

# Sinfo 02

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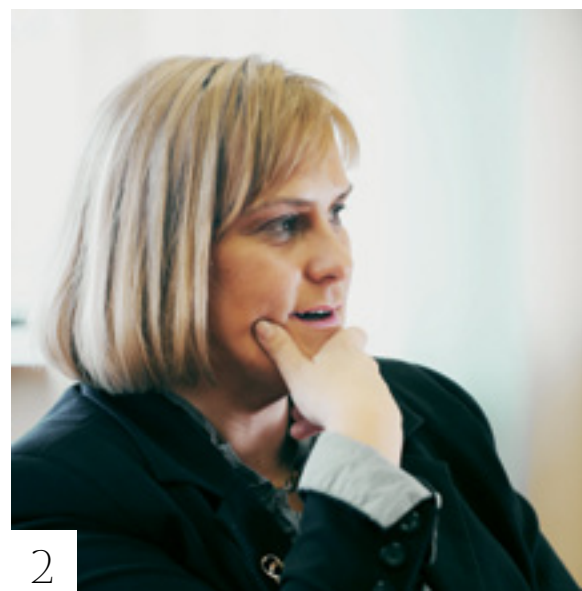
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# editorial



Vesna Žarkovič, Editor

## EXCELLENCE AS AN INSPIRATION AND A VALUE

This issue of Sinfo features our new look. At the turn of the new year, we often decide to make changes which we believe are an improvement, which we hope will lead to excellence. Excellence describes something above average, something worth striving for, especially in times of economic, social, financial and also moral crisis. To be excellent means being open to changes, to new challenges, it means striving for improvement, progress, increased knowledge, better development. Excellence in business is based on guaranteeing competitiveness, says our interviewee this month – Minister of Economics Darja Radić.

In addition to design changes, this year's first issue of Sinfo also features some changes in content: a new column called Before and After will mark the 20th anniversary of Slovenia's independence; the ambassadors' letters will no longer be written solely by career diplomats, but by various contributors; and in order to highlight our increased focus on environmental protection we have added a new column called Green Corner. The cultural and ecological association Smetumet ("TrashArt") teaches us how to turn waste into something useful. By thinking critically and reflecting about the problem of waste and society's attitude towards the environment and their fellow man, they teach others and create themselves through a combination of art, ecology, design and play.

"This year with our slogan "Change the World, Be a Volunteer", we have also joined the European Year of Volunteering – an opportunity and a challenge for all of us to improve ourselves, help others and make the world a better place.

How have photography enthusiasts seen and experienced 20 years of their homeland? Photography fans searched for the answer to this question in a photo competition called Picture Slovenia – 20 Years, which was held by the Government Communication Office in cooperation with the Picture Slovenia portal, which is administered by the Tovarna Institute.

Searching for, presenting and rewarding the special female energy which engenders, inspires and enraptures is the mission of the Slovenian Woman of the Year campaign. May it go to a journalist, a human rights or animal rights campaigner, a doctor, politician, athlete, scientist, world traveller or any woman who has changed the lives of Slovenes through her efforts. This is the Slovenian Woman of the Year – a woman whose sacrifice, dedication, courage, imagination and success have enriched society.

Superstars – the best of the best made a name for themselves in the world of sports as well. They deservedly collected medals and foretold great new successes for Slovenian sport in the future. 2010 was an Olympic year – the Winter Games in Vancouver – and a year of major world championships – in football and basketball. These events also marked Slovenian sport, with the country's athletes achieving results on the highest global level. This year, Slovenian athletes will once again be facing new challenges at the highest global level, and will undoubtedly bring home new medals and demonstrate the meaning of excellence.



Darijan Košir

# Towards a year of stabilisation and the first signs of growth

The start of a new year is always a good moment to assess the economic state and condition in which the country concluded the year that has just ended, or how successfully it has been led by its government; reviews of this kind are particularly welcome at a time of major changes such as those through which Slovenia has passed as a result of the great economic crisis of the last two years.

If we take the most commonly used indicator of the economic activity of an individual country, in other words the growth rate of gross domestic product (GDP), in 2010 Slovenia actually managed to check the worst trends: if it ended 2009 with an 8.1% fall in GDP, according to the latest forecasts GDP growth last year will be around 1% (the most recent forecast from the Institute for Macroeconomic Analysis and Development currently talks about growth of 0.9%, but the estimate is not complete). Expectations for 2012,

a year in which Slovenia will also see parliamentary elections, are however even more optimistic and forecast growth of 2.5%; this would even exceed the estimates for 2012 for the EMU area as a whole (1.5% growth). It is of course true that the biggest influence on these movements comes from increasing Slovenian exports, since domestic demand has not yet gained new momentum; with an increase in domestic demand, the rate of economic growth would be much higher, but after all there is still time for this.

The increasing volume of foreign exports, which generated almost all of last year's economic growth, was truly impressive: real export growth last year was 7%, which in fact is slightly less than average growth in EMU countries (10.7%); an additional positive indicator, however, is the fact that exports grew faster than imports (which 'only' grew by 5.6%), providing Slovenia with a

**To summarise the assessment, we may say that Slovenia ended 2010 very successfully in the economic sense: its economic indicators showed significant improvement compared to 2009 and, even more important, the majority of indicators for 2010 and forecasts for 2011 show Slovenia reaching and exceeding the average for the countries of the European Monetary Union (EMU), in other words the circle of the economically most developed countries of the European Union.**

**The Slovenian Government has thus been able to close the economic accounts for 2010 optimistically: from the statistical point of view, all the economic indicators have turned in a positive direction; their comparison with EU countries indicates a moderately good picture (economic growth, exports, inflation) or even a very good picture (unemployment, budget deficit, public debt); at the same time, the Government has planned a very wide spectrum of not only short-term 'firefighting' measures, but also ongoing and structural reforms.**

trade surplus that made it easier to weather payment difficulties. Forecast growth rates for Slovenian trade in 2011 are not so high but are still exemplary (around 6% and at the level of the European average). Among the set of factors influencing economic growth, we must also mention industrial sector growth: following an incredible 18.9% drop in industrial production in 2009, last year the country was already recording growth as high as 6.6%. In terms of inflation Slovenia ended 2010 on very positive note, with inflation standing at 1.8%, which is slightly higher than the EMU average (1.5%) but not significantly so; a slight rise in inflation, by around half a percent more than last year, is forecast for 2011.

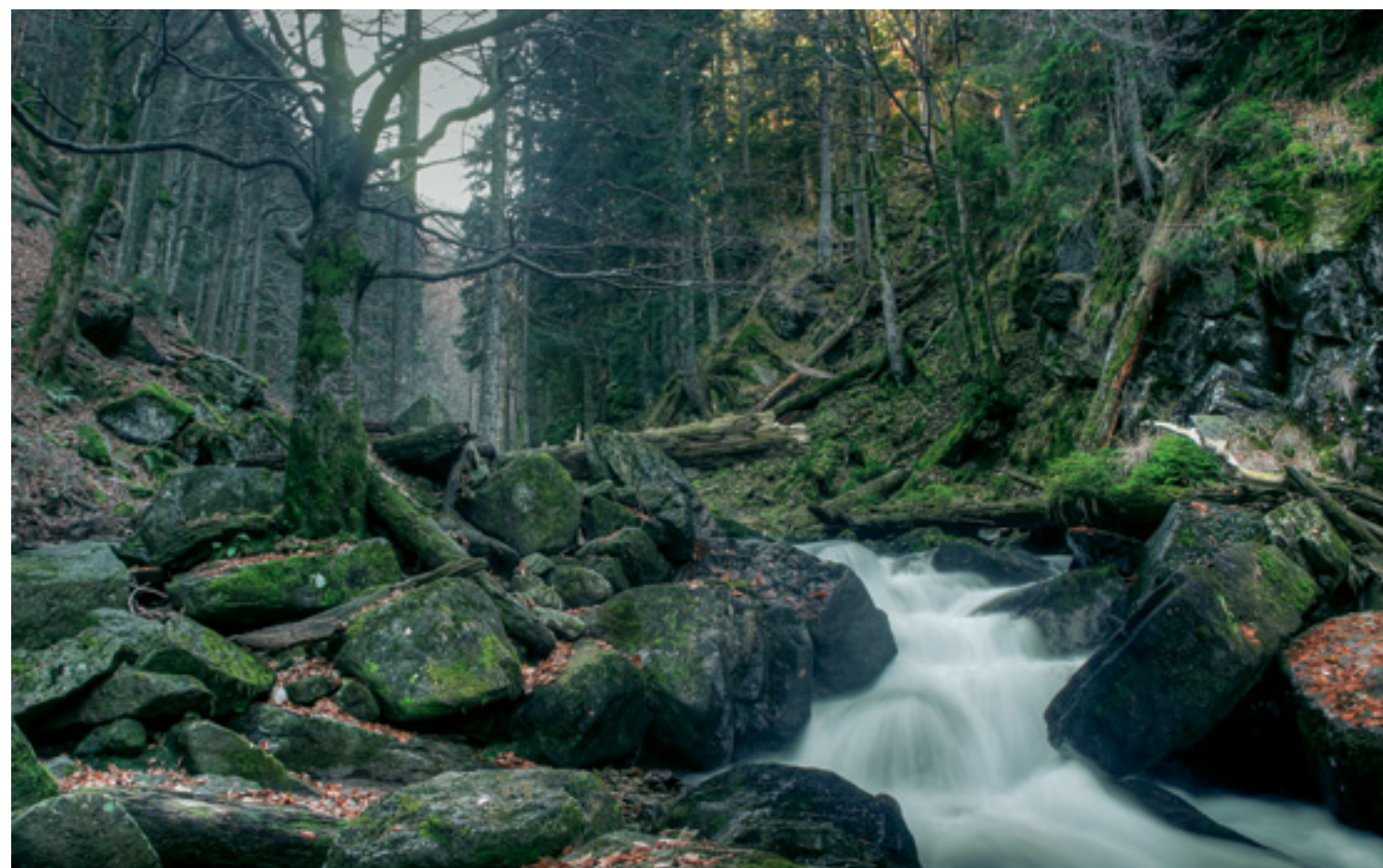
The other set of indicators most frequently used by European countries in recent months to measure the health of their economies are budget deficit (or the overall deficit of the country) as a share of GDP and gross government debt (public debt) as a share of GDP. It must be admitted that in the last two years both figures have increased significantly – just as they have increased in every country in the world that has mitigated the consequences of the economic crisis above all through budget measures, making significant borrowing necessary. At the same time, however, both debt indicators have remained well below the average levels for EMU countries. To put it in figures: Slovenia's budget deficit in 2009 was 5.8% of GDP (and 'only' 1.8% in 2008), while last year (2010) it fell by two tenths of a percent (to 5.6% of GDP), making it more than half a percent lower than the average deficit in EMU countries (6.3% of GDP). Slovenia is even better placed when it comes to comparisons of public debt: although this grew from 22.5 percent of GDP in 2008 to last year's 37.9%, it is still significantly lower than levels of public debt in EMU countries, where in 2010 the average was as high as 84.1% of GDP. With such low debt levels, Slovenia is for the time being on the safe side when it comes to assessment by international markets: last year, as we well remember, these markets attacked and 'conquered' over-indebted countries such as Greece and Ireland, and the two 'sick men' of the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal) are next on the list. Not only that: Slovenia's finances are in such good condition that it was even able to bail out the aforementioned over-indebted countries as a creditor in the consortium of European donor states.

In the last two years the Slovenian government has devoted the highest amount of budget expenditure to easing the social consequences of economic crisis. Funds for social transfers have increased by 44% in comparison with the pre-crisis period. In this way, the state has saved an enormous number of jobs. There are currently around 110,000 unemployed in Slovenia. While this figure is much higher than before the crisis (the figure in December 2008 was just over 66,000), it is still lower than the predicted 140,000 unemployed. According to the internationally comparable survey rate of unemployment, Slovenia was among the most successful EMU countries: with a rate of 7.2%, it was considerably lower than the European average (10.1%). Forecasts for 2011 regarding expected economic growth promise a halt in the growth of unemployment or even a slight reduction; more optimistic forecasts are inappropriate, because some economic sectors – for example the construction industry – have still not been 'purged' with respect to the pre-crisis period and this rehabilitation will cost thousands more jobs.

In terms of ongoing reforms, it has put through 16 of the 27 planned laws from the so-called exit strategy, while at the same time it has already adopted (in parliament) or begun to prepare more far-reaching structural reforms such as pension and healthcare reform which in the future should further radically restrict the growth of government expenditure; every country in Europe has had to undertake similar reforms recently, but Slovenia has adopted them (for the time being) without serious socio-political consequences or even unrest. The latest assessments – not only domestic assessments but also those of foreign economic institutions and ratings agencies – indicate that 2011, while difficult, will be a year of stabilisation, while in 2012/2013 Slovenia will return among the countries with moderate economic growth, later almost reaching the level of growth to which it was accustomed before the 'abnormally' good years of 2007 and 2008. These growth levels, which will exceed 3%, will be the first proof that the worst economic crisis since the Second World War is finally over.

# Slovenia joins in actively with the International Year of Forests

The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2011 to be the “International Year of Forests”.



During the year, under the slogan “forests for people”, targeted activities will be conducted at all levels in Slovenia to strengthen awareness of the importance of sustainable management and the conservation and sustainable development of all types of forest, for the benefit of current and future generations.

On the national level, the job of heading up the national campaigns has been taken on by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, the Slovenian Forest Service, the Slovenian Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry, the Forestry Association and Timber Association at the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce, the Forest Institute of Slovenia

and the Department of Forestry and Renewable Forest Resources at the Biotechnology Faculty.

## Slovenian forests

It is worth noting that forests cover more than 60 percent of Slovenia’s territory, and they are also regarded as a recognisable symbol of the country and a reflection of its attitude to sustainable development, whereby it is attempting to ensure the sustainable and optimal functioning of forests as ecosystems, communities of plants and animals and their habitats and sustainable use and management of resources. The surface area of the forests in Slovenia has been continuously expanding for 130 years now. The trend of change,

however, is not spread equally across the country. The forest area is expanding where there are already large forests in terms of landscape diversity, on the other hand in areas with intensive agriculture and in suburban areas we encounter serious pressure on the forest area, which despite efforts to conserve forests, is gradually leading to a shrinking of the already meagre forest remnants. Nevertheless, Slovenia’s forests are preserved both in terms of their vegetation and their fauna. This is also confirmed by the fact that forests account for a major portion of the 35.5 percent of Slovenian territory included in the European ecological network Natura 2000. In Slovenia there are 11 forest habitat types on the list of

Europe’s endangered habitat types, while 9,630 ha have been declared forest reserves, where forests are left to develop naturally.

In the International Year of Forests we wish to further strengthen public awareness of the importance of forests. Meanwhile we can state that people’s connection to forests, which used to be great because of timber and other material assets they obtained from the forest, is gaining strength again, now chiefly because of the environmental role of forests and the popularity of the forest environment for rest and recreation.

Surveys show that as many as 60 percent of foreign tourists visit Slovenia for its unspoilt nature.

In the national informational and promotional forest campaign, it has set itself the task of raising awareness of the importance of forests, their sustainable management and timber as a raw material, and of motivating and linking government, business and other organisations associated with forests and of reducing the difference between the actual and possible exploitation of forest potentials.

## Effective forest management

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food will continue to cooperate creatively in the efforts of the government and the forestry and timber production industry to create effective forest and timber chains.

## Key messages of the information and promotion campaign

### 1. Forests are important for you, too!

Forests are an important part of our environment and they contribute to the sustainable supply of raw materials, offering work and earnings in the countryside as well as space for rest and recreation and experiencing of nature.

### 2. The products and role of forests provide us all with a high quality of life and a secure future!

As a natural habitat for wild animals and plants, forests contribute to biodiversity, they filter water and air and protect land from erosion. Wood from sustainably managed forests is an indispensable renewable

building material, and a raw material and source of energy that contributes significantly to our supply of raw materials from domestic sources. The importance of forests in the context of global trends such as dealing with the consequences of climate change, the need for sinks for climate-damaging carbon dioxide, the lack of fossil fuels and also the large losses of forest surfaces will be further emphasised.

Slovenia and its forests are part of the global world, so the message about worldwide events and commitments is important.

### 3. Sustainable, multi-purpose and co-natural forest management works hand in hand with nature!

Sustainable, multi-purpose and co-natural qualities represent the highest principles of forest management in Slovenia, embracing economic, environmental and social aspects. This kind of stewardship takes equal account of forest exploitation, nature protection, preserving biodiversity and wider public benefits. It uses natural processes and works in harmony with nature.

### 4. Forest owners, forestry, the state and society are all responsible for forests!

Forest owners and the forestry sector, in other words those who are involved directly with forests, bear special responsibility for forests and appropriate management of them. The responsibility of the state and society stems from the wider conditions for preserving sustainable, multi-purpose and co-natural forest management. These factors set out the role of forests for society and how the various interests in and demands on forests should be coordinated. The responsibility of the state and society is also reflected in the commitment to all forests on Earth. Slovenia is involved in international forest policy in the area of preventing the shrinkage of forests and their degradation, especially in developing countries and in the area of enabling sustainable management.

### 5. You too can do something for forests!

Everyone can contribute something to benefit forests both nearby and throughout Slovenia. By using sustainably obtained wood for house construction and furniture and other sustainable products, each person contributes to the sustainable management of forests and in that way to preservation of the forest’s role. On an entirely general level, there is also the anticipated critical and informed behaviour of



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## FORESTS FOR PEOPLE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FORESTS AT [www.letogozdov.si](http://www.letogozdov.si)

As part of the campaign marking the International Year of Forests 2011, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food has created a special website, [www.letogozdov.si](http://www.letogozdov.si). It is intended to provide information to the general public and forest owners about forests, forestry and events during the Year of Forests that will be organised by partners cooperating in the campaign.

consumers. Targeted demand for environmentally acceptable production of products can contribute markedly to sustainable forms of using soil and forests, including in developing countries and in countries on the threshold of development, whereby forests in other parts of the world also have the prospect of sustainable use and existence. Equally, there is an important contribution from everyone spending time in the forests and respecting the forest ecosystem, the animals and plants living there, the property of forest owners and the interests of all those who go to the forest.

**Responsibility and consideration are based on respect of forests and their functions and roles. This is something we must instil especially in our children and young people.**



# “Volunteer! Make a difference.”

## European Year of Volunteering 2011

**The European Year of Volunteering has now begun, which represents an opportunity and challenge for us all to improve ourselves, help others and change something in our environment. As the campaign slogan says: “Volunteer! Make a difference.”**



### Volunteer-ambassador Barbara Miklič Türk, spouse of the President of Slovenia:

“People should find out about all the interesting things there are to do and how to help the community, others and themselves. I am a committed supporter of volunteers, and with my own eyes I have seen how easy it can be to bring help to people in difficulty. There are so many chances to increase the quality of life, but often we do too little to find them. We can help in different ways, and in so doing enrich our own lives as well as the lives of others.”

Volunteers work across a very wide range of fields – social, sporting, recreation, education, health, culture, environment, tourism and emergencies (e.g. firefighters, rescue volunteers), and many more. Volunteers are male and female, young people and children, middle-aged people and the elderly, in fact anyone can contribute based on their abilities – in principle there are no restrictions. Volunteering is very important to the community, because it supports the interests of individuals and groups that are threatened, deprived, marginalised or excluded and improves the quality of life for individuals in society. Due to industrialisation, the modern organisation of the individual's time, and the de-

creasing significance of family ties, there are more and more individuals who cannot satisfy their own basic or supplementary living requirements and whose care falls to the state or to volunteers. The first societies and volunteer organisations appeared in Slovenian territories in the 19th century. Greater development came at the start of the 20th century. In 1922 scouting movements began, while in post-WW2 Yugoslavia there was massive promotion of youth work brigades. In the 1980s there was a huge flowering of new interest groups that operated primarily on the basis of voluntary work. At the end of the 1980s professionals began to recognise the importance of voluntary work and

started to see it as a form of additional assistance and quality, rather than as a competitor, and able to offer users better forms of assistance.

### Creating a network of voluntary organisations

The beginning of the 1990s saw the founding of Slovenian Philanthropy – Association for the Promotion of Volunteering, a society whose basic mission is to develop and promote voluntary work in Slovenia at the national level. Wide-ranging cooperation also led to the creation of the Slovenian Network of Voluntary Organisations, which today covers over 650 voluntary organisations. Its internet presence is centred on the site: [www.prostovoljstvo.org](http://www.prostovoljstvo.org).

Slovenia today has over 20,000 registered societies, all of which feature some form of voluntary work. Research by the Slovenian Social Research Institute has illustrated the breadth of the voluntary sector. In 2004 volunteers did 1.3 million hours of work in Slovenian non-governmental organisations. This is equivalent to the work of 7,125 full-time employees. According to 2009 research by Slovenian Philanthropy which covered over 2,500 voluntary organisations, in 2008 there were 183,025 active volunteers, who carried out 14,694,588 hours of voluntary work.

### Making a difference

The Council of the European Union proclaimed 2011 as Eu-

ropean Year of Volunteering, a year to promote active citizenship. This affirmed the efforts of European and national voluntary centres and networks, including Slovenian organisations, to ensure that the European Union acknowledged the importance of voluntary work and became more committed to ensuring its development. The campaign slogan in English is “Volunteer! Make a difference” (the Slovenian slogan means literally: Be a volunteer, change the world!). Preparations for the European Year of Volunteering were underway throughout 2010. A national coordinating committee was appointed, comprising representatives of ministries and agencies as well as five representatives of NGOs. It is led by the Ministry of Public Administration. Slovenia's national objectives for this year

are focused on the regulation of voluntary work, informing the public about voluntary work – especially people in public administration and in businesses, promoting voluntary work and support for voluntary work mentors and organisers.

### A year of challenges and opportunities

The European Year of Volunteering will incorporate numerous events, which all ministries and public agencies, local communities and NGOs have been invited to contribute to. Forums, panel discussions, workshops and conferences will take place in various local and regional centres. They will offer chances for networking, exchanging ideas and promoting voluntary work, as well as being an opportunity to welcome new volunteers to the ranks. The large response,

mainly from NGOs, of groups wanting to actively participate in the year, has led to the creation of an events calendar, which is available on the Ministry of Public Administration website. The largest profile events in the first half of the year include the Day for Change (Dan za spremembe) organised by Slovenian Philanthropy and other voluntary organisations, which will take place on 26 March. A wide range of voluntary activities will be taking place that day all over Slovenia, aimed at offering assistance to marginalised people as well as community actions to improve the environment. At the end of May Ljubljana will be visited by the European Year of Volunteering Tour. At the same time as the tour visit, presentations of voluntary organisations will take place in 20 towns around Slovenia and three confer-

ences will also be arranged: to promote corporate volunteering, including civil servants in voluntary work, and promoting youth voluntary work. The final event, to be organised in December 2011, will present the year's achievements and guidelines developed during the year on how to promote voluntary work in future. A major event for Slovenian voluntary organisations will come this year with the Voluntary Work Act, which represents a turning point in the organisation of voluntary work and introduces government incentives for increasing its development. We would like to invite you to join in with voluntary actions for the 2011 European Year of Volunteering and be one of the volunteers making a difference.

As well as establishing a favourable environment for voluntary work in the European Union and strengthening the powers of voluntary work organisers to increase quality, the objectives of the European Year of Volunteering also included gaining recognition for voluntary work and strengthening awareness of its benefits and significance.



The European Year represents a major opportunity to show how important volunteering is and to increase volunteer numbers. These ambassadors for the European Year of Volunteering will be mak-

ing a major contribution to this work: Boštjan Klun, Anton Koren, Petra Matos, Anica Mikuš Kos, Darko Nikolovski, Vlasta Nüssdorfer, Magdalena Strmšek, Barbara Miklič Türk and Živa Vadnov.



### Lucia Villa Sanchez, a 27-year old volunteer from Spain,

Day for Change, she helped renovated a social room in the asylum centre, and also helped organise the Migrant Film Festival. She was most enthusiastic about work with asylum seekers, which gave her the chance to get to know people from all over the world.



“The main objective is to increase competitiveness, and excellence in business is the basic guarantee of competitiveness”

# Darja Radić

**Minister of the Economy Darja Radić, who succeeded Matej Lahovnik as minister six months ago, is satisfied with the work of the ministry over the present Government's two-year term. Increasing competitiveness remains the main objective, but she stresses that the effects of the measures are not yet visible as the majority of the projects are still underway.**

**Mrs Radić, you head the ministry which is unquestionably subject to the heaviest amount of criticism during these difficult economic times. How do you feel in this role?**

It isn't easy, but we are trying to do our jobs as well as we can. I think that the biggest problem is that we spend the majority of our time putting out fires instead of implementing real systemic solutions; the numerous companies that come to the state for help have to be dealt with. And then there is energy, which is a very difficult and extensive field and which could as such demand broader support in view of what is currently happening and what we are expecting in future.

**Are you thinking about a separate independent ministry which would deal exclusively with energy?**

If there's no other way, then that could be a solution. The fact is that we are facing several challenges in the energy field. We have to figure out how to build the sixth block at the Šoštanj power plant. This is a project worth EUR 1.2 billion, which does not have too much public support. And then there is the idea of building a second block at the nuclear power plant, which will require a public debate and will have to be thoroughly thought out; all of these are very difficult issues which require attention 24 hours a day. Not to mention the construction of the South Stream gas pipeline. Activities in connection with the pipeline are increasing... only large projects, which require special attention.

On the other hand we have companies which have got into

trouble and are expecting assistance from the state. In this connection we are searching for ways that we could assist them, especially those companies where there are a lot of jobs and in which bankruptcy could be a major problem. The fact is that the fix for the economy lies in the development of systemic measures (particularly in competitiveness policy) through which we will be able to create a better business climate, in which domestic companies will find it easier to do business and which will also be more competitive for foreign companies so that they invest in Slovenia.

**What conditions do you plan to create in order to help companies succeed?**

The main objective is to increase the competitiveness of the business environment, in which the measures of the other ministries are crucial. We are facing a series of challenges in this regard. After the onset of the crisis, the Ministry focused mainly on assisting healthy companies which were prepared to invest in development and new products during the crisis. In two years we have supported 3500 company projects through development incentives worth over EUR 500 million. The results of these incentives are not yet known, as the majority of the projects are still underway, but they will certainly make it easier for those companies to survive on the market after the crisis has ended.

The Ministry of the Economy is currently developing a new competitiveness policy. The key highlights are increased secure transparency on the labour market, the introduc-

tion of restrictions on the payment of social contributions (a social services spending cap) and the removal of administrative barriers. The flexibility of the labour market follows the change in the Employment Relations Act, and through a change in tax policy we could reduce the tax burden on labour costs, which enjoys support among employers as they see an opportunity for providing better bonuses for development personnel. These are the people who contribute the most to added value, and this would also help stem the brain drain. Foreign investors are very much in favour of this measure. Implementing the social spending cap and/or tax relief would increase the country's appeal for foreign investors and for their establishing development departments in Slovenia.

**What are you mainly hearing from foreign investors?**

That they are most bothered by corruption, which we are truly not proud of, and just after that the disburdening of the salaries of development personnel. They actually praise the rest of the work conditions, especially the excellent environment, good standard of living, they say that working in Slovenia is nice, that the environment is sufficiently creative... All of this is in line with the vision that I have in mind regarding the direction that Slovenia should take.

**What direction should it take?**

It should move towards developing an economy that creates high added value. We should never tell the world that we are a country with a cheap workforce. All of the branches of the economy have the capacity to create high added value. This is created through innovation, creativity and knowledge, which Slovenia has in abundance; only in my opinion we don't know how to take sufficient advantage of it. It makes sense to support the branches where Slovenia already has knowledge and competence. And there are many such fields.

**You also mentioned the removal of administrative barriers as a priority for further development. The situation is improving, but not fast enough...**

yes, that's true, removing obstacles is extremely important for improving the business environment and increased competitiveness, but none of these priorities lies directly within the competence of our ministry, so the work will be difficult. The measures will have to be implemented by other ministries. I myself am not focused so much on rescuing companies in crisis, but on the healthy part of the economy, which is developing new products through know-how. The main objective of stimulating entrepreneurship and competitiveness is increasing the number of high-quality jobs. It bothers me when people say that we are using the measures solely to create new jobs which only pay the minimum wage. It is important that they are high-quality jobs which generate high added value and give the workers a suitable standard of living. These are our long-term goals, which cannot be achieved in two years, but it is important to begin implementing them as soon as possible.

**Among other things, the Ministry of the Economy intends to continue to provide development incentives; what kinds?**

I am expecting the greatest results from the call for tenders for the designing of development centres for the Slovenian economy, which was held on 15 November of last year and which will put EUR 185 million at our disposal. We received 42 tenders, of which 11 were complete. The applicants' projects are worth a total of EUR 967 million, of which they expect EUR 385 million from the state. Despite the fact that we have only half that amount at our disposal, we will be able to support the best development centres throughout the country.



We are also successfully supporting small and medium sized enterprises through grants, loan guarantees and subsidised interest rates. We will also support company development and growth in future through refundable sources of financing. Last year we also introduced a risk capital instrument and signed agreements with six risk capital companies. We hope that we

will soon obtain the first promising company projects that we will finance through these funds. We have EUR 30 million at our disposal.

**What fate will be suffered by weak companies that are facing bankruptcy right now?**

The economy works in such a way that companies which are in an inescapable position have to die in order to make room

for new, healthier companies. There are currently more weak companies than new ones, and these disparities are creating headaches. It is difficult for the state to shoulder the burden of poor business decisions in the past. It makes more sense to support healthy companies. But you can't just ignore the weak ones, since that means losing jobs. We have to deal with this, but if there is no way

out, it is better to go into bankruptcy immediately, and this is also better for the employees. Letting companies die slowly only prolongs the agony.

**What are the plans in connection with the National Energy Programme?**

In December the National Energy Programme was not yet under public scrutiny, since we would first like to obtain a detailed review of the project of the sixth block at the Šoštanj power plant (TEŠ 6) as well as the results of various studies, including one on coal reserves at the Velenje coal mine which Holding Slovenske Elektrarne (HSE) commissioned with foreign contractors.

These studies will be finished by 15 February. The ministry will decide which projects will become a part of the National Energy Programme on the basis of these studies and also by studying other alternatives at TEŠ – renovating blocks 4 and 5 instead of building a sixth block, or building a 350-megawatt block instead of the currently proposed 600-megawatt block. It is also possible that the “undisputed” parts of the energy programme will enter public discussion first, and investments such as TEŠ 6 will be debated separately.

**According to Renault's Vice-President of Sales and Marketing Jerome Stoll, Renault will be investing in Slovenia in the coming years. What sort of new project will this be?**

Renault will be investing in Slovenia in the coming years. We are negotiating a new Renault project in Slovenia. The decision will be made soon, and the planned date of implementation of the project is the end of 2013 or the beginning of 2014. We do not yet have any figures on the amount of the investment in Revoz, but it will undoubtedly be a large figure, as they are planning to introduce a new car model. This is one of the largest investments in Slovenia, which will also require the assistance of the Slovenian Government, whom

they expect to cover 10 per cent of the investment. We are in principle prepared to support this project.

At the recent fifth summit on the Slovenian economy, Prime Minister Borut Pahor stated that conditions in the Slovenian economy are improving, but more slowly than hoped for, and he called for more responsible behaviour on the part of both the Government and the business community. He particularly emphasised the problems of the construction sector, lack of payment discipline, bureaucracy and drawing on European funds.

At the beginning of our term I was very optimistic and I was sure that with a little bit of good will we could improve the procedures for obtaining funds. Unfortunately I have to admit that we have been quite unsuccessful in this area. The procedures are very demanding, no less so than those within the state administration. We have attempted to simplify the procedures, but not yet effectively enough. It will be difficult to do much more to simplify the procedures before the end of 2013. Our experiences will serve as a good lesson on how not to implement the cohesion policy in the future.

**The forecasts are saying that the Slovenian economy should recover as early as this year, although more slowly than the most dynamic part of the EU. How is the recovery going?**

Exports and manufacturing are increasing, we have got through the worst of it, and there will definitely be economic growth this year, but we are still facing the worrisome trend of increasing bankruptcies of companies that have managed to hold on so far; the real wave of bankruptcies is still coming. We have to be prepared for this, we can't let ourselves be surprised by increased unemployment, and despite this we have to work with new companies that will be able to create new, high-quality jobs. This is much better than if the state were involved in rescu-

ing weak companies. We do have a programme for rescuing companies that are in trouble, but we have a highly selective attitude towards distributing funds. Companies have to come to us for help when they are still stable, when they have a market, good products and services; our focus is on healthy companies.

**The economy is expressing interest in opening new diplomatic and consular offices in the Arab world. What kinds of cooperation do you expect on that market? And how is the expansion of the Slovenian economy on the Russian market going?**

The internationalisation pro-

gramme that the Government adopted last year is an important document through which the state hopes to contribute to a more successful appearance on foreign markets. The fact is that our companies have to become more international, since the Slovenian market is too small for them. We are developing an action plan to stimulate internationalisation.

We have formed a working group with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which includes representatives of all of the stakeholders involved. The intention of the plan is to define the priorities for implementing the programme, from target markets, target activities, who will implement individual

activities etc. One of the possible target markets is the Arab world, which we assess as very promising. Russia and the other countries of the former Soviet Union are also interesting. There is a great deal of work around the world, but our companies will have to start making connections within consortiums if they want to compete on the global market. I see an opportunity here even for small construction companies, in fact I see this as a promising opportunity for the future. Doing business abroad of course depends greatly on the competitiveness of our companies' bids. Only the best will succeed on the global market.





## Will Slovenia's growth outpace pre-crisis levels by 2013?

At the beginning of 2011 the Slovenian economy was posting approximately one-per cent growth, which is primarily the result of increased exports, as domestic spending continues to fall. In 2010 Slovenia recorded an inflation rate of 1.9 per cent and more than 110 thousand unemployed. The Parliament adopted a pension reform package and the so-called Part-Time Employment Act, but both will probably have to endure trial by referendum.

Among other things, reforms of health care and the labour market were also supposed to be passed in 2010. However, all of these are reforms that will not receive a great deal of support among the Slovenian general public, especially when increasing numbers of companies are experiencing liquidity problems, and they are forecasting that the unemployment rate will increase again this year; nobody knows where this figure will end. Company failures, particularly in construction, as well as difficulties for numerous other companies, which are attempting to resolve their situations mainly by letting go of employees, are creating problems for both the pension and health care budgets, as numerous payers of these contributions are showing up unemployed at the Employment Agency.

Meanwhile, credit analysts Dun & Bradstreet have announced that Slovenia could reach pre-crisis growth levels as early as 2013, i.e. in two years. The forecasts from the Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development don't go quite as

far, but they do forecast 2.5-per cent economic growth for 2011 and 3.1-per cent for 2012. The European Commission is slightly more reserved with regard to forecasts about Slovenia's short-term economic growth. Slovenian forecasters expect conditions in construction to begin to improve in 2012, although this improvement can be expected to look quite different from the way it was at the beginning of the crisis, as some companies are already undergoing bankruptcy proceedings and others are facing compulsory composition. The Government has adopted various measures to support the construction industry, including assistance in the sale of unsold apartments, as well as in doing business abroad.

Various professionals, economists and others have voiced their opinions recently on the arrangement or improvement of various economic issues. Dr Franjo Štiblar has taken the position that the most important Slovenian banks should remain in Slovenian hands, while the smaller banks could form a new banking pillar, with a shared assets structure



Dr Franjo Štiblar of the Faculty of Law.



Dr Marjan Senjur of the Faculty of Economics in Ljubljana.

similar to that of Slovenia's largest bank, NLB. In support of such thinking, Štiblar cites the Slovenian and European assistance provided to Greece and Ireland so that they would not have to sell their banks, but criticised the Slovenian Government for wanting to do just that. Dr Marjan Senjur of the Faculty of Economics in Ljubljana and a former economics minister has advised the finance minister and the Government to limit the public debt and budget deficits. He says that it would be possible for the annual expenditures to amount to approximately 43 per cent of GDP; the first step would be to achieve a normal target deficit at the level of one per cent of the GDP, but in the long term it would have to tend towards a balanced budget. According to Senjur, the propor-

tion of the public debt should amount to at most 40 to 50 per cent of the GDP, which would be below the Maastricht level of 60 per cent. Slovenia is a small and open country, said Dr Senjur, and therefore it is all the more important for it not to be heavily indebted, as this would also affect the costs of financing.

A group of young economists would like to reset Slovenia, since in their opinion problems have stacked up during the crisis period which are causing Slovenia to progress slower than it could. The Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology has developed a strategy called Bold Slovenia, and, as Prime Minister Borut Pahor pointed out at the Innovations Forum, Slovenia's only raw material is its own intelligence, and the better ad-



Ivo Boscarol, Managing Director of Pipistrel company.

vantage Slovenia takes of it the more competitive it will be in global terms.

**One of the companies that does so is the Pipistrel company of Ajdovščina, which was named Most Innovative European Company in 2010 for its ultralight aircraft.**

Its Managing Director Ivo Boscarol advocates a better and faster transition of researchers into the business world. A group of entrepreneurs alerted the Government of the difficulties in employing engineers in business. Boscarol also said that it is extremely important to encourage students in the natural sciences and technical disciplines to seek employment in the business world.

According to data from the Bank of Slovenia, the total value of Slovenian foreign investment is EUR 5.5 billion. The great majority of Slovenia's export investments are in the countries of former Yugoslavia. These investments grew steadily from 2004 to 2008, and fell for the first time in 2009. The same is likely also true for 2010, although no detailed information is available yet. For certain companies, such as Mercator, Intereuropa, Krka and Gorenje, revenues from these investments already account for a large part

of their groups' revenues. In the case of Mercator, which has shown interest in acquiring various Tuš shopping centres in the Balkans, this trend could increase. The greatest share of Slovenian investments goes to the countries of former Yugoslavia, with Serbia and Croatia



in the top spots, followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia, and in fifth place is Russia, where Slovenian companies had EUR 314 million in direct investments at the end of 2009. In comparison, Slovenia had EUR 1.6 billion in direct investments in Serbia, and over a billion in Croatia.

When Slovenia achieved the status of Cooperating State with the European Space Agency at the beginning of last year, it was said that this would allow for improved cooperation of Slovenian industrial and research organisations in several of the Agency's programs. At the end of last year, Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology Gregor Golobič and Director of Legal Affairs and International Relations Peter Hulsroy signed an agreement on financing ten projects that the Agency selected among Slovenian proposals. 58 proposals were sent in by institutions, companies and individuals in response to a public call for proposals, and although Slovenia is not a major player in space technology, some of them are already working with the Agency. European Space Agency officials selected the highest number of projects, for which the ESA has earmarked EUR 2.3 million, from the Jožef Stefan Institute and the University of Ljubljana, as well as some from the universities of Maribor and Nova Gorica.

Slovenia also has nearly EUR 2.2 billion worth of approved projects financed by European Cohesion Policy funds for 2007 - 2010. Over one billion euros for these projects has been paid out of the state budget, ranking Slovenia among the most successful countries in terms of drawing on EU funds.

Ten projects were successful in a public call for applications for obtaining funds from the European Regional Development Fund for the promotion of tourism, which were used mainly in 2010 and also for the preparation of tourism promotion in 2011.

Up to the middle of January the Surveying and Mapping

Authority was still accepting amendments to the framework calculation of the value of private property. The real estate census that they had carried out previously is intended to be used as the basis for the property tax which is planned to be introduced in 2012 and should among other things replace the current municipal lands fee.

In January, by linking several different databases, the Slovenian Statistical Office for the first time conducted a so-called register census of the population. In future all censuses are planned to be register censuses, which means that individual canvassers will no longer have to go door to door to take population censuses. Slovenia's records are even expected to be a model for European Member States. Several different censuses have been carried out in the last few years, so the data are still fresh. The question is whether they will still be as fresh in 10 or 20 years.

**Slovenia switched from analogue to digital television broadcasting in December 2010. The analogue transmitters had been in operation for several decades, some as much as over 50 years.**

Slovenia is in 80th place out of 213 countries in terms of numbers of users of the largest social network, Facebook. According to the Facebookers website there are over 617 thousand Facebook users in Slovenia, which is 31 per cent of the population. Most of the users are between 18 and 34 years of age. Slovenian mobile networks were used by more than two million users last year, therefore by those who had and used several mobile telephones. There are still more than eight hundred thousand addresses with fixed telephone connections, while broadband internet access was provided through 483 thousand connections.



Polona Prešeren, Hana Souček Morača, photo: Iztok Dimc

# Slovenian Woman of the Year

## A Victory for Female Success!

It may be a journalist, human rights activist or animal rights activist, a doctor, politician, sportswoman, global traveller or just a woman whose efforts have left their mark on the lives of her fellow Slovenians. That is the Slovenian woman of the year.



There are not many awards in Slovenia with such a long tradition, great reputation and wide recognition as the Slovenian Woman of the Year Award. It is a special award for special women, who frequently go unobserved and all too often under-appreciated. This year it goes to a woman whose sacrifice, commitment, courage, imagination and success enriched our society, as selected by the readers of Jana, the leading Slovenian family magazine.

Women have now reached positions in society that they deserve, yet compared to men they are still all too often marginalised or even overlooked. "Sadly in many areas, women remain ignored, and are still not completely equal. If we manage to give exceptional women at least a moment of satisfaction about their work, courage and bravery, then we can be very proud," says Melita Berzelak, editor-in-chief of Jana, speaking of the award's

importance. The Slovenian Woman of the Year Award has become an institution, with readers this year selecting our 23rd winner.

This year's Slovenian Woman of the Year is the cross-country skier, Petra Majdič. She was nominated, according to Jana writers, for "her heroic race with five broken ribs, which was the most dramatic story of the Olympic Games in Vancouver, Canada. Petra has a heart greater than any of the problems she faced, and her message truly helped increase

optimism in Slovenia." The other nominees alongside Petra Majdič this year were the musician Severa Gjurin, Petra Matos, the organiser of the largest volunteer event in the country, Clean Up Slovenia in a Day, Marinka Cempre Turk, a volunteer firewoman of many years, Mateja Kožuh Novak, president of the Union of Pensioner Societies, Maja Lupša, retired Jana journalist and campaigner for the rights of homosexuals, and Tanja Babnik, class teacher at the medical school within the Soča Rehabilitation Institute in Ljubljana.

## WHO IS THE SLOVENIAN WOMAN OF THE YEAR?

Let's look back at how it all started. The idea to select an exceptional woman for recognition came from the Jana editor of the time, the legendary Bernarda Jeklin, herself an extraordinary woman, who certainly does not give up easily. "I wanted to immediately make this into a national event. At that time women only had a high profile in a few areas and in a few more visible positions, so I wanted to push things along," remembers Bernarda.

Preparations for the first Slovenian Woman of the Year Award began at Jana at the end of September 1988. At the time they wrote that they wanted the selection of the best of the best and the crème de la crème to become a matter in which all of Slovenia was involved. The editorial board received numerous proposals for Slovenian woman who might

deserve the title, and drew up a short-list of 12 exceptional women. The selection was difficult, but eventually a convincing victory was recorded by Mojca Drčar Murko, then journalist at Teleks and candidate in spring for president of the Slovenian presidency, which was still then part of federal Yugoslavia. Her achievements, recorded for posterity, remain worthy of recall: her consistent honesty and focus on freedom and the defence of the human right to diversity. She herself remembers those days as turbulent and most interesting, a time in which Slovenia was making great strides towards independence.

However, Bernarda Jeklin considers that the choice of Slovenian Woman of the Year has been separate from political events in the country, saying:



**"The Slovenian Woman of the Year functions to promote female potential, and was an award that was expressly female, but neither social nor political."**

## THE READERS' CHOICE

For each award there is a dilemma about who should decide on the winner and how, in order to ensure the award is relevant and fair. Although some larger media houses abroad make selections in-house, the decision was made to open the decision up to the public, and the staff have never tried to influence the readers' decision. Bernarda Jeklin remembers that she did not always agree with the readers' choice, and that it really pained her when Dubravka Tomšič Srebotnjak, one of the biggest names in Slovenian music, missed out on the title by four votes. But that was the people's choice.

The voting today still requires readers to send their voting slips from the magazine into the editorial board. These are carefully stored and available for checking at any time, in case any criticisms or claims about the process should be made. Many claims have indeed been made, often politically-motivated, hence the desire to steer the awards well clear of politics. It is true that sportswomen often have more media coverage and hence a higher profile.



The recipient of the Slovenian Woman of the Year award has always been a closely guarded secret at the *Jana* magazine, so well kept that until the last minute only the editor-in-chief or head editor are actually aware of the winner. That is one reason the evening the winner is announced has been the subject of so much excitement and anticipation, and the event so well attended. This year's event was also broadcast on national television, which

in the words of the editor-in-chief Melita Berzelak gave all *Jana*'s readers who send their votes in to the magazine and select the Slovenian woman of the year the opportunity to watch the event and also enjoy a peek behind the scenes. Of course, the award ceremony is also the major social event of January, which is something they do not want to change at *Jana*. They will continue to pursue their positive message and 'quota of good news'.



## Who has held the Slovenian woman of the year title?

### **Mojca Drčar Murko (1988)**

Journalist at Teleks and candidate for president of the Slovenian presidency.

### **Viktorija Potočnik (1989)**

Known in the 1980s as an advocate for human rights and civil forms of national service, she became Slovenian Woman of the Year due to her struggle within the then republic parliament.

### **Ljerka Bizilj (1990)**

Journalist and editor of very popular TV shows and a former parliamentary deputy.

### **Tanja Starič (1991)**

A journalist who reported on the main political events of the day. She saw her victory over 14 very high profile women from all over Slovenia as recognition for the work of journalists.

### **Vida Jeraj-Hribar (1992)**

Then 91-years of age, this violinist, proud European and writer, artists, author of

*Večerna sonata* (The Evening Sonnet), which revived memories of her days in Vienna, Paris and Ljubljana.

### **Vida Žabot (1993)**

This nun was a symbol of harmony, inner beauty, purity, serenity, pride and freedom in the battle for the Slovenian language that even brought her into opposition with the church. She later left her convent and started to live out her vocation in another way.

### **Mila Kačič (1994)**

Actor, former member of the opera choir, member of Ljubljanska Drama, and an established author who had also won awards abroad for four collections of poetry.

### **Metka Klevišar (1995)**

An oncologist, who in 1995 founded the Slovenian Hospice Association together with her colleagues, a not-for-profit organisation that serves terminally-ill peo-

ple and their loved ones, and works to get rid of taboos surrounding death and introduce a changed attitude to dying to Slovenian society.

### **Brigita Bukovec (1996)**

Winner of a silver medal in the Olympic Games in Atlanta, an athlete who set national records in the 100 m hurdles, 60 m hurdles and 50 m hurdles.

### **Irena Polanec (1997)**

An artist well established abroad, with a distinctive style whose paintings adorn the walls of globally famous celebrities.

### **Emilija Baranja (1998)**

A self-sacrificing mother and carer for two children with cerebral palsy.

### **Milena Močivnik (1999)**

A dog lover, who took in dogs from people who had grown tired of their pets and looked after them, rather than looking the other way and getting on with her life.

### **Alma M. Sedlar,**

**Jana's deputy editor-in-chief**

"The Slovenian Woman of the Year is still the most prestigious award for truly special and deserving women, whose acts and achievements, who they are and what they do, have changed the world and all of us for the better. What the *Jana* Slovenian Woman of the Year award means to Slovenia can be best seen by the fact that all the winners as well as all the nominees over the past 23 years have found that the recognition has stayed with them for many years, and therefore represents a very special honour and award for all of them."

### **Bernarda Jeklin,**

**former editor of *Jana* and creator of the Slovenian Woman of the Year Award:**

"On the editorial board we always tried to select good candidates. From the start of the award, the candidates were the most important, and have always been successful woman, each with their own exceptional and special story. They are an example of female success. And the candidates have always given a sense of what it means to be a Slovenian woman."



### **Marija Zakušek (2000)**

A foster mother to 43 foster-children, none of them hers, but who for many was the only and for all of them the best mum in the world.

### **Vlasta Jeseničnik (2001)**

The then Moscow correspondent for RTV Slovenija won the readers affection for her reports from the war in Afghanistan, and who dedicated the award to the women of Afghanistan who she said still did not have the right to live their lives as they want.

### **Štefka Kučan (2002)**

The spouse of the then outgoing Slovenian president and the first "first lady" of Slovenia, who set the standard for any woman who might take her place alongside the "father of the nation."

### **Benka Pulko (2003)**

The world traveller Benka Pulko, who circled the globe by motorbike. Over five and

a half years she became the first woman to travel across all seven continents by motorbike and gained three Guinness world records.

### **Irena Grafenuer (2004)**

A world-famous flautist who openly announced her terminal illness in order to convince as many Slovenes as possible to become organ donors and hopefully save the lives of others.

### **Mojca Senčar (2005)**

The doctor and president of Europa Donna, the Slovenian association to fight breast cancer, which she personally battled against herself.

### **Metka Zorc (2006)**

A cardiologist who readers chose because of the numerous patients she treated and helped.

### **Lilijana Kornhauser Cerar (2007)**

The head of the intensive care unit for

new-born babies at the Ljubljana maternity hospital.

### **Neža Maurer (2008)**

Slavist, poet, writer, journalist, editor and teacher. Her poems captured people's imaginations.

### **Katarina Kresal (2009)**

Politician and minister for the interior, who decisively defended the rights of people denied residence and worked to establish the position of same-sex couples and the reputation of women who find the courage to follow their own path.

### **Petra Majdič (2010)**

Cross-country skier who in a heroic race with five broken ribs wrote the most dramatic story of the Olympic Games in Vancouver, Canada. She returned home with a historic bronze medal and – despite her injuries – a smile on her face.



José Gabriel Ferreira Cruz, Philosopher and translator

## Comrade, schnapps and unconquered Triglav Slovenia – where “the heck” is that?

My first visit to Slovenia took place 17 years ago. When I returned to Portugal, my friends gave me the new nickname of “comrade”. Even though I had continually explained to them that this was no longer Yugoslavia, that Tito had died some time ago and together with him the good old days of socialism, that Slovenia was now an independent, democratic country of barely two million people, and no longer part of a conglomeration of six republics and two autonomous regions. But my friends paid little attention to my explanation. Their take was that I was a guy with a lot of friends in Yugoslavia, so I was a comrade and that was that.

### SLOVENIA

Through all the years of coming and going and getting to know it, my love of Slovenia grew and blossomed, like any love at first sight. Among the loves I found in Slovenia are the mountains and snow. My first contact with snow, which we only ever get in Portugal as an afterthought, and then only on our highest mountain – Serra da Estrela – was icy and wet. Since I wanted to make an impression on my friends, they rapidly convinced me that I would easily master skiing, so I first stood on skis at the Soriška planina ski resort. Watching the other people, it seemed as easy as pie, but sadly only up until the moment when I tried myself, and found out that there was a lot of speed involved and I had no idea how I was even going to stop. After a few hours, when I had mastered the plough – knees bent – I was as tired as if I had just done a full Tina Maze training session. But persistence paid off, and nowadays I enjoy the white slopes, whether it involves skiing, tobogganing or ice hockey, and I am hoping to master the discipline of the valiant Petra Majdič in the coming years.

Slovenia is an exceptionally clean country, and I find that inspiring. Since I live in the capital city, I hardly need a car, and I can live ecologically and get around by bicycle, since the city is well organised for cyclists. We can only dream about that in Portugal. Instead of cycle paths, in Portugal they are just building expensive motorways. That chaotic urban planning of course has little in common with ecology, and the cities have no parks, with individual trees even hard to find. Meanwhile, in Slovenia even the bigger cities have a park almost around every corner, and if not a park, at least some green space.

Slovenian cars are newer models. The typical Portuguese car is somewhat older, “bruised” on all four corners, and the local roads are in a terrible state, although in Slovenia, too, you tend to say “new road, and they’re already mending it”. And in the south of Portugal, in Alentejo, people say that they don’t even mend them, but just colour in the holes. On the other hand, it seems to me funny and sometimes a little illogical that Slovenians make such a “big deal” of their cars. It’s important for you to have a good make, you take great care of them and protect them from the slightest scratch, and you polish and clean them after each trip on a dirt road. At least that is what I observe outside my apartment building.

The first time I was on the Pokljuka plateau, I felt drunk from the beauty of the mighty spruces and other tree species. Well alright, perhaps not just from that, but also from the “medicinal” beverage – šnops (schnapps) as they call it in Slovenia, which is always close at hand in the hills. Most of all I am continually surprised that to date I still have not tried all the versions of that fortifying drink, since the Slovenians do to speak make their šnops from just about anything that grows.



Photo: Marea Jordović Potocnik

In general I find the rich tree cover in Slovenia absolutely enchanting, especially in the autumn, when everything is so vividly coloured. Sadly we do not have such colourfulness in Portugal. For comparison, in Portugal for the most part they plant eucalyptus, mainly because they grow extremely quickly and they can keep being cut down in great quantities, producing paper, which is a big national business for Portugal. But we may ask ourselves, would it not be a bigger “business” for the state to preserve healthy land and thereby also the ecological future of coming generations. Or perhaps we may blame it on the saying expressed by the famous Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa: The Portuguese are in their essence cosmopolitan.

In any event my love of Slovenia is not confined just to the above, for my wife Barbara reminds me of it every day.

### PAINFUL BUREAUCRACY, THE SLOVENIAN LANGUAGE AND FAILED JOB SEEKING

After I mastered my first sentence in Slovenian 17 years ago, a sentence I practiced to make an impression on Barbara’s grandmother – Potica je dobra (the potica cake is good) – I imagined that learning Slovenian would be a whole lot easier than it really is. The problem is that everyone in Slovenia speaks excellent English, so you get rather spoiled, since you can see that there is no problem communicating. Fortunately every foreigner in Slovenia has the chance of taking a Slovenian course, something I immediately signed up for when I came here to stay permanently two years ago. I was motivated by the fact that I made rapid progress, and the turning point in my language learning came when I fell into the hands of a teacher whose husband was also a foreigner. With her experience she led us into the world of spoken Slovenian, and suddenly I started making up correct sentences, acquiring a vocabulary and conversing exclusively in Slovenian.

But it became clear that not everything was so fine when I started getting my papers in order for the marriage and permanent residence, and looking for work. The bureaucracy left a bitter taste that I am still having to deal with today. They send you from one office to another, and the whole thing is a vicious circle. Thankfully things have been a little easier since getting married, and I am nevertheless happy – and for me this is the important thing – that I now live in Slovenia, which has become my country. Unfortunately it will only be after three years that I gain political and citizen’s rights, which come with new citizenship. Since the very first day I have continuously hoped that finding a job would not be so tough. After all, Portugal is a Member State of the European Union, just like Slovenia, and free movement in the labour market between our two countries is in place. Equally, I am highly educated, with more than 11 years of work experience, fluent knowledge of four world languages and a large measure of goodwill and motivation. In deciding to come to Slovenia for good, I realised I would probably have to go a step or two lower and get stuck into some kind of work that was different from what I was used to. Nevertheless it has been difficult so far, mainly because of my initial lack of Slovenian, but I remain an eternal optimist, and I believe that I will soon get a job that will please me and satisfy me.

The Slovenian saying goes that whoever has not been up Triglav is not a true Slovenian. No doubt this is the crux of the matter, so I resolved to deal with all my outstanding problems in one fell swoop, and I am now training intensively to climb Slovenia’s highest peak.



Branko Gradišnik, Writer and translator

## The Portuguese national character

Yesterday we celebrated New Year in Lisbon. In Ljubljana I imagined that it would be like some kind of Brazilian carnival.

The first big surprise was the complete absence of any pyrotechnics – I first noticed the unfathomable silence around St. Nicholas Day.

The Portuguese are experienced dynamiters, I reassured myself, when there was still nothing going off with a bang around Christmas. Just think how many bombs they had hurled in political assassinations! Surely there was no doubting the sayings that whoever went bang last, went bang the sweetest!

Even though by New Year’s Eve no one had chucked even a single banger, I concluded that for a change our dog should sleep in with us. I anticipated that, at least at midnight, if not before, all hell would be let loose. After all, this is the country where the firefighters are called Bombeiros!

At quarter to midnight we took the dog to do his business. The streets were calm, and just here and there we saw groups of people walking quietly towards the two nearby Miradours (viewing points). The impression was a little like Christmas Eve under Tito. We hurried back into our house and then peeped through the shutters – but there were no fireworks. Or rather, I noticed one feeble attempt, but it was so paltry that in Ljubljana even the smallest local community would have disowned it. As if someone had sprinkled some uncut chestnuts into a brazier and here and there some cinder popped into the air. There was no sense at all of being caught in the middle of a war, which is the feeling you get in Ljubljana.

César – Bernarda’s driver, who is a veritable sage – explained to me that “throwing firecrackers never caught on – probably because of the Lisbon fire of 1752, which razed whatever was left after the earthquake”. Fear of fire, no less! So that’s the answer!

But wait!

A forensic inspection of the Miradour revealed that there were no shards of glass on the ground! I found bottles neatly placed in the rubbish bin, and a few more were set among the pine roots, where they offered no inducement to be kicked. I did in truth count seven shredded plastic cups; so the worst hell-raisers obviously vented themselves by stomping on empty cups. (Unless they doused some discarded cigarette end and then to be extra safe, stamped on it along with the cup?) At this point I remembered that on 25 November, the day after our arrival, we did not notice that there was a general strike going on in the city. Nowhere were there any unionists noisily expressing their disagreement with the government’s belt-tightening policy, let alone any delinquents overturning full rubbish bins or police cars or, heaven forbid, throwing firecrackers.

It was then that it first occurred to me that perhaps the Portuguese were – submissive?

César affirmed this for me. “Yes we are humble and restrained and peaceful. For the most part we protest only with our feet.”

“You stamp your feet? Aren’t you worried about causing an earthquake?”

This teasing did not put him off his stride. “We don’t stamp our feet – we move away. In the past two years more than 200,000 of us have moved away.”

I stopped to think. “Weren’t you an imperial superpower in the 15th and 16th centuries? Wasn’t it you who first sailed around Africa, discovered Brazil, Formosa and Cipangu, and circumnavigated the globe?”

Surely you need to be bold to do that.”

“Ah, senhor, but that is exactly where the difference lies. You, who historically have until recently appeared merely like ears of corn blowing in the wind, you still harbour the illusion of how wonderful it is to be the wind, while we, who were once the reapers, know that such heroics don’t pay off. In fact we have been everything in our history: conquistadors, slave traders, gold-diggers and plantation owners, as well as subjugated, once by the Moors, then by the Spanish and finally by the French. We had everything: kings, a bourgeois republic, Salazar’s dictatorship and after it collectivism and socialism, and finally we had the restoration of capitalism, free enterprise and EU subsidies, which went on motorways, so the financiers can get to our beaches more easily. And now we have a recession. All the lives, our own and other people’s, which were taken by history, were just like chaff. It’s when you grasp this that you see the essence of our saudades, our nostalgia. When you realise this, all you can try to do is not hurt anyone close to you.”

I was astonished at this philosophy, and there and then I vowed to put it into practice myself, but then I recalled the smashed window on the Toyota and the stolen Nüvi (the official name for the Garmin GPS system). So I asked him how his assessment squared with this painful incident, which cost me 400 euros and four hours of my time.

“Oh, senhor Branco, that was not done by a Portuguese person.”

“How do you know?”

“Don’t you remember how the next day the automatic door of your communal garage was smashed in? Your thief obviously ordered the Nüvi to go home, without first changing the address! It just blindly followed his order and of course he ran into the door!”

“And?”

“We can conclude from this that he was too stupid to be Portuguese!”

This was of course a generalisation – but isn’t any report on your impressions of a foreign country a generalisation, like it or not?

So since César and I are the same, I agree with him.



Photo: Tomaz Bertić

Polona Prešeren, photo: STA

# Picture Slovenia

## photo competition – 20 years on

**The exceptional quality of the photographs being amassed by amateur photographers is demonstrated by the photo competition organised by the Slovenian Government Communication Office together with the web portal Picture Slovenia, or rather the Zavod Tovarna (Factory) public institute, which manages the portal. Between 5 October and 15 December, photography enthusiasts could load onto the portal their photos of Slovenia, and thereby show everyone how they saw and experienced 20 years of their homeland. On 23 December, exactly 20 years after the plebiscite in which we opted for independence, the jury made its decision on the competition winners.**

“We would like to involve as many people as possible in the series of events marking the 20th anniversary of this country, which has barely got going with this photo competition, and this goes especially for young people, so they can feel that this is their celebration, too. Each person sees Slovenia in their own way, and has experienced its twentieth anniversary in their own way”, said Darijan Košir, director of the Communication Office.

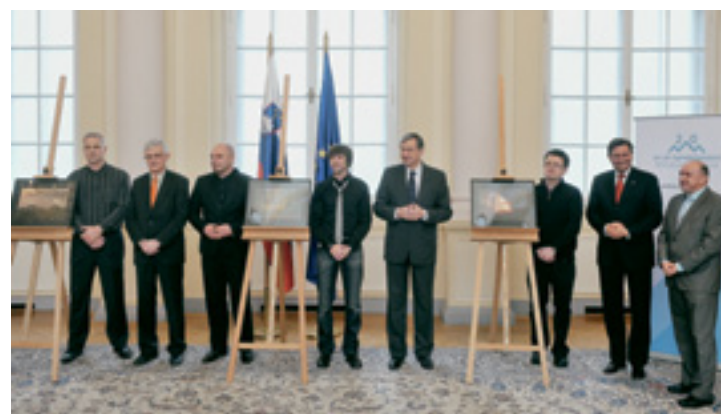
The photo competition organiser, Primož Žižek of Zavod Tovarna, added that the mission of Picture Slovenia is in fact as a sociable project “aimed at promoting Slovenia by means of photography, which can convey more than words alone”. Experience to date with the Picture Slovenia project and its past competitions has shown that there are as many as 100,000 individuals in Slovenia involved as amateurs or professionally in photography.

**The photo competition saw the participation of 970 Slovenian amateur and professional photographers, who registered a total of 2,800 works.**

Meanwhile the web portal recorded 160,000 visitors from 57 countries, most of them from Slovenia, Germany, Serbia, the USA, Canada, Luxembourg and the UK.

The committee, composed of the established Slovenian photographers Arne Hodalič, Tomo Jeseničnik and Borut Peterlin, along with Primož Žižek on behalf of the Picture Slovenia portal and Polona Prešeren for the Communication Office, awarded the first prize for the photograph entitled Fishermen (Ribiča) by Robert Kruh. Second prize went to the photo Last Rays (Zadnji žarki) by Darko Brenko, with third prize going to Jani Novak for his photo The Cutter (Rezalec).

“The great response, the number of works registered and the quality of the photos sent in for the competition have inspired us with confidence that the competition was held in the right way. The responses of those taking part have been very positive. I am also certain that the committee performed its work very well and truly selected the best photographs”, said Primož Žižek on behalf of the competition organiser, the portal Picture Slovenia. In all, the committee selected and awarded 50 works, which are all, together of course with all the registered works, available for viewing on the web portal [www.pictureslovenia.si](http://www.pictureslovenia.si).



1. Fishermen. Photo: Robert Kruh
2. Last Rays. Photo: Dare Brenko
3. The Cutter. Photo: Jani Novak

“This kind of response to the competition and the quality of the photographs show that Slovenians are aware of the beauty of their homeland, and they are able to appreciate it and feel it”, added Darijan Košir, who together with those who took the three top photographs, presented them as gifts at the beginning of January to Slovenian President Dr Danilo Türk, President of the National Assembly Dr Pavel Gantar and Prime Minister Borut Pahor. The prize-winning photographs thrilled all three recipients.

The photographers who won the three top prizes are in fact all amateurs who have honed their hobby to perfection. Each one used their lens to portray the exceptional quality of Slovenia. Jani Novak photographed his Cutter at very high temperatures in the Acroni factory in Jesenice. Darko Brenko, a lover of nature, captured the final rays of the sun on the hilltop of Bukov vrh in the Poljanska dolina valley, which enchanted him with its natural beauty so close to the capital city. Novo mesto native Robert Kruh, who took the first-prize photograph, used his camera to capture the River Krka at Otočec, and a fisherman at work. He told the local newspaper Dolenjski list that “seeing my photograph in first place is fantastic, and proof that I am working well. My model is what my eyes see, and no one or anything else. I would like to be unique.” The fact that his photographs are unique has been borne out by the photo he submitted.





Jože Osterman, photo: Boris Šuligoj

## Tartini's violin heard once again

In the municipality and town of Piran, which often bears the suffix Tartini's town, people in recent years have gained a revived awareness of the importance of linking a town's identity as much as possible to the personality of an artist who worked there. There are several such towns in Slovenia: For Kranj we all think of Prešeren, and it seems perfectly natural to speak of Trdina's Novo mesto and Linhart's Radovljica, and we could find more examples. In today's age of shallow generalisations, the value of a special identity is growing, since this is often a source of pride amongst residents and a means of generally identifying a place. So the years of efforts by Piran's cultural circles, which are now enjoying a greater response from the municipal authorities in seeing the need to exploit as much as possible the legacy of the great Tartini, seem both logical and rational.

Piran's most important resident, Giuseppe Tartini, the composer and violinist who was born in 1692 and died in 1770 in Padua, where he is also buried, does indeed lend Piran at first glance a recognisable stamp. In the main Tartini Square, in front of the composer's birth house, an imposing Renaissance palace, stands a large monument constructed by the townsfolk to mark the 200th anniversary of his birth and unveiled in 1896. Standing on a high plinth is a life-size bronze sculpture of the master, and the monument is the work of Venetian sculptor Antonio dal Zotta. The birth house contains a memorial Tartini Collection, managed by the Piran Maritime Museum, and it would be easy enough to arrange and enhance this, one of the most precious museum collections in Slovenia. The collection includes Tartini's violin, the property of the great master and an outstanding exhibit, which the people of Piran now want to promote as one of the cult items of Piran's history.

What is certain about the violin is that it was Tartini's property and the maestro also played it, for a special certificate attests to this, and it is between 300 and 400 years old. What seems harder to establish is its origin, or who actually made it. The period in which Tartini lived is characterised as being the particular time when violins of the highest quality were being made, and today they are regarded as matchless. The violins made by such families as the Amati, Guarneri and of course Stradivarius, forming the very pinnacle of the outstanding production of this musical instrument, now represent a value which, expressed in monetary terms, reaches sky-high. A Stradivarius made in 1709, for instance, was sold in 2005 for approximately 4 million euros! The kind of promotion that such instruments could provide can be seen in the experience of Unicredit Bank, which es-

tablished one of the major collections of old instruments – including some violins of famous Italian makers – which it loans out only to the most distinguished musicians, thereby promoting its name in the very best way. Something that might interest Slovenians is that the Italians selected the wood for the tops of their violin bodies on the Gorenjska uplands of Jelovica and Pokljuka, where the spruces are sufficiently compact for the best sounds to be coaxed from them.

**No one is certain whether Tartini's violin originates in such circles, but there are some indications of it. There is considerable certainty that the violin was made by Nicola Amati, with a record in the body of the violin stating that it came from a workshop in Bologna. The certificate from Cremona, made up in 1937 by Italian experts and now kept in the Piran Museum, provides incontrovertible evidence that the violin was indeed the property of Tartini.**

In any case, what is beyond debate is that this is an instrument of great value, lent particular significance by Tartini's personality. Over the centuries the violin was not treated to the most appropriate care; it spent the Second World War, for instance, holed up in the staircase of a municipal building in damp and highly variable climatic conditions. Some say that the later restoration and storage were not optimal, either, although it was restored by the top experts of Slovenia and Hungary, and its location in one of the showcases of Piran's Tartini Collection, where humidity and temperature are not controlled, has its problems, too. The worst thing for it, apparently, is that no one has played it, and this can be a major problem for a violin, which is a "living musical organism".

The keeper of the collection, curator Duška Žitko, and director of Piran's Maona Tourist Agency, Polona Senčar, take the credit for organising a special concert in Piran on the day after Christmas, in which Žiga Faganel, a member of the Slovenian Philharmonic orchestra and one of the top Slovenian violinists, played Tartini's sonata in G minor, Dido Abandoned, on the priceless antique. Faganel also assessed the condition of this exceptional instrument, and determined that some of the previous restoration work was indeed perhaps not optimal, but it can all be put right. He stressed that the top two strings produce a very noble sound, while the sound of the lower strings is somewhat "closed", which is perhaps a consequence of inappropriate storage, since the violin was placed in a showcase with taught strings. As for the future, however, Faganel is optimistic. The violin will need to be restored further, while he himself and his associate, also a music teacher, will work to maintain the regular "fitness" of this wonderful instrument through regular playing.

Hana Souček Morača, photo: Damjan Švarc

## The Sever awards

The Sever Award is a Slovenian theatre prize awarded by the Stane Sever Fund, set up in memory of the legendary Slovenian theatre and film actor. Stane Sever was born in Ljubljana in 1914. Soon after his arrival at Ljubljana's Drama Theatre he became one of the leading actors of this theatre, remaining loyal to it right up until 1968. He also appeared in numerous films, among them Na svoji zemlji (On Our Own Land), Vesna, Ne čakaj na maj (Don't Whimper), Samorastniki (Wild Growth) and Srečno, Kekec (Mountain of Fear). From 1950 onwards he was an honorary lecturer in stage acting and art of speech at the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television in Ljubljana. In 1966 he was appointed associate professor. He won many domestic and international awards for his work as an actor, among them two Prešeren Awards.

Sever Awards for acting achievements in professional and amateur theatres and student work have been awarded since 1970. The awards ceremony always takes place in Škofja Loka, where Stane Sever gave the premiere performance of his final theatrical work, a monodrama based on Dostoevsky's A Gentle Creature. The actor is also commemorated every year at Ribnica na Pohorju, where he died on 18 December 1970. In 2011 the people of Škofja Loka will mark the 40th anniversary of the awards with a special commemorative anthology. This year's Sever Awards for the finest achievements in the field of Slovenian stage acting in 2010 went to Nataša Matjašec Rošker and Renato Jenček.

Of the actresses nominated for the award in the professional category, it was Nataša Matjašec Rošker, a member of the company at Drama SNG Maribor, who most convinced the expert jury with her performances in Vili Ravnjak's Travelling to Rome (Caravaggio) (as Miss Phyllis), Alexander Pushkin's The Tale of Tsar Saltan, Patrick Marber's Closer (as Anna) and Dominik Smole's Antigone (as Ismene). In the award citation the commission noted that Nataša Matjašec Rošker created sensitive, nuanced but above all full-blooded characters with many different layers that do not offer the audience answers but instead pose them questions.



This is the second Sever Award for Matjašec Rošker, who previously won the student acting award for her role as The Old Croaker in John Arden's Live Like Pigs, which was her graduation performance. As the actress explained in an interview, winning an award is a great pleasure but at the same frightening, because it means that even more attention is focused on her. You cannot simply win an award, you also have to be able to carry it, justify it and improve it, she believes.

Renato Jenček from the Ljudsko Gledališče (People's Theatre) in Celje won over the jury with his performances as Brendan in the first Slovenian production of Bridget O'Connor's black comedy The Flags, as the Prosecutor in the first Slovenian production of David Mamet's courtroom comedy Romance, and as Willy Loman in Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman. Jenček explains that all his roles are dear to him. 'I really enjoy comic roles because you get the energy of the audience, but I am equally fond of dramatic roles.' Jenček says that after 25 years as an actor, the Sever Award will have a special place in his life.

The recipient of the 2010 Sever Award for lifetime achievement in amateur theatre was Mira Rebernik Žižek of the Jože Kaučič Cultural Association in Ljutomer. Mira Rebernik Žižek began acting at a young age and fans of amateur theatre have seen her in an enormous variety of roles, with all of which she has been able to identify down to the last detail, effectively becoming another person.

This year's Sever Award for drama students went to Žiga Udir for his performance as Segismundo in Pedro Calderón de la Barca's Life is a Dream. In the award citation the expert jury noted, among other things, that the young actor had transcended the usual frameworks of study and, with a complete creation, combined elements of his exploration of his own inner self with the image of the character he portrayed.



Hana Souček Morača, photo: Domen Grögl

## Urban identity

The cities we live in have an important influence on our lives and on the way in which we establish relationships with our immediate environment, how we are shaped by space and culture, and how we picture our future. These last conceptions are never static. This is proved by Ljubljana and many other dynamic cities, since they are living organisms in a process of constant change, just like the reality and expectations of the people who live in them.

The Zalog district of Ljubljana is home to a new young generation who have their roots in the diverse and rich mixture of cultural backgrounds of the countries of the former Yugoslavia, a fact which has contributed to the development of Zalog's unique urban identity, with its own urban venues and urban perspectives. The Zalograd project has seen a group of artists, architects and social researchers begin to study the urban space from the point of view of young people and confront the following questions: What is their relationship to the city? What is important for them in the city? What is the fu-

ture of Zalog? Does 'more urban' also mean a worse quality of life? This group of researchers and artists are exploring ways to create a series of new urban venues that will meet the needs of young people in the future. In these venues, young people can for the first time take the initiative to construct a part of their own city – Zalograd – which is the basis for the creation of a manual on the understanding of urban spaces. This will be one of the results of cooperation within the context of a broader project, Public City, initiated by STEALTH. unlimited, designed by Ana Džokić and Marc Neelen and cultural association C3 in conjunction with the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana and with the support of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia and the Netherlands Embassy in Ljubljana.

The Public City project is a new initiative that reveals the attitude of citizens of Ljubljana towards their own city and will enable insight into the way in which new generations of citizens experience and interact with 'their' Ljubljana.

The architect, critic and town planner Boštjan Bugarič, who explores his views of spatial management through architectural and research projects and has been realising them for a number of years through

C3, explains that the concept of the Zalograd project is an interdisciplinary one. To begin with, theoretical research took place in selected locations for one year. The following year filmmakers and photographers joined the anthropologists and architects already involved in the project. Reflecting the fact that the project is aimed at several different target audiences, the results will be presented in different environments. The first location chosen was the Museum of Modern Art, where the results of the project were discussed in an art and architecture context. Later on the works will be transferred to the everyday environment of the locations where they will be realised.

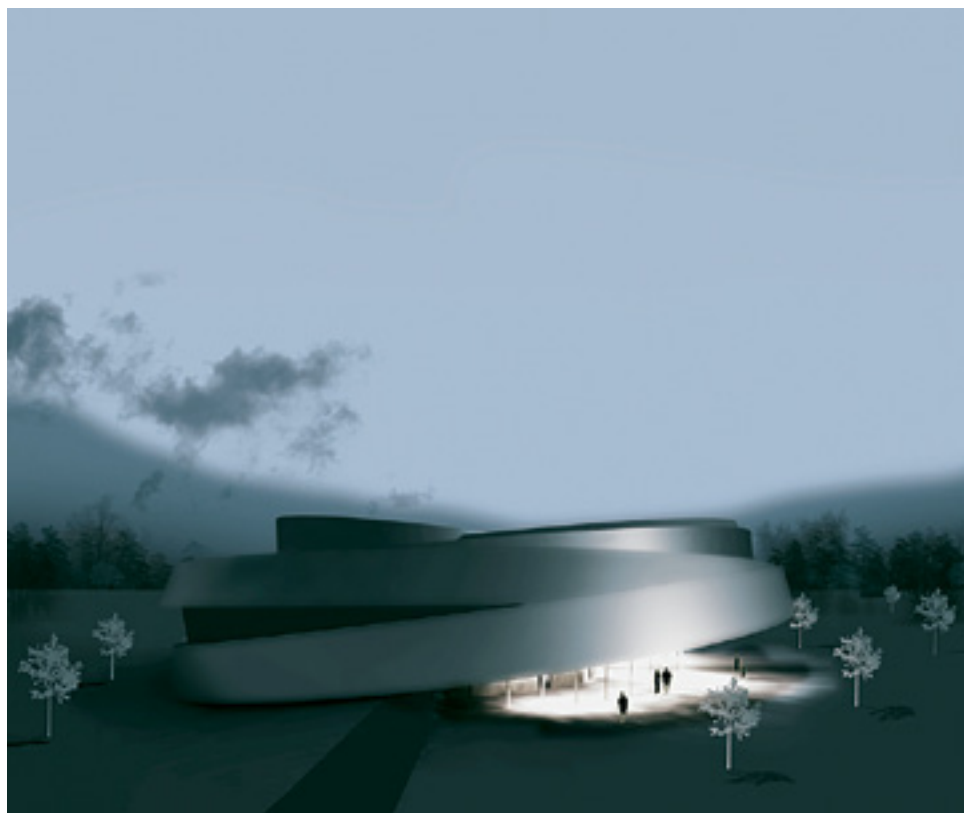
As Bugarič points out, the primary goal of the project is to raise public awareness about urban issues. The Public City project is an international project dealing with young people and their rights to space and opportunities within it. When designing the project it was established, following brief research, that its district youth centres make Ljubljana particularly suitable for a case study.

'Simultaneously with this project, parallel projects are taking place in cities such as Belgrade, Brussels and Vienna. Experiences from

Ljubljana will thus trigger a series of future collaborations and the implementation of similar projects in these cities.' Project participants will exchange experiences and results with colleagues from the other cities and in this way strengthen the structure of the project.

In recent decades the concept of belonging to a city has changed intensively. With the Public City project, attention is directed towards the youngest generation of citizens currently reaching adulthood in Ljubljana. 'The young generations allow us an insight into the way in which the city they live in has influenced them.'

As Bugarič has pointed out, motivation among adolescents to take part in the project was initially low, but now the collaboration is highly reciprocal. For example, the architectural design for the renovation of the sports field, where recycled materials will be used to build the stands and roofing, is being prepared in collaboration with youngsters from the Zalog District Youth Centre and Zalog Primary School.



Blaž Šef, photo: KSEVT archive

## The Culturalisation of Space

On 12 April 2011 we will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the first human spaceflight. At 09.07 Moscow time on that day in 1961, the military pilot Yuri Gagarin left the Baykonur launch site in the spacecraft Vostok 1 and went into orbit of the earth. At the moment he achieved a height of 50km, the Earth gained a new profession that no previous century had known – cosmonaut.

Over the five decades since then there have been numerous flights into space by a whole series of cosmonauts, astronauts and taikonauts. There has already been over 500 spacemen and women, working in a wide range of human professions, but so far no professional artist has ever left the earth's surface and travelled into actual outer space on an artistic mission.

This is one reason that 21st century space programmes must include the culturalisation of space. KSEVT (Cultural Centre of European Space Technologies) is a response to this urgent need. It was founded to ensure the systematic and institutionally-based culturalisation of space within space programmes!

KSEVT will ensure the culturalisation of space using processes that combine art and science. In Slovenia we have a tradition of space technology research that goes back 80 years. The European pioneer of spaceflight, the Slovene Herman Potočnik Noordung, published his fundamental book in Berlin in 1929 entitled "The Problem of

Space Travel – The Rocket Motor". This work influenced the people who developed the first space vessels, and the first space living quarters and information systems.

In the first third of the 20th century, Slovenes were among the first in the art world to produce levitating sculpture. In 1927, as part of their shared artistic work within the congenial, holistic artistic endeavour, the Trieste Constructivist Ambient, the artists Edvard Stepančič, Avgust Černigoj, Giorgio Carmelich and Josip Vlah created a levitating construction that addressed the absence of gravity.

Decades later the tradition of Slovenian constructivists could be indirectly or directly seen in the work of modern and research artists such as Dragan Živadinov, Dunja Zupančič, Miha Turšič, Marko Peljhan, Sašo Sedlaček, Iztok Amon and institutions such as Delak, the Projekt Atol institute and the Kapelica gallery. The artistic and methodological approaches of these individuals and institutions have enabled them to carry out research projects within space programmes.

The efforts of Slovenian artists and scientists across the 20th century have culminated in an initiative to culturalise space, which must be understood as a process that goes in two directions.

First, it entails recognising and making people aware of culture within the most complex scientific and technological projects our civilisation has ever developed – space programmes. Only now, with a century-long tradition of developing space science and technology behind us, and the publication of sufficient quantities of scientifically verifiable material, can we speak with authority of sequences, patterns and exceptions and also responsibly reflect on these from a humanist position.

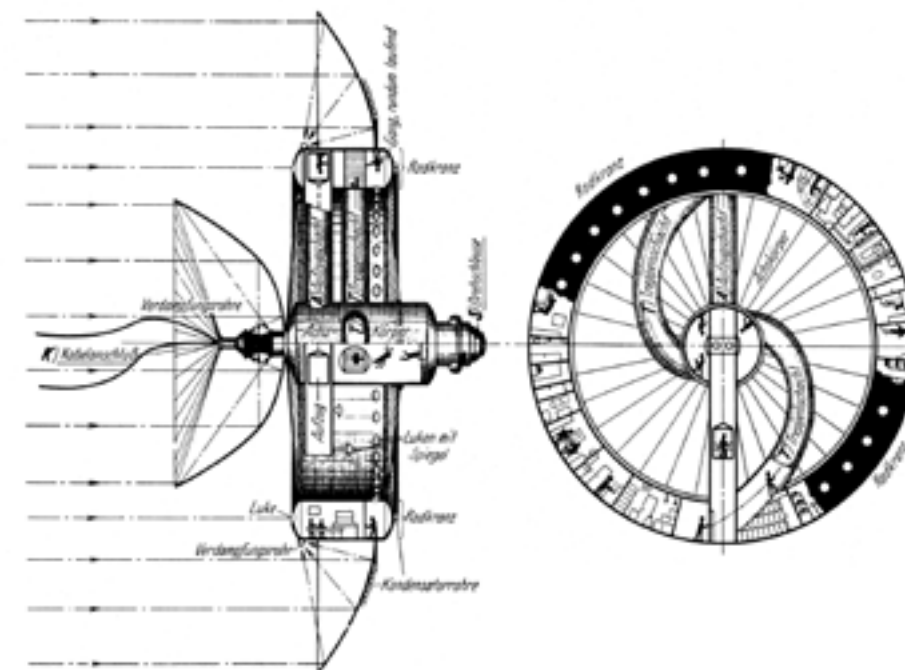
On the other hand there is an awareness that it is essential to develop and create completely new forms of cultural practice, using new tools in a completely new environment, the environment of space itself. Terraform or terrestrial processes of morphology will be replaced by cosmokinetic practice. Only over the past decade has real and near space become more widely accessible. The coming decade is therefore the time to define the bases for a "cultural space programme". They will be created as the essence of the processes for the culturalisation of space. Space culturalisation concepts will therefore materialise within the KSEVT institute. This will make KSEVT the central model for everything that will happen within the actual infrastructure constructed in so-called high orbit.

And now we are starting this where we should: in Vitanje, in the place of origin of the spaceflight pioneer Herman Potočnik Noordung, in the place in which the KSEVT architecture is currently being constructed. Slovenia's historical and geographical position between major cultural spheres is privileged with an understanding of those spheres, which it can synthesise and combine. It knows how to transfer that process of understanding and integration into supranational structures. Since a "cultural space programme" can only come from supranational approaches, it can in no way be constructed on the basis of a national plan alone, but from a cultural pattern of "what it is to be human".

The architecture of KSEVT is the product of cooperation between four studios, all renowned for architectural excellence: Bevk-Perovič architects, Gregorič-Dekleva architects, Ofis and Sadar+Vuga. The guiding principle and common denominator in planning the architecture was Herman Potočnik Noordung's primary invention – a geostationary satellite, which became familiar to the wider public through the Stanley Kubrick film 2001: A Space Odyssey. The space technology consultant, Friderick I. Ordway III, introduced the geostationary satellite to the 1965 film together with the scriptwriter Arthur C. Clarke. It was Clarke who had used Potočnik's book "The Problem of Space Travel" as an important reference work in 1945 in his own renowned text on information satellites.

KSEVT is planned as a small-dimensional planetary event facility far from urban areas, but with judiciously supramodernistic spaces and structures equipped with high-tech and optical communications tools. The title of the opening KSEVT exhibition in Vitanje will be "100 Monumental Achievements Influenced by Herman Potočnik".

### The orbital dawn will begin in Vitanje!

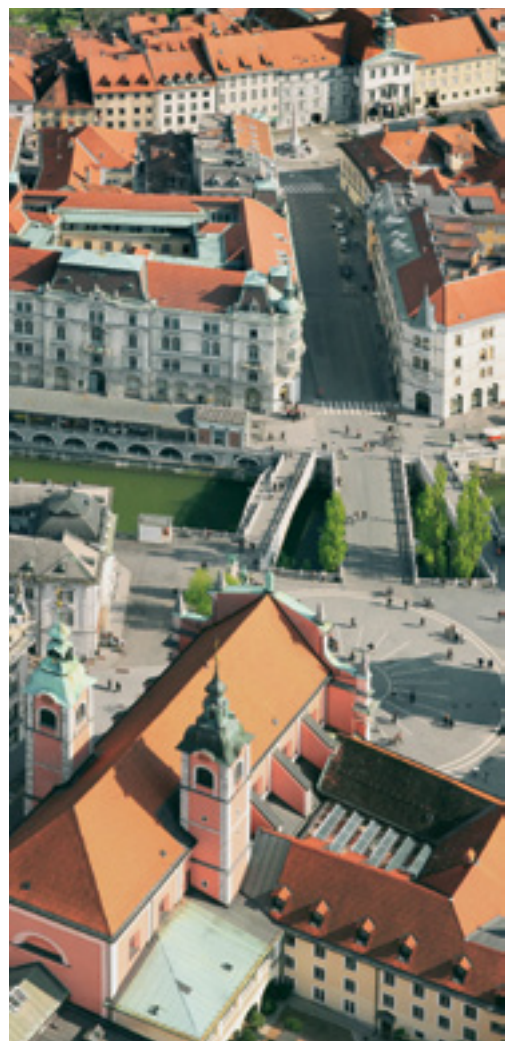


From mid-December 2010 to mid-January 2011 the Slovenia Press Photo 2010 exhibition is on view at the DocuClub Centre for Documentary Photography in Tel Aviv, which will conclude its international tour after the New York stage in May.

DocuClub is led by the internationally renowned and established Israeli photographer, Oded Balilty, 2007 winner of the Pulitzer Prize, who was also one of the people proposing the exhibition should go to Tel Aviv. Balilty was one of the five-member international jury who judged and selected the best works by Slovenian photographers in March 2010.

The exhibition opening attracted considerable interest, including Slovenian ambassador to Israel, Boris Sovič, with his spouse.





Jože Osterman, photo: Barbara Jakše Jeršič

## New open-air gallery

Ljubljana has undoubtedly reaped numerous benefits from having been named World Book Capital 2010. And not only in the field of books, as the city's general awareness of the importance of culture has risen noticeably. Many facets of the city's cultivation have happened faster than they otherwise would have (if they would have occurred at all). Many of the town's inhabitants have realised for the first time how much more pleasant the urban environment is when it has a thriving cultural life and when new cultural areas begin to function.

One of these areas is the newly renovated banks of the Ljubljanica River, the Krakovski nasip from the Shoemaker's Bridge to the Prule Bridge, i.e. the part of the embankment which has been relatively accessible in the past, but did not offer much more than a few benches to sit on. Now a very simple measure, just widening the pavement, has created a new open-air art gallery. It was justifiably inaugurated by a photographic exhibition of Plečnik's forms and harmonies, put on by photographers Stane and Barbara Jeršič. We say justifiably Plečnik since the Krakovski nasip lies between the wonderfully terraced part of the Trnovo embankment that the great master installed decades ago and the part of the regulation of the watercourse which he built between the Shoemaker's Bridge and the Three Bridges, which in some people's opinion was not as great a success. The excellent large-format photographs of Plečnik's forms on the newly arranged embankment give it a look that the town can be proud of. The left bank of the Ljubljanica, from where it enters the city centre at Špica all the way to the Dragon Bridge, is becoming one of the nicest walking paths in Ljubljana, and well worth a visit.



Vesna Žarkovič, photo: archive

# Slovenians take eight medals at EuroSkills 2010

"I like to solve absurd problems with ridiculous deadlines; I have no experience with competitions, but I'm preparing for EuroSkills by looking for solutions for all of the crazy stuff in the competition guide," said one of the award-winning Slovenian participants.

Statistics indicate that fewer and fewer young people are enrolling in vocational education and training programmes, while the need for employees with vocational education and training remains unchanged. The result of this is an insufficient workforce, which in these times of high unemployment is truly absurd. One of the ways to increase the attractiveness of vocational education and training is vocational skills competitions such as EuroSkills 2010. It was designed to promote jobs which are either lacking workers, rare or have a poor reputation in society. The vocational skills competition for young people from 18 to 25 years of age, held in Lisbon from 9 to 12 December, included more than 500 participants from 26 European countries who competed in 52 vocational skills categories. The Slovenian colours were represented by 15 competitors who took home six individual and two team medals.

The Slovenian participants competed in six vocational skills categories: floristry, mechatronics, catering, carpentry, IT and window displays. Our top competitor was Slavko Žitnik, who took a gold medal in the IT competition. Marinka Žitnik took a silver in the IT competition. Boštjan Pajk and Marko Merkač took silver medals in the carpentry competition. The IT and carpentry teams also took team silver medals. Urška Kalan and Nives Koblar took bronze in the window display competition. This was the second time that Slovenians had competed at EuroSkills, and they were among the most successful of the new countries. The next EuroSkills competition will be held in Belgium in 2012.

The Ministry of Education and Sport was in charge of organising the team.





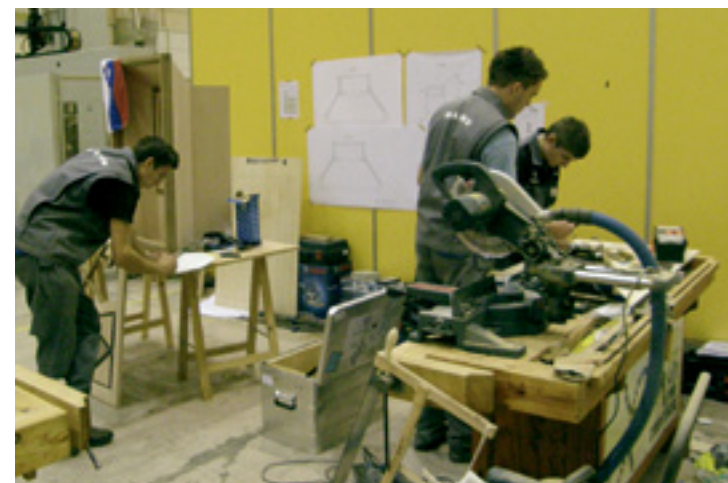


Slavko Žitnik (Cisco) took a gold medal and recorded a historical success: "I'm really happy; I didn't expect a medal. We were relaxed at the competition and that paid off. I study computer science and of course I see myself working in that field. I hope that my medal at EuroSkills 2010 will help me find a good job."

Marinka Žitnik took a silver medal in the project leader category. The Slovenian IT team also took a team silver medal with their excellent design of an information system for a virtual company. The Slovenian IT team was made up of Marinka Žitnik (project leader), Peter Virant (Microsoft), Miha Longino (open-code systems) and Slavko Žitnik (Cisco).



Slovenian competitors in the carpentry competition also made it to the podium. Boštjan Pajk took a silver medal in the furniture and cabinetry competition, and Marko Merkač took a silver in techniques for machine processing of wood.



The entire Slovenian carpentry team also took a silver medal for their finely designed wood products. "At first it looked like we would be going home without any medals, but we kept at it to the end. The jury obviously liked our products. The medal is also an incentive for my career; I want to work in the field of making boutique products out of wood," said the third member of the silver-medal winning carpentry team, Denis Štok.

Urška Kalan and Nives Koblar also took medals; they took a bronze medal in the window display category. When asked why they like this kind of work, they said that they enjoy it because it relaxes them and at the same time it allows for creativity.

And what did they wish for their fellow competitors? "May the best one win!"

The other Slovenian representatives, who competed in the floristry, mechatronics and catering categories, also achieved excellent results (both team and individual). A lot of credit for this great success goes to the Ministry of Education and Sport and to the Institute for Vocational Education and Training, which organised the Slovenian team, and to the mentors and the mentors' schools: the Ljubljana Electro-Technical and Computer Science Vocational School and Gymnasium, SC Novo mesto Construction and Carpentry Secondary School, Celje School of Horticulture and Visual Arts, Nova Gorica Technical School Centre Vocational College, Ljubljana Secondary School of Commerce, Maribor Carpentry School Vocational College, Slovenj Gradec School Centre Secondary School of Catering, Tourism and Carpentry, Maribor Vocational School of Catering and Tourism.



The idea for EuroSkills competitions parallels that of the WorldSkills competitions, which have more than 50 years of tradition all over the world. WorldSkills began in 1946, when there was an acute shortage of workers with vocational training in Spain. José Antonio Elola Olaso, the general director of the Spanish Youth Organisation at that time, saw that young people, their parents, teachers and future workers had to be convinced that their future lay in an effective system of vocational education and training.

Competitions in vocational skills seemed to be the most appropriate way to achieve that objective: it would stimulate the competitive spirit among the youth, adults would talk about the competitions, the vocations involved and the results, and visitors would be able to see a wide range of economic areas.

The same idea also sums up EuroSkills, as it was first held at a time when there was a lack of workers on the labour market in Europe with vocational education and training, owing to the reduced enrolment of young people in such programmes

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Polona Prešeren, photo: Smetumet archive

# Smetumet

or how waste can be made useful

A bag, notebook, pencil, multi-use carry bag, clothes ... all made from used but still useful materials that still have a point and ways to be used. That is what they do at the Smetumet cultural and ecological society.



**Their mission is re-think, re-fuse, re-use and re-cycle.**

The society, which recently found new premises on one of Ljubljana's busiest roads, deals with the issues of waste articles in general, such as why they are considered waste, what to do with them and make out of them. Their home base, where I met Maja Modrijan and Maja Rijavec from the society, is real treasure trove of recycling ideas. I was impressed with the bags made from old umbrellas, as well as various products Smetumet produced for companies using waste from their marketing campaigns.

## WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

**Smetumet is a cultural, ecological society that deals with critical thinking and reflection on the issues of waste and society's attitude to the environment and their fellow humans. It does this by linking art, ecology, design and play.**

They teach others and create themselves. They work to address attitudes to nature, consumption, waste and modern ways of life. They have been operating actively, successfully and on an ever greater scale since 2007.



The three young women – Maja Rijavec, Maja Modrijan and Urša Štrukelj (and a few young men who've joined in too) – are convinced that waste is not ugly or dirty. Especially if it is properly separated. Waste can be useful, and a lot of useful and aesthetic products can be made out of it. As they say: “There's only a few of us, but we're a successful, well-coordinated and energetic team with a committed attitude to our work.” And they change waste into useful and attractive products! Sounds simple enough.

Each of them has a specific professional profile – from a professor of fine art to a range of social science backgrounds. They already had considerable affinity for design and had been involved in numerous projects in the field. Their social science backgrounds led them to begin design together with a socially engaged mission. They started from zero, with no references and no start-up capital just enormous reserves of enthusiasm. It was the idea and desire of doing something, changing something, and making their contribution to society that made them get things started. Without hesitation! “We noticed that nobody was properly addressing the subject of waste,” explains Maja Rijavec about their first moves.

**“We wanted to take some obvious, everyday ideas and practices and move them forward through waste.”**

Today they are expanding the basic concept of addressing waste to natural cosmetics, recycled clothing and using different forms of waste to order. “We're playing with natural elements, investigating and ask ourselves why things are like they are. We're putting old things back into circulation. It's about keeping things going if they can be used again,” they explain. “It's a philosophy of life. We're thinking holistically about our lifestyles as well,” adds Maja Modrijan.

They continually seek alternatives to modern living, and attempt to present them to people through workshops and make them more accessible. The workshops, which are more socially engaged, are aimed at raising people's awareness. The making of the various products is also not merely recycling, but an attempt to include their entire philosophy into their output. “We try to mix materials as little as possible, and we are careful to ensure that the materials can be rapidly separated at the end of the product's life cycle and, above all, primarily that the products are functional and high quality and very durable.”

We would like to teach people to think about what they really need. Before people come to our workshops we encourage them to collect waste and bring it with them. This is to start them reflecting on their own process of waste generation.

Their workshops take place in a spirit of global learning, and are thematically aimed at a form of global education.

As well as workshops (delavnice) the Smetumet society also organises 'active workshops' (dejavnice), the purpose of which is even greater action and involvement by guests and the opportunity for a deeper and more analytic approach to the subject. “In that way we can change the narrower environment that we have in front of us each day. We'd like to overcome the idea that others should be doing something. You can shape your own environment and your own world.”

At Smetumet they are convinced that reducing your waste is far more important than separating it. Once you have it, of course, you have to recycle it. We need to refresh our attitudes to consumption and to what we genuinely need. This is something else we teach at our workshops. Recycling is a means of resolving certain questions.

**“At the workshops we always discuss tangible questions of how to get rid of some of the superfluous things in life. We attempt to place everything in a wider context, and your own experience is a vital part of this. If you experience something yourself, then you know how to take it forward.”**



## NOT ALL WASTE IS THE SAME

At Smetumet they have the conviction that waste is not something dirty, but has the potential to become something very useful. Although they have a lot of supporters who collect and bring them waste, while they also frequently check larger-item rubbish collection points, they avoid some kinds of waste. They consider plastic bottles to be completely superfluous in terms of function and environmental burden.

In their designs they always look for natural alternatives to synthetic materials. Instead of glue they cooked flour and used it to make puppets, for example (which are still in one piece). They also like to experiment with natural pigments. They use various handicrafts and skills that today are starting to lose their importance, and which they would like to prevent from dying out. They use them to create modern products and sometimes use them in completely untraditional ways and with new materials.

They are continually studying, discovering and looking for new techniques to apply to waste materials. That is how they came up with the already cult bags made from the classic Slovenian Barcafe coffee packets and Cedevita powdered drink packaging in the I'd like a coffee! collection. This kind of food packaging is difficult to put into industrial recycling

processes, as it generally combines plastic with aluminium foil. A lot of energy is needed to separate and recover the raw materials. To make one bag, they use about 20 coffee packets, which local bars and restaurants provide them with. They have developed the bags really well, so they really can carry quite a lot. They also make bags from old umbrellas, but they do not actually call them shopping bags, as they would like to promote rational consumption.

They also use office waste, photocopy waste, which they use for block notes and gift packaging. They are very happy about any special forms of waste they acquire from customers, such as companies that order business gifts to be made from their waste.

**“It's an incredible feeling to start with next to nothing and make something new that is functional and above all ecological.”**

The society is financed through tenders, with some financing coming from their own activities and products, which are the fruit of their own ecological and creative work. They also do interior decorating – primarily by recycling old furniture and re-upholstering it. They find most of the materials they use for renovation at large-item waste points. They have also collaborated with companies for which they have prepared special business gifts.



## WHERE NEXT?

Smetumet looks to the future and remains open to any ideas about the environment and new forms of recycling. Their aim for this year is to prepare a handbook with instructions and on what people can do themselves to make a cleaner environment. They would like to present their philosophy and concept to others.

They are also planning a major project called pREobleka on the theme of textile issues, which will include workshops on how to transform clothing and training events that will focus on the ecological and ethical side of our clothing habits. We would like to encourage people to think about how to make something useful out of old clothes. This would promote circulation in the local environment and help people get over the idea that there is something wrong with old clothes and see how useful they can be. "There are so many waste clothes in Slovenia, but we still aren't talking about clothes as waste," says Maja Rijavec. Maja Modrijan adds that alongside the containers for separated waste there should be containers for textiles. At present people can only give old clothes to Humana containers, Red Cross and Karitas. The Smetumet team say that the Finns are an example to them when it comes to recycling old textiles and they have been in contact with the Finnish embassy in Slovenia. They would like to prepare their own line of recycled clothes as well as respecting the emotional aspects of clothes that have been in our wardrobe for some time. "These are things that mean a lot to us, due to some special event, despite being completely useless. Their importance can stop us letting go of them," say the two Majas.

**There is certainly no shortage of ideas at Smetumet. Even the commitment they bring to everything they do makes them an example to many. The work of these young women is a real inspiration! And another thing ... did you know that paper can be worked very nicely on a sewing machine?**



Polona Prešeren, photo: personal archive

# Boštjan Narat: "My songs write themselves"

It's hard to say whether Boštjan Narat is first of all a philosopher or a musician. He is both, and he combines philosophy and music very elegantly. "They are lovers with substance", says Narat. The artist, who is also the leader of the group Katalena, writes and plays music for the theatre, and is also a singer-songwriter whose debut entitled Strah je odveč (Fear is Pointless) was voted Slovenian Album of the Year by the critics last year.

## Philosopher

At his suggestion we met at Sax Pub in the Trnovo district of Ljubljana, a bohemian hangout and a gathering place for Ljubljana's artist community. In fact, we couldn't have met at a place that better reflects Narat's style. We had a pleasant chat over

coffee and he told me that philosophy is no longer part of the curriculum at Ljubljana's Poljanska Gymnasium. After eight years he traded classrooms and chalkboards for freedom and dedicated himself entirely to his art. But that does not mean that he abandoned philosophy. He is currently organising his second season of philosophical debates featuring philosophers

and artists who have, he says, the ability and knowledge to put their work into a philosophical and conceptual/theoretical framework. At the debates they discuss relevant philosophical topics in front of an audience, which is occasionally included in the discussion. A circle of philosophy enthusiasts has formed who regularly attend the evening debates.

“For me, the most fascinating thing about being a singer-songwriter is the aloneness. There is nothing and nobody to lean on, nobody that could help you, but you don’t even want that, since what you are trying to say is so important that you have to say it yourself”.



## Singer and songwriter

As an established musician and the leader of the group Katalena, which is known primarily for its performances of Slovenian ethno music, last year he did a solo project in a completely different genre and put out an album called *Strah je odveč* (Fear is Pointless). This singer-songwriter project has brought a fresh new sound to the Slovenian music scene. It is utterly

his own, as he did all of the singing and songwriting himself. Solo projects are a completely different genre. They are about being a singer-songwriter, and his new album probably brought Narat back to an old passion. His solo debut *Strah je odveč* (Fear is Pointless) was voted Slovenian Album of 2010 by the critics. *Vikend* magazine wrote: “this album reminds us that good, sincere, intimate music is still being made by musicians who actually have something to say, who know how to express themselves and who know the right way to do it”.

Narat made a fairly substantial switch in genres. “Being a singer-songwriter the same thing happened to me as happened with Katalena – I didn’t actually know what I was getting into with either project”, says Narat. “I wasn’t familiar with either scene, and I stepped into both worlds kind of innocently. Being a singer-songwriter seems to me to be a form of creativity that is never directly in the limelight, even though some singer-songwriters are very popular. However, it is a genre that never dies, since there are always people write and try to perform what they have written. And that’s also its charm!” he says enthusiastically.

Boštjan Narat’s singing and songwriting is original, special and unique. Sometimes a bit ironic, and also philosophical, but still cheerful. He also finds that there is something primordial about being a singer songwriter. “A person trying to say something accompanied by an instrument is something that is written in their soul.”

Since Narat wrote the lyrics, his songs are a reflection of his personality. They are deep and ironic, but at the same time they are funny and touch on life’s issues. “My songs really do write themselves.” “Are they philosophical too?” I ask. “What isn’t philosophy!” he quips, as if this were something only philosophers knew. Even the title *Fear is Pointless* is meaningful. It’s about fear of a lot of things, says Narat. Including the fear of doing something new, of confronting your aloneness, of saying what you want to say. He was slightly surprised by the huge response that the album received. But the critics’ rave reviews are not at all pointless.

## The Katalena phenomenon

Narat’s background in philosophy doesn’t just affect his approach to being a singer-songwriter, but influences his writing for Katalena as well. Perhaps because of this he approaches each project very conceptually and imaginatively, and tries to find answers to various questions. Always the most important thing is what he is trying to achieve with the album.

“I believe that I can say that we put a lot more time into conceptual questions than others do. This is probably also due to my eternal Why?, i.e. why is it necessary to do this show, why record an album, why participate in some concert etc.”

Katalena is actually a kind of phenomenon, since it is made up of urban musicians who play traditional Slovenian music using modern forms and combinations. So Katalena is not just folk music, it is an original project.

There is a lot of raw material for creativity, there is a lot of art of one form or another, and I believe that when you are creating something you always have to ask why. If you don’t have an answer to that question, I don’t see the point in creating something. All of these folk motifs, musical and poetic, are always just the starting point for original development, explains Narat. “That’s where we start from, but then we let the music take us wherever it takes us. When selecting material we use two criteria – the song itself has to be interesting in the sense that it talks about relevant things, and at the same time it has to allow the possibility of further treatment. That’s the essential element, since there has to be a possibility for us to develop the song and give it our own original twist.”

They don’t go looking for folk songs; they use the ones that are already there. These are usually recordings made in the field and kept and released by the Musicology

Institute at the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Science and Art. Since Slovene has an exceptionally large number of dialects (Slovenia is characterised by an exceptional wealth of dialects: it has the largest number of dialects with respect to the size of the population out of any language), a lot of Katalena’s songs are sung in dialect.

Their singer Vesna Zornik therefore has to study the individual versions very carefully, since they are often sung in a nearly incomprehensible or difficult to pronounce dialect.

“The most extreme example was when we recorded our album *Cvik Cvak*, which is entirely dedicated to the Rezija (Resia) region. We received a great deal of help there from Dr Matej Šekli, who is an expert in the Resian dialect and taught our singer the dialect, corrected her and helped her improve”, recalls Narat.



But as Narat points out, Slovenia is not just rich in terms of dialects, it is also musically very diverse. The musical differences between the regions are also exceptional. These differences are so great that they can be heard by lay people listening to music from Bela Krajina, Prekmurje, Štajerska or Rezija, even with just a casual listen. And that’s not to mention the Resian tradition. Therefore when working with complicated dialects they always look to an expert for help; this is part of their vision. When they are not sure about something, they ask the experts.

They are not preservers of the folk tradition; they see nothing wrong in interpreting it in their own way. “We try to be accountable to the material that we obtain”, he explains. Katalena is above all a group that makes music, and it decided to take its inspiration from the Slovenian musical heritage. “From that point onward it’s all our work. We do preserve it in the sense of the reconstruction of the experience – we don’t try to present the music the way that it used to be played and sung, but the way that we experience and respond to the world the way it is here and now.”

“We simply can’t work as if we still lived in the time of hayracks and the old times and the old ways, wassailing and the Three Kings. Although all of this is still our folklore, that’s not what we’re into. We are first of all musicians and we make music.”

## Direction

In view of the different projects that Narat is involved in, I am of course curious about what other directions he might go. “As far as I’m concerned, I’m going in the right direction and I intend to keep going. I would like to put more work into the theatre, which is becoming increasingly less occasional and increasingly more regular. And of course continue with the philosophy evenings.” He confesses that he has had a secret desire to write a rock opera since he was a child. He has everything worked out; he knows exactly what he would do, how he would do it and who he would work with. For now these are just his dreams, but you never know how things will turn out. And, in the spirit of his philosophical approach, of course he also knows why. “All of this is just part of the journey, which I am putting all of my energy into.”

Andrej Stare, photo: STA

# THE BEST OF THE BEST

At the end of every calendar year, there is also a settling of accounts in the sports world. Who was the best, who achieved the most outstanding results and records – the year 2010 was an Olympic year (the Winter Games in Vancouver, Canada) and a year of major world championships (football and basketball). These events also marked Slovenian sport, with the country's athletes earning results on the highest global level. And this was not just in the Olympics and football, since Slovenia's sporting circles were also captivated by the outstanding exploits of boxer Dejan Zavec.



## DEJAN ZAVEC

After his surprise win to earn himself the title of world champion in 2009 (by beating local man Isaac Hlatshwayo in Johannesburg, South Africa), the 34-year-old boxer from Ptuj then successfully defended his IBF title twice. On 9 April at Tivoli Hall in Ljubljana, in front of 10,000 spectators he defeated the Argentinian Rodolfo Martinez with a knock-out. The South American boxer succumbed to Zavec's superiority a minute before the end of round 12. On 3 September the newly constructed Arena Stožice was treated to a grand spectacle, a fight for the title of world welterweight champion (up to 66.678 kg). Facing each other were the world champion Dejan Zavec and Polish boxer Rafal Jackiewicz. Zavec dominated all 12 rounds, and in the end for the second time in five months he won on points to retain his title of best in the world. This victory opened up Zavec's path to the best in the other three versions (WBA,

WBC and WBO), and in 2011 he will be defending his title of world champion. Where his next bout will be, and who he will face, are still not known. Dejan Zavec and his trainer Dirk Dzemski are hoping his next opponent will be one of the best welterweights, who were not that active this past year. His potential opponents include most prominently the Filipino Manny Pacquiao, the Ukrainian Vyacheslav Senchenko and the Americans Floyd Mayweather and Andre Berto. Zavec's big wish is to defend his world champion title in Las Vegas, where to date the majority of the biggest boxing matches in the world have been held. In a ballot of Slovenian sports journalists, Dejan Zavec deservedly and convincingly won the title of best sportsman of 2010, and in second place came the ice hockey player Anže Kopitar, who has been fantastic in the North American NHL playing for the Los Angeles Kings. Third place went to footballer Valter Birsa, a member of the French club Auxerre.

## TINA MAZE

The selection of the best sports woman of 2010 was actually easy and no surprise. Tina Maze, heroine of the Olympic Games in Vancouver, and specifically at the ski slopes of Whistler, defined Slovenia's year of sports in 2010 with her two silver medals. Maze is the first Slovenian sports woman to win two medals at the Olympic Games. After winning a silver medal in 2009 in the giant slalom at the World Championship in Val d'Isère, she once again struck silver at the Olympic Games. To begin with, on 20 February she was outpaced in the super giant slalom only by the Austrian Andrea Fischbacher (by 0.49 seconds), but in the giant slalom she was even quicker and better, although ultimately she had to admit the superiority of Germany's Viktoria Regensburg. The difference was a mere four hundredths of a second, but then on 25 February it was Tina Maze's big day. She won her second silver medal at the Olympics. In the past year Tina Maze also shone in the World Cup, in which to date she has secured nine victories, six second and seven third places.

She was a very convincing choice as sports woman of the year, with second place in the final count going to cross-country skier Petra Majdič, who won bronze at the Vancouver Olympic Games, and third place going to Slovenia's judo champion Lucija Polavder.



Photo: Ales Fevzer



## THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM

The football World Cup is without doubt the biggest sporting event when it comes around every four years. For a month, everything in the world revolved around football, and we forgot about political and economic problems, conflicts, natural disasters and so forth. Just as the Olympics did once in ancient Greece, football united the whole world. And Slovenia was an active participant in the World Cup. For the second time in its brief history, Slovenia got to play amongst the best national teams in the world. A little bit of luck and half a minute was all that Slovenia would have needed to make it through to the knock-out stages of the World Cup in South Africa. Slovenia had an outstanding start, first defeating Algeria 1-0, and then after leading against the USA, the game finally ended as a 2-2 draw. The final round was the decider. Slovenia needed a point against former world champions England in order to progress, and if Algeria drew with the USA, Slovenia would go through to the best 16 no matter the result against England. England won the game at Port Elizabeth 1-0, and in the 3rd minute of extra time in its game with Algeria, the

USA scored a winning goal, and Slovenia had to head home. Nevertheless, Slovenia won its first victory and four points at the World Cup, and with the help of more than 1,000 fans it left an outstanding impression. In the 2010 season Slovenia was represented in 11 games (at the World Cup, games for European Championship 2012 qualification and friendlies) by 26 players, under the leadership of coach Matjaž Kek and his assistants Milan Miklavič and Nihad Pejčovič.

In the points awarded for the best team, the football squad won for the fifth time, having previously been voted the best team in 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2009. In second place came the basketball team, which secured 8th place in the World Championship in Turkey, with third place going to the volleyball team of the ACH Volley club.

The best of the best thoroughly deserved their titles, and point to some major new success stories for Slovenian sport in 2011. Although there are no Olympics this year, there will be world championships in Nordic and Alpine skiing, the biathlon, athletics and plenty more competitions at which Slovenian competitors promise to achieve top world-class results, and of course some new medals.

### THE BEST SLOVENIAN ATHLETS OF 2010:

* men:	votes
1. Dejan Zavec (boxing)	218
2. Anže Kopitar (ice hockey)	97
3. Valter Birsa (football)	45
4. Jure Meglič (kayak - canoe)	40
5. Peter Kauzer (kayak - canoe)	39
6. Klemen Bauer (biathlon)	38
7. Jani Brajkovič (cycling)	37
8. Jaka Lakovič (basketball)	35
9. Peter Mankoč (swimming)	32
10. Robert Kranjec (ski jumping)	29
* women:	
1. Tina Maze (Alpine skiing)	309
2. Petra Majdič (cross-country skiing)	238
3. Lucija Polavder (judo)	45
4. Raša Sraka-Vukovič (judo)	43
5. Teja Gregorin (biathlon)	15
6. Anja Klinar (swimming)	5
7. Mina Markovič (sports climbing)	4
8. Tanja Romano (roller skating)	3
9. Martina Ratej (athletics)	2
10. Polona Hercog (tennis)	2
10. Mateja Zver (football)	1
* teams	
1. Slovenian football team	72
2. Slovenian basketball team	20
3. ACH Volley	17
4. Slovenian ice hockey team	6

Hana Souček Morača, photo: Cveto Sonc

# A taste of Emona

Back in the distant past, the inhabitants of Ancient Rome lived modestly and simply. Their diet, too, was modest and simple. Ancient Roman cuisine grew rich and varied in parallel with military expeditions on which the conquering legions began to taste food in far-off lands. Soldiers began to bring new foods to Rome, along with different methods of preparation. They also brought slaves to cook for them.

Food was part of the culture of the ancient world, a constituent element of the life of the Romans, and therefore much more than merely satisfying to basic human need for nutrition. Developing over the course of centuries, the cuisine of Ancient Rome also left its mark in Slovenia.

## Everyday life in Emona

The Roman colony of Emona, the first real town on the site of present-day Ljubljana, was founded almost exactly 2,000 years ago and lasted for 500 years. The 'Emona: Myth and Reality' exhibition at the City Museum of Ljubljana (until the end of 2010) offered a glimpse of everyday life in Emona, the historical turning points of the town and the mythical tradition surrounding its founding. Information about the eating habits of the middle-class citizen of Emona is provided by objects found in excavated graves in Emona's northern burial ground.

According to Bernarda Županek, the head of the project and co-author of the exhibition, Emona and the period of Antiquity it embodies are still present in everyday life today. 'We know most of all about the wealthy classes, famous for their sumptuous banquets.' Roman citizens ate three times a day. Breakfast or *jentaculum* was eaten between 7am and 9am, while lunch or *prandium* was between 12pm and 1pm. The main meal, for rich and poor alike, was an abundant dinner or *cena*. Dinners began at around 4pm and were sometimes known to last right up to the next morning. The formal banquet of the kind that only wealthy Romans could afford lasted several hours and was an important social event. Family, friends and guests would gather in the dining room, where the host would entertain the guests and show off his wealth. Guests reclined on cushioned benches arranged around the table. The usual dinner menu consists of three parts. The starter or ap-

petiser would include olives, various kinds of salad and eggs. The main course would include seven types of meat. 'They also enjoyed fresh fish. Ice would be brought from the mountains and packed around seafood to keep it cool and fresh during transport.' They were also fond of *garum*, a kind of fish sauce made by leaving salted fish to decompose in the sun so that they fermented, after which they were strained and used as a strongly flavoured sauce. Dessert consisted of fruit, nuts, pastries and honey breads.

The menus of ordinary households often included oven-baked dough covered with sauce, a kind of forerunner of today's pizza. This is indicated by the numerous shallow platters that served for baking the dough. With regard to drinking habits, the co-author of the exhibition explained that the Romans mixed wine with water, because drinking pure wine was considered barbaric. 'They also drank sweet wine mixed with honey and pepper.'

## A taste of Emona

There is no doubt that the people of Emona also modelled themselves on the prevailing customs in Rome, described in detail in the famous Roman cookery book attributed to Apicius. At the City Museum of Ljubljana we tried our hand at Roman cooking at a culinary workshop entitled 'A Taste of Emona' led by Boris Kuhar, co-author of a book of Apicius' recipes updated for the present day. Using recipes from the Roman cookbook, we prepared and tasted a number of typical dishes of Emona, including spiced wine (*conditum paradoxum*), to which honey and pepper were typically added, lentils with chestnuts (*lenticulum de castanias*), in which the dominant flavours are coriander, caraway, mint and rue, vinegar, honey and pepper; ham (*perna*) with figs and a home-made dessert (*dulcia domestica*) consisting of, for example, stuffed dates with walnuts rolled in salt and fried in honey.

## CONDITUM PARADOXUM

### Ingredients:

7.5 kg honey  
11 l sweet white wine  
120 g pepper  
4 g mastic  
handful of bay leaves  
saffron  
200 g dates  
charcoal

### Preparation:

Mix the honey with 1 litre of the wine. It is best to use a copper pan. Cook until the wine reduces. Stir the honey. If it starts to bubble, reduce the heat and add wine. Cool the cooked honey and then cook again. Repeat this process two to three times, then remove the mixture from the flame, skim off the froth and add ground pepper, mastic, bay leaves, saffron and roasted date seeds together with the dates, having first soaked them in good wine. Finally, pour in 10 litres of sweet wine and add a little charcoal to neutralise the fragrances and bitterness.



## PERNA

### Ingredients:

1 ham (approximately 1.5 kg meat)  
25 dried figs  
honey  
500 g wheat flour  
100 ml oil

### Preparation:

Boil the ham with a good number of dried figs and three bay leaves. Remove the skin, make cross-shaped incisions in the meat and fill them with honey. Make a pastry from the flour and oil and wrap the ham in it. Cook in the oven until the pastry is cooked, and serve. The pastry covering must be at least one finger thick. The cooking time is a good hour at medium temperature in a preheated oven.



## And after the banquet...

Some people fast in preparation for the holidays, but after the December festivities and New Year celebrations there are many of us who begin a period of partial abstinence simply to feel better. Fasting dishes are positive for today's diet and we do not only use them for fasting. Cooking expert and chef Boris Kuhar explains that the Romans used to fast or eat fasting dishes before or after the holidays, just like people today. 'They knew how to make various soups, including a simple roux-thickened soup made by heating oil in a pan, adding flour and stirring until the flour becomes yellow. Next the required quantity of water is added and the soup is seasoned with salt, a bay leaf, pepper and paprika. When the soup comes to the boil, beaten eggs are stirred in, the soup is left for a minute or two and then removed from the heat.'



Alenka Černelič Krošelj, photo: Museum archive

# The Valvasor Complex in Krško and the Krško Civic Museum

COEXISTENCE OF THE OLD AND THE NEW



The town of Krško has developed over the course of the centuries between the river Sava and a hill (Trška Gora), and for a long time was dominated by a castle on the hilltop. Krško was granted town rights on 5 March 1477. Over the centuries that followed it survived Turkish raids, peasant revolts and numerous plagues. The castle slowly crumbled into ruin and 'disappeared'. The town below it continued to be created by its inhabitants, whose achievements, along with the traces they have left behind, also help shape our present and direct our future. The core of Krško's old town centre consists of three houses, the Valvasor House, the Jarnovič House and the Kaplan House, today the most beautiful and oldest surviving part of the town. The renovation of these houses has been a difficult and lengthy project.

The people of Krško strove for more than a century to transform this part of the town into a public museum. How they achieved it is one of the town's more interesting stories. On 7 October 1894 the citizens of Krško erected a plaque on the house at number 85. The plaque bore the following inscription: 'In this house JANEZ BAJKORT VALVASOR died on 19 September 1693.' So it was that the house in which the famous polymath Janez Vajkard (or Johann Weichard) Valvasor (1641–1693) was supposed to have spent his final months was chosen and officially designated. The house had been left to the town in 1886 by Martin Hočevar (1810–1886) to be used as a hospice, but even then doubts were expressed about the correctness of the choice. In 2006 Dr Boris Golec discovered that the real Valvasor House was

some tens of metres away from the house that had been chosen, and bore the name of the author, lawyer and mayor Janez Mencinger (1838–1912). The Municipality of Krško is now planning to renovate this house too. Despite the new facts that had come to light, the Municipality of Krško did not deviate from its planned renovation of the Valvasor Complex, the name of which has not been changed. Nevertheless, the new facts constitute an interesting new story for the town.

The Museum Society for the Political Districts of Krško and Brežice was founded in Krško on 30 September 1939 – in the Valvasor House. In 1948, however, the house was emptied and its contents removed to Brežice, where the Posavje Museum was founded in Brežice Castle the following year. A statue of Valvasor by Vladimir Štoviček was erected in front of the house in 1966. In 1977, to coincide with the 500th anniversary of the granting of town rights, the house was given a new façade and the status of a monument.

In 1993 the Municipality of Krško proclaimed the area a cultural and historical monument and, at the same time, began obtaining conservation and planning documentation for the renovation. The area was henceforth known as the Valvasor Complex. The planned renovation of the Valvasor Complex was accompanied for a number of years by a series of unfortunate circumstances, where renovation work was limited to single interventions. Between 1998 and 2004 work was limited to repairs to structural elements and roofs in order to prevent the Valvasor House from falling down. The Ministry of Culture provided €137,500 of the total €439,166 spent. The remainder was provided by the Municipality of Krško.

An intensive renovation of the Valvasor Complex, lasting a year and a half, began in the autumn of 2008 when the Municipality of Krško decided to use funding from the European Regional Fund alongside funds earmarked for culture. The Valvasor House has been restored to its original appearance, as has the oldest part of the Jarnovič House, while the Kaplan House, following the damage suffered in the storms of 2004, could no longer be saved and was rebuilt incorporating the most important original elements. This €2.5 million investment took place with the help of co-financing from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) as part of the Operational Programme for Strengthening Regional Development Potentials 2007–2013 (Develop-





## \* cultural trails \*



ment of Regions priority axis). The ERDF provided co-financing in the amount of €950,000, while €90,000 was provided by the Ministry of Culture. The remainder was provided by the Municipality of Krško. Planning documentation was prepared by Savaprojekt d.d. of Krško, while the final stage of the intensive renovation was planned by CRP d.d. of Brežice. The entire operation was supervised and coordinated by the Ljubljana Regional Unit of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage and chief conservator Alenka Železnik.

The design of the contents of the complex follows the functional distribution of the premises in the past. The ground floor is mainly given over to services and there is also a café here. The first floor and attic house the Krško Civic Museum, which operates as a unit of the Krško Cultural

Centre. The renovated complex and museum were formally handed over to the town on 30 March 2010. The permanent collection, which is growing gradually, presents the town through the life stories of prominent citizens including, besides Valvasor, the grammarian and teacher Adam Bohorič (c. 1520–1598), the first translator of the Bible into the Slovenian language, Jurij Dalmatin (c. 1546–1589), the businesswoman and philanthropist Josipina Hočevar (1824–1911) and the sculptor and medallist Vladimir Štoviček (1896–1889). Polona Zupančič is responsible for the design of the permanent and temporary exhibitions and the overall appearance of the museum.

The contents of the museum are being created with the support of a project called Riches of the Countryside in a Joint Tourism Product, also known as the Honey and Gingerbread Route between Krško



and Zagreb, financed by the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme within the Operational Programme IPA: Slovenia-Croatia 2007–2013. Funding in the amount of €123,401 also enables free admission.

The Brestanica branch of the National Museum of Contemporary History is currently housed here while its permanent home, Rajhenburg Castle, is renovated. The renovation is expected to be complete by the start of 2013. The museum includes an exhibition on the heritage of the Trappist order, which owned the castle between 1881 and 1947. In conjunction with the Association of Slovenian Expellees 1941–1945 the museum has prepared an exhibition on wartime expulsions and the work of the association to mark its 20th anniversary.



The founding and opening of the Krško Civic Museum is the first result of the successful renovation and proof of the Municipality of Krško's commitment to both immovable and movable heritage. This modern, attractive, flexible and constantly changing museum has come into being as a coexistence of the old and the new and is becoming the focus of cultural tourism of the town and municipality of Krško. Visitors are always welcome!

The museum is open from 12pm to 6pm from Tuesday to Saturday and by arrangement for pre-booked visitors and groups. Closed on Sundays and national holidays. Admission to the museum is free.

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## \* natural trails \*

Jože Osterman, photo: Barbara Jakše Jeršič

# Rakitna



The area surrounding the Slovenian capital Ljubljana, which is itself presented as a green city, is distinguished by its exceptionally diverse and untouched natural environment, a feature not exactly common and typical of a European metropolis. Geographically situated pretty much in the centre of the country, at the confluence of the Sava and Ljubljanica as well as some smaller watercourses, the city lies in a plain, but the first slopes of quite extensive hills to the south and west are just a few kilometres away. So just a short hop, barely noticeable in a bus or car, can take Ljubljana residents effectively to a different planet, to unspoilt nature, something that certainly provides a lot of added value to living in the capital city.



To the south and west of the city centre, rising directly above the Ljubljansko Barje wetland, stands the 1107 m high mountain of Krim, which to the observer looking at it from the city's basin seems quite imposing, particularly given its dark and somewhat mysterious forested slopes that blanket the mountain. Yet concealed behind the dark green slopes is an extensive plateau, with broad forest glades that have been partly cleared by humans for crops, orchards and even settlements, in which around 500 people live today. This is less than at one time, and before the Second World War, when farming and timber were more profitable than today, and people were more used to hard physical labour, the plateau had a stable population of around 800 people. The war was not kind to Rakitna, with internecine clashes claiming the lives of around 80 inhabitants, and the later mode of rapid industrialisation and neglect of farming lured a sizeable portion of the then population, especially younger people, to the city. Nowadays, too, life on the plateau is not easy, and is something only tough people can handle. Farming has shrunk, with animal husbandry, which mainly involved cattle and horses, being practiced in a much smaller scope than before. Small farms, which for the most part make up the human

community at Rakitna, have a difficult time surviving without additional support and without close links with each other, and that is the case here.

### Youth health resort

The non-intensive level of business activity typical of Rakitna in recent decades has, on the other hand, had one favourable consequence, in that the natural environment remains practically unspoiled, while to some extent it is nevertheless arranged and well-kept. The severe yet healthy climate typical of this area, which lies around 800 m above sea level close to a big city, meant that just under a hundred years ago the location was recognised as being suitable for the treatment of a wide range of illnesses. During the First World War, Rakitna became a military hospital used to treat the Austrian wounded and sick from the Soča Front. In 1927 patients with osteo-articular tuberculosis were treated here, and in 1930 they started treating pulmonary illnesses in children. In subsequent decades, Rakitna became the only Slovenian Alpine children's treatment centre for respiratory diseases, and with some enhancements this programme is still in place today, although in the meantime there have been numerous difficulties and problems that sometimes even

threatened the existence of the health centre. Today the health centre is owned by the municipality of Brezovica, although financially it is entirely dependent on the work of the young and ambitious medical and physiotherapy team, which has supplemented the programme of treating pulmonary diseases with programmes to treat diseases and various disorders which, in modern times, weigh even more heavily on children: a school of healthy growth, and a programme of reintegration and rehabilitation for persons with emotional disturbances and dietary disorders. The innovations in these programmes, which involve particularly interesting therapies using domestic animals, especially horses and dogs, are quite surprising even in the European context, and the experts of Rakitna have made several successful presentations of their methods to fellow paediatricians abroad. With all these programmes, the health centre has embarked on an entirely new path, which undoubtedly involves upward development. The heads of the health centre are optimistic, since they have clearly weathered the worst, and all they need now is to step up the development they have started, although they realise that there is still a lot of work ahead. The years of stagnation put their institution in a position where they need



**Winters in Rakitna are indeed harsh, meaning that there is usually a lot of snow, but more noticeable than that is the severe cold, which often goes below what is recorded at the traditional Alpine locations in Gorenjska and Koroška. So you can tell that it is close to the coldest place in Slovenia, Babno polje, which is itself situated on the high plateau of Bloke above Cerknica, where they have always recorded the lowest temperatures in the country, and where the mercury frequently slides down close to as low as minus 30 degrees!**

to renovate all the buildings and infrastructure in order for the upgraded health centre to accommodate the modernity of the programmes they have planned. Their big hope is to get European Union funding.

The details of this outstanding health centre will be described in some other issue, for Rakitna's attractiveness as a natural jewel is not confined to this. The dense spruce forests that cover a major portion of the plateau offer a pleasant refuge for numerous wild animals, which offer everyday company here to people going about their business. Deer, which in some parts of the plateau still graze right next to houses, are an entirely common sight, while slightly more unusual, but by no means a rare occurrence are bears, which wander up to the plateau, as well as wolves, which at least thus far have not caused any major damage here, as they have in places elsewhere in Slovenia. The spruces in the forests are tall and very high-quality, since the severe climate permits only slow growth. This was something the former Austro-Hungarians understood well, and the Rakitna forests were one of the main sources of wood for making masts for the vessels of their navy. The very last mast for one of

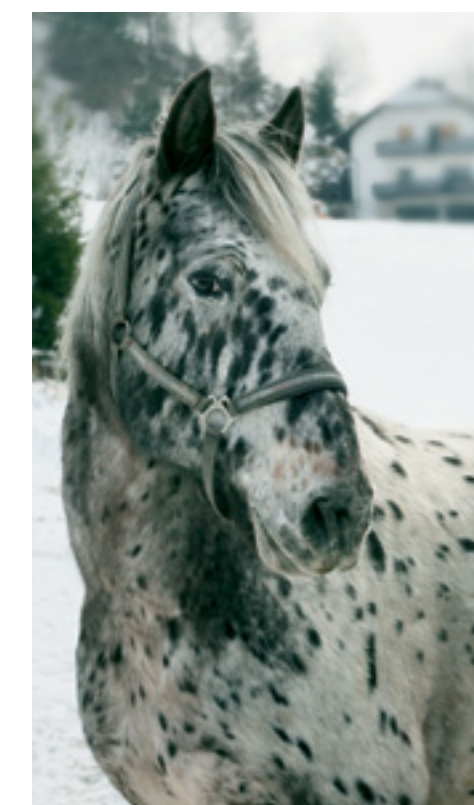
their naval sailing ships came from this very location! Later, new military technologies halted the construction of naval sailing ships, and probably for that very reason there are still a few magnificent spruces left at Rakitna.

### The lake

An especially charming feature of the plateau is Rakitna's delightful lake, which was formed in the middle of the last century through the artificial merging of several ponds on the southern side of the plateau. Rakitna Lake, which is undoubtedly one of the more popular excursion points for residents of the capital city, and at the same time a central point for the settlement of some 300 holiday homes, is especially alluring in winter for those who like the cold.

On the other hand it is surprising that the climate at Rakitna is just as frequently influenced by warmer air masses from the Mediterranean, which can unleash strong south winds, and sometimes an early spring. This mixture of warmth and cold mingling above the plateau also contributes to the usually early and thick snow cover. This is supplemented by the thick crust of ice on the lake, which is shallow enough for the water to cool

down quickly with the onset of winter, and the lake freezes even in the middle of December, of course attracting a lot of skaters from nearby, and at weekends they completely take over the frozen surface. After many years the wide range of attractions in this area finally spurred a young entrepreneur to open a brand new hotel on the shores of the lake in October last year. Her hotel is an architecturally fascinating new building with around 30 beds, a pleasant restaurant and conference rooms that would suit small conferences or seminars. The tranquil and beautiful surroundings are indeed an ideal setting for everything you would need for work and concentration.



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