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The latest from Slovenia



IN FOCUS INTERVIEW: **Karl Viktor Erjavec, Minister of Foreign Affairs**
WONDERLAND: **Bled - a vision of paradise** EUROBASKET: **EuroBasket 2013 is just
around the corner and Slovenian hearts are beating to the beat of the basketball team**



EuroBasket SLOVENIA 2013

4th - 22nd September 2013

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Karl Viktor Erjavec

**Cooperation is of the utmost importance:
it opens doors**

Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

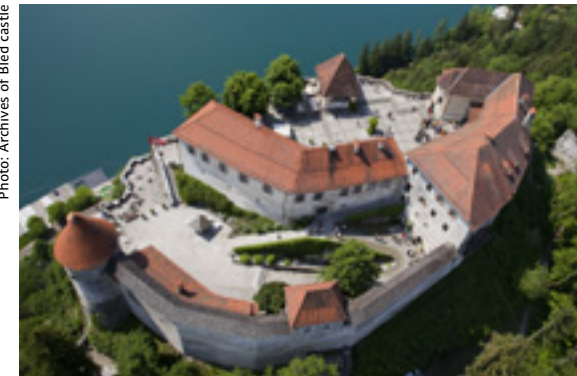


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Bled

A vision of paradise

Photo: Archives of Bled castle



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European Basketball Championships

**EuroBasket 2013 is just around the corner and Slovenian
hearts are beating to the beat of the basketball team**

Photo: Archives of Basketball Federation of Slovenia



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Photo: Bruno Toič

Tanja Glogovčan, editor

Hear the proud Slovenian call

Our August issue highlights EuroBasket and the Bled Strategic Forum (BSF). The Bled Strategic Forum 2013 is entitled “A Changing Europe in a Changing World”. We asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Karl Viktor Erjavec, what changes and challenges would be explored at the forum. He gave us a very interesting and informative answer. As the environment is one of the central topics to be discussed at the BSF, the issue features the setting of the forum, the town of Bled. It is set against a backdrop of splendid nature and remarkable history, rowing sports and a unique oral tradition. All these aspects will be presented to you by the mayor of Bled, Janez Fajfar, the secretary-general of the Rowing Federation of Slovenia, Jernej Slivnik, and the Bled parish priest, Janez Ferkolj. Certainly, we could not cover everything, but we do hope that our description of Bled and its features will encourage you to visit this treasure of the Alps.

We are all eagerly anticipating the EuroBasket championship. It will undoubtedly be a truly memorable event that it would be a shame to miss. Apart from great basketball games and the overall atmosphere of adrenaline and excitement, fans will be able to experience excellent cuisine. You will surely enjoy kranjska klobasa (Carniolan sausage), wine-soaked ham or at least one of the official EuroBasket 2013 wines.

The issue also reports on the Brdo Process, the meeting of Western Balkan leaders, and the French President François Hollande’s first official visit to Slovenia. Moreover, we bring you interviews with the businessman Janez Škrabec, director of the Riko company, the programme leader of the Okarina Festival in Bled, Leo Ličof, and Igor Falshin, a Russian businessman.

Last but not least, we warmly congratulate the Trieste writer Boris Pahor on his centenary. At his venerable age, Mr Pahor is incredibly vigorous and full of inner strength. We have tried to reflect at least a part of his creative life and literary work.

As the official EuroBasket anthem puts it, “Hear the proud Slovenian call, feel the heartbeat of us all.” It is a story of Slovenia, its outstanding sportsmen, writers, artists, businessmen, and its beautiful land. This is the story you will find in Sinfo.



Photo: GCO

I Feel Slovenia – I Feel Basketball

Slovenia is counting the days until the start of the European Basketball Championship, which will be the greatest sporting event in Slovenia so far. From 4 to 22 September, four Slovenian towns, Ljubljana, Celje, Koper and Jesenice, will host the competition between twenty-four European basketball national teams for the title of the best in this interesting sport. Organising a European championship in as widespread and popular sport as basketball is an enormous organisational and financial challenge for Slovenia, which is currently not on its best economic and financial form, to use sporting terminology. In spite of this, I am convinced that we will host EuroBasket 2013 brilliantly and prove yet again that Slovenians are not just great at sport, but also at organisation. In the current challenging economic conditions, this is also an important sign to the wider international public that we have the know-how and ability to organise the most demanding projects. And it is an equally, if not more important message to the domestic public who now, more than ever, need mainly positive encouragement to boost their confidence. Along with the psychological effects of EuroBasket 2013, sporting ambitions are also important. Slovenia's national team is very good and can count on a very good placing if they are encouraged by a loud and enthusiastic domestic audience. The greatest optimists are talking openly about a medal, but we should remain realistic. Which does not mean that Slovenia has absolutely no chance of climbing the winner's podium.

It should be noted that basketball is one of the most popular sports in Slovenia, with a well-organised federation and good-quality

home league. Our basketball players can boast of top achievements dating back to the days of the former Yugoslavia, which was once a world superpower in this sport. This is proven by the fact that the national teams of all the former Yugoslav republics have qualified for this year's European championship: Slovenia, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Montenegro. The mere attendance of these teams promises superb basketball and large numbers of visitors from the countries nearby: according to the organisers, reservations so far show that we can also expect a good response from more distant countries like Finland, Russia and Turkey. If we add fans from Italy, France, Spain, Germany, Belgium, Great Britain, Greece, Israel, Poland and the Czech Republic, Slovenia is set to be a mini-Europe in September. This really is an opportunity we cannot miss, as it offers plenty of economic and promotional opportunities, which are especially valuable in a recession. As I said, EuroBasket 2013 will be the greatest sporting event in Slovenia so far, which does not mean that we are not experienced in organising great sporting events. Slovenia has already successfully organised world championships in rowing and wild-water canoeing, and the global public is undoubtedly familiar with winter events in Planica, Kranjska Gora, Maribor and Pokljuka, to mention only the most renowned. This is why I am confident that EuroBasket 2013 will be the best European basketball championship so far, and I cordially invite you to visit us and feel Slovenia directly. You know: I Feel Slovenia.

See you in September at EuroBasket 2013. Welcome!

Celebration at the Russian Chapel

More than a thousand people gathered at the Russian Chapel under the Vršič mountain pass, at a ceremony in memory of First World War Russian prisoners of war who died in an avalanche while building the road over the pass.

In her opening address, the Slovenian Prime Minister, Alenka Bratušek stressed that Russia was one of the most important economic partners of Slovenia. The annual ceremony at the Russian Chapel is a celebration of friendship between the two nations, said Minister of Foreign Affairs Karl Erjavec. The successful development of cooperation between Slovenia and the Russian Federation was also confirmed by the Deputy Chairman of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, Yury Leonidovich Vorobyov. This year's ceremony was attended by a number of senior officials from Slovenia and Russia, including the President of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, the President of the National Assembly, Janko Veber, delegations of the State Duma (the lower house) and the Federal Council (the upper house) of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation.



Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA

The ceremony was attended also by Archbishop Yevgeny of Vereya, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church Education Committee, and Celje Bishop Stanislav Lipovšek, who represented the Slovenian Catholic Church.

More cooperation between Slovenia and Russia

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Karl Erjavec, and the Minister of Communications and Mass Media of the Russian Federation, Nikolai Nikiforov, had a meeting at the end of July, at which they reviewed the implementation of a programme of major bilateral projects.

After the meeting, Minister Erjavec said that the programme now entailed 37 major projects in various stages of implementation. The latest project is a EUR 124m textile plant that is to be built in Russia by the end of 2015. Mr Erjavec and Mr Nikiforov also discussed the most important strategic project on the list - the construction of the South Stream pipeline. In addition to Telekom Slovenija, Russian investors are interested in banks and the airport operator Aerodrom Ljubljana. Other Slovenian companies from various sectors could also become the subject of interest among corresponding Russian companies.



Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

It was agreed that Slovenian and Russian businessmen will meet soon at a business conference to be held in the autumn in Moscow.

Meeting of former Prime Ministers in Trakošćan

The President of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, and the former Prime Minister of Croatia, Jadranka Kosor, held an informal meeting in Trakošćan, Croatia, to commemorate the fourth anniversary of the meeting at which they reached a key breakthrough on the long-running border dispute between Slovenia and Croatia.

In his address, President Pahor stressed that it is important to keep alive the memory of this decisive moment from four years ago, when it seemed that Slovenia and Croatia "could not find a way to solve the outstanding issues between them and that, by each stubbornly insisting on its position, they pushed their relationship to the limit, threatening to escalate it into a security concern." Ms Kosor noted that, although yielding no concrete decision, the meeting resulted in an agreement on a new way of solving the unresolved issues between the two countries and laid a foundation for a subsequent agreement on how to resolve the border issue.



Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

As part of the celebrations, Jadranka Kosor, now an independent Member of Croatian Parliament, and Slovenian President Pahor, unveiled a plaque in memory of the meeting in Trakošćan from four years ago.

Meeting of the Brdo Process - Together on the path of opportunity

On 25 July 2013, the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, and the President of the Republic of Croatia, Ivo Josipović, hosted the Leaders' Meeting of the Brdo Process at Brdo pri Kranju, with special guest, François Hollande, the President of the French Republic.



Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA

Upon their arrival, the leaders were greeted by the President of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, and the President of Croatia, Ivo Josipović.

Together with the President of the Republic of Croatia, Ivo Josipović, the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, decided to continue the initiative begun in March 2010 at Brdo pri Kranju with the meeting of Prime ministers, which has now been shifted to the level of heads of states.

Together with the President of Croatia, Ivo Josipović, the President of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, decided to continue the initiative begun in March 2010 at Brdo pri Kranju with a meeting of Prime ministers, which has now been shifted to the level of heads of states.

On 25 July, the heads of states of the Brdo Process met to seek ways to strengthen the process of enlargement in their informal working discussions. The meeting focused on the significance of reforms and close mutual cooperation and support as the foundations of accelerated progress towards EU membership. Good communication and cooperation between the region

and EU Member States are also important, and for those purposes, in addition to two Member States, Slovenia and Croatia, France was also present as a guest. The presence of France at the presidential and ministerial levels added special weight to the meeting. In their discussion, the leaders noted the significance of several key social processes, such as building trust, reconciliation, compliance with binding international treaties and the rule of law.

After the plenary session, the President of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, and the President of the French Republic, François Hollande, held a press conference. Firstly, President Pahor expressed his gratitude

to President Hollande for attending the Leaders' Meeting of the Brdo Process as the first head of state of one of the most important countries in the Union, which is significant in terms of EU enlargement. President Pahor stressed that the leaders engaged in the Brdo Process recognise the opportunities that the Process offers for the resolution of open issues and efforts for reconciliation, peace, security, stability and welfare. "This part of Europe offers many opportunities which must be used to the advantage of the region and the European Union," said the Slovenian President.

The President of Slovenia also noted that one of the main purposes of the Brdo Process is to



Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA

In the photo: leaders of the Brdo Process: Filip Vujanović, Željko Komšić, Bujar Nisihani, Ivo Josipović, François Hollande, Borut Pahor, Atifeta Jahjaga, Gjorge Ivanov, Tomislav Nikolić.



Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA

The President of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, on the Leaders' Meeting of the Brdo Process, "The main purpose is for all of us to advance along the path of opportunity together".

point to the numerous special characteristics and features of the region to make it interesting also for enlargement. The Slovenian President is certain that such informal meetings contribute to eliminating prejudices about the Balkans as an unstable region with no concrete plans. In future, the Brdo Process may play an exceptional role in the enlargement process, added President Pahor, and he confirmed that the informal meetings between the leaders of the Brdo Process would continue. The next meeting of the Brdo Process will be in Croatia and will be attended by Martin Schultz, President of the European Parliament.

At the press conference, President Hollande said that his par-

icipation in the summit of the Brdo Process was a great honour for him. He noted that the region of the Western Balkans was still weighed down with open issues which require "alertness". He expressed his certainty that the Western Balkans must continue the reform process and find alternative solutions for disputes, although the door to the European Union might perhaps remain closed for a while after Croatia's accession.

The leaders issued a joint statement or so-called conclusions of the meeting at the end of the plenary session of the Brdo Process, which also included the idea that the shared vision has remained unchanged i.e. to include the Western Balkans

in the European Union. The enlargement of the European Union must continue and the countries of the Western Balkans must continue on the path of reform and reconciliation.

The leaders' joint statement also highlighted the fact that the area of the Western Balkans has already seen important positive changes which have contributed to stabilising the region and economic and social progress. "Together, we want to prove that open issues can be resolved within the framework of the proposed forum through open political dialogue," they stated, stressing that they wish to change the impression that Balkan countries cannot resolve bilateral issues unaided.

The leaders issued a joint statement or so-called conclusions of the meeting at the end of the plenary session of the Brdo Process, which also included the idea that the shared vision remained unchanged i.e. to include the Western Balkans in the European Union. The enlargement of the European Union must continue and the countries of the Western Balkans must continue on the path of reform and reconciliation.

The President of the French Republic, François Hollande, first official visit to Slovenia

France sees Slovenia as an important economic partner

Slovenian President Borut Pahor stressed that relations between Slovenia and France were excellent and that the Strategic Partnership provided a good basis for closer cooperation in the future: "We assess that, along with the deepening of partner relations, bilateral cooperation in politics, the economy, culture and education should be strengthened as a matter of priority," he said.



Photo: Staniko Gruden/STA

Following discussions with his Slovenian counterpart, Borut Pahor, the President of the French Republic, François Hollande, said that they agreed that economic relations between the countries must be strengthened.

President Hollande and Mr Veber strongly advocated closer cooperation between the French and Slovenian national assemblies at committee level and between parliamentary friendship groups.

On the occasion of his first official visit to Slovenia, during which he also attended the meeting of the heads of states of the Western Balkans, the President of the French Republic, François Hollande, hosted by the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, also met the President of the National Assembly, Janko Veber, and Slovenian Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek.

FRANCE HAS CONFIDENCE IN THE SLOVENIAN BANKING SYSTEM

"France trusts in the Slovenian banking system, which will nevertheless have to prove its reliability, just like the systems in other countries," said the French President, who also believes that Europe must be a synonym for trust, not fear. In this respect, he rejected the fears relating to the existing Eurozone: "The countries will undoubtedly remain in the Eurozone in spite of the problems in some of them," he stressed. According to President Hollande, it is necessary to focus particularly on overcoming the recession. "Europe must focus on boosting economic growth and not on

strict austerity measures," Hollande stressed. With regard to the economic conditions in Europe, the French President was optimistic. "An array of indicators published in recent days show that we have good reasons to believe that we will overcome the crisis," he added.

FRANCE WISHES TO STRENGTHEN BUSINESS RELATIONS WITH SLOVENIA

Following discussions with his Slovenian counterpart, Borut Pahor, the President of the French Republic, François Hollande, said that they agreed that economic relations between the countries must be strengthened. He emphasised that France supported the cooperation of French companies in the planned privatisation process in Slovenia within a framework of transparency. "France has complete confidence in the Slovenian economy," he stressed. President Hollande had already presented a list of companies and fields to the Slovenian President which are of particular interest to French companies, but provided no further informa-

tion on the matter. These include companies in various sectors; in the President's opinion, French knowledge, technology and capital invested in Slovenia could prove beneficial. He also noted that Renault had been followed in Slovenia by other French companies due to Slovenia's high-quality workforce, as well as its favourable business environment. According to several Slovenian media outlets, France is particularly interested in energy companies, banks and the food industry. The French President also stressed that he felt personally obliged to further deepen relations with the countries of the Western Balkans, particularly because of his participation at the Leaders' Meeting of the Brdo Process. He said he was honoured to attend the meeting and congratulated the Slovenian President on its success.

ESTABLISHING A POSITIVE STANDARD FOR SLOVENIA AND FRANCE

President Pahor said that he had acquainted his French counterpart with the plans to end the



Photo: Staniko Gruden/STA



Photo: Staniko Gruden/STA

President Hollande expressed his certainty that balancing anti-crisis measures on the one hand and concern for economic growth on the other is the correct way to preserve hope, which the citizens of the EU Member States must have in these difficult times, and that we can only be successful together. The parliaments of Member States must have an important role in achieving this goal. In the photo: President of the French Republic, François Hollande and President of the Slovenian National Assembly, Janko Veber

After the discussions, the Slovenian Prime Minister accompanied by Karl Erjavec, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, invited the guest from France and his delegation for a short walk through the old town centre of Ljubljana, the Slovenian capital, as a gesture of hospitality and good relations. The French President received a warm welcome from Slovenian citizens and French tourists.

economic crisis in Slovenia and boost economic growth and the desire for France to remain an investor in Slovenia. "Thus, in the light of the meeting and bilateral relations, we have set a new milestone on behalf of both countries which marks a positive standard in relations between the countries. And my wish is for France to see in Slovenia a friend and ally, as Slovenia views France," he stressed. President François Hollande, also met Janko Veber, the President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia. The discussion partners agreed that the agreement on the strategic partnership between the countries was an important achievement. President Hollande and

Mr Veber strongly advocated closer cooperation between the French and Slovenian national assemblies at committee level and between parliamentary friendship groups. President Veber presented the guest with an invitation for the President of the French National Assembly to visit the Slovenian Parliament. The discussion ended with a joint statement proposing that national parliaments play a greater role in strategic agreements. The Slovenian Prime Minister, Alenka Bratušek, also emphasised excellent friendly relations during her talks with the guest from France and introduced the Government's plans to overcome the crisis. The discussion

partners paid special attention to enhancing bilateral economic relations and agreed that when preparing and adopting measures, social solidarity must be maintained. According to President Hollande, the efforts of the Slovenian Government are encouraging and inspire confidence.

The French President also met representatives of the University of Ljubljana, the Minister of Education, Science and Sport, Jernej Pikalo, and a group of students. They focused especially on youth unemployment as a severe problem throughout the European Union, emphasising the opportunities that young people have in Slovenia and France.

According to President Hollande, the efforts of the Slovenian Government are encouraging and inspire confidence.

Torbjörn Månsson, Msc
Acting executive director, BAMC

The rehabilitation of the banking system tops the list of the Government's priorities

Torbjörn Månsson holds a master's degree in economics. His basic task with the Bank Asset Management Company (BAMC) is to establish a functional team and an establishment which will complete its tasks competently and promptly. Prior to this post, he worked for Bain & Co. for eighteen years, for the last ten years as head of Nordic Private Equity Practice, and focused on consulting in asset management, and on investments and strategies. He also managed Nordic Performance Improvement Practice, where he dealt primarily with restructuring and optimising operations in various industries. He has worked in thirty countries, from China, India, Japan, the United States of America and Mexico to Europe. Between 1991 and 1995, he worked for the SIAR-Bossard company for Eastern Europe as a consultant on strategies for entering new markets.



Photo: Tamino Petelinček/STA

The rehabilitation of the banking system tops the list of the Government's priorities. How bad is the situation in Slovenian banks in your opinion?

It is not good if the three system-relevant banks, i.e. banks that are too large or too important to let them go down, are unable to raise fresh capital in the market. If these banks were not so important for the Slovenian economy and society, the state would revoke their banking licences and they would collapse. However, the damage done to society by this would be too severe and its cost would be much greater than the cost of state aid to banks through recapitalisations and the Bank Assets Management Company (BAMC), which will take on the management of non-performing loans of these banks. It is clear that billions have already been lost, and by managing and selling non-performing loans the BAMC will aim to recover as much of taxpayers' money as possible.

The European Commission and the ECB also require the performance of an independent external audit of banks. Do you think this is necessary and, if so, why?

I cannot comment on what the European Commission and the ECB understand as necessary. In any case, the BAMC will examine their findings and use them to the greatest extent possible in its preparations to take over loans to avoid unnecessary costs.

Do you also share the opinion of the European Commission and the European Commissioner for Finance, Olli Rehn, that the transfer procedures of bad bank loans to the BAMC can only be initiated when the external auditors deliver their opinion?

Transfer procedures which in-

volve any kind of state aid have to be agreed on with the Directorate-General for Competition of the European Commission. External audits must be carried out because the Competition Directorate-General needs these external audit findings in order to make credible decisions. This means that this really is necessary in order for the packages of loans to be transferred. However, a pilot transfer of assets at a price equal to the market price and without hidden state aid could take place sooner.

When will the majority of bad loans be transferred to the BAMC? Can you also tell us more about the specific deadlines and what is currently going on in this area?

In view of the ongoing procedures of the European Commission, major transfers of bad loans are planned for September, although we are still seeking ways to make a pilot transfer first.

The BAMC's aim is to preserve taxpayers' money at minimum cost. The Government has already confirmed the recapitalisation of NLB and NKBM totalling EUR 900 million at the general meetings of the two banks. What is your explanation for this?

The main purpose of the State's assistance to banks – whether directly or through the BAMC – is to create conditions for the sustainable and profitable operation of banks so that they will be able to raise capital from external, international sources under favourable conditions, thus improving their capacity to provide lending to the Slovenian economy. By doing so, banks will contribute to the recovery of the Slovenian economy and help it get back on its feet. Aid to banks is therefore a package solution involving bank re-

capitalisation, the transfer of non-performing loans to the BAMC and the setting of a new strategic direction in banks' operation to make sure that something like this will never happen again. In carrying out these procedures to rescue banks, we must not lose sight of the most important objective: through the good practice of the BAMC and the Government, we must recover as much of taxpayers' money, that is bring it to the state budget, as possible.

The measures to rescue banks and the new bank rehabilitation and liquidation rules without burdening the taxpayers were also discussed by the EU finance ministers a few days ago. What is your comment on this?

I cannot comment on the discussion of EU finance ministers.

What bad loans are scheduled to be transferred first to the BAMC?

At this stage, it is too early to give any details.

Do you consider the law governing the BAMC appropriate and sufficient to guarantee the effectiveness of your work?

Some of the provisions of the law are very good, giving us a considerably better basis for effective bank resolution than certain other countries, for example Spain and Greece, have had. On the other hand, there are also inconsistencies, to which we must pay attention and seek appropriate solutions, which is very time-consuming. That is why it is important that we find solutions to these issues which will guarantee the effectiveness of our work.

How will the BAMC contribute to the recovery of Slovenia's economy?

The BAMC will contribute to the

We are convinced that Slovenia, if it takes the right political decisions, can solve its problems on its own.

recovery of Slovenia's economy in many ways. First, it will relieve the banks of non-performing loans, enabling them to clean their balance sheets and do all that is necessary to ensure their normal operation. The "clean" banks will be able to start lending to enable the development and implementation of good projects, which, in turn, will further the recovery of the economy.

Second, the BAMC will play an important role in seeking solutions for those non-performing loans which banks keep on their balance sheets for one reason or another and for which they cannot find any appropriate solution. We will contribute new approaches and share international experience in dealing with these kinds of situations to achieve the necessary reconstruction of banks and help them to again conclude good business deals.

Third, the BAMC will make sure that certain loans are protected from drastic price changes in the market. With all the above activities, the BAMC will promote good practice and provide an example for others to follow. We hope that, by doing so, it will attract external and/or foreign capital to finance the loans managed. This will ease the burden on the state budget and taxpayers and will have a positive influence on the dynamics of the local economy.

And finally, another question: is Slovenia on the right track to manage its financial affairs without the assistance of the troika, i.e. without assistance from Brussels?

We are convinced that Slovenia, if it takes the right political decisions, can solve its problems on its own.

BSF 2013

A Changing Europe in a Changing World

In early September, Slovenia is expecting approximately 450 guests from about 40 countries, including heads of state, prime ministers, foreign and other ministers, high representatives of international organisations, entrepreneurs of successful foreign and domestic companies, academics and young people, to attend the Bled Strategic Forum (BSF) taking place in Bled, beside the beautiful lake surrounded by the Alps.

Photo: Personal archive



Despite the different approaches, it is clear that in the future, the European Union will be more integrated – as a banking, economic and political union. Discussions will also deal with EU enlargement policy.

The 8th Bled Strategic Forum, to be held between 1 and 3 September, is organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with the Centre for European Perspective. In the last few years, the Forum has gained considerable visibility, becoming one of the most prominent international conferences in the region and developing into a popular gathering of politicians, businessmen, academics and young people.

This year, in the light of the European Year of Citizens, the Forum entitled “A Changing Europe in a Changing World” covers global and regional topics specifically related to Europe. Panel discussions will focus on the future of Europe and European Monetary Union. Despite the different approaches, it is clear that in the future, the Eu-

ropean Union will be more integrated – as a banking, economic and political union. Discussions will also deal with EU enlargement policy. One of the panels will focus on EU-Turkey relations and the other on the current situation and current integration progress of the Western Balkan countries, and on the question of which country will be next after Croatia's recent accession to the EU. A special panel will discuss the relationship between international criminal justice, the provision of justice and successful economic future of the post-conflict countries. The BSF will also focus on an environmental topic – water, the source of life and link between regions – which may serve as an opportunity for closer cooperation and strengthening of confidence, peace and stability in the Middle East and North Africa. The United Nations is aware of this fact, and therefore declared 2013 to be the International Year of Water Cooperation.

This year, the second Business BSF and third Young BSF will be held as part of the BSF. The Business BSF, organised jointly with the Slovenian-Russian Business Council and the IEDC – Bled School of Management, will focus on the Russian Federation and countries of Central Asia. Successful Slovenian and foreign entrepreneurs will discuss the energy industry and high technology, with special emphasis on strengthening multilateral economic relations, creating new business

opportunities and discovering the potential for cooperation with the Russian Federation and Central Asia. The main topics of the Young BSF, entitled “The Clash of Generations”, will be: Young People in the EU, Digital Revolution and new ways of Doing Business. Around 150 young people from Slovenia and abroad are expected to participate in the Young BSF.

This year, the Strategic Forum is again organised with the support of Slovenian companies. We are very pleased that, despite the unenviable economic situation, Slovenian and certain foreign companies support the Forum, seeing it as an added value and an opportunity for strengthening existing economic cooperation and entering new markets, and also as a meeting point of politics and economics. Special thanks should go to our media partners and everyone who participated in the preparation of one of the largest government projects in Slovenia.

We wish all the participants of the Bled Strategic Forum every success with the conference, many new acquaintances and, of course, a pleasant stay in Slovenia. We hope that Bled and its sights (Bled castle, Lake Bled with its romantic island and church), along with its famous cream slice, will impress and persuade you to return next year and participate in the Bled Strategic Forum to be held between 31 August and 2 September 2014.

Young Bled Strategic Forum

The Clash of Gs

Over the past few years, the Bled Strategic Forum (BSF) has become a prominent platform for high-level strategic dialogue on various global issues, bringing together leaders from the private and public sectors. As such, it has become one of the most important conferences in the wider region, seeking to encourage discussion, find solutions and bring together the most eminent guests. Two additional segments have been introduced to the Bled Strategic Forum in the recent years: the Young BSF in 2011 and the Business BSF in 2012.

Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA



Youth in the EU: The Promise for the Future or a Lost Generation?

The Young BSF gives young professionals with various backgrounds the opportunity to share ideas and positions on issues that pose a challenge to the younger generation around the world. This year, the three main topics are Youth in the EU, Digital Revolution and Doing Business, all against the backdrop of the progress made by the internet and communication tools, which has resulted in a shift in power from governments and media corporations to individuals. As a facilitator of change, the internet has deconstructed control of social and political movements, political agendas, business strategies and information gathering. Networking has become the most important skill, and what was once a clash of civilizations is now a clash of geopolitical powers, groups and generations: a Clash of Gs.

As a powerhouse of transformation, the young generation, seeking change and heralding new technologies, faces a number of issues on its path to success, many of them related to the three main topics of this year's Young BSF. To find meaningful solutions that can be applied to the daily lives of the participants and the wider public, the 2013 Young BSF is being extended for the first time to last throughout the summer. Bringing together young professionals from business, academic and diplomatic fields, the Young BSF aims to define the challenges of the three topics, develop ideas, propose solutions and take action. For the first time, the Young BSF is also open to the public, enabling participation in the discussion and the sharing of ideas through an online platform.

The first stage of the Young BSF, the Challenge Conference, took place in Ljubljana on 27 and 28 June. The conference opened with speeches by Alain Brian Bergant, Secretary General of the BSF, Tjaša Ficko, the Deputy Mayor of Ljubljana and patron of the conference, and Timotej Šooš, the Programme Director of the Young BSF. The Challenge Conference was attended by fifty participants, who engaged in intriguing and provocative discussions throughout the two days.

Discussing young people in the EU, the participants took a closer look at the new circumstances in which young people find themselves when entering the labour market. While this generation has a high level of education, good language skills and many other talents, the market structure does not provide them with

This year, the three main topics are Youth in the EU, Digital Revolution and Doing Business, all against the backdrop of the progress made by the internet and communication tools, which has resulted in a shift in power from governments and media corporations to individuals.



Photo: Naboljsa Telizija

The open-code concept is becoming the rule of innovation. New businesses operate in unusual working environments as workspaces are changing drastically too. At the same time new technologies enable them to work with the best professionals, who may be scattered all across the globe.

Changing the world is not a simple goal, but it can be achieved one step at a time; the Young BSF participants have demonstrated that they do indeed dare to dream.

enough opportunities to truly tap into their potential. The discussions addressed how the existing social system could be revamped, new alternative ways to overcome difficulties in the labour market, how the meaning of mobility could be redefined and how people should be acknowledged as the EU's most important asset. The two discussion panels were moderated by journalists Anja Hlača Ferjančič and Igor E. Bergant, with participants sharing their points of view and challenging Anja Kopač Mrak, Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, and Peter Grk, Foreign Policy Advisor to the Prime Minister.

The Digital Revolution was discussed as a tool for DIY (do-it-yourself) politics and a possible catalyst of political change. In two separate panels, the participants discussed the impact of online tools and online political participation, the search for information, possible digital fraud and abuses, and the digital divide with Simon Delakorda, Toni Cowan-Brown and special guest Father Thomas Rosica. The fact that change is continuous has raised the importance of online participation, but its impact remains questionable, because the active online population remains a "digital minority" and the crucial characteristics of such participation are still anonymity and the possibility of digital fraud. The digital revolution has also given rise to issues of digital ethics, generation gaps and online political participation.

The discussion of new tools and new rules for doing business mainly revolved around the role of informal education, ethics and entrepreneurship. While the participants agreed that the current EU welfare system is not sustainable, a combination of policies and solutions can provide young entrepreneurs and researchers with opportunities to overcome obstacles in the current market structure and launch their ideas, patents and products. Harald Katzenshläger spoke inspiringly of the importance of ambitions, while Tommy Hutchinson challenged the participants to take a different look at the challenges of business objectives and access to resources.

The passion and courage to take risks was the common thread of the business breakfast on youth entrepreneurship with His Royal Highness the Earl of Wessex, hosted by the British-Slovenian Chamber of Commerce in cooperation with the British Embassy Ljubljana and the British Council. The panellists, Olympic medal-winner Petra Majdič, film director Mitja Okorn and the President of the SRC Management Board, Miha Žerko, encouraged young people to take risks, to learn to cope with failure and to act as real entrepreneurs: to set up their own networks, establish connections and be practical.

The conference was organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Centre for European Perspective in cooperation with our corporate partners, Studio Moderna, Bisnode and Microsoft,

and other strategic and corporate partners. Although the participants came from different countries and had very different professional backgrounds, they had much in common, most notably the stress they placed on creativity, inspiration and drive. They have faith that the young are not a lost generation, but one that can change the world. To this end, it is crucial to think outside the box, overcome one's personal reservations, change mind-sets and, most importantly, dare to dream. Changing the world is not a simple goal, but it can be achieved one step at a time; the Young BSF participants have demonstrated that they do indeed dare to dream.

The challenges of the Clash of Gs have thus been defined and published on the online platform (www.bledstrategicforum.org/ideas), where a discussion is now taking place. The participants and the public are invited to share their ideas and arguments to help us find solutions, our main goal for the Solution Conference in early September.

The YBSF Solution Generator Conference in Bled (1 September 2013) will host about 120 participants, whose solutions to our challenges will encourage them to take action in their daily lives. Taking proper action and changing the world is a daunting task, but defining the obstacles and challenges and sharing ideas with people of different cultures, mind-sets and professions is certainly a good way forward.

Photo: Archives of MFA



Karl Viktor Erjavec Minister of Foreign Affairs

Cooperation is of the utmost importance: it opens doors

Karl Viktor Erjavec was born on 21 June 1960 in Aiseau, Belgium. Mr. Erjavec has served in the Government of Slovenia as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister since 2012. He was Minister of Defense from 2004 to 2008 and Minister of Environment and Spatial Planning from 2008 to 2010. Until 1990 he worked in private sector and entered public service in 1990. Between 1995 and 2000, he was Director of the Expert Service of the Office of Human Rights Ombudsman and Head of the Office of Ombudsman. Since 2005 he has been the president of the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia. Mr. Erjavec graduated at the School of Law at the University of Ljubljana. He is the author of a variety of articles on the protection of basic human rights, the functioning of the judicial system and security issues. He is often invited to lecture at various professional seminars and conferences at home and abroad. He is married and has two daughters.

In the photo: Slovenia's Foreign Minister, Karl Erjavec, and his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov



Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

I am a die-hard European. It is important for Slovenia to remain in the EU, especially because it is a small country.

The theme of this year's Bled Strategic Forum (BSF) is "A Changing Europe in a Changing World". What changes are these?

As we can see, the world is changing, and so is Europe. On the other hand, new global centres are emerging, such as China and Russia. Meanwhile, as a global superpower, Europe faces an economic and financial crisis. BSF will serve as a platform for discussions on the future of the EU and the position of the EU in these changed global circumstances. The question of why the EU is in such a crisis also arises. One theory may be because of its efforts to ensure social security for its citizens, environment protection etc. Certain funds are required for this, which reduces its competitiveness. In relation to this, the historic fact that Europe experienced many wars throughout history also has to be noted. The establishment of the EU was actually a response to the Second World War. Europe has never had such a long period of peace since the formation of the EU, if the Balkan wars are excluded. We will primarily discuss the question of how Europe should remain competitive and stable and maintain its leading role.

What is your position on the future and prospects for the economic and monetary union? Is the existence of the EU also in the interests of Slovenia?

I am a die-hard European. It is important for Slovenia to remain

in the EU, especially because it is a small country. Experts say that a normal country requires six million citizens to perform well all the functions that citizens expect from it. So I am certain that in this global world, where it is necessary to compete with the biggest players, the opportunity for Slovenia lies within the EU. It is nevertheless true that the EU will have to become even more integrated, as this will also help overcome the crisis.

Two important agreements were adopted on the idea of a banking union: on the uniform supervision of banks in the Eurozone and how to restructure banks. Integrating the EU will not be successful if the result does not produce a way out of the crisis.

Speaking of integration, the most topical question is how much sovereignty can an individual Member State preserve if it transfers certain functions to the EU level. I am certain that the EU would be more competitive at least in the economic field if it was more integrated.

In this respect, I also stress that the EU was established at a time of high economic growth. Not enough thought was given to mechanisms for periods of distress, which were not even developed in the EU.

The political level presents another issue; where, due to insufficient integration, the EU is losing its leading positions, and certain political decisions relating to the certain global situation will have

to be adopted. I take the resolution of problems with Syria as a concrete example. So many different opinions were expressed in the EU on the weapons embargo that it was very difficult to form a united position on the matter. Resolving the Palestine issue is another such example. The different political positions weaken the EU as a negotiator. So it will be necessary to implement mechanisms to enable united political positions on global political issues. BSF will host important political leaders, and I am certain that the discussions on these topics will be very interesting.

2013 is the international year of water cooperation, a strategic resource and asset, which is scarce in most of the countries in the Middle East and North Africa. You will also discuss this at BSF. What is Slovenia's position on these issues?

Slovenia has rich experience in water management. We manage water resources very prudently. When the discussion on privatisation of water resources began in the EU, the Slovenian public's reaction was decidedly negative. Since water will gradually become a strategic asset, this will also be a strategic advantage for Slovenia. Although it seems that other strategic resources such as oil and gas are more important now, I am certain that water will be in the future.

If we return to the actual discussion of water and strategic re-



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

sources, this will be an excellent opportunity for Slovenians to share our experience with foreign visitors, especially because in some countries there is a shortage of this strategic resource, while in others it is abundant, but not suitably exploited. Slovenia has the knowledge. The priority of foreign policy is not only to ensure peace and security, but to provide and protect natural resources, which are more and more important global challenges.

Accompanied by Prince Edward, you attended the Young Bled Strategic Forum. What can you tell us about that meeting and the event itself? What were your impressions?

BSF is not only a political event, so we tried to expand it into a meeting point for politicians, businesspeople, young people and scholars. The Young BSF is very important, because the young are our future and it is only right that young people use the forum to discuss topics that concern them. Slovenia has many successful young innovators who have broken through with their innovations in new technologies. At the Young BSF in June, young people discussed the digital revolution, new business models and their position in the EU. In cooperation with the British Chambers of Commerce, we prepared an interesting event, which included a meeting with Prince Edward. The young people were thrilled, which means we have been pre-

sented with a great responsibility and challenge for next year. Prince Edward inspired us with his openness, approach and genuine knowledge of the problems of the young generation. We also hosted other interesting guests at the Young BSF like Petra Majdič, our most accomplished cross-country skier, and Mitja Okorn, a renowned and talented film director.

Returning to the part of BSF which focuses on the economy, why are you focusing on the markets of Russia and Central Asia?

This year's business forum is organised in cooperation with IEDC-Bled School of Management and the Slovenian-Russian Business Council. In Slovenian foreign policy, economic diplomacy is important, which is why the business section of BSF is a vital part of the forum. If, on the one hand, the participants at BSF are politicians, it seems logical that businesspeople should also be there. BSF is a place for seeking business opportunities, and we have to be aware that conducting business in the EU is different from conducting business in other parts of the world. In the EU, the assistance of national authorities is not really needed. But in Turkey, Russia and Kazakhstan, for example, different rules apply when making business connections. When I was visiting the countries I mentioned with businesspeople, they all agreed

that such political-economic meetings had a different, more positive atmosphere, because at these meetings, we met not only businesspeople, but also heads of state, parliaments, governments and ministers. Cooperation is necessary.

At present, when the European Union is facing a crisis, individual economies outside the EU are growing stronger. I mean mainly the BRICS countries, and Turkey, which is also increasing its economic and political presence. Is Turkey's future still in the EU, and is this one of the questions at BSF?

That's true: Turkey is experiencing an economic boom. In the document adopted by the Slovenian Government, International Challenges 2013, Turkey was defined as a priority for economic cooperation, in addition to Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and India. We are doing our best in this field. The Turks have expressed great interest in investing in Slovenia and also in cooperation with our companies. Certain Slovenian companies have been present in the Turkish market for some time, and we are combining efforts to pave the way for others. Slovenian and Turkish companies are working together on some projects as strategic partners in third countries; for example, we are cooperating on the construction of major hydroelectric power plants in Montenegro. The relationship between Turkey

Slovenian Foreign Minister Karl Erjavec, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius and French Minister Delegate for European Affairs Thierry Repentin at Brdo Process on 25 July 2013.

In the document adopted by the Slovenian Government, International Challenges 2013, Turkey was defined as a priority for economic cooperation, in addition to Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and India. We are doing our best in this field.

The joint membership of the Croatia and Slovenia in the EU has benefits for our citizens on both sides of the border. We look forward to future cooperation in all fields: political, economic, cultural and scientific.

Minister Karl Erjavec with the Foreign Ministers of the Western Balkans and France at Brdo Process on 25 July 2013. The photo shows Mr Erjavec in the company of his counterparts: Enver Hoxhaj, Aldo Tonin Bumçi, Igor Lukšič, Nikola Poposki and Laurent Fabius.



Photo: Stanko Crudenčič

and the EU is undoubtedly interesting. We could say that Turkey is a permanent candidate for membership. There are certain objections among Member States which particularly reflect concern that Turkey is perhaps too large and too different to be a member. Slovenia supports the accession of Turkey. I believe that its future is in the EU, for geostrategic, political and economic reasons. Its accession is also important with regard to the question of the aging EU population. By the way, we are already thinking about a panel for next year on the significance of aging population trends in the EU. I think this is a global issue that should be addressed.

BSF also focuses on rights, international law, and particularly, women's rights. What is the position of the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on this issue?

Slovenia condemns all violations of human rights. On every occasion, I personally stress the role of the International Criminal Court. The discussion at a special panel of BSF will focus on the question of the efficient protection of the civilian population, particularly the most vulnerable groups of people, who are frequently the innocent victims of armed conflict. All violations of human rights would be reduced if the authorities responsible knew that they would be prosecuted for their crimes. The worst violations of human rights cannot and must not go unpunished. This is why the role of the International Criminal Court is of exceptional

significance. For numerous victims, the international criminal justice system frequently offers the only hope of justice and the appropriate prosecution of criminals.

On 1 July, Croatia became a full member of the European Union. When settling disputes between Slovenia and Croatia, you bore a great responsibility. What is your view of the new member of the European family, and above all, what does this mean for Slovenia?

Geographically, this means that all our neighbours are EU Member States. Slovenia is no longer on the edge of the EU, but we have already moved closer to the centre, and that is positive. The joint membership of the Croatia and Slovenia in the EU has benefits for our citizens on both sides of the border. We look forward to future cooperation in all fields: political, economic, cultural and scientific. We managed to resolve the open issues between us, which resulted from the dissolution of the country of which we were parts, in a civilised manner. This was difficult, because there is no relevant international case law, which is why the Vienna Agreement was concluded in 2001 to determine how to resolve succession issues. The Agreement on Succession Issues involved not only foreign currency savings, but also the distribution of property and art works. Due to Croatia's accession to the EU, I thought it important to conclude a suitable agreement which would enable the National

Assembly of the RS to ratify the Croatian Accession Treaty with the EU. Both countries thus concluded the Memorandum of Understanding on the former Ljubljanska banka (LB), which served as the basis for the unanimous ratification of the Accession Treaty in the National Assembly. The Croatian Foreign Minister, Vesna Pusić, and I cooperated actively throughout and agreed to ask the Bank for International Settlements in Basel to help resolve the issue of account holders with the former LB, so that the matter could be resolved within the succession process. An arbitration tribunal will decide on the border, the second open issue. We have prepared the argumentation and the court will make a decision that is binding on both sides. It is in Slovenia's interests that all the countries of the former Yugoslavia join the EU. This will ensure peace and create conditions for better economic cooperation. The practical benefit of Croatia's accession to the EU is that we will be able to transport goods freely, without customs duties. I hope that Croatia also joins the Schengen Area soon.

You've already mentioned that it is in Slovenia's interests for the entire region to join the EU. Can you further elaborate on this position?

I am pleased that great progress has been made on Serbia's accession to the EU. The issues between Belgrade and Priština are being resolved successfully. Slovenia has always made efforts for Serbia

to be allocated a date to begin negotiations, as it already has candidate status. Our proposal was October 2013; the negotiations will begin in January 2014. In the case of Macedonia, the issue of the name remains. I hope a compromise is found soon. During my visit to Skopje at the beginning of April, I suggested that Macedonia, irrespective of this barrier, implement all the activities required to meet the criteria for accession to the EU as far as possible. Regarding Montenegro, I believe that it is making good progress and has the least problems with accession. Bosnia and Herzegovina is becoming a special problem due to the political deadlock. I hope that next year's elections will break the deadlock. Because Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of different entities, it is also a permanent critical point which may cause instability in the region, so its accession to the EU is important particularly in terms of peace and security. Slovenia will certainly offer its experience to help these countries.

You have rich political and ministerial experience. Prior to your appointment as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, you were Minister of Defence and Minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning. This is your second year as Foreign Minister. How frequent are your contacts with foreign diplomats in Slovenia and on which occasions?

I believe that personal energy and attitude are very important. If there is positive energy, doors open. Formal diplomacy is one thing, but informal diplomacy, which happens after, before and during meetings, is something else. A good example is the successful resolution of issues with Croatia, which was also the result of the relationship between Borut Pahor, who was prime minister at the time, and the former Croatian prime minister, Jadranka Kosor. The same applies to my relationship with Croatian Foreign Minister Vesna Pusić, with whom I enjoy very good cooperation. I would also like to mention the improvement in our relations with France. The French President, Francois Hollande, paid his first official visit to Slovenia at the end of July, and I have also met

French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius on several occasions. I am a Francophone, and the French appreciate foreigners who speak their language, so it is easier to build genuine friendly relations. Due to the nature of my work, I naturally maintain regular contacts with foreign ambassadors in Slovenia. These contacts are useful, as they serve for the exchange of first-hand information and strengthen bilateral relations.

What about your relationship with Slovenian diplomats?

I am in regular contact with all diplomats. It is important to have good personal communication. A panel discussion with all our ambassadors is held annually, which is an opportunity for discussions on joint projects, Slovenian foreign policy priorities, open issues and the possibilities of improving the work of the diplomatic and consular network. The discussion is open. I believe our diplomats are professional and perform their duties with efficiency and responsibility. At the moment, the legally determined quota of non-professional diplomats is ten per cent. I think that this percentage could be higher, especially because we need specific profiles for certain posts, particularly in organisations, such as the OECD and NATO. This quota will be discussed in the future.

Let us briefly mention the new foreign policy strategy. What are its starting points?

The objectives of the strategy planned in 1999 were accomplished. The strategic goals were the accession to the EU, NATO, the Schengen Area, OECD, OVSE and similar. We must now ask ourselves what our role as a member of these organisations is. We are currently in the process of preparing starting points already discussed by the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Policy. To summarise its main points: our values are the right to self-determination, respect for human rights, the rule of law, democracy etc. These values direct our foreign policy. Another important starting point is our geostrategic position. What is Slovenia: a Central European country, an Alpine country, a Mediterranean or a Balkan country? It is important

to identify our strategic partners. These undoubtedly include the USA, Russia and China. It is important to define our relations with our neighbours. And as I always emphasise: to pay more attention to economic diplomacy, which can help us open doors to strategic markets and attract foreign investors. I strongly support this idea.

As Minister of Foreign Affairs, you opened a Slovenian reading room in Gradec, Austria. What is your role in preserving Slovenian culture and language among Slovenians living in neighbouring countries? Does the Ministry actively cooperate with the Office for Slovenians Abroad?

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs plays an important role, because it is the discussion partner at the highest political level. The Minister of Slovenians Abroad deals directly with Slovenians living in neighbouring countries and with the responsible authorities at the regional level. Minister Komel and I enjoy excellent cooperation. When Peter Kaiser, the Carinthian State Governor, visited Slovenia, we met at a working lunch, and I have to say that Mr Kaiser was very open to the idea of finding suitable solutions regarding the Slovenian minority in Austria. We also have good experience in regulating minority rights with the other neighbouring countries, Hungary and Italy.

Finally, BSF takes place in Bled. What would you recommend that the participants enjoy or see?

Slovenia is beautiful; they should use their time to see the natural sights. We also have a good range of excellent wines and spirits. They should try Slovenian nut roll. If they have more time, they could see some places near Bled: Bohinj, Kranjska Gora, and also Postojna Cave etc. And of course, they should definitely see a game during EuroBasket 2013, which Slovenia is hosting between 4 and 22 September. I am sure it will be interesting and should not be missed. I would like to express a personal welcome to everyone who comes to Slovenia. And last, but not least: let this not be their last visit.

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Janez Škrabec

Director of the Riko Group

Nothing is more permanent than change

He is demonstrating to the world that Slovenia is not a tiny country in the middle of nowhere but a state capable of manufacturing highly innovative and state-of-the-art products. A complex in the centre of the Belarus capital Minsk which will include a five-star Kempinski hotel, 81 housing units and business premises worth more than EUR 100 million and the production and marketing of ecological and energy-saving wooden buildings highly valued in Europe are only some of the achievements placing the Riko company among the world leaders in its field.

Janez Škrabec director of the Riko Group, is one of the most noted and respected – and also one of the wealthiest – Slovenian entrepreneurs. In 2002, he was appointed the Honorary Consul of Morocco. Mr Škrabec has been a member of almost every business delegation, especially those visiting the countries of the former Soviet Union. The noted entrepreneur is well aware of where he is coming from, what his home environment offers and where the opportunities lie. His company is primarily focused on the Russian market, but this does not limit him. Mr Škrabec, who holds a university degree in economics, is known not only as a director but also as a donator to and sponsor of Slovenian art, culture and sport. Charles Handy, author of *The New Philanthropists*, published in London, has ranked him among the world's top 23 philanthropists. Janez Škrabec is an interesting interlocutor, especially at a time when entrepreneurs are facing new challenges of the financial crisis.



Photo: Tammo Petelinšek/STA

Mr Janez Škrabec, as Riko's managing director, what are you currently most involved with?

It is the Kempinski project that I am focusing on. This is a prestigious project won by Riko after tough negotiations and with the help of Slovenian diplomacy and the personal involvement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Karl Erjavec. As the principal contractor, what we're aiming for in the implementation of this project, to the greatest extent possible, is to include a Slovenian component. A few months ago, we signed a contract with Marmor Hotavlje for the construction of the Kempinski hotel's stone façade. The contract value is EUR 10 million, which is as much as normal annual turnover for this Slovenian company. Opportunities will also be given to Slovenian suppliers of interior furnishings and furniture. In addition to the Kempinski complex, we are devoting attention to other promising business operations in the former Soviet Union. A contract worth EUR 100 million that we recently signed in Moscow covers the construction of the Ivanovo textile factory for the production of speciality fabrics. It has already become a tradition of ours that we focus on markets of the former Soviet Union that Slovenia perceives as highly promising and strategically important.

One of your flagships is the first eco house constructed in cooperation with the French designer Philippe Starck. You have already signed the first sales contract for the supply of a P.A.T.H. eco-house to buyer Ray Tammi. Philippe Starck is certainly the most famous design icon in the world. Looking for a partner, a house manufacturer with whom he could develop a strategic working relationship covering the design and manufacture of a new line of houses distinguished by a precise design concept and sustainable premises, he eventually knocked on Riko's door. That's quite a compliment, isn't it? We have of course accepted his cooperation initiative and soon we will be proud to present the results of this development project. The "P.A.T.H. by Starck with Riko" line of houses is an achievement distinguished by both Starck's

design concept and the project design proficiency and technological and engineering skills primarily contributed by Slovenian experts. This is indeed a high-grade Slovenian project with a strong emphasis on development that has also been supported by the Slovene Export and Development Bank (SID Bank). I am very pleased to say that this institution has recognised the project's innovation and technological intensity. SID Bank's strategic support to development projects in respect of which its chairman, Mr Sibil Svilan, is really making great efforts is invaluable, as companies often do not have funds to invest in development, which is something that's really indispensable. I am convinced that the P.A.T.H. house will reap success, with the Starck name certainly contributing its share to this effect. We are talking about a very strong, recognisable and highly regarded trademark in global terms that also strengthens Riko's visibility, in respect of both our wooden houses and our engineering projects.

Your eco houses are currently the most prestigious real estate project in England.

"The Lakes" is a project that connects an idyllic location which is only 80 km away from London with a sustainable design of a settlement of wooden houses designed by Philippe Starck, Jade Jagger and Yoo Studio. I am proud that it was us whom the investor entrusted with the construction of the wooden houses. To date we have built some 60 units occupied by those who want to spoil themselves in a rural environment, in unspoilt nature in designer wooden houses. This five-star settlement is closely interlinked with the superlatives of the setting itself, including an eco marketplace, antique shops, excellent pubs and restaurants, sports facilities, fishing, golf and so on. Many famous people, including supermodel Elle Macpherson, Mark Owen from Take That and actress Tina Hobbley, have already chosen a Riko wooden house as their weekend cottage.

Do you think that Slovene companies are internationally oriented or competitive enough?

We can hardly be satisfied with the state of Slovenia's economy. I share the opinion of Slovenia's President, Borut Pahor, who some time ago emphasised that after the crisis, the structure of Slovenia's economy will completely change. Companies which until recently were still pillars of the Slovenian economy have worn themselves out, privatisation has been delayed, we have problems with taking advantage of foreign capital, and as a country we are not open enough. I regret to say that our policymakers have recognised neither the real value and importance of foreign capital nor the idea that a market-oriented economy which takes account of foreign competition is, in the long run, much more effective than an introverted economy. Just take a look at Lek, a pharmaceutical company which despite foreign ownership has kept its entire development sector in Slovenia and retained jobs as a socially responsible company in all respects, while also demonstrating commercial success and ambition. Moreover, we can observe with optimism how the pedestal of the Slovenian and indeed European economy is being occupied by smaller, even niche companies. And it's these that will very soon be responsible for all economic growth. Hermann Simon has called them the hidden champions of the 21st century.

Does that mean that we need a more entrepreneurial way of thinking?

Absolutely, because the point is that the entrepreneurial way of thinking enables you to maximise and optimise your opportunities by yourself, without relying on others, not even on the state, whereas in our country there is still a widespread belief that it is the state which must take care of everything. But the state cannot react to a never-ending cycle of change rapidly enough. The business community is much more flexible and also aware of the fact that nothing is more permanent than never-ending change.

Who, in your opinion, would run the country better, businessmen or politicians?

I do not advocate the idea of managers running the state. On

It is the Kempinski project that I am focusing on. This is a prestigious project won by Riko after tough negotiations and with the help of Slovenian diplomacy and the personal involvement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Karl Erjavec.



Photo: Riko archives

In the photo with Janez Škrabec: French designer Philippe Starck, President of the Republic of Slovenia Borut Pahor and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Karl Erjavec

I am trying to promote Slovenia in the Russian Federation and vice versa. I have intensified these efforts since my appointment to the position of Chairman of the Slovenian-Russian Business Council.

the contrary, policymaking or running the state is a substantially more complicated and demanding job than managing a company. It is a special skill and craft which one must learn and master. I respect successful politicians, even more so today, when we are in need of real leaders whom we can follow. The same applies to Europe, which is losing its primacy. The main development and breakthrough trends are happening and having effects in other parts of the world, while the EU reacts to this situation with even more (unnecessary) bureaucracy and resolutions which, unfortunately, do not result in the necessary solutions.

How should the state best support the economy?

When I get asked this question, I like to paraphrase Amir Kimur, a great 14th-century Uzbek leader, who said that the state's task was to enable a merchant to travel from Samarkand to Istanbul with as few problems and as rapidly as possible. Although ancient, this idea is still highly relevant. Unfortunately, our policymakers are not very keen on understanding this message and, blinded as they are by their power, are still too much involved in corporate management by politically appointing their people to top positions and

deciding on strategies irrespective of potential consequences. Personally, I do not expect the Ministry of Economy to manage my company, to search for business opportunities on my behalf or to make it possible for me to obtain money. I even oppose the ad hoc state guarantees. This cannot be considered a sustainably effective policy. Such policy must be systemic and make it easier for entrepreneurs to focus on development and business operations. It must place emphasis on good companies and not keep rescuing bad companies without any potential. And this is the very reason why healthy companies, including Riko, quite often operate under difficult conditions, meaning that we have restricted access to loans, development and bank guarantees, which is a considerable obstacle and burden. However, I would also like to highlight the good sides of our politics, because it quickly reacted to the relevant situation and introduced reforms which are enabling Slovenia to regain the necessary international reputation.

Riko is successful in tackling the current economic situation and crisis also because of its timely decision to focus on foreign markets.

At the beginning of my entrepreneurial career, I soon recognised that Slovenia's market was (too)

small and that its scope could only satisfy limited and very specific corporate segments. Therefore from very early on I focused on foreign markets, i.e. on markets of the former Soviet Union. I was aware that these large markets are an opportunity not only for Riko but also for the entire Slovenian economy. Today, I am still more certain of my decision. As part of the former Yugoslavia, Slovenia was a respected partner while the Soviet Union as such still existed. Even the situation following the disintegration of the system did not make us leave and, therefore, the Russians have a special relationship with us despite the fact that in recent years they have been hosting competition from all over the world. Here we can expect great opportunities which can always have a reciprocal effect. In my view, Russian investments in Slovenia could include the areas of energy, transport infrastructure, banking, new technologies and tourism, while further opportunities can also be expected in the privatisation of Slovenian companies in majority state ownership.

You are very visible on the Russian market and can also claim credit for good economic cooperation in this part of the world.

I am trying to promote Slovenia in the Russian Federation and vice



Photo: Riko archives

Eco friendly house Riko

versa. I have intensified these efforts since my appointment to the position of Chairman of the Slovenian-Russian Business Council. With its highly dynamic economy and capital surplus, Russia is one of the most promising markets in the world. Russia is certainly a very important business partner for Slovenia. At Riko, we see ourselves as integrator of Slovenian know-how and products; we always integrate a strong Slovenian component in all projects implemented in Russia. Let me mention just a few examples of this policy: the renovation of the Peter I Hotel in the centre of Moscow, where the Slovenian input exceeded 49%, or the current project including the construction of a Zvezda plant in St. Petersburg, where a new generation of diesel engines with 400-1700 kW power range will be made. The relevant contract was signed at the end of last year and provides for the integration of several Slovenian products.

Last year, the volume of trade between the two countries exceeded EUR 1.1 billion, which is 28.3% more than in 2010, with Slovenia's exports to Russia last year reaching EUR 747.7 million, representing a 26.6% increase in comparison with 2011, and imports from

Russia amounting to EUR 399.3 million, up 31.5% on 2010.

These figures suffice to illustrate the situation. The protagonists of Slovenia's exports to the Russian Federation are largely those companies which have been operating in this country for quite some time. Riko's success in this market is by no means a recent phenomenon: I always like to stress that we have been operating there for twenty years on a twenty-year basis. The same is true of other successful companies, such as Krka, Lek, Iskratel, Gorenje and others. It is quite possible that the figures will be even higher in the coming years, because the Russian Federation is investing heavily in modernising its industry, especially the automobile industry, while other challenges can also be identified in civil engineering. Moscow alone is making plans to renovate or build several hotels. And there are further opportunities in the energy sector, with the emphasis on efficient use of energy and renewable energy sources.

Is Russia a very demanding market considering the fact that the entire global competition has gathered there?

Each market should be respected and none underestimated. Suc-

cess doesn't come easy anywhere. All the global players understandably centre on the most promising markets. The epicentres are known – Brazil, the Russian Federation, China and India. Of all these markets, the Russian one is closest to us, because with Russia, we share cultural roots, political and historical experience, and business ties dating back several decades. In addition to knowledge of the language and cultural similarities, our advantages consequently include the visibility of our products and trademarks and the high reputation of Slovenian companies owing to their long-standing presence on this market. The two countries are maintaining their traditionally good relations, without a single blot on their bilateral relationship. This is another of the reasons why Slovenians can further develop their opportunities in the Russian Federation. My advice to all Slovenian companies is to enter the market of the Russian Federation, but with a great deal of patience and determination. This applies not only to Moscow, but also to other regions which are very strong in terms of development and capital but where the global competition is (so far!) represented to a lesser extent.

My advice to all Slovenian companies is to enter the market of the Russian Federation, but with a great deal of patience and determination.

Janez Fajfar

Mayor of Bled

Guests in Bled appreciate friendliness the most

Janez Fajfar (born 1955) is serving his second term as mayor of Bled since 2006. He graduated in ethnology and is a professor of geography. He travelled a lot as a student and has always been interested in everything and everyone. Before his first term as mayor, he was a director of Vila Bled Hotel, which was considered the most prestigious hotel in Slovenia because of its membership in the international chain Relais & Châteaux. He was at Vila Bled from 1984, when the diplomatic service stopped using it. During that time, he established many contacts at the national and international levels. Matters of protocol were always part of his life, as his aunt was a cook for President Tito on the Brioni Islands. Mayor Fajfar is a member of numerous associations and a recipient of international decorations. Among the most important are the Freedom of the City of London, and Gold Medal for Services to the Republic of Austria, which is a decoration from the Governor of Austria's province of Carinthia for establishing good relations in the bilingual region between the countries. It is not difficult to talk to him, as he has many interesting things to say and is not short of words.



Photo: GCO archive

You have a lot of experience in the hospitality field, but you have also been mayor for a while now. What made you change directions in your career?

That's right, since 2006. In the first term, I was a candidate of the Slovenian National Party (no longer a parliamentary party) and then I was candidate of the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (a coalition party). I like being mayor of the Municipality of Bled. It is a great challenge and honour, but above all, a great responsibility.

That is true. You are one of the most well-known Slovenian mayors. Official visits are frequently on your agenda.

Yes, I suppose that's true. But I have an exceptional team of colleagues whom I can rely on. I would not be able to deal with both municipal problems as well as protocol matters. And I don't want that. But it is true that I follow the content of individual official events and I am present sometimes if I can. Bled is twinned with many municipalities, such as Henley-on-Thames, where the Royal Regatta is held every year. Rowing, which has a long tradition in Bled, enjoys high status in Great Britain as an elite sport.

In addition to official visits, famous people and others, Bled also hosts many journalists and historians. They are particularly interested in the history of Bled and also admire its special landscape. They have been so impressed that Bled has been featured in full-page articles in newspapers such as The Guardian, The Times and others. Bled receives an abundance of free promotion, which makes us happy. As far as official receptions are concerned, these are harmonised with representatives of the President of the Republic, the National Assembly, the Government and other institutions. We are also happy to welcome these guests.

Could you mention someone in particular?

I was exceptionally thrilled about Sunita Williams, the American astronaut with Slovenian roots. She really is a fantastic person, a fantastic woman. Very pleasant, agreeable, sparkling; she was interested in everything. Laura Bush, who showed a lot of interest when she visited Slovenia, left a similar impression on me. She is also a very educated and interesting woman, and very well-informed.

We have had quite a few interesting official visits recently. Meira Kumar, the Speaker of the lower house of the Indian Parliament, and her large delegation visited us. The mayor of Mumbai was in the delegation as well. We took them to an Indian restaurant in Bled, which is very good, and which I highly recommend. They were very pleased. The meeting with Prince Edward and his wife was also very nice. Their visit was private. They were joined by Janez Škrabec, the director of the Riko Group and Danica Purg, Dean and President of IEDC-Bled School of Management. The British royal couple also met several British citizens who live in the vicinity. It was interesting.

I also have fond memories of the visit of the Japanese imperial couple, Prince Akishino and his wife. They are both avid nature enthusiasts and were excited about Bled. The parents of the Japanese prince were at Bled in 1976. Their advice to their children was that if they visit Slovenia, they must go to Bled. It seems that their advice was taken. The imperial couple especially admired Bled Island and everything else connected to nature. They even congratulated the newlyweds they happened to meet on the island.

Are these guests genuinely excited about Bled and Slovenia?

They all express sincere admiration; they like Slovenia very much. Naturally, there is always room for improvement, and we try to keep in mind their suggestions. It is true that as a mu-

nicipality, the costs of official visits are high. We have a very ambitious municipal plan and want to see these plans followed through; official events are important, but the municipality must first take care of the local residents. Better roads will have to be constructed; the cleaning of the lake and regulation of water will have to be considered; bathing areas will have to be arranged. I am trying to be mayor to all inhabitants of Bled, not only those who elected me. But above all, Bled is a Slovenian gem, so I feel an even greater responsibility.

There is no high-quality tourism in Bled just yet. If there is, Bled will be more expensive. In which direction do you want to develop tourism; to make it accessible to everyone or maintain it as an elite location?

Slovenia is small and Bled must be available to all Slovenians. But it will also be necessary to offer a hotel to suit guests with above-standard requirements in every respect. It is also true that the people we call elite guests come to Bled primarily to seek peace and quiet. In a way, they like to disappear in the crowd and be ordinary. Many crowned heads have walked around without reporters knowing anything about it. Well-known and famous people appreciate that. I believe that it is friendliness that people appreciate the most. Above all, tourists want a friendly welcome. And to all those who are just now walking around Bled or who are planning to come: you are welcome.

So, will be you running for mayor of Bled again?

I will. I have come to love my work, although I was first persuaded into running for this position, and for a very long time I doubted that it was the right thing for me. The Municipality of Bled is very active; we are planning many projects and I want to be there to see them come to fruition. I especially want to see the roads in Bled finally arranged properly.

Bled is twinned with many municipalities, such as Henley-on-Thames, where the Royal Regatta is held every year. Rowing, which has a long tradition in Bled, enjoys high status in Great Britain as an elite sport.

Slovenia is small and Bled must be available to all Slovenians. But it will also be necessary to offer a hotel to suit guests with above-standard requirements in every respect.

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Igor Falshin

Director of Petsdialog LLC team

Woof, woof at Bled castle

What do Renee Davis from the USA, Alexander from Russia, Vesna from Serbia and Denis Cebulec from Slovenia have in common? They all have dogs and they are all taking part in a competition that was announced last spring on the website <http://petsdialog.com/lord/>.



Photo: Personal archive

Igor Falshin is a businessman. His main project connects with import of different products from Europe and America. For many years he has had successful cooperation with Slovenian business firms. He flies a lot on his business and almost every time he takes Micky with him. Micky is his favourite Chinese crested dog.

The first time I visited Slovenia was in 2000 after a very important government official said to me, "You should visit Slovenia. I was reborn in this country. It's a real Paradise on Earth."

I also fell in love with the Slovenian people, with their hospitality and open souls. And after 12 years nothing has changed: Slovenia still has a very special place in my heart.

Igor, when did you visit Slovenia for the first time?

The first time I visited Slovenia was in 2000 after a very important government official said to me, "You should visit Slovenia. I was reborn in this country. It's a real Paradise on Earth."

Two weeks later I visited this wonderful country with my pet. It was like a dream come true. It was more than love at first sight, it was a fountain of emotions. I fell in love with this wonderful cosy country with its tender Adriatic Sea, unique Alpine lakes, natural parks, sky-blue rivers, outstanding architecture, reviving thermal springs and fantastic cuisine.

I also fell in love with the Slovenian people, with their hospitality and open souls. And after 12 years nothing has changed: Slovenia still has a very special place in my heart.

Now I understand why you decided to organise this competition in Slovenia...

When our team needed to choose a place for this worldwide competition for the "Petsdialog" project, we had no doubts about what country to choose. There was only one choice: Slovenia.

It was extremely important for us to draw attention to the problems of animals and popularise charity work with homeless and handicapped animals.

Please tell us something about the participants. How many participants do you already have?

First of all, all our participants have one thing in common, which is their endless love for their pets. Now we have more than 500 active participants on

our website and everyone is ready to prove that his or her pet is the best.

It is stated on your website that the prize for the winner is 100.000 euros. Is this really true?

The winner will not only receive 100.000 euros but will also get the opportunity to be the caretaker of Bled castle for a day. I also would like to emphasise that there will be five finalists, who will all get the chance to go to Slovenia and discover this wonderful country with their pets. They will then write special blogs about their experiences in the country. People all over the world will be able to know more about Slovenia through these blogs.

Now let's talk about the format of the competition. What are the necessary requirements?



Photo: Personal archive

You must have a beloved pet, otherwise you will be disqualified (laughing).

Secondly, you must register on our website, <http://petsdialog.com/lord/>, and fill in the application form, where you will give information about you and your pet, explaining why you deserve to become the winner in our competition.

The next step is to get as many votes as possible from visitors of our website. There will be 20 semi-finalists.

Five more semi-finalists will be chosen by the members of the jury (now we are in the process of choosing these people). They will be public figures known all over the world.

Ok, so there will be 25 semi-finalists. What's next?

As I've said, you need to get the most votes from visitors of our website. The voting process will be absolutely transparent and fair. We have been discussing the procedure of voting for a very long time, because the prize is very substantial. Finally we decided to let visitors of our website decide who will be the winner. You will be able to see your position in the

competition daily. We would also like to point out that it is not prohibited for friends and relatives of competitors to vote for them.

How will people be able to make their decisions? Who should they vote for?

First of all, your detailed and interesting application form will help visitors of the website make the right decision. We have already had several examples of incredibly interesting and creative descriptions of why people think they should win and go to Slovenia.

Semi-finalists will also need to make a video about themselves and their pets and answer questions from our site visitors and readers. All this will help our visitors to make the right choice.

Four finalists will be chosen by the public and one by the members of our jury.

The five finalists will go to Slovenia together with their pets, where they will spend a whole month and will be competing for the main prize.

Who will pay their travel and accommodation expenses?

It goes without saying that we will cover all the expenses.

Consider it their salaries. They will be writing their blogs, describing a new country, its traditions, cuisine and amenities for their pets. In short, they will be preparing all kinds of materials that will help them to win. Finally the winner will be announced. He or she will become a caretaker of one of the most beautiful castles in the world, with a salary of 100,000 euros. The other finalists will receive other prizes. But in my opinion the most important prize will be given to all the finalists. This of course is the trip to this wonderful country.

Have you got a message for your participants in the competition?

I would like to wish good luck to everyone. Do not waste your chance to win a dream job in one of the most beautiful places in the world.

Please visit our website, <http://petsdialog.com/lord/>, and fill in the application form. There will be a lot of pleasant surprises on your way to the main prize. I promise you will never get bored with us!

Petsdialog LLC is a team of 30 individuals who are the best designers, programmers, managers and interpreters. Their goal is to prove that Slovenia is a great choice for people travelling with their pets. The team, put together by Igor Falshin, is always thinking of new ideas and introducing our recent project innovations.

First of all, all our participants have one thing in common, which is their endless love for their pets.

I would like to wish good luck to everyone. Do not waste your chance to win a dream job in one of the most beautiful places in the world.

Boris Pahor turns 100

If you exist in order to talk and be heard by certain people, you are not alone and not completely ruined

Boris Pahor, a Slovenian writer, will celebrate his 100th birthday at the end of August. At his venerable age, he continues to write and publish his work. His novel *Mesto v zalivu* (The City in the Bay) was published in French this April under the title *Quand Ulysse revient à Trieste*.



Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

Boris Pahor was awarded the 2013 European Citizen's Prize by the European Parliament. The prize is given to individuals and groups in recognition of their contribution to mutual understanding and closer ties between nations in the European Union. Mr Pahor will receive his prize in Slovenia at the end of August when he celebrates his 100th birthday. Mr Pahor was nominated for this prize by all Slovenian MEPs who said that "as a critical writer and a great intellectual he has had an invaluable impact on the Slovenian language and on the cultural development of the area between Italy and Slovenia". For the *slomeia.it* portal, Mr Pahor expressed his satisfaction at receiving this honour. "When the European Parliament, through my person, recognises the existence of our culture and the validity of the European spirit in Slovenians, then this comes as a great satisfaction experienced not only by me, but by all of us, as I am the son of the people of Trieste and Primorska. This is an honour for all our culture and the level of our European culture," he said.



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

Boris Pahor, born on 26 August in Trieste, is considered one of the best known Slovenian writers. His fame in Europe stems from publications about the atrocities in Nazi concentration camps, but in Slovenia and among Slovenian minority in Italy he is well known for his social and political engagement, in addition to his writing.

Apart from his literary work, Pahor is also known for his social and political engagement.

To mark his birthday, a symposium called *Pahoriana* was organised in April 2013 at Cankarjev Dom Cultural and Congress Centre in Ljubljana. The participants analysing Pahor's work described it as multilayered and omnipresent, important for jogging our memory of history, and a significant testimony for future generations.

At the end of the symposium, Mr Pahor thanked Evgen Bavčar (a Slovenian essayist, publisher, philosopher and photographer), saying that without Mr Bavčar this symposium would never have taken place and his works would never have been translated. Mr Pahor added that the credit for making his work more visible also goes to French publisher Pierre-Guillaume de Roux, who after "listening to two men praising this book" arranged for *Nekropola* (Pil-

grim among the Shadows) to be translated into French.

"*Primus erat Bavčar, secundus erat Pierre-Guillaume*. It is thanks to them that I became a person so talked about. First in France, New York and Germany and only then in Italy and so on," stressed Mr Pahor. Throughout the symposium he kept saying that he actually should not have been present. "This was supposed to be a speech about me, but after I am gone," he joked while expressing his great pleasure with the event.

PAHOR'S ROOTS

Boris Pahor, born on 26 August in Trieste, is considered one of the best known Slovenian writers. His fame in Europe stems from publications about the atrocities in Nazi concentration camps, but in Slovenia and among Slove-

nian minority in Italy he is well known for his social and political engagement, in addition to his writing. *Nekropola* (Pilgrim among the Shadows), the collection of novels entitled *Grmada v pristanu* (The Bonfire in the Quay), and the novels *Nomadi brez oaze* (Nomades without an Oasis) and *Spopad s pomladjo* (A Difficult Spring) are Pahor's most popular books. Mr Pahor was nevertheless first noted abroad, and only later in Slovenia.

Boris Pahor claims that for him writing "is a way to reconfirm my own roots. The happiness of finding my own identity over and over again. At the same time, writing evolved into healing, a way to release everything that is bottled up in me. 'Release' is a strong word but I believe that it conveys what it means to free oneself from the fear of death."

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Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

French literary and film critic Jean-Luc Douin once said: "Despite doubt, despite faithful memory of the tortured fellow prisoners, despite the momentary conviction that he is no longer capable of being happy, for he stood on the threshold of a crematorium...Pahor still believes that desire and love can bring salvation. And he proves that too."

In anticipation of his 100th birthday, *La Repubblica* (after Milan's *Il Corriere della Sera*, *La Repubblica* is the most influential Italian daily with the highest circulation) published a two-page interview with Mr Pahor in which he announced that a special event marking his 100th birthday would be organised in Ljubljana on 26 August, and a special book published about his life and work.

He also talks at length about his childhood marred by the Fascist arson attack on Narodni Dom, a Slovenian cultural centre in Trieste, that signalled the beginning of attacks on everything Slovenian over a long period of time. The Slovenian language was banned. Slovenians were forced to use Italian in written and spoken communication, Slovenian books were burned, and children in schools were no longer allowed to declare themselves Slovenian. All of this filled Pahor with suffering, fear and shame. He also speaks about his father, a travelling salesman who sold butter,

cottage cheese and honey. He does not forget to mention his experience from Benghazi in Africa where he completed secondary school. Until September 1943 he worked as a translator for a military information service. After Italy's capitulation on 8 September 1943, he returned as a civilian to Trieste where he joined the resistance movement.

NO GREAT EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

In his interview for *La Repubblica*, Boris Pahor speaks about his attitude towards death for the first time. "I am afraid that I will have to say goodbye. I think eternity is a great void. You can find solace in Catholicism but for that you have to have faith," said Mr Pahor and went on to answer the question whether he was a religious person by saying, "Learning to love and forgive is what I like about Catholicism, but there is not only one Jesus; there are millions of suffering people, millions of Jesuses. If God is so almighty

and good, why has he let all this happen?"

In his opinion, he lives a solitary life: he gets up at half past six and at seven o'clock listens to the Slovenian radio broadcast in Trieste. He is not fond of social life or salon-style parties. He does not eat much, but writes and occasionally goes for a walk. If he has to go somewhere, he takes the bus. If he has to see someone, he prefers that the meeting take place in the back room at Lukša bar in Prosecco near Trieste, a kind of a sanctuary for him.

He has no great expectations for the future, not even for an individual or humanity. "For me it is enough just to remember everything that happened in the 20th century so that I can say to myself: Boris, if you exist in order to talk and be heard by certain people, you are not alone and not completely ruined."

Sources: Summarised from Delo, *La Repubblica* and STA.

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Leo Ličof

Artistic director of the Okarina Ethno Festival

There is beauty in everything so there is no need for us all to think or live alike

Today, in a world that is getting smaller, such a perspective is of great value, says Leo Ličof, artistic director of the Okarina Ethno Festival and owner of the Okarina Restaurant in Bled. Ličof is used to people doubting him and occasionally having a hard time accepting the innovations he has introduced into his environment: the music performed at the ethno festival, the food he offers in his restaurant and his out-of-the-box thinking.

In August, the Okarina Ethno Festival is once again enriching the cultural activities of Bled; in its 23 years, it has gone through numerous changes and has had its ups and downs. "The beginnings of the festival date back to 1991, when we got a phenomenal feeling of experiencing a kind of change. It was at that time that we decided to organise a festival which would bring good entertainment, grounded in quality, to Bled. Ethno music had just started to become popular in Europe, and it seemed that there were the beginnings of a new style which would undoubtedly have a great impact on the music scene. World music was born, and after many years, the fusion between ethno music and other diverse styles such as jazz and blues, which use the ethno tradition as their basis, took place. Today, this is again becoming extremely popular, bringing about an upgrade to original ethno songs.

Photo: Leo Ličof archive



Leo Ličof, artistic director of the Okarina Ethno Festival

After all these years, we have become visible, and one of the resulting drawbacks in organising the festival is the fact that we have to turn down a large number of music groups which would like to participate. There are many great and lesser groups that would like to appear at the festival, but we cannot afford them all for financial or scheduling reasons. We simply cannot have 60 performing artists, since we are limited to two weekends. With the finances available, we try to organise a music programme which is as good and as interesting as possible and one that satisfies us all.

Since ethno music is full of nostalgic tunes supported by different interpreters in different ways, it allows everyone to discover its tradition or message typical of a pleasant music experience."

All the concerts are free of charge, except for those staged at Bled castle, where visitors have to pay the castle entrance fee. Local residents enjoy free entry even at the castle. In the last 23 years, the financial situation has changed significantly. Nowadays, the festival needs more than thousand euros just to fly a music group from Paris. For a number of years, the Bled Culture Institute has not only

been the main financial supporter of the project but has also helped in different ways for the festival to take place.

"Each of the genres possesses beauty and unique features. It is not about one message based on one intellectual concept, but is about a feeling of an intuitive and very deep nostalgia that every nation has in itself."

Along with Ljubljana's *Druga Godba International Festival*, the Okarina Ethno Festival is one of the oldest festivals of traditional music in Slovenia. The organisers named the festival after a traditional folk instrument.

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BLED

A vision of paradise

Dark blue on the top, light grey, sometimes even white as snow in the middle, and different shades of green below. A mirror glitters at the bottom. Dark blue sky before the storm. White as snow, light grey limestone covers the mountain ranges. Forest of different shades of green. As the seasons change, so do its colours.



Photo: Aleš Fovžer/SPIRIT

Bled Corner was created by water. The ice was scraped, deepened, pushed away and stacked; the rivers cut beds into the glacial landscape, carried away the glacial debris, scraped it and deposited it again when their currents settled. During the ice ages, the rivers created lakes. The rivers Sava Bohinjka, Sava Dolinka and Radovna all border Bled Corner.

Lake Bled lies at the centre of the Bled Corner. A tectonic hole made later by the Bohinj glacier was once at the location of the present lake. The glacier ran into an obstacle, a huge rock against which it rubbed and scraped for so long that the only thing that remained was the present island. But the story of the island is probably more magical...

LAKE BLED

Lake Bled lies at the centre of the Bled Corner. A tectonic hole made later by the Bohinj glacier was once at the location of the present lake. The glacier ran into an obstacle, a huge rock against which it rubbed and scraped for so long that the only thing that remained was the present island. The ice melted and the basin was flooded with water, which led to the appearance of the 2.12 km long and up to 1.30 km wide Lake Bled. It is up to 30.6 m deep, which makes it attractive for divers to explore. But the story of the island is probably more magical... Pastures used to be located on this spot, in the middle of which stood a small church consecrated to the Virgin Mary. Since there was no fence around the church, cattle

used to come right up to it and even go inside, desecrating its interior. One day, a voice of caution was heard from heaven, "Build a fence around the church. If you don't, I will." As the people of Bled remained indifferent, they woke up one day and saw the church on the hill surrounded by water. And this is how Lake Bled emerged.

THE OLDEST CASTLE IN SLOVENIA

A mysterious castle was once located on a high hill above the Great Stone in the Radovna Valley. What you are about to read happened to an old man who ventured unsuspecting from Radovna to Mass in Gorje along a lonely path by the river. "Suddenly, something frightened him near the Great Stone. Something rustled horribly in the bushes

right next to the old castle. He quickly hid behind a tree to wait and see what was hiding in the bushes. He did not have to wait long. He caught sight of a large fat snake slithering down over the stones and rocks into the valley. It crawled into the water, screaming loudly." This story is from a tale about an accursed woman who used to live in this accursed castle, and the tall hill above the big stone is still called Gradišče (fort).

On 10 April 1004, the German king Henry II granted the Bled estate to Albuin, Bishop of Brixen and his bishopric. In 1011, Henry II granted the castle atop the cliff (Castellum Veldes) to Albiun's successor, Adalberon, with a new deed of gift, which is the earliest known record of the castle. Bled castle was the administrative centre of the Brixen estate in

Photo: Skok/SPIRIT



Photo: Begdan Kladnik/SPIRIT



With its great natural beauty, Bled and its surroundings rank among the most beautiful alpine resorts, and are renowned for the mild, healing climate, and thermal lake water. The beauty of the mountains reflected in the lake, the sun, the serenity and fresh air arouse pleasant feelings in visitors throughout the year, guaranteeing an ideal relaxing break or an active holiday.

Throughout history, tourists' motives for visiting Bled have been diverse: pilgrimages, trips, spa, resort, hunting and fishing, sports, culture, congresses, ecology. During the period of modern tourism, the culture of villas, summer houses and hotels developed here.

Upper Carniola. Medieval sources mention Bled in the German form of Veldes. On the basis of the documentation, the castle is the oldest castle in Slovenia. The castle facilities are arranged along the lower and upper courtyards. The bishops of Brixen did not live in Bled and very rarely visited. The estate was managed by ministers, caretakers and the people of Gradišče, in accordance with the castle's feudal law. The bishops later leased the estate. The first tenant was Konrad von Kreigh, and the Kreigh family remained tenants for almost two hundred years. They were followed

by their relatives, the Turns, and then Herbard von Auersperg, a hero of battles with the Turks. He attempted to buy the building for his family and began reconstructing it after the 1511 earthquake. While he was a tenant, the castle was a strong base of Protestantism. Primož Trubar stopped here in 1561. Later, Ivan Josip Lenkovič and Count Žiga Turn became tenants. After the tenancy period, the bishops appointed governors, all of whom until the 18th century were noblemen, while later they were commoners. Some lived in Bled, while others managed the estate through caretakers. Due to

the changes in its managers, the castle had little valuable equipment of historical value. The Bled estate was nationalised in 1803. When Napoleon occupied Carniola, the estate came under the ownership of the Illyrian Provinces. The property was returned to the Brixen diocese in 1838. After the feudal system was abolished in 1848, the Brixen owners could no longer afford the rising costs of upkeep, and so the property in Bled was sold in 1858 to the entrepreneur and owner of the Jesenice ironworks Viktor Ruard. Ruard sold the castle and estate to wholesale merchant Adolf Muhr

On 10 April 1004, the German king Henry II granted the Bled estate to Albuin, Bishop of Brixen and his bishopric. In 1011, Henry II granted the castle atop the cliff (Castellum Veldes) to Albiun's successor, Adalberon, with a new deed of gift, which is the earliest known record of the castle.



Photo: Tamino Petelinšič/STA

Bled castle

It is still true that, once in the Church of the Assumption of Mary on Bled Island, one should ring the bell and make a wish. The wishing bell comes from a story about a young widow who had a bell cast in memory of her husband.

Bled became a meeting place of diplomats and politicians as early as in the 19th century. Organised diplomatic activity began in Yugoslavia, when King Alexander Karadorđević declared Bled his summer residence.

in 1882. The restless history of the castle continued, and the castle, lake and island were bought by Ivan Kenda, a hotel manager from Bled, in 1918. He had great plans and wanted to convert the castle into a hotel. He over-invested and his entire property was confiscated in 1937 by the Cooperative Business Bank, and later taken over by the Drava Banate. A fire broke out in the castle on 18 August 1947 which destroyed a significant part of the roof. The history of Bled castle is diverse and tumultuous. Organised professional reconstruction began in 1952 according to the plans of architect Tone Bitenc, who was a student of the famous Slovenian architect Jože Plečnik. The reconstruction took ten years and was completed in 1961. During the reconstruction, Bled castle gained a somewhat more modern appearance adjusted to tourist tours. The Bled Culture Institute renovated the museum section in 2008.

THE WISHING BELL

It is still true that, once in the Church of the Assumption of Mary on Bled Island, one should ring the bell and make a wish. The wishing bell comes from a story about a young widow who

had a bell cast in memory of her husband. As it was being ferried to the island, a storm surprised the workers and they drowned, together with the bell. The young woman was so unhappy that she devoted all her assets to the construction of a new Church of St. Mary on the island, although she left Bled castle and entered a convent in Rome. When the Pope heard the sad story about the unfortunate young widow, he consecrated a new bell and had it transported to the Church of St. Mary on the island where, as the wishing bell, it still conveys many sincere heartfelt wishes. On some clear and serene nights, you can still hear the sad tolling of the sunken bell from the dark depths of the lake.

ARNOLD RIKLI – THE SUN DOCTOR

According to Dr Arnold Rikli's philosophy, the nervous system is the highest autonomic principle in our bodies, and sunlight is the finest and most dynamic (invigorating) food for the nervous system. Life is the movement of substances, and power is the ability of substances to move. In addition to sunbathing and air baths, Rikli prescribed

various baths, vegetarian food and sleep in the open air. Rikli used his unique healing methods to set up a unique health spa offer. To apply his healing system, Rikli built 56 air huts, a swimming area, an administrative building with a dining hall and a villa in Bled. He was the first to describe the network of paths around Bled and its surroundings in 1862.

BLED – THE GREEN ARENA OF GLOBAL DIPLOMACY

Bled became a meeting place of diplomats and politicians as early as in the 19th century. Organised diplomatic activity began in Yugoslavia, when King Alexander Karadorđević declared Bled his summer residence. The most important foreign policy events include three meetings of the Little Entente (1926, 1935, 1938) and one meeting of the Balkan League (1935). Bled maintained its important political and diplomatic role even during World War II, becoming the centre of the German occupation authority in Upper Carniola. After World War II, the decision of the former Yugoslav President Josip Broz–Tito to build a residence in Bled strengthened the official



Photo: Archives of Bled castle

role of the place. It was at that time, especially in the 1960s, when Yugoslavia began to open up to the world, that Bled saw the peak of diplomatic tourism. The Tito–Dimitrov treaty on the Yugoslav–Bulgarian federation (1947) and the Balkan Pact (1954) were signed here.

BLED FOLK TALES

One tale relates the story of a mountain guide from Bled called Bavant. One day, he met a fearsome Turk in battle. They swore, spat over their shoulders, loaded their guns, aimed and boom! But what do you know; when the smoke dispersed, they were both still standing. The people of Bled still believe that their bullets collided.

In the days before refrigeration, ice-making offered an opportunity to make some cash in the winter, and was also a kind of tradition in Bled. The following story was well-known. In order to cut the ice, workers removed one handle of a mitre saw, made a hole in the ice with an axe, and sawed. As they were working, a man from Ljubljana came by. The man watched and then started shouting for the workers

to change places or else the one in the water would drown. He thought that another person was working the other end of the saw underwater.

In the years before World War II, the Karadorđević royal family decided to buy some horses in Norway, so-called Fjord horses. Stables were arranged in Proštija, opposite the entrance to Villa Bled. At the end of the war, one of the regally-bred Fjord horses was taken to the partisans, which did not please it very much. He even bit the partisans on more than one occasion. The horse was destined to be cooked in a cauldron somewhere in Jelovica.

The history of the Rikli period is diverse. Who knows if climbers from Bled know that Rikli's patients were the first climbers from Bled to master descent using a rope? There was not enough room in the open huts by the lake for all the patients, so they also stayed in hotels. At night, they would descend to the ground by using sheets tied together. Coachmen waited for them around the corner and took them to good inns. The hard-working Mr Rikli, however, was convinced that only he could take credit for the

good appearance of his patients. The people of Bled used to go ice-skating (modern ice-skates with metal blades) on the lake. Ice-skaters, particularly women, dressed up to go skating. It was such a joy to watch them. More prominent houses used upholstered armchairs with blades (ice-skates) attached to the front to drive on the ice. People were hired to drive prominent ladies around on the ice like this. One of these armchairs was also owned by the parish. It was beautifully made and upholstered in cardinal red plush. On St. Blaise's day, the altar boys used this armchair to push the priest to the island.

THE REFLECTION TAKES SHAPE

Then one catches sight of the shining mirror. And what does one see? The fractions of the image have names; only the sky remains just that. The mountains with Triglav are the core of the Julian Alps; the colourful part is the foothills and forest of Pokljuka, and the mirror is Lake Bled. The image in the eye of the traveller is a vision of paradise.

Sources: Summarised from a story by the Mayor of Bled, Janez Fajfar, and the publication 'Bled – 1,000 years'.

With its high-quality wines, the castle cellar invites you to taste the wines and watch a demonstration of bottling from oak barrels. Those visitors who fill up a bottle as a souvenir, and cork and wax it, receive a commemorative certificate. You will also enjoy the mixture of colours, scents and tastes.

Then one catches sight of the shining mirror. And what does one see? The fractions of the image have names; only the sky remains just that. The mountains with Triglav are the core of the Julian Alps; the colourful part is the foothills and forest of Pokljuka, and the mirror is Lake Bled. The image in the eye of the traveller is a vision of paradise.

Rowing Wimbledon at Lake Bled The best and most beautiful rowing course in the world

Lake Bled, a Slovenian natural paradise, offers ideal conditions for rowing. The length of the lake is the same as that of a standard rowing course and its width is just right to accommodate six lanes. Owing to its natural beauty, it is known as the best and most beautiful rowing course in the world, a kind of Slovenian Wimbledon of rowing, which can boast of having already organised four world championships, the last in 2011.



Photo: Stanko Gruđen/STA

Lake Bled, a Slovenian natural paradise, offers ideal conditions for rowing.

The first recorded regatta in Bled, which brought a medal to the local team, was in 1905, though rowing clubs on the Slovenian coast existed as long ago as the 19th century.

The club also takes pride in the rowing centre that they established in the 1950s and renovated in 2011. This is one of the most beautiful centres in the world, Mr Slivnik says proudly; when there is a competition, everything runs smoothly, like clockwork.

The secretary-general of the Rowing Federation of Slovenia, Jernej Slivnik, explains that sportsmen and visitors are keen to keep returning to the town and its lake. The first recorded regatta in Bled, which brought a medal to the local team, was in 1905, though rowing clubs on the Slovenian coast existed as long ago as the 19th century. The Bled Club was established in 1949 and a rowing federation, whose members first participated at the Olympic Games in 1956, followed three years later. In the 60s, two coaches – former rowers Miloš Janša and Stanko Slivnik – got to work on reorganising the club, paving its way to a place among the best in the world. In 1992, soon after Slovenian independence, two rowers – Iztok Čop, one of the most successful Slovenian athletes of all times, and Luka Špik – started to participate in competitions. Čop is the holder of the Olympic rowing gold medal from Sydney (2000), the

silver from Athens (2004) and bronze medals from Barcelona (1992) and London (2012); as if this were not enough, he is also a quadruple world champion. Špik is the holder of three Olympic medals. In 2013, he started the season without his long-term partner in the double scull Iztok Čop, who finally retired from competition last year. Even in the post-Olympic season of 2013, centring his efforts on the competition in the single scull, he is aiming for top places.

THE MAIN ARCHITECT OF SLOVENIA'S ROWING SUCCESS STORY

Miloš Janša remains the coach of the Slovenian rowing teams for the period 2013–2016, thus retaining the position he has held ever since independence. Under his leadership, rowing in the independent Slovenia has, among other achievements, brought home five Olympic medals. The

63-year old lawyer from Bled is the main architect behind the Slovenian rowing success story and the coach of the majority of our crews that have been winning medals at the Olympics and world championships since the 1980s. He participated as a competitor himself in the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, and in 1976 he started to coach for the Bled rowing club.

The new Olympic cycle also entails major changes in the Slovenian rowing crews. The overall objective is to make use of the asset of Luka Špik's experience and, even after the departure of Iztok Čop, do everything possible to continue attaining top results and winning medals. At the same time, more energy will be dedicated to bringing forward competitive young talent. Although rowing is a relatively demanding sporting discipline, the boys – most of them locals from Bled – are used to hard work



Photo: Stanko Gruđen/STA

Despite having reached the end of his racing career, Čop still likes to take to the water and now and then still enjoys training:

“Yes, I still train a little. Occasionally. I am not completely out of the rhythm yet. However, when I come to Bled and see the training schedule but the weather is bad, I am not in the least sorry. The boys have to go out on the lake whatever the weather conditions, but I can decide to do as I please. It is the beauty of Bled and the local rowing knowledge that made me persist in rowing for three decades.”

Luka Špik and Iztok Čop, winners of the bronze medal at the 2012 summer Olympic Games in London.



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

Rowers Gašper Fištravec, Luka Špik, Jernej Markovc and Matej Rojec at the training at Bled lake.

and the training conditions are good. They start training at the age of 12, when their bodies are still developing. During training, the biggest strain is on the back, so back pain is a common complaint among rowers. Great emphasis is laid on achieving a technique that ensures the desired speed with maximum output of oar resistance and correct movement in the boat. Thus good technique complements the rower's strength.

The club also takes pride in the rowing centre that they established in the 1950s and renovated in 2011. This is one of the most beautiful centres in the world, Mr Slivnik says proudly; when there is a competition, everything runs smoothly, like clockwork.

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT BETWEEN BLED AND HENLEY

A partnership agreement has been concluded between two world-renowned rowing centres. Henley-on-Thames is the famous venue of the prestigious Royal Regatta, organised every year since 1839. And it was the Bled and wider Slovenian rowing tradition and outstanding sporting achievements that convinced the councillors of Henley to unambiguously support the partnership with Bled. Henley too is a cradle of rowing sports: the Royal Regatta has a longstanding and unbroken tradition and it is also the home of Leander Club, one of the oldest and most successful rowing clubs

in England and indeed the world. Among the members of the club is the sporting legend Steven Redgrave, who won five gold medals at five consecutive Olympic Games and at last year's Olympics in London was among the final bearers of the Olympic torch. The town is also famous for its excellent Rowing Museum, which keeps a rich collection showing the entire history of the development of the sport. This year, part of this exhibition will be dedicated to Bled. In 2007, the world-famous Royal Regatta, which traditionally takes place in the end of June, was also attended by Iztok Čop and Luka Špik, who won in the double scull event.

Henley-on-Thames is the famous venue of the prestigious Royal Regatta, organised every year since 1839. And it was the Bled and wider Slovenian rowing tradition and outstanding sporting achievements that convinced the councillors of Henley to unanimously support the partnership with Bled.

The town is also famous for its excellent Rowing Museum, which keeps a rich collection showing the entire history of the development of the sport. This year, part of this exhibition will be dedicated to Bled.

To Potičnica on Bled Island for a slice of nut roll

You cannot truly experience Bled without tasting the legendary Bled cream cake, taking a drive in a coach (fijaker) or visiting the island by traditional wooden boat (pletna). And now we can add: you cannot truly experience Bled without visiting the Potičnica Café on Bled Island.



Photo: Tina Zupar/SPIRIT

The Potičnica Café is the first of its kind in Slovenia.

Potičnica offers the roll filled with almonds, hazelnuts, chocolate, tarragon, poppy seeds, carob, dried pears, apples, figs, chives, raisins, cracklings, onions, bacon and, most important of all, walnuts. Some people say when you crack walnuts, you also crack your problems.

In addition to the gallery, the facilities on Bled Island have been enhanced with the addition of the Potičnica Café. The parish priest Janez Ferkolj says that Bled has always been too strongly associated with the cream cake (in Slovenian: kremna rezina), which does have a long tradition in Bled. But still, he believes that it does not deserve so much attention, as it is not a traditional Slovenian cake. So he decided that the Bled parish should transform the old inn facilities on the island into the Potičnica Café.

NUT ROLL IS QUEEN

In Potičnica, you will be served their own Slovenian nut roll (in Slovenian: potica), baked on the island. The name of the café comes from the name of the earthenware baking dish in

which the nut rolls are baked. Potičnica offers the roll filled with almonds, hazelnuts, chocolate, tarragon, poppy seeds, carob, dried pears, apples, figs, chives, raisins, cracklings, onions, bacon and, most important of all, walnuts. Some people say when you crack walnuts, you also crack your problems.

The nut rolls are also made a la carte and to order, according to the customer's wishes. Father Ferkolj says that the most wonderful thing about the traditional recipe is that it offers so many options for new ideas.

Potičnica on Bled Island is the first Slovenian café devoted to serving the dish, and was opened out of a wish to serve guests and visitors to the island with home-made Slovenian

desserts. The most popular fillings are walnut, almond, chocolate and salted leek. I tried the walnut and have not had such a good one for a long time.

YOU CAN TREAT YOURSELF TO A DELICIOUS NUT ROLL

Father Ferkolj, the parish priest at Bled (the father of the Potičnica Café, as it were) still has many ideas for developing Bled Island and adding to the tourist offer. He would like the island to become a meeting point for anyone who wants to enjoy the wonderful natural surroundings, a good book or a pleasant chat in the shade of the trees on the Island, the delicious nut roll and fragrant coffee. You should definitely visit the Potičnica Café. You will surely want to taste the nut roll.

I feel Slovenia and sport Slovenian sports enthusiasts feel and share the energy of the Slovenian basketball team

The slogan and brand I feel Slovenia were extremely well received at various events organised by the Government Communication Office for the promotion of Slovenia and its national brand. Sporting events, in particular, were highly successful.



Photo: Archive of OKS

As the administrator of the I feel Slovenia brand, our Office decided to examine ways to link this national brand with major sporting events that are potentially interesting for the brand's promotion. The brand was first put to the test at a friendly football match between Slovenia and England in London in the autumn of 2009. We provided the supporters of the Slovenian team with T-shirts and presented the national brand at a press conference. Slovenian fans identified themselves with the I feel Slovenia brand. The British media and tour operators were unanimous in agreeing that this is one of the best marketing slogans ever. This positive response in London prompted us to continue with special promotional activities at big international events abroad.

The Olympic Games are undoubtedly one of the most important sporting events in the world. Joined by the Olympic spirit, athletes, their coaches and fans, curious spectators and sports enthusiasts from all over the world gather for the Games. At the venue of the 2010 Winter

Olympics in Canada, a Slovenian House showcasing the I feel Slovenia brand was set up for the first time. In addition to supporters equipped with I feel Slovenia paraphernalia, the official wardrobe of the members of the Slovenian Olympic delegation increased Slovenia's visibility in Vancouver, and together with the I feel Slovenia slogan, became a big hit with visitors to the Olympic Games.

The I feel Slovenia slogan was extremely well received by visitors to the Olympic Games in Canada: "Very imaginative." "Excellent marketing." "I like it."

It would be difficult to find a national brand that would better match the Olympic spirit. At the Summer Olympics in London, the Government Communication Office also made sure that the I feel Slovenia brand was clearly visible. The experience with the I feel Slovenia brand in sports is a positive signal for the future and a foundation for further development of the brand. It will also help connect the brand with the image of sports.

THE STORY OF THE SLOVENIAN BRAND IN SPORTS

The desire to move is a part of every Slovenian. The eagerness with which we pursue our recreational goals is a consequence of the desire for balance. We excel in sports because we enjoy movement. Because nature is everywhere around us and because nature calms us and gives us renewed energy, being active is a part of our every day life. Slovenians connect jogging, skiing, hiking, or any other physical activity with the quality of life. We cannot imagine balanced living without physical activity.

We ski where nobody has skied before; we climb where nobody has climbed before; we swim where nobody has swum before; we cycle for distances that others have not. We do not overcome basic natural laws and limits, we discover them. Because we engage in sporting activities that we enjoy, we are capable of excelling at them. It is our tenacity that makes us discover limits set by nature. And because we value balance and safety, we respect these natural limits.

Slovenian team at the 2013 European Youth Olympic Festival in Utrecht in the Netherlands.

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Photo: Archive of OKS



Ivo Tomc, Olympic Committee of Slovenia

VISUAL IDENTITY OF SLOVENIAN SPORTS

It is in our nature to strive for a uniform visual identity when travelling abroad to compete for Slovenia at selected events, be it official sports competitions or informal social gatherings. We wish to be seen by others as be-

longing to one team. Slovenian athletes are given this exceptional opportunity to represent their country at international events. It is therefore our task to provide them with a uniform visual identity that they can show to the world. The better the sportsmen, the more Slovenia's colours will shine; a more uniform and persistently used visual identity increases Slovenia's visibility in the world.

Nataša Bušljeta, Msc

LET'S CHEER IN A SPORTING WAY, LET'S CHEER FOR OUR TEAM!

The European Basketball Championship is drawing near and tension between both the competitors and the fans is rising. The host towns are putting the last touches to their preparations, and all the locations have been tested successfully by the Slovenian team in warm-up matches. In the towns which traditionally host top sports events, the team defeated all comers. The additional players – the fans – undoubtedly contributed to these wins. Slovenian sports fans are very proud of the successes of our sportsmen and women and like them, are great promoters of Slovenia who are also writing the story of the "I feel Slovenia" brand.

In cooperation with the Slovenian Basketball Association and the host towns, the Government Communication Office prepared various promotional activities for the fans, providing them with cheering props at warm-up matches in the host towns. Between 2 and 4 August in the Laško Group Tournament in Celje,

the fans used clap banners as fans to cool off in the hot Zlatorog Hall and the energetic atmosphere at the matches of the Slovenian national team.

On 25 August, the Office held a fan conference in Congress Square in Ljubljana, where the fans were able to compete with the legends of Slovenian basketball, participate in prize games and acquire cheering props to boost the Slovenian national basketball team during the championship. Basketball events in the spirit of the "I feel Slovenia" brand will take place in Congress Square in Ljubljana throughout the championship in cooperation with the Municipality of Ljubljana.

You can also follow the fans' activities on social networks and co-create the atmosphere with fans throughout the entire championship at FB, Feel Slovenia, and Twitter, #ifeelslovenia. Before the championship, the Office will post 'instructions' for cheering in a sporting way on YouTube, so that visitors will also be able to feel Slovenia as different, as green, presenting a balance between the calmness of nature and enthusiasm for all that we love.

SLOVENIAN BRAND AND BASKETBALL

The brand of Slovenia must be presented with a full measure of energy and associated with the movement and action that are typical of Slovenians. Slovenian sports enthusiasts feel and share the energy of the Slovenian basketball team, which has been successful in recent years and thus created great expectations for the upcoming European basketball championship. At EuroBasket 2013 to be held in

Ivo Tomc

SLOVENIAN SPORTS COLOURS

Slovenian sports colours – green, blue and white – are increasingly used. Everyday more sports organisations are aware of the significance of having a uniform visual identity. Furthermore, the Olympic Committee of Slovenia suggests that sports organisations use the following ratio when designing national sports equipment: 50 % green, 30 % blue and 20 % white.

Colours used for Slovenia's national sports equipment:
 • green / PANTONE 375 C
 • blue / PANTONE Process Blue C
 • white

THE NATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE ISSUED THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- SLOVENIA should always be written in capital letters;

JANEZ KOCIJANČIČ, PRESIDENT OF THE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE OF SLOVENIA

"The colours of the Slovenian flag are well known in many countries that were created during the Spring of Nations, when the French flag served as a model. For this very reason, we were looking for a specific combination that would make us visible. Green represents the linden leaf and the green landscape of Slovenia. At the recent Mediterranean Games in Mersin in Turkey, we were able to see that no other participating nation out of a total of 24 had this combination of green, blue and white, whereas blue and white were used by at least 15 teams. At the national level, we by all means do not want to copy the colours of

Slovenian from 4 to 22 September, the Government Communication Office will, in its role as the administrator of the I feel Slovenia brand and in cooperation with the Basketball Federation of Slovenia, link the stories and the energy of the national team and the brand. Slovenian basketball players will become the key promoters of the national brand during preparations for the championship, while their supporters, with their invigorating green, will energetically cheer them on at matches.

- Verdana typography (also the secondary typography of I feel Slovenia) should be used as the basis for SLOVENIA;
- since teams and individual athletes use their national sports equipment most frequently at international events, the English word for SLOVENIA should be used.

HANDBOOK ON SLOVENIAN SPORTS COLOURS AND THE USE OF NATIONAL SYMBOLS

The Olympic Committee of Slovenia prepared a special handbook for sports organisations. It includes instructions on how to use Slovenian sports colours, information on the proper use of Slovenian national symbols, and recommendations on how to write Slovenia and use several graphical elements on sports equipment.

clubs," said Janez Kocijančič, the President of the Olympic Committee of Slovenia.

"When asked about the existing image of green, blue and white, the majority of top sportsmen said that they were satisfied with it. Tradition, being different from other teams, and the Slovenian national identity speak in favour of this image. Our common objective is to be recognised wherever we go. Speaking from my own experience, I can assure you that Slovenia has become visible with these colours. The response from around the world is also positive," explained Mr Kocijančič.

Source: Matej Grošelj, Dnevnik, 2 July 2013

European Basketball Championships EuroBasket 2013 is just around the corner and Slovenian hearts are beating to the beat of the basketball team

In September, Slovenia will host the European Basketball Championships. The pulse of basketball can be felt everywhere. Fans' hearts are beating in time with their Slovenian basketball heroes, who are deep into their preparations for the greatest sporting event in the history of Slovenia. The main aim of the players selected by Božidar Maljkovič is to qualify for the 2014 World Basketball Cup in Spain, but their secret wish is to win a medal too.

Photo: Archives of Basketball Federation of Slovenia



For the second time in their history, there will be 24 teams competing at the 38th European Championships on 4–22 September. The first round of the championships will be hosted by the Bonifika Hall in Koper, Podmežakla Hall in Jesenice, Zlatorog Hall in Celje and legendary Tivoli Hall in Ljubljana. The best twelve teams, divided into two groups of six, will advance to Round 2. This part of the championships, and the finals that follow, will be held at Stožice Stadium in Ljubljana. Each team in Round 2 will play three games, while the matches from the quarter-finals on will be played on a knock-out basis.

In Round 1, Slovenia will play in Celje. Their first match will be

against the Czech Republic on 4 September. On the following day they are due to play Spain, then Georgia (7 September), Croatia (8 September) and Poland (9 September). In Round 2, Slovenia's group will play against group D, made up of Russia, Greece, Italy, Finland, Turkey and Sweden.

EUROBASKET 2013 GROUPS:

Group A (Ljubljana): France, Great Britain, Germany, Ukraine, Belgium, Israel
 Group B (Jesenice): FYR of Macedonia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Latvia, Serbia
 Group C (Celje): Spain, SLOVENIA, Croatia, Poland, Georgia, Czech Republic
 Group D (Koper): Russia, Greece, Italy, Finland, Turkey, Sweden

THE SLOVENIAN TEAM BEGAN THEIR PREPARATIONS ON 19 JULY

The preparations for the Slovenian senior team began 47 days before the start of EuroBasket 2013. National team coach Božidar Maljkovič first invited 16 players to take part. On his list of candidates to wear the national kit were Jure Balažič, Jaka Blažič, Jaka Brodnik, Goran Dragič, Zoran Dragič, Jaka Lakovič, Luka Lapornik, Domen Lorbek, Gezim Morina, Edo Murič, Klemen Prepelič, Uroš Slokar, Gašper Vidmar, Mirza Begić, Nebojša Joksimović and Boštjan Nachbar. The Basketball Federation of Slovenia made sure that training conditions for our basketball stars were absolutely fantastic this summer. In the prepara-

The anthem In the Beat of Basketball, expressing the sentiment Yes, I feel basketball (from the Slovenian national brand "I feel Slovenia"), will resound through halls across Slovenia during EuroBasket 2013.

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The fans are also proof that Slovenia is a basketball country. They are renowned throughout the world as knowledgeable about the sport and follow their team's every move.

If you're not jumping, you're not Slovene! Hey, hey, hey! If you're not going to EuroBasket, you're really missing out!



Photo: Archives of Basketball Federation of Slovenia

tion period, the team members have been perfecting their play and strengthening team spirit in various locations throughout Slovenia. Rogaška Slatina, Ljubljana, Zreče and Kranjska Gora are tried and tested preparation bases where the players and team management always feel great.

Fans – the sixth player on court
The fans are also proof that Slovenia is a basketball country. They are renowned throughout the world as knowledgeable about the sport and follow their team's every move. Slovenian fans have already been a real hit in Spain, Poland, Turkey and Lithuania. There is little doubt that they will take the role of the sixth player at the European Championships at home, as tickets for matches involving the Slovenian team were sold out in the blink of an eye.

Slovenian team players and management are not the only ones who are aware that Slovenian fans play a very important part in the sport. The EuroBasket 2013 Organising Committee has made fans the main stars of the video of the official EuroBasket anthem in the Beat of Basketball, performed by Zoran Predin and CoverLove.

With this, the Local Organising Committee wished to emphasise the importance of Slovenian fans for the success of the team and the championships as a whole and to show that fans have a special status in the country and that cheering for the Slovenian team feels great. Foreign visitors will also enjoy the special experience of being a fan in Slovenia.

SLOVENIAN NATIONAL TEAM ON SOCIAL NETWORKS WITH #JUNAKI (HEROES) HASHTAG

This year, during the preparation period and EuroBasket itself, the national team will use the official Twitter and Facebook hashtag #junaki, under which fan opinions and forecasts will be collected and, more importantly, the team's victories will be celebrated. The choice of the phrase is the result of a successful trial to unite Slovenian fans on these favourite social networks. It was developed when the Slovenian handball team competed at the World Championships. The hashtag then was #HeroTeam, and now the handball team is passing the baton to the basketball team, which will inspire us in the autumn. In the basketball euphoria accompanying the matches of the Slo-

venian team this year, we should remember that both those on the court and those cheering in the stands are all heroes.

MANY FAVOURITES

The EuroBasket this September will certainly be one of the most evenly contested to date, looking at the teams. At least ten teams can be counted among the favourites for medals, so in addition to good training and daily form, luck will definitely play a part. According to experts, Spain, France and Montenegro are the main favourites. Then there are Lithuania, Russia, Turkey and Serbia. The wider group of favourites also includes Slovenia, but every championship brings one or two surprises. One thing is certain: the road to ultimate success will be long and hard for any team.

Many teams, including Slovenia's, have faced losing players. But as the saying goes, needs must when the devil drives. In any case, we are in store for some excellent basketball in September in Jesenice, Koper, Celje and Ljubljana. And of course we hope the Slovenian basketball stars will play the leading role.

Aleš Križnar

EuroBasket 2013 Director

Everything is set for the championship

This is a project of national importance

“We will not wish you luck, because you don't need it. You are a basketball nation, and we know that EuroBasket will be an excellent event from the sporting, social, tourist and economic perspective. Slovenia is a truly outstanding country, the people are nice, and they perceive basketball very emotionally. It is well worth a visit.” This is how Jose Montero, representative of the Spanish Basketball Federation, evaluated the organisation of the European Basketball Championship to be held in Slovenia in September.

Photo: Aleš Fevžer



Mr Križnar, the European Basketball Championship is about to begin. What is happening at the moment?

We can rest assured as far as the preparations are concerned. Although there were some fears a while ago due to the economic situation, things have developed in the right direction with the sponsors, and with tickets, as well as with our partners. We hope there are no great shocks before the championship begins, and our hard work in the past few years is rewarded by the success of the Slovenian national team.

We are entering a period of action, which means that what we have been doing for the past two and a half years is being realised in the warm-up matches. Our team has already begun prepara-

tions. Everything we planned will be tested. Many things are ready to be delivered, the reconstructed stands are in place, and the parquet has been laid. In this sense, the warm-up matches are vital, as they point to potential shortcomings. During these games, the media involvement of the event will be tested.

What are the expectations from the sporting, social, tourist and economic perspective? The European Championship in Slovenia offers more than just sporting spectacles.

We have constantly emphasised that this is a project of national importance, as it is one of the most important sporting events in the EU this year, and it has numerous multi-purpose effects. In the

towns where matches are played, i.e. Ljubljana, Koper, Celje and Jesenice, the halls will be renovated to the highest international standards, which will also showcase the development of the municipalities and towns, and other sporting and cultural events. An important aspect of the championship is the popularisation of sport among the young, given that 90 games will be played by 23 foreign national teams. In addition to basketball, other events and accompanying activities will contribute to this. The promotional effects will also be strong, but difficult to measure. The information that there are 1,400 officially accredited media which will report to the world about our country and EuroBasket during the championship says a lot. The

People need a positive sporting spirit which binds and unites them. My silent wish is at least for third place.

We have constantly emphasised that this is a project of national importance, as it is one of the most important sporting events in the EU this year, and it has numerous multi-purpose effects. In the towns where matches are played, i.e. Ljubljana, Koper, Celje and Jesenice, the halls will be renovated to the highest international standards, which will also showcase the development of the municipalities and towns, and other sporting and cultural events.

championship in Lithuania was broadcast to 162 countries worldwide. It is outstanding promotion for Slovenia to be presented to so many people. The tourist aspect is even more important, since we have to present the country as a location with a unique position with great logistical advantages. This time our small size is an advantage; 30,000 visitors will be here for a lengthy period, and it is up to us to show them a friendly welcome with open arms. If they are satisfied, they will keep coming back.

The economic perspective is important too.

Absolutely. Many influential business people will be here seeking new investments. So if we look at the big picture, the championship has many positive effects.

How will the teams, media, referees and fans, and accompanying activities be catered for?

The teams are among the most important people in the competition. We must provide them with good conditions so that they can do their job well. In this respect, accommodation is extremely important. It is similar with referees, and delegates who are involved in the competition. And we have prepared a few accompanying events, fan centres in towns, numerous events and shows for fans. The country will live and breathe the championship.

What is the system of ticket sales like? There is enormous public interest in tickets for EuroBasket 2013.

You know, it is never easy to fill the seats for 90 games. Ticket sales began in February. The prices range from four euros for the cheapest in the group from fifth to eighth place, up to 180 euros for the most expensive seats in the finals. The first round was intended for foreign basketball federations whose national teams qualified for the competition, while sales to the general public began in March. Tickets for the decisive medal games are still available. We were the first to offer tickets for each individual game and not daily ones, when fans were often left empty-handed. Tickets can be bought only through the official vendor, Eventim, or

Palma Tourist Agency together with their packages. 4,000 to 5,000 tickets are available to the general public for the first round, also in Celje where the Slovenian national team will be playing; for the second round in Stožice, between 9,000 and 10,000 tickets are available. Ticket sales for the second round began on 1 April. For better availability, we have set affordable prices comparable to the previous European Championship in Lithuania. So the lowest price is only four euros for tickets of category 7 for games for placing from the fifth to eighth place. Tickets for the first round cost a minimum of 15 euros and a maximum 35 euros. Prices for the second round range from 17 to 55 euros, for the quarter-finals 19 to 75 euros and for the semi-finals from 25 to 120 euros. The finals will cost 35 to 180 euros, and prices for the third place game range from 30 to 150 euros. We think that a total of 250,000 tickets will be sold, which will generate an income of 4 to 4.5 million euros.

How many people will have been directly involved in the organisation of this magnificent event?

In addition to all the officials, approximately 1,000 volunteers will see to the undisturbed conduct of the championship. The EuroBasket 2013 company will be managing and supervising 6,000 people in various offices, organising committees in towns, among referees, delegates, healthcare workers, etc. Of course, this number does not include players or representatives of various media. During the championship, between 50 and 60 hotels around Slovenia will be full. Then there are restaurants, transportation operators and shops; in short, a lot of people will benefit one way or another from EuroBasket.

How satisfied are the representatives of the basketball federations with the halls they have seen and the general situation?

We had a meeting with all the heads of national teams, and their responses to what they saw were very positive. For three days, we drove them to all the venues, showed them all five sport halls and the hotels, and presented novelties to them. They were thrilled with

our small size, which makes it easy to travel between towns. In one day, you could see three games in three different locations. They were delighted with the country, the cleanliness and security, and are all looking forward to the championship. They know we are great organisers. They know us and talk about us in superlatives. The teams, referees, delegates, VIP guests and media will be staying in 65 hotels. Each location must include at least five hotels in different categories, which we pay for. The Palma Tourist Agency has prepared special travel packages for visitors.

What financial effects do you expect from the championship?

At the end, we will draw the line and measure the results. A cost-benefit analysis will be prepared by the Faculty of Economics in Ljubljana on real bases. We really must make use of the fact that we are now at the centre of attention. The period of the championship is merely the tip of the iceberg. Current team actions are very important. There will be more and more information on the championship and on what Slovenia has to offer in general. Without state support, which contributed six million euros to the account of FIBA Europe, we could not host this championship. I am convinced that the championship will generate plenty of new revenue for the state. We expect an income of between 38 and 40 million euros, five to seven million of which will go to the state. In short, the financial effect is expected to be good.

Can you tell us what you expect from the Slovenian national team?

Wishes are one thing and reality quite another. The result of the home team will significantly affect what we think of the championship. In terms of organisation, we can give it all we have, but if there is no result, everything could be ruined. The impact of our team and its results will certainly be enormous. If the placing is good, it will contribute enormously to the atmosphere. People need a positive sporting spirit which binds and unites them. My silent wish is at least for third place.

Taste Slovenia The EuroBasket menus and wines

EuroBasket 2013 will be an excellent opportunity to promote supreme quality Slovenian wines and Slovenia's culinary offer among the visitors to the Championship. The organisers have made sure that information on Slovenia's gastronomic offer and exquisite wines is spread to Europe.



Photo: Aleš Fevžer

WINES OF EUROBASKET

2013 European Basketball Championship will offer a novelty. Together with their colleagues from the organising committee of the Championship, a special catering and wine expert committee selected the official wines of EuroBasket 2013. The offer will include 14 wines from 13 wine producers from all around Slovenia. According to the organisers' estimates, over 60 thousand bottles of wine will be sold, which will be on offer at official fan centres, selected bars, official hotels and stores. EuroBasket wine bottles will be labelled with the official logo of the Championship in green and purple and will be on offer as souvenirs or gifts.

Two varieties of sparkling wine will be available. Radgona Gold Brut Natur sparkling wine from Radgonske gorice is the first Slovenian sparkling wine prepared

according to a French method of fermenting in bottles. The second variety, from Vila Istenič, is a sparkling wine with a citrus aroma based on a medium-dry Chardonnay.

White wines come from all corners of Slovenia. Rebula Quercus from Goriška Brda is a supreme quality wine with a moderately-rounded flavour and a pleasant acid taste, giving the wine its distinct freshness. It reflects the uniqueness and locale of Brda. Šipon Gomila comes from Ormož and is produced by P&F Jeruzalem Ormož; it has an intensive flavour of white flowers, herbs and citrus. The dry white wine 3 Cuvee-trojka is from the Štajerska region. Zelen Lanthieri is a medium-dry wine from the Vipava Valley, which is typified by flowery and fruity aromas and hints of Mediterranean herbs (lavender, rosemary). Dušan Kristančič's Chardonnay, with its

fresh, fruity and lasting flavour, will also be on offer. Two dry wines are from the Marof Winery in Prekmurje: Beli Križ, which is a blend of Italian Riesling, Chardonnay and Sauvignon, and Breg Chardonnay, produced from the smallest grapes which ripen in the warmest terrains.

The committee selected three red varieties. Refošk Rex Fuscus is a dry red wine typical of Slovenian Istria from the Primorska region. Stara Brajda from Goriška Brda, with an aroma of ripe red fruit, spices and brushwood, will also be on offer. The Štoka Winery from Kras is offering its characteristic Teran, produced from vines which thrive in the terra rosa soil of the Karst.

Two rosé varieties will also be on offer during EuroBasket 2013: the famous Cviček from the Martinčič Winery in the Dolenjska region is a light, dry, fresh and

Lipko is also excited about the flavours of Slovenian wines.

The offer will include 14 wines from 13 wine producers from all around Slovenia.

EuroBasket wine bottles will be labelled with the official logo of the Championship in green and purple and will be on offer as souvenirs or gifts.

In addition to the excellent basketball team, Slovenians can also be proud of their exquisite wines, which foreign visitors to EuroBasket 2013 will be able to taste.



Photo: Ales Fezder

The culinary themes will vary and include concepts such as Taste Slovenia, O Concept, Mediterranean Day, Taste the World and others.

pleasant wine, and Damski Rose from the Erzetič Winery in Brda has a mellow orange-red colour and aroma of red fruits and dried spices; both wines can be served on any occasion.

SLOVENIAN CUISINE SUPPLEMENTED WITH GLOBAL CULINARY TRENDS

The volunteers, media representatives and special guests of the Championship will be catered for every day of the European Basketball Championship. The official catering partner of the Championship is Jezeršek gostinstvo d.o.o., a family business with a 30-year tradition in catering and organising catering at various events. Their goal is to exceed the culinary expectations of the organisers and participants of the Championship. They will prepare dishes combining traditional and modern Slovenian cuisine, occasionally supplemented with global culinary trends. As well as the demanding requirements of the client and guests, they will comply with the guests' frequently expressed request to add Kranjska sausage, a Slovenian speciality, to the menu.

THE EUROBASKET MENUS IN NUMBERS

When preparing dishes, mostly Slovenian ingredients provided by Slovenian partners will be used, and some foreign specialities.

With its creative team of highly-qualified experts from the culinary and catering fields, Jezeršek Catering will provide

more than 66,000 meals in three to five different segments in the three competition phases of the Championship. The staff will include approximately 120 chefs, waiters and drivers for the entire event. It is estimated that 28 tons of ingredients i.e. 9 tons of meat and meat products, 1 ton of fish, 9 tons of fruit and vegetables, 6 tons of bread and pasta and 3 tons of milk and dairy products will go into the preparation of the meals. Before the Championship starts, they will also have to supply and store approximately 80,000 wine glasses, 40,000 water glasses, 80,000 plates, 80,000 forks, 80,000 knives, 40,000 spoons and 27 kilometres of table cloths.

Jezeršek Catering will prepare most of the dishes in cooperation with Slovenian suppliers. Panvita Group, distinguished for its environment-friendly food production and sustainable animal production, will supply meat and meat products. Pivovarna Laško Group, which maintains its leading position in Slovenia with responsible and environment-friendly management of beer sales, will provide beer, water and non-alcoholic beverages.

Juices will be supplied by Fructal, which has been making various high-quality products from fruit and other products of nature since 1945 and strives to retain the richness of natural ingredients without additives in its products. Mlinotest, a company with a 200-year tradition of producing qualitative and healthy food, will supply pastries and pasta.

Jezeršek will also include protected Slovenian products in their dishes, such as Karst prosciutto, Nanos cheese and Kranjska sausage.

As their special dish, Jezeršek highlight their venison fillet in red wine sauce, fuje (bread dumplings wrapped in prosciutto) and sautéed pear in wine with cranberries.

COOKING IN FRONT OF GUESTS

Different dishes will be served depending on the segment and location of the competition. The schedule of dishes has been prepared in such a way that the concept of the dishes changes daily, and guests will also be served international dishes in addition to Slovenian specialities. Each section of the Championship has different requirements and standards regarding the selection of the menu.

In the last three sections of the Championship, the level of catering will be at its highest and the extent of service will be at its broadest, because chefs will be preparing dishes in front of the guests. In the last section of the competition in Stožice, dishes for the highest level of participants will be served in the form of various concepts, featuring various types of cutlery and table settings. The culinary themes will vary and include concepts such as Taste Slovenia, O Concept, Mediterranean Day, Taste the World and others.

The culinary side of EuroBasket The tastes of Slovenia interpreted by Jezeršek Catering

Photo: Jezeršek archive



Venison fillet in red wine sauce, fuje (bread dumplings wrapped in prosciutto) and sautéed pear in wine with cranberries. Served at the gala FIBA Sponsors Dinner on 8 March 2013 at the National Gallery in Ljubljana.



Photo: Jezeršek archive

Martin Jezeršek, Managing Director, graduated from the elite Swiss school, Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne. He then spent two years acquiring knowledge, international experience, acquaintances and friends from all around the world. He returned from Switzerland with fresh ideas and a plan to make the family business one of the leading catering companies in Europe. Martin believes in his team and work, but not in borders. He is a connecting, calming, creative, hard-working team player, daring, compromising, decisive and persistent. His closest family members describe him in this way. In April 2008, Martin received the Georges Baptiste Award at the prestigious European championship in catering service skills in Madrid. A year later, he was made the Hospitality Ambassador of Slovenia.

How will the catering be provided?

Jezeršek gostinstvo d.o.o. is a licensed partner of the European Basketball Championship, EuroBasket 2013, providing catering for VIP guests, international delegates, business guests, the media and volunteers. The project is a big organisational challenge in the field of catering. The creative team includes highly-qualified experts from the culinary and catering fields. On the basis of agreements which are regularly harmonised with the client, the development managers at Jezeršek are organising procedures for preparing food for their chefs, who will be preparing dishes at various locations. The procedures involve the creative design of the dishes, the preparation and measurement of ingredients for individual dishes, photograph-

ing the preparation process and the final presentation of the dishes, the entry of data and photographs in their computer-supported catering programme and instructing the staff. The purpose of the demanding and lengthy procedure is to ensure and maintain a high quality of food preparation.

More than 66,000 people will be served during the EuroBasket 2013 matches, in three to five different segments (VVIP, VIP programme, corporate hospitality programme, media and volunteers) in three phases of the competition.

How many different dishes will be prepared?

Our food will be served in three to five different segments, which depend on the phase and location of the competition. Each segment has different require-

ments and standards for the selection of dishes. The schedule of dishes has been already prepared to provide a diverse daily offer or rotationally, depending on the type of participants.

We will provide daily cold and hot dishes for the volunteers, the media, VIP guests and for corporate hospitality and the VVIP programme in Stožice. For the latter three, the catering is at the highest level, and the extent of service the broadest, because our chefs will be preparing dishes in front of the guests. In the last part of the competition in Stožice, dishes for the highest level of participants will be served in the form of different concepts which involve various types of cutlery, table settings and culinary themes. These include Taste Slovenia, O Concept, Mediterranean Day, Taste the World and others.

Photo: Jezeršek archive



Dried cod in bianco with roasted black olives



The Jezeršek, O Concept: cold starters served on round dishes and in a special environment. A modern concept introduced in public for the first time at the opening of Ljubljana Festival in summer 2011.
 - Scallop on fennel salad with apples, mustard seeds, red onion and parsley
 - Fresh cheese with melon balls, cherry tomatoes, black olives and basil pesto
 - Prawn cocktail

Photo: Jezeršek archive

Photo: Jezeršek archive



The best Kranjska sausage, horseradish, mustard. Part of the permanent offer at Dvor Jezeršek.



Prešeren figs.

Photo: Jezeršek archive

Our food will be served in three to five different segments, which depend on the phase and location of the competition. Each segment has different requirements and standards for the selection of dishes. The schedule of dishes has been already prepared to provide a diverse daily offer or rotationally, depending on the type of participants.

We have prepared about 100 different starters, 125 hot dishes and 80 desserts. These numbers vary and are added according to the client's requirements. The purpose of the Jezeršek House of Culinary Arts is to exceed all the culinary expectations of the organiser and participants of the Championship. We will use mostly Slovenian

ingredients when preparing dishes, supplemented with foreign specialities. From all the ingredients, we wish to create high-quality dishes and stress the best qualities of the simplest ingredients. The dishes were also planned thoughtfully with regard to the dietary requirements of participants: vegan, vegetarian, Islamic, gluten-free

and similar. The dishes served will be a mix of traditional and modern Slovenian cuisine, occasionally supplemented with global culinary trends. In spite of the demanding requirements of the client and guests, we still most frequently hear people say they would like to see 'our Kranjska sausage' on the menu.

Jezeršek gostinstvo d.o.o. is a family business with a 30-year tradition and experience in catering and organising catering at various business and private events, which average 1,100 annually. They also own two hospitality outlets: Dvor Jezeršek, a boutique hotel with a restaurant

and conference facilities, and Jezeršek House of Culinary Arts, which is intended exclusively for the organisation of catering, and also includes conference facilities. Jezeršek gostinstvo d.o.o. have received numerous awards for their quality services and have experience ca-

tering for several sports events in Slovenia. They participated at events organised by the Slovenian Basketball Association, such as the U20 European Championship in 2012, Adecco Ex-Yu Cup, Telemach show, Superpokal etc., where they provided supreme catering.

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



Lipizzaner stud farm awarded by TripAdvisor

Slovenia's famous Lipizzaner (Lipica) stud farm has joined other tourist destinations that have received praise in reviews by TripAdvisor travellers, reaching an overall rating of four stars or higher, for which the biggest online travel portal, TripAdvisor, awarded them the 2013 Certificate of Excellence.

"Encouraging traveller reviews from all over the world show that our efforts produced results and that Lipica Stud Farm is by all rights one of the most popular tourist destinations in Slovenia," announced the stud farm in a press release. The majority of TripAdvisor's travellers cherished above all the contact that they established with the Lipizzaner horses, while the relaxed atmosphere and beautiful countryside will also stay etched in their memories.

Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA



In the photo: Director of ARSO Joško Knez and Minister of Agriculture and the Environment, Dejan Židan, M.Sc.

New supercomputer to forecast dangerous weather activity

The Slovenian Environment Agency (ARSO) has unveiled a new supercomputer that will help Slovenia's meteorologists make more accurate forecasts and will aid them in predicting extreme weather phenomena. The supercomputer can carry out 20 billion mathematical operations per second, a task that would take one person around 20 years to perform.

Utilising the processing power of about 600 personal computers, the supercomputer will provide more precise and complex meteorological and hydrological data for forecasters to use in predicting the weather. Worth around EUR 640,000, the supercomputer is part of the biggest Slovenian project for monitoring and analysing the aquatic environment in Slovenia, dubbed BOBER, which is valued at EUR 33m in total. The BOBER project was launched following several cases of severe flooding in Slovenia in recent years.



Slovenian archaeologist discovers ruins of hidden Maya city

Slovenian specialist in Mayan archaeology Ivan Šprajc and his team recently discovered the hidden ruins of an ancient Mayan city in a remote jungle in the western Yucatan peninsula. Further research on this site could shed more light on the Late Classic Maya period, Šprajc told in an interview after returning from Mexico.

"This was the largest newly-found site in the northern sector of the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve, which is uninhabited and protected as a natural park," Šprajc explained. It took the archaeologists two and a half months to research the whole site, stretching over an area of 22 hectares. It was a hieroglyphic inscription on one of the stelae that inspired the archaeologists to name it Chactun, meaning "Red Rock". "According to tradition, we label new sites with names that allude to some characteristic of the site or to the circumstances surrounding the discovery," said Šprajc, Slovenia's only specialist on Mayan archeology.

Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA



Special slovenian cradle for royal baby

Slovenia will present Prince William and the Duchess of Cambridge with a special cradle on the birth of their firstborn. The cradle was designed by a team headed by Slovenian innovator Erika Drobnič, who has developed a multi-purpose cradle that is marketed under the brand name Kiara.

The cradle to be presented to the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge is quite special. "We've redesigned this cradle to change its shape and add two new materials, glass and lace," Drobnič explained. The idea for the royal birth present was first presented at the Slovenian Embassy in London in November last year. It took Drobnič's team several months to make the cradle, which is made of Slovenian wood, precious glass made by Steklarna Hrastnik and Idrija bobbin lace.

Photo: Xinhua/STA

Photo: Kaja Krajčevič/STA



This ocean, so terribly open

Until 5 January 2014, Piran

This exhibition of works by Avgust Černigoj, Lojze Spacal and Herman Pečarič at Piran Coastal Galleries offers a new view of the complexity of these artists' oeuvres and on understanding the selected motifs in the geopolitical context of the Slovenian coastal region. The exhibition is dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the birth of Trieste writer Boris Pahor, who is from the same generation as the artists and knew Avgust Černigoj and Lojze Spacal personally.

Photo: Tamara Petelinšek/STA



Ex Ponto 2013 – Where is the Border?

1 September – 8 September 2013, Ljubljana

Ex Ponto, the International Performing Arts Festival, offers twelve performances and numerous other acts at different venues, including Cankarjev dom, SNT Drama or the Slovenian National Theatre Opera and Ballet, Mini teater and Etno Klub Zlati Zob. The festival ends with the performance 55+, a production by Montažstroj of Zagreb, which features a generation of people above the age of 55.

Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA



Biennial 2013

14 September – 24 November 2013, Ljubljana

The 30th Biennial of Graphic Arts is a complex event comprising several exhibitions and events. This year, the Biennial 'takes a step back' and returns to exploring the nature of graphic processes. The curator of the main exhibition, entitled 'Interruption', which also includes a project by Charles Juhász-Alvarado, is Deborah Cullen.



Photo: Darinka Mladenović/SPRIT

Sweet Istria 2013

13 September 2013, Ankaran

Visit the international festival of desserts and sweet products and applaud the best confectioners who are participating in the competitions. In addition to tasting various Slovenian desserts, you can also attend the public lectures, workshops and other events and buy sweet products.



Photo: Dunja Wedam/SPRIT

Idrija Žlikrofi Festival

31 August 2013, Idrija

Take a stroll through the market of local produce and products. A free tour around the town of Idrija will be organised for you and a tasting of the best Idrija žlikrofi dumplings. This is a charming destination, which is also known for its mercury mine and lace-making.



Photo: Samo Bauer/SPRIT

Shoemakers' Sunday

1 September 2013, Tržič

Shoemakers' Sunday is no longer only a fair, but a centre for crafts, shopping, sport, entertainment, prize games, education and enjoyment. The tradition of Shoemakers' Sunday also includes the custom of 'freišpreh'nga', once a traditional event on this Sunday, when shoemakers' apprentices and assistants were hired in Tržič. In the past, shoemakers were known to have a good time after working hard in their shops and successful sales at the fair, which is why the Angel Sunday always ends now with dancing at the shoemakers' party.

Photo: Tina Kosac/STA



Tanja Glogovčan

Nekropola (Pilgrims among the shadows)

Nekropola (in English translation: Pilgrims Among the Shadows) is a travelogue, an account of a journey in Western Europe. At the same time, it is also Pahor's autobiography. The novel discusses the author's visit to the Nazi concentration camp Natzweiler-Struthof, where he was imprisoned during the Second World War. Today, the camp serves modern tourism together with the magnificent monument Necropole Nationale du Struthof. The author writes about his life in the camp; he remembers numerous camp stories and the suffering of his fellow prisoners. He also contemplates how the experience of the camps remains outside modern memory. The events are described very minutely and realistically, which makes the novel both shocking and thought-provoking. It pauses on the question of sin, which arises even in these inhuman conditions, when a male nurse is happy to find a piece of bread left by someone who has died without eating their last meal. The author is overcome with a sense of jealousy when processions of tourists violate his world, an abyss of rejection, with which faith in human pride and freewill were punished. It also occurs to him that perhaps all these pilgrimages are not so meaningless after all. Perhaps the tourists standing beside the ashes of fellow humans and in front of the crematorium oven at least try to comprehend the horrible faith of the concentration camp prisoners. On this thought, Pahor becomes expansive and wishes to contribute his share to our recognition of the dark history of the 20th century.

At the moment when Pahor leaves the exterior space as seen by a tourist, his travelogue ceases to be a travelogue in the usual sense of the word. His journey shifts into an interior world, into a layer of memory which is awakened at the site of the past world of horror he has known. From this point onwards, Pilgrims Among the Shadows is primarily a testimony of the world of the crematorium; but it is not a testimony in a linear sense, because the main role is given to the conflict of associations, and the past is therefore not presented in

a conventional and outwardly orderly stream. The writer surrenders to the internal dynamics. The creative heart of this novel lies in the intricate details of a prisoner's life and his physical deterioration. Since this is a monologue by the author, he particularly describes his own ability and inability through the work of a camp male nurse – an allegory of hope in hopelessness. "Yes, a man truly hopes to succeed; hopes that goodness and innocence will triumph; but he must also submit to the need to appease the urge to rescue. This innocent, beautiful urge, which often outlives puberty and goes on to infinity with persistence." Pahor's fundamental thought returns through the story to those direct human relationships which he understood through experiencing the threat of the crematorium. The section in which he confronts crematorium ethics with the principles and practice of post-war life is particularly important in Pilgrims Among the Shadows. Pahor frequently resorts to principled deliberations on the meaning of crematorium incineration. A feeling that the author finds the camp's barbed wire absurd can be detected. What is more, he even feels his own guilt, because the surviving prisoners never achieved recognition of their humanity. He feels his greatest responsibility is to younger generations. They are detached from his world, which is why he concludes, "I do not know how to place before them the humiliated bones and humiliated ashes. I am powerless, and cannot imagine how my ghosts will find the right words to confess before the children's choir that is now dancing in the middle of the tents, and before the little girl who hovered around the wire yesterday as if an invisible merry-go-round had carried her over by chance." Pahor presents the reader with difficult ethical questions. With his moral task completed, he also settled his debt to his fellow prisoners, to whom he erected a monument with this novel and thus expressed his reverence.

Pilgrims Among the Shadows was first published in Trieste in 1967 by Založništvo tržaškega tiska publishing house. This Slovenian novel was also translated for Portuguese-speaking readers in August 2013.

Sources: Summarised from a review by France Pibernik, Sodobnost, 1967, and a review by Bernard Nežmah, Mladina magazine, 2008.

Борис Пахор

НЕКРОПОЛЬ



UMCO