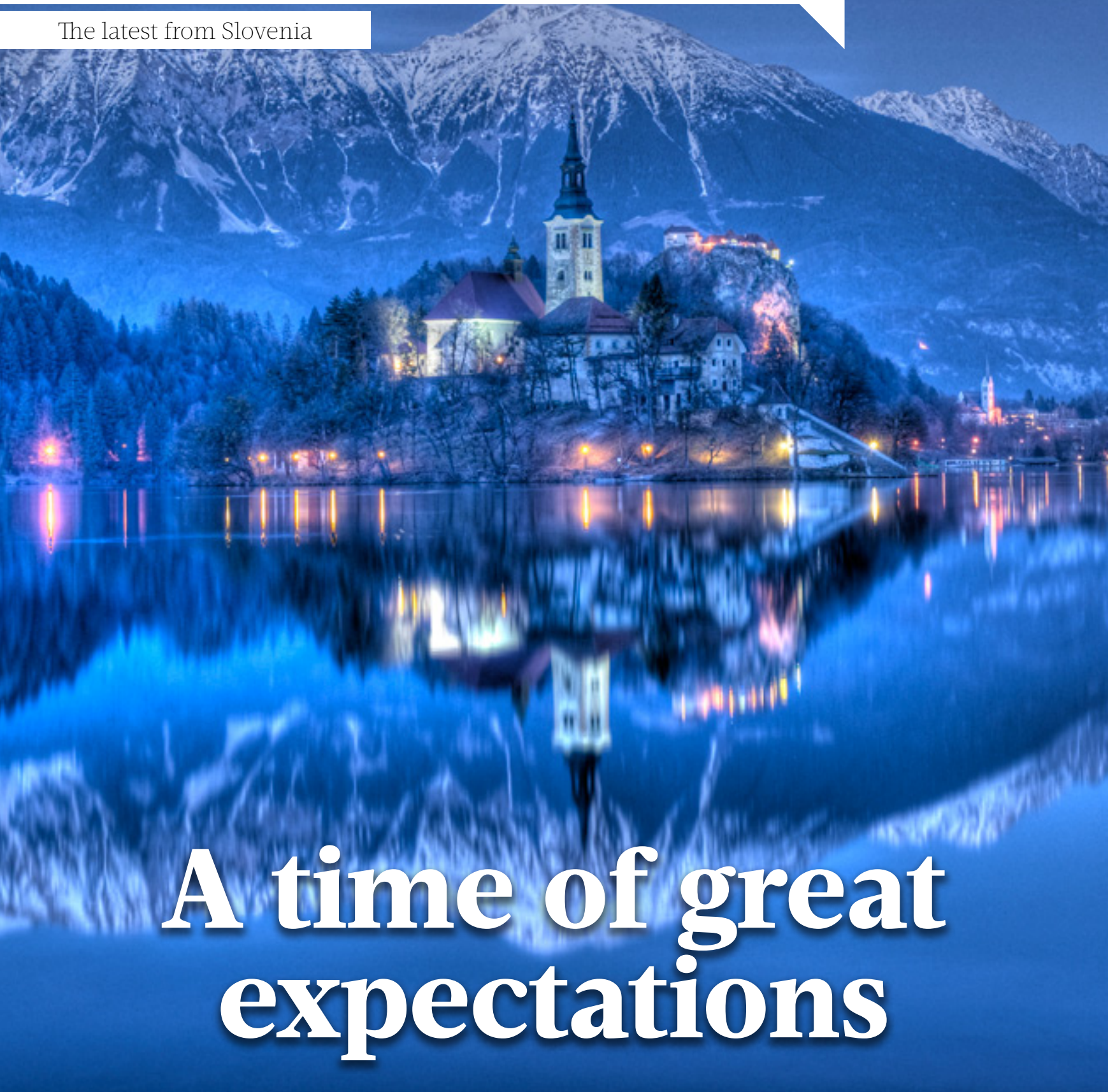


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The latest from Slovenia



A time of great expectations

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- PEOPLE: **UMC's Gynaecological Clinic team** • ART & CULTURE: **Maribor 2012: Ready to start**
- SPORTS: **A fresh wind in Slovenian football** • SLOVENIAN DELIGHTS: **Holidays are in the air**

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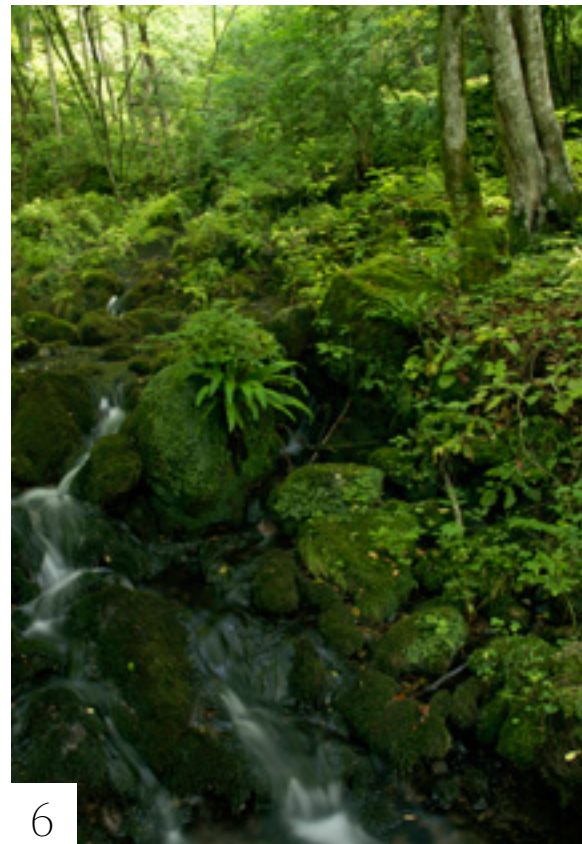
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A successor to the Himalayan heroes

SLOVENIAN DELIGHTS

Holidays are in the air

Sinfo – Slovenian information

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Vesna Žarkovič, Editor

A time of great expectations

The outcome of the parliamentary elections held on 4 December will definitely go down in history as a stark contrast to pre-election forecasts. Zoran Jankovič, the most likely prime minister-designate, commented on the results of the opinion polls conducted on election day that turned the forecasts on their heads by saying that Slovenians want an efficient democratic state. However, changes in the top political posts are only one aspect of this outcome. It did not in itself end the period of uncertainty as urgent measures are required. Nevertheless, such are the expectations of Slovenian businesses and Slovenian citizens – Slovenia must recover from the recession and strive for modest development with economic growth at 4 % and the fiscal deficit below 3 % of GDP by 2013; it should also accelerate growth and implement reforms to increase competitiveness.

We have to account for our deeds and take stock of the outgoing year. Which events in domestic politics, culture and sport first spring to mind?

The end of December will mark the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of our constitution by the then Slovenian assembly. We asked the Minister of Justice, Mr Aleš Zalar, about the views on this fundamental act twenty years on: Does it still serve its purpose? Does it address the issues associated with modern states or is it obsolete? Does it require partial amendment?

Maribor is already counting down the hours until 13 January 2012, the day of the beginning of its undoubtedly historic project – the European Capital of Culture. Visitors passing through Maribor in these December days can already feel a certain 'cultural vibration' in the air, because among the numerous New Year ads and decorations, it is impossible to overlook all the advertising announcing the Capital of Culture. Despite the considerable problems the city has been facing, it is aware of its great opportunity and will try to take advantage of it as best it can. Two vanguard companies below the Karavanke mountains have also captured our attention this year as flagship manufacturers in their respective industries: Elan has been one of the top five Slovenian trademarks for half a century and maintains its position at the cutting edge of ski manufacturing with amfibia, and Seaway, a fast-growing company producing environmentally friendly Greenline Hybrid boats.

The national opera and ballet house reopened after six years of renovation works. This great day for Slovenian culture saw the return of the theatre from years of exile. The occasion was marked by various celebrations joined under a common theme 'Fusion of Centuries' and also serving as an introduction to the theatre's festive 120th season.

We also take pride in the achievement of the doctors from the Ljubljana University Medical Centre's Gynaecological Clinic: following the radical removal of the patient's uterine cervix and laparoscopic cerclage, they successfully delivered her baby. Only ten years ago, cervical cancer often led to hysterectomy, making it impossible for the patient to bear children. This team of top specialists has developed a combination of various methods enabling women to give birth even after the radical removal of the uterine cervix.

December, as the longest and most festive month, is very special as it fills our hearts with eager anticipation of something that we may not even be able to identify. Even more so now – when a new government is being formed, our expectations run high and our hopes increase for a better tomorrow. May they be fulfilled!





Darijan Košir

Startling election outcome with many unknowns

Slovenia ended the 2011 political year – one of the most turbulent and complex years in the country's history – with parliamentary elections on 4 December that have thus far not provided any final answer about its future political organisation, but nevertheless indicated potential directions of development. Unless there is a really dramatic turn of events, which is rather unlikely yet not impossible in politics, there is no doubt whatsoever that Zoran Janković, currently holding the office of Mayor of Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, since 2006, will probably be in charge of the future Slovenian government for the next four years, and that the new coalition's political orientation will obviously be centre-left. Slovenia will get a new national assembly at the end of this year, a new prime minister probably at the beginning of January 2012, and a new government perhaps as early as February next year.

Above all, the recent Slovenian parliamentary elections are historic because of the degree of surprise brought about by their final outcome. All (literally all) surveys and opinion polls, the results of which the media were allowed – for the first time in the history of Slovenia's elections – to announce publicly until the beginning of a two-day electoral silence, i.e. until Friday evening, 2 December, predicted a more or less smooth, overwhelming and convincing victory (by an approximately 10 % margin) of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) of Janez Janša, Slovenia's Prime Minister from 2004 to 2008. The only survey that predicted the possibility of a turnout, but did not dare to confirm it, was the online survey carried out by the weekly *Mladina*; on Friday evening, just before the beginning of the electoral silence, it announced a 'possible turnout' in the voters' deliberations. This proves that public opinion trends changed and moved in the opposite direction during the last two days of the campaign. To be more precise: according to polls taken on Wednesday evening (30 November) with results to be announced on Thursday and Friday, Janša was still in the lead with a 10 % margin, but squandered half of this advantage by Friday evening. Over the weekend, in the

quietness and shelter of the electoral silence, this advantage not only vanished, but Janković even outran him by more than two percent. From that Wednesday evening to the election on Sunday, the votes thus moved linearly. Convinced of his overwhelming victory, Janša lost about six percent of his support in three days, whereas Janković gained the same share – enough for a truly surprising turnaround.

The question how anyone can squander such advantage in such a short time – the political analysts are unanimous in the assessment that the campaign, at first managed intelligently, collapsed in the final few days, with the 'old' Janša once again settling accounts with his political opponents, which on this occasion, he even further upgraded with his evasive statements concerning his real estate 'portfolio' – is less important than the fact that Janša's defeat has been followed by a complete rearrangement in the country's future political arena. While Janša, on the basis of highly favourable poll forecasts, was already raising expectations of forming a 50+ coalition, in which his political option (centre right, together with the Christian People's Party, NSi, and the Slovenian People's Party, SLS) would have more than one half, i.e. at least 50 seats, or perhaps

even a constitutional majority (60+) in the National Assembly, Sunday's election turned everything upside down: the centre right does not even come close to one half of the parliamentary votes. It is true, however, that it still has sufficient votes (30+) for all kinds of constitutional blockades, both parliamentary and referendum. This circumstance will additionally aggravate the situation of the new coalition team of prime minister designate Janković in running the country.

Furthermore, his potential centre-left allies will not make the formation of a coalition any easier for the likely prime minister either. However, considering the current state of affairs, the most natural coalition would, alongside Janković, consist of the Social Democrats of the former Prime Minister Pahor, the Civic List of Janša's former minister for public administration, Gregor Virant, and one of the potential 'fourth' partners, among whom the first two options are probably Desus, the pensioners' party, and the aforementioned SLS. Together with the representatives of the national minorities who are traditionally inclined to support the government, this formation could have at least 55 votes in the 90-member assembly, which could apparently ensure smooth governance. However, the strength and coherence of such a government is at least as problematic as in the case of Pahor's former four-party coalition. While such a government is indeed possible, it is nevertheless expected to have quite a lot of difficulties, considering the variety of demands put forward by individual partners and the relative weakness of the largest government political party. This seems increasingly likely to be the case if one also takes into account the aforementioned structural blockades, which will obviously be impossible to eliminate due to the new constellation of political powers and the demands of the trade unions that are particularly unfavourable to the major changes urgently needed.

In this regard, the assessment given by the opposition leader Janez Janša immediately following the election defeat even seems reasonable. He suggested that the result of the vote did not provide a solution, one that was the very reason for Slovenia to hold snap elections: a solid government having a majority, which would facilitate the implementation of urgently required reform and measures to overcome the crisis. However, it is also true that on this point, the opposition contradicts itself: it would advocate the broadest possible coalition, almost a government of national salvation, as long as it could run it itself; yet in the present case, when the government will be run by the centre-left coalition, the opposition's willingness to cooperate in such salvation government is much lesser. This can be inferred from Janša's statement that Slovenia can soon expect new snap elections. These will obviously only be absolutely necessary if the country is again faced with a political blockade, similar to the one that occurred in the first half of 2011, and one which caused an early termination of Prime Minister Borut Pahor's mandate.

This is actually a great pity, because ahead of Slovenia there are certain challenges that need to be dealt with promptly. Following the pension reform failure in the June 2011 referendum, the price to be paid by Slovenia for money obtained on foreign financial markets skyrocketed; the surcharges on our ten-year bonds are, for example, by about five percent higher than the reference German surcharges, whereas only half a year ago, they were barely above the German level. This is another proof that foreign markets monitor the current public finance situation in Slovenia and its capacity to implement long-term structural change very attentively. In both segments, Slovenia is still behind schedule in adopting appropriate measures. It is true that the worst problems were eliminated through the 2011 supplementary budget that, for the first time in the country's history, really made deep cuts in the growth of budget spending. Consequently, Slovenia will end 2011 with less than 5 % budget deficit, which is a 'golden average' at the EU level, a phrase very much favoured by the current Prime Minister Pahor, and the public debt will simultaneously stabilise at slightly more than 42 % of the GDP, thus being one of the lowest in the EU.

Nevertheless, just as Pahor's government cut this year's budget, Janković and his government will have to reduce the 2012 budget, which although adopted, was confirmed in a completely unrealistic framework and will urgently need to be balanced by reducing expenditure by at least 5 %. Pahor's government actually did make such an attempt: first, they proposed the adoption of a supplementary budget for 2012, but this proposal was rejected before the elections; later, they made an attempt to at least freeze the major expenditure items of the national treasury (wages, pensions and social transfers) by way of an intervention law. Again, most of the parliamentary deputies cast a negative vote on this proposal. Therefore, these two tasks now wait to be accomplished by the new government. The situation with Pahor's other structural reform measures (pensions, health, labour market, avoiding credit crunch, etc.) is the same: they are waiting to be implemented, since during his term of office, they were all rejected, either in referendums or within the social dialogue framework. Slovenia must nevertheless adopt all these measures in order to avoid being excluded from the group of euro area countries (the German-French train) that it wants to be part of.

Finally, we should perhaps say that prime minister designate Zoran Janković has never been afraid of any difficulties or challenges, and, to his credit, always dealt with them successfully, as demonstrated by his previous career. However, the aforementioned challenges are greater in scope than ever before. Therefore, in order to be successful, something 'more' will be required this time. While congratulating him on his election victory, allow us to wish him every success in dealing with the problems awaiting solutions – to the benefit of Slovenia.

The year's key events

NATIONAL POLICIES: 20 years of Slovenian independence

The year of 2011 will not be remembered fondly by Slovenians as it was the year when the pressures of the global financial, economic and debt crisis caused the escalation of many problems concerning the past development of the country, its social and economic structure, and the direction it should follow in the future to catch up with the pace of development in the western world.



German Chancellor Angela Merkel has arrived in Slovenia on 30 August and began her short visit to Ljubljana with a stroll around the capital in the company of PM Borut Pahor.

This year was a celebration for Slovenia as it marked 20 years of its independence. Independence was declared on 25 June 1991, which the newly-seceded country declared a national holiday – Statehood Day. This important anniversary was marked by a number of celebrations and memorial events, the most significant of which were the central state ceremony attended by the presidents of all Slovenia's neighbouring countries upon the invitation of President Dr Danilo Türk; only

a few days later, the Slovenian and Croatian presidents, Dr Danilo Türk and Ivo Josipović, attended a major music event at which over a thousand musicians from Slovenia and Croatia performed Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 8 in E-flat Major. This concert was another sign of the friendship between Slovenia and Croatia, which was further strengthened last year after the conclusion of the arbitration agreement determining the border between the two countries; besides numerous

historical, cultural, economic and other ties, the countries also share the same date on which their independence was declared.

REFORMS

Right from the start, the coalition led by Prime Minister Pahor embarked upon an extensive programme of economic and social reforms for the purpose of leading Slovenia on the path towards a comprehensive overhaul and transformation in step with the dynamics of

more developed EU member states and the most advanced countries in the world. The aim of the government reform programme was to cover mainly pension and health care reforms, as well as labour market reform, but it soon encountered obstacles as certain reform projects were opposed by the social groups affected, almost always supported by the opposition or at least by its most influential component. As consensus on individual reforms usually could not be reached through a social dialogue or negotiations with the aforementioned social groups and their representatives, the Government focused its efforts on implementing some reforms unilaterally, but was almost invariably blocked by its opponents through initiatives or referendums, both of which are enabled under the legislation in force. As a consequence, the Government's reform initiatives in the pension and labour market fields fell through, as the general opinion held by most people, especially those affected by changes, was unfavourable in both fields. The plans for health care reform at the beginning of the year were slightly more promising; some of the points of contention and objections were directed only at the proposed streamlining of the public health care network; this was because the local communities affected

were against the closing down of some maternity wards or against their merger, while the proposed cancellation of supplementary health insurance and its integration into the compulsory health insurance system met with greater support, with the exception of the insurance lobby, for which it would not be beneficial. Nevertheless, the drive to upgrade the health care system, as it was called by the competent minister, lost momentum and also died down, as a result of the general disapproval of the Government.

REFERENDUMS

April saw the referendum rejecting the Mini Job Act, by which the Government attempted to implement changes to student work, which enables many students to earn extra money, and on which many students depend while studying, but as numerous abuses have occurred in this field, the work of students and secondary school students was, according to the government's idea, to be treated as a mini job which could also bring additional income to unemployed and retired people.

The same fate was encountered by the pension reform or the new Pension Act which was to raise the full pensionable age to 65 and introduce some other changes, but these were strenuously opposed by the trade unions who began collecting signatures for a referendum to be held after negotiations with the Government were unsuccessful; a majority in the National Assembly tried to stop the referendum on the basis of the requirement that the Constitutional Court should examine the potential unconstitutional consequences of such a referendum; however, the Court did not establish this. The pension referendum and two other referendums – the referendum on the Prevention of Illegal Work and Employment Act and the referendum on the amended Archives Act, both required by opposition party SDS, were held in June and all

the aforementioned acts were rejected – a painful blow for the government as all its legislative initiatives had now been blocked.

There was another apple of discord, namely the new Family Code by which the Government attempted to make all forms of family communities equal in the interest of the improved and more equal protection of children, which included the legalisation of the right of same-sex partners to adopt children. These interventions in family law met strong resistance from a section of the public and the political sphere, including the Church, so the government accepted some of their objections and restricted the rights of same-sex couples to adopt; nevertheless, the opponents of same-sex parenthood also announced that a referendum would be held on the modified code, and began collecting the necessary signatures, while the Government again addressed the Constitutional Court with the argument that the possible rejection of the Family Code would constitute an intervention with human rights and that the campaign against it would serve as an opportunity to kindle intolerance towards gay people. At the close of the year, the fate of the Family Code remains open as the Constitutional Court has not yet issued its opinion on whether the referendum should be banned.

It therefore became very apparent that the Government would not be able to implement its reform plans and legislative initiatives as the referendum arrangements in force had become an insurmountable barrier to the implementation of any Act or reform; in response, the coalition proposed initiatives for certain restrictions to be included in the referendum arrangements, which would allow a referendum only if required by a sufficient number of citizens, and that the referendum decisions should exclude all laws with fiscal consequences, as well as topics concerning human rights.

However, the coalition was not unsuccessful in all its legislative initiatives as it managed to establish a political consensus in its ranks as well as in part of the opposition on legislation on the incompatibility between the functions of Member of Parliament and mayor – an important achievement after the numerous unsuccessful attempts made in previous years.

COALITION BREAKUP AND VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE TO THE GOVERNMENT

But even Prime Minister Pahor's ruling coalition, which consisted of the Social Democrats, the Liberal Democracy of Slovenia, Zares and the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia, revealed conspicuous differences which its members either could not or would not overcome, while their disagreements hindered the functioning of the coalition on many issues and decisions. At the beginning of this year, the four coalition parties made another effort to find consensus about their priorities until the end of the term of office, but this attempt also turned out to be short-lived. As soon as in the spring, the Pensioners Party left the coalition as a result of disagreements concerning especially the pension reform and the urgent freezing of pensions; before summer, it was followed by Zares, who left the coalition because of disagreements on the construction project for the new block in Slovenia's largest thermal power plant, in Šoštanj, whose justification, rationality, cost-effectiveness as well as environmental suitability had been severely disputed by Zares, in opposition to the Social Democrats, the coalition's leading party. The principal reason for Zares's departure was, however, the unconditional proposal put forward by its leader, Gregor Golobič, that all three leaders of the remaining coalition parties – therefore himself as the minister of higher education, Katarina Kresal, the president of the Liberal Democracy of Slovenia, as the

minister of the interior, and last but not least Borut Pahor as the president of the Social Democrats – should all resign from their positions in government in order to give the coalition more credibility; the coalition had been subject to different scandals and criticisms concerning its competence, especially after the unsuccessful pension referendum. Golobič's other coalition partners, Katarina Kresal and especially Prime Minister Pahor, were not amenable to his proposal and Golobič's party left the coalition.

After two parties had left the coalition Prime Minister Pahor was left with a minority government without the support of a parliament majority, but remained adamant that the necessary majority for the adoption of each law and reform could be achieved on a project-by-project basis. Furthermore, he did not attempt to appoint new ministers for the posts vacated by the ministers of the Pensioners Party and Zares, of which there were five in total, as Roko Žarnič, minister of the environment, did not resign but instead resigned from the Pensioners Party; as an alternative, Prime Minister Pahor entrusted some other ministers with the leadership of these ministries. Pavel Gantar, the president of the National Assembly, did not immediately follow the resignation of his colleagues from Zares; in agreement with Borut Pahor, the president of the Social Democrats and the prime minister, he kept his position until 1 September, after which he was surprisingly seamlessly replaced by Ljubo Gerlič, deputy of the Liberal Democracy of Slovenia.

ECONOMIC AND FISCAL CRISIS

This year's economic news was less gratifying. Slovenia's macroeconomic indicators did not improve considerably and Slovenia continued to slip down the rankings of international economic success and competitiveness charts, despite a slight, but insufficiently

prominent revival of economic activity and the perceptible economic growth in the first half of the year that had already started decreasing in the third quarter, which raised new threats of a double-dip recession. Pessimistic economic conditions and an increasingly troubling fiscal situation, particularly the unstoppable growth in government borrowing, raised numerous warnings that Slovenia may face a 'Greek scenario' if it continues in this way and does not immediately adopt and implement the necessary reforms. A sign of alarm, especially after the failure of the pension reform and even

more after the block following attempts made to adopt in a timely fashion the intervention act intended to freeze government expenditure in the field of salaries in the public sector, social assistance and pensions, was the lowered credit rating first of some Slovenian banks and, more recently, of Slovenia as a country, which mostly implies more expensive loans from abroad. But even without these fiscal aspects, the state's inauspicious economic position was evident from the number of bankruptcies and the increase in the officially registered unemployment rate, which was further

aggravated by the collapse of most civil engineering companies. The crisis in the Slovenian economy is also demonstrated by the sales of some Slovenian companies to foreign buyers: Fructal, a manufacturer of soft drinks from Ajdovščina, was sold to Serbian company Nektar, while plans are afoot for the sale of leading Slovenian company, Mercator, to the Croatian company, Agrokor. This autumn witnessed especially heated discussions about the urgent need to sell the rest of the state assets, which could slightly alleviate Slovenia's fiscal problems, as well as on the reservations that such a sale

could turn into the sale of 'state silver' for less than its real value. The solution for Slovenia and the way out of the crisis is through asceticism and tightening its belt, a fact which was pointed out in the recently concluded election campaign by almost every politician; there was almost unanimous consensus that Slovenia must board the 'German and French train' as soon as possible, a suggestion often made by the departing prime minister, Borut Pahor. There do not seem to be any other adequate alternatives.

The question as to what extent film and theatre, in particular, but also literature, deal with current social topics and whether they remain restricted to the intimate sphere of individuals, was responsibly and seriously posed by the theatre, the first time this has happened in the long years since Slovenia's independence. This is not a negative thing as it indicates that the social crisis has grown into a cultural question. The answer is complex: critics declared Slovenian theatres rather weak from a

social commitment perspective, in comparison with Croatian, Serbian and other theatres (as well as films), whereas literature is more responsive. The Ex Ponto theatre festival was especially unambiguous in this respect. In light of the fact that the younger population in particular is waking up, smashing the windows of parliament and camping on the square in front of the Stock Market, it would be a surprise if there is no active response on the part of Slovenian artists in the years ahead.

An interesting fact is that the increasingly dark period yielded a few downright excellent shows and events striking a rather vivid contrast to the state of society. The Ljubljana Summer Festival opened with a concert featuring 1 000 participants and director Tomaž Pandur staged a grandiose premiere of Tolstoy's War and Peace in Zagreb, which will be one of the most spectacular events of the ECC Maribor 2012. Unfortunately, the critics were not too enamoured. Unlike these trends, this year's Lju-

bljana Biennial of Graphic Arts was modest, elegant and especially reflective, as it was obvious that the focus of its attention – graphics – was dying because of different new painting technologies, which requires new orientations to be found. Another important topic is a committed interest in the fate of Edvard Kocbek, which yielded an excellent work of Andrej Inkret far exceeding numerous political attempts of Kocbek's evaluation witnessed (again) in recent years.

Jože Osterman, photo: STA

CULTURE: 2011 as the year of expectations in culture

The expectations, of course, concern the most important cultural project – European Capital of Culture Maribor 2012 – which will show our organisational capacities and level of sophistication in Maribor and five partner towns. The preparations encountered many problems and the economic crisis upset investment plans especially, meaning the number of new facilities and spaces in Maribor will be much lower than initially planned.



Another year of expectation, now passed, was also experienced by the ensemble of the Opera and Ballet in Ljubljana, who witnessed the construction of the new Opera House setting new foundations for their activities. Construction took

much longer and the costs were considerably higher than first expected. Two hundred metres away, the old Kolizej was pulled down to loud protests from the public; however, this well-known cultural monument had not been maintained

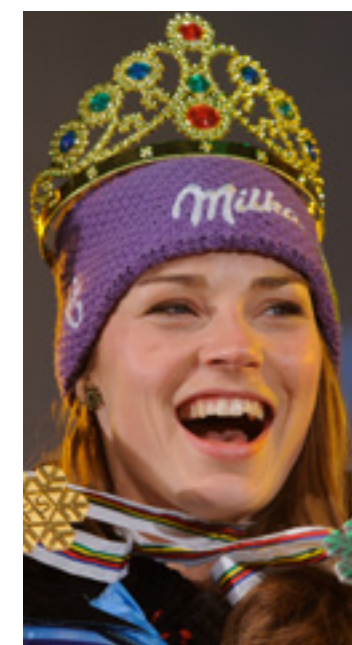
for the last half century. Kolizej thus fell victim to the new times and the capital, which will erect a building with new cultural facilities in its stead but which had previously never made an effort to unite the old and the new in some way. And talking about

buildings and facilities, mention must be made of the new Museum of Contemporary Art which has opened in the Metelkova Street areas under the auspices of the Modern Gallery. These interesting attempts at cultural socialisation in this part of the city centre, south of Masarykova Street, therefore enrich Ljubljana with a new cultural quarter.

Although there were no groundbreaking achievements this year, we should not overlook Slovenian film presented at its festival in Portorož to the extent yet unseen. As many as 17 feature length films, 8 medium-length films, 17 short and animated films as well as 25 student films constitute a body of work which may soon bear valuable fruit. We could say that this year has brought us about five good and interesting films, but no extraordinary achievements. We have, however, noticed two new directors: Nejc Gazvoda and Mitja Okorn, who successfully reinvented himself in Poland.

SPORT: Outstanding achievements of Slovenian Athletes

Slovenian athletes have once again successfully demonstrated their skills. In almost 40 different sports, they have achieved results that rank them among the best in both Europe and around the world. Some superb achievements in winter sports were recorded at the beginning of 2011.



The unrivalled athletes of the winter season were Tina Maze and Petra Majdič. At the World Championship in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Maze became the giant slalom world champion, and she won the silver in the super combination. After Mateja Svet, she has now become the second Slovenian skier to win the title of women's world champion. In the World Cup, she stood on the winners' podium seven times, twice as the winner (Trbiž – super combination, Lenzerheide – slalom).

Upon bidding farewell to her career as a professional ski runner, Petra Majdič won the bronze medal in sprint at the Oslo World Championship, and was number one in the special World Cup sprint sum total for the third time in a row. In the future, the queen of the ski-running tracks will assist the next generation of Slovenian female ski runners. We were also cheered by the achievements of ski jumpers. At the team competition on the famous Holmenkollenbakken ski jumping hill, the Slovenian team, with Kranjec, Prevc, Tepeš and Damjan, won the bronze of the Nordic World Ski Championships in Oslo. Moreover, at the end of the season, they achieved outstanding results in ski flying in Planica, where Robert Kranjec took second and the national team third place. Robert Kranjec – undoubtedly the leading name in our team – also set a new ski flying national record (232 metres) in Vikersund. The best Slovenian ski jumper of all times, Primož Peterka, retired from professional sport, and is now coaching the women's national team. Our ice hockey players were less successful, as they did not

manage to retain their position among the best teams at the World Championship in Slovakia. After a sensational 5-2 victory over Latvia, they were defeated by the Austrian and Belarusian teams. Our 'lynxes' will thus again compete in the second quality group (Division One). Ljubljana will be the host of this World Championship tournament running from 15 to 21 April 2012 in the new Stožice sports hall. In team sports, our basketball players eventually took seventh place at the European championship in Lithuania. Some were satisfied, some not. However, one should consider the fact that Slovenia played without five players of the first team squad who did not take part in the tournament for health or personal reasons. The volleyball players of the ACH Volley Club were excellent again, slightly less so the national team, whereas the football players did not manage to qualify for the European championship, which will be held in Ukraine and Poland next year. The 1-2 defeat against Estonia at home was fatal, and after five years, a new selector was appointed. During

the next term, our national team will be coached by a promising expert, Slaviša Stojanović. Among summer sports, an excellent achievement and bronze medal in hammer throw won at the world championship in Korea by Primož Kozmus, who returned to the athletic grounds, should be emphasised. This is a highly promising result before the forthcoming London 2012 Olympic Games. Tennis player Katarina Srebotnik ended the season ranking first among doubles, her greatest success being the victory on the hallowed courts of Wimbledon together with Kveta Paschke of the Czech Republic.





Aleš Zalar:

We have fully implemented the great reform of criminal justice

Aleš Zalar, Minister of Justice in the departing Government is convinced that the results of the criminal justice reform will soon be seen and that the best prosecutors and judges will handle the most demanding cases, which are now foreseen to be concluded considerably faster.

How would you comment on the fact that our country's current situation is being blamed entirely on the police, the prosecution and judicial bodies, and on the statement that it is especially wrong that people have no trust in law?

I see the problem in the fact that people themselves often disregard the law, which can be seen particularly in business relations and in breaching of fundamental rules of co-existence in society. This is where the criminal offences occur. People expect the judicial system to miraculously solve all their problems, which, of course, is not possible. We would definitely have fewer economic disputes if, when entering business relations, company owners and managers were to more thoroughly consider the risks emanating from contractual relationships. In short, they should foresee ways of resolving disagreements or disputes occurring in these relationships instead of forgetting that problems can occur and leaving their resolution entirely to the courts. We also have numerous disputes taking place between individuals – over a million judicial proceedings are continuously rotating in the courts; therefore, our Government has enabled our courts to develop new management functions.

Which functions?

Among others is mediation, i.e., searching for a compromise in all kinds of disputes: family disputes in which spouses are separating, labour and indemnity disputes, etc. The mediation is directed toward resolving disputes in a way that the role of parties in disputes is considerably more active than in the past. This is a great change that, of course, requires time for society to accept it completely, but the results show that we are on a good course; in this area, Slo-

venia is becoming a role model for other EU Member States. In the area of extrajudicial settlement of disputes by the mediation, we are absolutely among the top European countries, with only the Netherlands and perhaps Great Britain that can be compared to Slovenia. We are implementing the principle that, as opposed to being the first and only possibility, as has been the case until now, the judicial proceedings should be the last resort in a dispute settlement. In this way, people's attitude towards the judicial system will improve accordingly, which is also proved by the positive responses of people who are interviewed after leaving the mediation at the court. They express extreme satisfaction with the proceedings. They are satisfied with honesty and qualification of the mediators; they are even satisfied in cases in which they do not reach an agreement but finally understand the essence of their dispute. In the continuation of our efforts to reinforce trust in the legal system, these are the changes we gradually try to further enhance. Namely, various ways to achieve justice exist: mediation, arbitration, reconciliation and others.

Where and why did trust in law start to decline and how can we get it back? Is there a possibility to regain trust by reducing the duration of judicial proceedings?

In the past, Slovenia was a country strongly regulated by law. After gaining the independence, transition processes were initiated, triggering a series of problems: denationalisation, renewal of tenancy relationships, privatisation, etc. Some of these processes still remain incomplete and the main source of dissatisfaction lies in the fact that large, notorious cases in the area of white-collar crime haven't seen

their judicial conclusion yet. All of these cases are in phase of judicial proceedings that are very complicated and require a certain amount of time. People would prefer that the proceedings be concluded as quickly as possible. They feel that these open cases represent a huge injustice, which has greatly influenced the loss of trust in the rule of law. As regards this issue, I am a moderate optimist. We fully implemented the great reform of criminal justice. The results will be seen very soon, especially because the capacity of the system has now been enhanced, combining our best prosecutors and judges, who will now be able to handle the most demanding cases. I am convinced that these proceedings will be concluded considerably faster in the future.

This government doubtlessly committed its mandate to reinforcing the rule of law and combating white-collar and organised crime. How did you, during your service as a Minister, react to misconceptions of transition, large scale white-collar crime, unrestrained greed and corruption?

In the area of internal affairs and justice, we were aware that it is necessary to reinforce the system's competence and throughput so that the cases representing a serious threat to the state's economy are processed quickly through procedures and with just decisions. For this purpose, the National Bureau of Investigation was established as a special organisational unit within the Police. This was followed by the establishment of four specialised departments at District Courts to deal with these cases and the establishment of the specialised 12th prosecutor's office. It is important that the priority matters are uniformly defined for all of the bodies: the Police, the National Bureau of

Investigation, prosecutors and courts, and that the path from charge to judgment is considerably shorter now. This is one gain, the other being that we succeeded in attracting the most experienced experts within the system to deal with these cases. Namely, we wish to emphasise quality that relates to efficiency. Besides, we also added some amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act, increasing prosecutors' empowerments and introducing negotiations between the prosecutor and the defendant and his/her counsel, allowing reduced penalty in exchange for the admission of fault ('plea bargain'). We concentrated the criminal procedure considerably and allowed confiscation of property acquired illegally even in cases in which it did not derive directly from a criminal offence. We also enabled the establishment of special investigation groups and adopted a series of measures, or 'criminal justice reform'. All these measures will show results gradually, while their first effects are already visible. I am convinced that we will be able to talk about positive results of the prosecution and the courts soon.

Did prosecuting and judicial authorities succeed in rejecting the common belief that we live in a country with two separate rules of law?

I have said time and again that we have only one rule of law. It is not ideal, but all our efforts are directed toward reinforcing people's trust in the rule of law. We are aware that the relationship of people towards the rule of law and the justice administration is built on the performance of our criminal justice. It is like this everywhere; this recognition is old and our government has invested a lot in the functioning of our criminal justice. As a politician, I am sorry that I have no time to conclude my regular mandate; if I had it, I would be able to show concrete results with judicial conclusions, but these results will come eventually and people will then recognise that our rule of law is functioning after all. It is true that by nature, judicial mills grind slowly but nevertheless, they work confidently. The slow

speed is due to the fact that the judges have to make decisions with their eyes closed in order to make unbiased judgments. They have to take time to consider whether a person has committed a crime, whether one is obliged to pay indemnity, etc. It is in the nature of judicial proceedings that this weighing is carried out within reasonable time. I am satisfied that the length of proceedings in Slovenian courts is being reduced – currently, the average length is less than six months. Problems in the EU are very similar to our problems; the entire EU feels the impact of the economic crisis through their judicial proceedings, which can be felt not only in the increased number of bankruptcies and economic disputes, but also in the increase of violence. People react to the crisis inappropriately and more and more people seek state assistance in the form of free legal aid, which the state is obliged to provide to those who cannot afford an attorney. These trends are being recorded in all countries. Certain differences exist related to the tradition and level of developed legal culture in a certain society, but, in this field, Slovenia does not deviate from the European average.

What about the new Penal Code, potential amendments to the Constitution and new legal solutions? Reproaches have been heard that the Penal Code was adopted hurriedly and without due consideration, but it nevertheless brings positive and much-needed solutions.

The reproach that it was adopted hastily should be addressed to the previous Government, not ours. The previous Government really carried out the legal procedure in relation to the new Penal Code overnight. The current Government, however, has been correcting and amending the Code for three years. Therefore, we talk about two entirely different approaches – ours is open: legal experts from legal theory as well as judicial practice were included in it, the work was carried out in wide working groups and the wider public was invited to participate in the consideration and discussing of solutions. As a result, the procedure of the

preparation of amendments took a long time. It was an example of how the state should approach larger, systemic interventions in law in cases in which extremely sensitive criminal, material law is involved. Namely, the procedure reflects fundamental values that are deemed so important by the society that it also wishes to protect them with mechanisms of coercion in relation to individuals. We have to be extremely careful in weighing how far the state should go without excessively interfering with an individual's freedom and which values we should protect more – such as children's rights or copyright, etc. I am proud that we have succeeded in adopting changes in such a way. The dissolved National Assembly has reassembled; in this way, it made the decision about the Penal Code twice over, i.e. before and after it disassembled. During the second round of voting, it supported the Code with an even greater majority. The future Governments should take this procedure as an example.

Do you think constant changes of legislation are good? Should the Government and the Parliament be more thoughtful and reserved in amending legislation?

No, not all changes in legislation are good, of course. In this mandate there were a few quick interventions in our regulations because we had to respond promptly to unexpected circumstances that nobody had foreseen, e.g. bankruptcies due to economic crisis, which brought along many problems, from non-payment of insurance contributions to having a rigid system for saving healthy cores of companies. It was very difficult to bring fresh capital into a firm that had been declared insolvent. It showed that we have a few weak points in holding those who bring a company to the brink of bankruptcy responsible. We had to react quickly, and that forced us to amend the same act several times. As a Minister, I did not want this to happen, but the situation made us do it and when you hurry, you make mistakes, of course. In principle, it would have been ideal if there

had been as little intervention into the normative framework as possible and if we had had a firm legal framework and a stable judicial practice. If the latter is not stable and if decisions are not uniform, no one can be certain of what awaits him/her in the end, which results in an inflation of judicial proceedings because attorneys also cannot tell their clients what to expect with any certainty.

Is it possible to assume that the functioning of the coercive apparatus of the state alone will create people's awareness of what responsible action means?

Responsible behaviour needs to be reinforced at all levels, starting in educational programmes where a lot of unused potential exists. Responsibility has to be established and enforced in the management of companies in which the fundamental principle of benefit for all, not only the managers but also the employees, will not be neglected. While ethical dimension is still not fully established, it will be hard to assume that we will all behave as the most responsible citizens. Every human must respect the code of personal ethics. If we build on it, there are substantially fewer possibilities that a criminal offence will occur, including those unpleasantly surprising us, such as corruption. In this area, Slovenia has not used all its available resources. We have professions in the area of justice that have highly developed codes of professional ethics, such as judges. The problem occurs when a professional group does not deal with the breach of ethics or code of conduct in accordance with the strictest criteria. In the absence of such practice, a black sheep is left in a system, stigmatising the whole system; therefore, a determined response is urgent in such cases.

How did you improve the lack of prosecution personnel?

We have already improved this with the State Prosecutor Act, which establishes the new, 12th specialised State Prosecutor's Office for dealing with the most demanding cases, for prosecution of white-collar crime and corruption. Seven prosecutors

have been engaged so far, but in the near future, their number will be increased to 21. Besides, we have also enabled, by amending the Criminal Procedure Act, prosecutors to form multidisciplinary research groups in which experts from other areas are included. By that, we have enabled prosecutors to decide, themselves, on what additional knowledge they need and whom to include in the investigation and prosecution of a criminal offence. In this way, we have made the system very flexible and considerably more responsive. I am convinced that the results will soon be evident.

There also seems to be a great need for politics to be taken out of the judicial administration; namely, it is extremely inappropriate that judges are still elected by the National Assembly, although we do have a Judicial Council, which is "substantially less politically infested".

The greatest interference of politics with the judicial administration was related to the appointment of presidents of courts. During the mandates of previous Governments, we had quite a few scandals in relation to this, so as a new Minister, I set myself a priority task to relieve myself of the competence of appointing presidents of courts, which I have also carried out in practice. The National Assembly adopted this amendment, thus in Slovenia the presidents of courts are no longer appointed by the politicians, but by the Judicial Council, which is an independent body. It is composed of 11 members – six judges and five non-law experts; it is a non-political body that assesses the fulfilment of criteria for appointment or dismissal of presidents of courts exclusively on the basis of objective criteria. I consider taking politics out of the judiciary to be one of my greater achievements. Presidents of courts have important empowerments, not only with regard to the management of courts, but also in guiding and supervising judges. We have also introduced the direct professional responsibility of presidents of courts in cases in which courts fail to achieve the management results defined



by their presidents. If this happens, a president's mandate is terminated. By that, we tried to balance greater independence of presidents of courts with their responsibility for the results they create.

Does it ever happen that the National Assembly elects a judge candidate for political reasons?

Honestly, it has to be admitted that in last 10 years I don't remember a case in which the National Assembly, for political reasons, rejected election of a judge candidate proposed by the Judicial Council. A constitutional custom has been established that the National Assembly must strictly follow the Judicial Council's decision. However, such an arrangement is not optimal in case of appointing Supreme Court Judges, since they have to go back to the National Assembly for the approval of their mandate if they wish to become Supreme Court Judges. Here, the risk of the National Assembly succumbing to political temptation is considerably higher, but, so far, it has not happened; therefore, it would make sense to correct the procedure so that the President of the Republic would be the one to give judges

their mandates at the proposal of the Judicial Council. This, however, is certainly not the main problem of the judicial administration at this moment.

A lawyer is also supposed to create clear boundaries in his/her conscience, defining the point to which his/her engagement means professional work and from which he/she is acting politically. It is probably a challenge for every individual.

Yes, this is true for the lawyers working in politics and far less for others, although we all are political beings. We vote in elections, we take political positions, we have our world view. The boundary between law and politics can sometimes be much more challenging for lawyers working in politics. I am a lawyer and at the same time a politician, my personal experience is interesting because I have been a judge and a president of court for a long time, so I know where the boundaries are in relation to judicial administration that should not be crossed by politics. I was careful not to do it. I benefitted greatly from the experience, since it is in this way that I am able to discern sensitive relationships between the

three branches of power more easily. You find yourself in situations in which you wish that some things would improve in the judiciary but you must not act because you would cross the boundaries of your empowerment and interfere with the independent judicial authority. Sometimes the limitation in operation and action is a painful realisation.

What are the reasons for the decreasing interest of candidates for the position of Constitutional Court Judge? One of the reasons why legal experts are deterred from the candidature includes the excessive competences of the Constitutional Court, which is the reason they have to deal with trivial cases.

These reasons were blatantly revealed when one of the renowned constitutional law experts, Constitutional Court Judge Franci Grad, PhD, resigned. In his resignation statement, he pointed out that he no longer wished to perform this function because the Constitutional Court was not sufficiently dealing with important constitutional law issues or the issues of fundamental importance for the protection of human rights. We took this warning seriously and immediately started with the preparation of constitutional amendments that would reinforce the competences of the Constitutional Court. The process lasted three years. It was well-structured, and all constitutional law and other law experts available in Slovenia were included. If we had had a higher level of trust in the current political authority at the end of the procedure, these constitutional amendments would have been adopted. Unfortunately, all the debates revolved around early elections, when the constitutional amendments came to the desks of the National Assembly Deputies and when the Constitutional Commission supported (not with a two-third majority) constitutional amendments. Therefore, the political moment was highly inappropriate, which was why we were short of votes. As a result of the whole process, we recently issued a special miscellany, hoping that perhaps one

of the future National Assemblies would adopt the document, reinstate the Constitution revision procedure and enable the Constitutional Court to deal only with essential constitutional law issues. Until this happens, I doubt that the interest of candidates for the office of Constitutional Court Judge will increase.

At the presentation of the miscellany Constitutional Reform of the Constitutional Justice, you said that amendments to the Constitution in the direction of modified competences of the Constitutional Court did not take place, but the project retains hope that in the future, Slovenia will find a way to reinforce the role and the position of the Constitutional Court. What are the core and the contents of the miscellany?

Two things are crucial; namely, how the entire procedure was carried out – it was inclusive, open; it was carried out at several levels, from working groups to consultation sessions, the Constitutional Commission and the expert group. It was conducted in a way that I hope will eventually become the norm for every intervention in the Constitution, which should be amended only in truly urgent cases. This is why a lot of time is required to consider every amendment, no matter how small. The other positive experience from this process has a substantial nature. We came to a solution that made use of the positive selection principle in having the Constitutional Court deal with important constitutional issues and issues related to interfering with human rights with negative consequences.

New Government is coming. In case you leave your current position, do you know where you might go?

I don't know yet. At the moment I am only just starting to think about what I might do; there will be quite a few possibilities, and my past professional career enables me a successful path that I hope will present me with professional challenges. I have always engaged in things I found pleasurable and I wish to continue to do so in the future.



FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Slovenia's most important foreign investors are Austria, Germany and Italy



Dr Marjan Svetličič of the Faculty of Social Sciences

Interest in foreign investments in our country is growing despite the crisis, and is now more intense than in recent years. The companies most interested hail from Italy and Austria, which is the largest foreign investor in Slovenia. Important foreign investors also come from the south of Germany and from France. However, there is a lack of interest in Russia, Scandinavian countries and the United Kingdom.

Slovenia is said to be unattractive for foreign investors. Land, in particular, is considered too expensive, and there is the feeling that Slovenians generally do not approve of foreign capital. This sentiment has been strengthened further because of some notorious managerial buyouts where the owners under crisis conditions were unable to service their debts, which brought some large com-

panies – not only in the construction sector – serious difficulties and even bankruptcy. On the other hand, one of the Slovenian credit rating agencies has recently published an assessment that foreign investment in Slovenia is much more risky than domestic investment. Zoran Stomatovski of the Public Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Entrepreneurship and Foreign Investments (JAPTI) disagrees and assures that foreign capital is less expensive for new technologies and new jobs, since, in his words 'a foreigner brings in the money and assumes all the risk'. This is even more important if we consider that, in Slovenia, a workplace costs around EUR 50 000, a sum which is beyond the reach of several smaller businesses in the current economic climate. 'Slovenians are biased towards foreign investment because of the small size of our country,' explained Dr Marjan Svetličič of the Faculty of Social Sciences.

However, foreign investment is a necessity, as domestic capital has been wasted on loans to the nouveaux riches. Svetličič also commented on Slovenia's tenth place in the Economic Complexity Index. He believes that this high ranking is due, in particular, to the efforts of the car parts industrial sector, an example of which would be Revoz, and the pharmaceutical sector, an example of which would be Lek. An opportunity for the development and inflow of foreign capital is represented by the large industrial zones that have already been established in numerous municipalities and several others that are currently under construction. Some industrial zones have already reached the limit of their capacity, such as the Šenčur zone in Gorenjska and the Tezno zone in Štajerska, whereas in other zones there is still enough room for both domestic and foreign investors.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Young graduates also facing long-term unemployment

Mr Ivan Svetlik, the Slovenian minister of labour, estimates that, by the end of 2011, the number of unemployed in Slovenia will be between 111 000 and 112 000. Unemployment has been rising due to certain larger companies facing bankruptcy, mostly in the construction sector. According to Svetlik, Slovenia will be able to avoid the worst-case crisis scenario and prevent a major increase in unemployment. However, there is no consensus on estimates as to the possible increase in the number of unemployed over the coming years, as there are signs of a new crisis on the horizon.

Employment opportunities remain weak, and should the crisis deepen, companies will tend to be even more prudent in their employment plans. Among the sectors that have been hardest hit during the last period is the construction sector, which has been shrinking by 25 per cent quarter-on-quarter. However, the increasing number of young people who encounter difficulties in finding work remains a point of major concern; this is partly due to the discrepancy between what these young people have studied and what is needed by the economy.



Dr Ivan Svetlik, Labour minister

ENERGY

Solar plants

Energy efficiency in Slovenia has increased considerably recently. In the past two years, 800 plants were built, most of which were solar plants. In 2010, the combined capacity of these plants was 25 megawatts, and has since tripled to reach 80 megawatts this year.

In the past the Government supported both gas and solar plants, while subventions will be mostly earmarked for solar plants in the future. However, some experts consider that the number of solar plants has been growing rapidly, and should be slowed.



SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Enough milk and apples for home consumption

Slovenia grows and produces too little food and, as a result, has to import it. For instance, it needs to import 40 per cent of its cereal as local production covers less than half of the wheat required, a little over 60 per cent of its potatoes, 84 per cent of its meat, but only 50 per cent of its pork; only 75 per cent of its honey is produced by local bees, and home grown veg-

etables account for only 38 per cent of total consumption. On the other hand, local producers meet and even exceed local demand for milk and apples. Nevertheless, husbandry continues to be Slovenia's most important agricultural sector. Last year, 520 tonnes of milk were purchased, more than 300 tonnes were exported and 230 tonnes imported.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

At the brink of a new recession

After five quarters of 2 per cent economic growth, the third quarter of this year witnessed Slovenian GDP falling by half a per cent. The economic forecasts made until the end of the year are not optimistic, and Slovenia faces a new period of recession, on top of the current downturn from which the country has not yet recovered. These negative economic trends are mostly due to modest domestic demand and limited investment in fixed assets, while the export sector – the only sector fuelling economic

growth during this period – was unable to surmount them. For Slovenia, the OECD predicts a 1 per cent increase in GDP growth for 2011, and only 0.3 per cent for 2012. A slightly higher growth in GDP is forecast for 2013. This slow down in GDP growth will always, according to the OECD, be accompanied by a moderate rise in inflation, whereas the fiscal deficit in 2013 is expected to be close to the Maastricht criteria of 3 per cent of GDP. EU forecasts for Slovenia are, unfortunately, much less optimistic.

RICH SLOVENIANS

The wealthiest are Sandi Češko and Igor Lah



Sandi Češko, owner and CEO of Studio Moderna

The Slovenian magazine, Manager, has listed the wealthiest people in Slovenia for 2011. As a result of the crisis, this year's list reveals major changes, as some people who have traditionally been ranked at the top have seen their property diminished, particularly those who are heavily in debt because of

managerial buyouts, and are unable to service their debts. Sandi Češko, owner and CEO of Studio Moderna, is at the top of the list; this company has been steadily increasing its sales over recent years. Češko's fortune is estimated at EUR 205 million. The following are among the wealthiest people in Slovenia: Igor Lah, the owner of Amplus Holding, Kalantia Limited, Aluber and other companies, is ranked second; Albin and Tatjana Dobršek of Engineering Dobršek are ranked third; Mirko Tuš, who took first place last year, is ranked fourth; and Samo and Iza Login, the owners of Outfit 7 and whose fortune is estimated at EUR 78 million are ranked fifth. The wealthiest one hundred Slovenians have a total fortune of over EUR 2.5 billion, which is high for Slovenia, but not particularly high in comparison with the world's wealthiest.

EDUCATION

Awards for best trainers and employers

In cooperation with the Sofos Institute, Planet GV selected and presented awards to those companies which have been doing the most in adult education in the most systematic way. Awards were received by the following companies: the banks, NLB and Unicredit; the auditors, Ernst & Young; the manufacturer of paints and coatings, Helios; Iskra Mehanizmi; the pharmaceutical companies, Krka and Lek; the accountant firm, Unija; the insurers, Zavarovalnica Triglav; and Zavod za zdravstveno zavarovanje (the Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia).

At the recent Employment Fair in Ljubljana, the award for best employer was conferred, for the third time in succession, to the pharmaceutical company, Krka. Krka scored best in the research conducted by the employment web portal, Moje-delo.com. This year, the fair brought together 61 exhibitors and attracted over 12 000 visitors. The employment fair, which is already in its ninth year, also organised conferences on employment opportunities in the European Union and lectures delivered by the best employers on their experiences.

ECOLOGY

More and more waste

In terms of the annual amount of waste generated, with 450 kg per person Slovenia is below the EU average of 520 kg per person. However, Slovenia is well above average in terms of waste collected per person; in Slovenia 350 kg are collected

per person in comparison with the EU average, which is 200 kg per person. Each year the amount of dangerous waste generated increases – from 863 tonnes of dangerous waste generated in 2002 to over 3 500 tonnes in 2009.

Constitutional Court of the Republic of Slovenia, photo: Borut Peršolja and court archives

The constitutional court and constitutionality day

The 20th anniversary of Slovenia's primary legal document

'This year, constitutional democracy in the Republic of Slovenia celebrates its 20th anniversary. [...] In compliance with the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, all state authorities are obliged to protect the values of the rule of law and strive towards this goal. The role of the Constitutional Court is of vital importance in this respect. As the highest judicial body for the protection of constitutionality, human rights and fundamental freedoms, the court is the pillar of the rule of law. With its strong powers and independent standing, it can significantly contribute to respect for human dignity and other foundations of the law.'

These were the words spoken at the beginning of 2011 by the President of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Slovenia, Dr Ernest Petrič, at the launch of the Constitutional Court Annual Report for 2010.



The constitutional court is composed of nine judges, each of whom is elected on the proposal of the President of the Republic by the National Assembly for a nine-year term.

On 23 December 1991, the Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, its first constitution as an independent and democratic state. As the country's primary legal document, the Constitution stipulates the foundations of state authority and the position of individuals in the Republic of Slovenia. It guarantees a democratic political system with a parliamentary form of state authority, a state governed by the rule of law, and a social state based on respect for human dignity. Some of the more important constitutional principles are the sovereignty of the people, the separation of powers, the right to self-determination, the protection of human rights and the special rights of the Italian and Hungarian national minorities, the separation of the state and religious communities, and the guarantee of local self-government. Furthermore, the Constitution also regulates the protection of human rights,

the organisation of the state, economic and social relations, public finance, constitutionality and legality, and the procedure for amending the Constitution.

23 DECEMBER – CONSTITUTIONALITY DAY

Each year, the Constitutional Court celebrates Constitutionality Day on 23 December to commemorate the day when the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia was adopted and declared. This year, the Constitution celebrates its twentieth anniversary.

The Constitutional Court, however, was not established in 1991. Its history dates back to the time of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in which it has functioned as the constitutional court of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia since 1963. Yet it was the very Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia that has strengthened its powers and position. Slovenia's accession to the Council of Europe in 1993, the ratification

of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms that followed, and the accession to the European Union in 2004 all affirmed Slovenia's commitment to comply with modern European legal principles and to guarantee the protection of human dignity.

Since the establishment of the Constitutional Court, its work has been marked by efforts to establish the rule of law and to ensure that all authorities comply with the constitutional order. The Constitution acquires its significance through the decisions of the Constitutional Court and has a direct influence on the actions of the holders of legislative, executive and judicial powers, directing them towards the protection of fundamental legal values and the values of civilisation, and constraining them when they exceed the limits of what is constitutionally allowed. This consolidation of the rule of law strengthens citizens' trust in the institutions of the Repub-

lic of Slovenia and that the legal system is just and modern, which is of paramount importance for further economic, scientific, social and cultural development.

WHAT IS THE POSITION OF THE SLOVENIAN CONSTITUTIONAL COURT?

In order to be able to perform its duties, the Constitutional Court must have an appropriate position within the organisation of state authority. What is the position of the Slovenian Constitutional Court? It is to some degree determined by the Constitution, which lays down its composition and all its most important powers, underlining its particular importance by including the provisions on the Constitutional Court in a separate, eighth chapter rather than the chapter on the organisation of the state. This in itself reflects the fact that the court is independent of all other state authorities in its work. The Constitutional Court Act, on the other hand,



is more specific and detailed; Article 1 of the Act stipulates that the court is the highest judicial body for the protection of constitutionality, legality, human rights, and fundamental freedoms, and highlights its position as an independent and autonomous state authority. The Constitutional Court is the guardian of the Constitution and, on the basis of its powers and responsibilities, interprets constitutional provisions. In so doing, it defines the limits of what is acceptable conduct for the holders of power, and protects individuals from the arbitrariness of authorities, and from violations of their constitutional rights resulting from the conduct of state authorities, local self-government authorities and other bearers of public authority. Considering the above, the decisions of the Constitutional Court must be binding as this is the only way the court can perform its duties. Due to its importance, this principle is also highlighted in Article 1 of the Constitutional Court Act.

The parties to whom the court's decisions are addressed (for

decisions with inter partes efficacy), or everyone, including the legislator (for decisions with erga omnes efficacy) have an obligation and responsibility to comply with them. It is also important that regular courts respect the positions of the Constitutional Court in their case-law as this is the only way to ensure the primary role of constitutional principles, human rights and fundamental freedoms. The level of compliance with the decisions of the Constitutional Court reflects how well-developed and sound a society's culture is, or, in other words, the Constitutional Court, of course, cannot have the first or only say in interpreting the Constitution, but it should have the final word. The decisions of the Constitutional Court contribute to a uniform application of the law, the highest possible level of legal certainty, and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. With its decisions, the Constitutional Court has defined in more detail the concept of the rule of law and a social state, and the principle of equality, helped

lay the foundations of our local self-government and established standards for assessing the restriction of the freedom of expression, the right to ownership, and the rights of persons in criminal proceedings. By consistently and decisively advancing the most important constitutional principles, the Constitutional Court will go down in Slovenian legal culture as one of the key factors determining the development and implementation of the rule of law.

THE COURT IS COMPOSED OF NINE JUDGES

Each of them is elected on the proposal of the President of the Republic by the National Assembly for a nine-year term. The judges are elected from among legal experts, and an additional condition for election is a minimum age of 40 years. By imposing this limit, the country seeks to attract experienced lawyers to join its rank of judges. They must, of course, also demonstrate a broadness of spirit and personal integrity to assist them when adjudicating on important legal

and ethnically sensitive issues. The President of the Constitutional Court is elected by the judges from among themselves for a three-year term. The first President of the Constitutional Court was Dr Peter Jambrek (25 April 1991–24 April 1994). The current President of the Constitutional Court is Dr Ernest Petrič, who took office in November 2010.

The Constitutional Court has a broad range of powers, most of which are expressly stated in the Constitution, which, however, allows for additional powers to be determined by law.

The fundamental powers of the Constitutional Court are related to the protection of constitutionality and to taking action if any branch of authority – legislative, executive or judicial – exercises its powers in contravention of the Constitution. The Constitutional Court therefore decides on the conformity of laws and other regulations with the Constitution, ratified treaties and the general principles of international law. The Constitutional Court decides on the conformity of a treaty

with the Constitution during its ratification process. Under certain conditions, it also reviews the conformity of implementing regulations with the Constitution and laws.

JURISDICTIONAL DISPUTES

The Constitutional Court also decides on jurisdictional disputes (e.g. between the highest state authorities), the impeachment of the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, and other ministers, the unconstitutionality of the documents and activities of political parties, the constitutionality of a request to call a referendum, disputes concerning the confirmation of deputies' terms of office and other similar disputes, the aim of which is to protect the constitutional arrangement with regard to the mutual relations between the various holders of power within the democratic system.

One of the more important powers of the Constitutional Court is also deciding on con-

stitutional complaints arising from violations of the human rights or fundamental freedoms of natural or legal persons because of acts committed by holders of power. This is a legal remedy primarily intended for violations of human rights or fundamental freedoms and cannot be used solely to act on the misapplication of substantive or procedural law or incorrectly established facts in court proceedings. A constitutional complaint may, as a rule, be lodged only against a court decision after all the legal remedies in the Republic of Slovenia (regular and extraordinary) provided to the party by law have been exhausted. A constitutional complaint may exceptionally be lodged before all the extraordinary legal remedies have been exhausted if two conditions are met: 1) the alleged violation is manifestly obvious; and 2) irreparable consequences for the complainant would result from the implementation of the individual act.

OVER 19700 CONSTITUTIONAL COMPLAINTS AND 6300 CONSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS AND INITIATIVES

Many of the applications lodged with the Constitutional Court demonstrate that the court, as the guardian of the Constitution and constitutional human rights and fundamental freedoms, is an important institution, which, in its twenty years of work, has earned the trust and respect of citizens and others seeking legal protection. In the twenty years since the adoption of the Constitution, the Constitutional Court has adjudicated on over 19 700 constitutional complaints and over 6 300 constitutional requirements and initiatives. Among other things, it reviewed certain international legal documents that were crucial to Slovenia. The Europe Agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and the Republic of Slovenia, the Agreement between the Republic of Slovenia and the Holy See on legal issues (better known as the Vatican Agreement), and the Arbitration Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and the Government of the Republic of Croatia should be highlighted in this regard. Requests to review the constitutionality of requests to call a referendum are also an important indicator of trust in the Constitutional Court at both the local and national levels. In this context, the Constitutional Court has established, for example, that the content of the request to call a preliminary legislative referendum on the proposed law regulating

the status of 'the erased' may give rise to unconstitutional consequences. The court came to similar conclusions on the content of the request to call a local referendum on the ordinance regulating the spatial planning of the Municipality of Ljubljana since the decision that would be taken in the case in question could encroach on the right of the Islamic community to construct a religious building where it is generally acceptable and customary to profess Islamic beliefs and perform religious ceremonies. On the other hand, the court has established that the referendum on the proposed law on pension and disability insurance will not result in unconstitutional consequences. To mark the twentieth anniversary of the Constitution – one of the most important milestones in Slovenia's history, the Constitutional Court, in cooperation with the Faculty of Law of the University of Ljubljana, held an international conference on 21 and 22 December 2011. The event brought together many domestic and foreign experts in constitutional law, including the authors of the Constitution, who discussed modern Slovenian constitutionalism from the perspective of the original conceptual, legal and theoretical application of the Constitution, and its interpretation. This year, the Constitutional Court celebrated Constitutionality Day in a ceremonial but working atmosphere, providing an overview of the most important views on this subject in theory and practice and outlining unresolved issues and the challenges that lie ahead.



The Constitutional Court.





Andrew Page, HM Ambassador

Is Britain now out in the cold in Europe? That's not how it feels to me in Slovenia.

“Europe leaves Britain” was my favourite UK newspaper headline this month. Sometimes I envy the journalists their editorial freedom. It's a rare pleasure for a diplomat to shed the shackles of instructions from capitals, take time out and write an op-ed piece reflecting on fast-moving events around the globe.

My good friend US Ambassador Joe Mussomeli set the bar high last month with an admirably honest critique, urging Slovenia to open up its economy more to foreign investment. This month, I'm the lucky one: a European Summit where Britain's PM refuses agreement at 27, a break-through in Durban paving the way to a global agreement on climate change, the biggest demonstrations in Russia for 20 years, and most important of all – for me, if not for the world – elections in Slovenia resulting in a remarkable victory (from 0% to 28% in six weeks) for a newcomer to the national stage. A momentous month – just as good a time to be a diplomat as a journalist in lovely Ljubljana.

Let me start with Europe, where we British diplomats have some explaining to do to gain understanding at least, if not sympathy, for our Government's approach. Why did David Cameron block agreement at 27 to amending the EU Treaty to strengthen the Eurozone?

There have always been different groups within Europe. Britain is a pivotal member of NATO (we led with France over Libya), and is at the heart of the EU's Single Market – indeed we are often the ones driving hardest for protecting and completing the Single Market in energy and services, including financial services. We benefit greatly from it (50% of our trade is with the EU), and have consistently argued for bold structural reforms and a comprehensive growth plan for a more dynamic, outward-looking Europe. But we are not in Schengen, and we are not in the Euro. Nor will we join the Euro – certainly not under this Government. Moreover, we have legislated this year to guarantee that we will not give up powers (on anything that involves Parliament or Government) without asking the British people first in a referendum. This brings us to the crux – sovereignty. The Eurozone agreed this month to create a new “fiscal compact”, with stronger co-ordination of economic policy, obligations for Member States to enshrine a 3% budget deficit ceiling into national constitutions verified by the European Court of Justice (ECJ), and automatic sanctions for violating this. This move to a fiscal union involves surrendering of sovereignty of a kind that is unimaginable in Britain. We have our own currency, our own interest rates and our own economic policy – and prefer it that way. We had our own emergency budget in summer 2010 on our own terms – not in summer 2011 on the financial markets' terms. The actions our Government is taking to reduce our budget deficit from 11% to 0% by 2015 helped secure record low interest rates for businesses and consumers. The Government has lent £150 billion to banks to get credit flowing again to business, financing projects and jobs.

When I first arrived in Ljubljana in early 2009, people used to ask me why Britain does not join the Euro – just as they used to ask me in Paris in 2000–04. They don't ask me that any more. Many envy the British our freedom of manoeuvre – and our retention of sovereignty.

The area where there is least understanding of Britain's position is financial services. The demands Britain made were not for repatriation of powers from Brussels, nor for unilateral exemption for The City or British financial services. What we sought, we sought for all EU Member States: to maintain a level playing-field in financial services and the Single Market as a whole. This would have retained our ability to take tougher –

regulatory action to sort out our banking system. But such a safeguard was deemed “unacceptable”.

So is there a risk that policies will be made by the Eurozone that will harm British interests? Our Government's view is that the institutions of the EU (Commission, ECJ etc) belong to the 27, to do things set out in the treaties that all 27 are signed up to – which cover extending the Single Market, including financial services – and that this will provide protection for Britain.

David Cameron's decision cannot be analysed in isolation from the politics in Britain. Any Prime Minister will seek to act in the national interest, but as a politician will also be mindful of what is deliverable back at home. The closest parallel in Slovenia, in terms of strength of feeling among Parliament and people, is the dispute over the Piran Bay, touching on visceral sensitivities for the nation. Many commentators have pointed out that amendment of the Treaty at 27 would have had to be presented to the House of Commons, where Eurosceptics' demand for a referendum on Britain's membership of the EU could have become unstoppable.

Despite our stance in the EU, as an Ambassador of an EU Member State in Ljubljana I feel in no way isolated – on the contrary, contacts with Ministers, officials, businesses, journalists, NGOs, academics and students on topics integral to the EU continue to be my meat and drink. I don't expect that to change. Nor do I expect EU-related work to reduce – quite the reverse. The EU will remain central to the way Britain pursues its foreign policy and security interests. With EU partners we will take a robust stance with Iran over its nuclear ambitions (and exact a price for the outrageous attack on our compounds in violation of the Vienna Convention); strengthen partnerships between the EU and countries on its periphery (including Croatia); use EU assistance, conditionality and trade measures to promote reforms in the Arab world; build prosperity via strategic relationships between the EU and the BRICS; enhance Europe's energy security; work with Slovenia and other progressive countries to ensure that the EU goes on giving a lead on climate change, as in Durban; in short, enable a strong EU to act as a magnet and an example to others, and to develop a rule-based international order that can deal with global threats, including terrorism, crime, corruption and cyber-security.

Looking ahead to 2012, I predict that Slovenian politics will be spiced up by the amazing shift in the political kaleidoscope. The new Government will face big economic challenges, not least the new fiscal strait-jacket imposed by the Eurozone agreement. The existential threat to the Eurozone may not go away for quite a few months, but I fully expect the Euro to survive. For Britain in Slovenia, 2012 will be a bumper year. We are gearing up now – in all parts of the “British House” (Embassy, Council, Chamber of Commerce, British School). We will be putting the GREAT back into Britain as we celebrate HM The Queen's Diamond Jubilee and host the London 2012 Games. Working closely with my friend Iztok Jarc and his team at the Slovenian Embassy, we want to welcome all Slovenes to Britain to witness the explosion of sporting events and experience our unique blend of the old and the new: from our history and heritage to cutting-edge culture and creative industries – in which Slovenes themselves excel. We will be rolling out the red carpet for the world's statesmen, just as we will for the world's entrepreneurs by offering low tax rates and incentives to develop business in Britain. Isolated from Europe? Out in the cold? Not in 2012, for sure – and in my view, Britain never will be.



Photo: STA



Iztok Jarc, Slovenia's Ambassador to United Kingdom

Letter from London

We live in a time of great pressure, where routine performance of tasks does not suffice. This is also true of Slovenian diplomacy, which, besides carrying out its usual duties, is paying special attention to economic diplomacy, the promotion of Slovenian tourism, the maintenance of contacts with emigrants and environmental diplomacy. And what news on these topics can we communicate from London?

THE ECONOMY

During the current crisis, which has spared neither the UK nor Slovenia, it is all the more important that the current bilateral trade data still demonstrate dynamic economic relations between the two countries. Compared to 2009, Slovenian exports, imports and the overall trade in goods increased by 19% in 2010, and these trends have continued to be similarly favourable this year. We can only hope that such solid performance by the companies involved will also be recorded next year. British investments in Slovenia have also increased: at the end of 2010, they amounted to over €314 million, which represents an almost 150% increase on the previous year.

Regarding the EU economic policies, Slovenia and the UK often have identical views when competitiveness and economic growth are at issue. They closely cooperate within the group of countries with similar views to try to give fresh impetus to a series of initiatives intended to boost economic growth in the EU. These range from a single digital market to the elimination of the remaining obstacles to a single services market.

Slovenia and the UK have, of course, very different starting points (the UK is not member of the euro area) regarding the most topical issue, i.e. the resolution of the euro area-related problems. However, on one point they fully agree: a rapid and systemic resolution of these problems is in the direct interest of all European economies.

Together with other stakeholders, the Slovenian Embassy makes every effort to consolidate the image of a creative and dynamic Slovenian economy among the British, an economy which through its achievements and supply can be an interesting partner for entrepreneurs and investors. In so doing, we closely cooperate with a group of young and highly successful Slovenians seeking their professional challenges in the UK. Their experience, contacts and advice are extremely useful. This has, for example, been demonstrated by the exhibition of contemporary Slovenian design entitled Silent Resolution, which received a very good response on its presentation in London.

THE OLYMPIC GAMES

Next year, Slovenia will have an entirely new opportunity to present itself in London, dressed in Olympic colours. Considering the previous achievements of Slovenian Olympic sportsmen and women, we may certainly hope that we will have every reason to be proud of our athletes in London.

The recent meeting held at our Embassy between the Chairman of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games, Lord Sebastian Coe, and the Slovenian delegation, including the reigning Olympic hammer throw champion Primož Kozmus, has confirmed that Slovenia enjoys a high reputation in the sports world. It would be welcome if Slovenia also used the Olympic opportunity



Photo: STA

for a comprehensive presentation of sports, the economy, culture and tourism. The Slovenian House in London should itself be a reflection of Slovenian construction engineering and design skills and Slovenian creativeness.

We believe that the Slovenian Olympic House can become a ‘real home’ for our economic achievements, culture, tourist offer, and of course cuisine and wine.

During the Olympic Games, the Slovenian Embassy will also be responsible for a series of other tasks, including those particularly focusing on providing assistance to Slovenian nationals.

For quite some time, we have also had a desire to effectively integrate the ‘European Capital of Culture – Maribor 2012’ programmes into the Cultural Olympiads that will take place next year as an additional programme of the Olympic Games. In this context, we can count on cooperation between the twinned towns of Greenwich and Maribor.

TOURISM

The British are important and traditional guests in Slovenia. The Slovenian Tourist Board has acknowledged this fact by opening a bureau in London in 2010, operating under the auspices of the Embassy.

Next year, we may expect an increase in travel in both directions. These expectations, however, much depend on the quality of airline connections that, in our view, are presently insufficient.

Culture, the Media, Emigrants and Environment-Friendly Diplomacy. Recently, the Slovenian Embassy has organised or co-organised a number of targeted events.

We are paying special attention to the presentation of Slovenian artists, guests at the apartment in London that the Slovenian Ministry of Culture rented for this purpose. Guest artists recently performing in London have included Almira Sadar, Jani Virk, Urška Vidic, Lidija Dimkowska and Maja Malus. During the last few months, round tables and presentations were also attended by Drago Jančar, Iztok Osojnik and many other men and women of letters.

Moreover, in the previous year, we organised two exhibitions by the world-renowned Slovenian painter Zoran Mušič and a painter of the younger generation, Anže Gallus Petelin, and a photographic exhibition by Matjaž Tančič. During the same period, we also organised a very successful concert featuring Zoran Predin and supported the appearance of the opera singer Sabina Cvilak.

Information about our activities and those carried out by Slovenians living in the UK is regularly published on our website or communicated through social networks and by way of a monthly bulletin. In so doing, we provide for the interconnection of Slovenes living in the UK. Our Embassy also pays special attention to green diplomacy in order to reduce the Embassy's carbon footprint and takes part in the London Green Diplomacy Network, which strives for the environment-friendly operation of embassies.

The Embassy would like to thank the editorial office of SINFO magazine for inviting us to contribute this text, and wishes a very peaceful Christmas and a Happy New Year to all its readers!

Jože Osterman, photo: Marjo Pigac, Goran Blaganjac

MARIBOR 2012: READY TO START

Maribor is already counting down the hours remaining until 13 January 2012, the day of the beginning of its undoubtedly historic project: being 'the European Capital of Culture'. Visitors passing through Maribor in these December days can already feel a certain 'cultural vibration' in the air, because among the numerous New Year ads and decorations, it is impossible to overlook all the advertising announcing the Capital of Culture. Despite some considerable problems the city has been facing, it is aware of its great opportunity and will try to take advantage of it as well as it possibly can.

An even stronger sense of this can be felt in the yard of the Vetrinjski Dvorec Mansion, which currently hosts the Maribor 2012 Institute, the operational manager of the project, in its beautifully refurbished premises. The halls in the ground floor, where craftsmen once had their workshops, are occupied by young people in front of their computers, preparing every detail of the project and its logistics. There is not much time left, but the team, which started to work only a year ago, is quite used to acting under pressure. They have taken this fact for granted, although they are not responsible for it.

PROGRAMME MIRACLE

In the previous year, programme director Mitja Čander performed a near miracle. While the previous organisational teams developed an overly grand concept consisting of as many as 16 programme sections, the costs of which could not possibly be covered in the current financial situation, Čander succeeded in shrinking the programme so as to preserve the projects that are considered to be most innovative and could bring the city permanent accolades.

In this respect, two programme sections – Urban Furrows and TownKeys – have remained almost unchanged. They are based on the establishment of a completely new relationship between the city and its inhabitants that would develop at a level of human connections, mutual assistance and solidarity, through which urban life could be cultivated without any major financial resources. Čander sensitively considered the prevailing trends that have been significant for the European Capitals of Culture in the past few years: to reduce the number of glamorous projects and performances of famous art companies and individuals that attract great audiences but do not leave any permanent traces behind, in exchange for something that can create a new identity of the city and activate its energy. In a time of economic crisis, this model is especially appropriate for the implementation of projects that do not require major funds, but nevertheless deeply affect the spiritual life of a community. And Maribor, as one of the cities with the highest rates of people moving out, is really in need of and eager for new incentives!

The members of Čander's team, young and mostly educated people and doctoral students who have already obtained experience in individual projects, but have not yet been given a proper opportunity in public institutions, institutes and similar organisations, are anxious to prove themselves, and have introduced a completely new approach to the projects. The entire European Capital of Culture project has been divided into four major programme sections. On the basis of invitations to tenders and the team members' own ideas, around the 412 different events and happenings have been incorporated in these programme sections, some of which will take place throughout the entire year. With a budget of approximately €15 million (which is said to be the lowest in history for such projects), a relatively innovative programme has been created. As already mentioned, an important part of the project events, even some of the most attractive ones, will also take place in the partner towns Ptuj, Murska Sobota, Novo mesto, Velenje and Slovenj Gradec.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TERMINAL

Within Terminal 12, the most 'classical programme section', offering performances and productions of famous art companies and individual artists, we can expect some interesting guest performances by theatres such as the Les Ballets C de la B of Alain Platel (Belgium), the Cabaret New Burlesque (United States), the Radu Stanca National Theatre (Romania) of Slivio Purcarete, the Bartabas Horse Performance Academy from Versailles, the Forman Brothers Theatre (Czech Republic) and the Jan Fabre Theatre (Troubleyn/Jan Fabre VZW, Belgium) with its world premiere of 'The Saint Gangster'. The Slovene National Theatre from Maribor will perform Slovene productions based on the cooperation between Slovenian and foreign artists; the Anton Podbevšek Theatre from Novo mesto, named after a Slovenian avant-garde poet, will prepare the project 'Man with Bombs'; the collaboration between Slovenian, Austrian, Japanese, Croatian and American artists will be the basis for the productions of the theatre companies En Knap and Superamas, the Pandur Theatres and the Croatian National Theatre from Zagreb (the performance 'War and Peace' based on the authorial manuscript by Tomaž Pandur), and Bunker Betontanc and Original Tempo. Among the most interesting projects are also 'The Tailors of the World' by Dušan Jovanović and Büchner's drama 'Danton's Death' performed by Jernej Lorenci, the Slovene Youth Theatre and the Ptuj Theatre. In this section, the project Twelve is also extremely important.

Within this project, Maribor will host notable, internationally renowned and leading personalities from various creative fields, ranging from artistic genres to philosophy. Maribor and its partner towns expect to be visited by Charles Simic, Boris Groys, Jan Fabre, Rebecca Horn, Laurie Anderson, Goran Bregović, Tzvetan Todorov, Garry Kasparov, Mario Vargas Llosa and Peter Zumthor. They should present to the public their visions of the future with an essay and with lectures. These important events should attract interest of the domestic and international public.

Renowned auteurs from the region will start shooting an interesting project – a feature omnibus film. This project will also be carried out in cooperation with auteurs from Slovenia's neighbouring countries: Croatia, Hungary, Austria and Italy. The artistic manager of the project is the Slovenian film director and Palme d'Or winner Jan Cvitkovič. He will work with other, internationally renowned film creators, including director Roberto Dordit and producer Igor Princič from Italy, director Michael Glawogger from Austria, director Antonio Nuić and producer Boris T. Matic from Croatia and director Georgy Palfi and producer Peter Miskolczi from Hungary.

The three most important fine art exhibitions to be held are 'La belle peinture est derrière nous', showing great works of Picasso, Miró, Cezanne and Degas; 'Following the Taste', an exhibition of drawings with approximately 300 drawings from the London Tate Gallery; and in autumn 2012 also an exhibition of works from the Otto Mauer Collection. This collection includes over 3000 works encompassing a wide spectrum of modern art and Otto Mauer's heritage. This exhibition will be organised in cooperation with the Austrian Cultural Forum in Ljubljana and will show around 50 works from the collection. The focus will be on graphic arts, including works of important Austrian and European artists of the 20th century, such as Otto Dix, Marc Chagall, Oskar Kokoschka, Maria Lassnig, Alfred Kubin, Arnulf Rainer and others.

Among the guest musical performances, the highlight will be the performance by Ivo Pogorelić with the Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Russian conductor Dimitrij Kitajenko. Within the framework of Festival Maribor, whose artistic director is Richard



Programme team of project: young and courageous.



Tognetti, a violinist and chamber musician, the Mars Festival will be organised. This festival is a special Slovenian-Croatian event, first taking place in a Slovene town and then in a Croatian town. In 2012, the towns will be Maribor and Zagreb.

INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS

The innovative programme section called Cultural Embassies will cover the presentation of cultures from various European Union member states, such as Finland, Estonia, Hungary, Spain, Italy, France, Germany, Great Britain, Belgium, Austria, Portugal, Latvia and Cyprus, and many other countries, among them Israel, Japan, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Mexico and India.

Particular attention will be devoted to the cooperation between the two Capitals of Culture, Maribor and Guimarães, Portugal: the youth exchange programmes 'Feeling the Future of Europe' and 'Letters of the World' are planned to connect school-age youth and encourage a quality cultural dialogue between Portugal and Slovenia through contests, while the purpose of the project 'History of the Future' is to connect secondary school pupils and help them establish a permanent dialogue. In this project, two philosophers and lecturers, Mladen Dolar and Moisés Lemos Martins, will also participate.

In cooperation with the Portuguese Pen Club and the Programme for the Slovene Language and Culture at the Faculdade de Letras in Lisbon, two bilingual anthologies of renowned poets from the two countries, entitled the 'Anthology of Twentieth-Century Portuguese Poetry' and the 'Anthology of Twentieth-Century Slovenian Poetry' will be published.

The major sports project of the European Capital of Culture will be 'Maribor Football Culture', which will start with the premiere of the documentary film about the Slovenian football player Zlatko Zahovič, continue with friendly football matches between the team of artists and the team of co-creators of the Capital of Culture projects from Maribor and Guimarães, accompanied by a concert by Zoran Predin, a singer and songwriter from Maribor, and a concert by a singer of the popular Portuguese fado music, and peak with

a football match between the Maribor Football Club and the Guimarães Football Club at Ljudski Vrt Stadium.

HISTORY AND THE PRESENT

The programme section TownKeys highlights the history of Maribor and sets it in the context of the present. The leader of this programme section and the oldest member of the team, Boris Cizej, will reawaken the medieval town walls of Maribor as the borders of the new creative town core. Over hundred events, including exhibitions and the projects of national and international authors related the history of Maribor – such as the dialogue with the past, the discovery of the roots in the national struggles of the 19th century and during the two world wars, the industrial character of the city by the Drava River, its obsession with football and its infatuation with the Golden Fox Ski World Cup – will pump fresh blood into the city centre and quicken its pulse.

The programme section Urban Furrows is led by one of the most incisive sociologists and social activists, Dr Marta Gregorič, and a group of highly qualified experts from different areas. They have based their research work on the theory of social ecology, which explains why environmental questions 'cannot be analysed and resolved without first confronting the fundamental contradictions in the mechanisms behind the modern society that are ripping apart the fabric of society and, consequently, destroying the natural environment', as stated on the ECOC Website. In their work, they use the method of militant research, which characteristically takes on a creative, affirmative and dynamic role typical for potentia (creative power), which is the reason the researchers work directly 'with' people not 'for' them. The introduction of food production in the immediate vicinity of the town with the possibility of achieving a high level of self-sufficiency, the introduction of models of mutual assistance and new social networks will probably significantly contribute to the entire project of the Capital of Culture by providing one of the most interesting and relatively innovative attempts of how to improve the lives of citizens with minimum measures.

Hana Souček Morača, photo: Slovene National Theatre and Government Communication Office archives

REOPENING OF THE SLOVENE NATIONAL THEATRE OPERA AND BALLET LJUBLJANA

WELCOME BACK, WE MISSED YOU!



Mitja Bervar, principal manager of the Slovene National Theatre Opera and Ballet Ljubljana:

The opening of the renovated opera and ballet house is a momentous event for Slovenia. A national opera and ballet house is a must for each EU Member State capital, as it symbolises the national cultural identity, nationality, and represents a big responsibility. Regardless of the various opinions held, I believe that only after some time will we realise just how much we have missed it and how very important its reopening is.

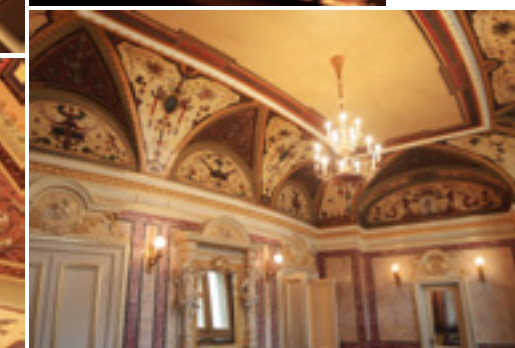
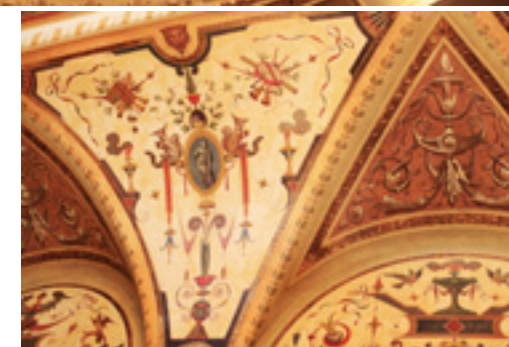
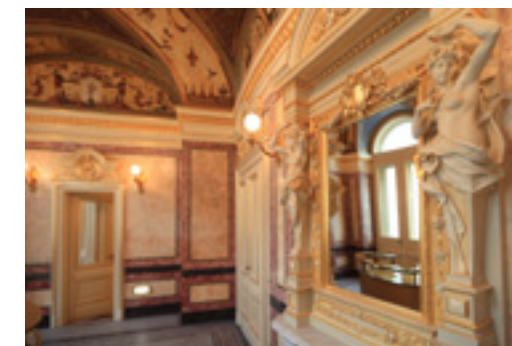
OPERA AND BALLET LJUBLJANA

On 10 December, the Slovene National Theatre Opera and Ballet Ljubljana, solemnly returned to its original residence accompanied by the sounds of the opening fanfare trumpets, as the construction works had been concluded, giving the building a fresh image. We can again walk along the corridors, accompanied with sounds, sit on chairs of colour 200 Paeltane, while waiting impatiently for the red velvet curtain that hides so many stories to rise again.

As the central Slovene repertoire music theatre company, the Slovene National Theatre Opera and Ballet Ljubljana has been staging performances since 1892; the building was originally a provincial theatre, built in a neo-renaissance style and designed by Czech architects Jan V. Hrasky and Anton Hruby – it has been closed to the public for the last six years.

The opera house renovation project started mainly because of its acoustic and spatial problems. A public tender was held for the overall renovation of the Ljubljana SNG Opera and ballet and the contract was awarded to Jurij Kobe and Marjan Zupanc in 1998. In 2006, the Ministry of Culture listed the cultural house of the stage art queen as a priority in the field of investments and, a year later, a contract was signed between the Ministry of Culture, and SCT and Vegrad, the construction companies, with which the then Minister of Culture, Vasko Simoniti signed an annex for the implementation of the second phase of the extension and renovation of the opera house. The final reopening of the opera house was announced for last year; however, the works were extended because groundwater had flooded the sub-stage.

The renovation included a new extension containing rehearsal areas for bands, the orchestra, the chorus, ballet and solo performers, storage space, dressing rooms, and administration premises. The old part of the opera underwent renovation works with individual functional modernisations of particular elements, with the exception of the stage tower which underwent a thorough reconstruction. The ceiling again regained its original image containing several colour shades as seen before the renovation. The stencil paintings between the ribs were totally reconstructed; coloured glasses in oil techniques were cleaned. Because of the monument-protection requirements, the stage opening and the hall remained the same, whereas the renovated stage is wider, higher, deeper and technically enhanced. With its technological capabilities and capacity, which holds up to 500 performers, it stands comparison with the most renowned opera houses in the world. The hall preserved the original number of seats, with a capacity between 526 and 605 visitors. After the removal of secondary paintwork, the auditorium revealed a much richer image. The unused space under the auditorium was



extended and connected with Cankarjeva Street on the one side and Tomšičeva Street on the other, where the entry atriums are located, functioning as an additional entrance to the opera theatre. The overall renovation project of the Ljubljana opera and ballet house amounted to EUR 42 million. Of this, approximately EUR 28 million was allocated to the Ministry for construction and craftsmen works, installations and refurbishment; the rest of the costs were spent on preliminary works, stage mechanical equipment, stage lighting, audio visual equipment, general equipment, restoration works, supervision and contributions.

The national opera and ballet house reopened and showed a new overall identity, a new web portal was launched for its visitors and a monograph 'Zlitje stoletij' (Fusion of Centuries) about the SNG Opera in ballet Ljubljana was published. This was also the title of the opening ceremony, which was broadcast live by RTV Slovenia, and the slogan of all events and activities within the opening event, moving and 120-year anniversary of its activities that will be celebrated next year under the under the auspices of the Slovenian president, Dr Danilo Türk.

Artistic bands performing all this time in extremely difficult conditions, dispersed in eight locations all over the capital, finally obtained their home. However, the spectators were not robbed of the primary glow of the Ljubljana opera house which, despite having second thoughts on the fusion of modern and neo-renaissance styles, respects the tradition and discovers in it even something new. Therefore, among other things, we can proudly admire the chairs from the time before the renovation took place, which were kept with love in theatre boxes and with a wooden frame, smoothed

by the touches of visitors. We are surprised by frescoes revealed under the white ceiling in the hall, which is intended for the visitors to meet, and once walked-in windows at the staircase. The renovation improved working and creative conditions, while providing the spectators with a better and more varied programme and enhancing well-being in the renovated house. Therefore, welcome back opera house – the doors to the top artistic institutions of the twenty-first century have opened for you.

As early as in the beginning of November, the chamber opera had its premier with a three-act opera "Dido and Aeneas" in a concert performance by Henry Purcell. In the second act, the opera soloists, chorus and orchestra performed pieces from Mozart's operas. In February, a premiere of Verdi's opera, Nabucco, will be held, which will take a new direction. According to the artistic director, Milivoj Šurbek, the premiere will feature entirely domestic performers. Marij Kogoj's 'Black Masks' is being prepared in cooperation with SNG Maribor. The premiere will open in January next year in SNG Maribor at the beginning of the year of the European Capital of Culture. In Ljubljana, 'Black Masks' will be staged in Cankarjev Dom's Gallus Hall in March. The re-runs of the programme include Verdi's Traviata, Antonin Dvorak's 'Rusalka', Peter Šavli's opera for the young 'Shepherd', and Franz Joseph Haydn's comic opera 'Apothecary'. In the 2011/12 season there will be two new ballet premieres. At the end of March next year, the ballet premiere 'Giselle' will be staged, while in June the project 'Ples poezije' (Poetry Dance) will open at the city's Congress Square in Ljubljana.

Jože Osterman, photo: STA

BOOK FAIR A SUCCESS

The 27th Slovenian Book Fair, which was held in Cankarjev dom for five days at the end of November, is undoubtedly one of the most popular cultural events in Slovenia. This year, like other years, the fair was jam packed with book lovers of all ages, proving that books still feature frequently on a Slovenian's wish list.

For the first time in recent years, the record for the number of published titles was not beaten; this number had been steadily growing over the last decade and reached the impressive number of 6 500 new titles in the previous year. This year about 100 publishers published approximately 6 000 new titles. These are, nevertheless, enviable numbers that lead us to presume that Slovenia remains the world champion in the number of new books published per citizen.

Therefore, the reaction to this fall in numbers was not particularly strong, as there was no need. Traditional publishing around the world is in much more serious trouble and the future for bookstores is especially grim, owing to the growth of web publishing. Slovenian publishers have not yet felt the effects of the crisis, but they are expecting it and are already making plans to limit its consequences. Not even the director of the Slovenian Book Agency, Slavko Pregl, who was once a publisher, showed any concern over the fall in the number of new books. He laconically concluded that this does not pose a threat to the pluralism of book production; furthermore, it can improve the editors' selection process and, as a result, the quality of published works.

The subject of this year's panel discussion was the digital book – a new challenge that influenced book publishing in 2011 that has developed an ever stronger presence in the publishing world. The dis-

ussion was not limited to the technical details of laying the foundations for proper web publishing in Slovenia, but also dealt with the consequences that the new manner of (digital) reading will have for the understanding and acceptance of books in general. Several distinguished foreign experts shared their experiences – apparently more of it bad than good – at the Publishing Academy Forum. It seems that the depth of reading, which is crucial for reading literature (and other demanding books), will suffer the most. The opinion of the majority is that Slovenia is far from being ready for web publishing, so for now only Študentska založba will offer some of its editions on a trial basis. However, Mladinska knjiga, the biggest publishing house in Slovenia, has a systematic approach and devotes the most attention to this matter.

The fair is also a prize-giving occasion. The main award, named after the printer, Schwentner, was presented to Marij Maver, an editor, publicist and publisher from Trieste. The award for best literary debut went to Katja Perat for her collection of poems *Najboljši so padli*, and Stana Anželj was conferred the award for best young translator. The awards for the most aesthetically pleasing books were conferred on the book of poems *Obleci me v poljub* written by Saša Pavček and designed by Petra Černe Oven in the literature category; *Čudežni prstan* written by Peter Svetina and designed by Damijan Stepančič and Janez Turkin in the category of books for children and young adults; and *Mojstrovine s kranjsko klobaso* written by Janez Bogataj and designed by Žare Kerin in the monograph category. The award for best produced book was received by the printing company, Gorenjski tisk, for the book *Julijske Alpe*.



Slavko Pregl, Director of Slovenian Book Agency

Government Communication Office, photo: GCO archives

IF THIS IS A MAN

Exhibition of the works of Zoran Mušič to serve as an introduction to an extensive presentation of Slovenia in Italy

Between 19 November 2011 and 19 February 2012, the Leone da Perego Palace in Legnano, near Milan, will host an anthological exhibition of the works of Zoran Mušič entitled *If this is a Man*. The exhibition is to serve as an introduction to an extensive cultural, tourist, economic and political presentation of Slovenia, which is scheduled to take place in Milan in February 2012.

This anthological exhibition of the works of Mušič, one of the most important Slovenian painters of the second half of the twentieth century, will go by the evocative title, *If this is a Man*.

The exhibition on the famous exhibition premises of the S.A.Le (Spazi Espositivi della città di Legnano), which last year hosted the Auguste Rodin exhibition, features more than 90 paintings by Mušič, most of which are paintings on canvas. There are also some examples of his drawings and watercolours.

The exhibition is another tribute to one of the most distinctive painters and figurists of his time. Of topical interest are his cycles *Nismo poslednji* (We are not the Last), which is the highlight of the exhibition. On this occasion, a special catalogue with texts by various Italian and Slovenian fine art critics was also published.

At the same time, the exhibition is an event announcing the Slovenian Days to take place in Milan in 2012, where Slovenia will present itself under its national brand 'I Feel Slovenia'. The events organised within the Slovenian Days will include exhibitions and concerts of recognised authors and performers, the presentation of Slovenian cuisine and tourism as well as an economic forum and some political meetings. The presentation's main events will be held between 13 February and 19 February 2012, while further events upgrading the Slovenian Days will be organised all year round.

Zoran Mušič (1909–2005), a distinguished painter belonging to the École de Paris, lived in Venice for many years. In 2009, on the occasion of the centenary of his birth, numerous events in Slovenia proved his influence on the creation of fine arts in our country, and in particular his artistic relevance and quality. We can observe in his paintings the reflections of the barren Karst land and the swaying movement of his domestic Brda hills at the same time and the constantly present distinctive message of humanity. Zoran Mušič's influence on Slovenian painting could already be felt in the years before World War II; after the War had concluded, he played an important role in the development of the Biennial of Graphic Arts and opened many doors for Slovenian artists to win recognition in Venice and particularly in Paris. He left a lasting impression on us all with his Dalmatian landscapes, the processions of his little horses, the views of the façades and the canals in Venice, and with his refined graphics and drawings.

The highlight of the exhibition, complemented by texts of the writer, Boris Pahor, will be the shocking cycles of dead bodies of prisoners in the concentration camp in Dachau, an eternal symbol of all those around him who became victims. With these paintings Mušič became famous worldwide and in his old age he complemented them with images of philosophers in meditation, crooked old men and with self-portraits. The timing of the opening of the exhibition is particularly well-chosen in connection with the city of Maribor, since it has been designated the European Capital of Culture for 2012. To the present, Mušič has namely also been the most distinguished painter in the capital of the Štajerska region, because he had lived in Maribor for 20 years (between 1920 and 1940), almost until the beginning of World War II.





Jože Osterman, photo: Seaway and Elan archives

Vanguard from under Karavanke

Elan with amfibia ski and Seaway with its series of Greenline Hybrid ecological vessels – both innovations have helped these two companies maintain their reputation as progressive – almost vanguard – manufacturers.



Hybrid 33 on Bled lake.

The Upper Carniolan town of Begunje and the neighbouring village of Zgoša have around 2 000 inhabitants. Nevertheless, they are known throughout Slovenia and in most of the Alpine and Adriatic region. This is thanks to two of the companies based there. Both manufacture sports equipment. The first is Elan, a factory for skis, nautical vessels and sports equipment, which has been one of the five best-known trademarks of Slovenia's industry for half a century; the second is Seaway, a rapidly growing company which started as a nautical engineering service, designing and implementing logistical tasks for all the major European manufacturers of vessels and which today builds its own vessels, having become a recognised Slovenian trademark in a few years. Sinfo has featured both companies several times, but as they develop products bestowed with globally renowned prizes every year, they deserve our attention again. This year, too, both companies are the focus of attention in their lines of business.

IT IS HYBRID TIME

The undisputable fact that man and his actions have caused planetary consequences manifested especially in climate change is more and more

rapidly changing the entire industry and manufacture in general. The conversion to the manufacture which strictly observes environmental standards as one of the main criteria for its launching increasingly penetrates the human conscience. The same criteria are beginning to apply to industrial products and the consequences of their use, as this is the only way to avoid the imminent transformation of our environment into a simmering threat disabling quality life on Earth. The idea about Greenline ecologically friendly vessels is the fruit of this awareness and of the important belief that one should not fully give up pleasures such as nautics, but instead adapt to the nature and to its self-cleansing abilities. Typical motor yachts frequently impersonate human vanity. Many a wealthy person of the new era demonstrates this by the roaring engines of more than one thousand horse power, which swallow incredible quantities of fuel and emit foul-smelling fumes.

The different orientation of Seaway is perceptible right from the outset. The reception makes an impression of an entrance to a house of arts where everything is in a state of transition from one condition to another. People greet one another cordially as they rush up and down the stairs. A board in the reception displays

ten values which the company considers the best for its operation. Three of these will catch the eye immediately: modesty is listed as first, a look to the future paying respect to tradition and humour. These are the values that inspire respect for the environment; they are a mental heritage and a true starting point for playfulness as the foundation of true creativity. The values closely binding the collective of now about 250 workers, of which 60, mostly engineers, are from abroad. The values summarised through his own experience by the owner, one of the best known and most interesting Slovenians, Japc Jakopin, a cardiologist by education. Despite an impressive medical career he listened to his heart, took to nautics and succeeded. When you see his colleagues, from pretty young public relations adviser Eva Jenstrle, who told me all about the company, to everybody else you meet, you cannot overlook the importance of Seaway in their lives and the contribution made to this by their unconventional boss. Of course, I am telling all this because Seaway is a living proof that innovation and breakthroughs of the new industrial philosophy may arise only in those environments which believe in themselves and draw on conventionality only so as to avoid inventing everything anew.



Hybrid 40.



POWER-OPERATED NAVIGATION

Their first product, the Greenline Hybrid, which was launched in 2009, is, of course, the embodiment of this newness. Its low silhouette with a dominant body, a somehow ascetically straight prow and a low superstructure deck is in a striking contrast with motor boats of muscular bodies and sometimes almost baroque superstructure decks, which cut deep furrows through the sea plains. Its shape grows on you gradually. Its elegance is hidden in its extraordinary details, in the proportion of the body and the discreet superstructure, in the beautifully executed flat roof covered by sun cells manufactured by the Slovenian company, Bisol, in outstanding lines of the interior decoration; in short, we are practically talking about a work of art. The form is in conformity with the new view of the efficiency of product: the newly designed hull called Superdisplacement displaces water almost without any resistance, as it makes almost no waves up to a speed of around five knots (approximately 8.5 km/h), which, of course, contributes to a considerable reduction in the use of fuel. As the basic condition, the boat uses an Audi diesel engine, which develops 75 horse power in the weaker version and 165 horse power in the stronger version and is considered one of the most economic in the car industry. So far, the model is classical, as the true value is added only by the hybrid system consisting of lithium batteries and solar cells fuelling the electric hybrid system. This system enables the operation of all electric appliances (refrigerators, TV, navigation machines and other electric appliances) as well as independent propulsion as the hybrid may, when its batteries are full and when it is charged simultaneously, cover up to 25 nautical miles at the speed of 6 knots (almost 10 km/h). In view of the fact that the emissions of Audi engines are four times lower than in average motor yachts, the electric propulsion runs without any emissions and is, in this respect, even cleaner than in sailing boats which need generators for their electric appliances. Even those familiar with nautics only superficially will know what this means. And since there are quite a few such people around the world, Seaway sold as many as 220 Hybrids 33 in 2010, which was the first year of sales, thus snatching an absolute victory in the category of vessels up to ten metres long.

Of course, Seaway goes on. By slightly reducing the production of its carbon sailboats Shipman and large yachts Skagen manufactured in Monfalcone, Italy, it is now preparing for the construction of a large plant in Puconci in north-eastern

Slovenia which will produce hybrids. In addition, Seaway managed to acquire about 12 million euro of European and other resources which will help it launch new production next year. Last spring, namely, a larger model, Greenline Hybrid 40, raised a wave of admiration while Hybrid 70, a hybrid ocean class yacht of over 21 m, is being launched these days. Moreover, Seaway is the only global company currently manufacturing hybrid vessels. As I wondered why this market niche had not been snapped up by others, Jakopin only smiled: 'I think this is because we have worked with all the major manufacturers, and they want to maintain good relations.' Fair play in the business world? Yes, this is possible – even among sailors!

ASYMMETRY ON SNOW

Elan is a factory which has surprised the global ski market by several radical innovations which have had a decisive impact on ski manufacturing. A good three decades ago those skis brought countless

triumphs to Ingemar Stenmark, who still holds the crown for the most successful skier with his 85 world cup victories; at the turn of the century, it was the first carving skis, SCX, that determined the further course of alpine skis; five years ago it was the fusion system uniting skis and their bindings in one; and finally, along came waveflex technology allowing for an excellent flexibility along the length as well as great transverse stability. With the amphibio ski, Elan now presents a technology uniting the capability of skis of a light pass to a curve (called rocker technology) and the capability of firmly keeping the direction and stability (camber). These two characteristics generally exclude each other.

Elan's head of development, Vinko Avguštin, is truly ascetic when it comes to self-praise and expression of joy over a work well done. While I radiated with joy that the ski got excellent marks on several tests of the most prestigious ski magazines, some of which are also published online,

he sceptically remarked that tests are not everything and that they sometimes focus on what you promise or provide to the testers; finally, however, he admitted that the product really had passed with flying colours. What pleased him most was the fact that despite doubts and even scorn he had sometimes experienced when launching the presentation of these skis he has practically proved that they really do work! If I think of the havoc probably raised by an Austrian or Italian head of development over a product such as amphibio, I have to bow before Avguštin: his modesty and sensibility guarantee that the development department will come up with many more inventions and not rest on its laurels.

COLUMBUS' EGG FROM ELAN

What is amphibio all about? Nowadays skis are produced with a view to the needs of individual groups of skiers, i.e. from beginners who may ski for only one week per season to the best recreational skiers who spend a lot of time on skis. (Professional skiers are a class in themselves as their skis are adapted to specific characteristics which cannot be used by ordinary skiers as they require enormous strength and knowledge.) The essential requirement of undemanding skiers is that skis are easy to guide as their speed is not high and keeping direction and stability is not a problem, so softer skis are more appropriate for them. As the requirements for keeping the line and stability strongly increase in more demanding and faster skiers, these need harder skis which make curves much more difficult. Elan succeeded in something which nobody has thought about: by partial modification of skis on which they slightly shortened the bending part, they extended the part important for curving, thus making the ski more responsive to curving in which the bending part still performs its task of excellent direction keeping. The ski has become asymmetrical, which makes the essential difference between the left ski and the right ski as easier curving depends especially on the outer ski where most of the skier's weight is centred.

As many a sceptic, one would think that it is more about theory than about the working practice. The proof against it is simple: a skier only changes skis and he or she will immediately notice the different (poorer) qualities of skis in this case. Thus the testers could only praise the flexibility of the skis in making curves while keeping stability and direction. Despite its steep price (ranking among the most expensive skis on the market), sales of amphibio are excellent.



Polonca Štritof, photo: Žiga Šmidovnik and authors of the winning photographs

Bag on Bag project – a tough battle against the eternal Lady of Plastic



The voluntary Bag on Bag project, which was held for the second year in a row, warns of the excessive use of plastic bags by combining art and environmental protection, and at the same time offers creative and simple solutions for the prevention of this type of waste. According to some data, an adult resident in Slovenia uses between 130 and 150 plastic bags a year on average. After use, which usually does not last more than 30 minutes, these bags usually end up with mixed waste, where they do not belong as they can be recycled (only 4 % are recycled at present). Plastic bags decompose after as long as 1 000 years has elapsed, and pose a threat to nature and to human and animal health (especially the health of sea animals). It should also be stressed that bags are made from non-renewable resources, such as oil and natural gas.

Between 19 and 26 November 2011, old plastic bags were collected and exchanged for textile equivalents at special stalls (Stojnice idej – Idea Stalls) in various locations throughout Ljubljana. Around 150 kilograms of plastic bags were collected over six days. Throughout the week, artworks and various useful items were made from the bags and plastic bottles collected. The project organisers will use the rest of the collected bags for future projects, workshops and creations.

At the final event, the organisers displayed the art and products made out of waste packaging and presented awards to the winners of the photo competition Vrečka na veji (A Bag on a Branch), which was held in October and November, the aim of which was to warn of the problem of plastic in the aquatic environment. Artists, musicians, improvisers and dancers participated at the event and made it a real mini-street dance-music-art show.

On 26 November 2011 Pogačarjev trg in Ljubljana was dedicated to the eternal Lady of Plastic. The event was staged next to a huge dead tree, decorated with plastic bags (by The Miha Artnak, in cooperation with Andraž Tarman (Rompom) and Erik Vidmar (Tisa d.o.o.)) and towering over Travniki (Meadow) scattered with colourful and completely non-biodegradable flowers made from plastic bottles (by Luka Mancini and Katarina Mrvar from Lukatarina design studio).

The artist, The Miha Artnak, named his art piece Pomlad je sen zime/The Rise of the Fall (Spring is the Dream of Winter/The Rise of the Fall). He commented on it: 'Along with the last year's snow came a new type of monster. It has adapted to the ecosystem, but since we have significantly limited the use of plastic bags, it died of hunger this August. The nature of waste is persistent and cannot be managed smoothly. It adapts to us with ease, particularly when we are not consistent in our handling of waste. It adapts to us in all seasons and every day tries to spread over an even greater space under the sun with its non-degradable fruit.'

During EWWR week (the European Week for Waste Reduction), the fashion designer Barbara Živčič (Ecologists without borders) in cooperation with Kralji ulice (Kings of the Street) led two workshops on how to make sleeping bags, at which 15 homeless people learned how to make a sleeping bag out of plastic bags. On Sunday Barbara Živčič brought the sleeping bags with her for display.

Barging in on the event uninvited came a plastic being going by the name of Bagfoot. It performed a dance entitled Who's Bag to show that shopping is a holiday. Bagfoot reinforced its dance act with his clones – the dancers from the Šola za nastopanje Bast – and volunteers.

An important part of the introductory part of the project in autumn was the Vrečka na veji (A Bag on a Branch) photo

competition, which started on 3 October and concluded on 15 November 2011. A total of 448 photographs were entered in the photo competition. Of the ten that garnered the most votes on the web, the three-member jury were swayed most by the following: Andrej Marenčič with I Wanna Spin (But I Cant), Anja Burnik with Smetovec (Garbage Tree), and Nataša Pezdir with 'Okraski' Koritnice (Koritnica 'Decorations'). Sašo Papp, the radio presenter and photo competition ambassador, presented them with their awards at the final event.

Many guest artists put their creations made of waste materials on display and thus proved that, with some creative flair, the life of products, including waste, can be prolonged:

Anselma, izdelovalnica vsega (ne)mogočega (Anselma, workshop for everything (im)possible), put on a fashion show featuring the rain ponchos that were entered in Anselma's first competition Moja pelerina (My rain poncho). There is a story behind each of these rain ponchos and they are all made of recycled materials such as bags, oilcloth, pillows, shower curtains, etc.

The architect, Tjaša Mavrič, made a nice collection of hand-made unique fashion accessories, which she presents under the name TM priboljški (TM treats). These include recycled handbags, wallets and pouches suitable for everyone and every occasion. Rompom is a group of four industrial designers: Nuša Jelenc, Tilen Sepič, Andraž Tarman and Jurij Ložič. At the final street event, they presented their Kanta-bins product, which is used for the separate collection of waste.

Nata Esku is an art designer who paints, takes photos, illustrates and designs. At the final street event, he presented some of his works made of waste.

By combining art, ecology, design and acting, Kulturno ekološko društvo Smetumet exposes the problems with our attitudes towards nature, consumerism, waste and the modern way of life. At the final street event, they presented the products they had made out of plastic bags and coffee packaging.

The event was accompanied by the lively rhythms of DJs Žakpižon and Felis Catus, the Improleptika theatre group provided laughter and unexpected situations, and the rapper Kosta gave the event some soul with his deep and strong lyrics. Three loud urban boys, Simpl, Perro and Rudstah (Datura, Nedelaz), showed what they have created during their years of practice in bomb shelters. They threw chopped syllables at the rhythm with great precision. The final street event was masterfully presented by the sports commentator and journalist, Luka Štucin.

Project partners: the Ecologist Without Borders society, the Eco Vitae ecological society, the artist, The Miha Artnak, Lukatarina design studio, and project co-organisers, Nataša Zuljan, Marko Orel and the SRCe Student House. The Vrečka na veji (A bag on a Branch) photo competition's partner was Ekomagazin.si.

Winning photographs:

1st prize: Andrej Marenčič for I Wanna Spin (But I Cant): http://www.ekomagazin.si/natecajfoto/index.php?option=com_joomgallery&func=detail&id=2745&Itemid=300#joomimg

2nd prize: Anja Burnik for Smetovec (Garbage tree): http://www.ekomagazin.si/natecajfoto/index.php?option=com_joomgallery&func=detail&id=2692&Itemid=300#joomimg

3rd prize: Nataša Pezdir for 'Okraski' Koritnice (Koritnica 'Decorations'): http://www.ekomagazin.si/natecajfoto/index.php?option=com_joomgallery&func=detail&id=2664&Itemid=300#joomimg



The team taking part in the surgical treatment of gynaecological cancer at the Department of Gynaecology. Left to right: Prof. Tomaž Tomažević, MD, PhD (laparoscopic cerclage); Head Physician Andrej Možina, MD; Head Physician Milan Čavič, MD; Asst. Prof. Leon Meglič, MD, PhD; Asst. Prof. Borut Kobal, MD, PhD, Head of the Department of Gynaecology; Head Physician Branko Cvjetičanin, MD; Asst. Prof. Adolf Lukanovič, MD, PhD, Medical Director of the Department of Gynaecology.

Vesna Žarkovič, photo: Mateja J.Potočnik

UMC's Gynaecological Clinic team

Achievement in medicine: successful childbirth after laparoscopic cerclage and the radical removal of the uterine cervix



The team of doctors at Ljubljana University Medical Centre's Gynaecological Clinic can be rightly proud of their achievements: following the radical removal of the uterine cervix, they successfully delivered a baby. The participants who took part in this achievement were Leon Meglič, MD, PhD; head physician Milan Čavič, MD, MSc; Prof. Tomaž Tomažević, MD, PhD; Borut Kobal, MD, PhD; Andrej Možina, MD, MSc; Prof. Matija Barbič, MD, PhD; and Branko Cvjetičanin, MD, MSc. Childbirth by the first woman who in 2007 had her cervix radically removed through a new method used in this part of Europe, was welcomed with great satisfaction and pride. The team of doctors at UMC's Gynaecological Clinic achieved their success through the use of original combination of methods. Only ten years ago, a woman subject to cervical cancer surgery also lost her uterus and, consequently, had no possibility of giving birth to a child. But now, the victorious team of doctors developed an original combination of methods which even after radical surgical treatment of uterine cervix enables a woman to have successful pregnancy. However,

this kind of pregnancy requires birth by Caesarean section.

This means that the possibility of getting pregnant via preservation of uterus with women who have recovered from cervical cancer – only in cases of an early detection of a disease – is the same as that with healthy women. Complications usually arise after the inception, somewhere in the middle of pregnancy, since the uterus after such surgical intervention is no longer protected from vaginal bacteria, all of which may result in miscarriage or premature birth. Due to such sad episodes, gynaecological specialists have developed a combination of various surgical techniques, including laparoscopic cerclage; in fact, these are not new techniques but constitute an original solution on a global scale. Such an approach, following a radical vaginal tracheotomy (uterine cervix removal), is not an ordinary one. The new method consists of laparoscopic placing a tape around the lower part of uterus (cerclage) thereby allowing a woman to have normal termination of pregnancy; elsewhere (only seven such centres left in the world), a method is used when, following

the inception of the pregnancy, the vaginal cone (cervix) is sewn closed during pregnancy in order to prevent any possible infection or related complications. The Ljubljana team currently involved in treating gynaecological cancer consists of 10 specialists.

REAFFIRMATION OF GYNAECOLOGICAL SURGERY IN LJUBLJANA

In fact, the above mentioned success by UMC's Gynaecological Clinic is not the only example. Already in former Yugoslavia, during the period following the Second World War, this clinic was famous for its successful treatment of gynaecological cancer. The early states of treatment under this method hark back to the time preceding the 60s, which is when the then head of the gynaecological clinic, Prof. Franc Novak, first put forward the idea of a radical surgical intervention aimed at preserving a woman's capacity to give birth. Professor Novak has become world renowned for having developed a special technique for the treatment of cervical cancer, which inter alia helped reduce urological complications. At the time,



this was considered a highly innovative approach which put Ljubljana's gynaecological school on the world map. Later on, many foreign specialists were trained here, while Slovenian doctors promoted these new cervical cancer treatment techniques throughout the world. Among those who studied the technique of radical uterus removal with Prof. Novak was the French surgeon, Daniel D'Argent. In late 80s, when the laparoscopic removal of pelvic lymph nodes was first introduced, Prof. D'Argent developed a technique for the radical removal of the uterine cervix. Constant innovation at the gynaecological clinic is proved by its latest achievements. This helps the doctors to maintain high level of expert knowledge and an innovative approach. This is mostly demonstrated by the fact that, prior to the described method, women affected by cervical cancer could not have regular pregnancy and give timely birth, since they had their uterus removed or either their pregnancy was interrupted by a miscarriage. At a given stage of cervical cancer, the inception of pregnancy is facilitated through a combination of new methods, which was previously impossible; in addition, the regular course of pregnancy until childbirth is provided by a surgical procedure called cerclage. This breakthrough will undoubtedly make the UMC's Gynaecological Clinic a referential institution for South-East Europe and the territory of the former Yugoslavia. The technique of uterine cervix removal found its home in Canada and France; in the meantime, the oncological and reproduction related results over a 20-year period were disclosed to the public. In medicine, there is a rule providing that the results of a treatment can only be objectively assessed after a certain period of time has elapsed. The publication of the results concerned revealed that among 582 patients, who were subject to the radical removal of the uterine cervix technique, there were 257 pregnancies, 23 repetitions of the disease and 12 cases of death related to disease. The first objective of the new method is to cure cancer and the second is to enable



a woman to bear a child. The issue concerns combining oncologically based criteria with the possibility of preserving the uterus and the capacity for reproduction. 'In the first place, this refers to oncological hospitals, since our primary duty is to cure people of cancer', points out Dr Borut Kobal. 'Therefore, the hospital selection criteria are very strict, and such treatment cannot be offered to every patient suffering from cervical cancer. To this end, four basic criteria must be fulfilled: that the patient wishes to preserve her capacity to bear children, that she is willing to participate in the tracking of the disease, that she has a curable type of cancer, and that the size of the cancerous tumour does not exceed 2 cm. Over a period of three years, we carried out 10 such operations and helped with the birth of two children. Innovation usually manifests itself through enhancing good ideas. I would like to stress that the synthesis of international

knowledge is at stake, and that this is not an invention of ours but a combination of those methods which are already known into one successful method. I can honestly say that there are very few centres in the world capable of combining so many different factors into one single operation. This allows us to keep pace with the development of contemporary surgical technology and to offer the chosen women the opportunity to bear children despite their cervical cancer diagnosis. However, practising our combination of methods is only possible when the disease has been detected in its early stages. This type of surgical intervention will be used only with a limited number of women. In addition, we hope that the number of patients with this type of cancer will decrease, owing to measures aimed at reducing the incidence of cervical cancer; we may freely say that these measures have had positive results in Slovenia.'



Andrej Stare, photo: STA

A FRESH WIND IN SLOVENIAN FOOTBALL

Aim: Qualification for the 2014 World Cup finals in Brazil.



Slaviša Stojanović, National football team coach.

Ten years ago, Peter Božič, one of the greatest contemporary Slovenian playwrights and an ex-vice president of Olimpija football club, said to me that it was his wish to see the young Slaviša Stojanović as coach of his team. Many, upon hearing these words, just shook their heads. Today, ten years later, Peter Božič, regrettably, passed away while Slaviša Stojanović was elected the national football team selector.

The past ten years represent a period marked by unbelievable success in Slovenian football. The national team's rather modest performance over the last decade of the previous century was followed by big results, such as the successful qualification for the Euro 2000 football championship and for the South Korea/Japan and South Africa World Cup

competitions. The failure to qualify for the forthcoming European championship next year in Poland and Ukraine resulted in a change to the national team selector. As a consequence, Matjaž Kek was replaced by 41-year-old Slaviša Stojanović.

He is remembered by many as a good football club player who played for Slovenian national first division teams such as Slovan, Ljubljana and Celje. In addition to time spent on the pitch, Slaviša finished his studies at the Faculty of Sports and obtained the football coach PRO licence.

'Obtaining a degree was a great incentive for my future. I dedicated all my free time to football and to working with football players, which is where I always found true meaning in my life.' In 1997, following his playing career (at just 28 years of age),

Slaviša became the coach of Slovan, Livar (national second division) from Ivančna gorica, and Domžale football club, where he spent six years. With the latter, he won two national championship titles (2007 and 2008). His path then led him to Celje and then on to the United Arab Emirates, where he assisted Srečko Katanec as the UAE national team selector. 'I've learned a lot from Katanec. The UAE national team was unknown to us both; it was there that I actually became acquainted with professional coaching methods and where I enhanced my knowledge on the preparation of a national football team.'

What new ideas is he likely to introduce to the national team's system of play and what are his objectives? 'Without any doubt, my objective, as the national team selector, is to qualify for the 2014 World

Cup finals in Brazil, a football homeland. The path will be long and treacherous, since our rivals in this qualification cycle are Switzerland, Norway, Cyprus, Albania and Iceland. None of them should be underestimated, since the differences between once superior and inferior teams have been significantly reduced. Albania or perhaps Iceland may spring a surprise, while Norway and Switzerland are well-established teams with excellent track records. First of all, I have to get to know the players I have not yet met personally; I was coach to many players at Domžale and Celje; I have to find adequate substitutions for the older players who are about to retire from the national team'.

Recently, the national team's play has been based on experience, a fixed roster with few replacements and consistency backed up with a strong spine. 'That's true', he agrees 'but there are limits to the performance of particular players. Some can endure ten seasons, few can go further than that. As a matter of fact, we have some excellent young players coming through; we have an excellent goalkeeper in Samir Handanović – currently one of the best goalies in the world – we have Tim Matavž, who is on the way to becoming one of Europe's best strikers; our national U21 team is full of an exceptionally talented generation of players. Remember the names of Krhin, Lazarevič, Jovič, Kampl, Črnčič, Mitrovič, Oblak, and many more. I think that, in a year or two, these youngsters will be the protagonists of a new Slovenian football renaissance'.

A new year is approaching, which appears to be lively and multifaceted for you as a selector; what are your wishes for 2012?

'I would like to clearly mark out the road to the World Cup finals; in autumn, we have four qualification matches preceded by several friendlies, where we will try to ensure the players are well-rehearsed and possess the true team spirit needed for the hard qualification matches ahead. Personally, I hope to stay in good health and to be successful in my work'.

2014 BRAZIL WORLD CUP QUALIFICATION MATCHES FOR SLOVENIA:

Group E

7 September 2012 – Slovenia: Switzerland
11 September 2012 – Norway: Slovenia
12 October 2012 – Slovenia: Cyprus
16 October 2012 – Albania: Slovenia
22 March 2013 – Slovenia: Iceland
7 June 2013 – Iceland: Slovenia
6 September 2013 – Slovenia: Albania
10 September 2013 – Cyprus: Slovenia
11 October 2013 – Slovenia: Norway
15 October 2013 – Switzerland: Slovenia

A SUCCESSOR TO THE HIMALAYAN HEROES

Markovič defends her world champion title by winning in Barcelona



Mina Markovič finished the IFSC Lead World Cup the same way she started it – by winning. She thus kept her leading position in the women's overall standings and came first in the women's world rankings.

Sports climbing is a discipline that will gain Olympic status. Slovenia has already achieved outstanding results in this fledgling sport. Its women are ranked among the world's best sports climbers. Maja Vidmar won the World Cup as early as in 2007; this year, this prestigious trophy was won by 23-year-old Mina Markovič from Kranj. She finished first in the women's overall and combination competitions.

These climbing competitions are organised throughout the year. This year, the climbers competed in nine World Cup events. Besides winning five World Cup contests, Mina Markovič was ranked among the best in eight events. She scaled artificial climbing walls marked by arêtes, overhangs and the most difficult combinations, and scored victories in Xining (China), Munich (Germany), Amman (Jordan), Olympic Chamonix (France) and Barcelona (Spain). In addition to these victories, she attained second place three times and third place

once; her poorest(!) result was still an outstanding fifth position in Valence, France. Mina Markovič has undoubtedly left her mark on this year's sports climbing season.

In Kranj, the home audience saw her win a title in the zlato polje sport hall, which hosted the best of the world's climbers for the sixteenth time. Mina finished second and won the prestigious World Cup trophy. Her team trainer, Simon Margon, laid out a climbing route for this competition, which was the most difficult for Markovič. She also competed in other important sports climbing events. This year's world championship was held in Arco in Lake Garda, Italy, on the most difficult artificial wall in the world. Mina excelled and won a bronze medal in the combination competition. In addition to this success, Maja Vidmar, a seasoned climber, finished the competition in fifth place.

Sports climbing is very popular in Slovenia; young people build their own artificial walls and gyms, and sport centres throughout Slovenia offer indoor climbing. Climbing difficult natural walls is also extremely popular; a spring or summer weekend can attract as many as 1 000 climbers eager to tackle the well-known Osp wall in Primorska.

Slovenian sports climbing is also successful in other ways and boasts several very talented young male and female climbers. Nineteen-year-old Urban Primožič from Škofja Loka deserves special mention; sports experts expect him to see similar successes as those achieved in 2011 by Mina Markovič, a Slovenian sports champion.

Slovenia is a country of great natural beauty, with its Alps and the Karavanke mountains. The Alpine Association of Slovenia has over 150 000 members and hundreds of thousands of them visit the low and high mountain ranges every weekend. Slovenians are a true mountaineering nation, ranging from recreational mountaineers to 'Himalayan heroes'. More than 30 Slovenians have conquered 14 Himalayan and Karakoram eight-thousand-metre peaks; Viki Grošelj has conquered ten of these. Slovenian Himalayan expeditions have become legendary; regrettably, their death tolls have been quite high.

Bogi Pretnar, photo: Darinka Mladenovič and Tomo Jeseničnik

Holidays are in the air

There is nothing more delicious than the aroma in Slovenian homes in the days of December: hot milk poured on ground walnuts, poppy seeds, rum, butter, vanilla sugar, almonds, carob, chocolate and even coconuts, yeast and sugar flour. This is the smell of potica, which promises the imminent arrival of the holidays. This national pastry, which is made of leavened dough spread with a rich filling that dates back to the mid-sixteenth century, should be served on every table, although many working women do not have the time to make it, but instead buy it in the shops.



Potica



Fine biscuits



Blood sausage or farmer's feast with cabbage



Roasted duck, goose or turkey



Roasted pig

since cocoa is added to the dough to darken it, and dark walnut or chocolate filling is replaced by a filling made from cream, sugar and coconut flour. The nicest kind of potica is baked in a ring cake mould so that a housewife can put a festive pastry in the form of a smelling garland on the table; this is reminiscent of an even older festive bread, poprtnik, which takes the form of a ring decorated with plaits and birds made of dough. Poprtnik bread is a Christmas blessing – it brings health to the family and cattle; therefore, it is broken into pieces and even taken to the stall after midnight. Poparnik bread, which is made out of buckwheat flour, used to be baked instead of poprtnik bread in the Dolenjska region's Gorjanci range; this traditional bread is also known as božičnik or župnik.

Christmas Day, New Year's Eve and the Twelfth Day are gourmet holidays, as asserted by the ethnologist, Dr Boris Kuhar – the author of the book *Festivals and Festive Food in Slovenia*. Especially on New Year's Eve, the meat of animals that 'move forward' to the future must be served on the table and not, for example, chickens who 'scratch backwards'. A table must be so full of treats that there is hardly any space for a glass. Those who eat well on the last day of the year will also eat well in the year to come. Therefore, food is brought to the table that we could not otherwise afford. And what would be on Dr Boris Kuhar's personal festive menu? 'Bakalar al bianco, with a good measure of cognac, available in sufficient quantities to wet the mouths of those who take the time and effort to beat codfish and soften it with their own hands. This is followed by pheasant soup, Christmas carp with potato, or New Year's stuffed roasted duck, a piece of koline (pork meat and sausages) or netted pork roast made from pork tenderloin, salads, and rolled dumplings with cottage cheese or walnuts – certainly one or two kinds of potica.'

In many places nowadays, pigs are slaughtered where there is a need to do so; in times gone by, this process was called koline – in some places, this is known as furež, which is the main event held



Poprtnik bread

before festivities commence. Regardless of whether we are talking about a three-hundred-kilogram pig belonging to a rich farmer or just a one-hundred-kilogram fattened pig belonging to a poor farmer: they both end their lives before Christmas. Koline used to be a festival in itself! They didn't need to economise with meat and sausages; both had to be consumed in good company with sauerkraut and potato with fresh crackling. Blood sausages, pečnice (grilled sausages), especially liver sausages and a pork roast are an obligatory constituent part of festive tables loaded with food during winter festivals; the koline season is also profitable for innkeepers since they attract guests who enthusiastically discuss the quality of home-made sausages.

According to tradition, the whole family gathers around the table on Christmas Eve, whereas on New Year's Eve every family member chooses his own way of welcoming in the New Year. A more demanding middle-class family eats a Christmas carp, which is soaked in milk to lose its muddy smell; it is then prepared with cream, seasoned properly, and baked in the oven with thin slices of potato. Another Christmas dish served on Slovenian tables is netted pork roast with red cabbage in wine; however, Dr Boris Kuhar also refers to his recipe according to which the koline (pork meat and sausages) is served with red cabbage and sparkling wine. Some people bake smoked pork neck in dough; however, pork roast with dried plums can also be prepared. It is almost obligatory to prepare potato as a side dish – often sautéed potato – since Slovenians have also established a society for sautéed potato lovers who try to eat it every day – just for kicks!

On New Year's Eve, roasted stuffed turkey, or duck with red cabbage, lamb cutlets, and capon are served on the table, whilst on middle-class tables, different types of fish are served – roasted young pig with potato and other salads is particularly popular. French salad – a vegetable salad with potato and mayonnaise that the French refer to as Macedonian – has recently become very sought after. After midnight, some drunken heads need to be brought down to earth with good sour soup prepared from different parts of a pig's head and pettiotoes, and as the remnant of the former common Balkan country, sarme, rolled leaves of sour cabbage stuffed with rice and minced meat.

In addition to the acclaimed potica, fine biscuits baked by a housewife a few days before the onset of festivities are also served – these are hidden from the sweet-toothed in a closed tin box; fruit bread with cut and dried pieces of fruit such as figs, apricots, dates and raisins are also served, especially on middle-class tables, where traditional Viennese cooking is appreciated; the sponge cake called chocolate stem is also popular. The tables will be sufficiently full to ensure a happy New Year.



Fruit bread



Fine biscuits

Traditional Slovenian Breakfast day in kindergartens and primary schools

On 18 November the Traditional Slovenian Breakfast project was carried out in kindergartens and primary schools throughout Slovenia. During the first hour of school, children breakfasted on brown bread, honey, butter, milk and apples, all of which were of Slovenian origin. Many well-known faces joined them for this meal, which acquainted them with a healthy way of eating.



Farmers, agricultural companies, food-processing companies and beekeepers contributed 19 165 kilograms of bread, 2 683 kilograms of butter, 53 663 litres of milk, 3 220 kilograms of honey and 32 040 kilograms of apples. A total of 828 primary schools and 707 kindergartens participated in the project. A list of all the farmers and companies contributing their products and participating in the project is published at www.tradicionalni-zajtrk.si.

Many people from the world of politics and sport supported the project by visit-

ing primary schools and kindergartens, including the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Dr Danilo Türk, the President of the National Assembly, Ljubo Gerlič, several ministers, mayors, as well as athletes such as the skier, Mitja Valenčič, and the gymnast, Adela Šajn. The Traditional Slovenian Breakfast project was initiated by the Slovenian Beekeepers' Association, later joined by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food; the Ministry of Education and Sport; the Ministry of Health; the Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia; the

Chamber of Agricultural and Food Enterprises of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia; and the Institute of Public Health of the Republic of Slovenia. The main goal of the project, which is to be a recurring event, is to educate, inform and raise the awareness of the youngest children and children of school age, and to some extent also the general public, on the importance of breakfast for our eating habits, on the importance and advantages of locally produced food, and on the importance of agriculture and beekeeping.

The Institute of Public Health of the Republic of Slovenia warns that balanced nutrition is very important whilst growing up. Breakfast has beneficial effects on our health, even if we only eat it four or five times a week. It should consist of complete cereal products (wholemeal bread, porridge, etc.), protein foods (milk and dairy products), vegetables and fruit. The project is in line with nutrition development in Slovenia and, from an agricultural point of view, is particularly important because it informs children on how food is grown and processed, and of the importance of locally produced food. The project was very well received by the children. At some schools and kindergartens, children enhanced the event with various art and cultural activities. They have responded in great numbers to the competition published in the Traditional Slovenian Breakfast newsletter.

Love is Universal (LU)

'We need to start with ourselves. You must be the change you want to see in the world'.



The Love is Universal Institute was founded by Tina Gams for the purpose of promoting tolerance, integration and social inclusion. The Institute is a non-governmental and independent organisation focused on humanitarian aid. It unites individuals whose aim is to increase solidarity in society and reduce economic differences between people. One of their objectives is to actively participate at the national and global levels for the purpose of exchanging experiences in the good practices and solutions that could contribute to reducing poverty and social exclusion.

Tina says that she has always felt a strong need to help powerless social groups. 'I responded spontaneously and also attempted to persuade the people around me to help others.' The Institute was established in 2010. Its members encourage people to love themselves and others more, and to try to spread this love to the young in particular. 'I think that it is wisest to invest in education because, in the long term, only through education will children learn how to help themselves and transfer their knowledge to others.' At the time the Institute was established, Tina also experienced two personal trag-

edies – two of her friends died of cancer. This has – as she explains – finally awakened her. 'I became aware that our time here is limited and that we should not let our lives pass by. I have recently realised that the world is at a crossroads,' she added. 'We should encourage compassion between people, because we all share the same planet,' emphasised Tina. In the campaign 'From children for children', young children from all over Slovenia helped collect toys, school essentials, baby equipment and books. They added letters of good wishes to the items collected and participated in soli-



Marcus Ferrar with contributions from dr. Mihael Glavan, Katarina Groznik Zeiler and Pavel Groznik



ally diverse areas of the world and to experience moments such as when I open a package sent from Kenya, made by women from Kenyan villages, containing plenty of hand-knit scarves made for children in Slovenia as a sign of their gratitude.'

There are currently three campaigns underway, two of which are organised within the Artish Project, through which clothes for children and the homeless are collected. A 2012 calendar entitled 'Children of the World' has also been published. The funds earned with this calendar will be earmarked for building the Piali Ashar Alo School run by Mojca Gayen. The Institute also wishes to help Luka, a seven year old boy with cerebral palsy who attends a special programme at a primary school where there is no toilet adjusted to his needs.

Through their activities, the Institute's members prove that hearts know no borders. 'Each of us has the power to change the world for the better. Can you imagine how much could be done by those who have the power in the current system! Much more could be done, emphasised Tina, who then cited the English proverb: 'A man who wants to do something, will find a way; a man who doesn't will find an excuse.'

HOW CAN WE HELP?

Take a look in your wardrobes for an item of clothing you don't wear any more. Give it to your neighbour together with a unique product made by Slovene artists for the purpose of collecting funds for the LU Institute – a calendar or a T-shirt. Visit the www.loveisuniversal.si website and get involved, because as Tina says: 'Take action to make your dreams come true!'

arity workshops. 'The items collected travelled over long distances. They were all sent to the Piali Ashar Alo School in India, which is run by Mojca Gayen, to orphanages in Kenya, to schools in the Masai Mara region, to some schools in Sarajevo and Zenica, and to Montenegro, Kosovo and Zambia.' The Institute also donated toys and other items to cheer up the children from Gaza who had undergone rehabilitation at the Soča University Rehabilitation Institute, and the children in the Asylum Centre in Ljubljana. The toys were also distributed to safe houses throughout Slovenia, Tina explained, adding that children from socially disadvantaged families in Slovenia also received some.

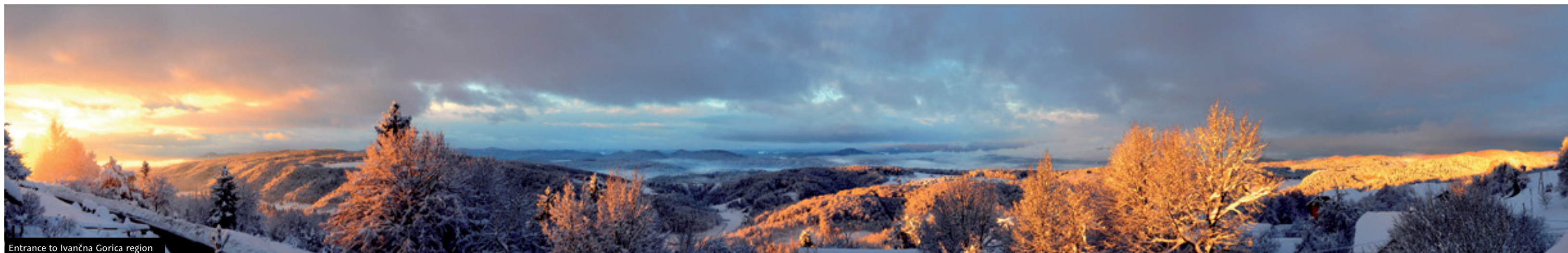
The Institute has recently collected sufficient funds to purchase 80 schoolbags for children from the Piali Ashar Alo School. They are still waiting to receive some of the funds collected at the charity football

match organised by two members of the Slovenian national football team – Tim Matavž and Valter Birsa – says Tina. These funds have been allocated for the education of children in Slovenia.

The founder of the Institute explains that her work inspires her when she sees the happy eyes and the smile of children who have poignant life stories, but whose hopes have finally been rewarded. 'I am inspired by those moments in which I realise that the fruits of my labour have turned out beautifully. Situations when the life paths of generation of children who would otherwise have remained illiterate and exploited have just been directed towards a better future.' Tina is encouraged by the thought that the children who have received help will one day become parents and become aware of the importance of education for their own children. 'I am happy to see friendships created between children from cultur-



» COMFORTABLY AT HOME « IN IVANČNA GORICA



Entrance to Ivančna Gorica region

Just a quarter of an hour after leaving the ring road of Ljubljana, travelling on the motorway south-east, you come upon a region which could hardly be more authentically Slovene – Ivančna Gorica. You've only just left the bustle of the capital, and you're already moving smoothly through a landscape of rolling hills, green woods, rippling streams and historical monuments. Even the weather's better. You've left behind the mists of Ljubljana's marshlands.

Few foreigners have ever heard of this region of just 16,000 souls, and it's hardly a household name in Slovenia either. But it's a place where people carefully nurture their natural heritage. They sing in choirs, keep bees, farm the valleys in the old way, make teas out of a rich variety of meadow flowers, and run a few small, modern industries (such as Akrapovič, maker of high-performance exhaust systems). In the main town of Ivančna Gorica, which gives its name to the region, stands a Roman milestone with a mediaeval Latin inscription. It's the heart of the area. In

a remote valley nearby lies Stična, with a majestic edifice that is Slovenia's only still-functioning Cistercian monastery. Founded in 1136, it was a foremost centre of religious culture in the Middle Ages. Visitors are free to roam around the monastery, where white-robed monks have been tending medicinal herbs for centuries. You can buy Pater Ašič's herbal teas as well as the monks' other specialities – Stična cheese and honey-based sparkling wine. At Šentvid down the road, singers from all over country gather in June for Slovenia's biggest choir festival.



Višnja Gora



Muljava, Jurčič's birth house



Krjavelj's Shack



heritage



Višnja Gora, the smallest town in Slovenia, has a sterner history. It was one of the first Slovene settlements to gain rights as a town (in 1478) and became the centre of the local Counts' secular power. Surrounded by ancient ramparts, with a fortified watch-tower, it was the home of Slovene nobles who fought and died long ago for the Habsburg Empire against the Turks. Its symbol is a snail with a golden chain. This commemorates a gilded snail shell studded with diamonds that the wife of a Venetian Doge gave to the local Countess in the 16th century for saving the life of her wounded son – or so the legend goes.

In the nearby Podsmreka Castle, Emil Roschütz bred large quantities of the so-called Carniolan Bees in the 19th century. They are particularly hard-working and docile, and as one of Europe's first bee entrepreneurs Roschütz exported them all over the world as far as New Zealand. The village of Muljava further south is the birthplace of Josip Jurčič (1844-1881), the first Slovene to write a novel in the Slovene language. Before his time, German was generally the literary language, since the Slovene Lands were in the Austrian part of the Habsburg Empire. Visitors can go into the house where he was born, which is now a museum, and his works are dramatized in a nearby amphitheatre. From a cave full of stalactites and stalagmites just outside Muljava bubbles forth the spring of the Krka, one of Slovenia's most charming rivers, still offering a place to live to rare animal species such as the otter and the danubian salmon. This is a karst area where streams run deep underground. In the subterranean caves one can find a rare blind amphibian known as the "human fish" because of its light pink skin colour. It was discovered for the first time in the 18th century near here. The Krka is



Višnja Gora aerial view



Krka River



Stična monastery

a quiet, pristine waterway depositing porous limestone rocks as it flows through a mosaic of carefully-husbanded countryside. Bees buzz among rare flowers such as wild orchids. It's a healthy environment.

The countryside of Ivančna Gorica is best explored by bicycle, on foot, on horseback or in a kayak. Marked trails including E6, part of the European hiking network, criss-cross its 227 square kilometres. It's easy going, but when you reach the crest of a gradual incline, you may find yourself gazing far and wide over much of Slovenia.

This is not a place for extreme sports, such as rock-climbing in Slovenia's Julian Alps, or wind-surfing in fierce burja winds off the Adriatic coast. Ivančna Gorica, right in the heart of the country, is a place to relax, enjoy, and taste a natural, authentic way of life.

»COMFORTABLY AT HOME« - HOW A SMALL PLACE FOUND ITS IDENTITY

How can a modest-sized territory in a small country ever make itself known outside its borders? Mayor Dušan Strnad decided that Ivančna Gorica must establish a unifying identity. The region needed its own "brand," as other cities, regions and countries are doing all over the world. As it happens, one of the local residents is Robert Kuhar, a Slovenian designer who created the logo and visual design for Slovenia's

European Union Presidency in 2008. The two of them got together with the local community to work out what's special about Ivančna Gorica – what makes it attractive. It should persuade people to come there, rather than somewhere else. Their aim was to create an identity which harmonises the region's diversity, makes the locals proud, and offers an attractive prospect to outsiders. It would embrace the values of the past, so that inhabitants could move together into the future.

Ivančna Gorica has heritage, history, unspoilt natural beauty, small-scale specialised industry and above all, gently undulating hills which convey a comfortable feeling. The new visual symbol for the region evoked these smoothly rolling shapes. The existing insignia of the region's 12 towns and villages were adapted to give a homogeneous look.

"Comfortably at Home" was the slogan they created to encapsulate what Ivančna Gorica represents. Or "Welcome to the world of your youth," as they put it in the welcoming message. The region got a smart new web site <http://ivančna.gremo.net> focusing on this new image, with an easy guide to all its interests and attractions.

"This new visual identity, with its unifying sign and slogan, has created a brand which sets a foundation for the holistic development of our region," said Mayor Strnad as he presented it to the media.

As for Robert Kuhar, he looks out from his

home on an Ivančna Gorica hillside and sees Slovenia's mighty Triglav mountain 80 kilometres to the north, wreathed in autumn mists. His children go to school in the little town down the hill where the Counts once held sway. He is less than half an hour from his office and clients in the Slovenian capital. "I'm here for the quality of life," he says. "You can find that in other parts of Slovenia too. But I chose the Ivančna Gorica region."



**I FEEL
SLOVENIA**

