

# Sinfo 04

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The latest from Slovenia

IN FOCUS: **EU has become part of our everyday lives**

IN FOCUS: **Step by step in the EU**

CULTURE INTERVIEW: **Tinkara Kovač - Round and round**

I FEEL  
SLOVENIA



# Sinfo

in your hands, on your computers and tablets.

## IN FOCUS 8

Karl Erjavec, Minister of Foreign Affairs

**EU has become part of our everyday lives**

Photo: Thierry Monasse/STA



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Milestones

**Step by step in the EU**

Photo: Krasimira Nevenova/Mostphotos



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Tinkara Kovač

**Round and round**

Photo: aminno Petelinšek/STA

**SINFO – SLOVENIAN INFORMATION**

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Photo: Bruno Toič

Tanja Glogovčan, editor

**Looking back to see forward**

Ten years have passed since 1 May 2004, when Slovenia became a full member of the EU. Slovenia's path to the EU was not without difficulties; nevertheless, our country has been an exemplary student.

In this issue, therefore, we have focused on Slovenia in relation to its membership in the EU. We have arranged for you to look behind the curtain. Take your time and read how the accession negotiations were experienced by those who had an active role in them. In order to refresh your memory of all the historical events, we have turned back the wheel of time to highlight some moments and related events that you may or may not be familiar with. We also present a number of projects that are on-going and highlight certain considerations that are even nowadays of substantial importance to Slovenia's EU membership.

However, there is more to SINFO than just reflecting on the past. We have also included other articles. You may want to read the article on the mutual friendship and cooperation between Slovenia and Norway, which Slovenian Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek has recently visited, an interview with the Dutch Ambassador to Slovenia Pieter Jan Langenberg, and an interview with the musician Tinkara Kovač, who is to represent Slovenia at the Eurovision Song Contest, and many other cultural, fashion, business and gastronomic stories.

Your impressions and suggestions are always welcome, so please continue to provide them. SINFO has recently begun to present its contents not only in its printed version, but also in electronic form. We invite you to indulge therein, since each contribution brings new added value to SINFO. For quite some time we have been inviting you to read our articles on your tablet computers. Our readers can also benefit from our recently developed SINFO portal, which can be found on the web at [www.sinfo.slovenia.si](http://www.sinfo.slovenia.si). Since the latter will hence provide short current news from Slovenia, our editorial board has decided that three sections, namely What's up, Tips and Wow, will be discontinued in the printed version of SINFO. Feel free to browse our magazine or look for us on our website. In any event, do follow us!



Photo: GCO

## Ten years of membership

In late March this year, ten years had passed since Slovenia became a member of the NATO Alliance. Subsequently, in early May, ten years will have elapsed since it entered the European Union. Slovenia thus fulfilled its fundamental foreign policy strategy one of whose main goals was speedy and full-fledged integration into the international community. For a country which had been founded hardly a decade earlier, this definitely marked an admirable achievement and proof of the cohesiveness of its political structure and its society as a whole.

The results of the referenda were further evidence of that achievement: membership of NATO was supported by slightly more than 66% of voters, while no less than 89.64 % of voters supported entry into the European Union. Ten years later, the picture is somewhat different. Various public opinion polls show that Slovenians no longer consider the benefits of the European Union as self-evident as they did ten years earlier, whereas with regard to NATO, their views are even more cautious. Economic recession has made people increasingly critical of their living conditions and particularly of the solutions offered by both Slovenian and European politicians. Opinion polls surveying Slovenia's membership of the European Union bear witness to the country's economic situation: in 2007, when Slovenia recorded high economic growth, no less than 91 % of respondents voiced satisfaction with the EU, while 80 % of respondents held optimistic views regarding the future of European integration. In 2014, with Slovenia marking the fifth consecutive year of economic recession, 50 % of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with membership of the EU. The positive results of EU membership first and foremost include an improved flow of people and labour force, open borders and free market. When asked what the greatest failures were, respondents mentioned unfulfilled expectations regarding economic performance and living standards. Despite these statistics, however, Slovenians could hardly be considered Eurosceptic, as 43.6 % of respondents said they would again vote in favour of EU membership, 34.8 % would vote against it, while 17 % said they would not vote.

In relation to NATO membership, public opinion is much more wary. This can be explained by the fact that the nature of this military alliance following the end of the Cold War remains unclear, and even more so given its associated costs. Upon entering the NATO Alliance, Slovenia allocated 1.5 % of its GDP to military costs, whereas today

the figure is only 1.1 %. Four countries only reach the required share of 2 %: United States (4.4 %), Great Britain (2.4 %), Greece (2.3 %) and Estonia (2.0 %). Luxembourg, for example, allocates barely 0.4 % of its GDP for security purposes. Faced with economic recession, taxpayers increasingly tend to view military issues through the prism of the well-known dilemma of "guns or food". On the other hand, too few people are aware that the military budget covers not only the military but also the system of civil protection and rescue operations, thereby including fire-fighters and other emergency services in charge of safety during natural and other disasters.

Both anniversaries have been overshadowed by the critical economic and consequently political situation in Slovenia. The Constitutional Court has repealed the Real Estate Act, declaring it to be founded on incomplete public registers which failed to ensure equitable and proportional taxation for all taxable persons. The ruling of the Constitutional Court highlighted the poor and often incorrect nature of public records that were gathered on the basis of the 2006 Act, adopted by the then government which decided to implement the real estate tax but subsequently failed to complete the process. None of the ensuing governments wanted to impose the real estate tax as it indeed had little political support. Eventually, the government headed by Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek was left with no other choice but to implement the tax, as budgetary resources became drastically depleted by years of recession. It is worth mentioning that Slovenia remains one of very few countries in Europe not to have a real estate tax.

The latest figures and forecasts seem to show that the period of recession in Slovenia is indeed gradually coming to an end. Forecasts by the Bank of Slovenia project the Slovenian GDP to rise by 0.6 % in 2014. In October last year, the Bank of Slovenia still projected a 0.7 % decline in economic activity. The International Monetary Fund announced a 0.3 % growth in GDP this year, while in 2015 economic activity is expected to strengthen by 0.9 %. The IMF thus considerably improved its economic forecasts for Slovenia, when back at the beginning of January it had predicted a 1.1 % reduction in GDP for 2014. Finally, there is one more encouraging figure which shows that international financial markets retain confidence in Slovenia: at the time this article was written, Slovenia's expected government bond yield stood at 3.46 %, while a year ago it had reached 7 %.

## Slovenia and Norway

# Two countries getting to know each other

At the mention of Slovenia, most Norwegians first think about Planica and Kranjska Gora. During winter sports events the flights of the Norwegian airline to Slovenia are full of fans from the north that temporarily occupy these two Slovenian towns. They return home enraptured with their countrymen's successes, friendliness of local people, and even friendlier prices of beer.

Photo: Mosiphotos



Norwegians are not only enthusiastic about beer, but also about products of Gorenje, Elan, Alpina, and in recent years, products of Intra Lighting and Pipistrel's airplanes. But even though Norwegians know these brands, not many of them will be able to tell their country of origin. Similarly, almost all Norwegians have heard of the Planica ski jumping hill, but only a few know that their highest ski jumping hill in Vikersund was upgraded by the Slovenian engineer Janez Gorišek.

### **PASSIONS AND INTERESTS, COMMON TO BOTH NATIONS**

Yes, passionate commitment to winter sports is certainly a very

strong link between Slovenians and Norwegians, but there is also love of hiking and admiration for natural beauties on both sides. It is interesting that both nations are fond of individual sports in which they achieve remarkable successes. They seem to share the same persistence, diligence, strength, and awareness that we have to earn our way through life by hard work and by relying on ourselves rather than expecting help from others. Perhaps this similarity between the Slovenians and the Northerners comes from the same evangelical values which have affected us through the reformation.

When comparing the two nations, the most prominent com-

mon feature is the fact that neither Norway nor Slovenia has ever made a conquest of territory by force of arms, but they were, quite the opposite, ruled by their neighbouring countries. This year Norway celebrates the 200th anniversary of the adoption of its own constitution, which led to an independent state, yet almost a hundred years later. Namely, until 1814, Norway was part of the Danish Kingdom for almost three hundred years (since the end of the Union of Calmar in 1523). When Napoleon was defeated in 1814, Denmark, being his ally, had to give up Norway, which then belonged to Sweden as spoils of war. Norwegians tried to take the opportunity of this historical moment to declare in-

Norway is immensely rich in fish, water resources, forests, and raw materials. Slovenia imports for around EUR 37 million worth of goods annually from Norway, and exports goods in the amount of EUR 50.5 million.

Norwegians are not only enthusiastic about beer, but also about products of Gorenje, Elan, Alpina, and in recent years, products of Intra Lighting and Pipistrel's airplanes.



Henrik Johan Ibsen was a major Norwegian playwright, theatre director, and poet. He is often referred to as the father of realism and is one of the founders of Realism in theatre.

dependence which was subdued by Sweden. Nevertheless, on 17 May 1814, Norwegians adopted their own constitution in Eidsvoll and thus laid the foundations of their country which became independent only in 1905.

**EVALUATION OF HISTORICAL DECISIONS**

Here is where the similarities end. Slovenia first declared independence in 1991 and only six months later, on 23 December, adopted the Constitution. While for Norwegians the Constitution Day is the most important national holiday, in Slovenia it is not even a work-free day, so many Slovenians do not even know when it is celebrated. Furthermore, we have quite different attitude towards state symbols, the flag in particular. Norwegians are very proud of their flag. On 17 May, children and adults walk in the procession dressed in traditional costumes (bunader) and waving flags. They have garlands with the national flag hung on their Christmas trees, they have the national flag on toothpicks in their snacks, and they even place poles in front of their homes with

narrow banners in colours of the Norwegian flag.

Slovenians celebrate important public holidays in May, too. 1 May, the international Labour Day, will this year mark also the tenth anniversary of the accession of Slovenia to the European Union, and on 9 May we will celebrate the liberation of Ljubljana and Europe Day. It should be noted that while Slovenia is very proud of the membership in the European Union and was the first among the new members to hold the Presidency of the EU Council, the Norwegians have rejected the membership in a referendum twice already.

**COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES IS GAINING MOMENTUM**

In the last few years, the cooperation between the countries has been enhanced by projects financed through the Norwegian financial mechanism and the EEC financial mechanism. The main obstacle that impedes the expansion of exchange is the lack of Slovenia's visibility. Thus the Slovenian Ambassador to

Norway has set to increase the visibility of the »brand« of Slovenia and its quality. Tone Kajzer, Ambassador to Norway, sees spa tourism as the main area of opportunities for the economic cooperation between Slovenia and Norway. In his opinion, there are also unexploited opportunities in the metal products industry, paper industry, chemical industry, energy sector, information technology, logistics, and tourism. The largest part of imports to Norway consists of machinery and equipment, chemicals, metals, and food products.

Do you remember the royal visit of King Harald V and Queen Sonja of Norway to Slovenia in 2011? On that occasion, the King stressed that Slovenia is considered as a reliable, perspective, and attractive country by the Norwegians. During the Slovenian Presidency of the EU Council, the then Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg also visited Slovenia. The Slovenian Prime Minister at that time, Janez Janša, presented Norway as an inspiring example of good practice for Slovenia, especially because of its efforts in environmental conservation.

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Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA



The royal visit of King Harald V and Queen Sonja of Norway to Slovenia in 2011. Former President Türk and his wife Barbara Miklič Türk welcoming King of Norway Harald V and Queen Sonja.

### THE PRIME MINISTER ALENKA BRATUŠEK VISITS NORWAY

Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek visited Norway on April 9 this year, accompanied by Minister of Economic Development and Technology Metod Dragonja. On this occasion, a business conference entitled "Investment opportunities in Slovenia" was held at Innovation Norway (Innovasjon Norge), a Norwegian agency for the promotion of the economy. At the conference, the Slovenian Prime Minister acquainted the participants with the priva-

tisation process involving the first set of Slovenian companies, whereby Slovenia is looking for strategic partners for 12 companies and one bank. In her opening speech to representatives of Norwegian companies, she explained the economic situation in Slovenia, highlighting the improved macroeconomic indicators in recent months.

She stressed that kick-starting the economy and privatisation process were top priorities of her government. The Prime Minister also emphasised that Slovenia is

looking for long-term strategic partners and that the sale of the first companies shows that Slovenia is serious about privatisation.

After the conference, the Prime Minister met with her Norwegian counterpart, Erna Solberg. The two expressed a desire for the two countries to upgrade their good political relations with stronger economic cooperation. Upon the conclusion of the visit, the Slovenian Prime Minister also invited the Norwegian Prime Minister to visit Slovenia.

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Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek met with her Norwegian counterpart, Erna Solberg.

## EU has become part of our everyday lives

This year marks the tenth anniversary of Slovenia's accession to the European Union, which has become part of our everyday lives, affecting us in many ways. Slovenian citizens are also EU citizens, and Slovenia has established itself as a distinguished and equal member of the European family of nations.



Photo: Archives of Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Many tasks and problems that were on the negotiating table over a good decade ago still remain topical. Slovenia has used numerous advantages of membership, but challenges remain which it will have to face in the future.

I firmly believe that Slovenia was a model candidate. By learning about the functioning of the Union, it completed the necessary tasks and prepared for membership, established new institutions and built its capacities, knowing that it was all being done primarily for its own development. The country has established itself as a successful EU member, which was confirmed in 2007, when it was the first new member state to introduce the euro and in the first group to enter the Schengen Area in the same year. It should be noted that Slovenia was also the first among the "newcomers" to hold the presidency of the Council of EU, in the first half of 2008. One should not forget the advantages for Slovenian citizens deriving from the Single Market and the high standards of key European policies. By joining the EU, Slovenia gained access to substantial funds, which are being used for development. As Foreign Minister, I would like to underline the importance of establish-

ing the European External Action Service, which already has two ambassadors from Slovenia in its ranks.

In recent years, the EU has been in the grip of a financial and economic crisis which has required changes in the EU's architecture in both economic and monetary fields. Despite signs of an approaching recovery, we are still not competitive enough, and face a credit crunch and massive unemployment, particularly among youth, which makes some people doubt the wisdom of EU membership and they tend to put national interests before joint European interests. It has been proved yet again that people can quickly grow accustomed to good things and that some novelties are quickly taken for granted, particularly among the younger generation. However, if we look around, we can see that such practice may be very misleading.

Many tasks and problems that

were on the negotiating table over a good decade ago still remain topical. Slovenia has used numerous advantages of membership, but challenges remain which it will have to face in the future. Neither Europe nor Slovenia will emerge from this crisis unscathed. Perhaps it is now more evident than ever that the future of the Union lies in its further enhancement, and that we will be strong in a globalised world only by acting together, with responsibility and solidarity, and by taking into account the underlying values of the European Union, which are the reason for its continued existence. In such a Europe, Slovenia too will seek its future.

**Karl Erjavec, Minister of Foreign Affairs**

*Source: from the foreword in the brochure: Slovenia – 10 Years in the European Union, published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Government Communication Office, April 2014.*



## Slovenia's accession to the EU

# Personal views by members of negotiating team

The tenth anniversary of Slovenia's accession to the EU is an opportunity to reflect on Slovenia's development and activity as an EU member state. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs on this occasion published a brochure comprising of contributions of the former members of the Negotiating Team for Slovenia's Accession to the EU, in which they presented their personal views on the key challenges facing Slovenia in the negotiations and the related progress over the ten years of membership. Below are the extracts from the contributions of the three former negotiators currently holding the key posts in the EU institutions.



### Janez Potočnik

During the negotiations Head of the Negotiating Team for Accession of Slovenia to the EU and Minister for European Affairs; today Member of the European Commission in charge of the Environment.

The Negotiating Team for Slovenia's accession to the EU was formed in 1998, and I headed it until the end of the negotiations. It was an incredibly positive experience, leaving pleasant memories of a group of people with one major goal: to carry out their task in a professional, effective and accurate manner, in order to guarantee Slovenia a successful accession to the European Union, without unnecessary obstacles, and to the benefit of Slovenian citizens. Already at the time of negotiations, we strove to present our European partners with an image of an efficient state, well aware of how to benefit from membership and what to do to gain it.

The rationale behind our approach was the belief that accession to the European Union and the ensuing changes we had to make corresponded to the transition towards an open economy and an open society connected with the world. This, in turn, was consistent with Slovenia's vision,

inside or outside the European Union.

We were aware of the rules of the game (i.e. the EU *acquis*), which could be changed only for well-founded reasons; we also knew that the candidate countries were joining the Union, not vice versa. In the first years of the negotiations, there was no political consensus among our EU partners about the accession timetable and the number of necessary negotiating rounds. Consequently, we had to dispel unnecessary doubts about our ability to adopt the *acquis* and carry out the transition rapidly and efficiently. In the eyes of our European counterparts, Slovenia was increasingly perceived as a candidate with a stable economy and an efficient administration, in brief: the candidate best prepared for accession. At the end of the process, we were perhaps even overestimated.

Of course, the negotiations were accompanied by questions, con-

cerns, and fears, some justified, others less so. Many of the things that we had feared did not happen, but a lot happened that we had not anticipated and had not adequately prepared for. Slovenia's membership can be divided into two parts: the period from accession to the beginning of the financial and economic crisis, and the period of crisis. The latter was, and still is, a time of great trials. Perhaps the worst really is over, but we are still far from a situation where one could safely argue that the European Union is back on solid ground and that the crisis is behind us. We are still struggling with a persistent financial, economic, and even political crisis. We are trying to find an exit, to balance and restructure our economy, and to find new ways to promote growth and create jobs. Just as the accumulation of debt and deficit and the other imbalances in the economy did not happen overnight, every solution will require time. If we had a magic wand, we would have used it.

It was an incredibly positive experience, leaving pleasant memories of a group of people with one major goal: to carry out their task in a professional, effective and accurate manner, in order to guarantee Slovenia a successful accession to the European Union, without unnecessary obstacles, and to the benefit of Slovenian citizens.

**Miro Prek**

During the negotiations Member of the Negotiating Team for Accession of Slovenia to the EU, Deputy Director and Head of the Sector for European and Comparative Law at the Government Office for Legislation; later State Under-Secretary at the Government Office for European Affairs; today Judge at the General Court of the EU.




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I can also conclude that the problems we faced ten or more years ago are still troubling us today and are likely to persist for some time. I leave the reader to judge whether this is due to the persistence of problems inherent in any system or a Slovenian peculiarity.

The period of negotiations for Slovenia's membership of the EU was one of the most interesting periods of my professional career. The negotiations gave me the opportunity to profoundly examine the legal problems of Slovenia's EU accession, both from the perspective of the domestic and European law in all the negotiating chapters. During the negotiations, both the content and form were relevant, the procedures and organisation having been equally important, while the knowledge and work invested were decisive. In this process, we became better acquainted with 'Europe' and, simultaneously, with ourselves: the mirror held up to us by Europe in specific areas reflected our many shortcomings and quite a few advantages.

What can be said after ten years? We must be content that we took the right decision by voting for EU accession, by a large majority, in the referendum. The fears that gripped us (and were being instilled in us) ten or more

years ago – that we would lose our hard-gained sovereignty, that our national identity would fade and be lost as the first among the many victims of integration processes, that Slovene would join languages facing imminent extinction or that our land would be snapped up by foreigners – have proven to be exaggerated, although not utterly unfounded. Indeed, the opposite is true: the EU is potentially the most important factor of stability in modern Slovenian history. Without it as an anchor which keeps us in the area of influence of modern Western Europe and which prevents us from excessive oscillations, we would fare much worse.

I can also conclude that the problems we faced ten or more years ago are still troubling us today and are likely to persist for some time. I leave the reader to judge whether this is due to the persistence of problems inherent in any system or a Slovenian peculiarity.

Would we negotiate differently if we were at the negotiating table today? Perhaps we would not be in such haste and would prepare more thoroughly – for our own sake, not the EU's; unfortunately, we did not take the full advantage of momentum and energies accumulated during the negotiations. If we had insisted then on more thoroughgoing reforms throughout the entire spectrum of state and society in general, our present situation would very probably be considerably better. If we had taken a break and made some additional useful (and thus not just necessary) changes, made certain improvements and prepared better for operating in the EU, we would be in a better position today. If only... We were in a hurry; the project was of a 'national importance', and any loss of élan could have been fatal. Or so we thought.



### Mitja Drobnič

In 1998 and 1999 Member of the Negotiating Team for Accession of Slovenia to the EU and Head of the Department for European Integration and Economic Relations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; today Head of Delegation of the European Union to Montenegro.

The European Union has been at the core of my work since 1992, when I joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia. After ten years of membership, talk about the beginnings of the EU integration process no longer holds the same interest; but to me, this story has several chapters, some of which are yet to be written. Slovenia was proudly one of the most efficient countries during the accession negotiations.

In 2002, I was appointed Ambassador to Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Six months before our accession, all ambassadors of the future Member States were invited as observers to the Cairo meetings of EU Member States' ambassadors; but even before that, I had begun to reap the benefits of our future full membership of the Union. It was quite difficult to obtain the information required to follow

Egypt's political and economic situation or useful information to promote bilateral economic cooperation, or to follow the turbulent and intense situation in the Middle East. However, EU Member States' ambassadors helped me greatly in my endeavours, especially from Germany, Italy and the UK. At the same time, the attitude of the Egyptian authorities, particularly the Foreign Ministry, began to change, and Slovenia was attracting more of their attention.

Following accession, the new Member States' ambassadors became equal partners in EU activities; at that time, the Union was represented by the ambassador of the Member State presiding over the Council (today, the head of the EU delegation performs this role). My work became easier, which was also reflected in consular affairs: after the 2005 bombings at the Dahab resort, I was first informed by the

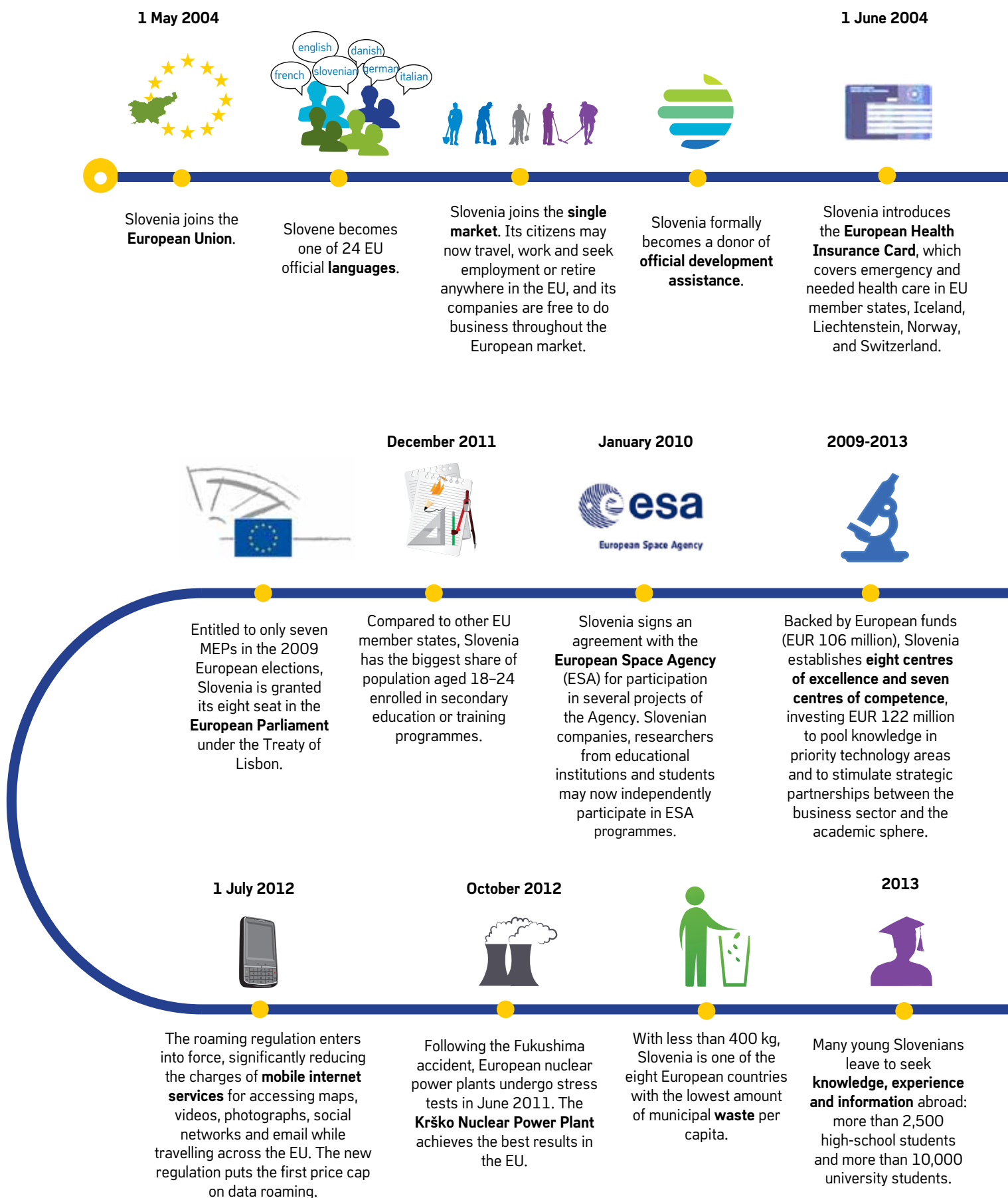
German ambassador that no Slovenian citizen had been killed or injured; due to the large number of German tourists, the German embassy had easy access to information.

I returned from Egypt in 2006, when EU presidency preparations were the Foreign Ministry's main concern. In June 2007, only six months before the presidency, I was appointed a political director, one of key positions during the presidency concerning the Common Foreign and Security Policy. My colleagues and heads of 27 working groups had to act quickly, devise a plan for preparations and start to implement it. The results of our work soon began to show. I believe that the Council presidency was the highlight of Slovenia's activity at the EU level, and this is true not only of foreign affairs but of all fields of its activity. Our success was largely driven by the team's high motivation.

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# Step by step



# in the EU

2 February 2005



EU establishes common rules on compensation and assistance to **air passengers** in certain cases. It applies to passengers departing from an airport located in an EU member state and to passengers arriving at such an airport from a third country when an EU carrier is the operator of the flight.

2006

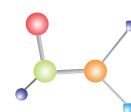


**Verica Trstenjak** is appointed the first Slovenian advocate-general at the European Court of Justice for a term of six years.

2 January 2007



Slovenia becomes the first of the EU12 to adopt the **euro** and the 13th member of the eurozone. The meticulous planning for the change pays off, as the transition is swift and smooth.



The Seventh Framework Programme for **research and development** is confirmed, allowing Slovenian scientists and institutions to cooperate with other member states. The results are impressive: Slovenian institutions and companies record 10,700 exchanges with institutions from other member states.

12 May 2009



The Slovenian city of Maribor is named **European Capital of Culture** in 2012.

January 2009



Slovenian nationals now dial **112** to reach emergency services throughout the EU.

15 April 2008



On Slovenia's initiative, the Ljubljana Process is launched to strategically enhance the development of the **European Research Area**.

13-14 March 2008



Slovenia chairs its first European Council and for a first time, a Slovenian prime minister hosts European heads of state and government at a dinner in Brussels.

21 December 2007



Slovenia joins the **Schengen area**, and thus enables its citizens to enter other Schengen countries without border control.

16 October 2013



**Boris Pahor** is one of the winners of the European Citizens' Prize awarded by the European Parliament for activities promoting the European spirit.

19 November 2013



The European Parliament approves the 2014-2020 **Multiannual Financial Framework**. For the second time, Slovenia succeeds in negotiating a positive net position and is set to benefit to the tune of 1.03% of GNI.

4 February 2014



Over the past ten years, Slovenia has succeeded in protecting, i.e. registering with the European Commission, 19 agricultural products and foodstuffs: 7 products with protected designation of origin label, 9 products with protected geographical indication label and 3 foodstuffs with traditional speciality guaranteed label.

25 March 2014



Ljubljana wins the second European **Mobility Week Award** and becomes the only city to take home this award twice.

## We are the EU

The collaboration of three principal institutions – the Member State, the European Commission and the European Parliament – allows for an efficient presentation of European topics to EU citizens and beyond. This year, marking the 10th anniversary of Slovenia's entry to the European Union, provides the right opportunity to look back on the trodden path and to chart the course for future. The upcoming European elections are a further reminder for us to be aware of the European family in which we live.



Photo: Mosphotos

The project aims to stimulate an exchange of opinions and viewpoints.

### **MORE EUROPE – MORE SLOVENIA**

The project "More Europe – More Slovenia" invites the citizens to "take part in discussions taking place at the public events online and in social networks to help form Slovenia's standpoints on the future of the European Union and Slovenia's role in it".

The project aims to stimulate an exchange of opinions and view-

points as well as citizens' proposals which would help the Government of the Republic of Slovenia to elaborate the starting points on the future development of the European Union and Slovenia's role in that development. The debates and a call for proposals are already underway and will be open until the end of June 2014.

Large numbers of participants in discussions and round tables, a lively debate and exchange of opinions taking place online and in social networks, both before and after the event, show that Slovenians are determined to cooperate in elaborating their country's standpoint on the future of the European Union and are very much concerned about its role in the European Union.



### YOUTH AND THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS – YOU ARE THE EU

In May 2014, citizens will be taking part in the European parliamentary elections. The decisions of the European Parliament affect each one of us, hence it is important to vote. In Slovenia, just over a quarter of all eligible voters took part in the European parliamentary elections in 2009. With those aged under 25, the figure actually failed to reach 20%. In light of these facts, a project for youth was initiated, with the purpose of stimulating young

people to participate in the European parliamentary elections and to take part in shaping Europe's future.

Workshops promoting active citizenship in secondary schools, round tables in university faculties, two topic conferences in Maribor and Ljubljana, as well as a competition to produce a logo, a slogan and a video, were among the main activities of the project.

More than 200 students and secondary school pupils took part in

a conference titled "Youth and Political Participation" in Ljubljana in April 2014. The participants discussed what kind of a world they strive after, what values they promote, which tools of political participation they use and how much their vote counts.

The project calls upon young people to "participate, play an active role and be part of the change today", inviting them to participate in related events and to vote in the elections to the European Parliament.

The project YOU ARE THE EU (EU SI TI) was initiated with the purpose of stimulating young people to participate in the European parliamentary elections and to take part in shaping Europe's future.

**EUROPE, MY COUNTRY**

May 2014 will mark the tenth anniversary of Slovenia's entry to the European Union. There was once a commercial slogan saying "Slovenia, my country". Do Slovenians after ten years of membership feel the European Union as their own country? That question was addressed to the citizens who had voiced

their opinions and expectations upon Slovenia's entry to the EU in 2004. Today, they will share their experiences regarding the changes which EU membership brought about in their daily and professional lives. Individuals from various professions, social statuses and different walks of life will present their own "EU stories" to be featured in 15 short TV clips.

The project aims to stimulate public discussion, it provides online information on elections to the European Parliament and seeks to compare political standpoints of MEP candidates with standpoints of the voter, calling upon citizens to take part in the European elections and thus co-decide on the future of the European Union.

Photo: Moshphotos



Green jobs are jobs of the future.

**PROMOTING GREEN JOBS**

What are green jobs? What business opportunities do they bring? How to support green development and how to strengthen political, economic, social and technological environment as well as the rule of law?

More than 200 participants who took part in the first national conference on "Promoting Green Jobs" are a proof that Slovenia recognises the importance of green jobs, while aiming to uphold its green-oriented ambitions as the focal point of Europe's future common de-

velopment. The main goals of the project are promulgating inspirational good practices in the area of green jobs and their contribution to economic development, connecting local communities and businesses and promoting the creation of green jobs in Slovenia.



## Slovenia

# At home in Europe

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of Slovenia's membership of the European Union, the Government Communication Office of the Republic of Slovenia decided to present the Slovenian contribution to integration in a somewhat different way – with a photography exhibition. With the story told by photographs of well-established Slovenian photographers, we wish to emphasise the rich natural and cultural heritage of Slovenia, its known and less known jewels of the diverse landscape and the activities of people living in it.

Photo: Žiga Koritnik



Doma v Evropi / At home in Europe

Although Slovenia is one of the smallest EU member states, it has greatly contributed to the Community, i.e. it boasts the oldest known wooden wheel with an axle in the world, one of the highest levels of biodiversity, the largest underground canyon in the world, the largest intermittent lake in Europe, the largest share of national territory included in Natura 2000, the most complex dialect network in Europe, it is one of the richest countries in Europe in water resources per capita, and many other things of which Slovenians can be proud.

Thus, most of the photographs are 'postcards' of Slovenia, with motifs from nature, cultural heritage, architectural masterpieces and scenes of people's activities in nature. The captions to the photographs widen the view to the European level and place Slovenia in the Community, of which it has been a member for ten years.

The Government Communication Office of the Republic of Slovenia prepared the exhibition in cooperation with photo editors Matej Leskovšek and Uroš Hočevar from Slovenia Press Photo. The final selection of 38 photographs was made from a

selection of more than one thousand.

And where can the exhibition be seen? It starts its journey in Ljubljana (8 - 22 May) and continues to the capitals of the member states which accepted among their number ten new countries, including Slovenia, on 1 May 2004. The exhibition will thus be showcased in Brussels in June, Berlin in July, Copenhagen in August and London in September, Paris in October and Rome in November.

More about the exhibition can be found at the website [www.ukom.gov.si](http://www.ukom.gov.si).

Thus, most of the photographs are 'postcards' of Slovenia, with motifs from nature, cultural heritage, architectural masterpieces and scenes of people's activities in nature.

Pieter Jan Langenberg  
Dutch Ambassador to Slovenia

## **My main emphasis is on public and economic diplomacy**

Although diplomacy is one of the worlds' oldest professions, Mr. Langenberg thinks that it is still practised behind closed doors too much. He is convinced that it would be a good idea to open the windows even more. After his arrival here, he was asked to talk about the Netherlands in general and had to introduce Dutch songs on the Slovene International Sunday radio program.





**Public diplomacy implies that, as an ambassador, you make yourself available to the media. How do you do that?**

I do hope that writing blogs and making good use of social media like Twitter and Facebook help to reach out to a wider audience, thus helping everyone to understand what the Dutch Embassy is trying to accomplish nowadays. My colleagues at the Embassy and I are always willing to spend time on the lecture circuit, either at seminars, such as the one regarding your European movement, local schools, or university departments. In fact, we have become modern lobbyists for Dutch national interests. We aim for a positive association when “Holland” comes up. In short, we do nation branding all day.

**Is there a big difference between the two countries?**

The similarities are becoming bigger than the differences. Currently, we are both Member States of the European Union, and we share a common history in Europe – from the Roman Empire, the Frankish Emperor Charlemagne, the Ger-

man Emperor Charles the Fifth, Napoleon, and more recently German occupation during the Second World War. We subscribe to the same European core values. Nonetheless, there are minor cultural differences that make life interesting. Of course, I am happy to note that I have moved to a central-European nation with a rich and diverse, almost multicultural, gastronomic tradition. History and the environment have influenced the kitchen directly, ranging from Viennese coffeehouses with generous tarts and pastries, to the truffles, olives, and fresh fish of the Mediterranean coast. Pasta and homemade ice cream, good beer, and fine wine, squid, and schnitzel – even burek – seem to co-exist happily. But more seriously, like the Netherlands, Slovenia has always maintained its distinct identity and its own language. Your citizens are rightly proud of their heritage, and they often ask me immediately what I think about Slovenia as a newly independent nation. The answer can only be positive: the quality of life is high. So it is no surprise that the Dutch community here seems

to be well integrated, the same applies equally to the Slovenian community in the Netherlands.

**What is your main experience in our country after being posted to Slovenia last summer?**

The looming banking crisis, the stress tests, privatisation, the current political transition and reform process, even allegations of corruption and possible future political instability, are all matters that can justify reporting by embassies. The numerous regular bilateral and multilateral contacts by our national ministers and experts in Brussels, Geneva, or New York have to be prepared for in the capitals, but they are often supplied with inside input from our own diplomatic missions too. An informed perspective can prevent surprises due to over-dependence on hearsay or the media’s perceptions. One has to know beforehand if other EU member states are like-minded, or if they have contrary views and interests. Before European ministers or leaders meet, whether to discuss finance, foreign relations, or the way Europe itself works, there are

Identifying commercial prospects or investment risks is part of his regular job description. Netherlands is a major investor in Eastern Europe and in Slovenia’s top ten with regard to some statistics. Dutch multinationals hold investments or have a presence in Slovenia: Philips, Unilever, Shell, DAF Trucks, TNT, Heineken.

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We aim for a positive association when “Holland” comes up.



In the photo: Dutch Ambassador to Slovenia Pieter Jan Langenberg with Slovenian President Borut Pahor.

often many briefings or informal contacts between countries in advance. I have to say that I have found your authorities always rather open to discussion regarding any policy issues.

**After being in the EU for ten years, Slovenia is now struggling to meet the benchmarks agreed upon by the EU and the eurozone. How would you comment on these endeavours?**

Setting the bar high implies even more change, through greater openness, reform in order to withstand increased competition in a tough economic climate, and adapting to general European standards. The role and responsibilities of the state that were taken for granted in the past are no longer certain. It is not so easy to deal with change if you are out of a job or retired and feeling much more responsible for your own well-being. The banking crises, stress tests, further reforms, and the large-scale privatisation of the public sector were the talk of the day when I arrived. They still are. The system, with a traditionally large overlap between economic and political elites, is also clearly in for change. These transitions all add up to a dynamic, sometimes unpredictable but always interesting, domestic political and economic environment. From this perspective, Slovenia makes an interesting posting for a foreign observer and any diplomat.

**How do you assess our bilateral relations?**

A diplomat's life becomes more interesting if there are more problems. Nonetheless, I am happy to say that our bilateral relationship has experienced hardly any problems. In fact, it is rather good, because the Netherlands and Slovenia are rather like-minded, and often work together to achieve goals in international affairs, for example, human rights issues at the United Nations. We both lobby one another for UN candidacies, for the Security Council candidacy of the Netherlands in 2017-18, and the Human Rights Council candidacy of Slovenia in 2015. I would like us to work more closely on the European agenda too.

**You stated that a Dutch ambassador nowadays spends almost half of his time on economic diplomacy.**

Working visits to different companies to find out if there are any commercial opportunities, and to gain a better feeling for the business climate in general, are always useful. I have already visited quite some companies, among others, Iskraemeco in Kranj, TIPS and NEK in Krško, and Henkel in Maribor. Representing a trading nation, including the Port of Rotterdam, 'the gateway to Europe', as we like to call it, explains why the Dutch are always interested in the area of transport and logistics. We have a lot to offer there, from dredging to cargo handling. The Port of Koper

might increase its cargo handling capacity by extending the harbor, and foreign investment might be instrumental in making that happen. However, as the Slovene government's strategic planning towards transport infrastructure is still being worked on, it is not yet clear whether the state-owned harbor might be ready to receive any foreign investment, and if yes, when and under what conditions. 100% privatisation is unlikely, so the question is: might a long-term lease of a cargo concession be considered? It could raise capital for investment, introduce foreign expertise, and improve Koper's connections by sea and land to other main transport hubs. Waiting too long might be detrimental, as competing harbors in the region might be an alternative for foreign investors and transport companies.

**Are there any other areas where you feel that commercial collaboration might be profitable for both countries?**

The Netherlands excels in fields like water, agri-food, and life sciences. We are the world's 2nd largest agri-food exporter. Of course, for instance, one wonders why more vegetables, fruit and flowers aren't produced in Slovenia itself. Ocean Orchids is the exception to the rule, having set up greenhouses based on a Dutch design, heated by thermal hot water, in the northeastern part of the country. It can be done with

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A diplomat's life becomes more interesting if there are more problems. Nonetheless, I am happy to say that our bilateral relationship has experienced hardly any problems.



Visit to Iskraemeco.

vegetables too, as Lušt tomatoes have proven. I was impressed when I visited them, a good match between Slovene entrepreneurship and Dutch technology and know-how. We might create more win-win opportunities like these, although limited financing by local banks and the time needed to navigate the necessary red tape, such as licensing paperwork, do hinder their business potential. We are working on a Dutch Horticulture Day on July 4, to bring Dutch expertise and interested Slovene parties again together.

In early February, the Embassy's commercial section also organised the so-called Dutch Water Days, together with the responsible ministries and the Chamber of Commerce. Clean, reliable, and safe water is essential for human life and for farming and industry, yet too often we still take it for granted. Through the struggle against the water, and coping with flooding, we Dutch have learnt our lessons the hard way, over many centuries. As the saying goes: "As God created the world, the Dutch created Holland." We have turned the lessons learnt into our commercial advantage.

**Another interesting area of bilateral cooperation is design. Dutch design, and the Dutch creative industry in general, among other areas, architecture and fashion, is something you are very proud of.** The successful mix of old and new

is one of the reasons why Dutch design is such a well-known brand, combining functional and artistic qualities in many products. So I was not surprised to find out at the kick-off event at the Ljubljana Museum of Architecture and Design MAO that quite a number of well-known Dutch designers, architects, and other creative minds from Holland are enthusiastically involved in the Ljubljana Design Biennale, BIO 50. The curator Jan Boelen, a lecturer on social design at the Eindhoven Design Academy, will go beyond showing traditional products, like chairs, and into design related developments: affordable living, food awareness, public water space, the fashion system, to mention a few. He has succeeded in releasing quite a lot of positive energy already.

Perhaps the residence that I live in is an even a better example. It is one of a series of functional buildings purpose built for the Dutch government. Designed by the Dutch-Slovene architectural practice Bevk-Perović, it is undoubtedly a strong statement of their vision regarding what should define modern Dutch diplomacy. Natural materials, shifting panels, and lots of glass combine to provide a flexible and transparent environment for living and working. Transparency is indeed an increasingly prominent characteristic of modern Dutch diplomacy. However, having your home featured in architectural guidebooks

does have consequences, as I had to get used to curious passers-by peering in across the hedge to catch a glimpse of contemporary Dutch-Slovene design.

**With the elections for the European Parliament coming up May 25th, it will probably be interesting to follow the domestic political debate.**

As EU ambassadors, we were asked by schools to talk about how the EU is perceived in our home countries. My Embassy will be taking part as well. The Slovene Ministry of Foreign Affairs has already organised a series of debates entitled "More Europe, more Slovenia". What's in a name? The difference with the critical and growing anti-European sentiments one can find in some outspoken political circles within the original six EU founding members is striking. To a degree, a more pro-European attitude over here is to be expected, as Slovenia is a recent Member State that still appreciates the advantages of European integration. Also your politicians don't blame Brussels for everything. Many people in the older Member States, like the Netherlands, often take the EU and its accomplishments for granted. In the Netherlands, we argue for the application of the subsidiary principle, which means taking decisions at the appropriate, best level. It might be the local, or the European level, depending on the issue. Another priority is to help the EU itself function better.

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## 2013 Rating of the Year award

# It proves that we and our partners are reliable

This year's winners of the 2013 Rating of the Year awards, conferred by the largest international credit rating agency, Dun & Bradstreet, for the best credit rating, are software maker Dewesoft from Trbovlje, magnetic materials maker Magneti Ljubljana and paper manufacturer Papirnica Vevče. According to D & B and its Slovenian partner Bonitetna hiša i Ljubljana, all three companies have most favourable risk factors, make payments promptly, operate successfully and have not made any bold business and capital moves that might threaten their existence.

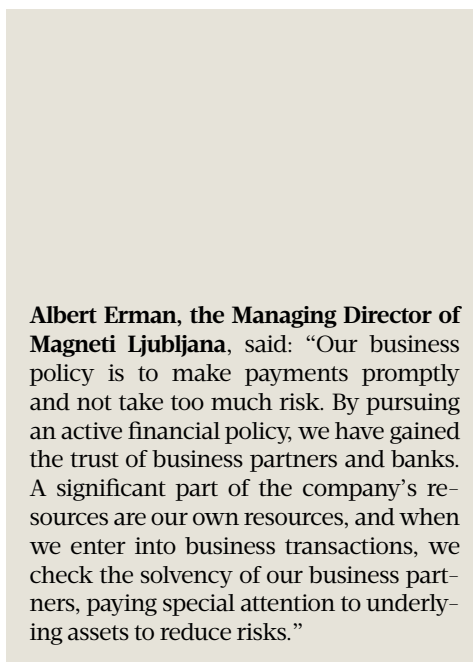
Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



**Dewesoft Director Andrej Orožen** highlights the importance of strategy and a level-headed approach in business operations: “Over the years of the company’s operation, we have done business in line with the generated income. At the time when we were involved solely in software development and sales, we achieved good results. Software development does not require big investments, but on the other hand, it enables us to deliver high added value. The accumulated profits have helped us to navigate these difficult times and remain stable and full of new ideas. When there was a tendency for everyone to make savings, we stepped up our investments in the development of new products, started the production of our own instruments, and expanded our business to other countries in the world. That is why we are not burdened with financing costs and are able to make all payments from our own resources. Given the company’s good position, we can allow ourselves to be bold to a certain extent, using common sense and good judgment, of course.”

They all agree, however, that there is no such thing as a general recipe for success. A lot also depends on the quality of a company’s products, their investment in the education of their employees and the quality of the company’s communication skills.

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



**Albert Erman, the Managing Director of Magneti Ljubljana,** said: “Our business policy is to make payments promptly and not take too much risk. By pursuing an active financial policy, we have gained the trust of business partners and banks. A significant part of the company’s resources are our own resources, and when we enter into business transactions, we check the solvency of our business partners, paying special attention to underlying assets to reduce risks.”



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



**The Director of Papirnica Vevče, Marko Jagodič,** agrees with the other two award-winners: “This is the result of long years of systematic work. We devote particular attention to the continuous education and training of our employees, who contribute to the company’s success, each in their own field of expertise. We are aware how important it is to make payments promptly and honour business agreements. We are not over-indebted, and we plan and manage cash flows. We believe that it is important to identify and manage different business risks and actively monitor claims to reduce risks, including with the help of credit ratings.”

#### FUTURE ORIENTED

All three companies are future-oriented. Last year, Papirnica Vevče invested over EUR 10 million in a new film press with a view to implementing new special products. They are also environmentally responsible. They are proud of having developed the world’s lightest label paper, which is used for labelling plastic bottles. This investment also contributed to a 15% increase in their production capacity.

All three companies are aware that their success is down to

teamwork and that this award also belongs to all their employees. The optimism felt by the employees of these companies has particular significance at a time of economic crisis. It is because of this very optimism that the award is all the more precious and brings a smile to their faces. Mr Erman said: “Having received this award in these difficult economic times, we have a great commitment and responsibility to continue to implement a positive financial policy.”

In addition to this, the award has a significant practical value. It

will be mentioned in the credit ratings of the award-winning companies for the whole year. In turn, the companies will automatically be offered more favourable terms by suppliers, banks and insurance companies. The award-winners hope and expect that the award will break down any reservations their major clients might still have and that they will see them as good partners in economic and technological terms. They will inform their partners of the award, hoping that this will also help them negotiate better payment terms with their suppliers.

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Given the company’s good position, we can allow ourselves to be bold to a certain extent, using common sense and good judgment, of course.

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



The awarding of the 2013 Rating of the Year awards for the best credit rating in 2013 to three Slovenian companies, organised by Dun & Bradstreet and Bonitetna hiša i. Director of Papirnica Vevče Marko Jagodič, Managing Director of Magneti Ljubljana Albert Erman, Director of Dewesoft Andrej Orožen, and Helios CEO Uroš Slavinec.

**THERE'S NO GENERAL RECIPE**

When asked what their recipe for success is, Andrej Orožen said: "The revenue must be distributed as and when generated, and not before. Of course, one must also continuously invest in development, new products and expand the market." They all agree, however, that there is no such thing as a general recipe for success. A lot also depends on the quality of a company's products, their investment in the education of their employees and the quality of the company's communication skills.

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We devote particular attention to the continuous education and training of our employees, who contribute to the company's success, each in their own field of expertise.



Photo: Tamara Petelinšek/STA



Magneti Ljubljana

Photo: Archive of Magneti



Dewesoft

Photo: Archive of Dewesoft



## Enolyse

# Wine and software

This year's University of Ljubljana Rector's Award went to the project Enolyse, a system for monitoring wine fermentation. A group of seven undergraduate and graduate students have developed a sensor for measuring sugar levels and a software tool to monitor the process of fermentation.

Photo: Željko Stevančić



The winning team members are Jaka Ogorevc, Primož Zajec, Petra Malavašič, Matic Krajnc, Nejc Stanko, Diano Kitanovski and team leader Martin Blazinšek, who holds a university degree in electrical engineering and is in his leisure time “a connoisseur of good wine”.

At the award ceremony, the minister responsible for science, Dr Jernej Pikalo, stated that “The University of Ljubljana, which is active in all scientific fields, is an incubator of knowledge and understanding, preparing conditions for innovation in the broadest social, cultural and not merely economic or technological senses of the word.” The Rec-

tor, Prof. Ivan Svetlik, stressed in this context that “The graduate students who enter the working environment armed with the knowledge provided by our university are a key element for constructing bridges between us and the economic sector. The present time requires us to find and create new forms of direct links between the university and employers.” As the special guest of the event and its keynote speaker, Prof. Jörg Steinbach, President of the Technical University of Berlin, noted, “Europe as a whole and Slovenia as a part of it face the important challenge of reassessing the social perception of entrepreneurship in the broadest sense of the word. The

role of the educational system and of universities is not only to encourage scientific excellence, but also to cultivate a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship and to empower young people for a responsible development of their careers”.

### FOUNDING MEMBERS

The founding members of the start-up who developed the system for monitoring wine fermentation, Primož Zajec, Jaka Ogorevc and Martin Blazinšek, were friends years before they started their entrepreneurial experience. Ogorevc and Blazinšek met back in their primary school days, when they played for their

Members of the entrepreneurial team.

Europe as a whole and Slovenia as a part of it face the important challenge of reassessing the social perception of entrepreneurship in the broadest sense of the word.



Photo: Zeljko Stevanic

The Rector's Award is awarded for the fourth time. The aim of the competition, launched by the Ljubljana University Incubator, is to encourage innovative individuals to transform their ideas into market-attractive products.

respective schools' basketball teams, while the three attended the same secondary school, went to the Faculty of Electrical Engineering in Ljubljana together and became close friends and roommates.

**FROM IDEA TO PRODUCT AND MARKETING**

The original idea on developing a complete solution for wine analysis came to Martin Blazinšek in 2009. His father, who was analysing some wine with a set of several tools, said that he wished someone could combine all these tools into a single measuring system. Martin, with the help

of his friends, decided to develop a sensor that would enable a new approach to wine analysis.

The product prototype is already being tested, and a patent application is being prepared. They plan to shortly produce a series of prototypes to offer to wine-makers, several of whom have already expressed an interest. The team hope to obtain the patent and the necessary certificates before this autumn's wine harvest. Their ambition is to sell their product globally, as, according to the young innovators; the sensor has the potential to be used in the brewing, food processing and even chemical in-

dustries. The price of the product, for the time being, still remains to be fixed.

Although aware of the competition, members of the Enolyse project are confident of the advantages of their innovative approach, which enables continuous on-the-spot measuring. Their competitors are mostly producers of vinificators, i.e. tanks for wine fermentation. The knowledge of the team, acquired through study, will thus not remain merely a paper project but will reach out through a successful entrepreneurial effort.

Although aware of the competition, members of the Enolyse project are confident of the advantages of their innovative approach, which enables continuous on-the-spot measuring.



Photo: Jean Luc Cochinneau/Mesiphotos

## Tinkara Kovač

# Round and round

Tinkara Kovač will be representing Slovenia in the Eurovision Song Contest in Denmark with the song Spet/Round and Round. She is a professional flautist, musician, singer, producer, and a writer of music and lyrics, who, in the fifteen years of her career, has received many awards.

Photo: Tina Kosec/STA





Photo: Nekočja Terič/STA

Tinkara Kovač achieved formal music education as a professor with a degree in flute playing at the Giuseppe Tartini conservatory in Trieste.

The song is about the rotation of the world, about people. It is about the same old patterns, some bad and some good. It seems that there are more bad ones than the good ones. In the chorus, I suggest we should change, but for the better, to apply values that already exist.

To perform at the Eurovision Song Contest is an opportunity for her to be heard by other European listeners and those who follow the contest. She also hopes for new collaborations and opportunities for performances and promotion abroad. Her expectations are high, because she sees the Eurovision Song Contest as a good occasion to develop her career. So, be sure to vote for Spet/Round and Round.

**You first performed at EMA (Slovenian national contest) in 1997; then three times as a solo singer and once as a backing vocalist. You won at the fourth attempt. What made you decide to perform at EMA again?**

I look at performances as presentations of my new singles in certain periods. In the meantime, I was more focused on other things. Last year, I was invited by Slavko Ivančič to perform at the Melodije morja in sonca festival (Melodies of the Sea and the Sun Festival), and this year at EMA at the invitation of RTV Slovenia. I think that the situation at Slovenian festivals is improving; a growing number

of good performers are participating again. When the single Spet/Round and Round was almost finished, I told myself that it was good to perform at EMA, because more people would hear the song, and if I won, that would be an additional bonus. I can add that I had the inspiration for the song while walking the Rilke Path (it is a tourist trail, providing a scenic view of a gulf of Trieste, Italy). At the time, I never imagined that so many people would hear it. I cannot wait to present the song to the European audience at the Eurovision Song Contest.

**Are you thinking about an international career?**

I have not only been thinking about a career abroad, but working on it for a few years now. I have had many music collaborations in Italy. An album will soon be released in Italy, which was recorded in Italian for the Italian market. In 2004, I released an album in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region for which I received the album of the year award. The album, called Orange, was distributed throughout

Italy. We also distributed in Croatia and other countries of the former Yugoslavia. Each new market is a success, but it does not happen over night; it takes a lot of work. When entering a new market, you always start anew. I have been working in Slovenia for 17 years, which means that I have been actively involved in the music scene, giving interviews, hosting radio shows, having concerts. It is nice, but less exciting than it seems. It is good to have concerts also elsewhere and not only in Slovenia.

**You will be representing Slovenia in Copenhagen with the song Spet/Round and Round. What is the song's message?**

The song is about the rotation of the world, about people. It is about the same old patterns, some bad and some good. It seems that there are more bad ones than the good ones. In the chorus, I suggest we should change, but for the better, to apply values that already exist. Love is the answer to any question.

**The song was partly in Slovenian and partly in English. Only the**



**Slovenian version is played by radio stations. In which language will you be performing in Denmark?**

The song will be performed in Slovenian and English, as it was at EMA. The performance at EMA had to be the same as if the song was being performed at the Eurovision Song Contest. I decided for both languages. I sing in English to be understood by the wider public and in Slovenian because it is part of my identity, my soul. Slovenia is my soul, and the language in which I feel and think, and considering the fact that there are so few of us, it is my responsibility to present the song in Slovenian.

**How are the preparations going for the Eurovision Song Contest, which is on 6 May?**

I have voice practice, many interviews and guest appearances on different shows. Basically, I just have to be myself. It will not be any different from any other concert. I am working on preserving my own identity. My biggest endeavour in recent weeks has been to get some rest. A lot of time is be-

ing taken up by the preparations for the Slovenian day, which will be a very positive promotional event, where several successful Slovenian companies will also be presented.

**Will the choreography be the same?**

I will present the song from the heart and soul to the best of my ability. I will be singing and playing the flute; there will also be my backing vocalists, who will be concentrating on the singing. We would like to give a good musical performance.

**What about the costumes? Maja Keuc and Eva Boto wore designs by David Matej Goljat and Hannah Mancini chose a dress by Jelena Prokovič. Who will be designing your outfit?**

This will stay secret. If you reveal everything, then you take away the magic and the experience of the public. I will only say that Svetlana Visintin is doing the costume design for the stage.

**The expectations of the Slovenian public are high. How does that affect you and what is your personal goal?**

If the expectations of the public are high, then I am happy, because that means that they respect me. I will give a good performance. Everything else is in the hands of the voters. If the song suits a Pan-European taste, that will be great. The organisation of the Eurovision Song Contest seems a nice way to promote the host country. I would be happy if such a grand show happened in Slovenia next year. I am not nervous before performing at the Eurovision Song Contest, since I enjoy what I do. I guarantee I will do my best. The rest is up to the context, as there is a lot of lobbying by different countries. The win of a certain country is not self-evident. They find out beforehand if the country which won can host the Contest. A few years ago, this was not possible in Slovenia, but now that we have Stožice Arena, it is. We will see. Let the universe decide.

Tinkara Kovač's other awards include first place at the Melodije morja in sonca festival 1997, eight Golden Roosters in 1998, gold and platinum awards for all her albums, second place at EMA in 1999, and the best video and song at the 2000 TV MP3 NOW contest in London.

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I sing in English to be understood by the wider public and in Slovenian because it is part of my identity, my soul.

## 100 years of Slovenian puppetry art

“Slovenian puppetry is based on an exceptional heritage which is unique and rare in the world. The selection was also a tribute to some of the extraordinary artists who have created for the puppet theatre,” said Agata Freyer and Edi Majaron, the curators of the exhibition, at the opening.



Photo: Tamino Pečiršek/STA

There is a difference between a puppet performance with string or hand puppets. Every puppet has its own character; the puppet-maker explores how to stage its emotional state and through this process they merge into one.

The exhibition, 100 Years of Slovenian Puppetry Art, was the third after the exhibitions of Polish and Serbian puppets prepared in cooperation with the National Museum of Slovenia.

On 21 March, World Puppetry Day, the exhibition 100 Years of Slovenian Puppetry Art opened at the National Museum of Slovenia. The curators designed the installation chronologically, so as to clearly display the changing aesthetics of puppets through history. Among those who stand out in the development of puppetry is, for example, Jože Ciuha. Freyer described him as a doyen of the fine artists who designed the puppets displayed at the exhibition. By looking at his puppets, it is possible to see how the artist's pictorial expression is reflected in the third dimension, she said. Many other artists

devoted their lives to puppets, i.e. Tone Kralj, Marlenka Stupica, Matjaž Schmidt, Marija Lucija Stupica, Jože Tisnikar, Breda Varl, Silvan Omerzu and others.

### THE MOST INTERESTING PUPPETS

Slovenian puppetry art always relied on exceptional painters who understood puppetry as a special form of fine art – visual art dramaturgy. Some were even puppet makers and also manufactured puppets themselves, while others made only sketches and the manufacturing was done by various supreme puppet makers.

Visual art dramaturgy is a complex type of fine art that requires the artist to first acquire a general knowledge of fine arts and the essence of theatrical costume and stage design, but above all, to understand the heart and soul of the puppet theatre, which is by no means a miniature form of the main stage, but has its own characteristics of the surreal and astounding and requires spatial showcasing. The puppet is a metaphor, a symbol of a person on stage, which suggests to the audience an understanding of its role in a performance with artistic elements. The puppet is the perfect actor, which – if techno-

logically well-presented – does not misrepresent the creator's ideas, as it is the full reflection of creativity in harmony with rational decisions.

#### PUPPETRY ART

Klemenčič (1875–1957) introduced the Italian and German traditions to Slovenia, focusing in particular on Venetian-style marionettes. He always stressed that puppet shows were his most important exhibitions.

The exhibition, 100 Years of Slovenian Puppetry Art, was the third after the exhibitions of Polish and Serbian puppets prepared in cooperation with the National Museum of Slovenia, said the director of Mini teater, Robert Waltl. They are also planning an exhibition of French and Israeli puppets. The current exhibition, featuring over 200 puppets, will be showcased at the National Museum of Slovenia until 8 June, and then tour Europe; first to Belgrade (Serbia), then to Kotor and Bar (Montenegro), Zagreb (Croatia), Subotica (Serbia), Budapest (Hungary) and Novi Sad (Serbia).

tia), Subotica (Serbia), Budapest (Hungary) and Novi Sad (Serbia).

#### WHY WORLD PUPPETRY DAY?

Edi Majaron: "Puppets do not hate; they are not envious or mean. They say everything that has to be said in a way that does not hurt us. They even take responsibility for our failures and defeats. They give us love, trust and honesty when we truly believe in them. At least on one day in the year we can think of, and talk more about, puppets."

Among those who stand out in the development of puppetry is, for example, Jože Ciuha. Freyer described him as a doyen of the fine artists who designed the puppets displayed at the exhibition.

Photo: Janina Žagar



Technical animation and the puppet's emotions are companions giving the puppet performance a rhythm and persuasiveness.

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



#### Message from Eduardo Di Mauro, Argentinian puppetry artist.

Puppets originate in one of the most primitive and original forms of art: play, not the representation of the sacred, as is sometimes understood. Puppetry was born from a genre of performance that was objective, spontaneous, transparent, and naturally became increasingly complex as it adopted various forms and content. Due to their transgressive nature, puppets have been feared and persecuted by kings, emperors, emirs, tsars and every other kind of abusive power, since this character of wood and cloth, however lovable and picturesque, is also the bearer of a keen talent for condemnation and criticism, able to use sarcasm, irony and humour with talent, rhythm and biting effect.



Slovenian puppetry is a rich field, it follows international puppet trends and has throughout history participated in a number of significant European puppet festivals.

**INTERESTING FACTS**

The founding father of Slovenian puppets was a painter, Milan Klemenčič, who received an education in the romantic tradition of Italian and especially German string-puppet theatres. In 1910, he introduced his own private Tiny String-Puppet Theatre to the public. The main actors in the performance were Milan and Pepca Klemenčič.

In the period between the two world wars, there was a boom in Sokol movement puppets in Slovenia, following the Czech example. In 1939 there were as many as 43 string-puppet stages registered as part of the activities of Sokol clubs. The intention of the programme was to educate and to raise national awareness.

String puppets were the predominant feature of the early era of Slovenian puppetry. In 1934, ethnologist Dr Niko Kure was the first to create a stage for hand puppets. Five years later he took Pavliha and his company to Radio Ljubljana and established Pavliha as the Slovenian version of Pulcinella, Kasperl, Punch, Petrushka and others.

It was a puppeteer from the Sokol club, sculptor Lojze Lavrič, who initiated the founding of the Partisan Puppet Theatre in 1944. This was a surprising cultural phenomenon which gained in popularity during the war in Europe, incorporating themes appropriate to the times.

Slovenian puppetry art always relied on exceptional painters who understood puppetry as a special form of fine art – visual art dramaturgy.



# Laibach

## The band that survived itself

Laibach returned to international scene in grand style this spring. After re-releasing new studio album in March, Laibach performed for the first time in China and Hong Kong and is now on tour across Europe. In fall expect them to perform across the U. S. A.

Photo: Maya Nahingale



Spectre is Laibach's first studio album since 2006's widely acclaimed conceptual album Volk with 14 versions of national anthems including the one of their own NSK art collective, which declared its own virtual state in 1991. In the meantime Laibach also released the side projects Laibachkunstderfuge (2008) and Iron Sky: The Original Film Soundtrack (2012).

With Spectre, once again, they have re-invented itself in a newly born, yet polished and solid, formation. And, as is now customary, the band calls into question all the rigid and cemented

interpretations (and prejudices) about itself, about its music, intentions, philosophy and ideology. And yet, despite everything, the new album resonates as a real and full-blooded Laibachian work and nothing else. One can say that with this album Laibach has created a big, important, and dangerous step forward. For, as Laibach themselves describes Spectre, it literally sounds like a political manifesto in poetic form.

The magnificent and serious, yet formally playful, fresh and provocative album steps out of its own shadow and brings an ar-

ray of new songs and ideas with which Laibach demonstrates that it masterfully manages its position.

But Laibach is more than just music. The band is famous for its uniqueness and provocative symbolic behaviour, which often brings to mind totalitarian states and which, especially at the beginning, caused many problems for the band. Laibach is distinct for their theatrical performances on stage. The band pushed many boundaries with their image and costume choices in the past- from partisan army look that reminiscent of a Ty-

Laibach is the German name for the capital of Ljubljana, which has through the band's accomplishments become a symbol of music, image and design.

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As Laibach says, by surviving Yugoslavia, Slovenia, Europe and NSK state, it actually survived itself.



They became famous in 1980 with a concert that never happened. Due to their controversial name and lyrics, the authorities banned their concert in Delavski dom in Trbovlje.

The band is famous for its uniqueness and provocative symbolic behaviour, which often brings to mind totalitarian states and which, especially at the beginning, caused many problems for the band.

rol to costumes resembling Nazi uniforms or those of the Yugoslav National Army. As Guardian wrote “Laibach just might be the most absurd group ever to have existed”. In the last three and a half decades their dark appearances became their distinction.

Besides creating a big sensation and enraging the public, the band also thrilled many sup-

porters of the avant-garde. Since then, the band’s involvement in art and music has been featured in numerous articles, television and radio shows and literary works. It is 34 years since Laibach’s existence; the band was founded in 1980 in the mining town of Trbovlje in Zasavje region of Slovenia. In this period Laibach survived everything: Salonica and Isonzo Front, WWII,

Brezhnev, Kennedy, Tito, 80’s, 90’s, 100’s, numerous names of domestic and foreign politics, the fall of Yugoslavia and the war that followed, the excitement of the independence and the entry to the E.U. of Slovenia. As Laibach says, by surviving Yugoslavia, Slovenia, Europe and NSK state, it actually survived itself.

Laibach have markedly influenced the band Rammstein, which refers to the band as its greatest inspiration. It also inspires Marilyn Manson and its concerts are frequently attended by Trent Reznor. The list of important musicians and artists who have in one way or another expressed their enthusiasm for Laibach is fairly long and also includes members of The Stranglers, Judas Priest, and Faith No More.

Its publishing company is the famous Mute Records from London, which has nurtured renowned international artists such as Depeche Mode, Nick Cave, Goldfrapp, Moby, Diamanda Galas, etc. On 16 May 2014, Laibach will again perform on the stage of the Križanke Outdoor Theatre in Ljubljana.

In 1995 they performed in the besieged city of Sarajevo, where they announced the founding of the state of NSK Sarajevo. Laibach have also performed at Tate Modern in London.

## Art Monaco

# Miss Monet by Catherina Zavodnik

The paintings and graphics of Catherina Zavodnik are like a theatre of memories in space and time. Like a palimpsest, they reveal the secrets of old, forgotten and blurred recordings in the field of modern technology. Their fragile and graceful consistency of expression shows that these are brilliant creations which are the result of total dedication, research, aestheticism, experience and desire.

Photo: Steven Music

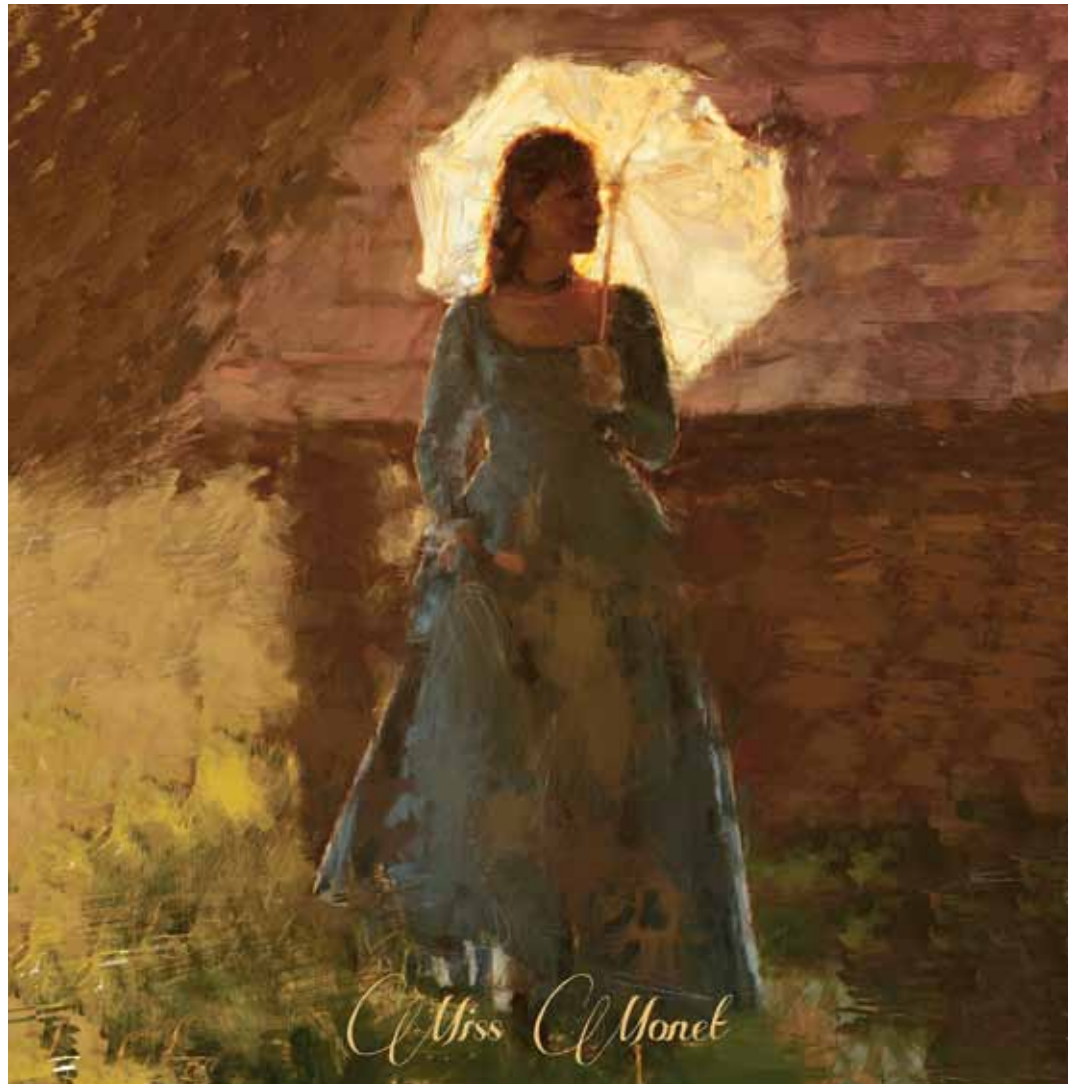
In Slovenia and abroad, Catherina Zavodnik has participated in many group and solo exhibitions, including the Ripatriarsi-Tribute to Da Vinci (Praetorian Palace, Koper, Slovenia, 2013) and Lettra – Krakow 2012/Letter and Sign Exhibition/International Print Triennial Society – Krakow 2012.




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Catherina Zavodnik was invited to Monaco by the Canadian artist Mona Youssef, and she will be showcasing Miss Monet, a digital painting on plexiglass, under the auspices of the Mona Youssef Art Gallery.

The image of Miss Monet is a recent symbolic self-portrait of Catherina Zavodnik and one of her modified historical characters, who has been created over the years with creative interplay. Miss Constable Catherina, Johannes Lady and Leonardo's Eternal Women are similar characters. As Milček Komej, Slovenian art historian, wrote in one of his reviews of Zavodnik's art, all these depictions of women are imbued with optimism, reverie, and rapt with love, which is a condition for any creativity.



Her works are characterised by high-levels of poeticism and aestheticism as she strives for purity and light. It is, therefore, not surprising that the artist is closely attached to her friend, Jolka Milič, a renowned name in Slovenian poetry and literature. This connection is visible in their mutual love for writing poetry.

The artist will be representing Slovenia in Monaco at one of the most prestigious cultural events organised by the Principality. Between 24 and 27 April, Art Monaco 2014 will open its doors to all lovers of art, art collectors, media representatives, art critics and highly-esteemed personalities of the world of art, who will be able to admire modern and contemporary art in various media. Catherina Zavodnik was invited to Monaco by the Canadian artist Mona Youssef, and she will be showcasing Miss Monet, a digital painting on plexiglass, under the auspices of the Mona Youssef Art Gallery.

**STRIVING FOR LIGHT**

Zavodnik's work incorporates notions such as femininity, mysticism, excitement and the primeval. The spaces of her paintings are pure endlessness and

unidentified dualities which seem to be both new beginnings and ends at the same time, undulating in scope and simultaneously 'forgotten' in a moment. She is particularly interested in similarities with historical examples, which she craftily exploits and which help her determine certain continuity in her own understanding of the thought which she experiences while painting.

When planning and producing her visual art projects, she comprehensively interweaves all her artistic passions and knowledge. Various creative techniques participate democratically in her artistic expression. Her works are characterised by high-levels of poeticism and aestheticism as she strives for purity and light. It is, therefore, not surprising that the artist is closely attached to her friend, Jolka Milič, a re-

nowned name in Slovenian poetry and literature. This connection is visible in their mutual love for writing poetry.

**BEAUTY, POETICS AND SEDUCTION**

In 2012, Zavodnik's work, My Face Is the Prison of Love, was selected as one of 44 finalists for the Manhattan Art International Exhibition among 800 entries from 24 countries. After being accepted in March 2011 in the most prestigious public call for artists in Northern Europe, Forår-sudstillingen/Spring Exhibition 2011 in Kunsthall Charlottenborg (Copenhagen, Denmark) with her painting, September, among more than 3,000 works, Zavodnik continues her work with much more feminine and subtle energy. Northern light left her with a dream: beauty, poetics and seduction.

## The Living Museum of the Karst

### A great starting point

The Living Museum of the Karst was established under the auspices of the Municipality of Sežana within the framework of the strategic project KRAS – CARSO. It is located at the junction of the Slovenian–Italian border, the Lipica Stud Farm and the town of Sežana, stretching out over 700 hectares of land.

Photo: Rosana Rijavec/STA



Karst offers variety of recreational activities.

The Living Museum of the Karst is part of the major KRAS – CARSO project with a budget of EUR 413,000. It is co-financed from the European fund for regional development and the state budget. Following the project documentation, the project was started last September and completed by the end of the year.

#### RECREATION WITH ELEMENTS OF THE KARST

Today the area offers a network of well-maintained and marked walking, cycling and riding trails that run past original elements of the natural and cultural heritage of the Karst. The Living Museum represents an excellent start-

ing point for a variety of recreational activities in the embrace of a typical karst region and for the exploration of its natural endowments. Here nature tampered with limestone, dissected and carved it, and from isolated stones created massive sculptures – forma viva. This is also an area offering a dense world

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Here nature tampered with limestone, dissected and carved it, and from isolated stones created massive sculptures – forma viva. This is also an area offering a dense world of diverse caves, the largest karst sunken valleys, gorgeous limestone pavement and many other geomorphologic phenomena typical of the karst landscape.



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

Nanos



Photo: Tomo Jesenčnik

One of the many caves.

The museum is designed so that the visitor, after taking a tour of the museum, can choose whether to move on to the Lipica Stud Farm, to the Vilenica cave or, across the state border, to the area of the multi-site Museum of Water in the Karst, which on the Italian side shows the connection between the water cycle and the Karst landscape.

of diverse caves (there are over 200 registered), the largest karst sunken valleys, gorgeous limestone pavement and many other geomorphologic phenomena typical of the karst landscape. The limestone base and thin soil – terra rossa – is a home to diverse flora and resilient fauna. The unique ecosystem preserves nature biodiversity, and its fascinating features charm the visitor.

In addition to its natural endowments, the area is a living testimony to a rich cultural heritage shaped through the centuries by people and their work. The Living Museum of the Karst features a number of renovated dry-walls, and signposts and information boards lead to shepherd's cottages, the well-maintained kal, or pit, at Orlek and the renovated Sežana Orlek well,

originally built in 1822, while the newly constructed platform offers a panoramic sight of the extent of Golokratna Cave.

For the more active visitor, equipment for physical exercise has been installed in three former gunpowder facilities. On the Bazovska (former Austro-Hungarian) road, which constitutes the central axis of the area and a unique technical heritage of dealing with the Karst terrain, there are well-maintained rest areas. The museum is designed so that the visitor, after taking a tour of the museum, can choose whether to move on to the Lipica Stud Farm, to the Vilenica cave or, across the state border, to the area of the multi-site Museum of Water in the Karst, which on the Italian side (Bazovica, Gropada, Padriciano, Trebče and Bani)

shows the connection between the water cycle and the Karst landscape.

**A HIGHER LEVEL OF TOURISM**

With the Living Museum of the Karst, Slovenia has certainly enriched its tourist offer, representing added value and a higher-quality level of tourism. The project is attractive to all those who love the Karst already and will fascinate those visiting the region for the first time.

Slovenia will continue the cooperation between local communities and institutions in the form of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), which also supports cross-border development partnership of the Karst in the 2014–2020 period.

Photo: Rosana Rjavec/STA



Sunken valley at the Living Museum.

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Photo: Marino Soppelsa/Mosiphotos



Left: Discover if the Postojna cave is really the most beautiful. Or this is not so?  
Bellow: Near by Living Museum is also a stud farm Lipica museum.

Photo: Mariko Petric/Mosiphotos



## Forgotten heritage

# The largest Roman monument in Slovenia

To commemorate the 2000th anniversary of Roman Emona, which was located on the site of present-day Ljubljana, we initially present the largest Roman monument in Slovenia, which is a great legacy of antiquity in Central Europe.



Lanišče near Logatec, the best preserved Roman fort in the defense system *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum*.

The remains of the Roman wall still wind along the slopes of some Slovenian hills, but the ruins have not survived well.

The citizens of the Roman Empire lived in a golden era of prosperity and political stability in the first two centuries AD. But following the accession of the philosophically inspired emperor Marcus Aurelius, Rome received shocking news: the borders of Upper Pannonia had been invaded by barbarian tribes. About 170 AD, Quadi and Marcomanni made their way into Northern Italy. This unexpected invasion reaching almost to the heart of the Roman Empire was the reason for the establishment of a military defensive zone on the territory of present-day Slovenia.

### MILITARY FRONTIER

The defensive strategy dictated the construction of barrier walls fortified with towers to prevent uncontrolled movement and supervise the main road connections. Fortresses and settlements for convoys and the civilian population were constructed in the rear. With walls of various lengths, the Romans protected all key natural routes between the Kvarner Gulf and Carinthia. The central section of the military control facilities was constructed in Notranjska, with its headquarters at Hrušica (Ad Pirum fortress). Supplies of food,

clothes, weapons and any other equipment the soldiers needed were dispatched from the larger centres, such as Aquileia (Slovenian: Oglej), Castra (Ajdovščina), Tarsatica (Rijeka) and Nauportus (Vrhnika).

It seems that the construction was gradual, from the third to the second half of the fourth century, when the walls were already functioning as a uniform military control system. The complexity of the terrain required teams of competent military strategists to plan individual sections of the walls. Construction was managed by skilled architects





and engineers, who were able to utilise natural characteristics to the advantage of the physically problematic construction of walls.

The walls were usually one metre thick and up to four metres high. Square towers (5x5m) consisting of one floor were erected perpendicularly to the main line of the wall. A kitchen and sleeping area were arranged on the ground floor, and a guard area with embrasures occupied the first floor. The longest defensive line, almost 10-km long, ran between Verd and Zaplana. It was interrupted in only a few places and was otherwise an unbroken wall controlled by soldiers located in almost sixty towers.

The original purpose of controlling natural routes towards Italy was to prevent the advance of an

external enemy from the north and east. But in fact, these walls and fortresses were important in internal struggles for power within the Empire. Apparently, the war zone in the pre-Alpine region was strategically very important, which the main participants in civil wars were aware of. The matter was clear: whoever controlled the main communications in the border area between Illyricum and Italy had a free path to Rome or to power.

#### **FAMOUS BATTLE AND FORGOTTEN WALLS**

The army of emperor Constantius II stood before the Ad Pirum fortress in autumn of 352. Troops of the usurper Magnentius who was located in Aquileia were deployed behind the powerful walls. The inevitable combat was fatal for Magnentius and his soldiers.

Forty – two years later, in 394, an important battle took place in the area of the defensive zone of *Clastra Alpium Iuliarum* which decided the religious and ideological sovereignty of the Empire. Emperor Theodosius the Great, a passionate advocate of Christianity, defeated his western rival, Eugenius, who had tried to revive the traditional Roman pantheon.

With the decline of the Empire, the defensive zone was abandoned and the military fortifications gradually decayed. The remains of the Roman wall still wind along the slopes of some Slovenian hills, but the ruins have not survived well. Unfortunately, although the wall played an important role in protecting the heart of the Roman Empire, it is now almost entirely forgotten.

The walls - symbol of power.

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About 170 AD, Quadi and Marcomanni made their way into Northern Italy. This unexpected invasion reaching almost to the heart of the Roman Empire was the reason for the establishment of a military defensive zone on the territory of present-day Slovenia.

Roman fort panorama at Lanišče is excellent.



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With walls of various lengths, the Romans protected all key natural routes between the Kvarner Gulf and Carinthia. The central section of the military control facilities was constructed in Notranjska, with its headquarters at Hrušica.

### **Roman day at Hrušica**

The best-preserved sections of the defence system are the remains of the Ad Pirum fortress at present-day Hrušica. In a cross-border project with Italy, the National Museum of Slovenia undertook to revive this unduly forgotten archaeological heritage. In addition to free guided tours, they also hold workshops for pupils, who learn about life at the fortress and explore the walls with various activities. It is also worth mentioning a Roman Day that takes place at Hrušica, when visitors can dress as Roman soldiers in replicas of combat equipment.

## Protected food products

# Slovenian gastronomic specialities enrich a common European cuisine

At Easter, the festive table features all kinds of delicacies. And although Slovenians have made it a tradition that on this Christian holiday they eat ham in various forms accompanied with colourful decorated eggs and horseradish, festive dishes will definitely also include some of the EU-protected Slovenian food products.

Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik/Mostphotos



Despite Slovenia's small size, its culinary offer is diverse and related to specific regions and traditions. Some Slovenian food products and foodstuffs are renowned beyond our borders for their quality, characteristics and tradition.

Slovenia offers a wide variety of local and traditional agricultural products and foodstuffs and, by protecting them, we help preserve the country's tradition. For consumers, it is easier to identify a greater choice of traditional and high-quality agricultural products and foodstuffs that are placed on the market. Various

quality schemes enable Slovenia to protect its agricultural products and foodstuffs, namely through: Protected Designation of Origin (EU scheme), Protected Geographical Indication (EU scheme), Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (EU scheme), designation of higher quality (national scheme).

### WHEN THE WONDERFUL SMELLS OF SLOVENIAN DISHES REACH THE EU

Let's take a look at some of the Slovenian specialities in the EU culinary area. Among cheeses, typical are Nanos cheese, Tol-

minc, Bovec cheese and Mohant cheese, the last being a particular delicacy. Mohant is a soft cheese of a whitish yellow, beige or pale buttery colour, produced from unpasteurized cow's milk. Its smell is pungent and its taste strong and spicy. Mohant is a special cheese, famous in the area of Bohinj (in Gorenjska). Its smell, taste and texture are highly dependent on the traditional production method, which is still followed to this day. The production process mainly involves two phases: the phase when the curd grain, after drying, is left to settle to the bottom, and the phase of ripening in the *deže* (special

Karst prosciutto

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Slovenia offers a wide variety of local and traditional agricultural products and foodstuffs and, by protecting them, we help preserve the country's tradition.

Mohant with cooked potatoes.



Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik

The Karst is a synonym for thin soil, severe winter, the Bora wind and drought, but also quickly brings the association with the numerous Karst delicacies.

Left: Belokranjska pogača is a form of flatbread, round in shape and made from leavened dough. In the centre it is between 3 and 4 cm thick, thinning to 1–2 centimetres at the edges. The surface is incised with a grid of angled lines, coated with beaten egg and sprinkled with caraway and coarse salt.

Right: Traditional Prekmurska gibanica is made from two different types of dough: short pastry for the base and filo (strudel) pastry for the top and between the layers of filling. Four different fillings (poppy seed, cottage cheese, walnut and apple) are placed in layers in a precisely defined sequence, of equal thickness and the same sequence of fillings is then repeated in the same order, so that the gibanica contains two layers of each filling. The dimensions of the gibanica are prescribed and the recipe is protected. Prekmurska gibanica's recipe is definitely not a simple one!

containers), providing anaerobic conditions for the ripening of the Mohant. The ripening process precipitates the breakdown of proteins into amino acids, thereby producing gas, so the cheese has a spreadable texture and obtains a distinctive smell and taste. On your way to the coast, you really ought to indulge in Nanos cheese and any of the extra virgin olive oils from Slovenian Istra, consisting of at least 30% of the special "Istrska belica" variety. Such oils are distinguished by a mild intensity with a slightly bitter and piquant taste.

The Karst is a synonym for thin soil, severe winter, the Bora wind and drought, but also quickly brings the association with the numerous Karst delicacies. These include Karst *zašinek*, Karst prosciutto (to be accompanied by a

red wine called Teran) and Karst honey. Numerous indigenous plants of the Karst are adapted to the extreme climatic conditions typical of the plateau. Some of these also have an impact on beekeeping, with typical sorts of Karst honey including mahaleb cherry, wild cherry, false acacia, chestnut, lime and winter savory, along with the more usual flower honey and forest honey. Due to the climatic conditions and microclimate, Karst honey tends to be dry and ripe and very high in minerals and enzymes. The very diverse flora and dry climate are expressed in its full and intensive aroma, which makes Karst honey particularly distinctive

In general, honey is very important to Slovenia. Slovenians have always been a nation of beekeepers. Slovenia is the only

European Union Member State to have protected its native bee (the Carniolan bee), which also means that in Slovenia only this breed of bee can be raised. Besides Karst honey, Kočevje forest honey and Slovenian honey are also highly recognised in the EU due to their distinctive taste.

*Šebreljski želodec* (Stuffed Pork Stomach) (Šebrelje, Karst plateau) is said to have been produced 200 years ago for gourmets from the Goriška region and Trieste. It is distinguished for its top-quality pork, high meat content and small share of bacon. The originality of this product is connected with the climatic conditions, as it is here that the Alpine and Mediterranean winds blend. It is produced by an increasing number of farmers in the area around Idrija and

Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik



Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik

Photo: Staniko Gruden/STA



The Kranjska klobasa is a typical Slovenian speciality with the protected geographical indication, representing one of the symbols of Slovenian heritage. The oldest recipe for the production of Kranjska klobasa can be found in the sixth edition of Slovenska kuharica by Felicita Kalinšek in 1912.

Cerkno and it also ripens well in Baška Grapa, while the climate of the Gorenjska region is not suitable for its production.

In the area of Prlekija, minced bacon, lard and dried pork has been stored in wooden containers called *tünke* for centuries. Farmers started to produce *Prleška tünka* in order to preserve their meat. It is made out of pork and minced lard. The lard is prepared by cooking, mincing and then seasoning the hard back fat. The pieces of meat (leg, loin, sirloin or neck of pork) are salted, dry-heat treated and smoked. Then the farmers place the prepared meat and the minced lard in layers in the *tünka*, where they are left to mature. This is the origin of the term *tünka*, which has been preserved to the present

day. *Prleška tünka* is a traditional food product related to the area of Prlekija in ethnological and geographical terms.

Another Slovenian speciality is *Štajersko prekmursko bučno olje* (Styrian-Prekmurje pumpkin seed oil). And do you, by any chance, recognise the following delicacy? Its name derives from the word *güba*, which means “a fold”, and the basic dough is made from short pastry on which four different layers of stuffing are placed in a specific order, among them layers of filo pastry. It is *Prekmurska gibanica* (Prekmurska cake), of course.

The area where the *Šebreljski žlodec* comes from is also known for *Idrijski žlikrofi* (Idrija dumplings). This is a dish made from

dough with a potato filling. The *žlikrofi* also have a characteristic hat shape. The dish is prepared from a traditional recipe dating from the mid-19th century, though the precise origin of the dish is obscured by the lack of historical records. In cuisine, they are appreciated as a starter, a side dish served with various meat dishes or indeed as the main dish itself, sprinkled with cracklings. *Idrijski žlikrofi* were the first Slovenian dish to receive recognition and protection under the EU's Traditional Speciality Guaranteed label.

Gourmets will also want to try other Slovenian specialities, such as *Belokranjska pogača* (Bela Krajina Cake) and Carniola sausage served with polenta or sauerkraut.

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In general, honey is very important to Slovenia. Slovenians have always been a nation of beekeepers.

Photo: Mostphotos



The wider area of Kočevje is in the pre-Dinaric and Dinaric region of Slovenia. The area where Kočevski gozdni med is produced lies between the Krka and Kolpa rivers and covers about one hundred and fifty thousand hectares of land.

Nanoški sir (Nanos cheese) takes its name from the plateau of Nanos, where it has been produced since the 16th century. It is a hard cheese and has the shape of a wheel. The rind of Nanoški sir is yellow with a brick-red to brown shade; traces of mould may be visible in places, the result of traditional ripening. The rind is smooth, dry and without imperfections or cracks. The edge of the "wheel" is slightly convex. The cheese can have occasional, irregularly-shaped, small to medium-sized eyes. The intertwining of Mediterranean and continental climates is typical of the area where this cheese is produced, while the climate and predominant karst soil is also reflected in the quality of the pasture on which the cows graze from which hay is taken.



Photo: Rosana Rjavec/STA

Let's take a look at some of the Slovenian specialties in the EU culinary area. Among cheeses, typical are Nanos cheese, Tolminc, Bovec cheese and Mohant cheese, the last being a particular delicacy.

### Protected Slovenian products

Nanoški sir (Nanos cheese), Tolminc cheese, Bovec cheese, Mohant cheese, Ekstra deviško oljčno olje Slovenske Istre (Extra virgin olive oil from Slovenian Istria), Kočevski gozdni med (Kočevje forest honey), Kraški med (Karst honey), Kraški pršut (Karst prosciutto), Zgornjesavinjski želodec (Upper-Savinja stomach), Štajersko prekmursko bučno olje (Styrian-Prekmurje pumpkin seed oil), Prleška tünka, Šebreljski želodec (stuffed pork stomach), Kraški zašink (a Karst meat product made from neck of pork), Kranjska klobasa (Carniolan sausage), Kraška panceta (Karst pancetta), Prekmurska gibanica (Prekmurje cake), Idrijski žlikrofi (Idrija dumplings), Belokranjska pogača (Bela Krajina cake), Slovenski med (Slovenian honey).

Tolminc was named after the town of Tolmin. It is classified as a hard, full-fat cheese. The raw material for the production of Tolminc is raw or thermised cow's milk. Its shape is round, the rind smooth and straw-coloured, the interior flexible, yellow in colour, with occasional pea-sized eyes, and the taste sweet and piquant.



Photo: Tomo Jesenčnik

## Mitja Hojak

# Would you like to step into his shoes?

The hand-made shoes and leather haberdashery of the Mihoya trademark are the result of the unique design, manufacture and several years experience of a young shoemaker from Litija. His products are aimed at people who wish to be different, are daring and want something more.





Crocodile leather shoes with fur, and heel made of plexiglass containing mercury.

I usually get ideas from everyday life and then incorporate them into the shoe.

**You are the youngest shoemaker in Slovenia. Where were you educated?**

I graduated in original design of hand-made shoes from the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering, which makes me a graduate shoemaker. I am still the youngest shoemaker in Slovenia, since the secondary school for shoemakers closed down 15 years ago. After I finished my secondary education, the school was closed down due to lack of interest in this profession.

**Was this your childhood dream?**

As a small boy, I accompanied my father in the Nama department store, where he repaired shoes. I saw it as a good opportunity to continue the tradition. But I also wanted more than the classic black shoes that my father made for my first communion. I took them off immediately after the photos were taken and put on trainers. I wanted something more comfortable, different; shoes that would stand out.

**When did you make your first pair of shoes? Do you still wear them?**

Yes, they are still in the wardrobe and I wear them once or twice a year. I made an elegant i.e. derby model from box calf, combining black and red. I made it when I was 15 in the first year of secondary school in practical training. For my diploma thesis, I made unique shoes from common sole and kangaroo, with dice in the heel. The idea came from everyday life, from playing Ludo.

**What about women's shoes? Did you make men's shoes first?**

No, it went parallel. I first made comfortable shoes for my mother, who had problems with foot bones, then a more elegant pair for my little sister. It was first for relatives and then for others.

**What is your favourite pair of shoes?**

I have three or four pairs that I wear, and then I change them all together, e.g. once a year. So, I have a favourite pair every year.

**What is the process of manufacturing?**

A client calls me and we schedule a meeting. Some clients already know what they want and some leave the decision to me. Women usually know what they want and combine the shoes with a purse or a dress they have. Men more frequently leave the decision to me and then are very happy. They tell me only what they will be using the shoes for. Reasons vary: for everyday use, for driving, walking, special occasions, and similar. I try to fully adjust to the clients when I select the material, the colour, etc. The first condition is that the shoes should be comfortable and then also that they are different. The shoes are made to fit the foot

in length and width. For women's shoes, I try to make the heel as comfortable as possible.

**What kind of woman wears your shoes?**

A woman who dares to be a little different, is bold. In that sense, I am proud of my clients, I have to stress this. When they come and see me, they want black shoes, for example, but they leave with purple ones. And almost always they return to get another pair, for example, red. I have also noticed with men that they are very happy with a somewhat out-of-the-ordinary purchase. They are looking for black or brown shoes, and I make them a pair of grey or purple ones. And then they return and say, "I have never received so many compliments as I have about your shoes."

**Your models are extravagant and unique, but you also provide comfort.**

In my work, I combine knowledge from the shoemaker's school and university, including the experience I have obtained at Milan and Bologna fairs. The manufacturing must involve not only aesthetics, but also comfort, I am certain of that. I make an anatomically formed sock, 5 mm thick, heat it up and model it according to the client's weight and the shape of the foot, so the weight is evenly distributed along the entire sole. Then I wrap the sock in leather. After a long night of dancing, you will still have a smile on your face – guaranteed (he laughs).

**What materials do you use?**

The emphasis is on leather, particularly exotic leather. I use crocodile, python, ostrich, frog, fish

Left: Pair of elegant men's shoes combined with a belt.

Right: You can work magic in these shoes.





and other leathers. I buy materials in Italy, with farming certificates, not caught in the wild. I also use Swarovski crystals, lace from Idrija, knitwear, fur; I am happy to consider clients' wishes and add to the shoes what the clients want. Sometimes they bring things with them. I also use technical materials, such as for example 'ledra', which is a type of artificial leather, antistatic, antibacterial, suitable for allergic people, extra-strong leather resistant to bacteria and chemicals. I make most of the shoes from leather, but I adjust to the client.

**How long does it take to make one pair?**

About 15 to 20 hours, depending on how difficult it is. It takes about 14 days for the client to get their shoes. But I try to finish them in 10 days. I usually make them to order, but I also showcase them so the clients can see the make and can also buy those.

**You are known for your innovations. Where do you find your ideas?**

I usually get ideas from everyday life and then incorporate them into the shoe. For example, I got the idea for shoes with carbon from carbon skis and bicycles. Carbon is six times thinner than steel and eight times stronger; so, I incorporated this and made unique futuristic shoes. The shoes with heels made of plexiglass containing mercury are also the result of an idea from everyday life. I also made shoes that you can charge a mobile phone on; it is possible to incorporate a USB flash drive or light into a heel. I also made women's boots with a GPS device, so clients can track the location of the boots. I'm not kidding. There are actually no boundaries for me when it comes to designing shoes.

**The Slovenian market has already recognised Mihoya products. Who are your clients?**

People who want the best for

themselves. When they see a product and try it on, they see the difference. My clients are usually satisfied enough to then become regular clients. Almost no one visits me just once. The clients come from all over Slovenia. I must say that I am really pleased.

**What about foreign market?**

I am preparing for a fair in Monaco (a fair of prestigious supercar brands - Top Marques Monaco) which will be held on 17 April, and that will be the perfect opportunity to present Mihoya shoes. I am cooperating with the automobile industry, i.e. the Slovenian company Tushek, which is showcasing its supercar TS 600 at the fair, hand-made by Aljoša Tušek himself. In addition to the car, which is worth over one million euros, the buyer will also be able to choose Mihoya shoes to drive the car.

**Your wishes for the future?**

For the clients to be happy and keep coming back.

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My clients are usually satisfied enough to then become regular clients. Almost no one visits me just once.



**Sales points**

Mitja Hojak's workshop and showroom are in Liti-ja. Mihoya products are also available in the Ikona shop and on Masarykova 14 in Ljubljana where Mitja has a showroom and small workshop.



## Planica

# Peter Prevc wins the season's final World Cup ski jumping event

The leading Slovenian ski jumper, Peter Prevc, who won two medals at this year's Olympic Games, rounded off his highly successful season with a home victory in the season's final World Cup competition in Planica. He set a new record on the new Bloudek giant hill and took second place in the overall World Cup standings.



Peter Prevc

Photo: Sanko Gruden/STA

It was the competition between Peter Prevc and German jumper Severin Freund for second place in the overall standings that was most eagerly anticipated by the most dedicated fans of the sport, who gathered under the Ponce Mountains. This time it was the Slovenian who came out on top, Prevc leading Freund after the first round and maintaining his advantage in the second. "I didn't worry about it. This fight was just going on somewhere in the very back of my head – which is not such a small one, by the way! After the first round, I saw that I was ahead of him, but that it was still all to play for, so I just focused my mind on the jump," said Peter Prevc after the competition.

Peter was also pretty relaxed about where the motivation for his outstanding 142m-long final jump came from: "Every success is additional motivation. But as for today's one, I'm not sure... Perhaps it helped that in the last few days I hadn't recorded a single exceptional jump, and I'm really happy that I got it right for

the last jump, which, in the end, was also the most important one." Rounding off the season like that is just the icing on the cake: "I'm happy that the final jump was also my best of the season. It's great to end the season like this – all the frustration just evaporates in a split second."

Freund took second place in the competition with 280.8 points, while Norwegian Anders Bardal was third with 278.5. The overall World Cup winner Kamil Stoch, who was in the lead after the first round, finished fourth (278.4 points). As many as seven Slovenians competed in the final round. For Jernej Damjan (133 m in the second round), a successful season ended well with a tenth place finish, while Jurij Tepeš took 19th. As for the other Slovenian competitors, Nejc Dežman came 20th, Matjaž Pungertar 23rd, Cene Prevc 27th and Tomaž Naglič 29th.

This year's World Cup event – for the first time held on the renovated giant hill in Planica, which has already hosted national

championships and the Continental Cup, while the smaller hill has already hosted the women's World Cup – provided a good opportunity for Slovenia to show that it would be an excellent host for the FIS Nordic World Ski Championships in 2019. The decision on the host will be made in the first week of June 2014 at the FIS Congress in Barcelona.

"With this event, we want to show everyone that Planica is ready to host the World Ski Championships in 2019," said the head of competition, Jelko Gros. The jump itself was well prepared despite the relatively high temperatures and the organisers' expectations that every day some of the snow would melt: "We are prepared for this scenario. The hill is prepared, we have had no problems. There has been some ice, but we are removing it, as it has not been freezing so much. But if you ski jump at temperatures above zero, you have to be prepared for that as well."

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I'm happy that the final jump was also my best of the season. It's great to end the season like this – all the frustration just evaporates in a split second.

## Happy Birthday, Slovenia!

Slovenia celebrates Statehood Day on 25 June, and this year our country's birthday will be celebrated very creatively. The project carries a special message, as it helps to maintain contact with the homeland, and also encourages children's expressivity in colour combinations, creativity and imagination, and enhances the image of our country.

Small gifts will be sent from Slovenian children to the countries participating in the project, and gifts of their choice will be sent to us from those countries. A day for a celebration will be chosen, when the gifts will be displayed at France Bevk Public Library in Nova Gorica. The gifts created by children in Slovenia will be opened at celebrations in participating countries (schools, embassies or at places where Slovenian children living abroad meet).

The gifts will be made at three creative workshops. The children will draw the Slovenian flag and themselves next to the flag. They will also sign the drawings, which will be exhibited for the celebration as decorative elements, thus the children on the drawings will be present at our celebration also symbolically. In this way, even if far apart, we will be celebrating 'together'. Slovenians in Germany will be celebrating together with, for example, Slovenians living in Finland and so on. I can confirm that Austria, the USA, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, the Netherlands and Belgium have already confirmed their participation.

Whoever wishes to participate in the project can make a drawing and send it to the following address by no later than 15 May 2014:

Nina Nemec  
Pod Lazami 72  
5290 Vrtojba  
Slovenia

or to:

Novogoriška knjižnica Franceta Bevka (France Bevk Public Library Nova Gorica)  
'Vse najboljše, Slovenija!' (Happy Birthday, Slovenia!)  
Jana Movja  
Trg Edvarda Kardelja 4  
5000 Nova Gorica  
Slovenia

You are cordially invited to participate in the project and to take part in the celebration at France Bevk Public Library in Nova Gorica on 13 June.

