

# Sinfo 12

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The latest from Slovenia

**IN FOCUS:** Slovenian missionary Pedro Opeka  
**GASTRONOMY:** Christmas delicious aromas  
**SPORTS INTERVIEW:** Slovenian athlete Miroslav Cerar

**I FEEL  
SLOVENIA**



Feel 2015

Government Communication Office

## IN FOCUS 12

Slovenian missionary Pedro Opeka

**My mission is to serve the poorest and the neediest – in this I found the meaning of life**

Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA



## GASTRONOMY 39

Slovenian Holiday Fare

**Christmas delicious aromas**

Photo: Mostphotos



## SPORTS INTERVIEW 44

Slovenian athlete Miroslav Cerar

**Sport without values is not a true sport**

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

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Photo: Bruno Toič

Tanja Glogovčan, Executive Editor

**Playing our part in the magic of December**

Once again the year is drawing to an end and we are looking forward to a festive December. It's a time of year when the city comes alive amidst the glow of the twinkling Christmas lights and decorated buildings. Streets are lined with festive gift and food stalls, luring visitors to feast their eyes on the many attractive products, warm up with a shot of medica (honey liqueur) or a glass of mulled wine, or treat themselves to a cone of roasted chestnuts. There's cinnamon, chocolate and vanilla in the air, and here and there we hear the year's end clinking of champagne glasses and the rustling of wrapping paper. From the kitchen wafts the scent of Christmas potica, while the church bells ring out on Christmas Eve to invite worshippers to Midnight Mass. But although our December celebrations may be somewhat ritualistic, each December is unique in its own way. And this is largely thanks to the atmosphere of homeliness and mutual understanding.

December is not only the month of overfilled bags: it is also traditionally the month when we dedicate some extra time to taking a look at ourselves and examining what we have done for our fellow human beings. Gift-giving may be extended to include less material offerings – of our time, a smile, a hug, a simple handshake or, indeed, concrete assistance. As we become aware of the true essence of Christmas, we trigger this magnificent urge of goodness.

Since we at Sinfo believe in the importance of charity, this issue presents two humanitarian organisations – Caritas Slovenia and the Slovenian Red Cross – which made a significant contribution to relief efforts in the face of the natural disasters that hit Slovenia this year. Fire-fighters and soldiers, too, in rescuing people from collapsed and flooded houses, have had a particularly busy year and set a fine example in helping others. And let's not forget our – if you'll excuse the pun – open-hearted blood donors. In Slovenia, this is still one of the most common forms of showing solidarity. We also present Slovenian missionary Pedro Pablo Opeka, whose humanitarian life in Africa offers a lesson in respect for the dignity of each human being. And there are other feature articles to read and enjoy.

All of us at Sinfo extend our best wishes to our readers for a festive holiday season and a happy New Year. May the holiday spirit find a home in your heart and the forthcoming year bless you with opportunities to serve humanity. In doing so, you will again embrace the Christmas magic, whatever the time of year!



Photo: Stanke Gruden/STA

## In times of need Slovenians stand as one

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There are various ways of describing Slovenia – green, diverse, undulating, mountainous, Mediterranean, and Pannonian. The same holds for Slovenians and our national character. We are melancholic, hard-working, critical, athletic, headstrong, adaptable, and the like. Each of these descriptions is accurate and subjective at the same time, depending on the observer; indeed, in times of global communication and cooperation many stereotypes are rendered unreliable. Pondering on the catchword to use in this context to properly describe present-day Slovenia and its people, solidarity is certainly among the words that come to mind. Solidarity is a concept, a stance much pronounced in Slovenian mentality, although frequently overlooked, miscomprehended, or misinterpreted. Every so often we even describe ourselves as individualists incapable of cooperating for the common good. I am convinced that such criticism is superficial and unfounded.

Let me list some examples to substantiate my point: firefighters, blood donors, civil protection members, members of the humanitarian organisations Red Cross, Caritas and many others, numerous volunteers have done a wide range of things for the civil society. Their activities are very well developed and have been successful even in the harsh financial and economic situation of recent years, when the country has been faced with recession and declining GDP. Such crises are likely first to begin to undermine people's optimism and readiness to help and solidarity. Slovenia is not much different, save for one important distinction: I believe that the basic feeling of solidarity has not been lost. And I do not mean solidarity in the narrow sense as linked only to social and economic issues, but solidarity as forming the basis of social justice. The figures prove that Slovenia is doing well in this respect. Regarding social inequality, Slovenia is found to have the lowest level of social stratification among the EU and OECD countries. Compared to Scandinavian countries with 18% and the OECD average of 17%, Slovenia devotes 20% of its GDP to social transfers. Indeed, these data lead to the question of over-pronounced egalitarianism which can hamper economic performance and have stirred up a lively debate – but I am going to avoid this topic now.

Let me again point to the above examples. Voluntary fire-fighting brigades have approximately 140 thousand members, accounting for over one-seventh of Slovenia's population. Firefighters are not only called on to fight blazes, but also intervene in all natural disasters. Four times in this year alone Slovenia was hit by heavy floods, which caused enormous material damage and even claimed human lives. If not for firefighters, the consequences would have been much worse. Fire-fighting has more than a 140-year long history in Slovenia and has been gaining increasing recognition. Rather than being a mere volunteer activity, fire-fighting has become a social glue, binding together people from different generations and social strata. Firefighters are actively engaged in their local communities and often organise humanitarian, social, cultural, educational, and also entertainment events.

Slovenia boasts almost 120 thousand regular blood donors, who have made Slovenia self-sufficient in the supply of this precious life fluid. Donating blood is a voluntary act with no payment; young people – even if frequently chided by the elderly as detached from society and lacking a sense of solidarity – are increasingly deciding to donate blood. Particular groups of blood donors, like students, bikers, athletes, managers, and various charities have been organised to attend blood donation sessions.

Volunteering has also been gaining importance in Slovenia. People working for free in various areas perform as much work as 7,250 full-time employees; the contribution of volunteering in GDP is growing yearly. Eurostat data show that 36 percent of young people aged between 15 and 30 years are engaged in voluntary activities, placing Slovenia fourth among the EU member states.

All these statistics and the seemingly dull figures provide a clear illustration that solidarity remains an important value for Slovenians and prove wrong those who claim that we are in a profound moral crisis and left in an ethical void. I trust that the magazine you are reading is going to convince you of that.

## Solidarity now

What is solidarity? Solidarity is the fundamental value of a society in crisis. It is a way of coexistence and an expression of compassion. Solidarity can have various forms. Everyone can choose his/her own way of expressing solidarity.

Photo: Mostphotos



Solidarity appears in various forms also in Slovenia. The notion of solidarity is, in some instances, not just hot air but a response to the challenges of the present time faced at various levels by the Slovenian society and the human society as a whole. Solidarity is important for achieving social equity and can be countered by exclusion. Moreover, in addition to instrumental value, solidarity also has an intrinsic, i.e. independent value that in the context of par-

ticipating in the lives of other persons can be understood as a fundamental moral obligation, the violation of which leads to evil. This is, therefore, the ethical foundation that must not be renounced by society. As a consequence, it certainly means that solidarity, i.e. the successful overcoming of unilateral pressures existing between market tyranny and social co-responsibility is a prerequisite for a happy society.

Images of solidarity entice us to read and reflect upon this topical subject at a time that is, at least at first glance, far from being favourable to it. One should be aware that solidarity means mutual responsibility towards others. If today we show solidarity towards others, we will benefit from solidarity on their part. Solidarity is a primary binding element of any society, it is a matter of our choice and can only be realised through our actions.

Solidarity is also an important value of young people in Slovenia.

## Slovenians are very responsive and willing to help

When natural disasters hit Slovenia, the role of humanitarian organisations came to the fore. There are many humanitarian organisations in the country, but the principal ones are Caritas Slovenia and the Slovenian Red Cross.



Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

Network of generous donors, volunteers and employees share a mission of preventing suffering.

The Slovenian Red Cross is aware that our strength and in fact our ability to fulfil our mission and carry out many activities comes from voluntarism.

We talked about the role, importance and mission of these two organisations with the President of Caritas Slovenia, Msgr Metod Piriš, and the Secretary-General of the Slovenian Red Cross, Dr Danijel Starman.

### What are your key missions and how do you operate?

**Caritas:** The key mission of Caritas Slovenia is to protect human dignity and advocate for the poor. It is shown primarily in helping to ensure the material needs of economically deprived people, particularly those who fall through the cracks of the state's welfare system or who, despite state assistance, cannot provide for themselves or overcome their distress related to

natural and other disasters.

It is also shown through its concern for itself with the most vulnerable groups in society, such as children and the elderly. Caritas includes children in preventive programmes and study help. It also provides school essentials. Elderly people are visited by volunteers at the local level, who help them overcome everyday difficulties related to old age.

Caritas repeatedly uncovers unaddressed and professionally demanding issues regarding addiction, violence against women and the victims of trafficking and tries to find solutions for them. Both volunteers and employees of Caritas Slovenia endeavour

to always be respectful towards people who come for help, mostly by listening, showing empathy and compassion, and helping in the search of possible solutions and anything positive that could help alleviate distress.

**Red Cross:** The fundamental mission of the Slovenian Red Cross is to improve the life of vulnerable people and protect their human dignity through the power of humanity. As the Slovenian Red Cross is a full member of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, its mandate and mission are defined in Geneva Conventions. They are also laid down in the Slovenian Red Cross Act adopted in 1993.



The Slovenian Red Cross thus operates in accordance with the seven fundamental principles of the RCRC Movement, i.e. humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality. It monitors the life of people in the local environment and actively responds to occurrences of distress and helplessness, particularly in vulnerable groups, such as children and the elderly, ensures respect for people and calls upon others to share a part of their good fortune with those in need. The Slovenian Red Cross encourages and builds a sense of solidarity and understanding for the distress of others, spreads the values of health and a healthy way of life, and introduces planned education and training for the fulfilment of its mission and tasks.

The Slovenian Red Cross is organised as a single national society with 163,643 members. It unites 56 regional Red Cross associations and 887 local organisations in 12 regions with 14,000 active volunteers. Among those operating within the Slovenian Red Cross is the Debeli

Rtič Youth and Health Resort, the only such resort on the Slovenian coast, where more than 15,000 children per year spend their holidays or receive treatment.

**What are the key points of your operation or your key actions?**

**Caritas:** The work of the Caritas network, which includes almost 10,000 volunteers and more than 100 employees in 450 parish branches at the national, regional and local levels and three social institutions, is very wide and diverse. It is most clearly presented in the numbers showing the value of the aid programmes in the preceding year, which last year amounted to EUR 8.1 million.

In 2013 (data for 2014 are not yet available), Caritas collected funds to provide material assistance to more than 125,000 people throughout Slovenia. The majority of material assistance was distributed to families, children and the elderly in the form of food, clothes, hygiene aids, the payment of essential bills and school essentials, holidays and various forms of social events.

In addition to general charity programmes, Caritas organisations also implement social protection programmes related to providing assistance to addicts, maternity homes, the homeless, out-patient clinics for persons without health insurance and the victims of trafficking.

Caritas Slovenia is also active in providing international humanitarian and development aid in the Balkans and Sub-Saharan Africa and carries out projects for raising awareness on global learning.

**Red Cross:** The Slovenian Red Cross exercises public powers that constitute the basis of its operation. It carries out activities aimed at motivating and recruiting blood donors, organises first aid courses and exams, establishes and trains first aid units, carries out health protection measures in cases of natural and other disasters and armed conflicts, measures for receiving and accommodating evacuees and other people at risk, and other measures contributing to the care of affected people and people at risk, and performs

Red Cross Slovenia volunteers

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The key mission of Caritas Slovenia is to protect human dignity and advocate for the poor.



tasks determined by the Geneva Conventions.

In addition to public powers, the core of the organisation's mission are humanitarian programmes, which are a direct humanitarian response to the situation in the environment and the needs of vulnerable groups of people, including social activity, preventive healthcare, health education and promotion, working with youth and education for humanity, and the organisation of holidays. In introducing new programme activities, the Slovenian Red Cross establishes connections and works with other institutions and organisations, individuals and international entities.

**Slovenia has recently been hit by several natural disasters (ice storms and floods). Do you consider that Slovenians are generally willing to lend a hand and help each other?**

**Caritas:** Slovenians are very responsive and willing to help. Particularly developed are neighbourly help and the care for common good at the local level, where Slovenia has many active societies. The response to collections of material assistance is always amazing, with tangible gifts of clothes, food and drink and other essentials. Such responses are particularly generous when natural and other disasters take place. This was the case, for example, when floods occurred in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Serbia. Fundraising charity campaigns can also be very effective and successful if they are well covered by the media.

For the last 10 years, we have been running the "For the Heart of Africa" campaign, built on our good working relationship with Slovenian missionaries, through which we help the poorest to build schools, hospitals and also

wells, since the most important issue in Africa is drinking water. We also responded to natural disasters in Darfur, Sri Lanka and Haiti and the floods in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, for which we raised more than EUR 800,000 of assistance.

**Red Cross:** The Slovenian Red Cross believes that the solidarity of Slovenian citizens is exceptional, which is shown particularly well in times of natural disasters, not only at home but also in cases of large-scale disasters abroad (for example those in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and the Philippines). In 2014 we have carried out several nationwide humanitarian campaigns to help people affected by natural disasters – the ice storm in Slovenia (January/February), floods in Bosnia and Herzegovina (May), floods in Serbia (May), floods in Croatia (May), and floods in Slovenia (September/October) – raising a total of EUR 738,296.21.

Recently, the solidarity of Slovenians has also been shown through their providing assistance in dealing with increasingly serious social distress and growing poverty in Slovenia caused by the harsh economic and social conditions.

Since the second half of 2008, the Slovenian Red Cross has been faced with an increasing number of applicants for and recipients of assistance. In the last five years, the number of recipients of material assistance has increased by 51,011. We have to be aware that without this solidarity and certain socially responsible companies, the hardships of some people would have been even worse.

**We pride ourselves on the high rate of voluntarism and solidarity.**

**Caritas:** The volunteers of Caritas alone do more than half a million hours of voluntary work per year. If we add fire-fighters, the Red Cross, retirees and chronic patients' societies, this number becomes really quite impressive. There are also many everyday acts of neighbourly solidarity that are never recorded. However, volunteer organisations, including Caritas, are facing great challenges. The average

age of active volunteers is getting older, for example. As the length of the working life increases, the period when people can do labour-intensive charity work is getting shorter. The demands of the state at various level of work and consequently the bureaucratisation of work in societies are increasing, which requires at least partial professionalisation. Individualisation is also on the march, confining people to their own worlds within four walls. Today's voluntarism is becoming mostly a project inspiration and a challenge, as people are finding it increasingly difficult to accept regular weekly obligations for a long period of time. Therefore education on voluntarism must start in the kindergartens and primary schools and continue throughout childhood. A person who experiences the richness of voluntary work in their youth will also be active later in life. We are glad that Caritas has many active young volunteers. For example, more than 110 animators participate in the organisation of children's holidays.

**Red Cross:** We most often measure solidarity by the amount of collected funds or material assistance, but there are many Slovenians who are willing to help with their work, knowledge and experience. The Slovenian Red Cross is aware that our strength and in fact our ability to fulfil our mission and carry out many activities comes from voluntarism. Therefore the promotion, nurturing and development of voluntarism has priority in our humanitarian organisation. The volunteers of the Red Cross, who are active throughout Slovenia, are constantly in touch with the users of our services and thus ensure an effective response to actual needs of persons or groups that find themselves in distress. They are present and willing to help even when their lives are in danger and in places where often no one else can be found.

Finally, the Slovenian Red Cross can also use as a measure of solidarity the number of blood donors, who with their unpaid, voluntary and anonymous blood donations make sure that there is an uninterrupted supply of blood for all patients in Slovenia.

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The Slovenian Red Cross believes that the solidarity of Slovenian citizens is exceptional, which is shown particularly well in times of natural disasters, not only at home but also in cases of large-scale disasters abroad.



## Blood Donation

# Modern methods of communication with blood donors ensure optimal management of blood supplies

Blood donation is certainly one of the noblest forms of help we can give to a fellow human being. With its number of blood donors, Slovenia ranks within the European average; however, it is of utmost importance that Slovenia is self-sufficient in its blood supply requirements. This means that we can cover the needs for blood in our health care system ourselves.

Photo: Mostphotos



Slovenia boasts a very well developed program of blood donation, a long and successful tradition with a well-organised blood donation system; a sufficient number of blood donors and a high willingness of people to donate blood as well as modern methods of communication with blood donors.

Every 5 minutes, someone in Slovenia needs blood, either for a planned operation or for saving a

life after an accident. This means that on average we need 350 blood donors every working day. With their voluntary blood donation, they contribute to the preservation of health of fellow human beings and of course help to prevent death.

The Slovenian Red Cross is responsible for recruiting and ensuring an adequate number of blood donors and is also the na-

tional blood donation campaign organiser, while the Blood Transfusion Centre of Slovenia (ZTM) is responsible for the collection, processing, testing and supply of safe and compatible blood and blood products to patients.

Despite the divergent blood transfusion services in Slovenia we have been able to overcome the organisational decentralisation and combine the supplies

Male donors can give blood every three months and female donors every four months.

Slovenia boasts a very well developed program of blood donation, a long and successful tradition with a well-organised blood donation system.



Photo: Mosphoto

The demand for a particular blood group corresponds to the distribution of blood groups in a population.

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Blood donors now actively cooperate and help to maintain blood supply levels by deciding to give blood based on prevailing needs.

of all three transfusion institutions (ZTM in Ljubljana, Centre of Transfusion Medicine Maribor and Centre of Transfusion Medicine Celje), which means that we deal with blood responsibly and rationally. With the publication of actual current requirements and supplies of blood on the web pages [www.ztm.si](http://www.ztm.si) and [www.daruj-kri.si](http://www.daruj-kri.si), the organisation of blood donors in Slovenia has moved to an even higher level. Blood donors now actively cooperate and help to maintain blood supply levels by deciding to give blood based on prevailing needs. Ensuring appropriate and optimal blood supply

levels and adapting to the current needs for blood and maintenance of supplies is a complex task, which requires constant monitoring and endeavour by all those responsible for the blood supply.

The mobile application “Daruj kri” (“Donate blood”), which reminds blood donors when they can again give blood, shows up-to-date blood requirements and the locations and operating times of blood donation campaigns, is a further upgrade of the partnership with blood donors. All data can also be found on the Facebook page “Daruj kri”, which successfully links

all supporters of blood donation and enables communication between existing and future blood donors and the professional and general public.

That Slovenia displays innovative and modern approaches to communication with its blood donors was recognised at the 1st European Congress DOMAINE (Donor Health & Management) held in The Hague (3 – 5 September 2014), where the Blood Transfusion Centre of Slovenia received the Congress award for their presentation of achievements in the area of blood donation campaigns.

## Slovenians busy with humanitarian and development work in Africa

Slovenians like to talk about their top athletes, fine scientists and cultural figures, but we are proud too of the significant number of people engaged in humanitarian and development activities.

Photo: Tanja Matheis



This article puts the spotlight on four such people who have decided to dedicate themselves to this work. They return to Africa time and time again. Some spend summers there as volunteers, while others, smitten by the mysterious charms of this continent, even make their homes there.

### AFRICA - AN INSPIRING ENVIRONMENT

“Hmm, isn’t it that rather a Slovenian approach: to place the nation’s self-respect or the interest in its own culture at the centre of development projects?”, wonders Miha Logar, the director of Edirisa, a Uganda-

based social enterprise, with its ideology based on his studies in Uganda and the influence of African intellectuals during his Master’s study there.

Edirisa (meaning “window” in the Ugandan language) is basically intended to change the image of Africa. According to Miha, this is definitely a continent with specific problems, but it is also an inspiring environment where many positive and interesting things happen. And it is not only Europeans but also, unfortunately, Africans themselves who have to be convinced about that. Miha Logar has been living in Uganda since 2000 and in the past few years

his main focus has been the “Gorilla Highlands” initiative, which promotes the south-western part of the country. By drawing attention to extraordinary natural beauty and astonishing history of these places, running treks and organising other activities, he hopes to significantly increase the number of travellers to Uganda. Their activities are designed in such a manner that most of the financial support goes directly into the hands of poor rural communities. Also the arrivals of visitors prove that Uganda is worthy of interest and that the inhabitants of that country can be proud of what their culture and country can offer. Miha has

Maja with the African kids.

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This summer, after many years, Maja Drobne’s wish has finally come true. Engaged in a project run in Slovenia by Zavod Voluntariat, the Institute for International Voluntary Work, she travelled to Benin, a small country in Western Africa.



It's a school time.

From August 2011 to the present day, Jana has lived in the central African country of Malawi. There, she and her friend Bernarda Nemeč established the ELA organisation to help children with special needs.

devoted particular attention to the tribe of Batwa Pygmies, who were forced out of the national parks twenty years ago. They are still in a desperate situation, with alcoholism making it even worse – the ever-repeating story of the Australian and American aborigines... Tourism is one of few possibilities to earn some money, though it must be underpinned by a respectful and rational approach.

**HELP FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

Jana Dular has been living in Eastern Africa since 2008, running various humanitarian projects. When she first came to

Uganda, she took a job at Edirisa and used her own salary to start running a project of agricultural assistance to the Batwa community. She assisted in the renovation of the Special Needs Education Centre in Uganda, intended for children with special needs, who are generally looked down on as inferior because of their differences and who were living in unbearable conditions. She taught them how to plant crops and helped with basic teaching aids. During the first year of living in Tanzania, she assisted in the project of building a school for Maasai children in the region of Manyara. From August 2011 to the present day, Jana has lived in the central African country

of Malawi. There, she and her friend Bernarda Nemeč established the ELA organisation to help children with special needs. With donations from the Ecologists without Borders Association, the ELA built its own educational and cultural centre in 2011. Each morning, the centre runs educational workshops to help children with special needs who attend free public schools but have major learning issues. And each afternoon, ELA's centre, assisted by both the regularly employed teachers and Slovenian volunteers, runs educational workshops, where about 200 village children learn reading, writing, mathematics, English and so on. In this way



Jana brightens the lives of many children with a lot of positive energy, love and attention and teaches them to have faith in themselves and their abilities.

#### **FASCINATED BY THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT**

It was in 2009 when Maja Ladič first ventured into Rwanda, a country perhaps best known for the genocide of 1994. As a volunteer, she held interviews with women from the local community, where the Nyamirambo Women's Centre was already in place. The centre became operational in 2007 with the assistance of the Peace Institute.

In the interviews, women talked about their lives, the challenges and issues that they have been facing, and about their needs. Most of them drew attention to poverty, lack of education, illiteracy, lack of knowledge of the law and of their rights, and a lack of the skills that would enable them to earn a basic income and to survive. Based on these interviews, a proposal

was drawn up for the activities to be performed by the centre for the benefit of the inhabitants, mainly women from the local community. Maja Ladič was so fascinated by the local environment and the women she met there that, after coming back from Rwanda, she continued her work on development projects with the Peace Institute. They have just completed their sixth project and Maja has already paid her seventh visit to Rwanda.

#### **THEY ALL KNOW EACH OTHER, HELP EACH OTHER**

This summer, after many years, Maja Drobne's wish has finally come true. Engaged in a project run in Slovenia by Zavod Voluntariat, the Institute for International Voluntary Work, she travelled to Benin, a small country in Western Africa. Her work primarily focused on workshops with children and teenagers on healthy lifestyles, nutrition, and learning about nature and the environment in which they live. Additionally, she worked with

a group of women engaged in the transformation of various products which are produced from the crops grown in the local environment. The concepts of home address and bank accounts are unknown to the people living in the village: they have a completely different way of life and are honest, genuine and know how to live with each other. Their pace of life is slow, without stress and they know how to enjoy small things. Europeans are reproached for leading a vertical and individual life, whereas there people still live horizontally – they all know each other, help each other. There "a human is a human to a human". The experience from Africa has had a profound influence on Maja, making her realise that a hot shower and access to a refrigerator are not things to be taken for granted. That the honest smiles of children who do not know what an iPad is mean far more than a perfect internet connection. And that for a happy life we actually need significantly less than we might think.

Miha Logar

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Miha Logar has been living in Uganda since 2000 and in the past few years his main focus has been the "Gorilla Highlands" initiative, which promotes the south-western part of the country.

Slovenian missionary Pedro Opeka  
**My mission is to serve the poorest and the  
neediest – in this I found the meaning of life**

Charismatic priest Pedro Opeka, together with his co-workers from the Akamasoa organisation, made possible to more than 23,000 homeless people to start a new life with schools, health care, their own homes and jobs. Fight against poverty, promotion of moderate consumption and environmental protection make Pedro Opeka a global example for solving the world's gravest problems.

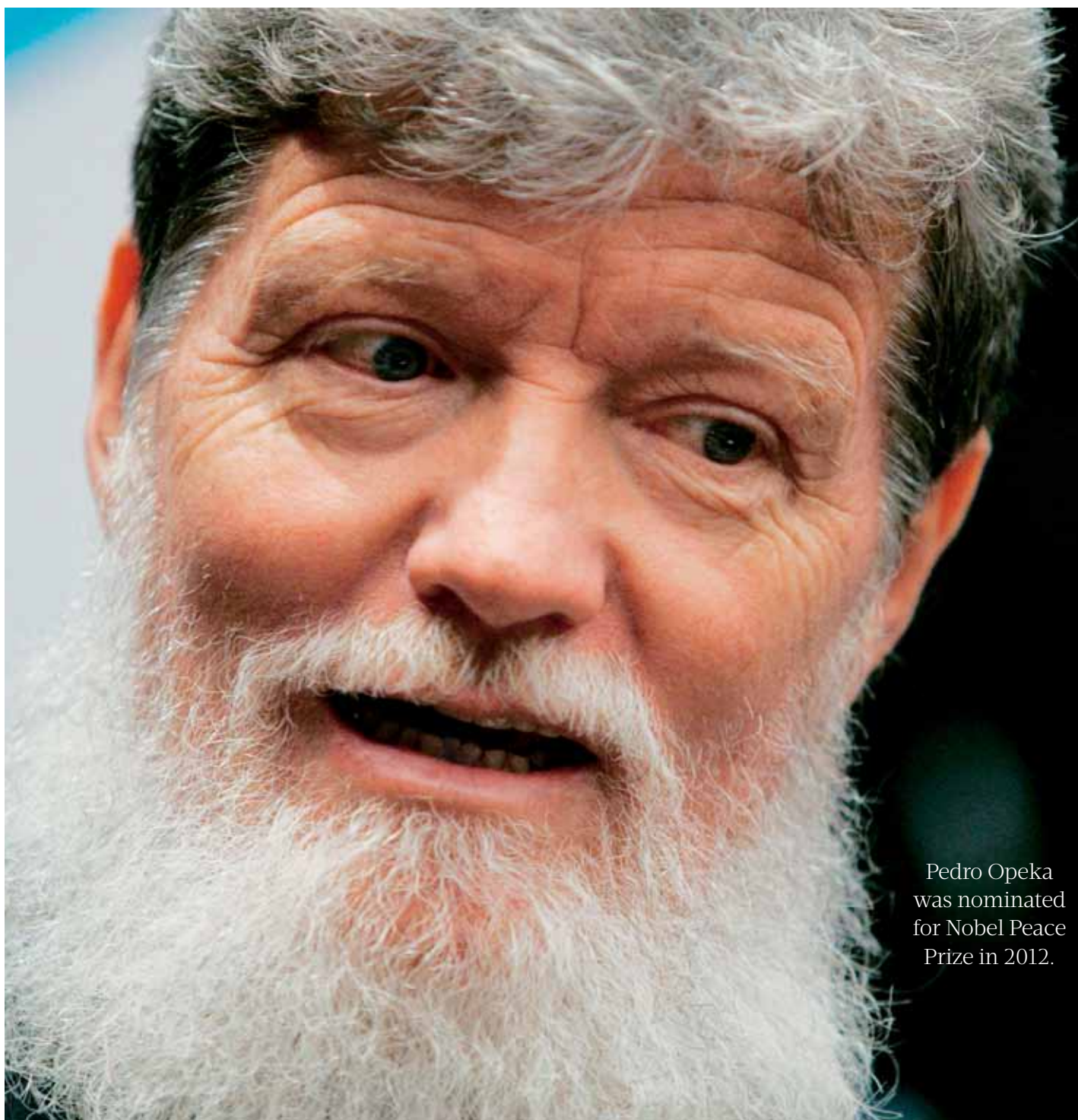


Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

Pedro Opeka  
was nominated  
for Nobel Peace  
Prize in 2012.



In an effort to learn more about the world, especially the poor, he hitchhiked as a student through most European countries, as well as in Morocco and Israel, and even sold shoes in Harlem, New York. His uplifting adventures and his subsequent work among the poorest of the poor have been vividly described in many books in various languages (French, German, Slovenian, Spanish, and English). Pedro soon noticed the extreme poverty in the slums of the city and discovered the degradation of the “garbage people,” scavenging the garbage disposal hills trying to find something to eat or to sell. He decided that no one should live in such extreme degradation and that his first task should be to help these poorest of the poor. Thus, he obtained some land and persuaded the first group of the most destitute to leave the slums and trash hills and improve their lot by becoming farmers. He taught men how to make brick and become bricklayers, building homes and in-

frastructure for villages in their new “communities of friends” or Akamasoa.

#### **FROM MODEST BEGINNINGS IN 1989, PEDRO'S PROJECTS HAVE GROWN BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS**

Former garbage people have achieved human dignity by means of hard work, developing self-esteem and a sense of responsibility for themselves and for the entire community. The world began to notice! In 2005, visiting journalists of Paris Match magazine described about 17,000 of Pedro's people who had been rescued from slow death on the trash hills of Antananarivo, Madagascar, and proudly worked in various shops, on farms and in the quarry, while over 8,000 of their children received surprisingly good education in schools established by Pedro. And there was Pedro's Akamasoa's Welcome Center where about 200,000 transients have by then received food, clothing, medical care and counselling. By

2012, statistics have increased to over 23,000 villagers, including more than 10,000 children and over 300,000 transients, who received temporary help. In cooperation with Akamasoa, which he had founded, four maternity wards, as well as four general hospitals for the poor whom no one would treat were established, built in areas of the greatest need, from the capital city of Antananarivo to remote, isolated rural areas over 900 kilometres or 560 miles away, where properly trained native staff, physicians, dentists, midwives and nurses care for the indigent patients. During the last year alone 35,890 patients were treated!

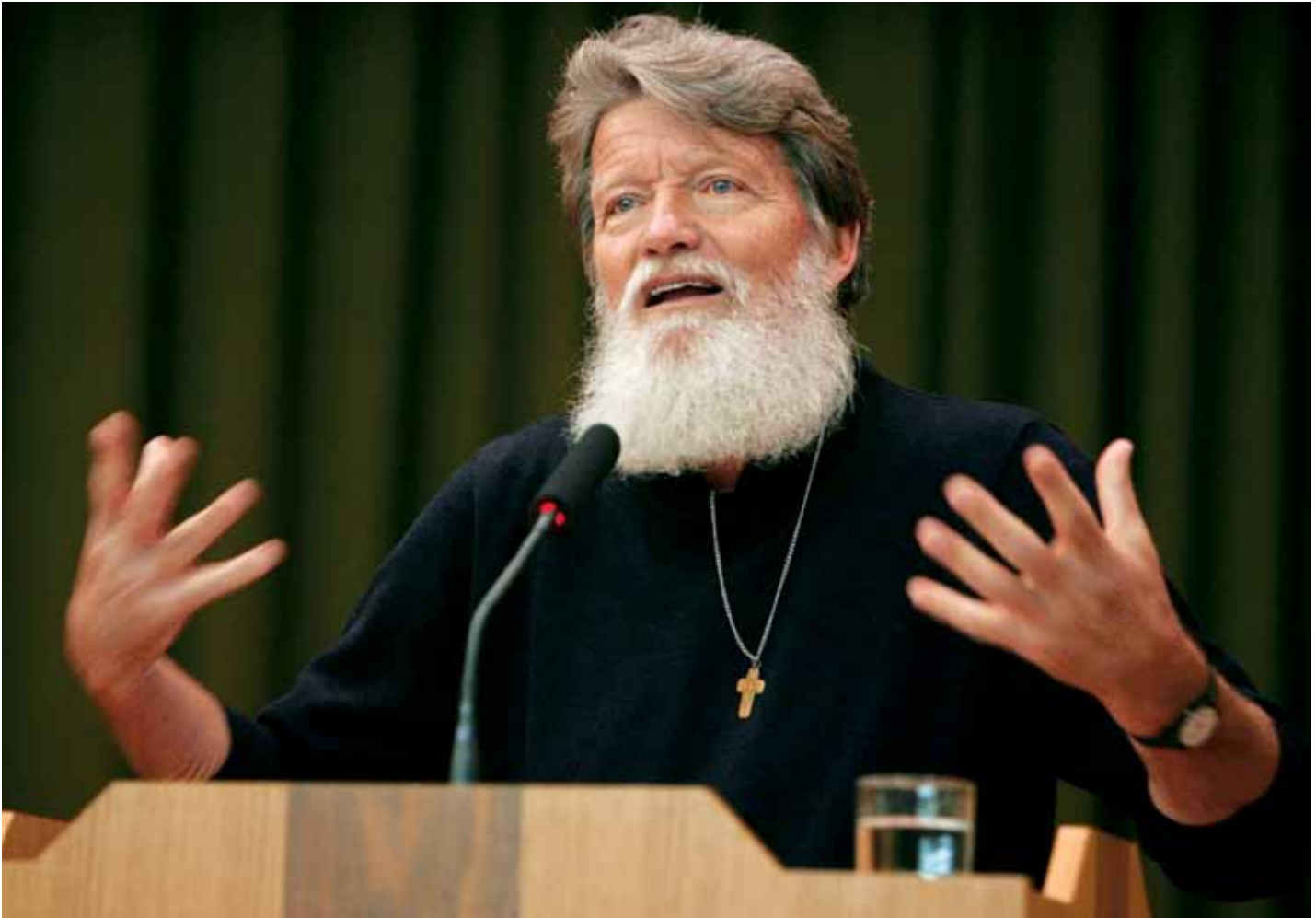
#### **I BRING THE JOY OF MY LIFE**

“I bring the joy of my life. This is not a fake joy, it comes from experience from living in Madagascar for 40 years. It is probably hard to imagine that talents and charisma can be successfully utilised in such a poor area as a dump in Madagascar. On

Pedro Opeka visited Slovenia. He spoke about poverty in Madagascar and his work.

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My message is one of solidarity, of sharing what we have, because the wealth we have has been given to us to share, because what I don't need goes to waste.



Love, taste for risk, spirit of adventure, but also free and provocative speech, freedom of action and thought. These words rightly portray Father Pedro.

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I bring the joy of my life. This is not fake joy, but comes from experience from living in Madagascar for 40 years. It is probably hard to imagine that talents and charisma can be successfully utilised in such a poor area as a dump in Madagascar.

the contrary, there they can be even more pronounced. Here, you have strong material foundations, but weak values, and wealth lulls humans and kills all initiatives. Your future is secure at least for a couple of months, while there we live from one day to the next. In poorer places people are happier, simpler, more accessible and open. When people are poor and lose everything, when masters throw them on the street and when families live in inhumane conditions, they can come to us. They explain their situation and if we see that they are telling the truth and truly want to escape poverty, their families are accepted immediately. Our association currently has 17,000 members, who live with us, but we have helped more than 300,000 people already. In 20 years we have built more than 3,000 houses. Everyone can become member of the association under three conditions: they need to work, the education and schooling of children are obligatory and they have to accept our discipline.”

**WHAT DO YOU RECOMMEND TO EUROPE AND SLOVENIA?**

“The crisis was expected. Those who were able to consider the situation in the long-term knew that our egoistic economy was reckless. We didn’t know how to share, and in abnormal comfort our standards of living were too high. We exploited land, spent money and lived fake lives. We took loans for everything and led unrealistic lives. When this stopped somewhere, everything collapsed. Economy must be built on work, reality and fairness. Current economy was built on artificial basis and was therefore not able to last. The objective of large companies is not creating jobs but ensuring fast earnings and becoming rich with the least amount of effort. The richer the companies got, the more they laid off employees, thus increasing the poverty. If the whole world lived by American standards, we would need six Earths. And why wouldn’t we all live by the same standards, why would the

Americans live better lives than others and why should all economies serve the American economy? If the trust in the economy is not restored, there is no future for it.

The egoistic economy hit a wall and something new needs to be discovered. And we will discover something. Values, such as solidarity, equality and fairness, offer a way out of this crisis and jobs should be provided to people. Such economy is possible. We need to consider every human being and every country.”

According to Opeka all dumps in the world should be closed.” We are fighting for that in Madagascar. This shows no respect for human beings. Nobody can convince us that you can survive at a dump. This is not dignified. Funds for schooling the children were donated by good people. However, our job is to tell the people that assistance from the outside is limited and will cease at some point. We encourage them to stand on their own two feet.”



## Tomo Križnar

# Those who think well should be loud

With his early realization that today's consumer society is based on exploitation, he began to travel the world and get to know and appreciate other ways of life. He found that ethnic groups that do not participate in capitalist consumerism are existentially threatened by hunger for resources in our greed-dominated world.



At the beginning of the 1980s, he abandoned a promising career in the biggest electronics firm in the then-still Yugoslavia and began to oppose inhuman predators with his journalistic talent as a writer, film-maker and photographer.

Slovenian humanitarian and indigenous rights activist Tomo Križnar is this year's winner of the Ethecon award. Križnar was chosen by the international Foundation for Ethics & Economy (Ethecon) as the winner of the Blue Planet Award 2014. With this award, Ethecon honours individuals who have

shown outstanding commitment to the rescue and preservation of our Blue Planet. The award is given to people who are truly committed to protection of human ethics. Besides the Blue Planet Award, the German environmental organization also awards the Black Planet Award, which was this year given to board members and shareholders of the Dow Chemical chemical group for their responsibility for the chemical disaster in the Indian city of Bhopal. The Ethecon Foundation was created at the turn of the millennium. It advocates for social justice and protection of human rights,

and is critical of the byways of globalisation and global corporations which are being led only by their profit. It has been awarding the Blue and Black Planet Awards since 2006.

### IT IS NECESSARY TO GO TO AFRICA

On his travels to Africa, he is selflessly venturing to dangerous zones not only to protect indigenous people, but to teach them to defend themselves from oppressors, be they Arabs, Chinese, or Europeans, trying to seize their land, and the natural resources it hides within.

Slovenian humanitarian and indigenous rights activist Tomo Križnar is this year's winner of the Ethecon award.

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It is wrong that in our country we live only for fun and pleasure. Humans were always driven by something more than just relaxation and pleasure.



Slovenian humanitarian and indigenous rights activist Tomo Križnar is this year's winner of the Ethecon award.

“It is necessary to go to Africa, to Sahel, and tell the world what is going on there. It is necessary to help, so that people will not have to flee to Europe, but will create conditions which would enable them to work and support their families at home. The time has come for actions, not discussions. The award ceremony will certainly give me the opportunity to inform the public of the actual conditions, and to call for action. I do feel satisfaction that we had been noticed, but we should have been noticed by those who have the power to act. I do hold hope that due to this award my voice will be heard. We needed a long time to start protecting endangered animal species, and obviously the innocent human indigenous way of life will be the last in line. I fear the reason is the fact that we still feel endangered by them, although they had already been beaten.”

Since he is a very emotional and sensitive person, he was not able to forget it once he returned into “our bunker in the North of the planet”. He was haunted

by the images of the victims of the European domination, both colonial and neo-colonial imperialism. “I was upset because people here misunderstand other cultures, and by the prevailing stereotypes, especially aimed at indigenous people. A number of books have been written about other nations, but all from the Eurocentric point of view. I felt the need to talk about my own experiences from my travels to Iran, Afghanistan, Indonesia, the Central America; people there invite you into their homes, and they give, instead of trying to take. And what they give are stories from their history, and what we, the white people did to them. It reminds me of the Roman Empire, which crumbled not because of the barbarians at the empire borders, but because of the decay from the inside, and the general exaggeration of the last elites. I notice the same materialistic attitude by us. We look down upon people living down there, the historical victims of our conquests, and consider them dangerous, and a threat to ourselves.”

**WHY AFRICA?**

“Because it is the largest sacrificial altar of humanity. The prevailing mindset is that if anyone should die first, it should be the Africans, because they are the most lazy and neglected, and because they resemble primates the most. When I try to inspire people here for the values of the Africans, I see that they don't want to understand me at all. They think I am naive. We allow and encourage conflicts so that we can exploit them. We are now competing with the Chinese, who have an even stronger strategy – kill a slave with a slave, which is currently happening in Sudan. All continents are getting on their feet, except for Africa. Wherever you look south of the Sahara, there is fire and war. Africa as the cradle of humanity and Europe as the cradle of humanism should work hand in hand. United we can do more. I currently host the humanitarian coordinator Suleiman Jammous from Darfur, who is seriously ill, and his family. We learn so much from one another. Especially that

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We look down upon people living down there, the historical victims of our conquests, and consider them dangerous, and a threat to ourselves.



Tomo Križnar with the friends.

they are people just like you and me. They are not barbarians, but only more cautious and controlled with many things than we are.

#### **HOW CAN PEOPLE KILL THEMSELVES HERE WHERE WE LACK NOTHING?**

It is also interesting that there are very few suicides in Africa. This is something that is completely unknown to indigenous people from the Nuba Mountains. "How can people kill themselves here where we lack nothing?" And here is where Africa can help us. Most of the people who visit

Africa notice that despite all the hardship, people there are still joyful and full of life. I wish for the cooperation of all mankind, and not only one global power. We shouldn't even be talking about races – they do not exist. Races only exist in the imagination of a white man who needs an excuse for extermination. We should be developing humanitarianism, not weapons. What gives us the right to be the world's police force? We have achieved nothing with these military adventures. As our greatest poet France Prešeren said: those who think well should be loud, but are hardly heard. I look at my

peers who are only waiting for their pensions. This is a tragedy for my generation which was so promising. We were the first with the opportunity to go into the world and experience other cultures, in which we were searching for answers to fundamental questions.

There is where you see that will which cannot be found here, the will to live and to enthuse others. You have to fight to preserve some idealism and enthusiasm. This is the major challenge, so that you don't fall into a collective depression that prevails in our sold cultures.

**Tomo Križnar:** "Yet another example of the latest atrocity: on 31 October, more than 200 girls and women were raped in the village of Tabit in Darfur. 16,000 UN soldiers, who are present in Darfur, but closed in the UNO fortress, have again failed completely. Since nobody is protecting the civilians, we are calling upon humanity to organize a protection system using pilotless aircrafts. Since January last year, the Tomo Križnar Foundation and the HOPE Humanitarian Organization have been experimenting with small inexpensive drones on the ground in the Nuba Mountains. At the same time, we are lobbying with governmental and non-governmental organizations all around the world and finishing the production of the documentary film "Drones above the roots of mankind" with the aim of gaining the attention of the broader civil society. We have also issued the calendar of the Tomo Križnar Foundation and the HOPE Humanitarian Organization to gather funds for directing and editing the documentary film."

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Nowhere in the world can you find more of such zeal, such enthusiasm, such a will to live, such willingness to give up apathy and collective depression than in Africa.

## International assistance and solidarity during disasters

### **A friend in need is a friend indeed**

During the devastating floods causing destruction this year in several countries, also in Slovenia, as well in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia solidarity was shown among neighbours and community members and through selfless work of firemen, Civil Protection and other rescue services, Armed and Police Forces and everyone who offered help to save what can be saved. International assistance was of great importance due to large scale consequences, which could not be mitigated by affected countries themselves.



The meaning of international solidarity was also experienced in Slovenia in February 2014.

In the event of natural disasters, which have become more frequent and stronger in recent years, people do not only lose material assets, but also their family members, their homes ... everything. Quick assistance from individuals and an effective response from national institutions and rescue services can prevent them from losing the one last thing in times of hardship – trust in human

solidarity. However, in case of large-scale disasters, international help is also needed. In an increasingly globalised world, where even disasters have no limits, international mechanisms have been established that mitigate the consequences of disasters and enable quick and coordinated assistance. In the spirit of European solidarity, the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism was estab-

lished as the main operational framework facilitation coordinated assistance of the participating states to victims of natural and man-made disasters in Europe and elsewhere.

In this context, the Emergency Response Coordination Centre operating within the European Commission in Brussels as an operational hub monitor the emergencies around the globe

24/7, exchanges information, receives requests and coordinates assistance offered by the Mechanism Participating States. In case of major disaster, an EU Assessment and Coordination Civil Protection Team can be deployed to the disaster stricken country.

### **THE WHOLE OF EUROPE OFFERING HELP**

When Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia experienced a thousand-year flood in May 2014, the inhabitants of the flooded areas were not left alone, as almost the whole of Europe offered to help. Numerous rescue units from 23 European countries helped evacuate and save people, animals and properties, pumped water and removed other consequences of floods in the flooded areas. Together they saved more than 2,000 people ... by boats, helicopters or in any other possible way.

When Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina requested international assistance, the Slovenian government decided without hesitation to send most needed help to the flooded area – high capacity water pumps and water rescue units. The assistance was quick and effective thanks to the rescuers who immediately responded to the request of the Administration of the Republic of Slovenia for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief, which organised and coordinated Slovenian assistance. In virtually half a day, the assistance for Serbia was ready and the first Civil Protection unit was deployed there on 16 May 2014 and to Bosnia and Herzegovina the following day. Three helicopters of the Slovenian Armed and Police Forces were also sent to both countries. In total, 148 rescuers, Civil Protection, Slovenian Armed and Police Forces staff, offered assistance in multiple rotations. Help

for the municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia was also provided by sister and other municipalities from Slovenia, which sent fire units and equipment for rescuing, water pumping and cleaning of flooded areas. Together the municipalities of Celje, Škofja Loka, Radovljica, Ljubljana and Maribor sent more than 100 firemen and other rescue service staff. This has been the largest assistance intervention of Slovenian rescuers abroad so far and was carried out professionally and courageously. The great wish of rescuers, many of them being volunteers, to participate in rescue interventions, is to be emphasised, as many of them left their jobs to help people in need as volunteers.

### **A QUARTER OF SLOVENIANS LEFT WITHOUT ELECTRICITY DUE TO SLEET**

The meaning of international solidarity was also experienced in Slovenia when almost a quarter of Slovenia's population was left without electricity due to the serious consequences of sleet in February 2014. On 2 February 2014, Slovenia requested international assistance in the form of high-power electric generators through the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism. Numerous countries immediately responded to the request. Several border municipalities from Austria and Italy, non-governmental and other organisations providing generators for individual use also showed solidarity. In total, Slovenia received assistance in the form of 172 electric generators from 11 countries: Austria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Italy, Hungary, Germany, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Serbia, the U.S.A. Assistance was also offered by some other countries, but it was no longer needed. International generators provided electricity for some public facilities such as the hospital in

Postojna, municipal buildings in the sleet-stricken area and larger residential buildings or remote villages where the supply of electricity was cut. Foreign rescuers also helped their Slovenian colleagues, firemen and others, clean and remove the consequences of the disaster.

### **HE GIVES TWICE WHO GIVES QUICKLY**

In the first days of sleet, there were around 180 foreign rescuers on average per day in Slovenia, while a total number of 644 rescuers from abroad participated in the intervention. In most teams, the rescuers worked shifts consisting of a few days, as they were mostly volunteers. The Administration of the Republic of Slovenia for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief provided accommodation, food and other necessary host country support. Support to foreign units was also offered by municipal and regional Civil Protection headquarters, local communities, professional and volunteer firemen, employees of electric power companies and others. Embassies of the sending countries in Slovenia had a major role in this regard. Slovenia's inhabitants who were left without electricity were deeply grateful for the assistance and warmly welcomed foreign rescuers, who carried out their work in an extremely selfless and professional manner, possibly with a hot cup of tea. Austrian firemen even brought their own kitchen and prepared warm meals together with the locals in Cerknica. The experience from the disasters shows that the proverbs "He gives twice who gives quickly" and "A friend in need is a friend indeed" are true. The rescuers who give up everything and go help people in another country during a natural disaster provide proof that solidarity and sense of helping others are still alive today.

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The meaning of international solidarity was also experienced in Slovenia when almost a quarter of Slovenia's population was left without electricity due to the serious consequences of sleet in February 2014.

## Work brigades

# Do you remember, comrades?

The times of youth work brigades were in many ways as exceptional and unique as the situation in the country, especially immediately after World War II. Youth voluntary work brought together young people, full of ideals, will, power and enthusiasm for work. We can say that voluntary work of all generations of those times in many ways overcame problems that were, also due to the cancellation of the Marshall Plan, more numerous than they should have been.



### Work brigade

This is how, after 30 years, the first new work brigade ReNewTown Velenje 2012 was created. During the construction, new friendships were made among the volunteers aged between 30 and 65 years.

These were not just the ideals – as it is known best by those who, with the help of brigadiers, obtained access to drinking water, landscaped roads and laid telephone lines, and received selfless neighbourhood and general human assistance, either in need during natural disasters or due to loneliness in old age, etc. Of course, from today's perspective, it would be pointless to build basic infrastructure in Slovenia with youth

work actions, since we live in a completely different situation. But the values of working brigades of solidarity and voluntarism are still present in which the need for basic physical work is getting smaller and smaller.

### **RENOVATION OF PUBLIC SPACE WITH WORK BRIGADES**

After three decades, the spirit of volunteering has again come to life in Velenje. Two years ago,

64 volunteers revitalized the central open space between residential blocks in only one week. During the work brigade, the green and the central open space between residential blocks in the local community of Gorica in Velenje were revitalized. The new image was ensured under the European project ReNewTown, the purpose of which is to create a balanced development of towns or their parts from the period



of socialism (1945–1989). In the municipality of Velenje, the investment of EUR 38,500 revived work brigades, which 50 years ago already helped the town of Velenje to grow. The purpose of the renovation of a concrete location under this project was to find and explore today's potentials of work brigades, which seemed an archaic concept – a part of another system and time.

It has been over 30 years since the last major work brigade in Velenje, so the Brigadier Association Velenje intended to mark the anniversary with a larger work action. They were pleased to accept the proposal of

the Municipality of Velenje, and were joined by the employees of the municipality and other residents. This is how, after 30 years, the first new work brigade Re-NewTown Velenje 2012 was created. During the construction, new friendships were made among the volunteers aged between 30 and 65 years. With this project they were able to achieve the objective of creating a development model or introducing a model of good practice that could be used in other Slovenian and European cities.

64 participating volunteers executed a total of 1,567 hours of work, i.e. 24 hours of work per

person or 3 working days of 8 hours. In the vicinity of the site, following the model of former work brigades, the brigadiers set up a dining room, offices, toilets and beds. After the morning coffee, the volunteers got together, raised the flag, formed working groups and distributed different tasks. Volunteering is certainly one of the forms of assistance which gives you personal fulfilment, but of course this appreciation and the desire "to grow through giving" differ from person to person. One week may be enough for major changes, both in space and in the perception of and attitude towards volunteering.

All of them agreeing on one thing; teamwork is extremely important for the success of the project.

Of course, from today's perspective, it would be pointless to build basic infrastructure in Slovenia with youth work actions, since we live in a completely different socio-economic and political situation, in which the need for basic physical work is getting smaller and smaller.

If youth work actions were absent of all the physical work and the concern for political indoctrination, which has not been present in Slovenia at least in the recent period (after 1986), we would get youth gatherings in support of solidarity, intercultural learning, tolerance, overcoming prejudices, etc. Today, such events, involving thousands of young people from all over Europe and also from the rest of the world, are quite numerous. For example, one such event against racism, xenophobia, anti-semitism and intolerance was organized by the Council of Europe in 1995 in Strasbourg.

## Ziferblat

### A place for social interaction that we create together

A wooden tree house...do you still remember? Childhood, you and your closest friends, conversations, games, collecting things, laughter, joy, secret whispers ... when you enter the world of Ziferblat, you become a part of it and it soon seems like you are in a tree house for grown-ups.



Photo: Jaka Brisa

At the till, you choose one clock that tracks your time spent at Ziferblat.

First and foremost Ziferblat is a place of freedom, where you can do anything as long as you don't interfere with the freedom of other people.

On a cold November morning, my friend and I decided to grab a cup of coffee at the Ljubljana Ziferblat. Right away at the door, we were greeted by an amiable fellow named Kristjan who invited us in and told us that everything there was free, and that you only pay for the time you spend there. At first it feels like you have entered a living room full of memories. There is an armchair which looks like your grandmother's, a tennis racket, just like the one your friend used to have is hanging on the wall, and on the shelf there is a metal tin which used to store candy that you loved to eat back in the eighties. The shelves are stacked with books, Gobelin tapestries hang

on one of the walls, while others are still empty and waiting for new stories, which have yet to be written. An old typewriter waits for you to write a line or two on an empty sheet of paper, in one of the rooms a guitar and piano invite musicians to play a tune, and there is also a corner for chess players and those who love putting jigsaw puzzles together. In the kitchen nook, Kristjan taught me how to make a real café style cup of coffee on the coffee machine, and invited me to make my own breakfast. I could choose from cereal, čokolešnik (instant wheat flakes with chocolate and hazelnuts), cookies... Of course, everything is free, the only thing you count are

the minutes. At the till, there is a shelf with colourful clocks and each visitor chooses one to keep track of their time spent in Ziferblat. I chose a small red alarm clock named Matiček. We stayed for about an hour, which just flew by in this delightful place with great company.

#### WHEN PROJECTS BRING PEOPLE CLOSER TOGETHER

Maša Pavoković, manager and creative director of Ljubljana Ziferblat, who is full of new plans for her "second home", explained the concept of Ziferblat and how it all began. "The creation of the whole project





began this past summer when we started looking for a suitable space in the centre of Ljubljana. In September I visited Moscow, the birthplace of Ziferblat, where I met the rest of the twelve teams that create Ziferblat around the world. Then we began searching for furniture to decorate the interior, which eventually came from almost all parts of Slovenia, as well as from other countries. At the same time we also started putting together a programme and began searching for people that would be willing to help us." Many friends and acquaintances participated in designing and creating the place because they wanted to lend a hand and loved the idea of Ziferblat. "Shortly after the first posts on Facebook I heard from quite a few people who were happy to stop by at our address at Vegova 8 in Ljubljana, where they started painting chairs, shelves and most importantly helped to put together all the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle that is Ziferblat. The most interesting part was that after I had personally asked my friends for help, I heard from a lot of people, even from those that I haven't seen in years. It is

really nice to see that projects can unite and bring so many people closer together," added Maša Pavokovič.

#### IT'S A PLACE OF FREEDOM

Every visitor can help co-create the space and leave his or her own mark. "First and foremost Ziferblat is a place of freedom, where you can do anything as long as you don't interfere with the freedom of other people," says Ms Pavokovič. "You can bring your own ideas to organise your own event, you can bring a book, and of course we never turn down fresh-baked cookies, because in this way each and every one of us co-creates Ziferblat in a way that he or she is familiar with. Anything is possible at our place, everything from concerts to literary evenings, exhibitions, you can paint on the walls, you can make coffee or decide to make pancakes and invite your friends," explains Ms Pavokovič and points out that they are currently involved with a small project called Ziferblat University where they ask their guests about their favourite professors and then ask them to invite their professors to deliver

a lecture at Ziferblat. The idea of "tea at five o'clock", intended to bring together guests around the same table, introduce them to each other, and establish a bond through conversation is interesting and will probably also lead to new friendships. Ziferblat is also the right place for those who might feel lonely during the month of December and would like to spend some time with people and experience the holiday spirit. "Ziferblat is open every day. At our location on Vegova Street we are also open for the holidays from 9 am until 10 pm. Holidays like Christmas and New Year's will be particularly festive because our kitchen will be very active. We plan to make dinner and have fun with our visitors," Ms Pavokovič invites everyone to Ziferblat and adds: "Ziferblat offers people everything they themselves wish for. It can be a place where you can drink tea or coffee with friends, it can be an exhibition space for your art, and it can be a place where you can start a conversation with a complete stranger without feeling embarrassed and maybe invite him or her to a game of chess."

Maša Pavokovič, manager and creative director of Ljubljana Ziferblat.

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It is hard to define the age group of Ziferblat visitors because their ages are so different and there are no limits.



Photo: Ziferblat archive



Photo: Jaka Brisa

Above: Ziferblat is not a café. It is a place where you feel at home.

Bellow: All visitors can become co-creators of the space and the programme.

Ziferblat team members are truly great hosts that happily invite guests into their home.

It is hard to define the age group of Ziferblat visitors because their ages are so different and there are no limits. "It is intended for young children, secondary school pupils and university students, new mums with prams, and older people who just want to sit quietly or maybe share their knowledge with younger generations. We are very happy with the number of visitors, especially since Ziferblat is something new in this part of Europe and we are seeing that everyone needs a place where

they can feel free, find their own tree house where they can participate according to their own rules," says Ms Pavoković.

And what does Ziferblat mean for Maša Pavoković personally? "For me it is first and foremost a unique challenge, because I am the one that kindly welcomes people into my home, and invites them to feel at home. It is great to meet different people each day and talk to them, uncover new talents and especially to enable people to use our giant

living room in the best way they can."

Ziferblat team members are truly great hosts that happily invite guests into their home. They develop a project, implement their own ideas for events, and in particular they are open to new ideas and the wishes of guests, who very soon stop being just guests and become friends who together help to co-create our tree house.

## Charity Bazaar

# Our motto is that culture should be used for the benefit of the people

At the end of November, the 21st charity Bazaar took place at the Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre. Products that cannot be found in Slovenia, but are typical for certain countries, were sold at low prices. This way the organiser SILA - Slovenian International Ladies' Association - helped Slovenian people in great distress.

**Laura Jamšek, president of the SILA association:** "There is a lot of work with organising the Bazaar. It is incredible how people help each other and work hard without being paid. We exchange national and cultural experience from different fields, from literature, music and art to cooking, creative activities and learning foreign languages. In addition, SILA enables foreign women that come to Slovenia for a definite period of time to be incorporated into the environment as fast and as pleasantly as possible. This is why we have a special Welcome coffee morning committee which organises meetings or gives welcome to new members. SILA also arranges trips for members in order to get to know the beauties and the diverse cultural heritage of Slovenia. Different sections organise various activities, from literary, English, French and travel club to the club for encouraging creativity or learning the Slovenian language. Every month, the assembly of members attends the "general meeting" where current events are discussed and decisions are made. This year, we had a record number of younger generation members, which is a good thing because it brought a new perspective. The combination of all ages, playfulness and wisdom produces excellent results. I am satisfied with the way our organisation is developing."

Nationality-wise, SILA is a very colourful association, as members come from different continents and more than forty countries. Among them are foreign women who have lived and worked in Slovenia

for a long time, some of them are also married to Slovenians or their companies are based in Slovenia. Several members are wives of foreign ambassadors, diplomats and businessmen who came to Slovenia for a definite period of time. Slovenian members are ladies who are or were active in different fields. Some of them are professors, lawyers, musicians, artists, entrepreneurs etc. Several Slovenian members lived abroad for a long time as wives of Slovenian diplomats or company representatives and want to share, after returning home, their international experience with other members and contribute to the association's work. "Our association brings together younger and older members, which strengthens not only the wide international range of activities but also intergenerational cooperation."

Every year, SILA sends requests for collaboration in organising the Bazaar to foreign embassies accredited in Slovenia. The response has been mostly positive so far, as at least 35 embassies or other representations agreed to participate each year.

### AND WHO RECEIVED THE DONATIONS THIS YEAR?

Every year, on its publicly accessible website [www.sila.si](http://www.sila.si), SILA sets the rules and conditions for applications for donations. A form is published which needs to be filled in and submitted within a given deadline. Members of the SILA Bazaar Committee examine all applications submitted in time and present them at the meeting with the representatives of



Photo: Marež Paternoster

the participating countries. Afterwards, the applications are ranked and the recipients are selected.

Laura Jamšek - president of the SILA association

This year's Bazaar also offered a diverse international cultural programme. "Our motto is that culture should be used for the benefit of the people," says Laura Jamšek.



Photo: Mediaspeed

At the Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre.

Several members are wives of foreign ambassadors, diplomats and businessmen who came to Slovenia for a definite period of time. Slovenian members are ladies who are or were active in different fields.

SILA stands for Slovenian International Ladies' Association. The word "sila" also means "strength" in the Slovenian language. SILA is a non-governmental, non-religious and non-profit organisation, formed in 1993 and is run voluntarily by its members. SILA offers its members numerous opportunities to participate in diverse and interesting activities to foster deeper mutual understanding among ourselves and to expand our knowledge of Slovenia and the rest of the world. Currently SILA has nearly 150 members of all ages from over 38 countries. Some are living in Slovenia temporarily, while others have been resident for many years, including many Slovene ladies. Our members have highly diverse backgrounds, including business, human resources, politics, public relations or spouses of diplomatic representatives.

## Non-government organisations

# Don't let this December's gifts end up as January's trash

Gifts nowadays are losing their meaning. Gifts have become a consumer substitute in a globalised world. A different approach is offered by five non-government organisations, Fair trade 3muhe, Smetumet, Humanitas, Zadruga Buna and Umanotera.

Each of them emphasises the importance of fair trade and urge consumers to make ethical gift-giving choices this December. Careful consideration should be given to the preparation of gifts, they warn, so that they don't end up as trash after the New Year. December gift-giving should preserve the symbolic renewal or strengthening of social bonds. In Slovenian cultural heritage, gifts are characteristically given for important life events, like births and weddings, and for other events throughout the year. Changes to the political and economic systems in Slovenia at the beginning of the 1990s, transformed the whole month of December into a festive season thus increasing the number of opportunities for gift-giving. Prior to those opportunities for gift-giving within the family circle were only for St. Nicholas' name day and New Year.

**Živa Lopatič from Fair trade 3muhe:** "What is important is that in the making of the article given as a gift, no-one was exploited. The person giving the gift should be mindful, that the item being given has not harmed the environment or any people. In our store all our items are ethical. For each one of them we know, where it came from and who made it and that the environment was not harmed in the process. It is not only important that the gift be beautiful, it is also important that it be responsible."

**Maja Rijavec from the Cultural ecological fellowship Smetumet:** "We notice that many gifts soon end up in the trash after the New Year, which we then recycle here at the fellowship. It seems that people want



to get rid of gifts soon after they receive them. I urge people to think carefully about what kinds of gifts they buy. Don't allow gifts to become trash after the New Year anymore."

**Rene Suša from Humanitas, society for human rights and supportive action:** "For many of the items we give as gifts, we don't know where they come from, who made them or how they were made. Toys that children in one part of the world receive as gifts, were made by children in another part of the world."

### ENVIRONMENTALLY AND SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE GIFTS

Fair trade 3muhe, Smetumet, Humanitas, Zadruga Buna and Umanotera have compiled an on-line catalogue of environmentally and socially respon-

sible gifts, among which the companies and individuals alike can choose, for instance, freshly roasted and ecologically produced arabica coffee, workshops on social and environmental consequences of globalisation and consumer society, or opt for the adoption of a dolphin. The authors of the catalogue are convinced that "With the originality of ethical gift-giving you will enhance the reputation of your company, which is clearly economically, socially and environmentally responsible." In the on-line publication the authors have chosen contemporary, environmentally and socially responsible gifts, with which companies can improve on outdated practices and embrace fresh and innovative solutions.

There are four packs from Fair trade 3muhe (Sweet, Interest

Representatives of the non-government organisations.

A different approach is offered by five non-government organisations, Fair trade 3muhe, Smetumet, Humanitas, Zadruga Buna and Umanotera.



Some ideas for the Christmas gifts.

December gift-giving should preserve the symbolic renewal or strengthening of social bonds.

ing, Pleasant or Carefree year), Wings, gifts with a magical power (14 gift packs), four items from the Cultural ecological fellowship Smetumet (SPORTable, JUTiful, In-the- pendant! and Graphicle), Buna coffee and two workshops from the Humanitas society (employee education on social and environmental consequences of globalisation and the consumer society, and for the children of employees, the puppet performance of Rešilni čoln (Lifeboat)).

There is a variety of filled chocolates available, ecologically produced and without added sugar, nuts and black chocolate, 100% natural shea butter from Ghana, ecologically produced oil, a variety of fragrant soaps, natural oils, a doll which keeps your worries at bay if you place her under your pillow at night, dried pineapple, organic coffee, dry mango, cashew nuts with black chocolate, etc.

**WINGS, GIFTS WITH A MAGICAL POWER**

The non-government organisation Umanotera offers a gift, which, in the name of the person receiving the gift, is intended for someone experiencing hardship. The recipient receives an attractively designed greeting card with a unique illustration, and

the money donated goes in full to one of the worthy causes that we choose ourselves. There are a number of innovative packages with which it is possible to enable the schooling of children in Ghana, adopt a dolphin, maintain forest trails, bring smiles to the faces of children in Slovenian hospitals, look after small animals, provide drinking water, buy a small piece of tropical rain forest, protect bees and much, much more. With the purchase of such an original gift we can contribute to the preservation of plant and animal species, reduce poverty in countries of the Global South, combat climate change, or make a child without parents happy by giving them the gift of a month-long swimming course. Aside from this, there are also other good sides to this type of gift-giving – we don't burden the environment, we avoid the shopping frenzy and long queues in the stores before the holidays, while at the same time surprising the gift recipient in a really original way.

**A VARIETY OF WORKSHOPS**

The Humanitas society organises workshops which are based on experiential learning methods and the active participation of learners. In the workshops they investigate the relationship between working on a local and

global level and talk about what kind of world we co-create with our opinions, beliefs and customs. By using practical examples and simulation they investigate areas such as: international trade, environmental problems, interculturalism, social exclusion, questions on development. At the workshops we find out a lot about what goes on behind the production of goods we use everyday (food, clothes, electrical appliances), they develop critical (media) literacy and intercultural understanding.

**“LIFEBOAT” FOR YOUR CHILDREN**

The puppet performance deals with the consequences of man's thoughtless interference in nature. Man and the animals live on an island – everything is fine, until Man decides that he will cut down all the trees on the island and build a biiig boat. The animals are powerless. Will they succeed in coming to an agreement with Man and showing him that he has to fix his mistake?

The performance is presented by participants of the Svetovne lutke (World puppets) project, who also created their puppets and instruments from recycled materials. The performance is suitable for children aged 5 years and over.

## Outfit7

# Talking Tom and Friends

Talking Tom and Friends is a rare global brand that, in just four years, has grown from instant app success into a fully-fledged media entertainment franchise. With a CGI animated series about to debut, a global licensing and merchandising program, and a chart-topping sensation on YouTube, the lovable 3D animated characters have skyrocketed in popularity with fans across the world and sit firmly at the forefront of the digital entertainment era.

Outfit7 is globally one of the most dynamic and successful companies in the area of entertainment apps for iOS and Android platforms. The founders and owners of the company are the Slovenian Iza and Samo Login, who in just five years took it from a startup and turned it into a leading company in its field. The company's umbrella brand Talking Tom, together with other talking friends, has become a global phenomenon. According to the company, the company's apps have already been downloaded more than two billion times. The company is now expanding its franchise to the film industry and other platforms. Disney has already made music videos and animated series with Outfit7 animated characters, and the company has more than 230 million individual active users per month.

### THE CHARACTERS WILL SOON BE HEADING TO HOLLYWOOD

Outfit7 recently announced that its characters will soon be heading to Hollywood. Outfit7 has partnered with Mythology Entertainment in a deal to adapt the Talking Tom and Friends universe into a fully animated or hybrid live-action/animated motion picture for family audiences. There are currently six major characters (Talking Tom, Talking Angela, Talking Ginger, Talking Ben, Talking Pierre, and Talking Gina) and a total of 15 apps within the Talking Tom and Friends umbrella brand.

Part of the strength of the Talking Tom and Friends franchise is the physical comedy and humor of the characters, which appeals to users of all ages, nationalities,

and languages. But its success is also due to the fun and friendly personalities of the characters themselves. There is a character everyone can relate to and users love to engage with them. It's as simple as that. Whether its chatting with Talking Angela about fashion, creating potions in the lab with Talking Ben, or helping Talking Ginger get ready for bed, these characters are loved the world over.

The award-winning apps in the Talking Tom and Friends franchise have now been downloaded over two billion times and played with in more than 230 countries and territories worldwide, with updates and innovative new products being released regularly. Furthermore, a brand new app featuring a beloved character from the Talking Tom and Friends franchise is due to launch in December 2014.

Outfit7's innovative *My Talking Tom* app won the 2014 Tabby Award for "Best iPad Game: Kids, Education & Family", as well as winning two Users' Choice awards for "Best iPad Game: Kids, Education & Family" and "Best Android Game: Puzzle, Cards & Family".

### FUN, GAMES AND PERSONALIZATION

*My Talking Tom* is a gaming app from Outfit7 that allows players to engage with Talking Tom by nurturing him through his nine interactive stages and 999 levels packed with fun, games and personalization. Players can unleash their creativity by selecting furniture or décor that suits them, and choose from a myriad





Have amazing fun with your Superstar!

of different furs, outfits and accessories for their Tom. Tom has life-like emotions; he can be happy, hungry, sleepy or even bored – depending on how you play with him. Fans can keep Tom happy by playing any of the app’s numerous mini-games, which also unlock new items and virtual coins. The unique Talking Tom characteristics, loved by fans globally, remain in *My Talking Tom* and are more fun than ever before. Fans are rewarded as they play and help Tom grow from baby through to toddler, teen and adult, unlock-

ing new items and coins as they go.

Just 10 days after launch, *My Talking Tom* became the top game app in 135 countries on all major platforms, with a total of over 11 million downloads worldwide – a figure which soared to over 27 million within a month. *My Talking Tom* has currently achieved in excess of 230 million downloads worldwide.

In addition to the incredibly popular apps, the characters

have also starred in an animated webseries made in collaboration with Disney Interactive, sung in chart-topping music videos, visited the White House, made an appearance on a major American sitcom, and strolled the Walk of Fame in Hollywood. Outfit7 also has a burgeoning global licensing program. There are currently over 40 official licensees worldwide, offering apparel, accessories, games and puzzles, paper goods, stationery, back to school items, and other Talking Tom and Friends branded merchandise.

The award-winning apps in the Talking Tom and Friends franchise have now been downloaded over two billion times and played with in more than 230 countries and territories worldwide, with updates and innovative new products being released regularly.

**Outfit7’s Iza Login, one of the richest women in Slovenia:** “We are successful because we encourage our staff to contribute their ideas, which are noticed and rewarded. Not all ideas may be realised, of course, but good ideas often lead to even better ones. Outfit7’s staff is among the world’s top developers in terms of programming, 3D animation, design, illustration, user experience, law and brand management. In the US, the Talking Tom app is successfully used by therapists working with children with Down syndrome and autism.”

Iza and Samo Login, founders and main developers of Outfit7, are the richest Slovenes according to the list of the magazine Manger. The company is evaluated at 1.1 billion euros, making it the first private Slovene company in this range. There are only three other companies in Slovenia worth more than one billion: Krka, Dars and Group HSE.



# Expo

## Five grains of buckwheat at Milano Expo 2015

We follow up the story from our previous issue, which looked at the magic of Slovenian wood, with a new tale focusing on five grains of buckwheat. The message of a green Slovenia is extended to an active and healthy Slovenia – I feel Slovenia.

*Green.Active.Healthy.*

With its contours, the Slovenian pavilion at Milan EXPO 2015 embodies the undulating Slovenian landscape. Constructed of wood, the pavilion symbolises the heart of the national brand, I feel Slovenia. Five pyramidal peaks above a geometrically variegated surface serve to represent the five senses we use to feel Slovenia. With this first impression we want to entice passers-by to visit our pavilion and to experience Slovenia.

### THE TALE OF THE FIVE GRAINS OF BUCKWHEAT

The tale takes place where the alpine mountain range meets the Pannonian plain, the Dolenjska hills and the Karst countryside, which stretches down to the Adriatic Sea, concealing below its surface an underground world interwoven with its myriad of caves full of stalactites and rivers. One who follows the rivers, the simple country paths, the steep alpine mountain pass, the underground labyrinth, or his own positive feeling, will find Slovenia again and again. **Green, active and healthy Slovenia.**

The visitor's journey through the Slovenian pavilion will be guided by five tiny grains of buckwheat. Slovenians love buckwheat, and it is sung about in some of our favourite folk songs. These small brown seeds are full of vitamins and minerals. Buckwheat is gluten-free, lowers blood pressure and slows the ageing process. It is recognised as one of the most healthy and hardy plants. It is also special because it is not affected by many pests and so does not depend on the use of pesticides. If farmers want to double their harvest of buckwheat by increasing fertilisation, the buckwheat yield is lower. Where it grows, the countryside is unpolluted. Buckwheat is ideal

for honey harvesting. The bees that collect it are more resistant and healthier, as are the people who grow it and eat it.

That is why the buckwheat seed is the best symbol of a healthier future and the perfect travel partner for visitors to the Slovenian pavilion.

### WELCOME

Salt, white gold, is part of the Slavic welcome, which is why it will offer a hospitable greeting to visitors on their entry to the Slovenian pavilion.

In Slovenia, we have one of the oldest sea salt pans in the world – the Sečovlje salt pans, where for the last 700 years salt has been produced using the same methods. It is said that if you fight nature, you lose. Slovenian salt workers still continue to respect and work in harmony with the laws of nature. Because of the sustainable method of production, Slovenian salt has a distinctive white colour and is rich in minerals. An exquisite culinary specialty is the salt blossom, whose crystals capture all the flavours of the sea.

Salt plays an important physiological role in our body, which we are not even aware of in our everyday lives. The human body has a biological need for salt and it is a mandatory ingredient in the great majority of foods, frequently even in sweets. Quite often however, we overdo our intake of salt, because we forget that most of the food we eat already naturally contains salt.

Armed with the knowledge of sustainable production and the need for salt, in moderation, in human's life, the visitor is rewarded with their first grain of buckwheat.



Photo: Moshphos

All great empires were built on salt. Armies were armed with the help of salt. Because of salt, armies went to war and uncovered new trade routes. Salt is said to have been the first traded commodity and the first good to be taxed. It helped to shape our civilization. It was once the privilege of kings and high society. Apart from being an addition to food it was, and still is, popular for the elimination and dissuasion of bad energy, fortune and thoughts. Cultures all over the world use salt as a powerful means of purification. With it they prophesied and predicted fate, it played an important role in traditional medicine. Its symbolic power is the embodiment of dedication and loyalty.



Photo: Mospheos

**IN NATURE, EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED**

Slovenian beekeepers also show their respect for nature. A surprising two thirds of our food is indirectly or directly dependent upon the work of bees. They are the most highly sensitive barometer of what is going on in nature. When there are no more bees, there will be no pollination, no plant life, no animals and no humans. Albert Einstein predicted that after the last bee on earth died, mankind would only have four more years to live.

Bees are a wonderful mixture of the wild and domestication. Man has always liked to compare himself to the bee, as being hard-working, persistent, connected to its community. In the Slovenian language we use the saying: not that the bee perishes, but that it dies. We also have the only protected indigenous breed

of bee, the Slovenian grey bee. That is why the bee is the main hero in our tale of the five grains of buckwheat.

Not only because it is important for pollination and the production of food, but also because with bee products we enhance and maintain our health. Will the visitor recognise, through the honeycomb mirrors, its own role in this tale? His reward is the second grain of buckwheat.

**UNDERGROUND ELIXIRS OF HEALTH**

Water is the source of life. At the beginning of our story, salt workers produced salt from sea water, now we continue into Slovenia's mysterious underground world. Even Valvasor, the first scholar to write about our territory, was astounded that so many rivers and waterways were to be found underground in this country. In fact, within

the limits of the depths that can be reached by man, there is 70 times more water underground than on the surface.

The volume of underground water is not only great, but the water is also pure and rich in minerals.

Slovenia is among those countries in Europe boasting the most water. Mineral and thermal waters are the greatest luxury. Radenska and Donat Mg mineral waters have for quite some time been accepted as the exclusive waters of Imperial Vienna and the Papal Household in the Vatican.

Slovenia boasts a number of thermal springs. The thermal waters are not for drinking, but for bathing. Health spa therapies make use of their mechanical and thermal properties. Due to the pressure, which works on those parts of the body that

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The visitor will receive the fifth and final grain of buckwheat when he blows into the horn and symbolically clears away the black carbon or soot from the atmosphere.

A bee's eyes are made up of thousands of tiny lenses, making their world an explosion of colour. For them, man's three-coloured world is a boring shade of grey.



Photo: Mospheos

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



Donat Mg is in fact mineral water with the richest source of magnesium in the world, its average age being 8,000 years.

are submerged, there is an improved fluidity in the internal organs, a draining of the vein and lymph vessels. The thermal action through heat has a positive effect on the whole body.

The visitor receives the third grain of buckwheat on listening to the water's effervescence and becoming more aware of the wisdom of water: "To quench our thirst, both physically and mentally, it is not enough that we have a supply of drinkable water in plastic bottles, but rather spring water must shimmer at its pristine source."

#### HEALTHY MIND IN A HEALTHY BODY

For good health we need to concern ourselves not only with a healthy diet, but also an active lifestyle. The Slovenian countryside offers us a myriad of opportunities to do just that. The varied terrain presents a challenge and inspires all those who desire a healthy mind in a healthy body.

The most popular activities among Slovenians are hiking and cycling. Extremely well marked and maintained walking paths and bicycle tracks, through beautiful natural surroundings, fill sportspeople, families and other lovers of nature with pure energy.

With Slovenia's green energy we also achieve superior results and are, with the number of Olympic medals per capita, among the top countries in the world. The visitor to our pavilion will also be able to reach the top of

Slovenia's highest mountain – Triglav, and with his respect for nature ensure good health, and earn the fourth grain of buckwheat.

#### FORWARD WITH NATURE

Our tale has taken us from the underground world to the highest peak and will come to end among the clouds. With Matevž Lenarčič, the world's top pilot in 2013, and Slovenian company Pipistrel's ultra-light aircraft, the visitor will journey around the world and across the North Pole. Not for the view, but for the results of the project "Adventure for Science": in the blueness of the sky there is more and more blackness!

The visitor will receive the fifth and final grain of buckwheat when he blows into the horn

and symbolically clears away the black carbon or soot from the atmosphere. Following greenhouse gases, black carbon is the second most important contributor to climate changes.

With Slovenian technology, Lenarčič first measured the presence of black carbon at the North Pole, where there are no emissions, but found the concentration of black carbon to be surprisingly high. We want to let visitors know that Slovenia is green, active and healthy, because we respect nature and move forward in harmony with nature. The same applies to the Earth's entire population: people are the ones who pollute and each one of us is responsible to respect nature and to maintain a healthy environment, without which there is no food and no energy for life.

We want to let visitors know that Slovenia is green, active and healthy, because we respect nature and move forward in harmony with nature.

Architectural design of the Slovenian pavilion: SoNo arhitekti d.o.o. SoNo Architects brings together a new generation of Slovenian architects in the creation of modern, high-quality architecture that is emerging as a mix of architectural theory, study and research of locations, innovation, and experimentation with new materials and construction methods. Pavilion construction: Lumar IG d.o.o.



## Tristan and Isolde ballet

# This is the first Slovenian version

The SNG Opera in Balet Ljubljana has conceived a new version of the Tristan and Isolde ballet. The motif of romantic and tragic love, which is believed to be the pivotal motive power of the poetic traditions ever since the Medieval Europe, has lived to see many versions. This is the first Slovenian version.



Photo: Darja Štravs Tris

Leading roles: Isolde: Tjaša Kmetec/Ana Klašnja, Tristan: Lukas Zuschlag/Kenta Jamamoto

Tristan and Isolde is the first ballet performance on the stage of the SNG Opera in Ballet under the leadership of the new artistic director Sanja Neškovič Peršin.

The Celtic legend of Tristan and Isolde inspired numerous artists in the broadest spectrum of their activity – from dramatics, poetry, literature and music to fine arts in the widest sense of the word. The topic treated by the ballet performance, conceived as a comprehensive work of art, is based on the idea of romantic love and the thesis of immortality.

### CONTEMPORARY ORIGINAL MUSIC

The ballet is also extraordinary because it is conceived to the original music by the Slovenian contemporary composer Sašo Kalan with the musical fragments from Richard Wagner's

opera Tristan and Isolde, which was recorded specially for this performance by the Orchestra SNG Opera in Balet Ljubljana. Young choreographer Dan Datcu is responsible for the choreography and Sanja Neškovič Peršin for the concept, Meta Grgurevič worked as set designer in collaboration with JAŠA, Barbara Novakovič Kolenc as dramaturge, Jaka Šimenc as lightning designer, while costumes were made by costumer designer Uroš Belantič, currently residing in Paris. The roles of Isolde and Tristan will be assumed by Tjaša Kmetec and Lukas Zuschlag, who will be substituted in some performances by Ana Klašnja and Kento Jamamoto.

### FRESH ORIGINAL PROJECT

The Tristan and Isolde ballet on the stage of the Ljubljana Opera is an original performance of the Ljubljana Ballet, bringing new excitement and announcing new artistic direction. It is an incredibly interesting and fresh original project with sophisticated choreography conceived to extraordinary music. Tristan and Isolde is the first ballet performance on the stage of the SNG Opera in Balet under the leadership of the new artistic director Sanja Neškovič Peršin. Does this show the new direction of the Ljubljana Ballet?

Photo: SNG Opera and Ballet archive



“Lately, we have been more focused on classic projects, so now we have to realise projects that offer new interpretations and values. I want a diverse programme, a touch of contempo-

rary elements and performances that reflect the time in which we live,” told us Ms Neškovič Peršin, who was a ballet dancer on the stage of the Ljubljana Ballet for 28 years, gaining thus enough experience to recognise all the potential and all the weaknesses of the ballet theatre. “Of course, the classic repertoire remains, but it must be updated with new approaches in terms of set design and directing,” she says.

One of her plans and priorities for the Ljubljana Ballet management is strengthening the creative environment of the ensemble by promoting good teachers, top choreographers, different approaches and creative processes. “My priorities are creativity, passion and challenge. I wish to discover new potential choreographers and enable them to realise new projects. Younger generation must

feel that this is their chance,” says Ms Peršin and adds that it is necessary to establish contacts with the international environment and to create a network of partnerships.

The Ljubljana Ballet Ensemble is not a ballet ensemble of one of the world’s metropolises, so it must “have its own features that will separate it from other similar ensembles in the international environment. It is very important to be ambitious, since only ambition will establish the Ljubljana Ballet as a main ensemble, an explorer and a bringer of new values in the art of dance” concludes Sanja Neškovič Peršin.

This season you are invited to attend other ballet performances in addition to *Tristan and Isolde*. More information is available at [www.opera.si/en](http://www.opera.si/en).

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The SNG Opera in Balet Ljubljana believes that the world on the other side is a glass palace, full of blooming flowers and, simultaneously, the ultimate goal of realisation in the afterlife – a place, where the lovers’ souls meet in the eternity.

Photo: Darja Štravs Tisu





Enjoy Christmas markets, New Years lights, traditional hand-crafted gifts, spicy gingerbread and warm mulled wine.

Enjoy Kranj street's shops, galleries, studios and museums! City glows with Christmas spirit.



This year you have to plan Christmas vacation with family in Slovenia.



For a truly unique take on Christmas celebrations, plan a visit to Piran during the holiday season.



Ljubljana sparkles with Christmas cheer, and the holiday season is easily the most festive time of year to visit this magical city.



Ptuj goes wild for a good Christmas celebration.

## Slovenian Holiday Fare

# Christmas delicious aromas

Did St. Nicholas surprise you with delicious cookies? Or did you set about baking cinnamon stars, honey biscuits and potica yourself? December really is a month infused with delicious aromas which warm the cold and ever-shortening days. Full of expectation and holiday feelings, we gather around the table, laden with festive foods, and raise a toast to the New Year.



Photo: Mosphotos



Photo: Mosiphotos



The first to be cheered by the festive days of December are the children who write letters to St. Nicholas asking him for presents. Once, the good man brought walnuts, hazelnuts, figs, biscuits, carob beans, apples and oranges. Perhaps even something sweeter, such as honey biscuits or gingerbreads depicting St. Nicholas and Krampus (parkelj in Slovene), that were sold at St. Nicholas fairs. Vendors also offered dolls, toy horses and other toys and there was the delicious aroma of cooked sausages, frankfurters, brandy and mulled wine. Nowadays, too, the children eagerly await St. Nicholas and wait for the winter's tale to begin.

#### THE MAGIC OF CHRISTMAS EVE DINNER

Once, the whole Advent period was dedicated to preparations for festivities. People cleaned and decorated their homes, attended early morning service and fasted. Before Christmas they ate low-fat dishes such as bean and potato dishes, porridge and pap. Before Christmas Eve, they often cooked dried fruit, but for Christmas Eve itself, meat dishes were prepared. The table was so laden with good food that there was almost no space left for the glasses!

Traditionally, in Slovenia people ate plentifully on Christmas and

New Year's Day, thus hoping for abundance in the coming year. Often, the festive table was laid with poultry (a cockerel or turkey), but more typical of the Christmas and New Year holidays – also the time of the traditional slaughter of a pig (koline) – is pork (which is believed to bring good luck) – a roast or other pork dish. Once Christmas was considered the beginning of a new year and therefore people, with the help of seasonal food, tried to focus on the future.

In the Primorska region, codfish (polenovka) was served and in Štajerska netted pork (svinjska ribica v mrežici), while in Koroška people feasted with

We will open the book. Its pages are blank. We are going to put words on them ourselves. The book is called Opportunity and its first chapter is New Year's Day.

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Characteristic of Christmas is also Christmas bread, which has many different names: poprtnik or poprtnjak, božičnik, župnik, parjenk, badnjak.

Before Christmas Eve, they often cooked dried fruit, but for Christmas Eve itself, meat dishes were prepared. The table was so laden with good food that there was almost no space left for the glasses!

stuffed roast pork (nabulana prata) and in Bela Krajina they prepared a regional stuffing (fulanka). All the dishes that are suitable for Christmas are also suitable for New Year's Eve. On New Year's Day people ate pork and, among other dishes, at the time of the pig slaughter they made sour broth, which they cooked from pig's trotters, tail and ears and soured with wine.

#### **THE AIR IS INFUSED WITH THE DELICIOUS AROMAS OF POTICA AND CHRISTMAS BREAD**

Most often, the table was laid with potica (its name originates in the word povitica - rolled cake), with various fillings that differed among the Slovenian regions. Even today, potica is the most widespread festive cake, irreplaceable and indispensable on the Christmas menu. The filling was sweetened with honey instead with sugar and composed of walnuts, hazelnuts,

almonds, raisins, poppy seed, cream or even cracklings. In the Gorenjska region, zidana potica, with a whole range of fillings and in the Štajerska region fruit bread (krhljak) were baked, while in Primorska potica was replaced with rolled cheese dumplings (sirovi štruklji) or doughnuts.

Characteristic of Christmas is also fruit bread, which, together with different versions of potica, deserve a special mention. Christmas bread has many different names: poprtnik or poprtnjak, božičnik, župnik, mižnik, pomižnik, stolnik, parjenk, badnjak... In Bela Krajina, in particular in the region between Metlika and Črnomelj, božičnik is decorated with a Christmas crib on the top. Christmas bread was on the festive table from Christmas Eve till Epiphany. Most often, three small rolls were baked - of wheat, buckwheat and rye flour. One was intended for Christmas, one for New Year's Day and one for Epiphany. On each holiday,

the family members each ate one small roll, feeding some to their livestock too. In such a way they symbolically linked all who lived from the farm and expressed their wish for a healthy and prosperous year to come. Even today, Christmas cakes and bread are a part of our tradition, just as are potica and biscuits.

#### **A TIME OF EXPECTATION**

In days gone by, people prepared slowly for the holidays - expectations and festive spirit increased gradually in intensity. Today, with our fast-paced lifestyle, we often forget to stop, calm down, look back on the past year and prepare for the year to come. So let December be a time to spend with our nearest and dearest! By baking biscuits together, enjoying a delicious Christmas dinner, drinking mulled wine at a stall and having a chat with friends, we feel and await the New Year.

Photo: Ukom archive



Photo: Tomo Jesenčnik



### Traditional fruit bread

Ingredients: 250 g coarse grained wheat flour, 100 g sugar, 1 packet baking powder, 1 packet vanilla sugar, 250 g dried plums, 100 g dried apricots, 100 g figs, 100 g raisins, 100 g coarsely chopped walnuts, 100 g chopped chocolate, 2 tablespoons of rum, a pinch of cinnamon, a pinch of cloves.

Preparation: Cook the dried plums in 500 ml of water. Add the cooled water in which the plums were cooked to flour and mix with fruit, cut into small pieces. Add the remaining ingredients to the mixture and mix well. Line a baking tray with baking paper and pour in the mixture. Bake at 170 degree Celsius for 1 hour. Let the baked fruit bread cool and dust it with powdered sugar.



Photo: Ukom archive

Left: Honey biscuits  
Right: Walnut potica

So let December be a time to spend with our nearest and dearest! By baking biscuits together, enjoying a delicious Christmas dinner, drinking mulled wine at a stall and having a chat with friends, we feel and await the New Year.

## Slovenian athlete Miroslav Cerar

# Sport without values is not a true sport

There are not many athletes who have marked Slovenian sport the way Miroslav Cerar has. He played an important role in Slovenian sport – first as an athlete, later as a lawyer, co-founder of the Olympic Committee of Slovenia – Association of Sports Federations (OKS), campaigner for fair play...

### Awards

- 1985 Olympic award –  
L'ordre olympique
- 1999 International  
Gymnastich Hall of  
Fame in Oklahoma  
City (USA)
- 2009 Highest distinction  
award by the State  
– The Golden  
Order for Services  
for significant  
contribution in the  
field of sport and  
outstanding  
achievements in  
gymnastics.



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

He finished his career as a world class athlete in royal style, with the title of World Champion on the pommel horse in front of his home crowd in Ljubljana in 1970.

In gymnastics, where he competed in dodecathlon, his best event being the pommel horse, Cerar collected a total of 30 medals from major competitions, 16 of which were gold (two Olympic Champion titles, four World and ten European Champion titles). He participated in three Olympic Games – Rome in 1960, Tokyo in 1964 and Ciudad de Mexico in 1968. He trained under conditions which from today's point of view seem unbelievable, modest, but he had a strong will and talent. Through sport he learnt the meaning of values and solidarity. He finished his career as a world class athlete in royal style, with the title of World Champion on the pommel horse in front of his home crowd in Ljubljana in 1970. His sports career was followed by a highly successful professional career. Since Miroslav Cerar recently celebrated a personal anniversary, we talked to him about his sports career, fair play and the educational role of sport.

**Your sports career is truly impressive. In recent years you have also been a campaigner for fair play. How do you evaluate values in Slovenian sport?**

We are trying to retain values in sport and there has been an in-

creasing focus on this lately. Sport without values is not a true sport. I am also active in the European and World Fair Play Association, where we are trying very hard to promote these values and are aiming for equality in a wide range of

areas. In Slovenia we are also very active in this area by putting emphasis on sport in general – we do not emphasise success at any cost, but rather support sportsmanship, which is after all, some normal framework of conduct.

We organise different educational programmes at schools and in clubs, some clubs even have their own codes. A lot of emphasis is put on fair play, we promote collegiality and mutual aid. The behaviour of fans also plays an important role in this context and sometimes it has to be regulated a little more radically. The English have found an excellent solution for problems at football fields, the stadiums have become family-friendly and material damage is no longer an issue. Such an attitude seems to be very important from a human point of view in general, not only for sports. Sport is certainly at the very forefront due to results; however, we have to educate the young depending on their maturity. Sport often also has some kind of a healing role as it can greatly contribute to certain life events and one's development. It is also a form of socialisation.

**And what did you receive from your sports career?**

When I was nine or ten I started attending gymnastic workouts at the former Sokol training associations. For me this represented a pleasant gathering with peers during different age periods. A considerable part of the training and work there was also educational, not only sport-related. They gave us a certain discipline and an attitude to work. You know, there is no cheating during a workout; the exercises have to be done correctly. If you don't do them right, you fall, get hurt and so on. The conditions, in which we trained, were so modest that we often had to help each other and so we learnt about solidarity. All of this had an important educational dimension. You had to be disciplined, but at the same time this was also hanging out with peers, not only a desire for results. Indeed there was also eagerness to be able to control your body and master certain skills. It was then of course followed by a result. All of this together taught us a special lesson. To put it simply – you cannot be a cheater and win. You have to do some things in a certain way, if you don't, you simply cannot succeed.

In the gym we also gathered important life experiences, not only strictly sports skills. This was truly a complex collection of

life events, going beyond purely sporting ideals. Moreover, I tend to notice that we used to socialise a lot more, but the times are now quite different, sport is influenced significantly by professionalism. Of course in principle it is certainly important that you enjoy what you are doing.

**Which of your achievements are you especially proud of?**

The Olympic medals are certainly the most prestigious, however, European and World Championships mean a great deal as well. During my competitive career there were so many different medals and successes, I would have difficulty in picking just one as particularly outstanding. I have always tried to do my best. I consider it exceptional if you are able to defend a certain result. I managed to defend the World Champion title several times, as well as the European one, and I also defended the Olympic Champion title. By being more than a one-hit wonder you prove your quality.

**And what do you think contributed most to such success?**

I was most successful on the pommel horse. This was because in the then deficient circumstances I was still able to work out well on this apparatus. I also had talent and I loved to work out. I was encouraged by the progress I was making and then I started to think innovatively about how certain things could be improved. It is also true that I was rapidly becoming better than my older colleagues or previous generations, and that encouraged me. The conditions back then were of course very modest. People from other countries who came to us could not believe the conditions we were training under, and yet still achieving such successes. Success demands: talent and work. Of course attitude is also very important, as it is with all work. And I simply loved to work out.

**In addition to outstanding achievements during your sports career you also completed a law degree and later opened your own law firm. How do you look back on that period today?**

You see, this was also part of the education during training sessions. We were taught not to neglect education or schooling.

Since we did not earn anything from the competitions, we had to prepare for life. During my sports career I studied at the Faculty of Law in Ljubljana and I am very proud that I did not receive any special benefits due to my career as a champion athlete. Some of the professors were not even aware that I was also a champion athlete. I notice however, that the times were much different back then: we helped each other more, there was less egoism, we helped each other with study matters.

But it was not easy, I had to put quite some effort into it. The training sessions were difficult and I was often rather tired. Then I also studied at the Faculty of Sport. After I passed the State Lawyers' Examination, I finished my sports career.

**After finishing your exceptional athletic career you remained active in the field of sports...**

...in between I also had my own law firm and I excluded myself slightly from the sports field, my obligations as a lawyer did not allow for any active participation in sports. After Slovenia gained independence, I was again attracted into the sports environment. I was a founding member of the Olympic Committee of Slovenia – Association of Sports Federations (OKS). Once I finished practising law, I was also a member of the OKS executive board and I performed various functions. Of course I followed sport constantly, but I was not actively engaged in its functioning.

**This year the Slovenian athletes once again achieved exceptional results, especially at the Winter Olympics in Sochi. What in your opinion are the prospects for Slovenian sports?**

We are in general an extremely successful nation with respect to sports results, and this does not apply only to the current year. The results we achieve are truly amazing. I believe that due to our own self-criticism we are not even aware of this fact. Nevertheless, sport is a great way to promote the country, it is very emotional. Besides that, I find it exceptional how many Slovenes take part in recreational sports. It is extraordinary to see all those recreational runners, cyclists... we are truly a sports nation.

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## Slovenia dancing for 60 years

# Slovenian dancers are among the best in the world

“Dance is your pulse, your heartbeat, your breathing. It’s the rhythm of your life. It’s the expression in time and movement, in happiness, joy, sadness and envy.”



Miha Vodičar and Nadiya Bychkova, European and World Ten Dance Vice-Champions in 2013

The Slovene Professional Dance Organization also celebrated the 60th anniversary, where some of the best Slovenian dancers in the world could be admired as well.

With this quote by an unknown author, mag. Drago Šulek, president of the DanceSport Federation of Slovenia, took many participants for a trip down memory lane at the ceremony on the occasion of the federation’s 60th anniversary, after the President of Slovenia Borut Pahor conferred a state decoration on this umbrella dance sport organisation. And who could have done this better than Slovenian dancers, currently among the best in the world in all three disciplines, ballroom and Latin dance, rock ‘n’ roll and modern dance?

In Grand Hotel Union’s large hall, the following dancers earned our admiration: Luca Bussoletti and Tjaša Vulič, Miha Vodičar and Nadiya Bychkova,

Bolero’s adult show dance formation “Birth – miracle of life”, Klemen Pirman and Barbara Šamperl, rock ‘n’ roll formation Brilljantina Teens, Tina Rabič and Franc Pevc and adult R’n’R formation, show dance small group of the Kazina Dance Club with the winning number “Fly me to the moon”, electric boogie dancers Andraž Mrak and Dejan Djurovič from the Miki Domžale Dance Club and SoFly, this year’s best hip-hop formation in the world from ŠKDPS Novo Mesto. A true spectacle was also the demonstration of figure 1 and 3 of the Jenko quadrille with the performance of Mihael Verbič, doyen of the Ljubljana Dance Club and the DanceSport Federation of Slovenia, who was a student and friend of the dance maestro Adolf Jenko. The event’s

host was Domen Valič assisted by 9-year-old Lana Klemen, show dance world champion in the solo female category.

The Slovene Professional Dance Organization also celebrated the 60th anniversary, where some of the best Slovenian dancers in the world could be admired as well.

### ORIGINS BEFORE WORLD WAR II

“The great story and all small stories included in it along our 60-year path were and still are written by thousands of former and today’s dancers and their parents, dance teachers, coaches and officials. These stories were written in dozens of dance schools, associations and clubs that could not survive a period



this long and are still being written in 82 members composing the DanceSport Federation of Slovenia today," said its president Drago Šulek on the occasion of the jubilee.

In Slovenia, the origins of competitive dance go back to the period before World War II when competitors were trained by individual dance teachers, while the conditions for regular and organised operation and pursuit of same goals were created with the foundation of the DanceSport Federation of Slovenia on 13 November 1954. A few days later, a decision was also granted to the Association of Dance Teachers of the People's Republic of Slovenia by the then authorities. First years after the foundation were not easy, as competitors in tailcoats looked like supporters or followers of the bourgeoisie which had been abolished during the war. This is why the number of competitors was very small for a long time

and most of them competed in ballroom dancing. At first, the federation was comprised of only four associations. Their number is twenty times larger today and the dancers also did an excellent job at international competitions bringing numerous awards and medals from European and world championships in the solo, duo or group categories. "Dance is a universal means of communication and a natural response to music and rhythm," emphasised Šulek.

The event was attended by numerous representatives of more than 80 dance clubs and associations operating under the DanceSport Federation of Slovenia. Carlos Freitag, president of the World DanceSport Federation, Michael Wendt, president of the International Dance Organisation, presidents of national dance sport federations from neighbouring countries Austria, Croatia and Italy, Heidi Götz, director of communica-

tions and member of the WDSF presidency, and Slovenians Mirjam Kerpan Izak, president of the World Rock'n'Roll Confederation and member of the WDSF presidency, Fiona Johnson Kocjančič, vice president and sports and competition director of the International Dance Organisation, and Verena Trofenik Šulek, director of the Professional Division and member of the WDSF presidency, also attended the ceremony and expressed their thanks, which proves that Slovenian dancers, coaches and choreographers are successful at an international level. Miroslav Cerar, Olympic champion and icon of Slovenian sport, also participated in the event, while Janez Kocijančič, president of the Olympic Committee of Slovenia, presented the DanceSport Federation of Slovenia with the award of the Olympic Committee of Slovenia – Association of Sports Federations on this occasion.

Slovenian dancers are currently among the best in world.

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# The 2014 Sports Year Is One To Remember



Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

## Outstanding results in Sochi

This year got off to a fantastic start. Slovenia will not soon forget the remarkable results it achieved and the string of medals it took home from the Winter Olympics in Sochi. It was a dream come true. Never before had the Olympic Games seen such a haul of medals go to Slovenian athletes. Skier Tina Maze brought home two gold medals in downhill and giant slalom. Slovenia's snowboarder Žan Košir and ski jumper Peter Prevc each claimed a bronze and a silver; bronze also went to biathlete Teja Gregorin and cross-country skier Vesna Fabjan. The Slovenian national ice hockey team also achieved an excellent result, making its debut in the Olympic men's hockey tournament under the leadership of national team coach Matjaž Kopitar and star player Anže Kopitar.

## Young Slovenian athletes at the Nanjing 2014 Youth Olympic Games

At the second Youth Olympic Games, which were held in Nanjing in China in the second half of August, the Slovenian flag was represented by 48 young athletes. 32 boys and 16 girls competed in athletics, badminton, golf, sailing, judo, kayak, cycling, basketball (3 on 3), archery, swimming, handball, shooting, taekwondo and rowing. The young athletes amazed everybody with their outstanding performances by bagging eight medals.



Photo: Daniel Novaković/STA



Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA



### Basketball World Championship

Even though the outlook for the Slovenian basketball team had been more promising, Slovenia finished 7th in the World Basketball Championship. This was nevertheless an impressive performance from the team under the direction of national head coach Jure Zdovc against the toughest competition in basketball from all over the world. It is also the best result ever achieved by our basketball national team at world cup events. When making its debut in the Basketball World Cup in Japan eight years ago, team Slovenia took 9th place, and it also secured 8th place in Istanbul four years ago.

### NK Maribor in the Champions League

Slovenian national football champion NK Maribor earned its place in the Champions League for the second time in 15 years after a thrilling victory over Celtic in Glasgow. The goal from Marcos Tavares ranked Maribor among the top 32 teams of Europe. Maribor's performance in the Champions League was also outstanding.



Photo: Anže Malovrh/STA



Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

Awards for best athletes of 2014

### **Tina Maze, Peter Prevc, and the national hockey team named best athletes of 2014**

Alpine skier Tina Maze and ski jumper Peter Prevc were named best athletes of the year for the second time running, and the Slovenian men's national ice hockey team was named country's best team. This is Maze's 5th time taking home the award, Prevc's 2nd, and the hockey team's 4th.

The titles of the best athlete of the year are awarded by the Slovenian sports journalists who make up the Slovenian Sports Journalists' Association, therefore the athletes are chosen by the very people who follow their achievements the closest. The two-time Olympic champ Tina Maze received 386 points in the Association's voting, overtaking the biathlete Teja Gregorin (191) and the ski runner Vesna Fabijan (155). Following Prevc, who received 318 points, was LA Kings hockey player Anže Kopitar (196) and in third place the snowboarder Žan Košir (168). The Olympic Games in Sochi also determined the winners in the team category, as the national hockey team, Olympic Games quarter-finalists, got 69 votes, Maribor Football Club 55, and the national basketball team 2 votes.

The athlete Maruša Mišmaš won the first-ever award for the outstanding young athlete, which will become a tradition from now on. The Slovenian Sports Journalists' Association announced the winners at the annual Athlete of the Year event in Gallus Hall at Ljubljana's Cankarjev dom. Janez Kocijančič also received a special recognition as his term at the head of the Slovenian Olympic movement, where he had been since 1991, came to a close.



Let us put a smile on children's faces

**Campaign for collecting toys and supplies for children from socially disadvantaged families**

In cooperation with social work centres and volunteers, the Association for Psychological Counselling Kameleon (Društvo za psihološko sodelovanje Kameleon) carried out a campaign to collect toys, school supplies and sweets to be given to children from socially disadvantaged families for Christmas. In the framework of a humanitarian campaign, which is being carried out for the third time, presents have so far been distributed to more than 2,000 children. In the campaign entitled "Let us put a smile on children's faces", the Kameleon association placed boxes in pre-schools, elementary and secondary schools, faculties and some companies to collect new or well-maintained toys, school supplies and sweets. At the beginning of the humanitarian campaign, the project manager and deputy president of the Kameleon association Anja Goršek told that in 2010, when toys and school supplies were collected for the first time, they intended to donate them to children from Ljubljana and its surrounding area. But people's responses were so positive and so many toys were collected that the campaign was expanded to the entire Slovenia.

Presents, which will be distributed at the closing ceremony on 20 December, are aimed for children from socially disadvantaged families up to the age of 14 years. Anja Goršek said that children who will receive presents are selected with the help of social work centres, schools and pre-schools, and added that they are trying to prepare presents which match children's wishes as closely as possible.

