of which will be lowered by EUR 30m, the Minister added. The increase in revenues was meanwhile mainly caused by a EUR 162m hike in corporate income tax. The government also expects to get more money from excise duty and value added tax. The government also decided today to take part in the share capital increase in NKBM, Slovenia's second largest bank. The supplementary budget allocates EUR 63m in order to maintain the state's share in the bank. »Slovenian banks are solid and we have no doubt as to their stability, but their share capital has been relatively low,« Bajuk said. The bill also allocates EUR 14.5m for the state's participation in the share capital increase in NLB, Slovenia's largest bank. The government also adopted the budget implementation bill for 2008 and 2009, which brings no major changes. The bill does say that the country would decrease the projected amount of loans by EUR 478m. Also decreasing in the supplementary budget are European funds, which will be cut by EUR 30m. »But this is not a loss of EU funds; it remains an opportunity for the future,« Bajuk said.

**JANŠA, BARROSO VISIT LJUBLJANA TECHNOLOGY PARK**



Prime Minister Janez Janša (left) and European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso (centre) visiting the Ljubljana Technological Park.

Prime Minister Janez Janša and European Commission President José Manuel Barroso visited the Ljubljana Technology Park on 8 May, with Janša saying that the facility demonstrates Slovenia's desire to become an even more modern and development-oriented country. Janša said that innovation, ingenuity and the possibility of transferring know-how into practice are key to survival in a competitive global world. He pointed to greater innovation and better global competitiveness as key goals and stressed that the support for these goals was included in Slovenia's development strategy and in the EU's Lisbon Strategy. Slovenia established a competitiveness council earlier in the year in order to implement a missing piece of the support system for a knowledge-based society, the prime minister said. Barroso meanwhile labelled Slovenia a success story, pointing to its euro- and Schengen-zone entry, and praised the zeal and enthusiasm with which the country conducts its ongoing EU Presidency. He also lavished praise on the technology park, saying »it is clear that the park provides support and an environment for innovative knowledge and technology«. During his first visit to Slovenia since the country took the helm of the EU, Barroso also met Slovenian President Danilo Türk for talks related to the EU and the Slovenian Presidency term. The pair focused particularly on problems related to global food price hikes and their impact on the fulfillment of development goals, according to a press release from the president's office. They called for thorough analysis of the hikes and careful response to the issue and coordination at the EU level. They also warned against jumping to conclusions about the impact of biofuel production on food prices.

**42-MEGAWATT GAS UNIT OPENS IN ŠOŠTANJ**

The Šoštanj coal-fired power plant connected its first gas unit to the power grid on 9 May, a 42-megawatt (MW) project that will improve the environmental footprint of Slovenia's largest power plant. Economy Minister Andrej Vizjak and Health Minister Zofija Mazej Kukovič applauded the achievement. Vizjak said that the gas unit would boost the output of the fifth reactor of the plant. It will



Newly opened gas unit of the Šoštanj power plant.

contribute to improving the environment and realising Slovenia's goals from the EU energy and climate package. Vizjak also underlined the importance of constructing the planned 600-MW sixth reactor at Šoštanj. Asked where the state plans to find the required funds, he replied that the government would pour more money into the power plant by selling the hydroelectric plant on the lower Sava River. The plant's director, Uroš Rotnik, meanwhile said that the first gas unit is soon to be supplemented by another with the same installed power. He assessed the value of the investment at EUR 50m. Šoštanj had an installed power of 755 MW, covering up to half of Slovenia's energy needs. The power plant annually generates between 3.8 and 4.4 billion kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity and 0.4 kWh of heat, using up 4.2 to 4.4 million tonnes of coal in the process.

**COMMISSIONER CALLS FOR GREATER COOPERATION IN R&D**



European Commissioner for Science and Research Janez Potočnik talking at the WDR Europa Forum at the Ljubljana castle.

European Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potočnik on 9 May called for greater cooperation at the EU level as the bloc endeavours to tackle global challenges and create a knowledge-based society. "One plus one equals more than two in a society of cooperation," Potočnik said in his address to the Europa Forum in

Ljubljana. The EU has no other choice but to create a knowledge-based society, which is the answer to technological progress and the adaptations that it requires of people. Europe's efforts in this direction are centred around the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs, Potočnik said at the event organised by German public broadcaster WDR. Potočnik underlined that the core aim of the Lisbon Strategy is to preserve the quality of life and the European social model, while at the same time improving competitiveness. The only way Europe can improve competitiveness is through a knowledge-based society. This means that aspects other than pure competitiveness need to be considered, an example of which is the recently adopted climate change and energy package. As Potočnik noted, by introducing tough environmental targets the EU took a path that might be riskier for business, but those who first see that these changes also bring opportunities will benefit greatly. Another part of the equation is funding, where the EU lags behind the United States and Japan in spending on research and development as a share of GDP. Yet whereas northern European countries are spending as much as 5% of GDP for R&D, some southern European Member States are spending a tenth of that. Yet Potočnik pointed out that whereas public funding of R&D is stagnating, private spending is on the rise. European companies are increasing investment – it is just that they are increasingly investing in Asia. At the EU level, another crucial component is the framework programme, which involves funding for R&D, as well as the creation of the single European research area and boosting the mobility of European researchers. Potočnik said that the EU has a team of stars; now it has to create a star team.

## NEARLY 60% OF SLOVENES INTERNET USERS

As many as 59% of Slovenes used the Internet in 2007, or 942,500 people aged between 16 and 75. This puts the country at the average among EU Member States. The figures follow the latest survey by the Methodology and Information Science Centre, which established in its first such poll in 1996 that only 4% of the population used the Internet. The most common Internet users are young people ages 12 to 29. While these access the Web several times a day, older age groups use it less. In fact, the frequency of use declines in reverse proportion to the age of users. Similar results follow from a survey by Valicon. More than half of Slovenian Web visitors are between 15 and 34 years old. An average Slovenian user visited Web pages nearly 275 times in March on 50 websites surveyed. For Slovenian users, the Internet is above all a source of general news, as well as information about music and films. Male users spend an average of 3 hours, 12 minutes and 51 seconds a month browsing the Internet, while women spend 45 minutes less, the Valicon survey shows. The most active population on Slovenian websites is students. While secondary school students account for 411 visits a month, primary school pupils make an average of 556 visits a month, spending nearly seven hours a month for this. Considering education, the most common users are those with a university degree. As many as 75% of these access the Internet several times a day, according to the survey by the Methodology and Information Science Centre. Comparative EU data shows Slovenia ranks somewhere in the mean among EU countries, although there has been a slowdown in the growth of users. Eurostat data for 2007 put the average number of weekly Internet users at 52% for Slovenia and 59% for the EU.

## JARC DISCUSSING COMMON AGRICULTURE POLICY IN ROMANIA



Slovenian Agriculture Minister Iztok Jarc on 10 May concluded a visit to Romania, where he briefed a regional meeting on the progress on some major issues and legislative proposals regarding the EU's common agricultural policy (CAP). The presiding EU agriculture minister also briefed a meeting of the Višegrad group countries, Bulgaria and Romania on Slovenia's positions regarding modifications to CAP, according to a press release from the Slovenian ministry. He said the European Commission would present its proposals on CAP adjustments for the first time at the informal meeting of agriculture ministers at Brdo pri Kranju on 27 May. Slovenia, as the presiding EU country, has drafted a document which recaps the conclusions of the formal ministerial meeting in March and will serve as a basis for debate at the upcoming meeting. The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry says the document highlights climate change, biofuels, environmental protection, risk management in farming and food safety. Jarc also commented on the increasing prices and shortage of food worldwide at the Višegrad group meeting. He called for an active response within CAP and for thorough consideration of the capacity of agriculture to secure sufficient amounts of food. The meeting in Romania brought together delegations from Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia.

## DINERS CLUB SLOVENIJA TO CREATE 120 JOBS IN IZOLA

Diners Club Slovenija, a credit card issuer, is to create 120 new jobs in the coastal town of Izola. Its owner, finance holding Findale Enterprises, has acquired Diners Club Italia and plans to transfer some of its departments from Barcelona, India and the UK to a new service centre in Izola. Employees of Diners Club Slovenija in Izola will take over the leading role in establishing a regional service centre which will support the Italian and Slovenian markets, Diners Club Slovenija said on Monday. The service centre will also support other franchises in the region and carry out call centre services. The training of new personnel will start in July and 120 new employees will start working in September.

## SLOVENIA WANTS MORE CHINESE FDI, GZS BOSS SAYS

Samo Hribar Milič, the chief exec of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GZS), has called for more Chinese investment in Slovenia, especially that with a higher added value. Numerous opportunities

for cooperation are still open, Hribar Milič told a visiting Chinese economic delegation on 12 May. According to Peter Ješovnik, the head of the Slovenian Public Agency for Entrepreneurship and Foreign Investment (JAPTI), Slovenia posted record foreign direct investment last year; however, very little of it came from China. Chinese investment is welcomed in all sectors; the only limitations are environmental friendliness and energy efficiency, said Ješovnik. Last year 209 Slovenian exporters and 2,272 importers were registered in China, and the number is growing, said Mateja Čepin, head of the GZS competitiveness centre. Twenty-five Slovenian companies are present on the Chinese market. According to Hribar Milič, cooperation can be boosted by improving mutual understanding. "I believe that economic cooperation will be followed by cultural, social and scientific cooperation," he said. The head of the Chinese delegation, Jia Qinglin, praised the progress in bilateral cooperation since 1992, when Slovenia and China established diplomatic ties. The Chinese Government has full trust in Slovenia and wants to improve ties with it, said Jia, the chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Jia said he was already convinced of Slovenia's success during last November's visit by Prime Minister Janez Janša and a team of Slovenian business executives to China. This feeling was deepened further at today's meeting with Janša. Economy Ministry State Secretary Tomaž Jeršič noted that China is one of Slovenia's most important trading partners, with imports from the Asian country amounting to EUR 346m in 2007 (+41% year on year) and exports to EUR 60m (+13% year on year).

## CONFERENCE ON TELECOMMUNICATIONS CALLS FOR PROTECTION OF USERS

Participants in a conference discussing ways to boost transparency and supply for end-users of electronic communications agreed in Ljubljana on 12 May that measures for providing competition on the telecommunications market should be amended with measures protecting the interests of end-users. Economy Minister Andrej Vizjak said at the conference, which was organised by the Agency for Post and Electronic Communications (APEK), that transparency and better supply for end-users is important, as it strengthens competition on the market and provides high-quality services in the long run. According to him, increasing competition on the market gives users access to diverse supply on the one hand, while a large number of different price packages reduces the transparency of the market, making it less user-friendly. Comparing different operators and different packages is becoming increasingly difficult for inexperienced users. According to the deputy director of APEK, Miha Krišelj, this is why there is a great asymmetry between providers and users, which can result in an unsuccessful market. Vizjak is meanwhile convinced that reform of the telecommunications sector in the EU, proposed last November by the European Commission, will provide better protection of users and strengthen the rights of end-users on the telecommunications market. The head of the Irish national regulator for telecommunications, John Doherty, meanwhile welcomed the fact that users' interests are included in the reform, as it envisages requirements for transparency and protection of interests of all groups of users for all operators and all services.

## FDI FACILITATING AGENCY GETS WORLD FINANCE MAGAZINE AWARD

The Slovenian Public Agency for Entrepreneurship and Foreign Investment (JAPTI) has been recognised by World Finance magazine as the most promising foreign direct investment (FDI) location for

2008–2009 in Central and Eastern Europe, JAPTI said on 12 May. JAPTI also expressed pleasure that its efforts to facilitate information for foreign direct investors had been recognised and rewarded. The remaining award winners for this year were the Slovakian Economy Ministry (Best Tax Environment 2008), Invest in Romania (Best Legal Environment 2008), ITD Hungary (Most Improved Business Environment 2008) and the Agency of Montenegro for Economic Restructuring and Foreign Investments (Best Privatisation Agency of the Year 2008). World Finance, published by World News Media, is a leading world bi-monthly financial magazine.

## GOVERNMENT ALLOCATES EUR 150M FOR ACTIVE EMPLOYMENT POLICY

The government adopted an active employment policy scheme on 15 May, allocating EUR 150m in funds for the envisaged measures in 2008 and 2009. Commenting on the document after the cabinet session, Labour Minister Marjeta Cotman underscored that Slovenia currently had one of the lowest unemployment rates in the EU. The labour survey unemployment rate for Slovenia is at 4.7%, while the EU average is at 7.1%. The Employment Institute registered 64,295 unemployed persons at the end of March, which is down 4% on February and down 13.4% on March 2007. The minister ascribed the decline to high economic growth and the government's active employment policy. On the down side, she pointed to the problem of structural unemployment, noting that the Ministry of Labour, the Family and Social Affairs would put more funds into training and education, so that the unemployed would get more skills and expertise. The programme of the implementation of active employment policy measures for 2008–2009 has been adjusted to the state budget and the operative human resources development plan. It envisages four measures: counseling and assistance in search for a job; training and education; incentives for employers and self-employment; and measures to increase social inclusion. The measures will be funded from the national budget and the European Social Fund, in the total amount of EUR 150m (EUR 74m for 2008 and EUR 76m for 2009).

## SLOVENIAN COMPANIES BOOST NET PROFIT IN 2007

Slovenian companies recorded profits for 6th year running, with the total net profit in 2007 beating total losses by EUR 3.43m, which is 39% more than the year before, the Public Legal Records and Related Services Agency of Slovenia (AJPES) said on 20 May. The report from AJPES includes records of 48,781 companies which reported their financial data for 2007. They employed a total of 499,465 people last year, a 6% rise year-on-year, while their total revenues increased by 19% to EUR 77.96bn. A total of 33,459 companies (68.6%) ended 2007 with net profit, which stood at EUR 4.12bn overall. There were 1,023 companies which posted more than half a million euros in net profit. Net losses were meanwhile reported by 13,095 companies (26.8%), and the total amount of the losses stood at EUR 684.1m. Last year 196 of those companies posted more than EUR 500,000 of net loss. The EUR 4.12bn of the total net profit was 36% higher in 2007 than the year before, while the EUR 684.1m of the total net loss was up 24%. According to AJPES, 92.7% of the companies belong to micro companies, 4% are small companies and 1.6% are medium sized ones. The share of large companies, employing over half of the workers, stands at 1.6%. The average gross wage in Slovenian companies that submitted the data last year stood at EUR 1,191, 6% more than in 2006.



## Ekliptik – A young company with new approaches in surgery

After leaving the Sekvenca company, the young entrepreneurs Tadej Fius and Darij Kreuh, who is an academy-trained sculptor, invited a mechanical engineer Paolo Brandoli to cooperate with them and founded their own company, Ekliptik, with the head office at Technology Park Ljubljana. With the help of experts in the field of surgery, the company developed the LIDIS system, which simplifies surgery on long bones after various types of injury. Kreuh insists that “such a procedure of interlocking of nails (this is the name for the procedure when nails are used to secure the bone and the nail in it) is fast, simple and, most of all, safe, because x-ray radiation has been minimised”.

### SYSTEM WORTH 6 MILLION EUROS

The creators came up with the idea for the product, which according to some expert estimates is worth six million Euros, during their visits to international conferences on surgery, and numerous interviews with surgeons who spoke to them about specific problems in their work.

“Darij and I have been constantly thinking about how to help surgeons with modern technology as concretely as possible during the surgical procedure itself”, says Fius, the company’s Technical Director. He adds that most complaints concerned the length of the procedures, which could take between twenty minutes and an hour. A surgeon spends most of the time in the operational

procedure locating the holes for the nails by x-ray scanning, through which the nail is then secured to the bone. Ekliptik plays an important role precisely at this point, and according to Fius, the company will significantly simplify these types of operational procedure with this product.

### LEADING TRAUMATOLOGISTS RECOGNISE THE EXCELLENCE OF THE GUIDING STAR SYSTEM

Their system differs from other devices already available in having numerous improvements. Most existing systems are based on optical navigation, or they are only partial solutions and systems which require a lot of preparations from the surgeon. The application method of the system developed by Ekliptik is based on micro-electromagnetic navigation, which is a completely new approach in this field worldwide. The system consists of the main unit, Guiding Star, and modules, which are attached to it. The first and longest in development, and already patented, is the LIDIS module (Less Invasive Distal Interlocking System), which enables a simpler procedure to attach a broken long bone to a nail, because it is inserted into the bone with nails, namely with guidance from a navigational sensor. This method is the first of its kind in this field.



## THE UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTRE LJUBLJANA WOULD SAVE 166,000 EUROS A YEAR WITH THE NEW METHOD

Using the LIDIS system, the operational procedure is shortened by at least 10 minutes or even more, which means that the savings while using this method could be considerable. Kreuh and Fius estimate that the University Medical Centre Ljubljana, where in the first 10 months of the past year 300 of these procedures were performed, the average cost of one procedure being 5,000 Euros, would save around 166,000 Euros a year using LIDIS.

The company predicts that the first fifteen LIDIS systems will be on the market in the first half of the next year. They decided to donate their first system to the University Medical Centre, while tests are already underway in Italy and Germany, and intensive talks on testing are in progress with hospitals in France, Croatia and Israel. The biggest success for penetrating the European market was when, after four months of difficult talks, they convinced the experts in the leading European traumatological clinic in Strasbourg to start trials.

## SOME 4.5 MILLION EUROS IN SALES REVENUES IN 2009, WHICH ATTRACTS FOREIGN INVESTORS

By the end of 2009, the company is supposed to sell 90 systems at 50,000 Euros, which amounts to 4.5 million Euros in sales revenues. Despite these forecasts, the investment costs are exceptionally high, so the company is trying really hard to attract foreign investors. Last year, the Austrian Horizonte Venture Management, a venture capital fund, helped complete the development of LIDIS.

## GUIDING STAR WILL RECEIVE NEW TOOLS AND NEW PATENTS

In addition to LIDIS, the company is developing another two new tools, Tocos and Epos, to upgrade the Guiding Star system, which



Tadej Fius



Darij Kreuh

is the main unit for managing the tools and the umbrella brand. The first tool will enable image-guided surgical procedures to adjust long bone fractures and treat torsional turns, and the second tool simplifies finding the point of entry for the nails.

## EKLIPTIK IS WORTH BETWEEN 10 AND 15 MILLION EUROS

The company is aware of its excellence, which is why it is undergoing intensive preparations for its strategic development. According to the owners, there are currently two possible development options. The first is based on building a partnership distribution network in some countries which have already expressed an interest in cooperation, among them is a large Italian distributor. However, none of them exclude selling the company to one of the major manufacturers of surgical nails, because this would increase the company's sales considerably. "With regard to the value of the first patent and the fact that soon we will have another two tools, which will also be patented, the company together with the patents could be worth between 10 and 15 million Euros", say Fius and Kreuh.

## THE MOST INNOVATIVE COMPANY IN 2006/2007

As the co-owners of Sekvenca, Kreus and Fius were awarded for their innovation, when in 2006 the company won first prize in The Best Entrepreneurial Idea competition in the Young Companies category. This time, too, with Brandoli, they received the prestigious award at the Podim conference in Maribor for The Best Entrepreneurial Idea and The Best Innovative Company in 2006/2007. Despite the company's excellence and the numerous awards received in Slovenia and abroad, they are well aware of how long and hard the road to success is. Innovation and the quality of the product are not a guarantee for a quick sale to hospitals. The route from prototype production to trials with patients is a long one; and always connected to financial resources, which, unfortunately, are always in short supply.

Text: JOŽE OSTERMAN, Photo: STA



## TWO SLOVENIAN EXHIBITIONS IN BRUSSELS

In mid-May, 'Plečnik Project', an exhibition on the works of Slovenian architect, Jožef Plečnik, opened at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts – one of the most prestigious exhibition rooms in Brussels. The exhibition is one of the key pillars in the representation of Slovenia during its Presidency of the European Union. In addition to this exhibition, other key presentations include, from the Slovenian perspective, a concert by the Slovenian Philharmonic in Brussels, as well as exhibitions on Primož Trubar and Slovenian impressionists in Ljubljana. 'Plečnik Project' was opened by Vasko Simoniti, the Minister of Culture and prepared by the National Gallery of Slovenia in Ljubljana in co-operation with Boris Podrecca, a world renowned architect of Slovenian heritage, who actually spends most of his time working in Vienna. Porch undoubtedly deserves primary credit for the world's discovery of Plečnik, as he was the main author of the breakthrough exhibition in the Parisian Centre, Georges Pompidou, from where Plečnik's reputation spread, so to speak, across the entire world. The Brussels exhibition, of course, includes material that was presented in larger international exhibitions of Plečnik's work to date, with the addition of entirely new presentations of municipal equipment designs and artistic products of functional use, ranging from chairs to lanterns, goblets and typography. His opus is also complemented by

original sketches and models, as well as film credits and other records that pertain to the architect.

In the places occupied by the permanent Slovenian representation in Brussels, there stands an exhibition entitled 'Euro - European Travels', which was prepared by the Slovenian representation and the Ministry of Finance and created by Branko Šmon. The exhibition components are created from cut up euro bank notes. In his works of art, the author explains that the euro is changing into the central international currency. and pays tribute to poet France Prešeren, who is portrayed on the bank notes, and to friendship, of which the poet speaks.

## CONFERENCE ON CULTURE IN THE EXTERNAL RELATIONS OF THE EU



At the beginning of May, a two-day conference on culture entitled 'New Paradigms, New Models: Culture in the External Relations of the EU', took place in Ljubljana. The conference allowed for an open discussion among high ranking politicians and individuals who come into contact with the areas of culture and external relations on a daily basis, but rarely speak on either topic. At issue is not only the question of how we may approach another nation with a particular festival or cultural event, but how, through the use of cultural content, we can reshape external relations into a deeper and more weighted contextual complex that can positively influence international relations, emphasized Helena Drnovšek Zorko, Head of the Sector for International Relations at the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Head of the Sector for Culture, Multilingualism and Communication at the European Commission added that culture couldn't, overnight, play a greater role in the external relations of the Union, but that several good starting points were offered at the conference to this effect.

New Luxury Yacht Pershing 64



## AN INTERNATIONAL PRESENTATION IN SLOVENIAN PORTOROŽ

Fourteen years ago, Matjaž Murko, the first man of the Menn Yacht Group for Eastern and part of Central Europe, could not have known that his vision of Portorož as a nautical pearl of Europe would come true in such large measure. But even when at the moorings of Portorož Marine, there bobbed predominantly small boats and sailboats, the Primorska native, who had spent much of his life abroad, sketched a visionary path, rolled up his sleeves and – convinced in future success and the right decision – began paving the path of nautical tourism. Modest beginnings, initial successes and the time, that with the support of his friends and co-workers, he invested in a successful future, began to reap rewards while a war was still brewing in the Balkans. On May 8th, the new luxury Yacht Pershing 64 was internationally introduced at the Paprika Club in Portorož. For one evening, the small seaside Slovenian city became the cosmopolitan center of the nautical world, equal to Milan, where the ship was presented on the mainland, and to Saint Petersburg and Palma de Mallorca, which are still waiting for an introduction!

The raw 3100 horsepower that propels the 20 meter, exceptionally designed beauty through the waves at an unbelievable forty-five knots, and that, according to last year's research, places its manufacturer in the number one world spot, performed its introductory rite on the sea before the eyes of the invited guests,

under the flare of floodlights and to the music of the Eroik Trio. The beauty of the sight truly took the breath away, while guests spoiled themselves with goodies and surprises throughout the evening and spontaneously applauded at the dreams that remain unattainable for many. But not to worry: Portorož and its people became – at least judging from the congratulations and responses – even more recognizable in nautical tourism, which is increasingly attracting well-to-do visitors to us. And Slovenia, of course, became more recognizable as well.

## THE BRILLIANT VOCALISTS OF PRIMORSKA

The fact that Slovenian choirs are among the best in the world was again confirmed at the large choir festival in Varna, Bulgaria, where, under the leadership of choirmaster Ambrož Čop, the vocalists of the mixed Academic Choir of the University of Primorska won the event and, as winners, attained the privilege of participating in the competition for the Grand European Award in Tours, (France). Last month, Sinfo reported that the winner of this year's European Grand Prix for Choral Singing, which took place in Debrecen, Hungary and in which a select group of the best European choirs annually compete, was the Tone Tomšič Academic Choir from Ljubljana. In the same vein, the Ave Chamber Choir also made the selection, so that next year's festival will be noticeably coloured by Slovenia.

## EXHIBITION OF THE CHANCELLORS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA IN VIENNA

The visit of Dr Andreja Kocijančič, Chancellor of the University of Ljubljana, to the Slovenian Korotan Center in Vienna, marked the opening of an exhibition pertaining to the lives, work and accomplishments of the university's 40 Chancellors to date, and through this, the development of Slovenia's first, and still foremost, university. Jože Ciprle, the author of the exhibition, which with certain works was already presented in 2001, notes in the programme booklet that through the exhibition, the university wishes to emphasize the Chancellor's function as a synonym for the autonomy of scientific pedagogical university activities that have contributed to the high reputation which this institution enjoys today. The exhibition will be on display until

## THE NEW PRESIDENT OF SAZU IS DR JOŽE TRONTELJ

The most prestigious scientific and artistic institution, the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, will be led, from May 6th onward, by Dr Jože Trontelj, Professor of Neurology at the Faculty of Medicine in the University of Ljubljana and President of the National Medical Ethics Committee. It is perhaps no coincidence that, upon taking over this responsibility, Dr Trontelj declared that, in coming years SAZU will need to place a particularly great emphasis on ethics, and suggested that under the sponsorship of the Academy, there be established in Slovenia a special National Council for Ethics, through which SAZU could become substantially more active in its response to ethical issues. To this, he added that the widest field in this area is undoubtedly occupied by bioethics, where new questions are constantly emerging: questions on human rights with respect to medicine and biology, or rather, questions pertaining to the pragmatic use of these two professions. The new president stipulated that how human beings deal with nature and with other beings on the planet is not inconsequential, for we have sinned much in these areas. The direction of the European Union as a single entity was also recently confirmed at the forum meeting of National Ethics Councils in Brdo pri Kranju.

The second issue that interests Dr Trontelj is the necessity of developing greater Academy responses to relevant social questions. On this topic, he stipulated that the independence and autonomy of the Academy Members is a distinctive feature of the institution and that this actually becomes problematic when the institution wishes to reach a consensus. Precisely because of the time that the Academy takes to react, the pragmatic actuality of its perspective often fades.

## FLOTA DANCE GROUP IN AUSTRIA

The Flota dance group, led by renowned Slovenian choreographer, Matjaž Farič, performed in Oberwart, in the Gradišičansko region of Austria, during the Days of Dance Festival, 'Tanztage'. At the invitation of festival organizer Liz King, Flota hosted its performance of 'Nemotelonemepesmi'. Representative dancers from Austria, Italy, Spain, Finland, Poland, Canada and Slovenia performed at the three-day festival.

## CONDUCTOR UROŠ KREK HAS DIED

One of the most productive and well-known Slovenian conductors, academician Uroš Krek, has died at the age of 86. Krek graduated in Composition and Conducting from the Faculty of Music in the University of Ljubljana, was for many years the editor of the national radio network's music programme, and following this, Professor of Composition at the Faculty of Music. For a number of years, he was the President of the Society of Slovene Composers, and was named by the Slovenian Philharmonic as an honorary member in 1988. Krek composed vocal-instrumental and vocal works, as well as theme, drama and film music. Even though he was predominantly an instrumental composer, Krek shaped his most characteristic works and adaptations in connection with the folk tradition.

## BOOK ON ACHIEVEMENTS AND THE BEST OF SLOVENIA

An interesting book with a very beautiful cover, which presents the best things in Slovenia, namely the oldest, the most beautiful, the exceptional, by one of the most famous photographers, Tomo Jeseničnik, who is also a permanent contributor to our magazine, was published by the publishing house Mladinska knjiga. It is a combination of photographs and texts, because of which Jeseničnik, as he said, travelled over 65,000 km and took 30,000 photographs (!), of which »only« 303 were selected for the book. He went 164m underwater and climbed 3,028 m higher from this lowest point, and "had fun" at -27 degrees Celsius of cold and 41.5 degrees Celsius of heat, which are the extreme points of the Slovenian climate. Jeseničnik described 101 best things in the book, but he left out around 50 of the best known (the largest Slovenia mammal, the bear; the highest-lying village; the oldest bicycle), so a sequel might follow.





## RENOVATED MUSEUM OPENED IN BLEED CASTLE

A renovated museum was opened in Bled Castle at the end of April. The museum now has wider content, as it became the museum for the ancient history of the entire region of Bled. This is probably the most frequently visited museum in Slovenia, as it is visited, also of course due to the attraction of Bled and Bled Castle itself, by over 200,000 guests annually. The museum was opened after a fairly lengthy disagreement between the Ministry of Culture and the Municipality of Bled, during which the Municipality first opposed state ownership rights to the castle, having invested large funds into its renovation decades ago. The dispute later centered around the management of the grounds. Two years ago, both parties found a satisfactory solution when it was decided that the management of the grounds would be entrusted to the Bled Tourist Association. Both parties then invested in the renovation of the building, while the National Museum of Slovenia placed a new museum collection in the space.

The rooms and exhibits of the museum portion of the castle which, given the length of time that passed from its last renovation over thirty years ago, had looked quite sad, now shine

in a completely new light. The remaining portion of the castle, which does not look as terrible as the old museum section once did, will be renovated in 2011, when the castle will celebrate its millennial.

## SECONDARY SCHOOL GRADUATES PERFORM A QUADRILLE

On 16 May, the Slovenian secondary school graduates together with their colleagues from five other European countries synchronously danced a quadrille in order to achieve a new Guinness world record in mass quadrille dancing. In addition, dancers from the Dance Association of Slovenia also competed for the record.

The Secondary School Graduation Parade, organised by Urška Dance School, brought young people together to dance in a street quadrille for the eighth year now. The secondary school graduates danced in more than 40 cities in Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Montenegro. This year's number of dancers was 26,924, which should suffice for the new record. Therefore, the condition to set a new world record, which is 23,628 dancers, was probably fulfilled. All the cities were connected by a satellite signal and that the dance was synchronised. The secondary school graduates from other countries had to learn the dance, because it has to be identical in all countries.

Now, all the documentation will have to be prepared and submitted to London, where it will be checked to see if a new Guinness world record has been set, which will take at least a month.



## Dr Anton Grad, professor and specialist in neurology and internal medicine: a person must be taken as a whole



Specialist in neurology and internal medicine. Professor and Department Head of Neurology. Doctor. But also a researcher who loves the work for which he has little time, a judicial expert who authoritatively stands behind his professional knowledge, and a volunteer-doctor who especially enjoys helping those who have no health insurance. A one-time tri-athlete who wishes to retain his former physique, a guide, an instructor, a judge of the work of rescue dogs and a ski instructor; yet, despite his many fields of expertise, he remains modest. He dislikes speaking of his years of difficult, persistent and successful studies, (multiple winner of the Student Prešern Fund and winner of the Boris Kidrič Fund for research achievements), and prefers, instead, to speak of his years of multi-oriented work, (even his excellent writing abilities and his constant battle to improve conditions in the health sector are not important!). The path he has taken for most of his life is undoubtedly paved with a wide scope of knowledge, a sharp intellect and a big heart. Dr. Anton Grad.

**YOU ARE A DOCTOR WITH TWO SPECIALIZATIONS, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME, YOU ENJOY WORKING WITH STUDENTS. YOU ARE AN EXCELLENT LECTURER AND DEPARTMENT HEAD OF THE NEUROLOGY DEPARTMENT. WAS WORKING ONLY IN MEDICINE NOT ENOUGH FOR YOU?**

A love for teaching is something that a person must have inside himself, and if he has that, he feels the need to pursue it. Maybe the fact that I became a Department Head has something to do with circumstance: a colleague, Professor Vodušek, who himself was Department Head for a long time, would now like to pursue other work, which is why I took over the Department – and because of my love for teaching. In terms of the specializations, it so happened that I was completing my specialization for internal medicine while I was working in intensive care, and when it was decided that the intensive care ward would be in the neurological clinic, I felt a need to become specialized in neurology – but it is also like this in the world. Even though I have licenses for both specializations, I practice neurology.

**MEDICINE IS, OF COURSE, SPECIALIZED: DOCTORS ARE EXPERTS IN NARROW FIELDS OF WORK, DESPITE A WIDE RANGE OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE NEED TO CONNECT IT. IS A WIDE SCOPE OF SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE IN MORE THAN ONE FIELD BENEFICIAL TO, AND WELCOMED BY, PATIENTS?**

That is a good question. A specialist would be someone who would know as much as possible from as narrow a field as possible. In medicine, lengthy studies are a requirement, as are studies while practicing, as only at this time are needs felt and expressed. From this perspective, I see that today, a specialization in family medicine is also required, even though it is absurd to say that someone is specialized in such a broad field. I would like to emphasize that illness knows neither neurology, nor internal medicine, nor dermatology, nor psychiatry, but it includes the person, and a person must be taken as a whole. I will not forget the surprise of my students who were in my clinic and said that it was just like a psychiatrist's office. It just happened that in the clinic that day, there were several depressed patients who also suffered from neurological symptoms. Specialization has mainly progressed in the area of surgery because individual achievements are specific and demanding, but when examining and communicating with a patient, a surgeon should also perceive them as a whole.

**AND YOU SEE, OBSERVE AND DEAL WITH THE PATIENT AS A WHOLE?**

I try to. It is very difficult in my work, where I also work with people who have difficulties in speaking and understanding. Sometimes I feel very incompetent in the area of communication: when I can't have a discussion with a patient, when a patient cannot explain his problems to me, when I must guess at the problems and at what is happening inside. I assist myself a lot by speaking to the nurses, who spend more time with patients, who know the patients better, and who, with a woman's intuition, better understand the needs of a patient who cannot speak: often, a person is very agitated, but it

would be very wrong if we gave him sedatives because it turned out that the patient was agitated due to pain and/or a full bladder.

## HOW IMPORTANT ARE YOUR SPECIALIZATIONS IN NEUROLOGY AND INTERNAL MEDICINE TO YOU AND TO YOUR EVERYDAY WORK WITH PATIENTS? DO THE TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE COMPLEMENT, BUILD UPON EACH OTHER?

In terms of a stroke, the diagnosis is provided from the field of neurology, while treatment is provided from the field of internal medicine. Therefore, both areas of knowledge complement each other well. A stroke is just one of the clinical forms of atherosclerosis, which today belong in the domain of internal medicine – but it touches all of us, whether it be our patients, or all of us (smiles).

**“The patient is, of course, the most important; we all say this, but at the same time, we are asked if we work according to guidelines and whether everything is financially all right. There is a lot of money, and at the same, there is very little money, because things are extremely expensive and therefore not accessible to everyone. We feel this most in the area of neurology, which has changed from an inexpensive science, to a, therapeutically, very expensive branch of medicine. An old anecdote: ‘Only lawyers with their lawsuits and the insurance company with its money change a doctor’s mind!’ Education and everything else has a smaller effect.”**

**“I try to be a good doctor, but I know that I have made many mistakes and I think that I still will. But these were unconscious. It is very easy to write of all that a doctor’s mistake could be, but in practice, things are not black and white.”**

## AFTER A BUSY CAREER, (CIIM, MASTER’S DEGREE, DOCTORATE, AND WHILE CONTINUING YOUR STUDIES IN THE UNITED STATES AND COMPLETING YOUR GRADUATE STUDIES IN PNEUMOLOGY), YOU WORK AT THE CLINIC OF NEUROLOGY. WHAT IS YOUR FIELD OF WORK?

Neurological patients, but this area is so horribly divided: there are older patients, who I see in the hospital every day, and who are with us because of strokes, and there are patients who are immobile because of Parkinson’s disease or multiple sclerosis; there are many patients with dementia; and there are patients I meet in the clinic every day because of dizziness, because of a previous loss of consciousness – these are young patients, and of course, also older patients, who come because of memory disturbances. I work with different populations of people.

## IN OUR DAY AND AGE, WHEN WAITING TIMES ARE HORRIBLE, ARE PATIENTS WELL CARED FOR? WHAT ARE THE CONDITIONS IN HEALTH CARE IN YOUR FIELD OF WORK?

We are at a crossroads: on the one hand, there are possibilities that we are able to provide and a huge leap forward has been made in the field of neurology. Fifteen years ago, we cured diseases with vitamins and offered diagnoses with the help of a hammer, and rarely with the assistance of computer tomography, whereas today, the possibilities are enormous. New biological medicine in the area of multiple sclerosis and other nervous system disorders has proven very successful, and in the area of strokes, internal-vascular splints have also undoubtedly brought us an incredible step forward. But this treatment is frighteningly expensive, and for this reason, we have fewer possibilities and we are very limited in the area of financial resources, and even more so in terms of personnel politics, which is catastrophic in the medical profession. Perhaps this is true in neurology even more so than in other areas, as in Slovenia, there are many white and grey areas: there are few neurologists to cover these – or there aren’t even any at all.

## IS THIS NOT A LITTLE STRANGE, GIVEN THAT WE KNOW THAT THE SLOVENIAN POPULATION IS GETTING OLDER AND THAT ITS NEEDS WILL ALWAYS BE GREATER?

Yes, yes, (temperamentally), these are sins from the past that all of us will be paying for – as patients. In ten, fifteen years, there will be a large increase in the elderly and in age-related degenerative diseases – dementia, Parkinson’s disease. Actually, the number of strokes, due to preventative measures, is somehow staying in the same range; it is not growing. Due to their course of development, the worsening from year to year, degenerative diseases are more difficult than strokes. But this is my personal perspective. I am glad that some are already aware of threatened groups, even though our eyes are all too often still closed. It will be necessary to take steps in this direction, but these should have already been taken yesterday – not today or even tomorrow.

## IS IT BECAUSE OF THIS – AS I UNDERSTAND – THAT YOU ARE CONSIDERING ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS?

That’s correct. Because those who decide, and those are politicians, do not well understand the problems of patients, the elderly - that are a large proportion of a marginalized population that is always increasing: if we also add to these the relatives who are forced to care for elderly patients, for whom there is not enough room in nursing homes, the number becomes huge.

## BUT DOES IT MAKE SENSE TO TRADE IN SO MANY YEARS OF STUDY, A PERMANENT COLLECTION OF KNOWLEDGE, WORK WITH PATIENTS, FOR POLITICAL WORK? WOULD YOU BE ABLE TO DO WITHOUT THE PERSONAL DOCTOR-PATIENT RELATIONSHIP THAT YOU HAVE SO DEVOTEDLY CONNECTED WITH?

That is a very good and a very personal question. I feel a need for this and I feel obligated to speak of the elderly. Of course, idealistically, I imagine that I would still be able to continue working with patients, at least in a clinic for people without health insurance. In our field, you must love people!

## WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO ENTER THE MEDICAL PROFESSION?

I can begin with the fact that, (sighs), I feel a need to help others...But it is also true that I was quite sick as a child, that I do not have artistic gifts, that I was not bright enough to study mathematics...

## I HAVE HEARD DIFFERENTLY: THAT YOU ARE VERY BRIGHT, EXCEPTIONALLY HARD-WORKING, GIFTED WITH MANY TALENTS, THAT YOU SPEAK NUMEROUS LANGUAGES...

(Modestly) Well, maybe this is what the voice of the people says, but I don't consider myself to be especially gifted, really I don't, (smiles with uncertainty). I like to do this, my own work; I have a good connection with people, although I did not have this connection when I decided to enter this profession: as a teenager, I was extraordinarily introverted, quiet, uncommunicative, and perhaps it was precisely the white coat that gave me the possibility to become more communicative.

## YOU WERE AN EXCELLENT STUDENT...

Yes, (with discomfort), others were also, better. It's true that I finished my studies first among my year, received an award and completed some research work, which is very demanding, but the average was not exceptionally brilliant. I worked on my master's degree for a long time, because simultaneously I was working on my specialization and at the Department – and this was difficult. I did my doctorate in the fields of neurology and internal medicine in combination – it pertained to changes in the heart condition that follow a stroke. I completed it one year prior to my specialization in neurology. This work, research, is an internal need, and today, I miss the work very much because I am quite inundated with routine work, to which I do not include my work at the clinic. I enjoy doing this work very much, it is very productive, but it also exhausts me. Yes, for research I would require more peace – a researcher, in a way, must be an egoist.

## BUT ALL OF YOUR WORK WITH PATIENTS AND TEACHING...

Nothing special, this is a normal path for many. Maybe I work more than others in the teaching field because I have many exams and many students in practice for their selected subject, but this to me is a pleasure and a joy.

## IN WHAT FREE TIME, WHICH YOU OBVIOUSLY DON'T HAVE, DID YOU MANAGE TO PLACE A LOVE FOR DOGS, RUNNING, BIKING...

Oh, this demands a lot of time! At that time, I went home earlier, but I worked there as well. I dedicated weekends and two days a week to working with dogs, but this is a time in life that I do not particularly miss. Being a guide for a rescue dog is a way of life, and as a judge and instructor, I also demanded this from others – I was more strict in this area than I am in medical exams and with students (smiles). Of course, I had ambition – to attain some peak. Also, in the triathlon and running, the marathon that I was not able to participate in

because of an injury. I wish that I could again attain such a good physical condition.

## YOU DON'T SEEM LIKE A PERSON WHO WOULD GIVE UP, WHO WOULD WISH TO ACHIEVE A GOAL AND WOULD NOT FIGHT FOR IT!

Of course, I am not! I often place myself in a situation where I think that I cannot do anything – neurologists have been in this position for the past two years; we see a new marble clinic beside our old long-standing one, but we are not in it and this depresses us! But we will continue to fight. But I have achieved enough; what more could I want? There are still at least ten years of work ahead of me.

## BUT ARE YOU A PERSON WHO COULD RETIRE AND TURN OFF YOUR PROFESSIONAL SIDE?

Oh, currently I see many things that I could be doing, but now, because of a shortage of time, I can't. I would like to spend time observing art, listening to music, visiting theatres and exhibitions, reading books, which are my passion, studying history... I am realizing that is it also necessary to take time for yourself and to know how to enjoy yourself when perceiving colours, nature.

## A THOUGHT THAT ACCOMPANIES YOU THROUGH LIFE?

During my studies, it was carpe diem – seize the day. Maybe the same holds true now, except that taking advantage of the day is different for me now: the day is taken advantage of even with a conversation, such as this one, so it is not necessary that it is taken advantage of only when I'm working. Of course, it is important that I do not do to another person that which I would not like done to me – but let it not sound like a cliché: I often make a mistake and hurt someone, but as a rule, unintentionally. But I also wish that I myself would act according to the healthy measures of life that I talk to others about (laughter)...





Text: BOGI PRETNAR, Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik



## Tourist farm ŽIBOVT

### A view over soured milk

If you look at the whiteness of the snow on 2,000 metre peaks over a bowl of just as white homemade soured milk, the view is even more worth admiring. If you want such a tasty view of the Savinja Alps, you will have to get first to the village of Solčava and the beautiful Panoramic Road. Hospitable tourist farms which stand over meadows are threaded along this winding road as if on an idyllic necklace.

The Žibovt tourist farm awaits you at the end of the Panoramic Road, which can be reached fastest from central Slovenia through the villages of Preddvor and Jezersko, then over the defunct border crossing between Slovenia and Austria to the Pavlič Pass, and then again get on the Slovenian side, near the Solčava Panoramic Road. Covnik, Žibovt and Šumet are the first farms at this end of the road, which is not called panoramic without reason. If you happen to have an opportunity, do not forget that this area is not only famous for an iron water spring, where you can even find a dipper for drinking, but also for Solčava marble, an extremely beautiful stone which decorates many facades, and for the acknowledged stonecutting art and craft of the Šumet family.

At the entrance to Žibovt, which is kept by Martina and Žarko Poličnik, on the right side is a brook running into a domestic fish pond, or rather a trough, as you can spot in the village free roaming cows right after the corner. Žibovt is an ecological farm of 59 hectares, which is enough for all the food put on the table to be produced here. Houses and farm buildings stand like on an open palm on a green meadow, which starts gradually descending immediately behind the house. A cluster of birches and a bench on which you can sit and think invite you for a walk in every season. The birches rustle greenly in the summer and gold in the autumn. And sour milk is as white as always. And it

is still organic and homemade as always, which is rarely the case with this Slovenian shepherd's and farmer's meal. You cannot even make it from commercial milk, as it becomes bitter rather than sour. The right sour milk is hard as pudding, it shivers slightly in a bowl, can be »cut« with a spoon and is covered with a thin layer of sour cream. Ordering buttered homemade buckwheat dumplings, or square homemade buckwheat bread with walnuts together with sour milk is a must, and both worth the sin. But this happens hopelessly rarely nowadays. You will frequently stop eating to observe the charming range of the Savinja Alps, as the peaks of Raduha, Ojstrica, Planjava, Brana, Turska gora, Skuta,



A view of the Savinja Alps over Savinja želodec, cheese and home-dried pears.

# GOODSLOVENIANINNS

Dolgi hrbet and Grintavec stretch ahead of you, as you enjoy yourself on the terrace, if your glance goes from left to right. Hiking, and in the time of modern tourism mountain biking, is at home here, and also down in the Logarska valley, which is a tourist mecca.

You can also spend a night at Žibovt. The rooms are first class, and a walk to the iron spring alone will fill you with the will to empty your plates. The kitchen follows both the seasons and tradition. As Savinja želodec is a famous dish in the Upper Savinja Valley, it may happen that you come across a sign 'Kosilo-želodec' (Lunch-stomach) in front of a restaurant, without having a clue why Slovenes have to explain that lunch goes right into this organ. This is why you have to see which stomach they have in mind. At Žibovt, želodec is prepared in thin dry slices, accompanied with homemade cheese and dried fruit - the farm has a fruit-drying house. Dried pears are a beautiful accompaniment to light, soft homemade cheese. Žibovt is a 'cheese' farm in general, as cheese is made here in various forms and has brought an award or two (for example, for so-called young boiled cheese). The cheese with ramson leaves, or wild garlic, is for gourmet tongues, while the cheese with green pepper is for those fond of stronger flavours. Smoked homemade cheese in tiny beads with a slightly brown crust can also be taken home.

Nettle soup, the best portion of vitamin C, many times finds its way to the table in the spring. Guests also praise the homemade žlikrofi, dough 'pockets' with various fillings. Veal stew is excellent, accompanied by buckwheat dumplings, an unavoidable Slovenian side dish. In addition, the lady of the house always makes rich homemade breakfasts and dinners with diverse homemade recipes. If you stay for a few days, you will be offered half-board, because they do not make lunch. But if you drop by at noon, you will surely find something. Most certainly, Alpine pie, which could not be named differently when coming in a package with such a panorama of mountains. A bit of dough for the shape and lots of cottage cheese filling, with a touch of homegrown fruit - apples or bilberries, raspberries, cherries, and other things nature brings. Nobody can resist this sweet temptation, so simple, natural and



**Buckwheat dumplings must be small and the milk must be thick.**



**Alpine pie with apples.**

juicy. Visitors also praise Žibovt's homemade jam, and this is why it pays to spend a night here and try jam for breakfast. It's not that you wouldn't be offered it otherwise, if you ask for it.

A tourist farm is primarily a farm, and farm work does not wait, which is why they have their rules. Žibovt is open from mid-April to the end of October, and if you want to enjoy their domestic cuisine, it would be better if you booked. Otherwise it may happen that you will have to manage with soured milk, buckwheat bread, cheese plate, Savinja želodec and Alpine pie. And the magnificent view. Would that be enough?

And this: you can get to the Solčava Panoramic Road from the other side, if you go from Ljubljana on the Štajerska motorway and exit at Mozirje, continue along the mostly renovated, though at certain parts still rather narrow road to Ljubno, Luče and Solčava, and when you reach this village, turn right towards Podolševa and then to the left towards the Panoramic Road. Now you join the Panoramic Road, with Žibovt at its other end. Above you is Mt. Olševa, with the famous Potočka zijalka cave, with the remains of the ancient dwellings of people who had to fight for their habitat against cave bear. Cave bears are no more there, but the cave still awaits you, if you are ready to trek uphill from Rogar for about an hour. This will be an experience after which Žibovt's (Rogar's, Klemenšek's...there are a number of farms) homemade food will taste even better!

Text: Jože Prešeren, photo: Darinka Mladenovič



## Ljubljana Castle

culture between mediaeval walls

The Roman name of present-day Ljubljana was Emona, which was first documented in the 1st century A.D., and probably originates from the pre-Roman period, of which archaeological excavations and legends give evidence as well. Archaeologists have discovered that the first inhabitants of today's Ljubljana originated from the period of the Urnfield culture. It has also been proved that Ljubljana's castle hill was already inhabited at that time and that the first building on the hill was during the Illyrian and Celtic periods; undoubtedly, the Romans had a stronghold there as well. The castle, whatever it looked like, has changed according to time and historical circumstances. The fact is that we cannot picture Ljubljana without it, because it is the main element of its view and the most noticeable external characteristic of Ljubljana. As for modern times, we also know that the City of Ljubljana has been renovating and investing large sums of money in the building for at least a hundred years; we can be proud that the

results of the renovation are becoming more and more visible and that it has slowly been assuming the role of the city's cultural and protocol centre as it never has before in its history.

### CASTLE FOR CULTURAL PURPOSES

The first mediaeval castle on the hill was built in the 9th century, but first mentioned in a historical document dating from between 1112 and 1125, when it was the seat of the Counts of Spannheim, the owners at that time, who even coined their own money in Ljubljana. It was mainly a military post, so the staff lived in the developing civilian part of the city. In 1335 it became the hereditary property of the Habsburgs and the administrative centre of the Duchy of Carniola. Finally, the Castle's "mediaeval" appearance was completed in the 15th century, when Duke later Emperor Frederick III of Austria enlarged and reinforced it with



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circular walls and corner towers, and two entry towers with a drawbridge and chapel. The gothic Chapel of St. George was consecrated in 1489 and looks almost the same today, while all the other buildings were either built or rebuilt in the 16th and 17th centuries. Until 1814 the castle served largely as barracks and then as a provincial prison for a few decades. The Outlook Tower, which has been one of the most visited tourist sights in Slovenia for several years now, because a large part of Slovenia is visible from it, was built in 1848. It was the home of a guard, whose duty was to fire cannons to warn of fire or announce important visitors or events in the city. In 1905 the Castle was purchased by the Municipality of Ljubljana to be used for cultural purposes; however, the city has been using it for these purposes only recently, because until 1964 it was mainly a residential dwelling. Since then the city has been rebuilding and renovating it; nevertheless, many events have taken place here for a number of years. Today, Ljubljana Castle is an exceptionally attractive tourist sight and venue of numerous cultural events, concerts, theatre performances, exhibitions, conferences and official receptions, which in the picturesque and beautifully arranged castle setting give a special character to the lively pulse of life in Ljubljana as the capital of Slovenia, and in many ways the capital of the European Union in the first half of 2008.

## THE CASTLE'S NEW ROLE

In 2007 it had 900,000 visitors, most of whom climbed the steep stairs to the Outlook Tower, which has been one of the most visited tourist sights in Slovenia for a number of years, and many visitors also take a look at the virtual museum. It needs to be mentioned that as many as 566 events were held in the renovated part of the Castle in 2007, most of them cultural events, as well as wedding ceremonies. Last year a funicular began to take the visitors to the Castle, an exceptional technical acquisition, which for several years upset many citizens and city authorities, but in the end was well received, even though it is not economically viable. A well-planned road and numerous footpaths lead to the castle as well, which the residents of the city centre use for walks and recreation.

The city is planning to arrange more shops and restaurants in the castle, which will be carefully integrated into the Castle environment. For this purpose, the city needs an additional 20 million euros; the renovation is supposed to take at least another two years, but these premises will then be easier to let.

At the beginning of May, on 8 and 9 May to be precise, a meeting of mayors of the capital cities of EU Member States and candidate countries for EU membership was organised at Ljubljana Castle in the framework of the Slovenian Presidency of the EU Council. The meeting coincided with the European Forum, the informal meeting of European leaders in Ljubljana, Europe Day, and Ljubljana's Peace Day. Many international meetings this year are being held in the framework of intercultural dialogue, which also symbolically emphasizes the openness and tolerance of Ljubljana and the whole of Slovenia.

Already in April an original theatre project, City of Sighs, was staged at the castle; the traditional Mediaeval Day is already being carefully organised, when the castle assumes a completely mediaeval appearance for one day. A number of historical exhibitions are being prepared, and most cultural events this year will be part of the traditional Ljubljana Festival with performances by numerous famous European musicians. By the way, the Festival Ljubljana company also manages the renovated Castle.

Text: ANJA HREŠČAK, Photo: Darinka Mladenovič



## A TOWN WHICH WAS SO CHARACTERISED BY THIS HISTORICAL PERIOD, STILL REVIVES MEMORIES OF MEDIEVAL MANNERS AND CUSTOMS

Škofja Loka, a town of bishops, as named by some, is the best preserved medieval town in Slovenia, and its image has changed only slightly since the 16th century, and this is its most distinctive feature. The town has endured attacks, plague, fires and earthquakes through its history. A great fire in 1511 badly damaged the town, but Bishop Filip soon had it reconstructed. This was the last major intervention in the external image of Škofja Loka. In 1987 the entire town was declared a cultural monument.

## ŠKOFJA LOKA COAT-OF-ARMS – A REWARD FOR HEROISM

The history of the town begins in 973, when the famous emperor Otto II gave the territory of Loška to Abraham from Freising in Bavaria. The town of Loka was erected in the Middle Ages at the confluence of the Selška Sora and Poljanska Sora rivers in the region of Gorenjsko. The name means 'grassy world by the water'. The Freising bishops later renamed the administrative and economic centre of the large Loka dominion, which they received as a gift, Škofja Loka (Bischoflack). The settlement was mentioned as a town for the first time in a document in 1274. Records indicate that the residents, in order to achieve better security, protected the town in the 14th century with walls which had five town gates secured with the same number of

watchtowers. Those walls have been preserved almost in their entirety. Medieval Loka Castle (or Škofja Loka Castle) still stands above the town. Its original image is missing the tower which housed prisons cells, as the nuns who lived in the town later had the tower demolished. Why?

During the entire Middle Ages, Škofja Loka enjoyed municipal autonomy, and between 973 and 1803 the territory, together with the valleys of Selška and Poljanska, was owned by the Freising Diocese in Bavaria.

The coat-of-arms of the town which, as well as the town itself, has remained unchanged since the 14th century, is particularly interesting even today. It displays a part of town walls with watchtowers and gates, with a black man in the middle. The coat-of-arms is connected with an interesting legend- many visitors are interested in how the head of a black man found itself in the middle of the town's coat-of-arms. A legend says that



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landlord Abraham from Bavaria once travelled through the valley of Poljanska with his black servant. In a dark forest, in the middle of their journey, they came across a giant bear. Duke Abraham stood still, while the black man took his bow and killed the bear. The master embraced his servant and told him: "You've saved my life, my servant. I will reward you for your bravery, so that coming generations will know what a hero you were". To express his gratitude, he ordered that the head of a black man be added to the coat-of-arms.

## THE MIDDLE AGES EVEN TODAY

Because it was the Middle Ages that left such a deep mark in the very identity of the town, its citizens are trying in a way to remember this period even today. One of the best known events in Škofja Loka is Venerina pot (Venus' Path), an event dedicated to the Middle Ages. The main show is a rich medieval market,

which offers its visitors elegant and tasty souvenirs of the old Loka, while authentic medieval meals are served in taverns. Numerous masters and craftsmen with crafts which have been almost lost are presented at the market, and visitors can watch craftsmen make Škofja Loka paper, Loka and Dražgoše bread, and can learn about calligraphy and pottery and see how the making of scarves, carving trade, lace-making, threading of flax on a spinning wheel, and hand weaving and basketwork once looked like. Countrywomen from nearby prepare goodies which are later sold at a food market. There you can find various milk products, cheeses, cereals and cereal products, homemade pastries, herbs, meat, dried fruit, spirits, poultry, small cattle, honey products.

Venerina pot is an international historical – cultural/tourist project in which Slovenia and Škofja Loka have been involved for a number of years. The idea for the project was floated at the University of Klagenfurt, with the main concept of the event being the medieval legend of the knight, Ulrich von Lichtenstein, who dressed up as a woman so that people could not recognize him as he travelled in the 13th century through 52 towns of the present-day Czech Republic, Austria, Italy and Slovenia, also making a stop in Škofja Loka. When Ulrich came to the borders of the present-day Slovenia, a duke spoke to him and greeted him in Slovenian: »Buge vas primi Gralva Venus (God accompanies you, Empress Venus).“ Ulrich's travels today represent the concept of the presentation of his, or to be more precise, Venus' path.

Remembrance of medieval times is also maintained by the recently awoken Škofjeloški pasjon (Processio Locopolis), the oldest preserved play in the Slovenian language and the only remaining passion play in Europe from the Baroque period. Processio Locopolis is also listed among the Slovenian cultural heritage. It was written in 1721 by the Capuchin Father Romuald Marušič. It was staged only a couple of times during the Baroque, and was later completely abandoned. After 200 years, people from Škofja Loka started staging it again in 1999, and this has become a tradition. The play involves more than 600 people, and performances are seen every year by about 40,000 visitors. The passion takes place in the form of a procession which is divided into scenes from the Bible, and represents the story of humankind from the fall of Adam and Eve through the allegory of death to the suffering of Jesus Christ. Scenes involve portable stages, carriages, horses and are performed through the streets and squares of Škofja Loka.



# DOMESTIC CRAFTS AS CULTURAL TOURISM

## In Prekmurje

you can still find families who make their living from traditional domestic crafts. They have recently become rather interesting for tourists who visit local workshops and learn crafts.

Text: ANJA HREŠČAK, Photo: Darinka Mladenovič



**Although the people of Prekmurje long ago abandoned traditional crafts as a source of income, they do not let them become forgotten. On the contrary, revival of domestic crafts, so-called cultural tourism, attracts increasing numbers of visitors to Prekmurje and Prekija.**

For example, the fourth workshop on traditional domestic crafts of Prekmurje, organised by the Regional Museum of Murska Sobota as a partner in the project Craft Attract – old crafts and new attractions for cultural tourism, has just been concluded in the village of Filovci. A workshop on twig and straw wickerwork, also among the domestic crafts of Prekmurje, is expected in the beginning of April.

Although only a minority of the population deals with traditional crafts, you can still find families in Prekmurje who make their living exclusively from traditional domestic crafts. One is the Bojnec family, who manage the only remaining pottery workshop in the village of Filovci, which used to be predominantly a pottery village. Besides dealing with pottery on their own and maintaining the tradition, they also organise educational workshops for tourists. This year, eight participants from Slovenia attended a two-day workshop and were acquainted with traditional techniques of forming and decorating clay products. They were assisted by Tomi Bojnec, otherwise an architecture student, and at the same time the third generation of potters in the Bojnec family.

Like in the Bojnec family, the third generation of the Celec family also maintains tradition by making gingerbread hearts, which is also a domestic craft.

'Grandpa' Štefan Celec started this craft in Murska Sobota, and his grandson Gregor Celec continues in grandfather's workshop the crafts of gingerbread making, mead making, and candle making. Almost all the family members help him out. Gingerbread, the mixture from which those goodies are made, usually in the shape of a heart, contains starch, whisked eggs and edible paint. All is then baked together and written over with romantic verses. Young men from Prekmurje once bought gingerbread hearts with romantic verses at country fairs for their sweethearts, and some still do even today.

Besides gingerbread making, one of the most interesting traditional crafts is straw plaiting, or dožnjek in the local dialect. Tourists who come to Prekmurje can also learn this craft, as Jani Jakob holds an annual workshop in Prekmurje, and also continues the family tradition in Ljubljana, where he lives. Hand-made products from straw, and also from rye, which is more suitable because of its size, are characteristic of Prekmurje and recall the customs at the end of the harvest. Jani Jakob has been making them since childhood. He comes from the village of Lipovci in the Beltinci Municipality, where his family still maintains this skill. Dožnjek, the product after which the craft was named, was at first only a simply braided wreath made from wheat ears and decorated with field flowers, and now the word dožnjek denotes decorative straw products of all kinds, and also various vases, amphorae, baskets, hearts and Christmas decorations – of course, everything from straw. For a number of years, his hand-made chandeliers have been the most attractive products for tourists and visitors. Dožnjek is one of the oldest handicrafts products in Prekmurje, and the people of Lipovci began making them more than forty years ago.

Jani Jakob also participates at various fairs, medieval events, and exhibitions of domestic crafts, and he also started teaching in schools, kindergartens, institutes and nursing homes.

During the recent Easter holidays, the making of ramenke – Easter eggs – was also popular in Prekmurje. Decorated eggs are symbolic items celebrating Easter and are indispensable at the Easter table. The decoration of so-called ramenke, which get their name from a special painting technique, is a tradition in the Rajsar family, who started the craft before the First World War. Today's multicoloured and two-coloured remenke, with characteristic patterns carved in wax in the form of flowers, ears, spirals, storks and castles, come from the skilful hands of this family, which maintains the tradition. Ramenke are made in three characteristic colours – red, white and black. The rosettes at the top and bottom of the egg are a special feature, while ancient decorative elements can also be found.

Straw for roofing



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