

Sinfo



EU - USA

Summit at Brdo pri Kranju - one of the most high-profile events of Slovenia's EU Presidency: EU, US reaffirm transatlantic partnership

Slovenia remembers Primož Trubar,

a man known by many as the writer of the first two Slovenian books

EU's main challenges global in nature, Janša says

Iztok Jarc, Slovenian agriculture minister: The EU will engage constructively in efforts to form a comprehensive international response to the rising prices of food to ensure food safety



George W. Bush /US President/: Slovenia is a »big slice of heaven«

Brdo pri Kranju, 10 June: Two years ago, I called Slovenia a »little slice of heaven« , today I call it a »big slice of heaven«. Also, I find it interesting that 20 years ago, Mr Prime Minister, you were in jail because of your beliefs...because you had the courage to stand up and speak out clearly for freedom for all. This fact tied in well with the discussions on »how to help others realise the blessings of liberty. It is a »fitting circle« that I had visited Slovenia on my first tour of Europe (2001) and was visiting it on my last tour of Europe as US president. I will be back as a tourist. As you know I'm close to retirement and I'm looking forward to seeing more of your country and seeing more of your gracious and hospitable people.



Jose Manuel Barroso /European Commission President/: Euro-Mediterranean University Established in Portorož

Portorož, 9 June: The establishment of the Euro-Mediterranean University is the biggest event of the European year of intercultural dialogue. The project deserves to be supported, the Commission already earmarked EUR 1m from Euro-Mediterranean partnership for the project. There is no better way to strengthen mutual understanding than by bringing closer the young from both sides of the Mediterranean. By hosting the university, Slovenia will play a key role in the Euro-Mediterranean process, even though its shoreline is very short. I welcome Slovenia's commitment to provide the building and the money for the institution.



Danuta Hübner / European Commissioner for Regional Policy /: EU Must Increase Investment in Research

Nova Gorica, 6 June - Europe should invest more in research and development and make better use of the public-private partnership. There is too little private funds invested in research and cooperation between ministries, governments and regions is a must. It is important that Europe's economic development is based on knowledge, therefore it is essential to support research and development. However, last year the funds invested in science amounted to only 1.8% of GDP, which was less than planned.



Janez Janša /Slovene PM and chair of the European Council/: Euro EU's Main Tool in Facing Globalisation

Frankfurt, 2 June - In the following decades Euro will remain one of the EU's main tools in finding right answers to the challenges of globalisation. With a single currency Europe was more resistant to numerous shocks from outside, including the turmoils on international financial markets and high oil and food prices.

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Anže Logar

THE SUMMIT

There has not been an event during the Slovenian Presidency of the EU Council that would raise such interest in the Slovenian media as the recent EU–USA Summit. This is the second visit of the President of the USA to Slovenia - this time, just before the end of his term. Although President Bush is not the main player of the Presidential election race that is reaching boiling point, he always attracts public attention. Perhaps we could find a person among Slovenian people that still doubts whether Slovenia really holds the Presidency or not; however, there is not one that does not know about the arrival of the American President in Slovenia. And not only that: due to extensive coverage in the newspapers, we are also acquainted with every step of his wife during the ladies' programme.

A few people can be found that are interested in the substance of the meeting, but they can read about it in the special declaration leaders adopt at the Summit.

In the previous edition, a well-known Slovenian agrarian economist set out some daring thoughts and measures that would help the European Union and the world overcome the current crisis caused by the high prices of agricultural products.

In the current interview section, the presiding EU agriculture and fisheries minister and Slovenian Minister of Agriculture gives some answers to certain dilemmas and presents his thoughts about the future development of European agricultural policies, which the French Presidency will certainly pay much attention to.

We are two weeks from the EU Presidency coming to an end. The grand finale in the form of the EU Summit offers a real opportunity to evaluate the success of our (first) presidency. However, the conclusion of the 'Slovenian EU half-year' has a true rival in the European Football Championship. If, on the last day of June, we ask a passer-by which question is easier to answer – about two most important successes of the Slovenian Presidency or the two football teams that met in the final of the European Football Championship – the answer will undoubtedly be about football, in Slovenia too...

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

2WEEKLYREPORT

Text: RAMON MIKLUS. Photo: archives and STA



JANŠA COMMEMORATES FAMOUS 80S TRIAL

Prime Minister Janez Janša, one of the four men put in front of the military trial that led to democratic processes resulting in Slovenia's independence from Yugoslavia, said on the 20th anniversary of the incident that no one had imagined Slovenia to be a part of the EU anytime soon, let alone preside over it. The four men involved in the JBTZ affair were Janez Janša, Ivan Borstner, David Tasic and Franci Zavrl. The affair began on 31 May 1988, when Janša and Borstner were arrested for passing to weekly Mladina a classified military document which ordered to raise the combat readiness of the Yugoslav People's Army (JLA) in Slovenia. The other two were arrested four days later. »Not even in my dreams I imagined that 20 years later, I would be in politics, holding the office with the biggest responsibility a Slovenian has ever had,« Janša said, speaking to the press at the ex-army barracks where what is known as the »JBTZ Process« took place. »In short, the changes are immense and most likely bigger than a single generation can comprehend,« Janša said. He added that he was grateful to everyone involved in the efforts for the release of the four defendants at the time. Tasic agreed with Janša, saying that Slovenia achieved all the goals it strived for and had fulfilled the dreams of an independent country that all Slovenes shared. »We can all be happy to live in a system where we can vote, speak freely and have a right to disagree. This is a great achievement,« Zavrl said.

JANŠA, LETERME DISCUSS BILATERAL RELATIONS, JUNE EU SUMMIT

Bilateral relations and preparations for the June EU summit topped the talks between Prime Minister Janez Janša and his

Belgian counterpart Yves Leterme in Ljubljana on 21 May. The pair agreed that relations between the countries are good. Janša said that economic cooperation has been developing especially well. He noted that trade, especially in the services sector, has increased strongly recently, adding that this showed there was still a lot of potential on both sides for further strengthening of cooperation. There are no open issues between the countries, said Janša and thanked Belgium for its support for Slovenia's efforts for membership in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Slovenia started the accession talks in December last year. Leterme also called for further strengthening of



Meeting of Prime Minister Janez Janša (right) with Belgian counterpart Yves Leterme (left).

economic cooperation. He said that Belgium respected Slovenia's achievements and that Slovenia has proven to be a successful and reliable EU member. He believes that the country's stint at the helm of the bloc will be successful. Janša said that he appreciated Belgium's contribution to the stabilisation of the Western Balkans. He said that Belgium was engaged in the stabilisation of Kosovo at least as strongly as Slovenia was. Leterme meanwhile said that the EU Eulex mission should operate on Kosovo's entire territory. Belgium supports the Western Balkans' EU accession and finds it a guarantee for stability in the region, it however insists on Serbia's full cooperation with the Hague tribunal before the Stabilisation and Association Agreement that the EU and Serbia signed on 29 April enters fully into force. Leterme said that Serbia needed to respect the principle of the rule of law and international law, as these were two fundamental principles of the EU. European prospects of the Western Balkans will also be one of the topics at the June EU summit, where EU leaders will also review the implementation of the Thessaloniki agenda for the Western Balkans. The summit will also discuss practical solutions for the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, which would enter into force on 1 January 2009 in case of a successful ratification in member states. Leterme highlighted the need for sincere and open debate on profiles of individuals most adequate for key EU functions under the Lisbon Treaty and their powers, and other issues related to the implementation of the document.

EU MINISTERS OFFICIALLY LAUNCH LJUBLJANA PROCESS

EU ministers responsible for science formally launched in Brussels on 30 May the Ljubljana Process, which is aimed at forming a single and efficient European Research Area (ERA). Slovenian Higher Education, Science and Technology Minister Mojca Kucler Dolinar said at the occasion that the ministers were satisfied with the breakthrough in the field, as they had outlined the vision and set the foundations regarding ERA's management. She said the ministers had launched the process of the area's overhaul, a topic that is also included in the programme of several future EU presiding countries. The process is to lead to a single and more efficient ERA through coordinated work of EU members and the European Commission. Kucler Dolinar said it was necessary to encourage all EU efforts for a more equal gender representation in science, especially areas that concern decision-making at the highest levels. European Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potocnik added that the Ljubljana Process could turn out to be a real milestone. He also welcomed the commitment to the process by the future EU presiding countries. The ministers also called on the member states to pay more attention to the already



European Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potocnik (left) and Higher Education, Science and Technology Minister Mojca Kucler Dolinar (right)

existing financial, managerial, cultural and mobility obstacles and to form flexible working conditions in science, so that men and women would be interested for careers in all areas of science. They also highlighted the importance of research infrastructure, with the emphasis on regional cooperation and pooling of public and private finance. They agreed that excellent research infrastructure was vital for ERA's development and underlined the need to boost investments into the area. They also agreed that regions held the key role in the development of the knowledge-based society and countries should establish regional partnerships.

VIZJAK PRESENTS PRESIDENCY'S ACHIEVEMENTS IN INTERNAL MARKET

Economy Minister Andrej Vizjak presented in Brussels on 2 June the Slovenian presidency's activities in the field of internal market and consumer protection, highlighting as the biggest success the agreement on the goods package, which will have positive impact on the work of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The goods package is a package of directives that liberalises the internal market and has especially positive effects on economy, in particular SMES, whose operations it will render easier, the minister told STA before addressing the European Parliament's Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee (IMCO). The goods package is also an important gain for the consumers, as it introduces higher standards regarding the protection of consumers rights and interests, he added. »Free movement of goods is one of the areas in which Slovenia has its first contacts with EU legislation. We are, therefore, especially pleased that agreement on the goods package - which represents a new milestone in the development of the single EU market - has been reached during the Slovenian Presidency,« Vizjak told the committee. Vizjak also highlighted as an important achievement the proposal for a directive on credit agreements for consumers. »We are pleased that agreement has been reached, as this directive will improve consumer protection, enhance the clarity of regulations and boost competitiveness in this area.« The third achievement that Vizjak underlined is the customs code. Turning to challenges that Slovenia is facing before its spell as the EU president ends in the end of June, Vizjak listed the directives on time-shares and the safety of toys, the type approval of hydrogen-powered motor vehicles, and the defence package. Vizjak said that the directive on time-shares brought more protection to costumers in services, especially tourism. Vizjak hopes that a political agreement will be reached before the end of the Slovenian presidency of the bloc. Regarding the directive on the safety of toys, Vizjak said that this was the first directive from the production package and a few open issues needed to be resolved before the directive was discussed by the parliament.

JANŠA CONFERS ENERGY GLOBE AWARD ON GORBACHEV

Mikhail Gorbachev contributed to the most important positive change in Europe in the last century, Slovenian Prime Minister and Chair of the European Council Janez Janša said on 26 May, as he presented the last president of the Soviet Union with the special Energy Globe Award (EGA) 2008 for lifetime achievements. Janša said in his address to the European Parliament that history was sometimes written by people with ideas, visions and energy. He added that Gorbachev, who was on the battle line when the conflict between capitalism and communism was nearing its end, was today a new noble role model, promoting new values, thinking for the future - a philosophy of responsibility. As the chair of the Green Cross International, Gorbachev is now fighting for



Janša (right) conferred the special Energy Globe Award (EGA) 2008 for lifetime achievements on the last president of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev

an environmental perestroika, for global glasnost, Janša noted. He concluded with Gorbachev's words: »We are all passengers aboard one ship, the Earth, and we must not allow it to be wrecked.« Gorbachev stressed that Europe with its uniting showed that problems can only be solved in cooperation and that it therefore can be the world's locomotive in environmental issues. He believes that history offers alternative solutions and it is up to people to find them.

EU JUSTICE MINISTERS ADOPT ENVIRONMENT, CROSS-BORDER REGULATION

The regular session of the EU's Justice and Home Affairs Council, chaired by Slovenian Justice Minister Lovro Sturm, confirmed on 6 June a directive on the protection of the environment through criminal law, and adopted new rules which are to strengthen cross-border legal protection of businesses and individuals. The environment directive lists emission of radiation into air, soil or water; the disposal of waste; and the production, storage and transport of nuclear materials as offences that would be sanctioned if they jeopardised the health of people or the environment. The approved text moreover lists as criminally punishable the killing or possession of protected animal and plant species; the deterioration of a habitat within a protected site; and the manufacture and distribution of ozone-depleting substances. European Commissioner Jacques Barrot, who is responsible for justice, freedom and security, said the penalties needed to be effective, proportional and dissuasive. Sturm meanwhile labelled the directive »a major success of the Slovenian EU presidency, the members countries and the European Parliament«. The directive gives countries a chance to punish offenders either through fines or imprisonment. The member countries have two years to enact the directive. In a separate decision, the justice ministers adopted new rules within the Rome 1 regulation, which aim at strengthening the legal protection of natural persons and legal entities within cross-border obligational relations. The rules update a part of the Rome Convention on the law applicable to

contractual obligations that dates back to 1980, Sturm explained. Sturm also presented to his colleagues an assessment of the EU-wide e-justice web portal, which was given a test run in the end of April. The portal is to serve as an entry point offering access to all existing IT solutions in the area of e-justice.

JANŠA COMMENTS ON SLOVENIAN PRESIDENCY SPELL FOR FRANCE 24

Prime Minister Janez Janša highlighted the launch of the second cycle of the Lisbon Strategy on 29 May, agreement on the principles and timeline of the Energy and Climate package, and response to challenges in the Western Balkans as the achievements of Slovenian presidency in an interview with French TV station France 24. Janša, the president of the European Council, identified the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty as the main task for the EU this year. The importance of a successful conclusion of the ratification procedure will also be Janša's message to his successor at the helm of the EU, French President Nicolas Sarkozy. »It has been 60 or 65 per cent done during our Presidency, and the rest is on his shoulders. And this is the main task we have to deliver. This is main product we hope to deliver at the end of this year,« Janša said for Le Talk de Paris show. Janša noted that Slovenia dealt heavily with the Western Balkans, »where some quite important challenges for the whole of Europe occurred during its turn«, referring to Kosovo's independence, election in Serbia and the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Serbia, to be followed by the one with Macedonia. He underscored the agreement with Serbia in particular, which he said boosted the pro-European forces in the country and helped them to win the election. He also voiced the confidence that the EU mission in Kosovo (EULEX) would be operational this year. Janša also expressed satisfaction at the bloc's economic achievements, but noted that the prosperity of the European people depended very much on the EU's ability to answer global challenges such as world peace and stability, climate change and the fight against poverty. The Slovenian prime minister also welcomed France's decision to fully open its labour market in July to workers from eight EU member countries, including Slovenia. He said this was a good example for all the countries that have not yet liberalised their markets. Janša also pointed out that the EU was facing a shortage of skilled workers, which is why barriers to the movement of labour must be removed. The prime minister would like the Slovenian presidency to be remembered for having tried and often succeeded in building consensus among member states. He quoted specifically the agreement on the negotiation framework for the partnership agreement with Russia.

EU AND NIGERIA WANT TO BOOST COOPERATION

Officials at an EU-Nigeria meeting agreed on 20 May to boost ties between the African country and the 27-member bloc. Nigeria would like to improve above all cultural ties and cooperation in energy security, Nigerian Foreign Minister Ojo Maduekwe told the press. Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel, who headed the EU delegation, said that the EU should »clearly pay a lot of attention to Africa.« A long time passed since the last troika meeting, but Rupel said the EU was very ambitious in trying to establish an atmosphere conducive of dialogue, exchange and cooperation with Nigeria and the entire African Union. Africa is especially prone to issues like the build-up of light weapons, as it is one of the continents most affected by weapon trafficking. African coastal

countries could also become affected by the consequences of climate change, so the Nigerian delegation stressed that the EU, being one of the biggest polluters, should contribute considerably to solving the problem.

The ministers touched on energy security in which the views of the EU and Nigeria are somewhat different, as Nigeria is an important oil exporter. However, the global problem remains the same for all and both the EU and Nigeria are aware of issues regarding energy security and pollution, according to Rupel. »The EU adopted and upgraded its principles regarding energy policy, while in Africa they do not have such detailed and long-term plans due to their oil supplies and are calmer,« Rupel said. Yet Maduekwe retorted that Africa was concerned about the problems associated with the reduction of fossil fuel supplies and the search for alternative energy sources. »We are concerned that the remedy used in addressing this challenge the remedy would cause a collateral illness and that the side-effect would be even worse than the original problem,« he said. Maduekwe stressed that the world needed to find biofuels which would not be based on food crops, as the food crisis was escalating not only in Africa but also in more developed countries. He believes that the world should turn to sun and wind for alternative energy sources. Nigeria would like to contribute to energy production from renewables, because in the opposite case, its industrialisation would take the same course as those of India and China, who are both becoming one of the biggest oil consumers in the world. Maduekwe, who believes that the way to energy stability is through partnership, invited European companies to invest in renewables in Nigeria.

A FUTURE IN EUROPE - THE ONLY POSITIVE ALTERNATIVE FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS, SAYS JANŠA

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia and current President of the European Council, Janez Janša, attended the Joint Parliamentary Meeting in Brussels on 27 May, with delegations invited from the national parliaments of all the European Union Member States, as well as the presidents of the parliaments of all the Western Balkan countries and Turkey. The meeting focused on the 'European perspective' for the Western Balkans and on the key challenges ahead for the region. In his address, the Slovenian Prime Minister stressed that the Western Balkans was the central focus of EU enlargement policy and, as such, constituted an inevitable chapter in any serious debate on the future of Europe. "Never before has the European Union so clearly seen its common future in the global context, beyond Europe's borders. In this respect, the present-day generation of Europeans has a historic opportunity to prepare Europe for its role as a global player. We will be able to fully seize this opportunity only if we discharge our historical responsibility to conclude our project here, in Europe," he emphasised. According to the Slovenian Prime Minister, EU enlargement to the Western Balkan countries and definition of the European Neighbourhood Policy will be instrumental in the European Union's successful response to three key challenges: peace and stability, combating climate change, and the fight against poverty.

EU PLEASSED WITH PROGRESS IN UKRAINE TALKS

Top Ukrainian and EU officials expressed satisfaction with the progress the two sides have achieved in talks on a bilateral

agreement. »The EU-Ukraine working relationship truly works,« European External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero Waldner said after talks at Brdo pri Kranju. The agreement will hopefully become an important instrument that will bring Ukraine substantively closer to the EU and help it achieve the goal of membership in the bloc, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Volodymyr Ohryzko told the press after the meeting held on 22 May. Commissioner Waldner also congratulated Ukraine on its membership of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), noting that this was an »essential step which has and will open the way to the start of EU-Ukraine free trade negotiations.« Free trade negotiations are a part of the talks on the new agreement. They were launched in February, as Ukraine needed to join the WTO first. The talks also touched on the current situation in Ukraine, where the EU side agreed that the country had achieved exceptional progress. »We heard information that make us optimistic. The assessments of the situation in Ukraine used to be critical, today they can be optimistic,« said Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel, the current chair of the EU's General Affairs and External Relations Council. Yet Rupel as well as Waldner stressed the need for constitutional reforms, which they said were vital if Ukraine is to develop fast. The EU expects that »all political actors in Ukraine« will play a constructive part in these reforms, Waldner said.



EU commissioner Benita Ferrero Waldner

EU MEMBERSHIP A PRIORITY FOR UKRAINE

EU membership is a key priority for Ukraine, Ukrainian Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko said after a meeting Slovenian President Danilo Tuerk on 4 June. Slovenia supports Ukraine's efforts to join the bloc, Tuerk said. Yushchenko said Ukraine had a lot of homework, which will take some time. »We are not talking about a time frame, we are talking about a goal,« he said, stressing that the EU should »light a beacon on a remote island«. Ukraine wants clear criteria for membership and it is embarking on the European path with responsible steps, said Yushchenko, who is pleased with the current talks on a new partnership and cooperation agreement with the EU. In March 2007 the EU and Ukraine launched talks on a new accord that would integrate Ukraine more tightly in the bloc's neighbourhood policy, but does not talk about the country's prospects of becoming a full-fledged member of the EU. Yushchenko also held talks with Prime Minister Janez Janša, who congratulated Ukraine on its recent entry into the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The president thanked Slovenia for its support for Ukraine's EU aspirations, with Janša saying that the support would continue, according to the prime minister's office.

COMMISSIONER WANTS CONSUMER INCLUSION IN ENERGY POLICIES

Consumers Commissioner Meglena Kuneva called for including consumers into the EU's plan to liberalise the energy market. Even the best ideas regarding liberalisation cannot work in practice if they are not supported by the citizens, Kuneva told participants of a conference held at the Brdo pri Kranju on 22 May. The challenges faced by the EU energy sector are an incentive for EU institutions to find tangible solutions to benefit EU citizens, Kuneva said on European Competition and Consumer Day. The commissioner supports endeavours to bolster competition in the energy sector as she sees it as instrumental in securing benefits to consumers. The third package of the liberalisation is an excellent opportunity to prove that the EU can be competitive and market-oriented while at the same time considering the needs of the consumers, she added. Slovenian Economy Minister Andrej Vizjak said that the EU energy sector was facing numerous challenges, such as high energy prices, energy supply security, fight against climate change and fully operational single energy market. The chair of the EU Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council added that the situation on the EU energy market was not satisfactory as regards the level of competitiveness. Despite the ostensibly functioning market and liberalisation efforts, numerous obstacles exist in the EU for the functioning of the market. These include powerful energy companies that prevent the entry of new suppliers and the lack of cross-border capabilities. According to Neelie Kroes, the European Commissioner for Competition, the Commission and the EU have the mission to find a solution for the energy sector in order to eliminate the issues that the Commission unveiled in its survey of the energy industry. Vizjak also commented on the recently unveiled compromise solution on the decoupling of energy production and distribution. The non-paper, drafted by the Slovenian presidency, would allow operators to control power generation and distribution, but with completely separate management. Vizjak said he hoped the political agreement on decoupling would be reached before the end of the Slovenian EU presidency.

HONG KONG, SLOVENIAN MINISTERS DISCUSS ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Possibilities for strengthening economic cooperation between Hong Kong and Slovenia topped the talks as Honk Kong Finance Minister John Tsang was received by counterpart Andrej Bajuk and Economy Minister Andrej Vizjak in Ljubljana on 26 May. Slovenia is one of the leading economies in Central Europe and Tsang told the press that Hong Kong saw it as a potential entrance point for Central and Eastern Europe. He added that he and his interlocutors had also debated the promotion of both countries. Tsang said that the Hong Kong economy was doing very well, although economic growth, which stood at around 7% last year, is expected to slow down this year. The biggest threat is inflation, which reached 2% last year and is expected to rise to 4-5% this year. He sees the main problem in high food prices. Minister Vizjak presented to the guest the possibilities of investing into logistics centres in Slovenia, highlighting Slovenia's strategic position that allows foreign companies to enter the EU and Western Balkans markets. Bajuk and Tsang meanwhile discussed Slovenia's presidency over the EU Economic and Financial Affairs Council. Tsang also highlighted as opportunities financial and business services, trade, banking, insurance, tourism and logistics. In his opinion one of the advantages of Hong Kong are low taxes. Tsang was accompanied by a strong business delegation, which attended a business conference organised by the the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office and Slovenian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The director general of the chamber Samo Hribar Milič said at the conference that Hong Kong could be Slovenia's springboard for the Chinese market, where Slovenia's economic activities are scarce despite the huge potential. Cooperation between Slovenia and Hong Kong has been on the rise. Between 2003 and 2007 trade between the countries increased by 24% yearly on the average.

CRASH CLEANUP TEAM RETURNS FROM CORSICA

A team of 60 experts who have in the past two weeks been cleaning up the site of the biggest accident of a Slovenian airplane in history, returned to Slovenia late on 27 May. They managed to remove 27.5 tonnes of aircraft wreckage, completely cleaning up Corsica's Mt. San Pietro. »All remains of this tragic accident were removed and only a memorial plaque remained on the mountain and was unveiled on a ceremony,« Miran Bogataj, the head of the Slovenian Civil Protection and Rescue Service, told the press in Ljubljana. A memorial was unveiled on 31 May to the victims of the worst aviation disaster in Slovenian history, as relatives of those killed visited the site of the 1981 crash in Corsica. Speaking at the unveiling of the memorial plaque, Defence Minister Karl Erjavec said the accident, in which 180 people were killed, had deeply affected the relatives of the victims. »But they say time heals even the deepest wounds,« he said. The team, which was equipped with two helicopters of the Slovenian Armed Forces with, managed to scour the entire area of the mountain, removing all the pieces of the plane as well as some skeletal remains of the 180 passengers and crew members who had died in the accident. »This final act of this tragic accident was carried out with all due respect as an act of piety, which we had to carry out because of the expectations of the families of the deceased and the Slovenian public,« Bogataj said. The Corsica crash is considered to be one of the 40 worst plane crashes in the world. The reason for the accident was never clearly established, but

one theory suggests misunderstanding between the pilot and an air traffic controller while the plane was waiting for clearance to land at the airport.

FISCHER BOEL CONFIDENT CAP REFORM DEAL POSSIBLE BY YEAR-END

European Agriculture Commissioner Mariann Fischer Boel has said she is confident the EU can agree on changes to its farm support scheme by the end of the year, despite differences between member states on the nature of the reforms. Fischer Boel admitted after a meeting of EU agriculture ministers at Brdo pri Kranju on 27 May that »there are some sensitive areas« in the talks on the changes to the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP). »Some delegations have asked for a much greater increase in milk quotas, whereas others thought that 1% (a year) was being extremely ambitious,« the Commissioner said. She added that the differences made her confident that the Commission had come up with a balanced proposal. The gradual increase in milk quotas is one of the biggest sticking points of the Commission's proposal, unveiled last week and debated extensively at the three-day meeting in Slovenia. Agriculture powerhouses Germany and France have voiced unhappiness with the planned increase in quotas, whereas other countries, including Britain and Italy, are calling for an even greater release of production. French Agriculture Minister Michel Barnier, whose country will hold the EU presidency in the second half of the year, warned today that increased production could bring volatility into the dairy sector. He said safety mechanisms should accompany any release of milk production quotas. However, Fischer Boel stressed that the planned abolition of milk quotas in 2015 was not a new feature, but something the EU had agreed on back in 2003. »The reason why we're discussing this is to give predictability to farmers, to afford them a soft landing,« she added. According to her, the countries who are most in favour of releasing quotas, including Poland, Ireland, Netherlands, Italy and Denmark, have dairy industries that would like to expand to emerging markets, including in Asia. »Increasing quotas does not mean that farmers are forced to produce - it is only a possibility to produce more if you think you can take your share of the market,« she added.

COMMISSIONER SEES TOLL STICKER AS A TRANSITIONAL MEASURE

European Transport Commissioner Jacques Barrot said he views Slovenia's plans to introduce a motorway toll sticker as a transitional measure on the way to the speedy implementation of electronic tolling. Barrot told the press at Brdo pri Kranju that the Slovenian project aimed at introducing fully automated distance-based tolling by 2009 for trucks and 2010 for cars was both brave and excellent. "The sooner it comes into force, the better," he said. His comments come in response to a question from the Slovenian press on the Commission's view on the toll sticker Slovenia plans to introduce for cars as of July. Barrot pointed out that the toll stickers, or vignettes, have been envisaged as a transitional measure by Slovenia. He said that the Commission was in contact with Slovenian authorities over the details of the plan.

SESTAK RECORDS SEASON'S BEST TRIPLE JUMP

Slovenian track and field athlete Marija Sestak managed a season's best of 14.85 metres in the triple jump at the Ljubljana Grand Prix late on 2 June, beating the previous best mark of the season by Francoise Mbango Etone of Kemerun by nine centimetres. »I proved to myself that I am prepared and that I can count on jumping over the magic mark of 15 metres this year,« said the 28-year-old bronze medalist from this year's World Indoor Athletics Championships.



Marija Sestak won bronze in the triple-jump competition at the 2008 World Indoors Athletics Championships



20 years later

Slovenia, 1988. Spring was ripening into summer. Everything was blooming, thriving, swarming, singing and flying. But it wasn't just the animals and plants who were becoming intoxicated by the restlessness of late spring. Something was buzzing in people as well. The threat of imminent arrest was hanging in the air, there was even talk of a coup d'état threatening the land on the sunny side of the Alps.

Then suddenly it came from a clear blue sky. The information spread like fire – they had arrested Janez Janša! Soon afterwards, they arrested Ivan Borštner, an n.c.o. in the Yugoslav National Army, and soon after him, it was my turn. A month later, Franci Zavrl was charged. We were charged with betraying a military secret, and three out of four of us were journalists or commentators, working for the then leading opposing journal 'Mladina'. The communist party and the army had struck back, or so it seemed.

Luckily, not everything went according to the plans of the party and military magnates. A committee for the protection of human rights was established, and soon several organisations and societies joined in, along with thousands of individuals and protestors, who expressed their discontent over violations of human rights. All these many incentives in civil society fused in a united struggle for democracy and the rule of law. And so it happened – as never before in the history of socialist Yugoslavia – that political prisoners emerged from their confinement as moral victors. It was a turning point, the final act of everything that was happening in the eighties, when day after day dissidents were pushing the boundaries of freedom and cornering the great party.

It seemed impossible; it seemed as if a miracle had happened in the middle of Ljubljana. Bells were ringing, people were walking around, talking loudly, as if they suddenly decided to repay themselves for all the years of compulsory silence. They were standing on monuments, talking about their visions of the future, and there was no one left who would dare to silence them, take them away or put them in prison. They filled their lungs with air, confident, full of hope for the future. As if in those decisive moments a heavy burden had been lifted from all of us. The air smelled sweetly of freedom and opportunities. Events were unfolding with immense speed. Everything that seemed

impossible the day before, had become a reality the next day, and that day seemed like the past. Yes, those times only occur every fifty or one hundred years. Some people never live to see them. It was a time you had to be part of. On the street, in front of the military court, at the rally, at the concert, standing in line to buy 'Mladina', on the Radio Študent frequency, even in prison...you had to be there, because for those who were late, those who slept too long, it was as if they had missed the birth of their own child. It was a unique time!

And today? Slovenia, 20 years later?

Of course, looking from the perspective of those turbulent times, it may seem that time has stopped. No more drama, no more excitement or enthusiasm. It's all routine. Politics. Boring diplomacy. Political parties fighting for the fun of it. Business tycoons who have seized the heritage of many generations. Uncertainty about the loss of employment. A feeling of inadequacy. Lack of self-esteem. This is what we carry with us every day - we read about it, listen to it, talk about it. We are bitter, disappointed and dissatisfied. But the real picture of Slovenia today is a bit different than it appears at first glance. Let's be realistic – twenty years ago, could anybody say they could imagine us living in our own country, the first independent country since the Slovene nation existed? Did anybody dare to predict that so soon after independence we would be accepted in the community of European democratic nations, that we would even preside over them? Was it possible to imagine that we could cross borders without documents or identification, and that in European capitals we would be able to pay with euros bearing the image of Trubar and Prešeren? Did anybody imagine we would be able to fill our shopping trolleys with ease and drive around in fantastic cars of every possible make?

I think it is plenty for a period of only twenty years. And I ask myself – do we even know how to delight in our own achievements? Do we even know how to enjoy the results of our own efforts? Are we destined, perhaps, to be always offended and stubborn, never having enough and never satisfied with what we have? Do you remember the wonderful spring of 1988, when we had little or nothing, but most of all we had the hope that one day everything would be different and that everything was still to come?

Photo: STA



EU - USA Summit at Brdo pri Kranju - one of the most high-profile events of Slovenia's EU Presidency

EU, US Reaffirm Transatlantic Partnership

US President George W. Bush, Prime Minister Janez Janša and European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso (left to right) address the press conference after the EU-US summit

The leaders of the EU and US reaffirmed the global importance of the transatlantic partnership in terms of values as well as the economy, and called for further liberalisation of world trade as they met in Slovenia on 10 June. »It's really important for the US to stay close with the EU. It is in our interest...to work hard to have a partnership that resolves problems,« US President George W. Bush said after the talks at Brdo pri Kranju.

The officials went to great lengths to stress the importance of the relationship. »Although we might have different approaches on some issues, this should not hamper our cooperation,« said Slovenian Prime Minister and EU Council President Janez Janša, who mentioned the death penalty and carbon emissions as two areas of discord. Janša recalled that Bush's tour coincided with the 60th anniversary of the Berlin Airlift and the Marshall Plan, saying that the US engagement did not only bring relief to Europe by promoting integration, it »set in motion an irreversible process«, which seemed impossible 60 or even 20 years ago. »History teaches us to be ambitious. We have to create a strong alliance based on out common values...able to lead, to change and to help, a new hope for those who suffer - who can start the work if the biggest and most developed democracies can't.« As European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso pointed out, the EU and US make for »a community of values promoting and supporting the world based on human rights and democracy«. A declaration adopted at the summit says that the transatlantic relationship is »the most significant bilateral economic relationship in the world« and highlights that the two sides would »resist protectionist sentiment at home and oppose protectionism abroad«. In this sense both sides reiterated the commitment to the Doha round of talks on the liberalisation of world trade. »It's really important to defeat the voices of protectionism now. If you're truly worried about global development and poverty, one of the best way to help poor people is to trade,« Bush said. Barroso said that the two sides needed to

work hard to achieve a »fair and balanced outcome of the WTO talks. The deal remains there to be done if the political will is there.« »Together, the EU and US can make a difference trying to bring others to a more realistic position so that we can achieve the deal on trade and development talks,« he said. Last year the EU and US established the Transatlantic Economic Council (TEC), whose mandate is to create a barrier-free transatlantic market. Barroso said savings for businesses related to the TEC agenda were estimated at US\$ 10bn. Bilateral trade amounts to EUR 1.9bn a day and the figures show a high degree of interdependence. »In a time of important challenges to our economies, we have reaffirmed our commitment to free trade and open economies in the face of protectionist voices on both sides of the Atlantic,« he said.

BUSH SAYS CLIMATE DEAL WITHIN REACH DURING HIS PRESIDENCY

US President George W. Bush said that a global agreement on climate change was possible during his term in office, which ends in January 2009. »I think we can actually get an agreement on global climate change during my presidency,« Bush said at the EU-US Summit at Brdo pri Kranju. As a follow-up to the Kyoto Protocol that expires on 2012, the EU has said it would cut greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent by 2020 and has sought support for a global agreement on binding goals. However, the US, which has not signed up to Kyoto, wants any global agreement on climate change to include fast-growing developing countries, such as India and China. In an apparent appeal to developing countries such as China and India, the statement adopted at the summit calls for major economies to »take responsibility for addressing the interconnected challenges of climate change, energy security and efficiency.« »Unless China and India are at the table, unless they agree to a goal, unless they agree to firm strategies to achieve that goal, I don't see how any international agreement can be effective,« Bush said. According

WHATMAKESTHENEWS

to Bush, the US strategy involved a »Major Economies Meeting« designed at getting major economies to agree to a firm goal and commit to strategies to achieve this goal. Prime Minister Janez Janša, the current president of the European Council, added that a commitment by the most developed industrialised nations was not enough and that developing countries needed to join the climate change fray. At the same time, however, »it is impossible without the leading role of the EU and US to reach a global accord in the short term«, Janša said. The G8 summit in Tokyo in early July should be an important step forward if this agreement is to be reached before the UN conference in Copenhagen in December 2009, he added. European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso expressed hope that the EU and US can work even closer together on this issue. »With EU and US leadership, it will be easier to get the global agreement that could create the right response to a global problem.«

BUSH PRAISES SLOVENIA'S ACHIEVEMENTS IN TALKS WITH PM

US President George W. Bush praised Slovenia's economic and political achievements as he held talks with Prime Minister Janez Janša, in what has been described as a »relaxed and friendly meeting«. »President Bush hailed Slovenia's achievements, saying its transition [to a market economy] has been very successful. In the seven years since his first visit, Slovenia has become a member of the EU and NATO, and now it is presiding the EU, Bush noted. The US president underlined the »transformational power of democracy and freedom«, recalling how Janša has gone from being a political prisoner 20 years ago to leading the country and the EU. This is as direct an experience in the transformational power of democracy and freedom as one can have. The prime minister also presented the Lisbon Treaty, which is currently in the process of ratification, saying it would facilitate decision-making and enhance the EU's role in the world. Serbia and Macedonia were in the focus of talks on the Western Balkans, as President Bush was interested in Slovenia's view. Kosovo was not discussed separately, only in the general framework of the Western Balkans.

BUSH SAYS NUCLEAR-ARMED IRAN »INCREDIBLY DANGEROUS«

US President George W. Bush has urged European allies to keep up the pressure on Iran aimed at preventing it from acquiring a nuclear weapon. He said a nuclear-armed Iran would be »incredibly dangerous« to world peace. Speaking at the EU-US summit at Brdo pri Kranju, Bush said that Iran had a choice to make between isolation on one hand and better relations with the West and a better life for its people on the other. Bush said Iran's nuclear programme was discussed extensively by him, Slovenian Prime Minister and EU Council President Janez Janša, and European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso at Tuesday's meeting. »We have made it clear to the Iranians that there is a better way forward...all the have to do is suspend their enrichment programme,« the US president said. Bush stated that »now is the time for there to be strong diplomacy« and added that a »group of countries can send a clear message to the Iranians«, in a reference to EU-US cooperation on the issue. He added that the EU and Iran were »on the same page« and welcomed EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana's plan to visit Iran at the weekend for fresh talks on resolving the stand-off. In the draft declaration confirmed by the leaders, the two sides indicated their readiness to step up sanctions against Iran with measures ensured at preventing Iranian banks from »abusing the international

banking system to support proliferation and terrorism«. Yet the joint statement also reiterates the belief of the EU and US that »a mutually satisfactory, negotiated solution remains open to Iran.« The comments come after three hours of talks between Bush and EU leaders, which broached a variety of international and regional issues. In the declaration, the leaders also addressed an appeal to the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to send a team to Zimbabwe immediately »to monitor human rights and deter further abuses« ahead of the presidential run-off. The document also calls on »the government of Zimbabwe to cease the state-sponsored violence and intimidation against its people«. The Middle East was also on the agenda of multi-faceted talks. According to Bush, the discussions broached plans for a Palestinian state, the situation in Lebanon and Syria. »One thing is for certain, if more people lived in free societies, the Middle East would be a more hopeful and happy place,« the US president said. Bush also thanked Slovenia and the EU for its support in Iraq and Afghanistan. »I believe it is in our mutual interest to work hard to help these democracies survive for the sake of peace, for the sake of human rights and human dignity«. The US president also directed a call to Cuba to release its political prisoners. »If the Castro administration really is different, the first way to show this difference is to release political prisoners,« Bush echoed the wording of the joint statement adopted by the EU and US at the meeting. Moreover, Bush had a call for the EU regarding Turkey's bid to join the EU. »We strongly believe Turkey ought to be a member of the EU,« said Bush.

US FIRST LADY IMPRESSED BY SLOVENIAN PAINTERS

US First Lady Laura Bush visited a show on Slovenian impressionists at the National Gallery as she toured the Slovenian capital in the company of Slovenia's First Lady Barbara Miklic Tuerk and the prime minister's fiancée, Urška Bacovnik. The ladies were delighted by the paintings by Rihard Jakopic (1869-1943), the leading Slovenian representative of the late 19th century style of painting that focused on the effects of light on objects. Laura Bush in particular was keen to learn about the individual motifs the paintings portrayed. Before leaving Washington, the US first lady met the dean of the College of Architecture and Urban Planning there, who told her that he found Ljubljana the most beautiful city in Europe architecturally. Laura Bush continued her visit of the Slovenian capital by taking part in what she described as an interesting debate about whether voluntary work should be tied to successful conclusion of secondary education.



First ladies (left to right) Margarida Sousa Uva Barroso, Urška Bacovnik, Laura Bush and Barbara Miklic Tuerk visit an exhibition of Slovenian impressionist painters at the National Gallery

Text: ANJA HREŠČAK, Photo: STA



'To stand and withstand'

Slovenia remembers Primož Trubar, a man known by many as the writer of the first two Slovene books. Many exhibitions, celebrations and commemorations will be organized to celebrate his fifth centennial.

As part of the celebrations during Trubar Year, the month of June was filled with events throughout Slovenia. Trubar Year 2008 is being celebrated in Slovenia during the fifth centennial of the birth of Primož Trubar. The event has also been listed on UNESCO's list of anniversaries.

The year 2008 has been declared Trubar Year due to the fact that the Slovene people are celebrating the 500th anniversary of the birth of Primož Trubar (1508-1586). He was a founder of Slovene literary language, a sketcher of the first strokes and contours of Slovene national sovereignty, and a leader of the Slovene protestant reformation movement. Primož Trubar, one of the most important Slovene historic personalities to contribute to the development of Slovene culture, was born on Raščica near Velike Lašče, and died in Derendingen, Germany. As a central figure in the Slovene protestant movement he believed that church services should be conducted in the language of the people, so they could be understood by the poorest and most uneducated of them. In Trubar's time, services were conducted mainly in Latin, the then highly regarded language of the educated. But his advanced views earned him the contempt of the Church. He emigrated to Germany, to escape from the persecution of the religious authorities, where in 1550 he published the first two books ever written in the Slovene language, *Catechismus* and *Abecedarium* (Primer). The texts were first written in gothic and later in Latin script. All Slovene writers in the 16th century followed his example and established a choice of dialect that would be most accessible to all the speakers of the great range of Slovenian dialects. In those days Slovene scholars knew each other well and they had a very good knowledge of all publications in Slovene, which enabled the unification of their vocabulary and grammar. Their common choice of literary language thus "took root and remained" as Trubar himself would say, even after the decline of the Slovene reformation movement. According to historians, had Trubar not laid the foundations of the Slovene literary language, there probably would not have been a Slovene nation as it exists today, for with the knowledge of the language, the national consciousness grew.

TRUBAR YEAR 2008

The anniversary of his birth has thus been commemorated by several events dedicated to the personality and legacy of this great Slovene. They have been mostly held in June, but the symbolic opening was in February, with the President of Slovenia, Dr. Danilo Turk, when a statue of Trubar was solemnly unveiled in the National and University

Library of Slovenia. In his speech, the President remembered Trubar's legacy: "At a time when Slovenia is presiding over the European Union there are many reasons why we should contemplate all aspects of Trubar's work and his mission." In the words of President Turk, we should consider Trubar as a founder of Slovene culture and as a man who bravely and honestly entered the social and political currents of his time. "We rightly remember his work as the work of a great European intellectual, in close contact with the leading minds of his time," said the President. In the National and University Library of Slovenia an exhibition was opened in May entitled 'Trubar's and Ungnad's Gift to Europe', where the Slovene public has a chance to view the celebrated collection of books prepared under the guidance of Trubar in the Bible Institute in Urach.

THE TRUBAR MILL

At the beginning of the year the Trubar mill was again rotated into action. Many Slovene municipalities joined the celebrations, including the capital Ljubljana, where an exhibition at the National Museum of Slovenia commemorating the life and work of Trubar was opened, and of course the municipality of Velike Lašče, where half a millennium ago he was born. Velike Lašče is also where, on the 8th of June, the main celebration was held in Trubar's own birth house in Rašica. The official speaker was the Minister of Culture, Dr. Vasko Simoniti, and the celebration itself was held in the manner and spirit of the time when Trubar was born. Part of the art programme was a performance symbolising a walk through the five most important stages of Trubar's life. The performance began with the latest stage, when Trubar lived in Derendingen, and continued back to his childhood in Raščica. Several renowned Slovene actors interpreted Trubar at different stages of his life: Jurij Souček, Tone Kuntner, Gaber Kristjan Trseglav, Gregor Gruden and Teo Saksida. A young Slovene singer, Eva Černe, represented a connecting element between Trubar and the Slovene culture. Singing Slovene folk songs, she united the four geographical parts of Slovenia and presented each "geographical" Trubar with a sunflower as a gift for his birthday. The final musical performance was by singer Gašper Vidic and the youth choir of the Primož Trubar Primary School. The journey through time was concluded by the rotation of the mill on Trubar's birth house, symbolising the continuity of Slovene language and culture. The Slovene Percussion Project and dancers, using the rhythmical sounds of book printing and choreography, wrote out one of the most important sentences symbolising the essence of the Slovene nation... to stand and withstand.



EU REACHES AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE ON ENERGY DECOUPLING

EU economy ministers reached on 6 June wide consensus on the compromise proposal on decoupling of energy production and distribution. The slovenian presidency represented by the president of the TTE Council, slovenian Minister of the Economy Andrej Vizjak successfully managed the debate and put great efforts in to reaching an agreement. The ministers reached agreement on key elements of all five legislative proposals on the single energy market, Slovenian Economy Minister Andrej Vizjak said in Luxembourg. The compromise proposal for unbundling of ownership was contested the most by Germany, Austria and Portugal today, with Vizjak saying that some countries brought their grievances to the table after it already seemed that a full compromise had been reached.

German Economy Minister Michael Glos said his country saw no problems in the part of the proposal on unbundling, but detected other drawbacks and therefore could not fully support the package. Glos said talks today were only held on decoupling, with Vizjak retorting that the countries have discussed all the points. All the countries tried hard to achieve a compromise, but some countries still came out with additional demands »at the end of the day«, Vizjak said. However, even though all EU countries do not agree with all the points, an agreement has been reached on the main ones, Vizjak commented on the deal, which now has to be passed by the European Parliament in July.

The deal brings three possible options of decoupling: full ownership unbundling, establishment of an independent transmission operator (ITO), which is vertically linked with a parent company, and setting up of an independent system operator (ISO). According to the Slovenian presidency's press release, »the proposal assures a high level of autonomy in the management and supervision of the ITO«. »There is also a planned provision on inspection, on the basis of which the actual performance and autonomy of operation of the ITO is determined.« Under the deal, the ITO has to function independently from its parent company, has to employ its own staff, use its own financial resources and be organised as a limited liability company. The criteria for securing the independence of its management have also been bolstered, a move that follows the requests by Germany and France. The majority of the management

must not hold a position in the parent company three years before or four years after holding the post in the management board of the ITO. Half minus one members of the supervisory board of the transmission operator will have to be independent from the parent company.

EU'S MAIN CHALLENGES GLOBAL IN NATURE, JANŠA SAYS

Slovenia's Prime Minister Janez Janša told a panel held in Ljubljana on 4 June that the main challenges facing the EU were international rather than home-grown. They key challenges for the EU are world peace and security, climate change and poverty, the president of the EU council told the panel hosted by the International Institute for Middle-East and Balkan Studies (IFIMES).

According to Janša, the causes and solutions of these challenges are linked, while no global power can tackle them alone. These challenges require global cooperation, he said. Janša believes that the EU's specific nature allows it to play a unique role. This is why it must adopt the lead in tackling these challenges, he said. »It is time we think about the Treaty of Rome (with which the predecessor to the modern-day EU was established) on a global scale.« According to him, the successful implementation of the Lisbon Strategy will represent the meeting of the final condition for the EU to start looking outwards and assuming a global lead. If it wants to be successful in this, the EU must form a common European identity, Janša said. In his opinion, this cannot happen in an introverted EU. The main challenges to achieving an extroverted Europe lies in Europeans themselves. The majority of the people in the EU, he said, are not ready to accept the bulk of the bloc's energy, activities and funds being spent on these global challenges. Moreover, Janša believes Europeans are afraid to make the required changes, as they currently enjoy a relatively comfortable life. He said the major issue was whether European institutions enjoyed sufficient support to begin focusing outwards. The new posts created by the Lisbon Treaty could play a key role in this.

It will be crucial to see whether the people assuming these new posts, including the new president of the European Council, will be able to influence the transformation to an extrovert Europe, he explained. The Prime Minister opened by emphasising that the challenges facing Europe in the twenty-first century were just as predictable as those of the 1990s. In the course of its operation, however, the European Union has learned important lessons and has therefore become more determined with respect to the implementation of the measures it has adopted. According to the Prime Minister, consensus between individual Member States is reached faster now. For the first time in the modern era, Europe will define its own national European interest based on the ideas enshrined in the Treaty of Rome.

European Council President Janez Janša noted that, on the path to achieving the set objectives of the European Union and to turning outwards and facing global challenges, the main barriers were actually in European citizens themselves. In his opinion, the majority of the European public at this stage is not ready, in particular on account of its fear of the necessary yet urgently needed reforms, to accept most of the European Union's attention, activities and money being devoted to addressing global challenges. In connection with reforms, the Prime Minister referred to the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, which is the final major prerequisite for the EU-27 to turn outwards and assume the leading role in addressing global challenges. The Lisbon Treaty provides for new institutions and new responsibilities within the European Union, which will be highly symbolic and will help build the overall European identity of EU residents.

Photo: STA



chairmanship of the network in July 2007 from Italy and will pass it on to Portugal at the end of June. EUREKA was established in 1985 by the then German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and French President Francois Mitterrand; Slovenia joined the network in 1994. It comprises 39 countries and the European Commission, including EU members and Croatia, Iceland, Israel, Monaco, Norway, Russia, San Marino, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and, as of today, Macedonia.

BLLED STRATEGIC FORUM 2008

Energy and Climate Change in the focus of this year's Bled Strategic Forum

Centre for European Perspective and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia are organizing the third annual conference Bled Strategic Forum entitled "Energy and Climate Change: Si.nergy for the Future" in Bled, Slovenia, on 31 August and 1 September 2008.

At a time of soaring oil and gas prices, growing public concern over dependence on imports of energy resources and the mounting evidence of global warming this year's conference will focus on two main topics: energy and climate change. During discussions high-level government representatives, politicians, EU officials, private sector leaders and senior representatives from think tanks and the non-governmental sector will examine possible synergy between the energy security and care for the environment.

The Conference will cover the following topics: strategic challenges of climate change and energy security, the new Post-Kyoto Deal, hydrocarbon energy resources dependency in geostrategic perspective, alternative and renewable resources as well as the links between climate change and the threat to international peace and security. Additionally, it will address the energy situation in the Western Balkans.

Bled Strategic Forum is designed as a platform for promoting high-level dialogue on key issues relevant to Europe and the world in the 21st century. The First Strategic Forum Bled 2006, called "Caspian Outlook 2008" was focused on the geopolitical relevance of the Caspian region for the EU from economic, political and strategic perspectives. The Second Bled Strategic Forum was convened in August 2007, just few months before the start of the first Slovenian EU presidency. The conference entitled "European Union 2020: Enlarging and Integrating" was the main foreign policy event in Slovenia, gathering more than 450 high-level guests. The Forum covered major challenges the EU and global society face today, primarily focusing on the principal priorities of the Slovenian EU presidency.

The success of the conference from the previous two years provide a sound basis for the annual Bled Forum to become one of the most important platforms in the region for addressing the most serious challenges both in the region and worldwide.

More information about the Bled Strategic Forum 2008, including a draft conference programme, is available at www.bledstrategicforum.org.

EUREKA NETWORK ADOPTS NEW STRATEGIC PROGRAMME

EUREKA, an international industrial research and development network, held a ministerial meeting in Ljubljana on 6 June, adopting an overhauled strategic programme and welcoming Macedonia as its 39th member country. The ministers also gave the green light to Eurogia+, an energy initiative worth EUR 1bn over the next five years.

"With its new strategic programme, EUREKA commits itself to the implementation of the European Research Area (ERA) and to the fifth freedom - the free flow of knowledge, which clearly shows that we're all following the same goals," stressed European Commissioner for Science and Research Janez Potocnik. The conference of EUREKA members was launched by Prime Minister Janez Janša, who stressed the role of EUREKA in meeting the goals of the Lisbon Strategy. "We have three years to complete this cycle of the Lisbon Strategy. During this time, we need to encourage reforms, while at the same time keeping the strategy for beyond 2010 on our minds," said Janša, labelling EUREKA's new strategic programme as a "big step in the right direction". One of the biggest projects under the Slovenian chairmanship is Eurostars, an EUR 800m programme aimed at small and medium companies that supports high-risk projects in the area of research and development over the next six years, according to Ales Mihelic, the current chair of EUREKA. Slovenia took over the



Bled
Strategic
Forum



The Euro-Mediterranean University, a network of universities initiated by Slovenia, was founded in the seaside resort of Portorož on 9 June. Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša and Secretary-General of the Arab League Amr Moussa stressed the importance of the institution in peace, stability and cooperation efforts. Janša emphasised in his speech that Europe and the Mediterranean have always been closely linked. He recalled the recent words of the European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner, who had written that the Mediterranean was Europe's cradle and its future.

He added that countries in Europe and the Mediterranean are in some ways very similar and at the same time quite different. These differences create the need for dialogue, searching and mutual enrichment. The university, which is meant to promote links between research and higher education institutions in the region, is to play an important role in that. It will also become one of the most distinguished institutions of intercultural cooperation in the world. Janša furthermore said that education and training have always been at the heart of the humanist teachings of the three main religions in the area - Christianity, Judaism and Islam. The key to a future which Janša hopes will be marked by peace, tolerance and cooperation, lies in educating the young to become ethical beings with a tolerant worldview who hold intercultural dialogue in high esteem. The Slovenian prime minister also thanked the European Commission, European Parliament and the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary assembly for their political, moral and material support for the project. Moussa said that only enlightened education could overcome extremist views, teachings and acts and prevent a clash of civilisations in Europe and in the Arab world. Moussa believes that both territories now have a unique opportunity to provide a fresh start for new generations, based on cooperation and dialogue. The university should also seek joint answers to the most pressing issues which are faced by Europe and the Mediterranean. European Parliament President Hans-Gert Poettering and European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso meanwhile pledged that the institutions that they chair would continue supporting the university. Poettering said

that in his view there was no better way to strengthen mutual understanding than by bringing closer the young from both sides of the Mediterranean. By hosting the university, Slovenia will play a key role in the Euro-Mediterranean process, even though its shoreline is very short. He also welcomed Slovenia's commitment to provide the building and the money for the institution. Barroso added that the establishment of the university was the biggest event of the European year of intercultural dialogue. He said the project deserved to be supported and added the Commission already earmarked EUR 1m from Euro-Mediterranean partnership for the project. 43 companies from 18 countries also signed letter of intent on establishing a Euro-Mediterranean University Foundation, with Kuwait chipping in EUR 1m. The special envoy of the Kuwaiti prime minister, Sabah El Ahmed El Jaber Al-Sabah, labelled the university a symbol of cooperation between European and Arab countries. Kuwait believes in dialogue between civilisations and bridge building between Europe and the Arab world. European Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potocnik said the university was a good example of public-private partnership and that companies could benefit from the institution by being provided with peace and stability in the region and a qualified and mobile workforce. European Parliament Vice President Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou said the university was a key opportunity for integration and cooperation in the region and called on all to strive to make this project a success. Among the companies that signed the letter were Slovenian fuel trader Petrol, telco Telekom Slovenije, postal service Posta slovenije, port operator Luka Koper and Hungarian telco Magyar Telekom. Slovenia bid for the seat of the university more than three years ago and later received the backing of the Mediterranean Universities Union, which has 74 member universities. Slovenia formally launched the proposal for establishment of an Euro-Mediterranean University based in the Piran municipality on the Slovenian coast at an Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly session in Tunis in March 2007. The institution will offer postgraduate programmes in the fields of economy, energy, the environment, tourism, transport, intercultural studies, international law, and international relations.

Climate Change, New Media, European Elections... Highlights from the meeting of the Club of Venice

Is it possible to reduce discussions on such different topics as climate change, new media, ethics in the public sector and European elections to a common denominator? Of course, if they are connected by a discussion on communication. The above topics marked the regular spring meeting of the Club of Venice, on 5 and 6 June 2008 in Slovenia, and organised by the Government Communication Office.

The Club of Venice, uniting directors of government communication offices and other communication experts from the European countries, has been functioning for 22 years. "Communication in the public sphere is also developing and changing rapidly, therefore it is necessary to follow the changes and to use new methods of communication," the founder of the Club of Venice and honorary president Stefano Orlando underlined in his opening address. "Thereby, we should not forget that while striving to help citizens to understand the goals of our institutions, we are bound to observe the public interest, professional and ethical conduct. Meetings of Club of Venice members are an ideal opportunity to exchange experience and knowledge, to be informed on good practice examples in the field of public communication functioning in a complex triangle between politics, the media and citizens." The host of the meeting, Anže Logar, Head of the Government Communication Office, agreed with him in his address. He believes that in major projects, such as the EU Council Presidency, the requirements and expectations of professional work and new communication approaches are even higher. Although the Presidency has not finished yet, Logar estimated that Slovenians did a good job in the field of communication. In his address, Dr. Dejan Verčič, Professor of Communication Management at the Faculty of Social Science, discussed the role of intercultural and international communication. He offered a concise insight into communication at a global level, and especially drew attention to factors of which we are not sufficiently aware. "Today, a great part of politics is also communication and communication itself has a certain political value." Communication is also a lot more than informing, which is something the majority of institutional representatives make use of. Informing is only the first step in the process on the way to the people, however - building upon emotional and social capital is also needed to attract citizens to a public discussion. Verčič is convinced that communication approaches need to be changed soon, if we want communication to outgrow its support role and gain a managing one. Within the thematic part on campaigns, Kevin Traverse-Healy from the British Central Office of Information, Jan Bos from the Netherlands Government Communication Office, Olivier Alsteens from the Belgian Government Communication Office and Eva Krings from the Press and Information Office of the German Federal Government presented their experiences and approaches. The Slovenian experience was presented by Andrej Klemenc from the non-government E-forum, cooperating with our Ministry of the Environment in raising awareness of the young on the environmental changes and on the request for different action. Their common recommendation is: communication on climate change is necessary, but extremely demanding. Since we influence the change of action and conduct of people who are not easy to reach, long-term activities are needed. All key stakeholders should be connected at the national level, and concrete examples should be applied to show models and the reasonableness of behaving differently.

NEW MEDIA TRANSFORM GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION AS WELL

The other part of the conference was represented by considering what the influence of the new media on government communication. Anže Logar presented two novel approaches: live-stream and transmission by mobile phones of press conferences, which the Office started to use during Slovenian Presidency and will continue to use. At the same time, he wondered about the expediency of some other types of digital communication which have a different connotation in the government sphere than in the public sector. Ylva Tiveus from the Directorate General Communication of the European Commission talked about the positive experiences of the Commission who uses new communication tools more and more frequently when communicating with stakeholders. European citizens favour an open, transparent and interactive method of communication, which is provided by such media. Jean Yves Nicolas from the French Toute l'Europe is convinced that the web 2.0 approach opens many opportunities for a dialogue with citizens; however, they are often lost in an overflow of numerous web sites (eg., over 30,000 of them present EU contents). He made the interesting proposal of creating a "map of web cartography" of the Club members, to look for common points and to connect web resources in order to be clear and afford easy access as much as possible.

The participants took rather a warm interest in the discussion on ethics in public communication. Pierre Alan Douay from the FEACP (Fédération Européenne des Associations de Communication Publique - European Federation of Public Communication Associations) drew attention to the often ignored principles of public communication – correct information, inclusion, provision of equal treatment, openness and transparency, which need to be observed by communicators in the public sphere. His proposal to review all codes of conduct applicable to state administrations of EU Member States and to create pan-European principles was positively adopted.

2009 CHARACTERISED ALSO BY ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

An important part of the substantive discussion was intended to communicate European content. Representatives of the European Commission and the European Parliament presented novel approaches and strategies and preparations for elections to the European Parliament. Francesca Ratti from the European Parliament underlined the significance of common preparations of the European and national institutions for the elections. "375 million voters in 27 countries and 9000 candidates from 200 European political parties represent an extremely demanding and responsible challenge for us all. It is necessary to unite power and efforts," Ratti said. All participants agreed on the significance of the approaching elections; however, they pointed out various circumstances and other important events that could affect attendance and voting.



On 31 May a professional tourist workshop and press conference on Slovenian tourism promoting Slovenia was held in New York, organized by the magazine National Geographic Traveler magazine (that has dubbed Slovenia a hidden jewel of Europe), the Slovenian Tourist Board, the Slovenian Government and the Ljubljana Tourist Board.

A number of Slovenian tourist companies and organizations were able to present themselves at a well-attended tourist workshop for American travel agents and tour operators, to whom the airline company Adria Airways, Ljubljana Jože Pučnik Airport, City Hotel Ljubljana, Adria Ankarana, Sava Hoteli Bled, the travel agencies and tour operators EXO Travel Centre Bled, Insider's Slovenia, Kompas International, Tolmin Tours, the Tourist Offices of Bled, Tolmin and Ljubljana, Terme Rogaška and the Slovenian Convention Bureau were presented. The well-attended press conference was opened by Petra Stušek, Press Officer of the Ljubljana Tourist Board, who gave a brief presentation of Slovenia and its capital. Other speakers at the conference included the Slovenian Ambassador, Samuel Žbogar, a representative of National Geographic Traveler, Dawn Drew, who described her experience of Slovenia, a representative of the Government Communication Office, Anže Logar, and the director of the Slovenian Tourist Board, Dimitrij Piciga.

American journalists were mainly interested in the cost of travel to Slovenia, as well as in some other details, also provided for in the journalist package. In the last few years, since the representative office of the Slovenian Tourist Board in USA closed, American tourists have found it harder to obtain information on Slovenia, but according to Piciga, there were around 55,000 arrivals in Slovenia from the USA in the last year. Several concerts were also performed in the promotion programme, including performances by Godalika and Fake Orchestra in Joe's Pub in the East Village, while in the Town Hall on Broadway there were appearances from Laibach, Bratko Bibič and Guy Klučevšek, Vasko Atanasevski, with Marc Ribot and Greg Cohen, Brina, Zlatko Kaučič, Silence and Katalena. Before the concert there was also a presentation of Slovene wines.

SLOVENIA IS PRESENTED IN NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELLER

Slovenia's tourist offer is presented in the May/June edition of the National Geographic Traveler, which has a print run of 850,000 copies, some 738,907 of them being distributed in the USA. This

is one of the key presentations of Slovenia in the cross-Atlantic markets. "This is a story that began around a year ago," said the director of the Government Communication Office Anže Logar. During the preparation for the Slovenian Presidency of the EU, the Government Communication Office, in cooperation with STO, sought different opportunities for the promotion of Slovenia in the EU, as well as in the USA. In case of the latter, they decided on a "soft" approach to promotion through tourism. "In this regard, National Geographic Traveler offered the best possible choice," he said, adding that the publication of the article coincided with the visit of George W. Bush to Slovenia.

"This is the highest point of our cooperation with National Geographic and National Geographic Traveller, but it is not the end of it", said the director of STO, Dimitrij Piciga, who added that in July there will be an advertisement published recapturing the events in New York, accompanying the above-mentioned article in National Geographic Traveler. In the European August edition of the National Geographic Magazine, with 534,000 subscribers, there will be an abbreviated presentation of Slovenia over five pages. It is expected that in the November/December edition of NGT there will be another, shorter article on Slovenia and a whole page ad. In editions prior to the May/June issue an announcement of the piece on Slovenia and events related to this presentation was published.

"Overseas markets represent seven to eight per cent of overnight stays in Slovenia. The USA, due to the growth in 2006 to 27 per cent and due to last year's five per cent growth, is already in 11th place in reference to overnight stays," said Piciga, adding that these are up-market guests in the highest price range that require products that Slovenia can offer. "These are guests that are prepared to pay more for the so-called 'freely designed product', a natural product, and they are willing to pay 15 to 50 per cent more, depending on the segment," said Piciga.

In addition to these events, the STO also prepared two presentations for the expert public; on 30 May, there was a workshop in the Millennium Broadway Hotel attended by approximately 35 agencies from the New York area, and a press conference. On 4 June, there was a gala dinner seating 80 to 100 guests at the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in Washington organized by the Slovenian diplomatic missions in the USA; from 9 to 14 June there was a presentation of contemporary scenic art in Lincoln Center Plaza, and from 16 to 22 June a retrospective of selected Slovenian movies. From 24 to 29 September there will be a presentation of selected Slovenian poetry in the Bowery Poetry Club.

Text: UROŠ KORBAR, Photo: STA



Iztok Jarc, Slovenian Agriculture Minister: The EU will engage constructively in efforts to form a comprehensive international response to the rising prices of food to ensure food safety

AT THE RECENT INFORMAL MEETING IN BRDO PRI KRANJU THE EU MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE DEBATED ON LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE INTERIM HEALTH CHECK OF THE REFORM OF THE EU COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY (CAP) AND THEREBY SHOW THE WILLINGNESS FOR A COMPROMISE. WHICH ARE THE MAIN EMPHASES OF THE MEETING? AND WITH WHAT CONSEQUENCES?

At the meeting the European Commissioner for agriculture Mariann Fischer Boel introduced for the first time the concrete proposals of amendments of the three main Regulations of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). These are the modifications in the context of the Health Check of the CAP reform from 2003. This would make agricultural policy even more efficient and the European agriculture more competitive and adjust it to global challenges, like climate change, biofuels, food security and high prices of food, ect. Exactly these challenges and the urgency of adjusting the European agriculture are pointed out in the document of the Slovenian Presidency, which served as a basis for the debate.

We agreed that the Health Check has to be bolder in adjusting to these challenges. We also have to consider the concrete measures and possibilities of ensuring additional funds for their implementation. We have to promote technological progress in agriculture, which will increase yield per hectare and enable an appropriate food

security with a safe and qualitative food at acceptable prices while ensuring stable balance between agriculture and the environment. Technological development must follow the goal of reducing the release of greenhouse gases and adapt to climate change. Regarding the proposed changes or the CAP supplements the ministers in principle supported the Commission proposal. I believe that we have great foundation to harmonize also the open issues like the transfer of funds from the pillar I to pillar II, measures for the so called "soft landing" for milk quota abolition, a gradual final abolition of production-coupled payments, ect., already during the French Presidency.

THE GROWING COMPLEXITY OF GLOBAL PROBLEMS CONNECTED TO FOOD AND ITS PRICES DRAWS ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT THE CONSEQUENCES OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC MOVES IN AGRICULTURE ARE INTENSIFYING. AS A DESIGNER OF A NEW »DYNAMIC FRAMEWORK« OF THE EU COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY YOU BEAR THE RESPONSIBILITY TO AT LEAST MITIGATE THESE CONSEQUENCES. DO YOU AGREE WITH THAT STATEMENT?

Partially I agree. We have to be aware that not everything that is going on with the prices of food has to do with the Common Agricultural Policy. This is a complex problem of not only agriculture but also the environment, energy, trade, security, ect. And it is the

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Health Check of the CAP reform and the mentioned supplements of the legislative proposals that represent an opportunity for the CAP to respond to the current high prices of agricultural products and the lack of food. However, we have to respond to these challenges in a common and sustainable way at the EU level also with other policies. The CAP adjustment can only be one of the steps in the direction of addressing this issue. Achieving the goals of food and environmental security cannot be left just to the market. We need an active and developmentally orientated agricultural and economic policy in Europe and all around the world. With effective measures and appropriate financial supports the multifunctional role of agriculture has to be strengthened. The economic development of the EU rural areas has to be supported with effective measures, which will contribute to the reduction of developmental differences between them.

EXPERTS CRITICIZE THAT THE EUROPEAN UNION IS NOT CAPABLE OF A QUICK RESPONSE TO THE CHANGED SITUATION AND THAT THE VISION OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN AGRICULTURE DOES NOT EVEN EXIST SINCE THE EUROPEAN AGRICULTURE WORKS TOO INTENSELY AND THINKS ONLY IN THE WELL ESTABLISHED FRAMEWORK.

I cannot agree with you or with those who say that. The debate in the context of the Health Check of the CAP reform and the concrete proposals for amendments actually prove that we do respond to the current changes. Already last year the EU accepted concrete short-term measure of a common agricultural policy (CAP) for the reduction of prices in the EU. We increased the cultivated areas with the abolition of the compulsory set-aside and increased the quotas for milk production for 2008, reduce the intervention supply and export refunds and temporarily abolish the import charges for almost all grains. In addition to that I would like to stress the importance of the development cycle of the Doha negotiations in the context of the World Trade Organization. The EU strives for their conclusion as soon as possible with a multilateral and balanced agreement in all negotiating fields. Important is so the willingness of the EU to abolish the export-related incentives with 2013 and the efforts of the EU to reduce the export limits and prohibitions in the political dialogue with third countries. The EU increased market orientation and reduced the number of measures that distort the functioning of markets and so enabled farmers a more effective respond to the development of prices. Maybe we are not ambitious enough in these changes, however I would like to stress that we have to be careful. These changes have to be balanced with a purpose to ensure farmers a stabile environment, which will not compromise the European agricultural model and its competitiveness. It is also true that this is one of the oldest and complex EU policies with the greatest share of the EU budget money. Probably this is a reason that it seems too awkward.

WHY DOES THE EUROPEAN UNION NOT MAKE A MARSHAL PLAN FOR AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST? WHY DOES THE EU NOT ASSIST WITH INVESTMENT IN THE LOCAL SMALL-SCALE FARMS, DEVELOPMENT OF

TRADITIONAL, SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION SYSTEMS, DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTES AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFERS, WHICH WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNDERDEVELOPED?

At the conference on food security in the light of climate change and bioenergy, which took place at the FAO Headquarters in Rome, I have, as the Chairman of the EU Agriculture Council, emphasised that the EU is determined to fruitfully cooperate in the efforts to achieve at the international level a comprehensive and common solution for the problem of high food prices and food security. The EU has already provided humanitarian and food aid. Moreover, it will secure additional resources for other emergency measures on financial aid, such as measures of social assistance for poor and vulnerable groups of the population, school nutrition and food coupons. In 2008 the European Commission will devote EUR 283 Mio. in total, whereby the resources contributed by individual member states for development aid are not included. In the medium term the EU will support the promotion of production in developing countries, among others by financing the input raw materials and advice in the management of market risk. Additionally, the EU will promote increased investment in agriculture, including rural infrastructure, irrigation, energy security, research in agriculture and political and institutional development. Thus, improvement of the agricultural sectors, increased food security and regional inclusion in developing countries should be achieved.

HOLDING THE EU PRESIDENCY, SLOVENIA COULD PROBABLY CONTRIBUTE SOME PIECES TO THE SEARCH FOR MOSAIC OF GREATER ATTRACTIVENESS AND GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT?

I believe that Slovenia has, as the EU Presidency, already contributed some of the pieces to this mosaic. In the framework of the May EU Agriculture Council we discussed on our initiative the high food prices and possible causes as well as actions for calming the situation. We highlighted the importance of the FAO high-level conference already in April and invited the EU member states to participate. Additionally, we have discussed with the ministers of agriculture the importance of research in agriculture, particularly in the field of the current adaptation to climate change. Among the possible directions for the adaptation to the new challenges the Slovenian Presidency also underpinned the need for flexible mechanisms to ensure sustainable development which provides for the sources of food and raw materials production. I am convinced it is necessary to quicken the reduction of the development lag of agriculture in the most underdeveloped areas, in the EU as well as worldwide. The migration of the population and abandoning of agricultural activity in the remote rural areas needs to be prevented and the conservation of habitats and biodiversity secured. Slovenia has gained positive experience in the field of sustainable development of multifunctional agriculture and rural areas, which is evidenced in the last years' accomplishments and in the relatively stable conditions.

A DOZEN PROTESTERS GATHERED SPONTANEOUSLY AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE BRDO COMPLEX. ACCORDING TO THE BANNERS THEY PROTESTED AGAINST THE

ABOLITION OF MILK QUOTAS PLANNED FROM 2015 ONWARD BY THE COMMISSION, INCREASING BUREAUCRATISATION OF AGRICULTURE AND AGAINST CROP PRODUCTION FOR BIOFUELS. WHAT DO YOU ANSWER THEM?

Some believe that high prices could be an opportunity for farmers as they would induce higher production and income. On the other hand however, high prices present great problem for the net-importing countries, in particular developing countries. The current CAP "health check" foresees definite abolition of the compulsory set-aside, phasing out of milk quotas by 2015, adjustment of the market price support in the cereal sector and the shift from support for energy crops to more efficient solutions for strengthening the bioenergy sector, but not to the detriment of food and feed production, including second-generation biofuels production. The decision to increase milk quotas by 2 percent was the response of the majority of the member states to the favourable situation on the EU and world markets and provides the opportunity for increased milk production. The proposal for quotas increase was designed by the Commission based on the autumn requests voiced by the member states and the report on the milk market outlook. It is important that the Commission has committed itself to consider this increase within the framework of the so called »soft landing« approach for the abolition of milk quotas in 2015. The increase will have an impact on the development of the branch in those countries and/or regions where the quotas presented a restriction in production and development. In these EU Council discussions we have of course never forgotten the situation at home. On several occasions we have stressed out that the sensitive areas where the abolition of milk quotas could harm the milk production should be protected and long-term milk production in these areas secured. In drafting legislation proposals under the CAP health check it is necessary to seriously contemplate, which are the measures to ensure the best possible adaptation of farmers to the quota abolition. With the aim to decrease the bureaucracy and the commitments of farmers, the requirements of the cross-compliance rules, for example, will be simplified by abolishing the standards which are unsuitable or not related to the responsibility of farmers. New requirements will be added to preserve the environmental benefits of the cessation of production and to improve the water management.

AMONG OTHERS THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION ALSO PROPOSES WITH LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS THE ABOLITION OF A SET-ASIDE, THE GRADUAL ABOLITION OF MILK QUOTA, HIGHER LEVEL OF MODULATION - THAT IS THE TRANSFER OF FUNDS FROM THE PILLAR I TO PILLAR II OF THE MEASURES OF THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE MINIMUM PAYMENT OR THE LIMITATION REGARDING THE SIZE OF THE FARM. WHAT WOULD THAT MEAN IN THE PRACTICE FOR THE SLOVENIAN AGRICULTURE?

Slovenia supports the CAP adjustments, which will work in the context of a current financial perspective and will not represent a radical reform of this area. In harmonization and simplification of the single payment scheme Slovenia promotes the solutions, which will ensure producers the maximum stability of conditions and consideration of regional differences. The changes should however be implemented carefully and gradually and with the intention to support sustainable development of agriculture and implement wider social goals. Some cases of the further abolition of production-coupled payments require special carefulness. Preservation and development of cattle and small animals is of strategic importance for Slovenia. Therefore it promotes the increase of the share of funds for addressing the problems of redistribution of payments in the context of the national envelope and that the purpose of the use of these funds is left to the Member States. We support the searching of the appropriate solution for insuring the products and for solving the consequences in the context of animal and plant diseases. The same goes for the proposals concerning the restrictions on payments per agricultural holding, we are however aware of the fact that this possibility is under jurisdiction of the Member State. The procedures in the field of cross compliance as one of the fundamental elements of the common agricultural policy should be simplified. We estimate the proposal for implementation of the modulation before the end of 2013 also in the new Member States as a serious change considering the existing definitions of the amount of direct payments by 2013. Concerning the proposals for abolition of some market interventions we have to be careful, mainly in some products like grains. Concerning the abolition of the compulsory set-aside and the envisaged increase of milk quota Slovenia doesn't have any serious reservations. A serious assessment requires the envisaged abolition of emergency measures for market support in the meat and milk sector, which are envisaged in cases of animal diseases. Adjusting to climate change and other challenges, which will from the point of view of the long-term arrangement require mainly an effective structural adjustment of Slovenian agriculture, will be if it stays in the current financial frameworks of rural development, to some extent impracticable. It will be necessary to consider the possibility of additional funds at the EU level. Slovenia expects also the proposals for regulation of high market prices. It is necessary to establish additional mechanisms, which will reduce risks in high prices of food. At the same time we have to review the possibility of new instruments in the light of managing with risks of high prices on the one side and an appropriate regulation of revenues in those branches that are due to high costs in a worse economic position. Legislative proposals should enable the increase of the productivity of the agricultural branch and thereby ensure an appropriate food security.



SLOVENIA UP EIGHT SPOTS ON IMD WORLD COMPETITIVENESS SCOREBOARD

Slovenia has climbed eight spots to 32nd in the rankings of the 2008 World Competitiveness Yearbook, an annual report compiled by the Lausanne-based International Institute for Management Development (IMD). The US remains the most competitive of the 55 economies listed, followed closely by Singapore and Hong Kong. »Part of the reason for Slovenia's progress is that last year most of the world economies reported high growth, while Slovenia's was significantly above-average, which reflected on its competitive edge,« Peter Stanovnik of the Ljubljana Institute for Economic Research told reporters on 22 May. Apart from the strong growth, Stanovnik pointed to the arrival of multinationals in Slovenia and partnerships that Slovenian companies form in the single European market. »Slovenia has improved the conditions for doing business, financial conditions for small and medium-sized companies and conditions for foreign investment,« Stanovnik listed. A colleague of his, Art Kovačič, agreed that the progress Slovenia had made was a »very good competitive achievement«. While government efficiency remains level, the country has made an improvement in economic performance, and managers are more on a par with their European peers. Kovačič specified that in the past four years, Slovenia had advanced in terms of international trade and prices, while it had fared worse in foreign investment, but it had made progress in economic efficiency. The Global Competitiveness Report 2007-2008, which the World Economic Forum (WEF) compiles on a more long-term basis, shows a somewhat different picture, though. »Slovenia's position in terms of long-term challenges can be compared to Estonia's, but we are still lagging behind it. Slovenia's problem remains a lack of market efficiency and technological gap,« Stanovnik said. »Slovenia places well in domestic economy, international trade and prices, while international investment, where Slovenia ranks 50th, remains an obstacle, just as it does employment, where Slovenia places around the 40th spot,« Stanovnik said. Slovenia's competitiveness in terms of the use of information and telecommunication technologies is the market environment is improving, but quite the opposite holds true for institutional environment and regulatory framework.

BAJUK ANTICIPATES LESS BORROWING



Finance Minister Andrej Bajuk

Text:RAMON MIKLUS, Photo: STA

Slovenia will have a budget surplus for a second year in a row in 2008, which Finance Minister Andrej Bajuk said on 23 May meant the country would depend less on borrowing. This is the reason the government has cancelled a second issue of state bonds planned for this year. The government amended the budget financing plan for this year on 15 May, opting for short-term borrowing instead of the planned five-year bond issue at the nominal value of one billion euros. Slovenia has already issued 11-year bonds at the nominal value of EUR 1bn this year. The January issue ranked among the 70 best deals of 2008 in the March edition of the The Banker magazine. Bajuk told reporters in Ljubljana today that the euro bond issue was important not only for Slovenia but for the whole Central and Southeast European region. This was the first time the country issued bonds in the volume suitable for a reference euro bond, and the first in which the euro was the domestic currency, Bajuk noted. The bond issue with a credit rating AA is notable for attracting a broad range of investors, 65% of the issue being sold to non-banking investors from a number of countries, none of which took more than 30% of the total, Bajuk said. The minister reiterated that Slovenia had had a budget deficit until 2006, but recorded a surplus in 2007 for the first time in the past ten years. This year the surplus will increase to EUR 70m. This means the state budget will depend less on borrowing, while the country will also lower its debt. State budget debt will decline from 26.3% in 2000 to 20.1% by the end of 2008, Bajuk said. He noted that the budget debt will decrease in nominal terms at the end of 2008 for the first time ever. Head of the Treasury and Finance Directorate Stanislava Zadavec Capriolo, said that borrowing would only be possible in order to purchase enough old debts. While Slovenia will not issue any new bonds this year, it may in 2009, depending on the fiscal policy.

JANŠA: SITUATION IN NOTRANJSKO-KRAŠKO BETTER ON THE WHOLE



Prime minister Janez Janša visiting the Notranjsko-kraška region

Postojna, 28 May (STA) - Speaking to the press during a government visit to Notranjsko-krasko, Prime Minister Janez Janša said data were showing »that the region is reducing the gap to the remaining regions and in some areas it is developing faster than the Slovenian average«. Janša said that the second visit of the government to this western statistical region showed that the past two years had seen progress. »Even in terms of economic power the region is

already above 90% of Slovenian average, and the same goes for net wages in the economy,« the prime minister said during his visit held on 28 May. Janša is particularly happy about the expansion of the share of services in the region's GDP, which is showing, according to him, that »restructuring is going in the right direction«. According to Janša, the past two years have brought an almost 8% increase in the number of companies, while the region also has the highest employment rate in the country with 65%. He is also happy about the reduction of unemployment shares for women, people with a low level of education and long-term unemployed. The prime minister noted that the 2006 changes to the funding of municipalities act have had a positive effect on the region. »Last year alone, when the changes were enacted, municipalities in the region got EUR 29m in additional funds, an 18% increase over 2006. This year the figure will be raised by another 4%,« he illustrated, adding that the same law will bring an additional EUR 2m in development funds to the region. Janša, cabinet ministers and state secretaries were scheduled to visit around 50 different institutions, organisations and companies during the two-day visit, which will conclude today with a charity football match featuring politicians and local businessmen.

SCHENGEN FUNDS COVERED 45% OF COSTS, FINAL REPORT SAYS



European Affairs State Secretary Janez Lenarčič presenting the final report on the Schengen facility to the press

Over the past eleven years, Slovenia has received almost EUR 120m from the Schengen facility, an amount which covered around 45% of all costs related to setting up the Schengen border, European Affairs State Secretary Janez Lenarčič explained on 28 May as he unveiled the project's final report. Slovenia started to phase in the Schengen border standards already in the 1990s, with the first round of funding coming from the Phare pre-accession aid programme in 1997. The EUR 80m were used for setting up border controls, building border crossing points and purchasing equipment. »The funding represented a conceptual novelty, which was proposed during accession talks by Slovenia itself. It was a novelty because the amount of EU funds was not based on the country's GDP per capita, but on the length of the exterior border a country has to control,« Lenarčič explained. The Schengen facility itself provided in 1999 Slovenia with EUR 120m for the 2004-2006 period. The resources

were allocated for construction and renovation of border crossings, infrastructure and other border facilities, plus training of border police. According to the final report, 22.5% of the Schengen facility funds were used to renovate and modernise 26 police stations. Equipment and transport costs meanwhile amounted to 21.1%, while IT investment stood at 28.5% of the budget. Just under 20% went for wages for around 500 police officers, consular officials and IT support staff, while 7.4% was used for renovation and enlargement of 23 border crossings along the Slovenian-Croatian border. The remaining 1% went for operational costs and other investments related to the project. In total, Slovenia received over EUR 200m of aid for establishing the Schengen border. Additional funds were provided by EU members, most notably Germany. With the Schengen regime fully implemented and under the EU's 2007-2013 budget, Slovenia will now receive

SLOVENIAN GOVERNMENT AND ESA SIGN COOPERATION AGREEMENT



Slovenian Higher education, science and technology Minister Mojca Kuclar Dolinar

The representatives of the Slovenian government and the European Space Agency's (ESA) signed on 28 May at the Sneznik castle an agreement on cooperation between the government and the agency. Both sides wish the cooperation to be long and productive, said Mojca Kuclar Dolinar, the Slovenian minister of higher education, science and technology, and Rene Oosterlinck, ESA director of legal affairs and external relations, who signed the document that is eventually to lead to full membership in the agency. According to the minister, Slovenia is ready to take part actively in the efforts for the peaceful use of what space has to offer. Slovenian companies and scientists are proving that - the Slovenian company C3M is for example already waiting for the first Slovenian experiment in space, she said. As a start of deeper cooperation, the ministry and ESA will organise presentations for businesses and scientists in Slovenia in September to bring space research closer to the people. The European Space Agency is in charge of the development of European space research. It includes 17 member states - Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK. The agency is also active in space for the development of better weather forecasts and satellite TV, while the systems set in space also bring benefits for health care, education, and transport systems. Satellites help in preventing the consequences of natural disasters and in search and rescue missions. Nevertheless, an important task of the ESA is also the improvement of possibilities for pollution detection and the control of the environment and climate change.



Transport Minister Radovan Žerjav (left) and DARS CEO Tomislav Nemeč at the opening of the motorway section between Pesnica and Lenart in NE Slovenia

NEW MOTORWAY SECTION OPENS IN NE SLOVENIA

Motorway company DARS on 30 May opened an 11-kilometre motorway section between Pesnica and Lenart in NE Slovenia. Transport Minister Radovan Žerjav said at the opening that the section was an important step towards completing the motorway network in the region. According to Žerjav, the motorway, when completed, will make the region more accessible, boost its development and increase traffic security. DARS CEO Tomislav Nemeč meanwhile said that the »Pomursko section of the motorway will be completed before the deadline« with one part scheduled to open in August and the final section in October.

The EUR 105m section was built by construction companies SCT, Primorje, Cestno podjetje Maribor, GIZ Gradis, CMC Celje and Vegrad.

UNIONS AND EMPLOYERS ENDORSE COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT



Dušan Rebolj, head of the Pergam union, shaking hands with Zdenko Pavček, director of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GZS), as trade unions and employers sign a collective bargaining agreement; between them Dušan Semolič, head of the ZSSS union

Employers and trade unions in the corporate sector signed a collective bargaining agreement in Ljubljana on 30 May, determining a 5.2% rise in base pay for 2007, and adjustment of wages and benefits for 2008 and 2009. The agreement affects some 57,000 employees.

The unions demanded the extra rise for last year in adjustment to the high inflation. Those employers who have already raised wages need to raise them just by the difference to 5.2%. The agreement also stipulates the lowest holiday allowance at EUR 665 for 2008 and EUR 686 for 2009. The companies suffering losses are to pay out a holiday allowance in the amount of minimum pay (currently at EUR 566) at least. Basic wages and the lowest base pays will increase by 3.9% in August 2008. If inflation exceeds 4.55%, the difference will translate into an additional rise in January 2009. A further rise of 2.3% is planned for August 2009, and another one, in January 2010, equaling the difference between 2.7% and the actual rate of inflation. The agreement also stipulates that companies in the industries posting growth in value added should check whether they can raise wages on the back of productivity growth in the past year. The rise should then be determined in sectoral collective agreements. The secretary general of the Employers' Association (ZDS), Jože Smole, welcomed the agreement as a success of social dialogue at a time when companies have to struggle with high costs and stiff competition, and employees grapple with increasing costs of living. Smole pointed out that the agreement was important for employers in that it provided a framework of labour costs for this and next year. Dušan Semolič, who heads Slovenia's biggest trade union association, ZSSS, noted that the collective bargaining agreement would also provide for those who were without one when the previous agreement expired. This means that Slovenia will be one of the few European countries where all employers are covered by a collective bargaining agreement, Semolič said. He gave part of the credit to workers who staged a general token strike in March and had taken part in demonstrations and thus contributed to the atmosphere that had brought to the agreement.

ISTRABENZ PROFIT SURGES OVER 250% IN Q1, REVENUES AT EUR 153M

Istrabenz group, the Koper-based food, energy and tourism conglomerate, generated EUR 153m in sales revenues in Q1, up 3% over the same period last year and 11% above plans. Net profit meanwhile surged by 268% to EUR 2.59m, the group said on 30 May. According to Istrabenz, the increase in net profit came about because of better results in energy and tourism, and higher revenues of the parent company Istrabenz. The group moreover said the material costs and costs of goods were up in Q1, on account of higher prices of energy and food. The major owners of holding Istrabenz in Q1 were energy company Petrol (32.63%) and investment firms Maksima Holding (24.95%), NFD Holding (13.99%) and Maksima Invest (5.63%).

PM SAYS GOVT TIGHTENING PURSE STRINGS

The government is tightening the purse strings with the supplementary budget for 2008. This will ease inflationary expectations and reduce the debt burden, Prime Minister Janez Janša told parliament on 29 May as he presented the supplementary budget bill. Spending for this year will be reduced by EUR 49.7m to EUR 8.82bn according to the budget bill. Revenues will increase by EUR 250m to EUR 8.88bn, turning the originally projected deficit of EUR 230.4m into a EUR 69.4m surplus. Revenues are increasing as a result of higher tax takings, which is the result of high economic growth. Yet despite lower overall spending, expenditure is increasing for policies such as public sector wages, social protection, education and environment protection, Janša said. Looking back at the performance of the Slovenian economy, Janša stressed that at 6.1%, economic growth in 2007 was the highest since Slovenia

gained independence. Slovenia's external debt is not a problem, as it is the lowest in the eurozone in relative terms. Slovenia is also among the countries with the lowest unemployment rate, whereas productivity growth is above average, he said. Janša acknowledged that despite the good results, Slovenia was also facing high inflation (which stood at 6.5% in April, down 0.4 points but still the highest in the eurozone), mostly due to high food and fuel prices. But he stressed that the government had moved to mitigate the effects by enacting a comprehensive set of measures and pursuing a policy of price stability. Excessive wage increases are the biggest danger, as a wage-price spiral would reduce purchasing power and exert a negative impact on prosperity, he said. Finance Minister Andrej Bajuk also stressed that the budget was mitigating the negative effects of inflation and eased inflationary expectations with counter-cyclical action.

Bajuk dismissed warnings that in times of such high growth, Slovenia should have an even bigger budget surplus, saying that the critics fail to take into account the reduction of the tax burden and measures to help the poorest cope with soaring prices. The deputy groups toed the party line, with the coalition pointing to the surplus as proof that the government has been prudent.

BAJUK AND ALMUNIA AVERSE TO TAX RESPONSE TO PRICE HIKES

Slovenian Finance Minister Andrej Bajuk and European Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs Joaquin Almunia are disinclined to use tax policies in response to high prices. Arriving for a ministerial in Luxembourg on 3 June, the pair said this would go against what EU finance ministers agreed on in Manchester in 2005. In 2005 the ministers asserted their commitment to effective, joint action in response to rising oil prices, but took a stand against unilateral fiscal or other measures that would prevent the necessary adjustments. Bajuk and Almunia referred to those commitments in their comments on France's proposal to freeze value added tax on petroleum products to compensate for the growth in oil prices. The main thing is that price hikes are not a short-time occurrence, they would be sustained over the medium term, Bajuk pointed out. This means the structure of prices had changed, which is why tax policies are not an adequate response, Bajuk said. Almunia noted that high inflation in the EU was the product of »external factors« such as oil prices, food and goods. He voiced the hope that the next G8 summit would decide on how the countries should work together in response to such inflation. Asked whether inflation would persist at the currently high levels in a year's time, the commissioner said: »I hope not.« The Slovenian presidency has compiled a special document in which it deals with the causes of strong increase in food prices. The document calls on the EU to make agriculture more market-oriented and productive and to promote sustainable use of biofuels. While these are mid- and long-term measures, Bajuk today also urged the adoption of short-term measures to help the poorest cope with the high prices. This is an urgent matter, he said. According to him, increased demand has a certain global affect, which the ministers will discuss. However Bajuk said that neither monetary nor fiscal policies could deal with this problem.

IEDC-BLED SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT, SLOVENIA IS THE SEAT OF EUROPEAN LEADERSHIP CENTER

The 6th Conference of the European Leadership Center (ELC) entitled "Leadership Scenarios for Europe's Future" was held the previous week at the IEDC-Bled School of Management. More

than 70 business people, government representatives and directors of schools of management from 17 countries gathered at Bled over two days. They discussed scenarios for European future leadership as well as other issues on hand which European leaders confront nowadays. The introductory address of Dr. Žiga Turk, the Minister for Growth of the Republic of Slovenia, and that of Jan Trzuszczynsky, the deputy director general at the European Commission Directorate for enlargement, marked the first day. The latter highlighted and explained five central challenges which Europe will have to cope with in the future. According to him, the EU needs to increase its efficiency and implication as a global player, continue the process of enlargement, ensure an energy supply, as well as maintain internal cohesion and solidarity and a strong political identity. He concluded his address with the conviction that without better leadership it will prove difficult to contain the challenges of the future and maintain a strong Europe. Dr. Žiga Turk, the Minister for Growth of the Republic of Slovenia, stressed the importance of the communications revolution, because of which creativity and innovation are not closed up in rigid organizational schemes. "If we want to succeed, we have to mobilize all our scientific, technical, economical and political potential, as well as our values," said Turk, who does not see the true role of Europe as leader of industrial production and progress, but rather in focussing on human values. At this year's conference, which was presided over by Paul Claudel, professor of leadership at the Kellogg School of Management in America and the Aix-en-Provence School of Management, views on future European leadership were presented by leaders from the business and political worlds, among which most attention was directed to Dr. Luca Gatti from Italy, who lectured on four scenarios of world development. This year's conference at the European Leadership Center represents a continuation of integrating activities, as well as examining and promoting European leadership, proceeding from the mission and vision of the IEDC-Bled School of Management. As explained by the school president, Prof. Danica Purg, conferences are organized annually in the framework of the ELC, where leaders exchange opinions on European and global issues, and encourage new ideas, projects and programmes to boost European leadership capabilities. Next year, the central theme of the conference will be "Russia and the EU: Leadership Prospects". This year, that is, for the sixth time in a row, the product of the conference is a journal containing the conference proceedings.



IEDC-Bled School of Management

Andrej Detela: In Ecology, It Is Essential That We Eliminate Greed

On the basis of Andrej Detela's idea and with the assistance of several innovative solutions, the Ljubljana-based firm Elaphe d.o.o., has over the past five years developed an "in-wheel motor" electromotor construction for direct drive electrical vehicles. According to the firm's director, Gorazd Lampič, the technological characteristics and simple design of the motor make it among the best in the world. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that the motor is small and light in construction and is distinguished by its high torque, power and efficiency, which is an excellent combination for building it directly into the wheels of various vehicles. Direct drive also ensures an advanced construction of the automobile that is adapted to the driver and passengers, as opposed to the motor and transmission. Despite the fact that it is precisely direct drive that has a huge advantage over other solutions, the firm is aware that building the motor into cars will develop slowly. This innovation can be successfully implemented in automobiles, especially in terms of hydrogen and fuel cell technology. Changes are happening, therefore electrical propulsion is intensively progressing into the forefront with light-weight two-wheel electrical vehicles, such as scooters and bicycles. The manufacture of these products is already surpassing an annual volume of ten million.

SLOVENIAN "IN-WHEEL MOTORS" WILL DRIVE THE NEXT GENERATION OF ELECTRIC AND HYBRID CARS

The idea of a motor built into the wheel of a vehicle was already developed in 1900 by engineer Dr. Ferdinand Porsche, when he launched the first car with a direct drive motor on the market. This was at a time when the development of the automobile was still in its initial stages and the demands of the automotive industry were not as great as they are today. In the 1980's, nearly one hundred years after its invention, Andrej Detela, head of electromotor development at the Jožef Stefan Institute, decided that he would upgrade Porsche's invention and develop the direct drive motor so that its characteristics would meet today's requirements. Andrej's earliest innovations found a place in the Japanese robotics industry, where he developed a direct drive motor for HDS, (Harmonic Drive Systems), which is currently the best direct drive motor in the world. It was in Japan that Detela learned how, with a larger team of co-workers, to bring innovation to life, and he also wished to bring this idea to us.

The great desire that he would find co-workers at home, and would in this way keep a greater part of the benefits of this development project in Slovenia, has served as an inspiration for five years. With a group of people who share a similar vision, Andrej would develop a more contemporary Elaphe motor, and he would do so in Slovenia. The Elaphe team wishes to become the "Slovenian Nokia" and is convinced that, through close co-operation with other innovative firms and ambitious institutions, this is also possible.

OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS, WE HAVE INVESTED MORE THAN HALF A MILLION EUROS OF VALUABLE TIME, KNOWLEDGE AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES INTO THE MOTOR'S DEVELOPMENT

Elaphe d.o.o., is a "spin off" of the Jožef Stefan Institute (IJS) and Sinteza d.o.o., and was created by Gorazd Lampič and Andrej Detela two years ago with the intention of fulfilling their basic goal – to accelerate the development of electrical vehicles. Besides Detela, who is a theoretical physicist and inventor, and Lampič, who in addition to managing the firm is also responsible for motor computer optimization, Dr. Joško Valentinčič, graduate of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Ljubljana, who prepares plans for the motors, technologist Rob Zaplotnik, economist Alenka Jeras and other younger co-workers also make up the team. Avtoelektrika, a company based in Šempetra pri Gorici, assists the team with the manufacture of most prototypes.

ANDREJ DETELA: IN ECOLOGY, THERE MUST BE A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WORLD, WITH PEOPLE AND WITH NATURE THAT RESPECTS THE INTER-RELATION OF ALL BEINGS

Despite the constant improvement of conventional vehicles with internal combustion engines, the contemporary team is faced with a

number of real difficulties in the area of transport. The most obvious unresolved problems are air pollution, high transport expenses, road traffic, and a large number of accidents. The most contemporary electrical vehicles of the new generation will in large part solve these problems. Through the development of lighter and stronger electric motors, which are built directly into the vehicles' wheels, (direct drive) and through the development of combustible cells, Lampič is convinced that the company will create technically superior, and market competitive electric vehicles.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES OF THE NEW GENERATION

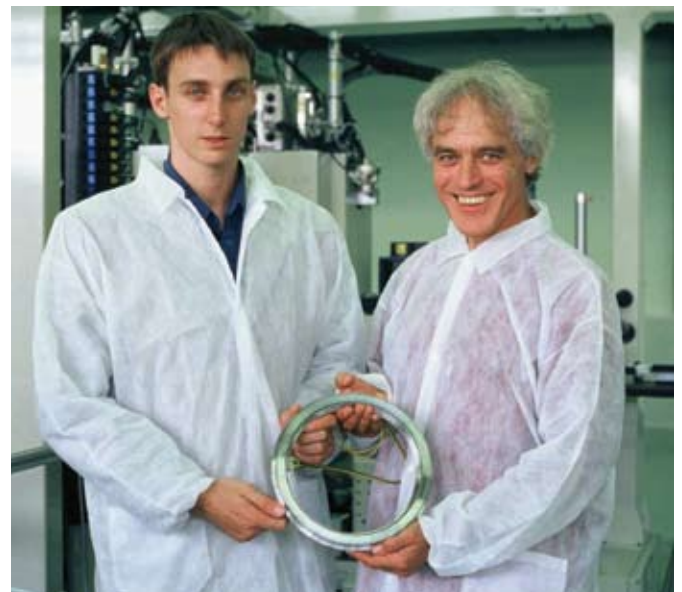
The basic difference between electric and conventional vehicles lies in the propulsion system – all electrical vehicles are propelled by electricity, whereas conventional vehicles are propelled by internal combustion. The consequences of this is low environmental impact by electrical vehicles, while conventional vehicles are the largest air polluters. The advantages of conventional vehicles are found in large fuel energy density and the already established petrol pump infrastructure. Conventional vehicles enable long uninterrupted drives, whereas existing electric vehicles are substantially better at taking advantage of the propulsion system and in their low impact on the environment. Despite these advantages, existing electric vehicle manufacturers unfortunately continue to design conventional vehicles with internal combustion engines. The reason predominantly lies in the fact that quality motors are exceptionally difficult to design, as they must simultaneously meet two conflicting requirements: on the one hand, they must be small and light weight and on the other, they must be exceptionally strong and energy efficient. There are nearly no motors like this on the market today. Here lies the advantage of Elaphe which, through its invention, offers products that enable for the vehicle design of the new generation. In this type of technology, electric motors are built directly into the wheels of the vehicle, which means that the vehicle does not have common drive axles, and that the wheels spin freely. In this design, the outer parts of the wheel rim and tyre are the only mobile parts of the propulsion system. The advantages of this type of propulsion are predominantly lighter weight and better efficiency, as well as the possibility of spinning on the spot, parking sideways and turning corners more safely. Although electric vehicles are an exceptional addition to the automotive market, they will, like every other innovation, require time before they are used. At issue are not only oil lobbyists, who hinder progress, but also as yet unresolved technical problems. One insufficiently addressed problem is related to electrical energy, which we do not yet know how to store in great enough quantity, Lampič explains. Direct drive can accelerate the acceptance of electrical vehicles on the market because it offers greater room for the energy source, while it improves the vehicle's energy efficiency. For successfully competing with the conventional vehicle, it is necessary to take advantage of all the possibilities that are offered by a movement to electric propulsion.

WHERE DO WE PUMP ENERGY FOR ELECTRICAL MOTORS FROM?

The method of energy storage, in addition to its most efficient utilization, is one of the key factors for the acceptance of electric automobiles. We could obtain energy in several ways – through various batteries, from lead to more refined, or through hydrogen conversion with combustible cells. This method is already being used commercially in the forklift industry. At the same time, all leading car manufacturers already have prototypes for hydrogen and fuel cell vehicles.

ELAPHE IS BREAKING INTO THE WORLD MARKET

Lampič says that current demand exceeds production capacity, which is why they are striving to develop efficient prototype manufacturing, and maintain a partnership for the development and manufacture of steering wheels. The Asian market is opening up significantly, and other markets are following. Even though direct drive automobiles will at first be more expensive than other vehicles, the difference in price will not be due to direct drive itself, but rather, to the batteries and electronics that steer electric motors. The price of driving electrical vehicles is substantially lower than the price of driving conventional vehicles. In Elaphe, they are convinced that we have enough industrial knowledge and experiences in Slovenia to be able to develop light-weight electrical vehicles ourselves. On the basis of these experiences, we could also enter the automotive industry in about a decade. Both industries in our country - the automotive and the electro-industrial - are excellent at following the latest trends. Unfortunately, they lack the motivation and courage to break into the market with innovative products that offer high added value. Even though the firm already co-operates with domestic partners in the development of some its prototypes, it will probably need to find assistance and co-workers abroad. In this way, it will ensure strong competition for itself outside our borders. Andrej Detela: Leonardo da Vinci was both an artist and an inventor. His artistic breadth also provided him with the ability to be a good innovator, which was given to him by the possibility of an imagination that surpasses the dryness and rigidity of scientific languages. If we attempt to solve a problem in its entirety, holistically, it is not enough to view it from one perspective. Instead, we must perceive it through the whole of human experience. In the opinion of Detela, the knowledge that we attain at university is substantially insufficient for good innovative work, as this is a creative process that reaches beyond the knowledge of one field. In order to fill this gap, Detela and Lampič, and their co-thinkers and co-workers, have created an Innovation Centre - the Non-Profit Institute for Research, Innovation, Ecological and Cultural Activity. In addition to storing knowledge, this centre features other activities. It will serve as a location designated not only for the purpose of innovative activity, but for fostering a creative, cultural and ecological community in which people will also live. This is not a new idea, there are many ecological communities. In Europe, there are at least one hundred - but very few are such that they include knowledge that is the result of the scientific development of the current age.



Text: JOŽE OSTERMAN, Photo: STA



BEST CONTEMPORARY EUROPEAN ARCHITECTURE ON SHOW IN LJUBLJANA

Forty outstanding European architectural projects were put on display in Ljubljana Castle as the travelling exhibition of the entries shortlisted for the latest EU Prize for Contemporary Architecture stops in Slovenia's capital. »The European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture - Mies van der Rohe Award« is awarded every two years to acknowledge quality architectural production in Europe. Apart from the main prize, worth EUR 50,000, the EU and the Barcelona-based Fundacio Mies van der Rohe, also give out the Emerging Architect Special Mention to up-and-coming architects. Last year, the special mention went to Slovenian architects Matija Bevk and Vasa J. Perovic for the building housing the mathematics department of the Ljubljana Faculty of Physics and Mathematics. The displayed projects also include Sotelia Hotel, which is part of the spa resort complex in Podcetrtek, in northeastern Slovenia. The design by Dean Lah and Milan Tomac was among the 40 projects that the 2007 award jury selected from an initial list of 273 projects from 32 countries. The EU first conferred the Van der Rohe Award in 1988, and has been awarding young architects since 2001. The projects shortlisted each time are published in a catalogue and showcased at an exhibition touring European capitals. The one in Ljubljana will run until 22 June.

SLOVENIAN COMPOSER WINS INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL COMPETITION

Young Slovenian composer Nina Senk won the composition contest at the 9th Weimarer Fruehjahrstage fuer zeitgenoessische Musik contemporary music festival. She entered the festival competition with her composition »Movimento fluido«. Each year, an international jury chooses the finalists of the competition from a number of contestants ahead of the festival. The finalists then work with an ensemble or an orchestra during the festival, as they each have a certain amount of time to rehearse with the performing artists. This year it was the Weimar-based Marges ensemble.



COLLECTION OF KOSOVEL'S POEMS PUBLISHED IN UK

The Cambridge-based publisher Salt Publishing has issued a selection of poems by Srecko Kosovel, a 20th century Slovenian avantgarde poet, in English translation. »The Golden Boat« collection features some 120 poems by Kosovel, who is sometimes referred to as the Slovenian Rimbaud. The translator, Slovenian poet Bert Pribac, told Monday's launch in Ljubljana that it was David Brooks, a leading Australian contemporary novelist, that made the publication possible. Pribac translated 520 of Kosovel's 590 poems he had found, but he could not get them through to the English-speaking world. He showed his translations to Brooks, who was thrilled and sent them to the UK. Together they translated the poems Brooks chose, though Pribac insisted that a third of them must be about the Karst region, where Kosovel came from and which he extensively wrote about. Kosovel died in 1926 at the tender age of 22, but had managed to create more than one thousand poems and a couple of hundred prose writings consisting of lyrical prose and sketches, literary criticism and essays, notes, diaries and letters. His complex poetry can compare to that of Rilke or Apollinaire. It is traditionally divided in three currents, impressionism, expressionism and constructivism, while it also includes dadaist, surrealist and futurist elements. Salt Publishing is one of the leading British publishers of poetry with 80 books yearly in poetry alone. The publishing house covers the entire English-speaking world, but recently also aims at continental Europe. »The Golden Boat« has sold in 700 copies even before its release, and the first edition of 1,000 copies is expected to be followed by a second one soon. Neither Pribac or Brooks have received any payment for the translations, while their application at the Slovenian authorities for funds has been rejected.

SNG DRAMA SUCCESSFUL AT THE STERIJIN POZOR EVENT

At Sterijin Pozor, the former Yugoslav theatre show in Novi Sad named after the Serbian playwright Jovan Sterija Popović, the main Slovenian theatre Drama SNG performed a play by one of the most interesting Slovenian writers, Ivo Svetina, 'Oedipus in Corinth', directed by the Croatian director Ivica Buljan. The performance has won several awards and is one of the best Slovenian performances in the last years. The public of Novi Sad and the reviewers appreciated the performance very much, and the ensemble received long applause and ovations, which is proof that the traditional mutual sympathy between cosmopolitan Vojvodina and Slovenia has remained alive and active.

At the round table that followed the performance, Ivo Svetina shared some interesting thoughts, and, in particular, he believed that in that time it was only possible to write a play about the Oedipus myth in relation to major topics such as great wars, revolution '68, fascism and other tyrannies, encompassing a difference between great expectations and little results arising from the great historical events.



Plečnik's Three Bridges

SHOW ON PLEČNIK OPENS IN TOKYO

An exhibition on the most famed Slovenian architect, Joze Plečnik (1872-1957), opened on 23 May in a gallery situated in Tokyo's biggest park Ueno. Ambassador Miran Skender said that this was the biggest cultural event Slovenia had so far organised in Japan. »There is a keen interest in the exhibition, because the Japanese are architectural enthusiasts,« the ambassador said, adding that interest was considerable in particular among the architects. The »Joze Plečnik - Architect in Ljubljana, Prague and Vienna« show was first put on at the Ljubljana-based National Gallery in January 2007, to mark the 50th anniversary of the architect's death. The exhibition showcases the architect's entire oeuvre, along with original drawings and pieces of furniture he designed. It was curated by Damjan Prelovšek, an authority on Plečnik, and architect Eva Prelovšek. The show in the Art Gallery of the Tokyo University of the Arts will run until 22 June. A symposium on Plečnik is planned for mid-June, at which Slovenian and Austrian architects will present Plečnik to their Japanese peers. On 5 June, the Slovenian and the Czech embassies will sponsor the screening of a Czech film on Plečnik, »Dear Master«. Born in Ljubljana, Plečnik studied at the Vienna Art Academy and got his first job in a bureau headed by Otto Wagner, who was also the head of the architecture department at the academy. Plečnik left for Prague in 1911 to lead the renovation of the Prague castle in 1920. Plečnik spent the next 13 years shuttling between Ljubljana and Prague until the Hradčany Castle was renovated in 1934. He died at his home in Ljubljana's district of Trnovo on 7 January 1957. He is buried at Žale, Ljubljana's central cemetery, which he designed as well.

BALLET DANCERS FROM LJUBLJANA AND MARIBOR IN SINGAPORE.

Even though various ensembles are frequently on tour at the beginning of summer when different cultural festivals open, the journey of the ballet ensembles from Ljubljana and Maribor to the Singapore Arts Festival 2008 is something special. At the festival taking place from 23 May to 22 June, the big names of performing artists from 21 countries will appear in 27 different events. Between 29 and 31 May, a noticeable contribution to the festival was made by Edward Clug, the choreographer and director of the Maribor Ballet, with his spectacle 'Architecture of Silence', and, together with him, dancers, instrumentalists and singers of both Opera and Ballet houses from Slovenia performed, altogether 210 (90 singers, 80 musicians and 40 dancers)! Symbolically, the project combines two stylistically incompatible musical pieces: Mozart's 'Requiem in D Minor' and 'Requiem for My Friend' by the contemporary composer of film music Zbigniew Preisner.

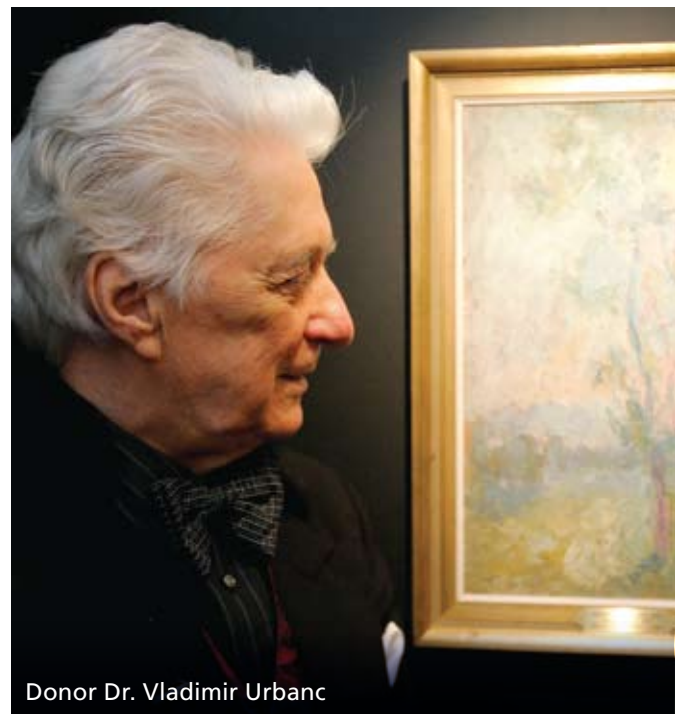
The Singapore Festival Orchestra performed with the dancers. In addition, Slovenian artists will participate in performing the symphony 'Lord of the Rings' by Howard Shore. Maribor dance ensemble will additionally present itself with a year old production, 'Radio and Juliet', which has received flattering reviews at home and at numerous tours across Europe.

LIPICA STUD FARM GETS ON ITS OWN TWO FEET

The long-standing crisis of the programme concept and management, which has been characteristic of the famous Lipica Stud Farm for as much as two decades, is gradually improving. In the first five months of this year, the Farm was visited by 28,719 people or one fifth more than in the same period last year. Although incomes have not significantly risen, this is still encouraging, since it indicates an increased interest in Lipica before the beginning of the main tourist season and, maybe, the beginning of better times. It is good that results are much better in the hotels on this location, too, since the occupancy was much better, and, besides the horses, a nice golf course adds great charm to the place, for which 22% more tickets were sold in this period.

The Stud Farm is one of the main promotion elements of Slovenia, therefore providing more stable financial condition is an urgent task, as this is the only way to enable optimum functioning. In Lipica, particular hopes were raised by the European State Stud Farms Conference, taking place on 10 and 11 June 2008 and attended by representatives of 30 of the most important European state stud farms, who exchanged experience of management, status, funding and heritage protection. The results of the conference might directly help Lipica, since the conceptual questions concerning relations between natural and cultural heritage, the golf and hotel industry, are far from being resolved.

DONOR DR. VLADIMIR URBANC DONATES A PICTURE BY MATIJA JAMA TO THE NATIONAL GALLERY



Donor Dr. Vladimir Urbanc

Last year, Dr. Vladimir Urbanc, living in Canada since 1953, donated a painting by Rihard Jakopič, 'Birches in the Sun', painted by this greatest Slovenian master of impressionism in 1905, to the main Slovenian gallery for older visual arts – National Gallery. To this remarkable donation, of which there are not many in Slovenia, has been added a new one, Matija Jama's 'Woman from Bela krajina'. The painting is now exhibited in the National Gallery as a part of the great exhibition of Slovenian impressionists that is one of the key cultural projects during the Slovenian EU Presidency, and will be transferred to the Gallery's permanent collection afterwards. So Dr. Urbanc donated to the National Gallery in a short time two monumental masterpieces, works by two giants of Slovenian painting, Jakopič and Jama, who with Ivan Grohar and Matej Sternen formed the big four of Slovenian impressionism, an era unsurpassed in the history of Slovenian painting.

SLOVENIAN MUSICIANS IN NEW YORK

In the Town Hall of New York, at the end of May, a group of the most renowned Slovenian musicians – Zlatko Kavčič, Vasko Atanasovski with the orchestra, Katalena group, Bratko Bibič and Guy Ključevšek, Borut Benko, and Brina and Laibach – performed. Around 1500 people attended the event.

The event was organised by the National Geographic journal together with the Slovenian Government and Slovenian Tourist Office in the framework of a Slovenian presentation to the American audience. Before the concert, a reception took place in the Millennium Broadway hotel, where Slovenian wines and food were presented, and more than 400 guests attended. At the same time, New Yorkers could get to know the Slovenian tourist and commercial offer and enjoy the performance of two Slovenian music groups, Fake Orchestra and Godalika.

YOUNG SLOVENIAN VIOLINIST ANJA BUKOVEC ON TOUR IN EUROPE AND USA

A young and attractive Slovenian violinist, who follows the trend of numerous young violinists by including an interesting erotic charge in their playing, Anja Bukovec, has returned from a long tour abroad. She warmed audiences with her concerts in Sarajevo, Skopje, Lisbon, Madrid, Edinburgh, Washington and Kiev, since she alone said that the audience response had been surprisingly hot. Anja only returned



Anja Bukovec

home for a short time, as she will perform in June with the RTV Slovenia Orchestra at the concert in Cankarjev dom and will later continue to perform abroad. Piano player Simon Krečič performs on tour with Anja. The tour will include 18 concerts in fourteen countries, ending in Tel Aviv on 2 October.

EU ACKNOWLEDGES SIGNIFICANCE OF DEVELOPMENT CAPACITIES OF CULTURE

A great shift in acknowledging the important development elements of culture happened by including culture in the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs, underlined the Slovenian Minister of Culture, Dr. Simoniti, in Brussels, who presided over a meeting of EU Ministers of Culture. Together they included culture in the conclusions of the European Council meeting in March, which recognised the significance of culture in relation to investments in knowledge, innovation and human resource investment. This old, but more and more declarative orientation of Slovenian cultural policy thus received an important affirmation within international framework. In confirmation, the Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Jan Figel, thanked Dr. Simoniti, since culture received so much attention on agendas during the Slovenian Presidency.

RECEIVER OF THE AWARD AT THE THIS-YEAR VILENICA IS THE POLE ANDRZEJ STASIUK

This year the 23rd international festival Vilenica will take place from 3 to 7 September, and will focus on the question of the author as a writer of literary works, with the title 'Kdo piše?' ('Who writes?'). The theme should be highlighted from two viewpoints in particular: literary-theoretical questions on the position and role of the author, and from the viewpoint of concern for the author's position in the contemporary culture industry. The professional jury consisting of 14 members granted the award Vilenica to a Polish writer, poet, essayist, and literary critic Andrzej Stasiuk, who in its opinion significantly transforms that image of the Central Europe which we know from the past, since he shows it as a living and very creative space. The leadership of the festival also decided that within the framework of representations of lesser known European literatures, contemporary Lithuanian literature will be represented, (and have already published an anthology). The festival will also make a significant change in the number of locations, so it will be held in Hrovača, Hruševe, Koper, Lipica, Ljubljana, Lokva, Maribor, Štanjel, in the cave of Vilenica, and in Italian Gorizia.

A YOUNG SLOVENE COMPOSER WINS IN WEIMAR.

A young but already well-known Slovene composer, Nina Šenk, received a first award at this year's Contemporary Music Festival in Weimar, for the composition *Movimento fluido* for alto flute, 'cello, and piano. The Weimar festival is in its ninth year and has two competitions: for compositions for chamber orchestra, and orchestral composition. The selection is just: first, finalists are selected in the first round from among anonymous scores, who then cooperate with the ensemble or orchestra during the festival. Each composer is given a definite number of rehearsals. In the second round for best chamber composition, four composers were selected – 2 Germans, a Chinese, and Šenk from Slovenia, who was also by far the youngest – and following the careful attention of the jury, the Slovenian composer was declared the winner.

ONCE A TOWER OF YUGOSLAVIAN ARMY, TODAY A MUSEUM APPRECIATED AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL

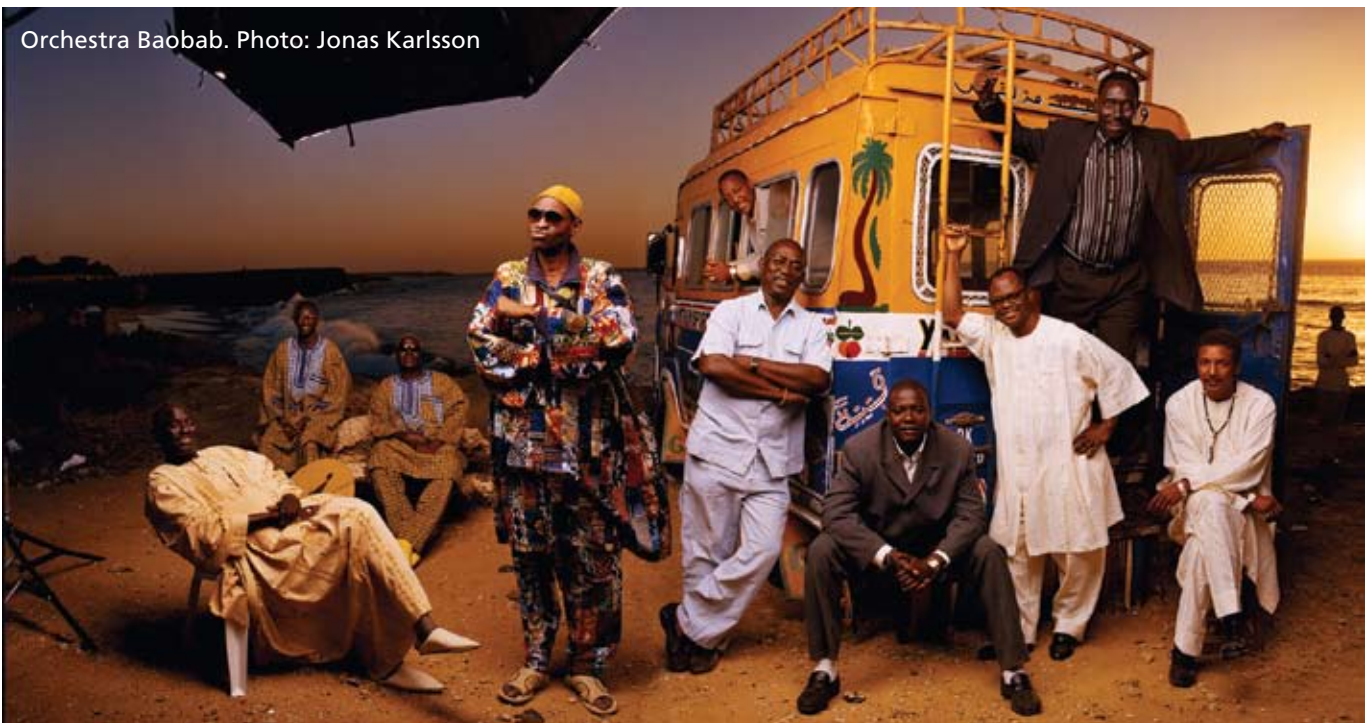
Since the year 1989, Slovene museums have successfully taken part in competitions of the European museum forum for the European museum award EMYA. The latter holds good also for the this year's competitor, the former watchtower at the Italian border near Nova Gorica. It was among 36 nominated (from total 240) registered museums, finalists, thus entitled to enter for different awards within this competition. Its message and originality was obviously very convincing, although it does not have any special equipment, not even electricity. The watchtower, 8 meters high, was raised in 1950 by the Yugoslav army, using it until the independence of the Republic of Slovenia in 1991. It occupies a ground area of 1.5 square metres and has three floors with embrasures in the lower part, and a flat concrete roof. At the top, there is a console platform with a view. In year 2006, the community of Šempeter Vrtojba renewed the tower and protected it as a historical monument. The Nova Gorica museum provided exhibits for the walls of the tower. There are about 2,000 photographs which show the border and the military along the border, thus elements not altogether pleasant for the life and work of the natives. The graffiti are especially interesting in the mini-museum, written by soldiers on the walls of the tower during their solitary guard duty. The watchtower acquired the status of museum, the smallest in the country, at the beginning of the year 2007. A speciality of the tower is that there is the key available to visitors at several places, and there are some thousand persons taking this free opportunity each year. The comment of the director of the museum in Nova Gorica is that "we build upon trust at the place where the tower was built as a result of distrust". This mistrust originated in 1947, when a new border was set between Italy and Yugoslavia. The soldiers provided a strong guard and tried to make the border impassable. Inhabitants in this area were stricken by this sudden blockade, since Goriška had always been a unified cultural and political area. All relations between relatives, friends and neighbours on both sides of the border were suddenly broken. In addition, the border in some places was completely illogical and unjust, since it sometimes divided courtyards

and even a cemetery. Movement in the so-called border zone without special authorisation was strictly forbidden.

THE DRUGA GODBA FESTIVAL CONTINUES TO LURE CROWDS OF WORLD ETHNO POP FANS FROM EVERYWHERE

This year's international Druga Godba Festival 2008 offers seven excellent nights, diverse in terms of style and geographical origin. Just like every year, the events fill up the concert spaces in the centre of Ljubljana. Crowds of visitors from all over the world remain under the strong impression of music from all parts of the world. Thirteen artists from eleven countries performed on this year's festival stage. The festival was founded in 1984 as an alternative to existing festivals that did not include radical or 'different' musical styles in their programmes. Nowadays, the selection of performers is also ethnically based, from various musical genres, and the various European and mostly non-European cultural environments of African, Arabian, Latin-American ethno-pop. Being one of the most significant European festivals of this kind of music, Druga Godba is linked to other such festivals and is a member of the central international organisation of such events, the European Forum of Worldwide Music Festivals. Beside the greatest names from Africa, new on this year's programme was the Roma hip-hop night; the rapper Kemp from Macedonia made his debut, together with the Roma stars Gipsy.cz from Prague. This year, there is a novelty regarding the programme and its geographical dimension - Comoros in the Indian Ocean, where Nawal, the most appreciated musician from the island, comes from. The Festival was crowned by the Indian master of the slide guitar and the group Lo Cor de la Plana from Provence, at the moment by many considered the most attractive vocal group. In the spirit of the Slovenian Presidency of the EU Council, a special addition to the Druga Godba Festival was the concert of the electro-gypsy-swing band Caravan Palace. The organisers came together with the French Embassy and L'Institut Français Charles Nodier to organise the event, which will take place on 14 July to celebrate the handover of the Presidency to France and its national holiday on Bastille Day. Admission is free.

Orchestra Baobab. Photo: Jonas Karlsson



Text: MIŠA ČERMAK, Photo: Slovene dream archives



Darinka Bunjevac and Bob Burgher, tourist ambassadors of Slovenia

A UNIQUE BEAUTY THAT CHARMS EUROPE!

Darinka is a native Slovenian; Bob Burgher is British, with Canadian origins. She is a journalist whose quest for new challenges led her from commercial television in Ljubljana to work for the Slovenian BBC Programme in London, which had intrigued her since childhood. He is a freelancer who feels at home in the fields of design and marketing. Their meeting in Great Britain became somewhat destined in several ways: between them was born a love that was crowned with a wedding in Slovenia, actually at Pristava Lepena. The location of the wedding somehow sketched a new career path for the young married couple. Apparently Bob fell in love with the beauty of Slovenia so much that he convinced Darinka of the necessity of introducing our little tourist gem to demanding British guests. Their tourist agency, Slovene Dream, was born, and has in the meantime grown into a three-year, solidly planned and anchored path - a love that wishes to grow beyond British borders and offer the beauties of Slovenia to other European countries.

WAS IT REALLY YOUR HUSBAND WHO WAS SO CHARMED BY SLOVENIA THAT HE THOUGHT OF INTRODUCING IT ABROAD?

Really (happy laughter), from the first moment, in the spring of 2000, when he first came to Slovenia, he was so charmed by it that he said he would one day live here! He fell in love with Slovenia,

but then so do most British people! Well, we also got married in Slovenia, in Pristava Lepena and precisely there we first somehow got the idea that we should occupy ourselves with representing Slovenia in tourism. Mila and Silviya Dolenc, who are the owners of Pristava Lepena, were a large inspiration: she is a foreigner who moved to Slovenia, and together they developed this wonderful Pristava; they invested a lot of love and effort in it, and Bob and I felt that this is a wonderful product that it would be possible to market abroad. So we were already considering then that we would occupy ourselves with marketing weddings in Slovenia.

PROBABLY BECAUSE YOU WERE CHARMED BY YOUR OWN WEDDING?

Yes, (laughter). Exactly one year after we got married, we organized a wedding for friends in the same location: Pristava Lepena was the only place where our friends wished to get married - and they had already lived together for several years and had children! A year after our wedding, we had already brought many British people...

SO YOUR BUSINESS HAD IN SOME WAY ALREADY STARTED?

The first idea (laughter). From the very beginning, Bob was saying that he must market this beautiful country of Slovenia to the British, that no one knows about it, or that it even exists, that no one knows how beautiful it is (laughter). I was not enthusiastic, as I am

a journalist and had therefore never worked in marketing, and I also worked at the BBC. But two years later, we came to Slovenia and attended another wedding at Franka House in Kobarid. We also discovered Nebesa, and Bob simply put before me this fact: he wished to introduce Slovenia to the British. It was a large undertaking, and we had absolutely no experience in tourism! But Bob is an enthusiast and he did not want to give up.

HOW DID YOU UNDERTAKE THE WORK? YOU PROBABLY FIRST HAD TO GET TO KNOW SLOVENIA VERY WELL AND UNCOVER ITS MOST BEAUTIFUL NOOKS?

True! Bob is quite a demanding consumer, he has high standards, but he persisted with the idea of serving demanding guests. He was convinced that Slovenia has been marketed through many agencies to average guests, to older patrons, to young backpackers. He insisted that Slovenia has something that could be introduced and sold on a higher level. Well, from then on we spent every holiday in Slovenia uncovering beautiful corners. It is interesting that it always turned out that we met wonderful people who always directed us towards new and beautiful places. At once we discovered so many beautiful places.

THAT YOU, AS A SLOVENIAN, WERE NOT FAMILIAR WITH?

(Laughter) True, I am from Ljubljana, and I have to say that I discovered most of Slovenia thanks to Bob. It is a wonderful experience, especially the people who we met - what enthusiasts they are! They proved to us that it is possible to promote Slovenia in a different way.

YOU AND YOUR HUSBAND ALSO WORK IN SUCH A WAY, BUT WORK REQUIRES THE ENTIRE PERSON - YOU STOPPED WORKING AT THE BBC. WHAT WAS THE FIRST YEAR OF TRAINING IN TOURISM LIKE?

The best part was discovering Slovenia, all the rest (laughter) was a horribly difficult lesson because we tackled tourism in a different way: we work directly with hotels and hoteliers; we decided on very personal contact with hoteliers, as well as with guests. Hoteliers are happy that they always get responses and so frequently - what could be better? We cultivate our personal approach to guests, in that everything we offer, we offer on the basis of personal experience - thus, with our personal recommendations. Most guests come to us because they understand this from our website. It is wonderful when someone calls me and asks how to get to the Šeruga farmhouse, to Otočec, and I can easily help him! We also give advice on where it is good to eat, what is worth seeing - this is actually also not available in the mainstream British tourism industry.

THE TOURISTS WHO COME TO YOU ARE THOSE WHO WANT SOMETHING MORE, THEY ARE DEMANDING: THEY WANT

SOMETHING SPECIAL AND PEACEFUL AT THE SAME TIME, AND COMFORT, UNSPOILT NATURE...

The responses that we receive from hoteliers are positive: the British are friendly, very accommodating; they are not bothered by the weather; they are not moody, not difficult; it is easy to satisfy them. Because they have large purchasing power, they represent one of the largest European markets - and they also travel a lot. But they are demanding, in that they are constantly searching for something new, something different. Slovenia is ideal for both reasons. Bob and I can spend hours explaining Slovenia to them, as they can't imagine it very well, they do not have a clear picture. Their responses are similar: they say that we did not tell them that Slovenia is so beautiful, (laughter)! It's unbelievable what praises their view of Slovenia when they return to Britain.

THEY MUST PERCEIVE OUR COUNTRY WITH DIFFERENT EYES, WHICH LOOK AND SEE IN THEIR OWN WAY. WHAT DO THEY LIKE BEST?

Definitely nature, the landscape; they also like the fact that in Slovenia, well, at least in the regions to which we send them, there isn't mass tourism: rather than going to Bled, which they, of course, know best, they withdraw to remoter Bohinj. They like peace and the diversity that makes it possible to be in the Alps or by the seaside within two hours; they really like the people - they say that we are incredibly hospitable, which I am a little surprised at (laughter). I think that they expect less - they are surprised by Slovenia's development. But most of the satisfied guests return from Posočje: because of the countryside, the peace. They are enthusiastic about the infrastructure, and that practically everyone speaks English. But I tell everyone this beforehand.

ARE YOU PROUD OF YOUR NATION, YOUR PEOPLE?

(Happy, mischievous smile) I always tell them: Ah, (swings her hand flirtatiously), you will see and believe when you come to Slovenia! Nearly everyone returns very satisfied. The criticisms that we get are usually about insignificant matters: that they got lost along the way; that the running water was not cold, and similar. Well, we are not responsible for everything, but to ensure positive experiences we organize hotels and car rentals and transportation, if necessary.

A PERSON WOULD ALMOST EXPECT THAT A SLOVENIAN WOULD CONVINCE HER BRITISH HUSBAND TO INTRODUCE THE BEAUTIES OF HER COUNTRY, BUT IT WAS EXACTLY THE OPPOSITE. DO SLOVENIANS SUFFICIENTLY VALUE THE BEAUTY THEY HAVE AT THEIR FINGERTIPS?

One of the sentences that Bob most often repeats is why Slovenians lament so much! Now he already knows us so well, that he says,

'But what is it with you?' when I talk to him about statistics, suicide, alcoholism...He says that we have such a beautiful country, that we do not know how to value it, never mind sell it! And I have to say that Slovenians are very funny: usually I describe them and, if I am sincere, I also include myself in this, as modest/arrogant. We are always repeating how modest and tiny we are, but when someone from the outside wishes to give us advice, we quickly say that we know better ourselves. This also disturbed Bob, because he so desperately tried to convince people that it was necessary to sell Slovenia differently, in a unique way - well, he also fell on deaf ears in Slovenia.

I AGREE, IN THIS MANNER WE WOULD BECOME EVEN MORE RECOGNIZABLE AND FOREIGNERS ALREADY REALIZED THIS SOME TIME AGO.

When I arrived in England nine years ago, they asked me where I came from, and when I replied that I came from Slovenia, they did not know where that was. Today, it is different: everyone knows someone who has already been to Slovenia and says that is where Bled and the island are (laughter). Everyone who goes for the first time likes Bled very much, but when they return again, they also wish to go somewhere else. But I hear that many people wish to get married in Bled, but they do not know that there are many more wedding appropriate locations. Well, in this, in the organization of weddings, we really do wish to get involved.

DO YOU NOW LOOK AT SLOVENIA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A TOURIST DESTINATION?

Yes, (laughter) and I am very happy that I am always discovering new places, even though we travel around Slovenia less and less, because we do not have time. We explored Prekmurje, we roamed around vineyards and wine cellars, and have already brought some guests.

HOW DOES INFORMATION ABOUT SLOVENIA COME TO YOU, DO YOUR SLOVENIAN FRIENDS PASS IT ON TO YOU? WHAT WAS MOST DIFFICULT AT THE BEGINNING: WERE YOU A SMALL AGENCY THAT WISHED TO BRING TOURISTS TO TINY, AND FOR MOST, UNKNOWN, SLOVENIA?

Of course, it is also true that lately hoteliers find us themselves, now that we have already become recognizable. We began with recommendations and our path again led us forward based on recommendations - from Goriška Brda to Dolenjska. It was most difficult for Bob to convince me to tackle this work, to determine how to approach tourism differently, with greater quality. The Internet helped us quite a lot, as did our beautiful website, into which we invested much, much effort and energy. People are also convinced by the beautiful photos of Slovenia on our website and, of course, by all of our information. The British mostly come for two

weeks and they like to visit more regions; they also like to go on holiday at least twice a year and for a few days in between.

YOU WORK ALONE AND OBVIOUSLY, YOU ARE STILL MANAGING. BUT IS ALL THIS NOT A LITTLE TOO DEMANDING FOR ONLY TWO PEOPLE?

We are just now thinking about the plan to move to Slovenia and employ someone else at our British office: in this information age, with the telephone and the Internet, this would not be difficult. I am very homesick; even though London is wonderful, it is tiring, noisy, expensive, with a devilish pace. We would like to focus exclusively on wine and gourmet tours, (Bob is an excellent cook, he makes very good potica), as the British are enthusiastic about our excellent restaurants.

SLOVENIA HAS GREAT POTENTIAL FOR DIVERSITY IN NATURE, FOOD, WINE, PEOPLE...

That it has not taken advantage of yet! It would be necessary to invest more resources in this direction and change the method of promoting Slovenia: we've had many ideas, presented them, but they told us that resources were not available. This is unfortunate, as British tourists, (who take sixty million vacations a year!), - and the top 'of the top' has still not been touched - are charmed by the wealth and mixture of influences found in the food and wine. They are pleasantly surprised! And unpleasantly - because it is difficult to get some Slovenian wines in England.

It is unfortunate that we must still always convince the British that Slovenia is much more unique than they envision - there are guests, in all aspects, who are happy to pay, provided that they receive something in return. We do this ourselves, and Bob sometimes seems to me like a kind of Don Quixote, who pushes and pushes - whereas I sometimes think that it is not worth it. And he says that we must persevere.

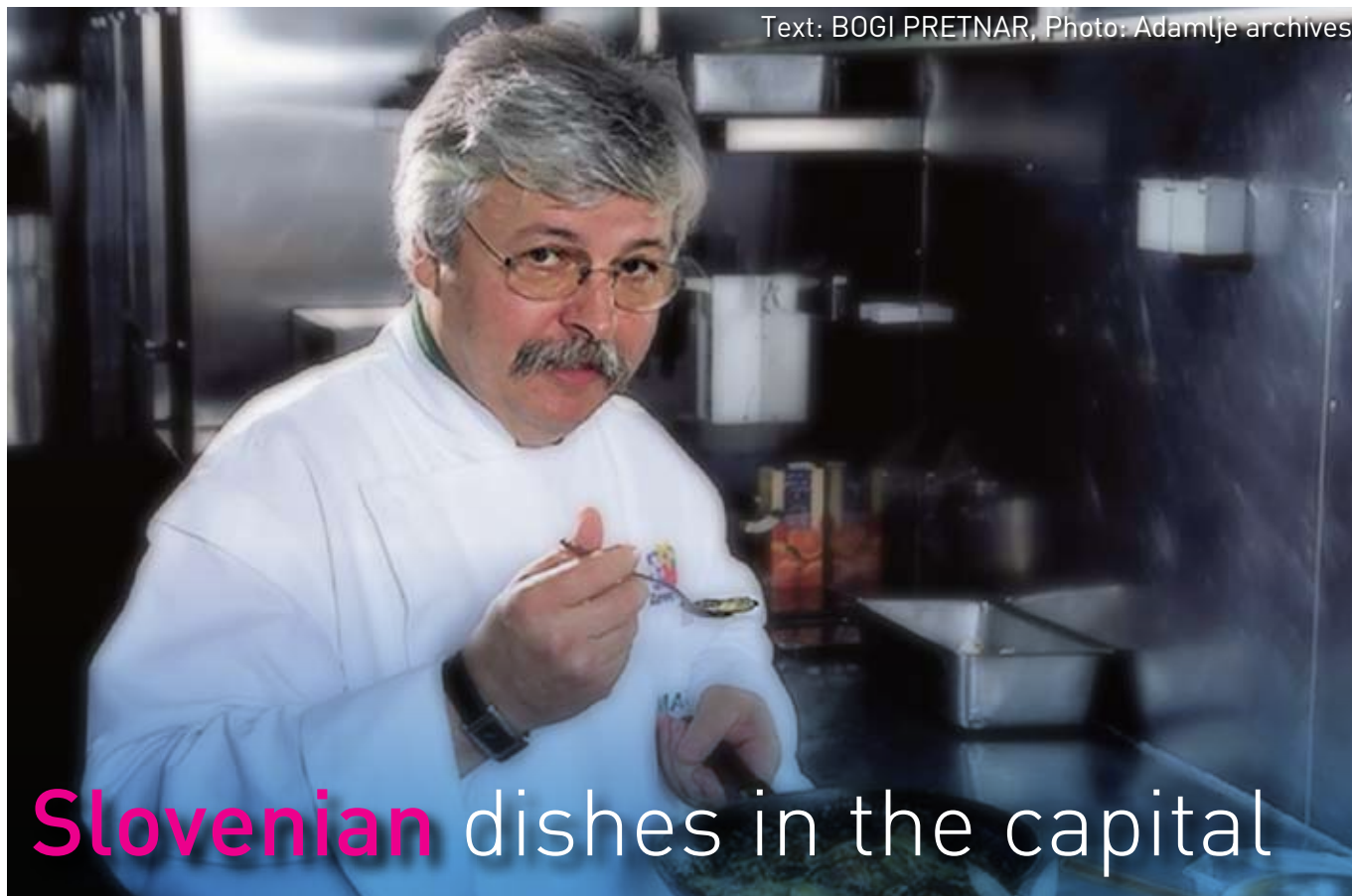
IN THREE YEARS YOU HAVE BROUGHT MANY BRITISH PEOPLE TO SLOVENIA. WHAT ARE THE PLANS?

I cannot count the number, but still fewer than we would like. The plans - we are going to expand our business and organize cooking classes. We would also like to combine tours that will include active holidays as well as enjoyment. And weddings: we are going to organize the first ones next year.

IS THE VISION CLEAR?

It is. And it is necessary to be very obstinate and have a morsel of insanity, as without it I would not tackle many things, as I would be afraid of the risk. It is necessary to take the plunge and swim. Even after three years, I don't know whether we will swim, but we have learned an enormous amount. Yes, it is sometimes necessary to be a little irrational and push your head through a wall, even when everyone says that it will not work! Bob is like that - and at the same time he also pushes me (laughter)...

Text: BOGI PRETNAR, Photo: Adamlje archives



Slovenian dishes in the capital

Slavko Adamlje

In the Slovenian capital you can eat good Bosnian food at Sofra on Dunajska Street. You can eat French food at city hall, Japanese on Wolfova Street. Thai on Subiceva Street and Chinese in at least six, maybe ten locations, like the Shanghai restaurant on Poljanska Street. You can eat Turkish food by Karl's bridge at the beginning of Dolenjska Street. Mexican food is good to eat in the Knafelj passage downtown, or on Medvedova Street in Siska. You can eat Serbian food at the end of Celovska Street, at Cad's under Roznik and in a few more places. We'd better not mention the various failed attempts at Indian and Greek restaurants. But what about Slovenian food?

What actually is Slovenian food? Cabbage and beans, say those who want to make fun of it, although it's partly true. Fried potatoes, roast pork and salad, say others who believe that there is no Slovenian Sunday lunch without this threesome. One thing is sure; beef broth has to have a lot of meat and various vegetables, broth that boils down slowly and ritualistically for two to three hours. Strengthen with pepper, a little tomato, a lot of salt and a sprig of lovage, if it really gives that something. Classic addition: noodles. Complex addition: liver dumpling or meat strudel. Middle way: grits dumplings or scrubbed groats. For the choosy: cold pancake noodles. On the plate in the last moment sprinkled with fresh chopped parsley or chives.

Also Slavko Adamlje's cuisine at his restaurant Hana near Interspar in Vic is unimaginable without a giant pot in which from early in the morning is boiling meat and vegetables. Slavko, till 2002 for many years kitchen boss of Ljubljana's most prestigious restaurant, Maxim, and since then he has been independent in catering industry, author of television shows and author of many cook books, is a convivial fellow who regularly participates in

disreputable fried potato, bean and "bograc" (similar to goulash with potatoes and noodles) parties. Even more often and regularly than that, he walks up Smarna Gora hill every morning. Only after that does he go to the market, while on the kitchen rage, water is slowly becoming real soup.

New times have brought new sights and tastes, and Slavko is definitely among those who are testing new tastes. Now, when the pumpkin season is here, he can make pumpkin soup, for which he first quickly boils young pumpkins, mashes them, adds wine and sour cream, and flavors with nutmeg. To cook this mixture he adds small pieces of pumpkin and carrot. He has a special relationship towards vegetables just like the vegetable women or 'branjevke', as he likes to address them, have towards him. But they probably don't know that his good knowledge of vegetables, wandering around market stalls and pushcarts does not arise just from sniffing for some new vegetable delicacy in an entirely new way, but from practice. He and his wife have a pretty vegetable garden guests have already eaten gentle spring lettuce from. Rocket, delicious spinach, as well chicory, which is not that known or appreciated by Slovenian people (except by inhabitants of the Slovenian coast and gourmets) from spices as well as Slovenian; from tarragon to savory, lovage, marjoram, thyme or crispy green chives. At the moment, Slavko is waiting to see what is going to develop from a mixture of Chinese spices that experimentally occupy a square meter of his garden.

Narrow tarragon leaves that the majority of Slovenians know as the best part of tarragon roll (of course, stuffed with cottage cheese, cream and eggs): Slavko chops them and mixes them in stuffing and sauces. For instance, in the very Slovenian



buckwheat “krapci” (made from rolling dough with cottage cheese, cream or butter) where for the paste mixes buckwheat flour and a few with flour into the boiling water kneads the paste and leaves it to rest. After that, he rolls it out until it is two to three millimeters thick, cuts it in circles and puts stuffing made from cottage cheese on them. Sometimes he adds salted cottage cheese, tarragon, chives or nuts. Afterwards, he folds the circles and squeezes them along the sides with a fork (lets be honest, today we can get technical instruments to make our preparation easier).

“Buckwheat krapci are good company with slices of venison back, which I put on wild mushrooms,” he rounds up one of his own Slovenian dishes. Buckwheat is as much Slovenian as barley is; there is a well-known as hot pot, spoon dish, with pieces of vegetable, beans and, if possible, smoked pork. Slovenian barley porridge with beans has been modernized: Slavko prepares it as risotto: instead of rice, he uses barley, while the soul and real flavor come from fried strips of bulb vegetables and crayfish.

The ingredients for his rich menu, of course, don’t come just from the famous Ljubljana central market - that would not be enough. Permanent suppliers provide fresh fish, asparagus, meat. But Slavko wouldn’t be Slavko if he did not take a around the market. I ask him which lettuce is more Slovenian.

‘Ledenka’ lettuce (spring lettuce with short leaves) from Trnovo, as many as it has left (a famous part of Ljubljana, near Križanke, where people used to cultivate lettuce and sell it to the people on the market). And dandelion. These herbs aren’t probably eaten by everybody, except Slovenian people. But juicy spring dandelion with crackling, hot potatoes and hard-boiled egg has almost no rival among rich salads. And there is lamb’s lettuce!

But there is no real Slovenian salad without beans with pumpkin oil, although olive oil is becoming more and more popular in the cities.

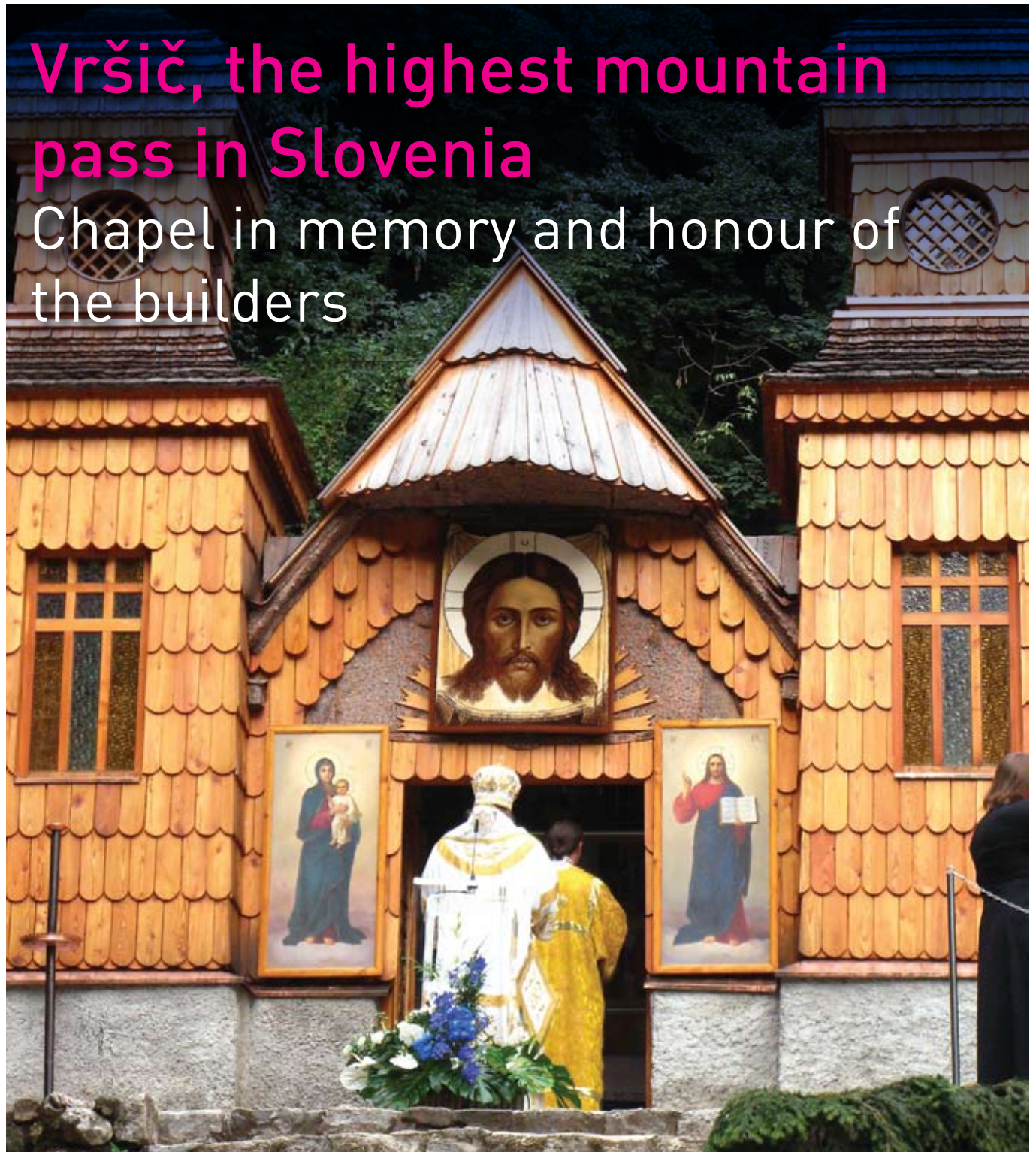
He also mentions chicory, which is great in salad, as long as it is young; his guests love it, and it always has to be in the salad buffet. This herb is not so popular among Slovenians, maybe because it is not well known and it is hard to get. “Tuna fish fillet and risotto with chicory matches very well: the rice has to be poured with fish base sauce if it is the base to fish and with white wine, of course...”

Do his guests, that pick top level restaurants, eat a lot of typical Slovenian dishes?

Actually, they don’t or they don’t recognize them as Slovenian. We can talk of a certain European taste, which in recent years has been based on good fish. People like lamb cutlets, tenderloin fillet with smoked goose liver they smoke in the house. But if we read old notes on former more demanding plain family cooking or old monastery cooking we can count these dishes Slovenian. And it is good to awaken them according to the old Slovenian recipes.

If we started with beef broth and continue with buckwheat “krapci” and tuna on risotto with chicory, let’s end with dessert that stands beside Slovenian roll: strudel. Although it comes from Austrian cuisine, it became popular among Slovenian people a long time ago. Slavko persistently holds on to the seasons, which is why he offers strudel at the end of a Slovenian menu, with cherries, when that sweet red fruit comes on the market, with cream or vanilla ice cream? Why not!

Text and Photo: JOŽE PREŠEREN



Vršč, the highest mountain pass in Slovenia

Chapel in memory and honour of the builders

Many domestic and foreign visitors of Slovenian mountains, motorized, cyclists or pedestrians, admire the beauties of this unique place, and express the greatest respect for the builders of this unique mountain road – the Vršč mountain pass, with its altitude of 1611 meters the highest in Julian Alps. The mountain pass and the road pass connect the valleys of Sava Dolinka and Soča; to mention only towns, this is the best connection between Kranjska Gora and Bovec, while in a broader sense we could say that it is a route from Upper Carniola to Primorje. In any case, even just a drive or walk over Vršč is an unforgettable experience.

As recently as a hundred years ago, only a narrow path led over this pass below Mt Mojstrovka, which was used mainly by the inhabitants of Trenta on the south side, and occasional travellers. People from Trenta carried their produce on this road, especially cheese and curds, which they sold in Kranjska Gora. They took back other things that were not available in their valley. On the south side the path was narrow, while the path on the Carniola side was quite well maintained and widened, as foresters took care of it for their own needs, i.e. for their pair or yoke carts.

NAURALTRAILS

ROAD FOR PROVISIONING SOLDIERS

When the First World War started, and the encounter between the Austro-Hungarian empire and Italy, which took place mainly on the territory of what is now Slovenia, a need emerged to build a road for the military supplies to the battlefields in Posočje. The road was planned already before the outbreak of the war with Italy, but in 1915 building of the road proved to be urgent, because some other routes to the front were constantly under fire from Italian artillery. Because the majority of able-bodied workers were already at the front, around 10,000 Russian prisoners of war were brought to work on the road, most from the POW camp at Spratzern near St. Pölten, and set up in huts alongside the whole building site from Kranjska Gora to Trenta. The prisoners had to work under extremely difficult conditions, and also did not have appropriate clothing or appropriate food. The extremely difficult living conditions caused numerous deaths among the prison labourers, who were also the victims of psychological and physical violence from some Austrian engineers. Despite the bad working conditions, the new road was in use already at the end of 1915. It was opened by the heir to the Austrian empire, Charles.

Work on the road, which was already in use, continued, because in many places it was necessary to fortify the banks or widen a section of the road. Also, proposals were submitted that at the most exposed places anti-avalanche roofs be built to protect the road from snow-slides, but the Austrian engineers rejected this idea, saying that there was no danger of avalanche. It is true that the winter of 1915-16 saw very little snow. Heavier snow started only in February and March 1916, and only then did it become clear what danger the avalanches meant. At first, several smaller avalanches caused considerable material damage and swept away a few people, but then the worst happened: on 12 March 1916 a massive one tore away from the steep slopes of Mojstrovka, and buried numerous prisoners and their guards. The exact number of dead is not known, but it is estimated at 170 to 300 Russian prisoners and a few dozen Austrian soldiers.

Rescue in those weather and war circumstances was difficult, but it was not possible to save lives. That is also the reason for such different estimates of the dead. Numerous memorials by the road and the graves in military cemeteries are reminders of the suffering of the unfortunate builders of the road to Vršič. Upon burial of the victims, the prisoners initiated the idea of setting up a memorial to the Russians. The Russian prisoners built a wooden chapel in Russian style on 1 November 1916, which was placed on solid stone foundations, and designed as a central building with two side towers. The structure is wooden. Initially, it was covered with bark, later with shingles. The roof is made of shingles, and also the onion-shaped towers. During the war, an icon of the St Mary was placed inside, but it disappeared after the war. The renovated altar is made of wood circles, on which is placed an iconostas with icons painted in oil. The inside is decorated with wrought-iron chandeliers and candlesticks, and a photo of the opening ceremony.

SYMBOL OF FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN SLOVENIA AND RUSSIA

Today, the chapel built by the Russian prisoners of war during the 1st World War is known as the Russian Chapel and is one of the major sights, and is seen by every visitor to Vršič. Some 92 years have passed since it was built; the chapel, today maintained by the local community, is carefully renovated and maintained as an extraordinary cultural monument, and also a symbol of

friendship between Slovenia and Russia. For many years, the memorial service at the Russian Chapel, which is usually in July, is also attended by reputable delegations of Russian authorities, and senior highest representatives of Slovenia. Last year, the celebration at the Russian Chapel was attended by the Vice-President of Russian Duma, Ljubov Sliska, who emphasised in her speech that these meetings help in harmonise relations between the countries, and especially in the field of culture - at that very moment, a number of renowned cultural groups from Russia were touring Slovenia.

The Russian Chapel is also one of the sights on the route from Kranjska Gora towards the Trenta valley, but we should definitely point out some other 'essential' stops, so that a visitor will not only count the turns on the road. It is definitely worth stopping and having a snack or rest in the mountain huts, which are certainly open at times suitable for walks in the mountains. Guests may visit the chalet on Gozd (1226 m), Tičarjev dom (1620 m), Erjavčeva koč (1515 m) and Poštarska koč (1725 m). An exceptional natural site, which is best seen exactly from the hill near Poštarski dom, is the 'Heathen Maiden' (Ajdovska deklica) in a rock wall. The view of the natural window in the Prisank Wall is also exceptional.

There are also numerous sights on the route to Trenta. One has to stop by the monument to the great admirer of these mountain beauties, Julius Kugy, and also see the picturesque source of the Soča River, which announces its beauty already at the very beginning of its path towards the sea.



Natural sculpture above Vršič: Ajdovska deklica (Heathen Maiden)

Text: ANJA HREŠČAK, Photo: Darinka Mladenovič



Idrija lace as home decoration or fashion accessory

The town of Idrija, according to its inhabitants, is known mainly for two things - one of them being the mercury mine and the other the world-famous Idrija lace

Cloths and napkins, curtains and bed linen, clothes and ornaments for clothes, even earrings, necklaces and gloves, as well as business gifts are all products made of Idrija lace. It's a fact that for a long time now the local women of Idrija have not only been making handkerchiefs and napkins out of lace, but also more diverse and useful things.

BOBBIN LACE-MAKING FROM ITS BEGINNINGS

The craft of bobbin lace-making occupies a very important place in the history of Idrija. Idrija lace, which is part of the life of many Idrija families, since the beginning of this craft more than 300 years ago, has travelled to many parts of the world as a handicraft and art product. The term lace-making encompasses several methods of creating lace, such as sewing, crocheting, knitting and bobbin lace-making. In Idrija it is mainly the latter that is used. Idrija housewives began to make lace as early as around 1696. First, it was a product made of thick flax thread, and intended mainly for the domestic market, for various church dignitaries and also for the wealthier peasantry. Bobbin lace takes its name from the specially designed tools called bobbins which hold the cotton or flax thread. In 1860, Štefan and Karolina Lapajne opened the first lace shop in Idrija. In the next few years, the Lapajne family won recognition in the markets of western and central Europe. Soon after, the Ministry of Trade in Vienna opened the first official lace-making school in Idrija, which has been open ever since. Until then, knowledge of bobbin lace-making was passed from generation to generation. Schools of lace-making that emerged in the second half of the 19th century were designed to improve the knowledge of lace-makers, thus increasing the quality of lace destined for the market. Through the schools and teachers that taught this traditional craft, bobbin

lace-making spread to other Slovenian regions like Cerkljansko, the surroundings of Trnovski gozd, to Selška dolina and to Poljanska dolina. After the Second World War, the mass production of lace slowly started to decline. The only people still engaged in bobbin lace-making were elderly women, who were trying to make extra money to supplement their meagre pensions. For the purpose of trading with lace a lace-making cooperative was established, succeeded later by the Čipka (Lace) company. In the 1990s, when the craft began to regain its former glory, new sales galleries and studios emerged in Idrija and other parts of the country.

THE FESTIVAL FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION

In addition to the lace-making school, there are also educational workshops for teachers of bobbin lace-making organized by the Municipality of Idrija in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Sport, which provide professional training for teachers who teach bobbin lace-making as an optional subject or as an extra-curricular activity in Slovene schools. The memory of this cultural heritage is also kept alive with the Idrija Lace Festival. This year the two-day festival begins on 20 June. The organizers, the Idrija Tourist Information Center, say that such a festival is an ethnological, entertaining, commercial and cultural event that gives the town of Idrija a special charm, also because in the summer months town life is especially lively due to the presence of lace. During the festival visitors can attend professional lectures on lace, and bobbin lace-making workshops and competitions, and visit many lace product exhibitions. With this festival Idrija has gained a place in the final selection for the title of European Destinations of Excellence 2008 (EDEN). The purpose of EDEN is to emphasize the variety of the rich European intangible heritage and promote developing, less visited destinations that, through tourism, strengthen the importance of specific local intangible heritage in a way that brings about positive social and economic effects and preserves natural resources.



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