

# Sinfo

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The latest from Slovenia



**IN FOCUS INTERVIEW: Petra Majdič - Coaches and competitors must have the best conditions** **IN FOCUS: Prehistoric skiing at Bloke** **BUSINESS: Elan - The most innovative brand**

I FEEL  
SLOVENIA

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Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA



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Photo: Archives of SEM



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**The most innovated brand**

Photo: Archives of Elan

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Photo: Bruno Tokč

Tanja Glogovčan, editor

**A nation of sporting greats**

This issue focuses in particular on the forthcoming Winter Olympics scheduled to take place in February. It features an interview with Petra Majdič, the head of the Slovenian Olympic team, in which she talks about her experience as an Olympic competitor and outlines her expectations for the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi. Slovenia's expectations are high, and rightly so. In this season and in the past, we have seen many Slovenian athletes achieve podium finishes. The achievements that marked the previous season are listed in an overview of sporting achievements and in an article about the outstanding sporting achievements of athletes who have been awarded the title of Slovenian Athlete of the Year or Team of the Year.

With the Olympic Games approaching, this issue also includes an article about the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Sokol Gymnastic Society, which played an important role in strengthening Slovenian national identity. In relation to the latter, we ask whether the Slovenians are truly a skiing nation. The story of Bloke skiers may be partly myth, but one should not forget that it is myths that inspire history. And the same is true of the Slovenians' attitude to sport.

In a conversation with one of the most successful Slovenian designers, Oskar Kogoj, whose works also adorn the residences of the world's most influential politicians, we discuss the Venetic theory, which maintains that the Slovenians are descended from the Veneti. In this connection, we outline the symbolic importance of the Venetic horse, a statute of which has been erected by the Slovenian company Smelt in Nebug near Sochi on the Black Sea coast.

Slovenia is still a land of opportunities, which is also demonstrated by the success stories of many family businesses and companies with a long-standing tradition, like Elan, for example.

Turning to sport again, we can say that sporting and Olympic traditions in Slovenia are part of the national cultural heritage. We may be a small nation, but we certainly know how to make an impact on the world's sporting stage.



Photo: GCO

## 2014 marks the turning point

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To begin with, I must self-critically admit that the past few years were declared a landmark for Slovenia, which has unfortunately not materialised. My prediction should not be taken as official, but as my projection of developments in Slovenia this year. Will the decline in GDP continue or have we already hit rock bottom, so now the only way is upwards and onwards?

As I see it, the only way from here is up. Let me justify this with the following: the most important fact is that the economic and financial situation in Slovenia is no longer a matter for global excuses; how the year 2014 turns out will depend entirely on us. Almost all EU Member States have recorded a recovery in economic output, which is to Slovenia's advantage as a highly export-oriented country. It is also encouraging that 'the bad bank', i.e. Bank Assets Management Company, is finally up and running. It was scheduled to open at least half a year earlier, but was delayed because the European Commission requested accurate figures about the state of Slovenian banks. We have now obtained precise information about how deep the banking hole is; the recapitalisation of banks is ongoing and, we can say without exaggeration that the capital adequacy of Slovenian banks is very good, among the best in Europe, in fact.

The police and the judicial system have started to show their teeth. Police investigations follow one after another; criminal investigators are knocking on the doors of wealthy and politically influential people, which did not happen very often in the past, but even when it did, adept lawyers won acquittals or otherwise protected their rich clients. Now, no one is untouchable, which is substantiated by the number of convictions and the names of the people who are already, or soon will be, behind bars.

The state is rapidly changing the bankruptcy law, which will be more focused on maintaining the healthy part of the economic sector and insuring creditors' claims, whereas owners and, often, their partial interests, will have to wait their turn.

It is worth noting the efforts of the Government to simplify the conditions for work and business operations and to eliminate administrative barriers. Data show that the waiting period to obtain various permits and approvals are being reduced and the state administration is becoming more efficient. The number of employees

in the state administration is rapidly decreasing; although data for the whole of the public sector are somewhat less encouraging, attention should be drawn to the fact that, in comparison with other countries, the Slovenian public sector is not as extensive as it appears. I agree, however, that the problem lies in organisation and, consequently, efficiency but as I have already mentioned, the situation is changing for the better.

Another positive factor underpinning my optimism is the country's effort to reduce the shadow economy. The measures taken by the Government have already produced direct financial effects: more revenue has been raised from taxes, and more importantly, people have started to realise that running a state is not cost free. Let me conclude my positive expectations by adding that young Slovenian entrepreneurs are ranked among the most successful and convincing on Kickstarter and similar online platforms that finance innovative projects.

I have stated the above in defense of my optimism. But I do think it's only fair to point to the less encouraging factors as well. It is difficult to decide which to put in first place, but I believe that the key issue in Slovenia is the poor political culture, which is attributable to our short period of official democracy - only slightly more than twenty years old - as well as to the Slovenian character, which is more focused on seeking differences rather than common interests. Making compromises is what we find most difficult in Slovenia. We always want someone to be the winner and another to be the loser. As a result, politicians constantly argue and, in the eyes of the public, a politician has the reputation of a card player who does not exactly follow the rules during the game and always hides an ace up his sleeve. The most devastating result of this perception is that fewer and fewer capable, ambitious and highly effective people are choosing to enter politics. This is an issue that can not be easily reversed, but is of considerable significance for Slovenia's future. The governance of the country should be in the hands of trustworthy, educated and capable people.

I firmly believe that there are more than enough of such people in Slovenia; hence, the key mission of the current political generation in Slovenia is to restore credibility to "the art of the possible". As I have already stated, this will not be easy, nor will it happen quickly, but it will happen. Let's be optimistic.

## A key new road

A key new road in a Hungarian border region that is home to the Slovenian minority was opened. Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek and her Hungarian counterpart Viktor Orbán described this event as a boost to bilateral relations.

“Slovenia expects that Hungary will continue to honour its commitments and support the minority’s efforts to develop and strengthen Slovenian identity, especially the language,” said Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán thanked his Slovenian counterpart for the way Slovenia treats the Hungarian minority.

The road section between Felsőszölnök and Kétvölgy, which was over six years in the building, will shorten the travel distance between the two villages from 24 to 5 kilometres. It is also expected to boost tourism in the region by improving links to Slovenia and Austria.



Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

Alenka Bratušek and Viktor Orbán also had a brief working meeting on the occasion and signed a memorandum of understanding on the development of road infrastructure. The two countries expect to construct six new cross-border road links in addition to the eight already in existence.

Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA



The meeting examined the priorities, needs and tasks required to make the crackdown on corporate crime and corruption even more effective, agreeing that positive steps had been taken recently; however, Bratušek also said that there was still a “huge” amount of work ahead.

## To restore people’s trust

Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek pledged her government’s continued commitment to combating white-collar crime after meeting of officials responsible for fighting corruption.

The meeting hosted by Alenka Bratušek was attended by the interior and justice ministers, the police commissioner, the state prosecutor general, heads of the criminal police and the Specialised State Prosecution Service, and the outgoing head of the country’s anti-graft watchdog. The meeting agreed that the key task was to restore people’s trust in equality before the law, Bratušek said, adding that the fight against corruption would remain a key priority for her government, which would also be reflected in the emerging coalition agreement.

## A key building for the Slovenian minority

The Italian region Friuli-Venezia Giulia has officially handed over to the Slovenian minority a building in the border city of Gorizia that is vital to the minority.

The keys were ceremoniously given to Martina Strain, the head of the National and Study Library. A building was designed in 1903 by Maks Fabiani (1865–1962), a prominent Slovenian architect, and built in 1905. At that time, it housed a bank and was also used by the Slovenian community of Gorizia. Gorizia Mayor Ettore Romoli expressed his belief that the mansion would become the cultural centre of the city and a place where the Slovenian and Italian communities promoted coexistence. He pledged that the city would continue to work to fully implement the 2001 Slovenian minority protection law.



Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

Among those attending the handover ceremony were Eliška Kersnič Žmavc, the Slovenian Consul General in the city of Trieste, and several members of the Slovenian minority, including Italian MP Tamara Blažina and Igor Gabovec, Vice-President of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Regional Council (parliament).

## Slovenia's candidacy for the UN Secretary-General

The Slovenian Government has taken the decision to support former President Danilo Türk's candidacy for UN Secretary-General. It will offer all the content-related support within its capabilities.

In 1992, Danilo Türk was appointed the first Ambassador of Slovenia to the UN Headquarters in New York; as Slovenian Ambassador, between 1998 and 1999, when Slovenia was a non-permanent member to the UN Security Council, he twice chaired the council's sessions. In 2000, Mr. Türk was appointed by then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan as his assistant for political affairs, and performed this function for more than five years.



Photo: Tanino Pečelnšek/STA

Slovenia belongs to the group of Eastern European countries, which have not yet had their own UN Secretary General.

Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA



As pointed out by Minister Erjavec at the end of his address, economic diplomacy remains the essential element of the Slovenian foreign policy.

## Foreign policy strategy

In mid-June, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs organised the Consultations of Slovenian Diplomats. The main topic was "New Slovenian foreign policy strategy".

Current changes in the international community call for considering a new foreign policy strategy, whose main focus will remain the commitment to peace, safety and prosperity of Slovenian citizens. Slovenia will regulate its position as regards public finances, and thus prove that it is still a credible member of the European Union. Currently at the multilateral level, candidacy for membership on the Human Rights Council is the top priority.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Karl Erjavec, touched upon neighbourly relations, which he assessed as friendly. In his opinion, in the area of foreign policy, Slovenia is successfully developing strategic partnerships. The Ambassadors were also addressed by the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, and the Slovenian Prime Minister, Alenka Bratušek. They both believed that the key task of the Government and its representatives abroad is to restore trust in the credibility, efficiency, openness and attractiveness of Slovenia.

## Elite club of the most successful

The most successful Slovenian entrepreneurs have joined the Slovenian Business Club. Marjan Batagelj, CEO of Postojnska jama d.d. Postojna, was elected President of the Club.

Among its values, the Slovenian Business Club highlights collegiality and networking among entrepreneurs. Entry conditions for club membership are strict in terms of high moral standards, since the associated entrepreneurs do not wish to be involved in tycoon stories, but rather to cooperate with fair and socially responsible individuals. The aim of the Club is to establish links for the presentation of Slovenian companies in foreign markets. At the presentation, the members also pointed out that the Club does not represent a competition to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry or to the Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia.



Photo: Nebojša Tejič/STA

Among the Club members are: President of the Management Board of Akrapovič company, Igor Akrapovič; owner of the Seaway company, Japec Jakopin; owner of the Elekronček company, Joc Pečičnik, and others.

# Investment conferences

## A tool to boost economic growth

The Slovenian Government supports new foreign direct investments as a tool to boost economic growth and economic stability, reduce unemployment, and enhance the well-being of the population and the integration of Slovenia in international business.

Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA



According to Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek, privatisation, one of the cornerstones in the recovery of the Slovenian economy will be carried out through transparent public tenders in which priority will be given to strategic partners that are interested in establishing a long-term presence in the country and have promising plans for the enterprise. Privatisation procedures will be carried out transparently, and it is important to find strategic partners with long-term interests for all Slovenian companies.

### **WE HAVE TO EXPLOIT THE COMPLEMENTARITY WITH GERMANY**

The first investment conference was held in Düsseldorf, since Germany is Slovenia's most important trading partner. Bilateral

trade in goods and services between Slovenia and Germany amounts to almost EUR 10 billion; nevertheless, the potential for expanding cooperation on trade as well on investments is much greater. Business cooperation between Germany and Slovenia has proved to be successful, as the companies involved generally operate well, employ a workforce, use higher added-value technologies, and are predominantly export oriented.

In Düsseldorf, Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek stressed that business cooperation between Slovenia and Germany should be even stronger. At the investment conference, attended by representatives of 80 companies, including RWE, Eon, Deutsche Bank and Messer, she and the Minister

of Finance, Uroš Čufer, presented investment opportunities in Slovenia.

Apart from privatisation, many other possibilities for cooperation exist in tourism, the automotive sector, telecommunications and information technology and the wood processing industry. "We have to exploit the complementarity of our two economies. The government is ready to help by removing red tape and actively supporting the process," added Ms Bratušek.

### **FRANCE WANTS MORE OF ITS COMPANIES IN SLOVENIA**

According to the participants, the investment conference in Paris was held in an atmosphere of trust, optimism and a fresh open-

The Prime Minister of Slovenia Alenka Bratušek and the Prime Minister of Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev both agreed that in recent years the two countries have developed very good relations and strong economic cooperation. There is, nevertheless, still ample scope for fostering further cooperation in this area.

The two prime ministers discussed the strategically important South Stream gas pipeline, which must be implemented in accordance with EU legislation.



Photo: Daniel Novaković/STA

In his welcome address, Italian Prime Minister Enrico Letta noted the great interest shown in Italy in Slovenia's privatisation process.

ness of Slovenia to new investments. The conference was attended by more than 20 leading managers of internationally recognised French companies in the fields of infrastructure, transport, civil engineering, energy, defence and banking. Last year, total trade exceeded EUR 2 billion, while Slovenian exports to France amounted to EUR 1.2 billion and imports of some EUR 950 million. The Prime Minister presented opportunities as part of the privatisation plan, and expressed her belief that the conference means "an important step forward in strengthening economic and business relations between Slovenia and France". She added that the existing investments can be further enhanced. Numerous exemplary cases of French investors in Slovenia, e.g. Societe Generale, Lactalis, Renault and Peugeot prove Slovenia's openness and quality.

Following the investment conference, the Prime Minister met with the French President Hollande, who reaffirmed the confidence of France in Slovenia. They discussed the financial stability of Slovenia, and President Hollande assessed Slovenia's plans for regulating public finances as "courageous". In the future, bilateral cooperation will strengthen French investments in Slovenia.

**THE OBJECTIVE IS TO INCREASE ECONOMIC COOPERATION WITH ITALY**

Economic cooperation between Slovenia and Italy is very intense, as Italy ranks third among Slovenia's foreign-trade partners. In 2012, Slovenian exports to Italy were worth EUR 2.38 billion, while imports stood at EUR 4.10 billion in goods and services. The share of Italian tourists in the foreign tourist visits to Slovenia is 19,3%.

The Slovenian-Italian investment conference was attended by approximately 150 representatives of Italian companies and other interested public from Italy, and also some representatives of Slovenian companies. At the investment conference, the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Uroš Čufer, together with Spirit Agency representatives, presented the privatisation of state holdings in selected companies.

The Prime Minister further pointed out that Italy represents a European and global economic superpower for Slovenian companies, and therefore the Slovenian Government is striving to enhance economic cooperation between the two countries. It is precisely because the two coun-

tries are important economic partners that the investment conference in Italy is of utmost importance to Slovenia. She added that "the current Italian partners see Slovenia as a country attractive for their business expansion because they appreciate its motivated labour force, which has a good command of foreign languages, its favourable tax environment, good geographical position, export orientation, innovativeness and other favourable factors".

In the course of the investment conference, the two countries signed an accession treaty for Expo Milano 2015.

**SLOVENIA IS A STRATEGIC PARTNER OF RUSSIA IN THE BALKANS**

During her working visit to Moscow, the Prime Minister met the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev. The two prime ministers discussed the strategically important South Stream gas pipeline, which must be implemented in accordance with EU legislation. Prime Minister Bratušek expressed her expectation that an agreement would be reached between Russia, the European Commission and the EU Member States.

In the course of the investment conference, the two countries signed an accession treaty for Expo Milano 2015.





The Slovenian-Russian investment conference was attended by approximately 60 representatives of Russian companies and other interested public, who followed with interest the presentation of investment projects and opportunities offered by Slovenia. As well as the Prime Minister of Slovenia, Alenka Bratušek, the conference was also attended by the Minister of Communications and Mass Media of the Russian Federation, Nikolai Nikiforov. According to data for 2012, the Russian Federation ranks the seventh among Slovenia's most important trade partners. In terms of the value of Slovenian DFI, Russia ranks fifth. In 2012, Slovenian exports amounted to EUR 881.2 million and imports to EUR 362.3 million. In 2012, 395 Slovenian companies exported to Russia and 200 companies imported; by the end of 2012 these (transactions) were worth EUR 325.8 million, while the value of DFI from the Russian Federation at the same time amounted to EUR 46.7 million.

The participants were addressed by the Minister of Communications and Mass Media of the Russian Federation, Nikolai Nikiforov,

who stressed that such events make a good basis for increasing trade between the two countries, as companies from both countries are offered a better opportunity to spread their joint development projects, both in the single market of the European Union, which includes Slovenia, as well as in the market of the Russian Federation. He said that Slovenia and Russia have traditionally warm and friendly relations, while Slovenia is a strategic partner of Russia in the Balkans.

There are ample opportunities for furthering cooperation between the two countries in the fields of clean energy, renewable energy sources, energy security within the EU context, the automotive industry, telecommunications and IT technology, public infrastructure, tourism, civil engineering, pharmacy and food processing.

#### **CONGRATULATIONS AT THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL MEETING**

At the December meeting of the European Council, the Prime Minister presented Slovenia's results of the stress tests and re-

ceived congratulations for a job well done in the banking sector. According to the PM, all the energy will be now focused on rehabilitating the economy, tackling the problem of youth unemployment, and healthcare reform. In this regard, she pointed out the great interest that foreigners have in Slovenian companies.

The European Council endorsed the opening of accession negotiations with Serbia in January. The Prime Minister believes that the integration of the Western Balkan countries into the EU should be accelerated. She emphasised that Slovenia has supported it so far and will continue to do so, also through the Brdo Process.

Regarding the economic situation in the EU, the leaders agreed that unemployment remains high, despite the first signs of recovery, and therefore great efforts will still be required to implement the reforms. In the talks on the banking union, the agreement on the Single Resolution Mechanism reached by Finance Ministers was endorsed.

Kolektor Magnet Technology, a German subsidiary of the Idrija-based industrial conglomerate Kolektor, opens new production plant in Essen.

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Privatisation procedures will be carried out transparently, and it is important to find strategic partners with long-term interests for all Slovenian companies.

# 150th anniversary of the establishment of Južni Sokol

## With power in the fist, determination in the heart and the homeland in the mind

On the 150th anniversary of the establishment of Južni Sokol Gymnastic Society, a conference on this social activity was organised at the Museum of

Contemporary History. The primary purpose of the Sokol movement was gymnastics, while at the same time it also served to promote political ideas.



A gymnast of Ljubljana Sokol during her performance on the shaft at Ljubljana Sokol gym premises

On the one hand, the emphasis was on physical exercises intended to strengthen the body, while on the other hand, the activity was aimed at fostering the convergence of oppressed nations and thereby strengthening awareness of national identity.

### THE FIRST GYMNAS TIC SOCIETY IN SLOVENIA

In 1863, a group of Slovenian patriots in Ljubljana established the first gymnastic society in Slovenia – the Južni Sokol gymnastic society, which not only promoted physical activity, but also played an important role in strengthening Slovenian national identity. This contributed significantly to the transformation of Slovenian nationalism into a mass national movement. At the conference, Milan Pahor said that the idea of Sokol movement came to Slovenia from the Czech Republic together with some other ideas. At that

time, the Czech Republic was the most advanced among the Slavic nations within the Habsburg Empire. It was a role model for other Slavic nations. The Sokol movement was based on the ideas of the Czech ideologue Miroslav Tyrš, being of particular importance for nations living under the hegemony of Austria or Russia.

### THE HISTORY OF THE SOKOL MOVEMENT

Dr Tomaž Pavlin pointed out that the organisation of Južni Sokol was an important historical turning point. Not only was Južni Sokol a harbinger of the modern idea of exercise and physical education, but also the foundation of the development of physical activity in Slovenia which, later on in the decades before World War I, was complemented with mountaineering and sports. The 30th anniversary of the Society fell in the reform period marked by

Dr Viktor Murnik. He introduced new gymnastic terminology, organised gymnastics for women and by creating a coaching corps, finally transformed the Society's former national-awareness-raising role to a gymnastics-oriented one, thus triggering the spread of the Sokol movement throughout Slovenia. According to Dr Pavlin, the network of Sokol societies in the decades before the First World War increased, and as a result, the Slovenian Sokol Association was established in 1905, and became a member of the International Gymnastic Association in 1907, and represented the Slovenian gymnastics and Slovenian identity at world championships and joint events of Slavic Sokol movements. This also represented the largest gatherings of Slovenian people in the second half of the 19th century, i.e. when Slovenia existed only as a national-political manifesto "Zedinjena Slovenija" (United Slovenia). Thus, in

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Members of Ljubljanski Sokoli are having a picnic at Kastelcov's farms after the excursion in 1921

the period before the onset of the World War, the Slovenian Južni Sokol gymnastic society played a key role in promoting modern club-based sporting organisations in Slovenia, while at the same time strengthening awareness of Slovenian national identity and contributing significantly to the transformation of Slovenian nationalism into a mass national movement.

By the end of the First World War and the establishment of the Yugoslav State, the Slovene Sokol societies had joined the Croatian and Serbian ones in the Yugoslav Sokol Association. As regards competitions, the Yugoslav gym-

nastic teams were generally represented by members of Slovenian Sokol societies; among them was Leon Štukelj, who joined Sokol in Novo mesto in 1907 and later on participated in three Olympic Games, where he won six Olympic medals. In this regard, it should be mentioned that all the Yugoslav Olympic medals won before World War II went to Sokol members, and that in the years 1924-1936 there were only two non-Slovenian Sokol members among the Olympic gymnasts. During the occupation in 1941, the Sokol movement supported the resistance, and by liberation in 1945 it had become the foundation of the organised pro-Soviet

gymnastics, and thus ceased to exist as the former Sokol organisation. This type of organisation was in place until Cominform in 1948; afterwards, a gymnastic association under the name 'Partizan' and later on 'Narodni dom' was established. Thus, the Sokol movement and Sokol club survived different social systems, such as the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Yugoslav monarchy, and socialism; in terms of membership, Narodni dom now ranks among the biggest sports societies in Slovenia. They produced immortal sports heroes such as Miro Cerar, Mitja Petkovšek, Sašo Bertonec, who all upheld the core values of the Society.

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Members of Ljubljana Sokol in 1969

Petra Majdič

## Coaches and competitors must have the best conditions

As the leader of the Slovenian Olympic team, Petra Majdič, bronze medallist at the Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver, is closely involved in the preparations for the Winter Olympics in Sochi in February. Her main concern is that the team has the best possible conditions to compete successfully.

**Petra Majdič** is the most successful Slovenian cross-country skier in the history of the sport. She achieved 20 victories in the World Cup, while at the World Championships in Sapporo in 2007, she won the silver medal in the classic sprint, which was the first Slovenian medal in cross-country skiing at major competitions. Among her many achievements, she also won Small Crystal Globes in the Cross-Country World Cup in women's sprints in the 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 seasons and a bronze medal at the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver in the classic sprint. Majdič has been voted Slovenian female athlete of the year on no fewer than three occasions.



Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA



**As the best Slovenian cross-country skier, this is your first time as leader of the national team at a Winter Olympics. Which role is more demanding?**

Training was undoubtedly more demanding, at least in the physical and psychological sense. Regarding stress and timing, my new role is more challenging. If I was able to schedule my own time before, this is no longer possible. My schedule now changes by the hour and is not only up to me anymore, but influenced by other people. This work demands a lot of time, which sportspeople during their active careers don't have. In addition, I have my own company, which also requires a whole person, so I don't have a lot of personal time. People have been working on this project for a year and a half, and I am certain that nothing will go wrong, regardless of who heads the delegation. I have full support and assistance of all the expert services of the Olympic Committee of Slovenia. However, my appointment to this position shows that there is a tendency in sport to actively include more former sportspeople in various roles.

**When will the final list of passengers for Sochi be known?**

Sixty-six candidates are confirmed, but of course the number can change, because all candidates must verify their qualifying performance in the current season. The number of members of the hockey team is known, i.e. twenty-five, but the names are decided by the coach or the Ice Hockey Federation of Slovenia. All the other sportspeople (not only candidates) have until 21 January to meet their qualifying requirements. Many world cup events will be held until then, where people will have the opportunity to verify their points and qualify for 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.

**How will you combine all sections of the national team, which will be quite dispersed at different venues?**

As I said before, an excellent and experienced operational team has been working for a year and a half to provide that the venues are connected to one another as much as possible. The accommodation for competitors and other staff must be booked in advance, as well as plane tickets and additional luggage. My

role is to assist them in any disputes that may arise; in short, to help them with unforeseen problems. As a former active sportswoman, my advantage is undoubtedly in the fact that I will be able to assess and anticipate the best circumstances and solutions for them. There will be three Olympic villages; two large ones and one smaller for endurance sports. The villages are about 45 km apart. Roles have been assigned already and accommodation arranged. Our 'headquarters' will be in the village of Krasnaja Poljana. The exact route of the road connections between the venues is still unknown because, as far as I know, the venues are in the final construction phase. An express train was mentioned a while ago, but we don't have any reliable information on that right now.

**Are you expecting problems when moving from one venue to another?**

Problems with transportation between the villages are possible. For example, for award ceremonies which will take place in Sochi, competitors will have little time due to all the obligations at the competition

The welcome party for Petra Majdic, the bronze medalist in the cross-country sprint at the Vancouver Olympics.

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Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

Hammer thrower Primož Kozmus (left) and cross-country skier Petra Majdič receive the award for best Slovenian athletes in 2009.

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venue (flower ceremony, press conference, drug tests) to make it to the official award ceremony in Sochi. The award ceremony programme will probably be adjusted and the presentation of medals for each competition will not be held on the same day as the competition. It will be difficult to quickly, timely and efficiently coordinate transport between the villages, but the operational team and individual competitors and their teams have vast experience from world cups and I am certain that we will succeed. I will try to be present at all venues, which means that we will be very mobile. The hosts have guaranteed us a high level of security. Sochi is not very populated and there is a lack of accommodation facilities, which has been solved by cruise ships, which will serve as substitute hotels.

**The weather conditions may also be very unpredictable.** That is true. There is a lot of snow at the venue currently, but

a warm wind could blow and it will be gone. There is a big difference between artificial and natural snow, but we are not always aware of that. The spectators and sponsors expect results, but many things depend on luck, including the weather and such. I expect the security and weather conditions to be extreme in a way. If one metre of snow falls, we will be unable to move between the villages quickly. Two cable-cars will be running into two villages in the hills, one for competitors and one for spectators. The problem is that we don't know how many people they will be able to take. You see, when there are no people there, everything works perfectly, but once there is a mass of people, unpredictable complications may arise. But I don't think many spectators will come to the Olympics, mainly because of difficult access by cable-car and car.

**Slovenia House will be absent this time, as at the London Summer Olympics.**

That is true, unfortunately. Because the Russians have set extreme prices for putting up the house or renting property, we decided not to put up the house. Several alternatives are being explored, and the marketing team of the Olympic Committee of Slovenia is as always doing its best in this field. We are in discussions with one of our representations in Sochi to hold different events at their showroom. We are also exploring the option of leasing a hall for celebrations – if we win a medal – in the hotel below the Main Olympic Village, where FIS delegates are to be accommodated. We are all well aware of the situation that Slovenia copes with, and it remains to be seen whether it is wise for Slovenia House to be absent from the Olympics again. We must note that Slovenia House is not the responsibility of the Olympic Committee of



Slovenia, but of Slovenian tourism, business and also the Government.

**How will the promotion of Slovenia be implemented generally?**

We have good past experience. The Olympic Committee of Slovenia has successfully cooperated with sponsors, and also organised a plane for Slovenian fans, and thus sent the largest organised delegation of fans to the London Olympics. The response was very good, and this will be repeated again on a smaller scale. The main promoters will be the team themselves. Slovenia's best promotion will be its sportspeople, their results and also its recognised colours, which were already presented at the Summer Olympics. SPIRIT Slovenia will have to take care of everything else. Discussions are being held to arrange for high state and governmental repre-

sentatives to come to the Olympics in Sochi.

**What about the coordination of journalists and press conferences?**

It will be conducted according to established guidelines. Journalists will be able to approach sportspeople regularly. I emphasise that sportspeople will be in the forefront and everything will work to their benefit. By this I mean that particularly the main candidates for medals have full schedules. They don't have only one competition, and will be available to the press a day or two before their competitions. Journalists will have access to venues and press conferences will be organised when medals are awarded. The venue for press conferences will be in the Main Village. For example, the hockey team will have a press conference in Sochi, and journalists will have to be as

flexible as us – the members of the organisational committee – while travelling from one village to another in order to interview competitors. But that will be decided on the spot.

**What are your predictions for medals?**

We have many superb competitors and many are candidates for medals. I am being asked why Slovenians perform much better at world cups than at the Olympics. The answer lies in the fact that large teams have many comparable competitors and we have only one; for example, there is only one Tina Maze, who must do her best in every race; there is no rest in between. As a rule, large nations withdraw their main favourites and only bring them to the Olympics, where they excel. We cannot afford to do that, because we are too few. But don't worry, we will not return without a medal.

Cross-country skier Petra Majdic (left) and alpine skier Tina Maze (right) were decorated with medals for services by former Slovenian President Danilo Türk

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We must note that Slovenia House is not the responsibility of the Olympic Committee of Slovenia, but of Slovenian tourism, business and also the Government.



Photo: Staniko Gruden/STA

Petra Majdič, bronze medallist at the Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver, 18 February 2010, Whistler, Canada (right) shares the podium with winner Marit Bjoergen (centre) and silver medalist Justyna Kowalczyk (left).

**Sochi Olympic Park** was built on the coast of the Black Sea in the Imeritin Valley, and it will be the venue for the medal ceremonies.

- Bolshoy Ice Dome – ice hockey; 12,000 spectators
- Shayba Arena – ice hockey; 7,000 spectators
- Adler Arena – ice skating; 8,000 spectators
- Iceberg Skating Palace – figure skating, short track speed skating; 12,000 spectators
- Ice Cube Curling Center; 3,000 spectators
- Fisht Olympic Stadium – ceremonies; 40,000 spectators
- Main Olympic Village
- International Broadcast Centre

**Krasnaja Poljana** is the scene for all winter sports:

- ‘Laura’ Cross-country Ski & Biathlon Centre – biathlon, cross-country, Nordic combined (skiing)
- ‘Rosa Khutor’ Extreme Park – freestyle skiing and snowboarding
- ‘Rosa Khutor’ Alpine Centre – Alpine skiing
- ‘Sanki’ Olympic Sliding Centre – bobsleigh, luge
- ‘RusSki Gorki’ Jumping Centre – ski jumping and Nordic combined (ski jumping)
- Rosa Khutor Plateau

But don't worry we will not return without a medal.



Photo: Archives of GCO

Sochi



## Prehistoric skiing at Bloke

# Are Slovenians really a skiing nation?

The Bloke Plateau, or Bloke, is located at the very edge of Notranjska between Cerknica Field and the valleys of Lož and Ribnica. Bloke is known as the cradle of old folk skiing and as the geographical centre of former Carniola. It

is one of Slovenia's most distinctive plateaus, famous for livestock farming and woodenware production. In terms of the number of villages and hamlets, it is one of the most populated areas of Notranjska.

Photo: Archives of SEM



Nature is still pristine here in the land of fresh air and healthy sun. The variegated landscape offers excellent opportunities for hiking, cycling or horseback riding and cross-country skiing in winter (Bloke cross-country ski marathon). Slovenians' certainty to be a skiing nation is connected with the latter. But is that true?

### THE CRADLE OF SKIING

Bloke was first mentioned in written documents in 1260, the

settlement of Nova vas in 1341. When considering 'Bloke skiing', it has to be stressed that it was first described in 1689 by polymath Janez Valvasor in *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola* as motion on skis in high snow. At the time, the people of Bloke were the only ones in Central Europe using skis to move on snow. According to this theory and historical facts, the Bloke Plateau was thus the cradle of old folk skiing.



Photo: Archives of SEM

### SKI PRODUCTION

The people of Bloke made skis from hard woods, preferably from old beech, because of its thick and even annual rings, which make it easy to split and bend. Elsewhere, other varieties of wood were used, such as birch because it is greasy and slippery. Maple, pear, elm, ash and cherry were also highly regarded. They liked to use old, already bent beech wood, because it did not require additional bending. The people of

Left: Nered's father from Škufče with his granddaughters.

Right: The original and primary function of skis was transportation. They also served as a means of communication between settlements.

In Valvasor's time, the people of Bloke were the only ones in Central Europe to use skis to walk or move downhill in snow. This unique phenomenon has been discussed by many local and foreign researchers (Boris Orel, Svetozar and Aleš Guček, Metod and Rudolf Badjura, Borut Batagelj and others).



Photo: Archives of SEM

Bloke used skis to transport water, wood, woodenware and cereals, and also coffins on special funeral skis. Bloke skiers were masterful at turning corners on steep slopes, and Valvasor's enthusiasm for their downhill skiing techniques is not surprising. But we must not overlook the second, also very important means of transport, i.e. the snowshoes that the people of Bloke used for lengthy walks on snow and for poaching, particularly when the snow was wet.

On the basis of oral tradition and museum specimens, the measurements of skis can be estimated at 1.50 metre in length, about 15 centimetres in width (the older ones were about 19 centimetres wide) and up to 2 centimetres thick. The length of the front curved section was about 20 per cent of the entire length of the ski; the average height of the curve was 10 centimetres. According to existing specimens and oral tradition, the function of the binding was to fasten the front part of the foot or the tip of a shoe to a ski. Materials and manufacturing techniques for the binding varied. We must not forget the wooden stick, which was a composite part of the equipment of the Bloke skier, particularly in hilly areas.

The stick was up to 2 metres long, usually blunt. The locals called it tumpasta.

#### REVALUATION OF WINTER

In 2011, Borut Batagelj organised the exhibition, "Winter: from fear to joy", Presenting Slovenia's skiing tradition, which was significant because it introduced diverse and controversial images of winter. It featured the pleasant and unpleasant aspects of winter. Was winter hated or loved in the past? The exhibition further deepened this question, as it pointed out permanent changes in our understanding of winter. At the turn of the 20th century, the perception, experience and interpretation of winter began to change in Slovenian society. People started to accept winter much more than in the past. They were not as afraid of it as before, merely sheltering and hiding from it, but they began to admire it and take pleasure in it. Leisure time was not spent in heated rooms as often as before; people went outside instead. The revaluation of winter came about with a new view of winter combined with romanticism and adventure. This was especially seen in the introduction of new winter sports in the second half of

the 19th century. Sledding, skating and skiing were completely new types of activity in townspeople's daily life. A new type of socialising developed, which was no longer related to spending time indoors. Before, winter had always been considered a season for theatre and balls, for sitting about in fancy cafes and inns on the one hand and in various cheap bars and smoky dives on the other hand. People started to enjoy lighted skating rinks. Fashion and new customs also began to evolve.

#### A SKIING NATION

Slovenians consider themselves a skiing nation. It is practically impossible to find one who has not heard of Tina Maze, Mateja Svet, Bojan Križaj and the products of the Elan company. The majority of Slovenians can ski or at least skate. However, this image may also be stereotypical. Batagelj has proposed that Slovenians are considered a skiing nation not only because of Bloke skiing, but also because of pop culture. "Bloke skiing was abused; it became a rhetorical moment. All the Slovenian terminology, i.e. terms such as ski or skiing derive from Bloke skiing. But on

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Batagelj believes that skiing in Slovenia, similarly to Austria, had an important state-forming role. The independence of Slovenia is quite obviously connected with skiing. After only a few months of independence, the Slovenian national team competed in the 1992 Olympic Games in Albertville, France.

the other hand, Bloke skiing in a way failed due to modern skiing.” In Batagelj’s opinion, Slovenians are lucky that Valvasor minutely described and provided evidence of Bloke skiing. In Croatian Lika (southwest Croatia, near the Velebit mountain range), no such records of the origin of skiing exist, only assumptions. Skis were known as “rtve” in Lika, which is similar to “arte”, the expression used for pre-modern skis in Russia by Sigmund von Herberstein in Notes on Muscovite Affairs. It is also interesting that the myth of a skiing nation was preserved in Slovenia, while it is not so deeply rooted in Croatia.

### SKIING HEROES

The first Slovenian ski hero was cross-country skier Franc Smolej (1908–1996), who was from the working class; the latter is important, as skiing in the past was, and now is even more so, an expensive sport. Smolej competed for the Yugoslavia at the 1936 Winter Olympics in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, where he was tenth in cross-country skiing over 50 kilometres and eighteenth over 18 kilometres. The team were also

tenth in the 4 x 10 km relay. After the Second World War, Smolej competed for the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia at the 1948 Winter Olympics in St. Moritz, where he competed over 50 kilometres and took fifteenth place. According to Batagelj, Tina Maze particularly deviates from the Slovenian collective spirit, unlike Bojan Križaj, because she trains individually and separately from the rest of the Slovenian team.

Proving that Slovenians are not the only ones who ‘adapted’ their skiing tradition, Batagelj also provides examples of the Austrians and Norwegians. He says, “The Austrians and Norwegians also invented their own skiing traditions. Explorer Fridtjof Nansen, who created a skiing boom in 1888 with his book *The First Crossing of Greenland*, is recognised as one of the most significant figures in Norwegian skiing. He achieved one of the milestones that skiing ideology adopted as it was being developed into a system. The Austrians are even more interesting. Until 1956, they did not formally exist as a nation, but were considered Germans. They acquired their national

identity through skiing, through their heroes, and also through the momentum of a victim. When Karl Schranz was disqualified from the Olympic Games in 1972, he received a mass reception in Vienna. He was driven around in an open car like a president. The Austrians defined themselves through skiing or through the newly formed Alpine culture, also represented by the musical, “The Sound of Music”.

### SLOVENIA’S INDEPENDENCE

Batagelj believes that skiing in Slovenia, similarly to Austria, had an important state-forming role. The independence of Slovenia is quite obviously connected with skiing. After only a few months of independence, the Slovenian national team competed in the 1992 Olympic Games in Albertville, France. “Skiing was thus a state-forming and later a state-building phenomenon. After the success of the national football team, a problem arose. How could this happen, if Slovenians are a skiing nation?” asks Batagelj – a challenging question.

When considering ‘Bloke skiing’, it has to be stressed that it was first described in 1689 by polymath Janez Vajkard Valvasor in *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola* as motion on skis in high snow.



Janez Vajkard Valvasor (1641–1693) was a man of many talents (polymath). He was a natural scientist, geographer, historian, ethnographer, soldier and publisher. His most important work was an encyclopaedia, *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola* (1689), in which he also described Bloke skiing. A statue of Valvasor is situated in front of the National Museum of Slovenia in Ljubljana. The awards annually conferred by the Slovene Museum Society for achievements in the field of museumology are also named after him.

About Bloke skiing, Janez Vajkard Valvasor wrote, “Farmers in some places in Carniola – especially near Turjak and there about – are familiar with a rare invention, which I have not seen in any other country; namely, they slide down high hills on snow in winter with incredible speed into the valley. For this purpose, they use two wooden planks, a quarter of an inch thick, half a foot wide and about five feet long. The planks are bent at the front and curved upwards. A leather strap is attached in the middle of each plank into which the foot is pushed; one such plank is attached to each leg. Furthermore, the farmer also holds a hard stick in the hands. The stick is positioned under the armpit and used for support and steering while leaning the body backwards. They thus slide or, I could also say, ski or fly down the steepest slopes”.

# Elan

## The most innovative brand

The story of Elan is intertwined with exceptional innovations which over the years have dictated skiing techniques. The innovations of the Elan team have influenced the development of skiing to such a degree that beginners and the best recreational skiers may now enjoy this beautiful sport. The prestigious title of the 'Most Innovative Brand 2012', presented to Elan by the German organisation Plus X Award, proves that Elan's achievements in design and innovation are truly great.



Photo: Archives of Elan

We have discussed the history and development of the Elan factory several times. The story of Elan skis is also a story of ups and downs, enthusiasm, struggle, commitment, innovation and exclusiveness.

This time, we will not focus on the history of the company. Let us only mention that ski jumper Rudi Finžgar, who entered the history of Slovenian skiing in 1941 with his 95-metre jump, was the establisher and founding father of Elan. He combined his experience and skiing enthusiasm with knowledge, ambition and vision, and thus laid the foundations for the Elan factory in 1945. Elan soon became a renowned name among producers and exporters of skis also to the United States of America.

In its golden era, skis from the Elan factory were known as the skis of winners, probably because of top ski stars like the legendary Swede, Ingemar Stenmark, who competed on Elan skis for nearly

twenty years, and Slovenian skiing legend Bojan Križaj. Ingemar Stenmark used to use 205 cm-long skis. Today, skis are much shorter, due to Elan's innovators, who always seem to be a step ahead of the competition.

At the end of the 1980s, Elan created carving skis, which at first seemed like a joke. The world ridiculed the new, much shorter sidecut ski. At the time, nobody dared think that this would be the greatest revolution in the history of skiing and the ski industry, and that within a few years, long, completely straight skis would be obsolete.

However, the new carving technique was revolutionary and has completely changed the development of the sport.

### ELAN'S DIVISIONS TODAY

Today, Elan employs 550 people in Begunje. By repositioning the brand with intensive investment in developing new products,

the technological modernisation of production, restructuring the distribution network around the world and new marketing approaches, Elan is now the leading producer and provider of products for sports and active use of leisure time. The Elan Group is comprised of three divisions: winter, marine and sports facilities. Skis, snowboards and yachts are produced in Slovenia, snowboards in Austria, and motor boats in Croatia. Elan owns five companies that market its products in Canada, Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Japan, including independent distributors around the world.

In the field of skis, Elan is a global brand present in all skiing markets. Its products are sold in more than 48 countries, and with sales of over 300,000 pairs of skis per year, the Elan brand takes an average of 8.5 per cent share of global markets. Elan also produces some other brands, which place it among the largest production capacities in the world. 550,000

The Elan Group is comprised of three divisions: winter, marine and sports facilities. Skis, snowboards and yachts are produced in Slovenia, snowboards in Austria, and motor boats in Croatia.

Photo: Tinkara Zupari/STA



The Duke's Chair, or throne, is a translation of the German Herzogstuhl. The throne played an important part in the third part of the ceremony installing the Dukes of Carinthia: sitting on the stone, the new Duke bestowed fiefs to vassals.

– or every sixth pair of skis from more than three million pairs sold worldwide – was made in Begunje. Germany, which is considered the largest and most demanding European market, accepted Elan as one of its leading trademarks. Three values represent the foundation of the Elan ski brand: Slovenianness, true technology and specialisation.

Elan Marine produces everything for lovers of sailing. Elan Inventa is the leading company in the Western Balkans, Scandinavia and Russia, which is also entering other European markets with its products for sports facilities. Elan Wind Power is a young division of Elan Group, founded in 2009; it produces high-quality and complex composite components for the wind turbine industry. It optimises manufacturing at a world-class level, uses environmentally responsible practices and has a lean manufacturing philosophy.

#### INNOVATIONS ARE THE ONLY WAY

The development of the Elan brand is based on innovations, which is true of all divisions. The development of constructions and forms of skis has thus been underway in Elan since 1963, when they obtained their first development institute. Only two years later, two patents were introduced to the market. Because each innovation triggers the need

for another, Elan has been exciting and surprising its customers throughout its history. After launching carving skis, it amazed with its development of the Fusion integrated ski binding system, which ensured a combination of the best flexibility of the ski and weight distribution. Later, better flexibility and the torsional stability of the ski were combined in the WaveFlex technology. Elan has now taken on a new challenge and is already conquering the world with the new Amphibio technology.

#### AMPHIBIO SKIS

As the first producer of this type of ski, Elan has succeeded in combining camber and rocker profiles in one ski with Amphibio technology: the outside edge of the ski has a camber profile and features full-edge contact for perfect edge grip, while the inside edge of the ski has a rocker profile, which enables control and easy turning.

Amphibio technology thus determines which ski is left and which right. Elan was the first company in the world to develop this technology, which skiers can use to optimise the characteristics of the outer and inner edges of the skis at each turn. By way of comparison: if you were driving a Formula 1 car, you would not have to worry about losing control at any point.

#### AWARDS

Elan always cooperates with the best designers and design studios, thus ensuring the faultless design of their products. Elan has received many prestigious international design awards for its achievements in design and innovation. For the second consecutive time, the Elan brand received awards for Most Innovative Brand 2013 and Best Product 2013. Both awards are among the most important in the global competition between the best sports brands and place Elan at the top of innovation and quality.

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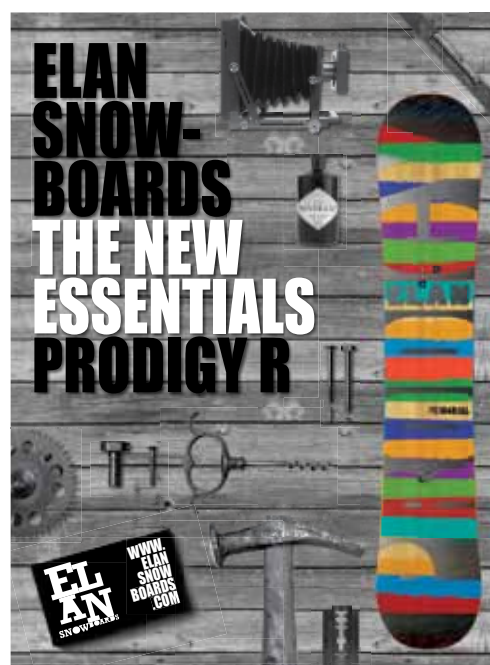


Photo: Archives of Elan

As long as we have a talented team who are passionate and also willing to make sacrifices to achieve the best possible results, the future of the Elan brand is guaranteed.

Leon Korošec, Member of the Management Board, is proud of the company's achievements: *"Elan has again proven that we can stand next to other renowned sports brands at any time. What is more, we have proven yet again that we are the best on the global scale, since we are the most innovative. In Elan, innovation is one of our virtues, because we believe that it significantly contributes to the user experience of our buyers. However, innovation requires not only patience and knowledge, but also courage. And we have all of the above at Elan, which is reflected in our products, and we will preserve these in the future as well."*

Luka Grilc, Brand and Product Director: *"Skiing developed in Slovenia; it is a national sport, and Elan is a company which plans, designs and produces the best skis in the world. We proved again that we are number one in the world in innovation and design, and that will be our direction in the future, too. This year, the jury was convinced with three*

*models that have Amphibio technology (Amphibio 14, Spectrum and SLX) and the lightest women's ski in the world, Delight. The pride and praise received at the award ceremony in Cologne will be passed on to all employees, partners and those who use Elan skis."*

Elan has also received four Plus X Awards for high quality, design and functionality for the Amphibio 14 Fusion, SLX Fusion, Spectrum 115 ALU and women's Delight skis. Elan is also the proud owner of three Red Dot Design Awards for the Amphibio 14 Fusion, SLX Fusion and Delight QT skis (the latter received a Red Dot Honourable Mention). The women's Delight QT skis also won an ISPO Award and received the Innovationpreis conferred by SkiMagazin.

In total, Elan has received the following expert recognitions: eight Red Dot Design Awards, thirteen Plus X Awards, two Universal Design Awards, the European Ski Award, the Good Design Award,

the IF Product Design Award, and a silver Designpreis Award, for which only the best products or projects that have received an internationally recognised design award may compete. Elan was also nominated for the German Design Award, which is considered the greatest award in the world of design and whose proposer is exclusively the German Design Council under the auspices of the German Ministry of Economics and Technology.

**ELAN IN THE FUTURE**

And what can we expect from Elan in the future? Luka Grilc says, "Our vision is to become number one in innovation and the design of technical sports equipment, and we will do everything in our power to achieve this objective. As long as we have a talented team who are passionate and also willing to make sacrifices to achieve the best possible results, the future of the Elan brand is guaranteed."

**Elan ambassadors and loyal followers of the Elan brand**

**Mitja Valenčič, World Cup ski racer**

I favour Elan because it is a synonym for quality and innovation. I feel very proud and honoured to be a member of Elan racing team. For me, Elan is one of the most recognised and respected Slovenian brands in the world. This is my sixth year with Elan, and I am more than happy with the skis and the support.

**Andrej Šporn, World Cup ski racer**

I believe in Elan; it meets my needs and I can co-create the skis. The brand has become a part of me. We had Elan skis since we were kids, and I am proud that I can represent my country in that way as well.

**Urška Hrovat, World Cup medallist, Elan ambassador**

I favour Elan because they are always one step ahead with innovations, technology and quality. They give the best value for money. I am proud to be connected to such an amazing and good-spirited company, which has a long and successful history.

**Peter Prevc, World Cup ski jumper**

I favour Elan because it is a Slovenian manufacturer, close to me, and has very good employees. Being a ski jumper, this brand means wings to me. I have been loyal to Elan because it never disappoints me.

**Davo Karničar, extreme skier**

Because trust is the most important foundation in addition to all our efforts. And I have complete trust in Elan. The collection of touring skis was created and is being upgraded in parallel with my sports career. Elan is part of me, like my arms, legs and heart.

**Glen Plake, skier, Elan ambassador**

I chose Elan because of their dedication to being a ski manufacturer, not just the company name, but every person working at the factory. The Elan brand represents a history of quality and passion for skiing. Elan is an emblem for the country of Slovenia, which I have come to love very much over the years and love to tell people about around the world.

Photo: Stanko Gruden



The event White Circus on the Sea was staged in Bernardin between the lagoon and the church. I feel Slovenia brand was present too.

### A WHITE SLOPE APPEARS IN PORTOROŽ

Elan always surprises. Last October, in cooperation with the Ski Association of Slovenia (SAS), they organised an event entitled “White Circus on the Sea”. A ski slope of artificial snow was made on the steps in Bernardin in Portorož. The event was attended by active competitors and legends of the ski sport. They accompanied children with their new Elan skis on their descent down the slope. The purpose of the event was to raise awareness and encourage children to spend more of their free time outdoors and on the snow.

“White Circus on the Sea” was staged in Bernardin, between the lagoon and the church. The ski track, with a total surface of 400 square metres, was made of artificial snow which was first prepared in special freezer facilities five days before the event. The snow was completely chemical-free, and lasted 24 hours in the open.

The aim of the event was to inform the public and encourage children to spend more of their free time outdoors and on the snow. For this purpose, the or-

ganisers hosted a round table discussion entitled “Bring Kids Back to the Snow”, with the following participants: the Slovenian Minister of Education, Science and Sport, Dr Jernej Pikalo; a representative of the International Ski Federation (FIS), Andrew Cholinski; a representative of the Ski Association of Slovenia, Matjaž Šarabon; brand and product director of Elan Luka Grilc, and freestyle skier Filip Flisar. They all agreed that being active in sport is vital, due to the drastic change in our lifestyle in the past few years. International research points to an alarming increase in obesity among children.

After the discussion, active competitors and legends of skiing arrived at the lagoon on yachts, where they were greeted by the visitors. Among those arriving were Christian Mayer, Filip Flisar, Andrej Šporn, Mitja Valenčič, Matic Skube, Peter Prevc, Jaka Hvala, Bojan Križaj, Davo Karničar, Glen Plake and Urška Hrovat, to name but a few. Representatives of skiing disciplines were accompanied to the slope by children, where they put on their skiing equipment and prepared for the descent. Bojan Križaj borrowed the pair of skis with which he ended

his career in Saalbach from the museum in Tržič, just for this occasion.

The organisers were very happy with the event. The President of the Ski Association of Slovenia, Primož Ulaga, said, “We are pleasantly surprised with the response to the event, and although we did have initial doubts, we now see that it is really worth going through with. There is a wish for this to become a tradition, which would encourage as many children as possible to take up skiing and maybe thus reveal some hidden talents on the white slopes.”

The representatives of Elan were also pleased with the event, which they used to present their global innovation, the so-called U-Flex ski, to the world. “The new Elan children’s skis with U-Flex technology are the softest skis on the market. They enable children to learn more easily, and, what is most important, have more fun skiing. We hope this will encourage even more kids to take up this wonderful winter sport,” concluded Luka Grilc, brand and product director of Elan.

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In its golden era, skis from the Elan factory were known as the skis of winners, probably because of top ski stars like the legendary Swede, Ingemar Stenmark, who competed on Elan skis for nearly twenty years, and Slovenian skiing legend Bojan Križaj.

Photo: Archives of Elan



## Boris Mesec, Director of Mebor company

# We have always tried to show something more

Mebor, a family business, has been manufacturing horizontal band saws for cutting logs for more than thirty years, and recording from 10 to 15 per cent annual growth in sales. The machinery made in the factory in Slovenia is supplied to customers in more than 45 countries around the world, from Europe through Siberia to Papua New Guinea. Over 95 per cent of the company's products are sold abroad, which is why it has recorded steady growth.

Photo: Archives of Mebor



The company director, Boris Mesec, comes from Sveti Lenart in the Selška valley. He started his entrepreneurial career in his twenties, when he made a horizontal band saw to cut logs to serve his own needs. He soon focused on the production of band saws and also worked in the sawing industry. In recent years, he has also been producing machinery for manufacturing wood construction elements for houses from round beams. Hard work and investments in development were followed by success in the international market.

We sawed all the time on our farm, always using our saws, so the experience gained during this process was taken into account in the development. This led to several innovations, but above all we had our own concept of a saw, which we now market successfully around the world.

**You are a very successful family business. How did your business develop?**

I made the first band saw in 1982 to meet our needs on the family farm. Because the saw worked well, the first customers began to appear. This led me to the decision to take an independent entrepreneurial path. We sawed all the time on our farm, always using our saws, so the experience gained during this process was taken into account in the development. This led to several innovations, but above all we had our own concept of a saw, which we now market successfully around the world.

**You focus primarily on foreign markets. In which countries is your presence the strongest and which firms do you cooperate with most?**

More than 95% of our machines are exported. We have over twenty agents worldwide, so a lot of machines are sold through them. Our customers are mainly individuals, because once they buy the machine, their needs are met for several years. We also have a lot of return customers who want to upgrade their sawmill lines or replace their machines with a newer model. We are very pleased that they return to us. Europe is still our

main market, but we also sell to Russia, America, Africa and Australia.

**What is the key to penetrating foreign markets?**

First of all, you have to have a good product to offer. The most important factors for us were good references, but, of course, also presentations at specialised trade fairs. We have always tried to show something more, something new, something that others do not have. We have always focused on our development and developed our own concept of saws. This gave us a certain visibility in markets and helped us



Photo: Archives of Mebor



to expand our market.

**So you are also managing to thrive in this time of economic crisis?**

It is essential that you never stay still. Development, innovation and finding new markets are required constantly. During the years of the crisis, our offer has been greatly increased. We have added new types of band saws and invested a lot of effort in the automation of our machines, because today customers look for maximally automated production with a minimum input of labour. However, we also work a lot on setting up complete sawmill lines. This means that we furnish a complete sawmill with

all the machinery and conveyors necessary for automatic cutting, from the logs to finished products such as boards and various elements stacked in packages.

**Where do you think others are making mistakes?**

It is difficult to judge the mistakes of others. We are best assisted by being export-oriented and focused on the diversification of the market. I think there is too much talk about the crisis and too little optimism. I think it makes no sense to wait for assistance from the state or who knows where. We need to trust our own knowledge and believe in ourselves, combined with hard work. The state can

best assist us with lower tax burdens. Given the situation in Slovenia, it will be necessary to be export-oriented as much as possible. As has been the case so far, the main tasks will include making improvements and developing new products, consolidating existing markets and conquering new ones.

**Due to rapid growth, you recently had to move to new premises. Which direction will your development take this year and in the future?**

The new premises offer sufficient space for growth and development, and it will also be easier to manufacture even larger sawmill lines.

The story of Boris Mesec raises optimism that the wood-processing industry in Slovenia will not disappear any time soon. Although Slovenia is the third most forested country in Europe, the wood industry has already lost a lot of jobs and most timber is exported to Austria and Italy.

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Photo: Archives of Mebor



Mebor is a genuine family company, which also employs the owner's wife, Marinka, and their sons, Uroš, Simon and Gregor. The owner's brother, Roman, and sister, Milanka, also work in the company, and his father, Albin, often offers a helping hand as well.

## Young entrepreneurs

# Startups forecast growth

It seems that in Slovenia, while large and historically established companies are deteriorating, already bankrupt or in compulsory settlement procedures, it is the young who are forecasting economic growth. In the last year, especially great successes were noted among so-called startups, most of which are run by young people.



Photo: Naborša Tejk/STA

This year, Koofr will be seeking project investments, primarily in the form of venture capital.

According to the Slovenian newspaper Finance, the Hekovnik Startup School in the Technology Park Ljubljana, Silicon Gardens, and Coinvest Platform, the most promising startups are the Mesi company, A.s.K, Enolyse, Modra Jagoda, Koofr, Fieldoo, FlyKly and CubeSensors. And what are these businesses doing?

### SUCCESS STORIES IN THE SPOTLIGHT

It is generally known that startup companies in Slovenia emerge mainly in the field of high technologies. However, the most prosperous ones are very diverse. The Mesi company is engaged in the development of high-tech medical devices; their products are already being sold in 15 countries. Last year, Enolyse was the winner of the Start Programme: Cloud, organised by the Hekovnik Startup School and Simobil, where it presented a cider fermentation monitoring sys-

tem. Koofr (details of this have already been presented in Sinfo) provide a unified programming and user interface for accessing different types of data storage on the Web. A.s.K is engaged in the development and installation of active traffic signals. Already in this month, they are going to install their tenth system, COPS@road, which preventively warns of the danger of collision. Modra Jagoda has created an information data base on medicinal products in the form of the Mediatly mobile application, which had five thousand registered users last year. Fieldoo, which has developed an online social network for connecting footballers and their agents, also had a very successful business year. They have obtained about a hundred thousand registered users and were nominated startup of the year by the German Web portal Venture Village. FlyKly has marketed a smart bike, which became a real Slovenian hit on the Kickstarter last year.

The company has announced that this year the mobile application FlyKly will also be available for standard bikes, so that they too will be able to measure speed and distance travelled. Last year, CubeSensors launched their first product – a license designed cube with special sensors which enables the user to monitor indoor air quality by means of a smart phone: the sensors can measure temperature, humidity and quality of air, level of noise and light, air pressure, vibration, and many other features.

### EXPANDING TO FOREIGN MARKETS

These Slovenian startups, considered by experts as the most promising, are aiming at very different markets. All of them want to expand to European markets and strengthen their position in the Balkans or in the countries of the former Yugoslavia. But their goals also include the promising markets of America, Asia and the

It is generally known that startup companies in Slovenia emerge mainly in the field of high technologies. However, the most prosperous ones are very diverse.

Photo: Lili Pušnik/STA



A.s.K have already been noted in Russia. In the photo: Peter Korun, Director of A.s.K

former Soviet Union. The traffic signs offered by A.s.K have already been noted in Russia, where A.s.K is to install the first system on their railways in the near future. This year, Mesi will open branch offices in Germany and France, and FlyKly smart bike has already met with great interest in America.

**BEGINNERS AND ALREADY ESTABLISHED STARTUPS**

Those who are familiar with the operations of foreign startups believe that the Slovenian ones lack experience in establishing large global companies. They also believe that in Slovenia, fewer innovative solutions as business models are created with customer

demand in mind.

One of the most successful start-up stories is the Celtra company, with its head office in Boston and branch offices in New York, San Francisco, Chicago and London, while their largest programme development team operates in Ljubljana. It has grown into a thriving modern communications company that is undergoing remarkable development in the USA, and is a global leader in the development of software applications for mobile marketing and advertising. Their key product, Celtra AdCreator, facilitates the efficient and rapid creation of mobile ads for more advanced phones and iOS, Android and ROM's OD operating

systems. Zemanta, a Slovenian-American technology company, is also very successful Active in content-based advertising, this company has already attracted eight million dollars of venture capital.

**CHALLENGES TO SUPPORT THE YOUNG**

The key question is how to enable young entrepreneurs to grow. What is really encouraging in this story is that young Slovenian entrepreneurs are full of ideas and ready for international cooperation. Therefore, it would be only appropriate for the more experienced ones to support them.

*Source: Papers Finance, Delo, and Slovenian Press Agency*

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Those who are familiar with the operations of foreign startups believe that the Slovenian ones lack experience in establishing large global companies.

Photo: Tamirno Petelinšek/STA



Photo: Tamirno Petelinšek/STA



Left: Fieldoo startup won the Investment Conference organised by Coinvest at the end of last year in Nova Gorica. Already this year, they intend to open an office in London and hire at least four new employees. In the photo: Klemen Hosta, Director of Feldoo company

Right: Last year, CubeSensors was among the hottest European startups in the hardware field; it was in the limelight at Web Summit, the European largest conference on startup companies and advanced technologies in Dublin. In the photo: Aleš Špetič, Director of CubeSensors company

# The Rajh Inn

## We all return to our roots

The tendency to return to our roots, our origins, to the place that we came from, is reflected particularly in tourism. In our free time, we like to

seek that authentic, original feature in people and places. The owners of the Rajh Inn in the village of Bakovci near Murska Sobota are well aware of it.



The Rajh family

In addition to excellent Prekmurje cuisine, they try to satisfy their guests so that they do not visit them only once, but return time and again. And they do return. They say it is for the good food, pleasant atmosphere, friendly staff and service, which is personal, sophisticated and guest-orientated. "We have

worked hard to encourage every guest to return; the motorway greatly contributed to this," they stress. The guests come from Vienna, Zagreb, Graz, Ljubljana, etc. to taste home-made, delicious and exceptionally thoughtfully served food. The customers of the Rajh Inn enjoy the originality of the place, the cuisine, customs, homeliness and authenticity, which is in plentiful supply, particularly when it comes to dishes. Pumpkin soup, rib of beef gypsy style, cold meat products; the portions were reduced, some innovations, novelties and original service added, and voilà, traditional dishes were rejuvenated.

tween the gastronomic heritage of Prekmurje and modern, innovative trends. Four generations live and work under the same roof: the grandmother, who still works in the kitchen, her son, Naci, his daughter Tanja and son-in-law, Damir, and both of their children, who are studying hospitality management in Austria, and plan to continue the family tradition and also bring an international approach to catering and service to the inn. Over the years, many generations have thus managed and planned thoughtfully, and their descendants wish to preserve their heritage and develop it.

### FOURTH GENERATION

They have been at the present location since 1969, and this is the Rajh's fourth generation. Their forebears opened the inn in 1886, so the Rajh Inn denotes family tradition in the real sense of the word. It maintains a balance be-

### HOUSE SPECIALITIES

The inn is famous for Prekmurje seasonal dishes. Several typical house specialities, such as buckwheat bread with walnuts, bograč goulash, mushroom soup with buckwheat, pumpkin soup, pumpkin cake, Prekmurje

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Pork fillet wrapped in dough, and roast polenta.



Home-made sausages with sour turnip, groat sausages, blood sausages, white, grey, and black grilled sausages

gibanica, etc. are made on a daily basis. This type of cuisine is combined with an international culinary offer. Winter specialities include roast suckling pig, pork fillet with mushroom paprikash, duck with apples, St Martin's goose with mlinci (a type of pastry) and red cabbage, roast veal liver, home-made sausages with sour turnip, Prekmurje gibanica, retaši (strudels), home-made buckwheat bread with walnuts, pumpkin cake,

bograč goulash, home-made stews and bread. White, mixed or buckwheat bread with walnuts is always on the table, accompanied by wine. Soups: exceptional pumpkin soup with pumpkin seed and hearty beef soup with liver dumplings. Liver, roasted with an abundance of onion, makes a hot starter. The picturesque nature and openness of the landscape dictate the lifestyle, combining countless flavours and possibilities for an

ingenious and unique culinary offer. For many decades, the journey to Prekmurje was considered quite a venture into the unknown, but it is now very close due to the modern motorway. This proximity is not only temporal, but is also based on knowledge of the everyday and festive occasions of the people of Prekmurje and the landscape, which contributes significantly to the beautiful diversity of Slovenian cultural life.

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The inn is famous for Prekmurje seasonal dishes. Several typical house specialities, such as buckwheat bread with walnuts, bograč goulash, mushroom soup with buckwheat, pumpkin soup, pumpkin cake, Prekmurje gibanica, etc. are made on a daily basis.



"Prekmurska gibanica" is a special cake made in eastern Slovenia. It is made out of poppy seeds, walnuts, apples, raisins and cottage cheese.

# Oskar Kogoj – creator of images

## Venetic Horse

Although forms define the external appearance of an object, the forms created by designer Oskar Kogoj come from the inside out. His creativity is derived from his own inner world and spirituality, and from his love of life and ev-

erything living. Curiosity and the investigation of life's mysteries provide his work with additional value. Eventually, he conscientiously reaches for the divine with his perceptions and everything that surrounds us and is inside us.

I discussed with Oskar Kogoj the motifs and symbolism of the Venetic horse and the symbols characteristic of Slovenian culture. Oskar Kogoj could clearly be described as a nationally conscious Slovene as well as a member of the Veneti. He describes himself as a researcher. "When we find the truth, we are all brethren," he says.

### VENETIC HORSE

The depiction of the Venetic horse is one of the most prominent, dating to the older Halstatt period. Several centuries later, when it was depicted on situlae, both Greek and Roman authors mentioned the Veneti as the best horse breeders. The depiction of horses was widespread, but not as realistic as in Ancient Greek and Roman art, but rather stylised.

The stylised depiction of horses reflects the animals' spiritual nature, which is not evident in their natural state. Kogoj was instantly attracted by the Vače situla bearing the image of a horse, which inspired him to create an outsize statue of the Venetic horse. "Every Slovenian home should have a statue of this horse," he insists. His Venetic horse was created at a time when the researchers Jožko Šavli, Ivan Tomažič and Matej Bor were intensively researching the history of the Veneti and studying their historical relations with the Slavs. The essence of their views is that 1) Slovenes had lived in the area they presently occupy long before the alleged settlement in the 6th century AD, 2) the term Veneti refers to Western Slavs, 3) Slovenes are descended from Veneti, 4) the Venetic and the Slovene languages are related. Kogoj was overwhelmed by this subject. He says: "I would also

Oskar Kogoj sees many things that other people pass by without paying attention, and he sees in them much more. He can inspire things with timelessness.

The depiction of his Venetic horse expresses the following idea: "A nation that loses its historical memory wanders its way into the future."



Photo: Archives of GCO

like to contribute to, ascertain, upgrade and maintain my awareness of who I am and where I come from." And, indeed, Kogoj's shapes are circular and are softly rounded off, revealing a state of mind in a quest for reality within one's own self. Even a stone is accorded its proper place in his work. He enthusiastically shows me around his studio. Some may find in it, perhaps, only boxes with various elements of nature: cicadas, stones, shells in a rock, roots, trees, eggs, etc. But, in fact, it is a story about life and know-

edge about ancestors and the wonderful perfection of nature. "You see how perfect this egg is?" he asks me. He then walks up to a vase with various sticks and tells me a story about each of them: this one is made of a fig tree root, another one from part of an animal's body combined with wood. Oskar Kogoj sees many things that other people pass by without paying attention, and he sees in them much more. He can inspire things with timelessness.

## THE VENETI

“Slovenes are a special people. Look how many civilisations have died out, while the Slovenes have survived. Slovenes are direct descendants of the Veneti. As long as we preserve our values, we will be ensure our future existence”, Kogoj believes.

According to some researchers, the role of the Veneti in the ethnogenesis of the population of Central Europe is most clear at the beginning of and during the ethnogenetic development of the Slovene people. In Kogoj’s opinion, this role is a result of the importance of Slovenia’s present territory as a linking hub, which was chosen by the Veneti as their special home base.

One of the main routes of the spread of the urn tomb culture (cremation of the dead as a form of purifying an individual from all evil and smoothing the transition to the afterlife) was the Amber Road. It is this road that brought the Veneti to the territory of present-day Slovenia and further on to Italy and the Eastern Alps area between 1200 and 1000 B.C. Slovenia became their special home base, as demonstrated

by the large number of urn burial sites and artefacts found at these sites. Apart from the evidence of previous cultures, little is known about these early settlers of our area. There can be no doubt that this people succumbed to the large-scale influx of settlers who brought along their urn tomb culture. This amalgamation could be referred to as the birth of the Slovene nation or the beginning of its ethnicity.

## NATIONAL VALUES

“The (Slo)Vene(tic) language which was then spoken in this area was almost identical to the modern Slovene, which makes it similar to the Sanskrit preserved in the Veda in its original millennial form,” says Kogoj. “Even the dual has been preserved only in the aforementioned two and in the Sorbian languages, which is indicative of their ancient origins,” he adds enthusiastically. In his view, the denial of old Slovene ethnicity in these parts is a result of political opposition and the jealousy of those who are envious of role of the Slavic peoples’, and particularly of the Slovenes’, which was so important to the development of European culture and history. “There was also no

evidence of the Slovenian population’s disappearance or Romanisation during the era of the Roman Empire. On the contrary, historic evidence and linguistic traces point to the continued development of the Slovene language and, consequently, the Slovene nation from its beginnings to the present day,” adds the artist. He believes that Slovenes should pay more attention to this issue: “How much longer do we have to wait for Slovenian science to take a clear stand on national values dating back to our oldest history?”

The depiction of his Venetic horse expresses the following idea: “A nation that loses its historical memory wanders its way into the future.”

Oskar Kogoj’s Venetic horse is a creation of his hands and soul, his own understanding of the world and values. It is a statuette of a horse that has no match elsewhere in the world. A copy of it also stands near Sochi, Russia, the site of the forthcoming Winter Olympics. This event will also provide visitors with an opportunity to see and admire Kogoj’s sculpture. The Sochi version of Venetic horse is green, green like Slovenia.

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The Sochi version of Venetic horse is green, green like Slovenia.

The sculpture by Oskar Kogoj quickly attracted a great deal of attention. Copies stand in several locations around the world: in front of the United Nations Palace in Geneva, in the Nebug complex at the Black Sea coast, in front of the former Jerusalem Parliament building, and in the WTC Building in Ljubljana and at Mestni trg in Slovenj Gradec, Slovenia.

Photo: Archives of Gallery Miren



# Eva Peterson Lenassi

## A studio that preserves tradition

Eva Peterson Lenassi is a sculptor and ceramics designer. She completed part of her studies at Indiana University Bloomington in Indiana, USA. Her work is directed mainly towards the preservation of traditions passed down from generation to generation. She is interested in folk heritage and believes that traditional crafts have already to a large extent figured out the rules of aesthetics. Therefore she is trying to preserve the tradition of pottery, which is currently in decline in Slovenia.

In her studio at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum in the heart of Ljubljana, which serves as workshop, shop and classroom, she and her co-workers create unique pottery ware. One of the purposes of the studio is to teach children, adults, families, companies and other individuals under the slogan "Play in Clay". In addition to designing earthenware and porcelain, the studio also carries out experiments and research, manufactures and exhibits pottery, presents traditional pottery-making and artistic and small-series production, and makes replicas. The studio emphasises that the most important thing is the process and not the final product.

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The studio emphasises that the most important thing is the process and not the final product.



Photo: Archives of Fato Pauli



Photo: Personal archives

Ms Peterson Lenassi is currently focused on the making of replicas. Next year she plans to make traditional potica baking dishes from the region of Bela Krajina, which went out of use in the 1930s. For this purpose she will undergo training in Serbia, where similar techniques, materials and processing methods are still in use.



In the period leading up to New Year, the workshops on making St. Nicholas figurines, Nativity scenes and decorations are particularly well attended. The warmth of the Nativity scenes and decorations is achieved with soft forms and light painting in different techniques.

Ms Peterson Lenassi has invited Slavica Cvetek, a master of painting on Kamnik majolikas (characteristic wine jugs), which is an almost extinct Slovenian art, to participate in the studio's projects. The majolika was developed at a time when Slovenians were forming their visual identity and has come to be considered as a characteristic Slovenian object. With the aim of ensuring that the knowledge and skills of underglaze painting are not lost, Ms Cvetek participates in the making of hearts, Easter eggs, Nativity scenes and other projects, the purpose of which is to create original Slovenian souvenirs with traditional decorations and without kitschiness.



Photo: Personal archives



Photo: Personal archives



Photo: Personal archives

There are also many foreigners creating in the studio. They are mostly interested in Slovenian pottery ware, but some of them devote themselves to working with clay and the learning of traditional Slovenian techniques. Another artist helping Ms Peterson Lenassi is the Argentinean painter Guillermo D. Escalanto Rodriguez. Together they make clay bowls with painted inner surfaces, on which they write verses and thoughts by famous artists. Here they are participating in the AAI (Articulacion Artistica Internacional), which is an international interdisciplinary group of people meeting in the virtual and real worlds to exchange poetry, thoughts and created images.

The pottery studio is a place where Slovenian and foreign traditions are respected and given a chance to be preserved. Workshops are intended for anyone who wishes to work creatively and is not too intent on the final product. After all, it is the process of creation that really counts.

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Photo: Personal archives

## Mlada beltinška banda

# There is something magical in those melodies

Mlada beltinška banda are a folk music band from the heart of the Slovenian region of Prekmurje. The band was formed in 1997 as a successor to the legendary Kociper-Baranja Band. Their work has undoubtedly also been inspired and influenced by the music of the Slovenian 'Bob Dylan' – Vlado Kreslin.

The band was founded in order to nurture the tradition of Prekmurje folk music as a successor to both the legendary Kociper-Baranja Band – also known as Beltinška banda (Vlado Kreslin's former backing ensemble) and to whom they refer with their name – and Marko banda.

Mlada beltinška banda: Miha Kavaš (violin), Blaž Ščavničar (clarinet), Dani Kolarič (cembalo), David Santro (accordion), Luka Ščavničar (double bass).

### SUCCESSORS TO BELTINŠKA BANDA

Mlada beltinška banda was formed in 1997 by members of the folklore ensemble of the cultural arts society in the town of Beltinci. The band was founded in order to nurture the tradition of Prekmurje folk music as a successor to both the legendary Kociper-Baranja Band – also known as Beltinška banda (Vlado Kreslin's former backing ensemble) and to whom they refer with their name – and Marko banda. The band was founded on an ad-hoc and spontaneous basis. First the boys accompanied the Beltinci folklore group and then continued on their own. As they say themselves, "We felt that we had to follow our own path."

Originally a 10-member ensemble, over the years the band became a quintet consisting of Dani Kolarič on cimbalom,

Blaž Ščavničar on clarinet, David Santro on accordion, Miha Kavaš on violin, and Luka Ščavničar on double bass.

Their repertoire includes traditional folk songs from Prekmurje, Bela krajina, Hungary, Russia, and some others songs from individual authors, and is inspired by rhythms and melodies from all over Central, East and South-east Europe. "We are rockers at heart," they joke. All of them are employed, with a few of them playing music professionally. "We did not want to think about the fact that we would have to play more mainstream music if we were to survive," they say. They also say that leaving Prekmurje is not an option for them: "Prekmurje has a special atmosphere that suits our music. The fact that all of us are from here makes it easier for the entire band to organise itself." Indeed, time passes more slowly in Prekmurje.

There is something magical in the words, melodies and intriguing beauty of songs that have become part of Slovenia's national identity, awareness, and folklore. With their creativity, the musicians of Mlada beltinška banda are also part of these musical endeavours. Even the most enthusiastic lovers of modern music will not be left indifferent by their arrangements.

### OUR MUSIC IS FOR AN APPRECIATIVE AUDIENCE, NOT FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC

They enjoy making music. They were Vlado Kreslin's guest backing band at Cankarjev dom, the biggest cultural centre in Slovenia, while on another occasion, they played for an audience of only three people. But they do not mind, because what matters most to them is quality and personal satisfaction.



Photo: Archives of Mlada Beltinška banda



“We are one of the rare music groups that maintain the folk music tradition of Prekmurje. We do no special advertising since, for the time being, we are focused on the quality of our music and on musical gourmets rather than on mass audiences. We look for opportunities to perform at our concerts,” they say.

They seek inspiration everywhere. When they find a tune that catches their ear, they create their own arrangement of it. Two of the band’s members play music professionally. One of their favourite songs is the Russian folk song Black Eyes. They are also interested in the musical traditions of Bela krajina and Primorska. “Although no one from our families was a professional singer, we sang Prekmurje folk songs at home, which is probably why this kind of music has always been dear to us. It is also true, however, that some of our parents played a musical instrument.”

#### THEY PERFORMED AT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Mlada beltinška banda have appeared on many television shows and in documentaries and performed at many festivals abroad, including at the European Parliament. The European Parliament holds an open day in Strasbourg every year at which EU Member States present themselves. In 2007, the EU newcomers Bulgaria and Romania were given the opportunity to present themselves in more detail, while this opportunity was given to Slovenia in 2008. On Sunday, 4 May 2008, within the Slovenian EU Coun-

cil Presidency, the Government Communication Office of the Republic of Slovenia (UKOM) held a full-day presentation of Slovenia. In addition to the folklore group Plamen from Škocjan na Dolenjskem, Mlada beltinška banda performed at the event. “It was an honour,” they say modestly, although it is a fact that this performance was one of their most important performances, as it was, so to speak, an “introductory” one.

They also have good memories of their performance at the Okarina Ethno Festival. “It was really impressive. The audience was great: there were a lot of young people and those who understand and appreciate music. It is a real pleasure to perform for such an audience,” they said. The Okarina Ethno Festival in Bled has a long-standing tradition. The festival is organised by the Bled Culture Institute. Its artistic director is Leo Ličof, a great lover and connoisseur of folk music. Last year, the members of Mlada beltinška banda played at the festival, delivering a high-quality performance. There was an interesting statement about their performance at the festival in the Slovenian media: that the band’s performance showed that Prekmurje folk tunes

had played an important part in the development of Slovenian folk music.

#### ŠPILAJ!

Their album Špilaj! (Play!) offers robust yet harmonious playing, delicate arrangements, finely controlled dynamics and other hidden strengths. It includes the Prekmurje adaptation of the Russian song Black Eyes, the Slovenian folk song Marko skače, the Hungarian folk song Kurizalok, and the gipsy folk song Basso. We cannot wait for their next album, because Mlada beltinška banda play from the heart.

They seek inspiration everywhere. When they find a tune that catches their ear, they create their own arrangement of it.

In the photo: Luka Ščavničar and David Santro



## In Love with Prekmurje

# Goričko Handicraft Products

“I am in love with Prekmurje and its good-hearted people, their warmth and kindness and their soul-caressing dialect, in love with the Prekmurje plains, Goričko, the wide fields and the Mura River, which has become part of me and which I lovingly call Mira. I sit in front of photos that have touched me deeply and lead me there for some years, although, much to my regret, in summer only.”

Pannart handicraft house, which houses a permanent exhibition of traditional handicraft industries.



The Toplak family - the daughter Zita, mother Terezija and father Ernest supplement the family income by producing unique baked clay products.

The above text available on the website of the Dobrovnik municipality in Prekmurje confirms the feelings one has when driving through the villages of the Prekmurje plain, where Goričko Nature Park is located. Thanks to some resourceful and industrious people, handicrafts have been thriving in the village

of Dobrovnik. The Toplak family - the daughter Zita, mother Terezija and father Ernest supplement the family income by producing unique baked clay products. In the first phase, using a model, they cut hearts out of evenly rolled clay and decorate them with hand-made roses. In the next phase, the dried hearts are baked in a pottery kiln at high temperature. The unique baked clay hearts in brown, white or a mix of colours are coated with transparent and white glaze. Baked clay hearts are packed in corrugated cardboard packaging, which are hand made by father Ernest. In addition to clay hearts, the Toplak family produces Advent wreaths, pretzels and candelabra. At the competition for the best handicraft products of Goričko, daughter Zita was awarded a Certificate of Recog-

ognition for her product, a pendant - a heart with a rose made of white clay. In this way, Zita found a job for herself, since it is hard to find work in the region.

### PREKMURSKA REMENICA

Elizabeta Urisk lives in the same village. For many years she has been colouring so-called “prekmurske remenice” - Easter eggs - using a batik technique. They have been made in Goričko for over a hundred years. Elizabeta studied the batik technique and learnt how to colour the eggs. She paints the eggs with hot wax in traditional motifs and flowery patterns. She uses red and black paint, as it was traditionally used in the past. She also manufactures etched and lace Easter eggs. She holds exhibitions in many places in Slovenia, Hungary, Austria and France.

The Toplak family





Unique baked clay products

### HONEY BISCUITS FOR CHRISTMAS

Educational worker Loreta Solarič, also from Dobrovnik, bakes honey biscuits. She started to make honey biscuits two years ago, by learning the craft from her mother-in-law and improved her knowledge at the handicraft workshop, which was organised in Dobrovnik with support from the Ministry of Culture and the European Regional Development Fund. The workshop was organised by the Pannart handicraft house, which houses a permanent exhibition of traditional handicraft industries. The exhibition presents pottery products, honey-made products and basketry made of straw, leaves and rods. The Pannart handicraft house is the centre and driving force of the handicraft industry in the area.

We asked Mrs Solarič how to bake honey biscuits. She said that first you make the dough, which is not very simple, since she needed quite some time before she learnt to do it properly. If the dough is not kneaded thoroughly, it holds air, which is not good, since the dough remains sticky. Then the dry components have to be mixed, flour and sugar sifted, baking soda and spices added. The dough should rest for 3–4 days to dry out and become firm and suitable for baking. After baking, she leaves the biscuits to rest for some days for them to dry. She makes the icing by mixing egg white and powdered sugar. The mixture should not be too liquid or too firm. At the end, she decorates the biscuits with motifs of flowers, tulips and birds. The essential ingredients in honey dough are honey and spices.

The honey must be warmed up to a proper temperature, to liquefy so that it can be more easily mixed with the flour. However, there are many possibilities when choosing spices for honey biscuits. Ready-made mixtures can be used for honey biscuits or you can make your own mixture of spices. The selection and combination of spices is optional, so the biscuits can be made with powdered ginger, cinnamon, cloves, allspice, white pepper, coriander, nutmeg or vanilla. All this creates a typical Christmas aroma. It is said that honey biscuits radiate love and bring smiles to people's faces. On behalf of the Sinfo Editorial Board, I extend to you all best wishes for the year ahead and hope you receive as many honey biscuits, love and smiles as possible.

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Thanks to some resourceful and industrious people, handicrafts have been thriving in the village of Dobrovnik.



Elizabeta Urisk from Dobrovnik has been colouring so-called "prekmurske remenice" – Easter eggs – using a batik technique. They have been made in Goričko for over a hundred years.



Educational worker Loreta Solarič, also from Dobrovnik, bakes honey biscuits. She started to make honey biscuits two years ago, by learning the craft from her mother-in-law and improved her knowledge at the handicraft workshop



Honey biscuits Loreta

## Slovenia marks the centenary of World War I

### About 'the war to end all wars'

The First World War or 'the war to end all wars', as it was perceived at the time, was indeed ruthless. It was not only merciless to soldiers on the front lines, but also took an enormous toll on civilians, as it turned out to be a total war, deeply affecting the lives of everyone.



It demonstrated the devastating explosive synergy of technical progress, dishonest international relations, mistrust, greed, brutality, cruelty, horror and lies. But the ruthless forces were opposed by heroism, sacrifice, ardent religious faith and mercy – values that should also today define an interpersonal relationship in all its aspects.

Looking back a hundred years enables us to see the great events of the Great War as new challenges: a chance to re-evaluate reactions triggered by the war and present events and phenomena connected with the war in a multilayered fashion.

#### IN MEMORY AND AS A REMINDER

Many countries will devote considerable attention to the 100th anniversary of WWI which will be marked in the coming years and Slovenia will be no exception.

In August 2012, the Slovenian Government established a National Committee for the 100th Anniversaries of WWI (2014–2018), which in cooperation with cultural, education and scientific institutions, associations and local committees will coordinate events in Slovenia during the four-year period.

The Committee will also organise or help organise annual central events and activities

dedicated to the 100th anniversaries, provide a joint visual identity, establish contacts with foreign embassies in Slovenia and Slovenian embassies abroad, as well as liaise with its counterparts in other countries.

A special web portal will be set up by spring 2014 in order to attract even more of the general public and to present not only the loss of life on the battlefields, but also the broader social repercussions of WWI. It will include factual information, a historical overview of the war and associated developments, views of various personalities, a calendar or announcements of commemorative events, a special media section and interactive content.

Several exhibitions and conferences about WWI were organised in Slovenia in 2013, with many more to follow between spring 2014 and the end of 2018: a national commemoration, museum exhibitions, travelling exhibitions, international conferences and round tables, publications, concerts, documentaries, etc.

#### SLOVENIA WILL PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN COMMEMORATIVE EVENTS ABROAD

A ceremony in the former refugee camp at Bruck upon Leitha in Austria, an international symposium entitled The Place of the

First World War in Southeastern European History in Sarajevo, an exhibition at the National Museum in Prague, the Isonzo Front exhibition in India, and a scientific consultation in Poland are only some of the most topical events planned for 2014.

#### EVENTS

The calendar of events in Slovenia and abroad is open-ended and will cater to all interests.

The years from 2014 to 2018 will serve as an opportunity to increase the general awareness of the profound impact of WWI on the life of every Slovenian and the entire Slovenian community in political terms and, above all, from the standpoint of the multifaceted experience gained in WWI.

A special web portal will be set up by spring 2014 in order to attract even more of the general public and to present not only the loss of life on the battlefields, but also the broader social repercussions of WWI.

During the war, 70 million of the adult male population of 170 were mobilised.



Photo: Archive of Pokrajinski muzej Nova Gorica

## Zoofa

# The most attractive co-op

On their own, each of them struggled, with various degrees of success, to keep their businesses afloat, facing an uncomfortable truth – creative production does not always go hand in hand with marketing. Then Slovenian economist Milan Vasiljevič, whose life companion is a fashion designer, came up with the idea of creating a kind of “cooperative” for designers, where everyone contributes, bears a share of the costs and takes care of the business on an equal footing. And the idea has received a more positive than expected response from the Slovenian media and general public alike.



“A girl should be two things: classy and fabulous.”  
(Coco Chanel)

The designers take turns working at the shop. Because there are so many of them, each works only around five hours once a week, while spending the remaining days of the week creating.

The newly opened shop Zoofa certainly enjoys an excellent location – on the refurbished bank of the River Ljubljanica, where special market events, including the art market and the flea market, are held throughout the year, and which has also been the venue for the Christmas market. This lively part of the Slovenian capital has now welcomed a new addition in the form of a cooperative of designers, operating under the name of Zoofa.

It might at first sight appear to be just another bijou shop in the

range of shops offering unique, locally designed products (e.g. Siti ArtStore, which has recently opened at the Crystal Palace, and other shops in the city centre such as Babushka, Lola, Ika and Sisi, to name but a few); in fact, it is very different, say its founders.

### **FASHION DESIGNERS STRUGGLE AT RAISING THEIR MARKET PROFILE**

The initiator and president of the co-op, Milan Vasiljevič, who is married to the fashion designer Simona Kogovšek, used to work in the fields of the economy and

logistics and has always wanted to be the “master of his own destiny”. And so a common problem has become the common problem. “The idea to open Zoofa came to mind during an informal chat over a drink in one of Ljubljana’s bars.” When I ask Milan whether they choose the designers with whom they will cooperate or whether they are open to anyone, he replies that Zoofa is essentially still in its infancy: “There are of course the few of us who launched the cooperative and then there are others who joined us later, though there is no guarantee that they will stay





Fashion is a life style.

here.” He explains that they pay attention to every detail: “If an item has a loose or ugly seam, we will not sell it. Not even at a discounted price. We want to maintain the high quality of our items, even though they are sold at affordable prices.” And indeed they do. In Slovenia, the prices of designer items are fairly high, considering the current situation. For example, the price for an average designer piece by a well-established designer stands at over EUR 1,000. But at Zoofa they are banking on both the quality of their design and their reasonable prices: “Our prices range from EUR 50 to 200. Shoes might be among more expensive items in the shop, but we are seeking a compromise on that point as well,” he says. He tells me that some of the products are selling very well, while for some of them there is almost no demand: “This will also help

give us a clearer picture of how to proceed,” he stresses. In the spirit of solidarity, the customers of individual designers, especially those who had their own studios before joining the cooperative, have in a way become shared: on visiting the shop, many such customers bought a product made by “their” designer and then one by a designer who “caught their eye”. Passers-by and foreigners are also among Zoofa’s customers. The latter often want to buy a product that is not a typical tourist souvenir, such as a miniature version of a Slovenian hayrack or wind-rattle, but a unique Slovenian product. In the Christmas period, there were many Italians, Dutch and Russians browsing in the shop, many of whom went on to make a purchase. “Customers are of all age groups, with the majority of them between 25 and 65.”

#### ALL IN THE SAME BOAT

Since for many designers doing business was just not their thing, some of them received the idea to join forces and share the cost between all those involved with great excitement. There was a lot of improvising, he says: “I was keen on the idea of joining forces. I looked at the experiences of workers’ associations in the past and thought that a cooperative was the sort of thing I was looking for, but I did not have a detailed plan. The fact is that the concept of our cooperative is somewhat different from that where workers have to buy their factory for millions of euros, but, on the other hand, given the nature of our products, we are certainly the sexiest co-op of all!”

When a location on the beauti-

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Every day is a fashion day.

“Many say: what a great idea, an excellent location, and so on, but if our products do not sell, we will not last much longer,” president of the co – op Milan Vasiljević admits realistically. He is aware that, today, if you want to survive as a shop, you must offer something more.

ful banks of the Ljubljana became available, he did his best to ensure that Zoofa got it: “Only then, in mid August 2013, did I begin taking on people.” At the beginning, he says, the problem was that they had very little time, as the premises were available right away: “We were in a hurry and there was not much time for debate about what we would do or how we would do it. Now that the teething troubles are behind us, we will direct our efforts to seeking out more special things, while sticking to the original concept of offering products that are not an end in themselves but are intended for everyday use, work, pleasure and so on – useful art, one might say.”

**A LOT OF “FIRSTS” AND A LOT OF IMPROVISING**

There were thousands of things that needed to be taken care of, and except for the founding document, copied from the concept of an agricultural cooperative, they had no other basis on which to proceed, as cooperatives were more characteristic of a different era, though they are becoming more popular again in this time of crisis: “This whole process was new not only to us, but also to the notary who had to register us and to our chosen bank.” Their business model has become clearer now, but it might still change in the future; they will adjust it according to the situation and the experience they gain.

**A BUSINESS THAT STANDS ON ITS OWN FEET**

“We hope that the business will stand on its own feet. If this is not the case, then we will consider the option of raising subsidies or foreign capital. But before that, we want to prove to ourselves and to others that we can succeed on our own,” Milan replies when asked whether they will manage on their own. In the future, they will focus even more on the organisation of social events, exhibitions and fashion shows to raise their market profile. “Of course we will also continue to invest in equipment and refurbishment,” he adds.

“The rent and electricity and heating costs are monthly costs. Ideally, they should be covered by sales revenue, but in the event of a lack of revenue, everyone involved would have to pay their share.” What about profit? “Profit is the revenue of an individual designer minus costs. If the revenue is lower than the costs incurred, then quite simply you’ve made a loss.”

**A PERSONAL APPROACH**

The designers take turns working at the shop. Because there are so many of them, each works only around five hours once a week, while spending the remaining days of the week creating. Apart from lowering costs, this kind of approach also enables them to better present their products and

to have a more personal contact with customers when taking their measurements and accepting orders: “One thing that cannot be emphasised enough is the fact that the items that are in the shop are there mainly to give customers an impression of what they can order and that the items, if required, may be tailored to their measurements. And all this at the price stated on the item’s price tag.”

“Many say: what a great idea, an excellent location, and so on, but if our products do not sell, we will not last much longer,” president of the co – op Milan Vasiljević admits realistically. He is aware that, today, if you want to survive as a shop, you must offer something more: “That is why we will aim to hold as many events as possible and do our best to be special. The mere fact that customers can be in personal contact with the designer, who can advise them as best he or she can, is added value. We also hope to host many interesting events with special guests, both domestic and foreign, who will share their experience and knowledge with you. We will diversify our offer, make the inside of the shop more comfortable, decide on a few details, such as uniform shopping bags, and so forth.” With their energetic approach, it seems almost impossible for Zoofa not to succeed.

**Who are the Zoofa?**

Ema Salčinovič – Lesema (wooden jewellery and clothes); Nina Holc – NI (never identical clothes, mainly scarves, and fashion accessories); Janja Turnšek and Nina Škoberne – Rosa (fashion accessories, especially eco-leather purses and handbags); Tanja Drinovec – Beadhabit (handmade jewellery); Simona Kogovšek – Colour My Skin (one-of-a-kind items of clothing); David Almajer and Eva Berce – Flamma Art Studio (one-of-a-kind ceramics); Pikoreo – multifunctional dress; Tanja Maraš – Pandemonium (gothic and punk fashion); Urška Pirc – Črna Z-raČka (items made from recycled tyres); Marjeta Pezdirec – Margaret88 (aluminium jewellery); Jaka Kolar – Gipsy and clown (jeans clothing and accessories); Tina Pavlin (one-of-a-kind items of clothing). The zoofovci also work with photographer Tania Mendilla. And there will be more to come...



## Athletes of the Year 2013

### Tina Maze and Peter Prevc received highest awards

It came as no surprise when Tina Maze was proclaimed Sportswoman of the Year 2013 at the end of December in Ljubljana. In her remarkable 2012/2013 season, she broke many records and set the bar almost unattainably high for alpine

skiers to follow. The title of Sportsman of the Year was awarded to the ski jumper Peter Prevc and the title of Sports Team of 2013 went to the national ice hockey team.

Photo: Polde Flisar



Athlete of the Year titles are awarded by Slovenian sports journalists joined in the Association of Sports Journalists of Slovenia. Athletes are selected and rewarded by journalists who monitor their performances throughout the year. We have written often about the excellent results achieved by our athletes at major international competitions, so it was not surprising that members of the association complained that their task was a difficult one: for example, the winner ice hockey team bettered the handball team by just a single point among the Sports Teams of the Year!

#### THE FIRST LADY IS TINA MAZE

Skier Tina Maze won the highest award in the women's competi-

tion. In a superb season, she extended boundaries on her way to first place in the Alpine Skiing World Cup overall standings and also won multiple medals at the Alpine World Ski Championships in Schladming. In addition to the large crystal globe for the overall World Cup, she won three small globes (in giant slalom, super G and super combined) and was ranked second in the World Cup in slalom and downhill. She stood on the podium no fewer than 24 times, winning 11 events and amassing a staggering 2,414 points, thus breaking the record held by skiing legend Hermann Maier. Her achievements were simply exceptional and peerless.

Sports journalists ranked mountain biker Tanja Žakelj second



Photo: Tomi Trbovc

to Maze, having won the title of European Champion in the past season, coming fifth in the Mountain Bike World Cup and ranking first in the overall standings of the Olympic cross-country race. Third ranked among the women was judoka Lucija Polavder, who, among other successes, won the title of European Champion.

#### OUTSTANDING PETER PREVC

The Sportsman of the Year was the ski jumper Peter Prevc, who won two medals – a silver and a bronze – at the Ski Jumping World Championships in Predazzo, unwaveringly taking on the competition in challenging weather conditions. Second place among the men went to basketball player Goran Dragić, who

Left: Tina Maze  
Right: Peter Prevc

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Skier Tina Maze won the highest award in the women's competition. In a superb season, she extended boundaries on her way to first place in the Alpine Skiing World Cup overall standings and also won multiple medals at the Alpine World Ski Championships in Schladming.



Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

Guys of the hockey team: Aleš Mušič, Robert Kristan and Nik Zupančič.

played an excellent season in the North American NBA and was the engine of the Slovenian basketball team which achieved fifth place at the European Basketball Championships held in Slovenia in September. Dragič was also ranked among the best five players of the Eurobasket event. Third place went to road race cyclist Matej Mohorič, who won the gold medal at the World Championships Road Race in the U23 Men category with a powerful performance in tough weather con-

ditions and won the junior and under-23 men's road race world titles.

#### **SLOVENIAN SPORTS HALL OF FAME**

The Association of Sports Journalists of Slovenia is also responsible for keeping the Hall of Sports Heroes, which is located in Ljubljana's Stožice Sports Hall and which brings together athletes who in their time made their mark on not only the Slovenian but indeed the international sports stages.

There are currently 56 sports heroes listed in the Sports Hall of Fame. The Association of Sports Journalists of Slovenia is also hoping to help preserve sports items associated with famous Slovenian athletes and keep a record of various historical sporting events. To this end, they are already looking for partners with whom they could establish a sports museum worthy of the achievements of Slovenian sportsmen and -women.

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#### **Recorded in the Slovenian Sports Hall of Fame:**

2011: Leon Štukelj (gymnastics), Miroslav Cerar (gymnastics)

2012: Rudolf Cvetko (fencing), Josip Primožič Tošo (gymnastics), Stane Derganc (gymnastics), Stanko Loriger (athletics), Ivo Daneu (basketball), Jože Šlibar (ski jumping), Janez Polda (ski jumping), Draga Stamejčič Pokovec (athletics), Janez Žirovnik (cycling), Nataša Urbančič Bezjak (athletics), Branko Oblak (football), Aljoša Žorga (basketball), Vinko Jelovac (basketball), Mima Jaušovec (tennis), rowing eight (4th place at the Olympic Games in Tokyo, 1964), Rudi Hiti (ice hockey), Peter Šumi (gymnastics), Miro Steržaj (bowling), Albin Felc (ice hockey)

2013: Franc Smolej (cross-country skiing), Ciril Praček (alpine skiing), Branko Zihlerl (diving), Tone Cerer (swimming), Tine Mulej (alpine skiing), Janko Štefe (alpine skiing), Ivan Toplak (football), Janko Kosmina-Mario Fafangel (sailing), Tine Šrot (gymnastics), Jurij Uršič (cycling), Edvard Vecko (table tennis), Ištvan Korpa (table tennis), Tone Gale (ice hockey), Milan Zadel (kayak canoe), Stanko Topolčnik (judo), Bojan Križaj (alpine skiing), Peter Vilfan (basketball), Bojan Ropret (cycling), Boris Strel (alpine skiing), Alenka Cuderman (handball), Borut Petrič (swimming), Miran Tepeš (ski jumping), Jure Franko (alpine skiing), Primož Ulaga (ski jumping), Andrej Jelenc (wild-water canoeing), Darjan Petrič (swimming), Matjaž Debelak (ski jumping), Mateja Svet (alpine skiing).

# Sporting achievements in 2013

## It glittered all year long

Looking back at 2013, whose sporting achievements do we remember? These champions will also represent Slovenia at the Winter Olympics

in Sochi. And since many Slovenian athletes rank among the world's top athletes, they will present a tough challenge for opponents.

Photo: STA



With a record number of World Cup points (2414), Tina Maze beat the previous record of Hermann Maier of 2000 points. She also achieved the largest margin of victory by beating her nearest rival by 1313 points.

The year 2013 was definitely marked by the success of Tina Maze and EuroBasket. We were impressed by the achievements of Slovenia's best skier of all time and the excellent games played by Slovenian basketball players in 2013 EuroBasket. Yet now, with a new year of sport and the Sochi Olympics ahead of us, we should not forget about all the other Slovenian athletes, as it is they who are often the best ambassadors for Slovenia.

### THE SNOW QUEEN

Tina Maze set new frontiers in skiing, and it was taken for granted that each time she competed she would achieve podium finishes. Expectations were also high during EuroBasket. And we were pleased to see the Slovenian basketball team come fifth, securing a place in the next European Championships.

Tina Maze was the overall win-

ner in Alpine skiing this season, winning the big crystal globe and two small ones in the giant slalom and super-G competitions and finishing first in the super combined. She finished second in the downhill and slalom listing. In the 2012–2013 season, she secured a record 24 podium finishes, scoring 11 victories and rounding off her season with the highest points total (2,414) ever achieved. But her winning streak did not stop there. She won one gold medal in the super-G and two silvers in the giant slalom and super combined at the 2013 World Alpine Ski Championships in Schladming 2013. She received a number of other awards and prizes: she was presented with the Golden Order for Services and selected as Slovenian Athlete of the Year for 2013 by sports journalists. In the spring, there were a number of receptions in her honour, where she was greeted by her fans. Although Tina Maze stood out in all respects, achiev-

ing almost everything it was possible to achieve, she was not the only one admired by Slovenian fans of winter sports. In the winter of 2012/2013, Slovenian athletes achieved a number of successes. Slovenian snowboarder Rok Marguč won the parallel slalom event at the World Championships in Canada's Stoneham, adding the gold to his collection of one silver and one bronze World Championship medals. Slovenian ski jumpers also excelled at the World Championships in Predazzo, with Peter Prevc winning silver and bronze, and the World Cup competitions. The Slovenian ski jumping team won several World Cup team events (in Zakopane, Poland, in Willingen, Germany, in Planica, Slovenia), with Jurij Tepeš, Jaka Hvala and Robert Kranjec winning their individual events. The Slovenian biathlete Jakov Fak won bronze in the men's sprint event at the Biathlon World Championships in the Czech Republic.

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The story of the Slovenian men's ice hockey team is one of success. In the many years since Slovenia's independence, many hockey players could only dream about achieving the ultimate goal – to play in the Olympics Games.

**THE SLOVENIAN MEN'S ICE HOCKEY TEAM QUALIFIES FOR ITS FIRST OLYMPIC GAMES**

The story of the Slovenian men's ice hockey team is one of success. In the many years since Slovenia's independence, many hockey players could only dream about achieving the ultimate goal – to play in the Olympics Games. Every four years, the sporting life of ice hockey superpowers reaches its climax with the Winter Olympics. On that occasion, the National Hockey League (NHL) puts the season on hold (it will also do so this year for the 2014 Sochi Games) so that the game's top players can compete in the Olympics. The Slovenian National Hockey Team will also take part at the Sochi Games. They put up quite a show in the qualifying tournament in Vojens, Denmark, beating Denmark and Belarus and booking Slovenia a place at the 2014 Sochi Games. This is not bad for a country with several tens of players on the roster and not even a proper national championship.

**MISSED THE PODIUM BY A TINY MARGIN**

In the winter of 2013, the Slovenian handball team played at the world championships in Spain, where they missed the podium by a tiny margin. After their excellent game in the qualifiers and play-offs, they were beaten by Spain in the

semi-final. The Spaniards later become the world champions. In the battle for third place, Croatia beat Slovenia, shattering Slovenia's dreams of one of the biggest successes in the history of team sports. However, the fourth place will go down in the annals of Slovenian handball as a magnificent achievement.

**THE MEDITERRANEAN GAMES**

The 17th Mediterranean Games held in Mersin, Turkey, brought a lot of success and enjoyment to the Slovenian delegation. Slovenia finished the games with a total of 35 medals, of which 13 were gold. This is one medal less than the overall tally reached at the 2005 Mediterranean Games in Almeria eight years ago, but with more gold medals. Most of the medals were won by judokas, swimmers, and athletes.

**FROM BARCELONA TO MOSCOW**

Slovenian athletes and swimmers also competed at the world championships in Barcelona and Moscow. Although Slovenia won no medals, Slovenian athletes were very close to taking one four times. Damir Dugonjič set a new European record in the 50m breaststroke, while Primož Kozmus took fourth place at the world championships in Moscow.

**THEY EXCELLED**

Slovenian athletes also enjoyed a number of other victories

and achieved medals at World and European Cups and world championships: judokas Rok Drakšič and Lucija Polavder, gymnast Sašo Bertonec, sports shooter Živa Dvoršak, mountain biker Tanja Žakelj, canoeists Anže Berčič and Eva Terčelj, slalom canoeist Benjamin Savšek, sprint canoeist Špela Ponomarenko Janič, and others. Klemen Gerčar won the 2013 Motocross World Championships in the MX3 class. Maribor's football team qualified for the sixteenth finals of the Europa League. For the first time in years, Union Olimpija had to be content with playing in the second-tier level competition, the Eurocup. The women's team handball club Krim Mercator played in the semi-finals of the Champions League.

**DECEASED PREMATURELY**

Unfortunately, Slovenian sport in 2013 was also marked by death. In 2013, we bade farewell to the promising speedway rider, Matija Duh, who died in a race in Argentina; chess player Vesna Rožič, who lost her battle with a fatal disease; the Slovenian skiing legend, Boris Strel; the legend of Slovenian judo, Stanko Topolčnik, who was the first to win a medal in the European judo championships, and Gorazd Stražišar, one of the pioneers of mountain biking in Slovenia, who died in a cycling accident.

In the photo: biathlon skier Jakob Fak, basketball player Goran Dragič, hockey player Anže Kopitar, ski jumper Peter Prevc, bicyclist Tadej Valjavec and Slovenian skiers.



Photo: STA, Mosphotots

Photo: Daniel Noaković/STA



## Slovenia is a Destination to Watch in 2014

The ABTA Association of British Travel Agents, a major British travel association, has just published a report on travel trends in the British travel industry in which it points out destinations likely to arouse the interest of British holidaymakers in 2014. Slovenia is one of them.

Slovenia is presented as a country offering numerous features sought by British tourists: unspoilt countryside, historical monuments and good food. At the same time, it is not too expensive and is attractive as both a summer and winter sports destination. Slovenia is in good company, being listed with some established favourite destinations, such as the Caribbean, Costa Rica, Greece, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mexico, Portugal and Italy.

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



## Slovenian President Borut Pahor nominated for the Isa Beg Ishaković Award

Slovenian President Borut Pahor has been nominated for the 2014 international award Isa Beg Ishaković, awarded every year to a prominent politician for their activity in the international community and contribution to the development of Sarajevo. The Award is named after Isa Beg Ishaković, who founded Sarajevo in 1462.

When announcing the nomination, Amel Suljović, the president of the Isa Beg Ishaković Foundation, stressed the strong friendly, historical and cultural ties that link Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and pointed out the constant support provided by Slovenia for the development of Sarajevo and the protection of its cultural heritage.

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



## Personality of the Year

For the fifteenth time in a row the readers of the newspaper Delo have chosen the Personality of the Year from ten nominees. The Personality of the Year 2013 is Anita Ogulin, Secretary of the Association of Friends of Youth Ljubljana Moste – Polje. She was nominated for giving unselfish assistance and support to numerous families to whom her work shows that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

For more than 40 years now Anita Ogulin has been committed to helping children and solving their problems, while uncompromisingly pointing her finger at those who are responsible for their unbearable situation. Besides Anita Ogulin, Tina Maze, and Goran Klemenčič, this year's nominees for the Person of Year award were the physicist Marko Mikuž, voluntary fireman Andrej Mrak, founder and owner of Duol, Dušan Olaj, researcher, inventor and ecologist Marinka Vovk, film director Rok Biček, basketball player Goran Dragič and former constitutional judge Matevž Krivic.

Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA



## A Lifetime Achievement Award to Štefka Drolc

Štefka Drolc was honoured with the Bert Award by the Slovene Society of Film Directors (Društvo slovenskih režiserjev). The Lifetime Achievement Award for motion picture achievements, which is being awarded for the first time this year, was presented to Štefka Drolc by Klemen Dvornik, President of the Society.

In his explanation, the President of the society quoted Vlado Škafar: "Štefka Drolc brought simplicity and grace to Slovenian filmmaking," adding that these are the two features that "the camera always falls in love with". He said that, in his view, Štefka Drolc is the mother of Slovenian film, both classic and modern.

Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA



## Award for Tenor

The 2013 Samo Smerkolj Award goes to tenor and concert singer Janez Lotrič.

Lotrič's repertoire includes more than 50 parts from Italian, French and German operas. He has sung under the baton of the most famous modern conductors in the company of other great opera singers of our time. In 1999, a critic in London compared his singing to Caruso's. Lotrič has followed the Slovenian tenors' route to international stages first taken by Anton Dermota, Josip Gostič and Rudolf Francl, and has undoubtedly surpassed their achievements. He ranks among the top opera singers on every continent except Australia.

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



## Ptuj Wine Cellar

The oldest Slovenian wine cellar, the Ptuj Wine Cellar, has been successful in foreign markets for many years and was recently awarded the title of Best Slovenian Wine Cellar at the AWC Vienna, one of the main international wine classification events. According to Vinko Mandel, this was the result of investments made in the last ten years.

"After the complete technological renovation, the most important factor was investing in the corporate identity of the wine brand 'Pullus', which, with its trendy content has continuously proved itself in trade and the market. The wines under this brand name soon reached the top quality position and kept this position at all the most important international wine classification events," said Vinko Mandel, director of the company. Their traditional 'Haložan' trademark is their best seller in Slovenia, while in foreign markets they have increased their presence in the USA, which is their most important market in terms of volume and revenue.

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



## Electoral Commission of the Year

The National Electoral Commission received the Electoral Commission of the Year Award at the International Electoral Affairs Symposium in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. At the same time, the National Electoral Commission was also awarded an Election Management Award.

According to Dušan Vučko, Director of the National Electoral Commission, this is the first time that international electoral awards have been granted by the International Centre for Parliamentary Studies (ICPS) established in London. Central Electoral Commissions from all the continents competed for the awards.

According to the citation of the nine-member award committee "the work of the National Electoral Commission of the Republic of Slovenia was impressive, particularly in a state affected by the economic crisis, and for this reason it earned the award". According to the committee, the National Electoral Commission not only improved the performance and efficiency of the whole election process, but also brought the process closer to the voters.

Photo: Tina Kosec/STA



## Slovenian honey is a newly protected Slovenian product

Slovenian honey is now the 19th Slovenian product to be protected at EU level. Acacia, linden, chestnut, fir, pine, flower or nectar and forest or honeydew honey can be sold under the trademark of Slovenian Honey.

Slovenian honey is produced in the territory of the Republic of Slovenia. It meets high quality requirements, since it contains less than 18.6 per cent water and less than 15 milligrams of hydroxymethylfurfural per kilogram. Over the millennia, the Carniolan honey bee has particularly adapted to the climate and forage conditions typical of Slovenia.





## Slovenia is on the right track

Improvements with regard to the labour market, business freedom and freedom from corruption have contributed to Slovenia's improved position on the Index of Economic Freedom, which is published by the Heritage Foundation and Wall Street Journal every year.

Thereby, Slovenia has received another international confirmation that the measures to exit the crisis promoted by the Government are appropriate. Statistical data have already reflected signs of slight recovery. Slovenia's industrial output increased above the average monthly levels recorded in 2010 in November after it had persisted below those levels since November 2012. The output of goods and services in November was 0.1% above the average for 2010. The activities on the financial markets have proven that Slovenia has been slowly re-gaining confidence. December results of stress tests that were so impatiently expected by the Slovenian and international public have shown that the Government assessed the banking sector deficit correctly, which re-gained the trust of the financial markets. This has also translated into the required yield: interest rate on Slovenia's ten-year bond, which only a short ([www.heritage.org](http://www.heritage.org))



Photo: Tamirno Petelinšek/STA

## Slovenian Scientists Building Cell Computer

**A group of Slovenian researchers has managed to design modular logic circuits in human cells that process information in way similar to the logic employed by computers.**

The invention, which could be used above all for medicinal and diagnostic purposes, has earned the team an article in the prestigious science magazine Nature Chemical Biology. The seven researchers, working for the Institute of Chemistry, the EN-FIST centre of excellence and the Ljubljana Faculty of Computer and Information Science, based the find on the use of proteins that can be designed so as to recognise almost any selected DNA sequence. The scientists who authored the paper, are Rok Gaber, Tina Lebar, Andreja Majerle, Andrej Dobnikar, Branko Šter, Mojca Benčina and Roman Jerala.

Photo: Nebojša Tejkić/STA



## Slovenia is a fairytale land

**An eight-year-old from Ljubljana has won the first ever Doodle 4 Google competition with a doodle entitled "Slovenia - a fairytale land". It was featured on Google.si on 23 January. The overall winner Maks Lenart Černelč was picked by Google's designer Brian Kaas.**

Over 3,000 doodles from 220 primary schools have been submitted for competition. Three winners (each for their own age group) were chosen via internet voting out of 30 finalists previously selected by Google employees and a special judging panel. At this occasion Google honoured the 130th birth anniversary of the Slovenian youth author Josip Vandot (1884-1944) with a doodle of one of his characters, Kekec, a legendary icon in Slovenian literature and film.



Photo: Tina Kosec/STA

## The Slovenian language has dozens of dialects

**Even though the Slovenian language is one of the smallest Slavic languages, it's one of the most diverse in terms of dialects.**

This exceptional variety in such a geographically limited area means that speech patterns sometimes differ from village to village. It also means that Slovenian speakers often have trouble understanding dialects from another part of the country. Even linguists don't agree precisely how many dialects of Slovenian there are. Most believe that there are close to 50. Whatever the exact number, the dialects are typically classified into eight regional groups – and the differences between each group are substantial. Today, standard Slovenian, the descendant of Trubar's creation, serves as a lingua franca of sorts for people from different parts of the country.

Photo: Vesna Pušnik Brezovnik



## The castles of King Matjaž

Mitnek pod Peco, 24 January – 26 January 2014

At this traditional event so far – the recent one being the 21st in a row – the builders have created a total of 1276 snow sculptures, which attracted more than ten thousand visitors. This is considered the most popular winter event in the Koroška region.

More information available at: [www.crna.si](http://www.crna.si)

Photo: Petra Trček



## Dragon's Carnival

Ljubljana, 1 March 2014 at 11:00 a.m.

Ljubljana Carnival includes a grand carnival parade through the city streets and an entertainment programme in Kongresni trg. The parade will show masks typical of pagan folk traditions, such as Kurents, Laufars, Morostars and others. The central theme of this year's Carnival is "2000 Years of Roman Emona".

More information available at: [www.visitljubljana.com](http://www.visitljubljana.com)

Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA



## Kurentovanje

The streets and squares of the old town of Ptuj, Saturday, 22 February 2014 at 10:00 a.m.

The opening ceremony giving authority to the Prince of the Carnival, international FECC EtnoFest meeting of traditional carnival costumes and masks, and a parade.

Introduction to the major folk carnival event in Slovenia, with the transfer of power from the mayor of Ptuj to the Prince of the Carnival, who reigns over the town for the duration of the Carnival. This is followed by a traditional parade of carnival costumes and masks from Ptuj and Slovenia, members of FECC Association and EtnoFest, which brings together traditional carnival costumes and masks from the continents of the world.

More information available at: [www.kurentovanje.net/](http://www.kurentovanje.net/)

Photo: Daniel Novaković/STA



## Festival of World Literatures: Fabula 2014

Ljubljana, 26 February – 8 March 2014

The Fabula Festival will complement the social scene of Ljubljana with top literary events. The Festival will be hosting a number of renowned writers from Slovenia and abroad.

More information available at: [napovednik.com](http://napovednik.com)

## REFORMA

On this occasion, the Designers Society of Slovenia is organising a biennial exhibition entitled REFORMA in Cankarjev dom, the biggest cultural centre in Slovenia.

Seeking balance and the recognition of the good, quality and vision for the future are becoming everyone's daily tasks. Design will certainly be a key factor in business success, adding value to all products and services, but only if it can be recognised and valued in the local environment. Form comprises the shape, the visible appearance, depiction or configuration of an object. In other words, the form could be an answer to the question "How?". And what if the existing form is inappropriate, or does not add value, as we rightfully expect? The answer is REFORMA.

The professional jury (Nina Bavčer, Katjuša Kranjc, Matjaž Deu, Primož Fijavž and Hermina Kovačič) selected only less than half of the works submitted for inclusion in the exhibition.

A short while ago, the second jury of the Designers Society of Slovenia selected and granted a lifetime achievement award and, one month ago, the third jury of experts from various fields selected the bravest visionary suggestions that young designers submitted to the open competition entitled Reformatör (Reformer) organised by the Designers Society of Slovenia in collaboration with SPIRIT, the Public Agency of the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology.

The exhibition displays the works of twenty-five designers, members of the Designers Society of Slovenia, who received awards in the Reformatör competition: Saba Skaberne, Marko Japelj, Tjaša Štempihar, Ariana Furlan Prijon, Sanja Jurca, Vesna Štih, Julijan Krapež, Mateja Krašovec Pogorelčnik, Ksenija Baraga, Jožica Curk, Mateja Pintar, Damjan Uršič, Eva Štrukelj, Robert Klun, Igor Rosa, Pavla Bonča, Marjan Žitnik, Jurij Dobrila, Elena Fajt, Marjan Kocijan, Tjaša Štempihar, Nataša Šušteršič Plotajs, Maja Gspan, Martina Kaš Nemanič, Vesna Brekalo and Daniela Grgič.

The young artists are showing various design ideas. These include modern architectural solutions, such as the Zidanica (Vineyard Cottage) project, or 200- to 500-year-old documents that simply hover in space, enclosed in transparent Plexiglas showcases. The exhibits also include sofas, kitchen furniture, TV audience meters, wooden footwear, postage stamps, posters and various organic products, both didactic and useful.

The 2013 lifetime achievement award of the Designers Society of Slovenia went to Branko Uršič, a living legend of Slovenian design. His work encompasses numerous extremely popular furniture products, for which he received many prizes and awards. His artistic career has been associated with a single company, Stol Kamnik. He and a group of associates spent decades developing a wide range of serial products and furnishing for various public facilities, particularly hotels. During all this time, the Stol company played a key role in Slovenian industrial design, and there is no doubt that credit for this goes to Branko Uršič.

This exhibition is a link between the business sector and culture and brings together the older and younger generations of artists, displays the works of various designers from various periods and in various styles, both traditional and fashionable.

The exhibition will remain open to the public until 2 February 2014.

3. XII. 11:00

etnološka zbirka Pokrajinskega muzeja Koper  
Gramscijska trg 4/5  
la collezione etnologica  
del Museo Regionale di Capodistria  
Piazza Gramsci 4/5

(svoja)  
**Obleci / nošo** (tvoja)  
**Indossa il / costume**

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[www.oblecinoso.si](http://www.oblecinoso.si)

