

Sinfo

January-February

The Best from Slovenia

IN FOCUS

Let's be Olympic Champions

**I FEEL
SLOVENIA**



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SLOVENIA**

Sinfo

SLOVENIAN INFORMATION

January-February 2018

www.slovenia.si
www.ukom.gov.si

Published by
Government Communication Office

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Print
Collegium Graphicum d.o.o.

Number of copies
3500

ISSN
1854-0805



Photo: Bruno Toič

AN INSPIRING YEAR

An exciting beginning to the New Year awaits us. Even though 2018 has only just started, we are already full of expectation for the Olympic Games in PyeongChang. We are proud that Slovenia actually boasts the most successful athletes in the world. This time won't be an exception, which is why we will keep our fingers crossed and then give an honest round of applause for our sporting heroes. However, entrepreneurs and representatives of tourism and cultural institutions also know that there is much more to the Olympic Games than just sports, and so they will have a platform of their own at Slovenia House. This issue of Sinfo provides insights into Slovenian Olympic history, and the history of sports in general.

Although dedicated above all to the Olympics and the Olympic spirit, this year is also special because it marks the European Year of Cultural Heritage. Cultural heritage is embedded in us, the environment, and the society we live in. The events that will unfold throughout the year will undoubtedly be engaging and attractive. Museums and cultural institutions will be wide open and welcoming, and we will brush the dust off the treasury of our heritage, as passed down by our ancestors.

This year is also dedicated to the memory of Ivan Cankar, to the preservation of his memory and legacy.

Many stories are waiting to be written this year; the best of them will be published in Sinfo. Another reason we are so thrilled about this year is because it will provide an opportunity to explore our boundaries, opportunities, knowledge, and everything that gives life meaning, especially as Slovenians.

Tanja Glogovčan, Executive Editor

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LET'S BE OLYMPIC CHAMPIONS

Like a true Olympic champion, let's focus not on awards with financial value, but rather on values themselves. Our goals should be high, because we can draw inspiration and motivation from a rich wealth of knowledge.



The Lipizzaner horses on Rogla mountain.
Photo: Iztok Medja

EXTRAORDINARY SLOVENIAN OLYMPIC LEGACY

Slovenian athletes have always shone at Olympiads

ALJA PAHOR, TANJA GLOGOVČAN
PHOTO: ALEŠ FEVŽER



Hockey Team at the "Team Welcome Ceremony" at the Winter Sochi Olympics in 2014.

The Olympic Games are the biggest sports event in the world, and the dream of every top athlete. They are also a privilege. Competing at the Olympics is the fruit of years of preparation, training and self-discipline. In the entire history of the Olympic Games, Slovenian athletes have frequently achieved exceptional results. The Olympic Games are an honour and reward for our athletes.

Of course, the path to dreams coming true is not easy, and only the best pass the test. This year's Slovenian Olympic team for the winter games in PyeongChang is once again made up of the best representatives of individual events and disciplines. They have to meet the criteria for making the cut, as formulated by the International Olympic Committee, the Olympic Committee of Slovenia, the Association of Sports Federations and national sectoral sports associations. Before competing in the Olympics, Slovenian sports people are divided into three quality rankings: those with the potential to win medals, those capable of a high ranking (between first and third place) and junior athletes.

SLOVENIANS IN THE OLYMPIC VILLAGE

During the Games, members of the Olympic squads representing Slovenia will be living in the Olympic Village.

In South Korea there will be two different Olympic Villages for Slovenian athletes.

Slovenia's competitors in Alpine skiing, biathlon, snowboarding, ski jumping, cross-country, Nordic combination, freestyle and luge are staying in PyeongChang Olympic Village in the mountains. Meanwhile, the village down on the coast (Gangneung Olympic Village) will accommodate the Olympic ice hockey team.

Entry to the two Olympic Villages is only permitted for competitors and accredited accompanying personnel (coaches, service staff, medics, etc.), and media representatives are not allowed in. Smoking or the sale of alcohol are prohibited in the villages. Guests are allowed in to the Olympic Villages only by prior appointment.



Slovene Olympic medals

Since the organisers of the Olympics are aware how important it is for those living in the villages, i.e. the athletes, to feel as comfortable and at home as possible during their stay, the sites are built in such a way as to offer them "life" as it would be in a small town, complete with shops and sports venues, and even hair salons, banks, post offices, cinemas and more.

LION-HEARTED SLOVENIAN OLYMPIANS

And even more...In the atmosphere of the modern Olympics, where often politics and advertising have a role that at least equals that of sports, Slovenians can lay claim not just to outstanding sports achievements but to a true and ancient Olympic spirit. One such example is the story of the courageous Slovenian cross-country skier Petra Majdič.

This year (2018) it will be eight years since her unforgettable cross-country performance, when she earned herself the status of an eternal Olympic heroine for her sporting example at the 2010 winter games in Vancouver.



Petra's bronze medal at the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver felt like a gold victory for her and the Slovene nation.

You can follow the Slovenian Olympic team via the social media pages of the Olympic Committee of Slovenia. **Facebook:** Slovenia Olympic Team, **Twitter:** @TeamSlovenia, **Instagram:** sloveniaolympicteam, Facebook chatboot, **App (IOS/ Android):** Team Slovenia, **YouTube:** TeamSlovenia, **Viber:** Slovenia Olympic Team.

After clearly suffering a serious injury on the cross-country trail, Petra got up again and persevered to the finish. And not just that – this incredible sportswoman won the bronze medal. The then head of the Slovenian Olympic team medical staff said after the accident: "Petra earned this incredible result with four broken ribs and a pneumothorax (collapsed lung), which allowed air to gather between the ribs and lungs." So the diagnosis was serious, and she later needed serious treatment. Nevertheless, Petra attended the

official medal award ceremony in the square in Whistler, although she arrived in a wheelchair with a tube placed in her chest.

Fortunately there were no long-term consequences, and such accidents are rare. But this event was not just a dramatic story, it also illustrated the true sporting spirit, and that is something Slovenians are especially proud of in their athletes, and we all wish them the best of luck!

TABLE WITH NAMES OF SLOVENIANS WHO HAVE WON OLYMPIC MEDALS AT THE WINTER OLYMPIC GAMES

To date Slovenians have won 19 medals at the Winter Olympics. Their biggest success was at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.

Year	Athlete	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Sport	Country
1984	Jure Franko	-	1	-	Giant Slalom	Yugoslavia
1988	Mateja Svet	-	1	-	Slalom	Yugoslavia
1988	(M. Tepeš, M. Zupan, P. Ulaga, M. Debelak)	-	1	-	Ski jump	Yugoslavia
1988	Matjaž. Debelak	-	-	1	Giant ski jump	Yugoslavia
1994	Jure Košir	-	-	1	Slalom	Slovenia
1994	Katja Koren	-	-	1	Slalom	Slovenia
1994	Alenka Dovžan	-	-	1	Combination	Slovenia
2002	(R. Kranjec, P. Žonta, D. Fras, P. Peterka)	-	-	1	Ski jump	Slovenia
2010	Petra Majdič	-	-	1	Cross-country skiing	Slovenia
2010	Tina Maze	-	2	-	Alpine skiing	Slovenia
2014	Tina Maze	2	-	-	Alpine skiing	Slovenia
2014	Peter Prevc	-	1	1	Ski jump	Slovenia
2014	Žan Košir	-	1	1	Snowboarding	Slovenia
2014	Teja Gregorin	-	-	1	Biathlon	Slovenia
2014	Vesna Fabjan	-	-	1	Cross-country skiing	Slovenia

SLOVENIA'S FIRST APPEARANCES AT THE WINTER OLYMPICS

Just being here is enough!

BORUT BATAGELJ
PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVES

Plaque commemorating the Olympics in Chamonix, which were held from 25 January to 25 February 1924.

Auguste Matisse

As we turn our eyes this winter to the upcoming Olympic Games and the events featuring our skiers, we can't help but have major expectations. Their successes at recent Olympiads, particularly in Sochi, where they brought home eight medals, are a far cry from the first Olympic appearances by Slovenian skiers.

The appearances of the Slovenian Olympians Vladimir Kajzelj and Zdenko Švigelj now seem like they come from another planet. Their performances in cross-country skiing at the games, which were billed as "International Winter Sports Week in Chamonix" and were formally a part of the Summer Olympic Games in Paris in 1924, are reminiscent of modern appearances by skiers from third-world countries, who compete at the Olympics "just to be here", but end up fighting against the course and the conditions more than against their competitors.

SKIING EXOTICS

Slovenian, or at the time Yugoslav, skiing first arrived on the international scene in 1923. At a competition in Czechoslovakia, the Yugoslavian Winter Sports Federation, which at the time functioned primarily as a skiing association, was accepted into the International Skiing Commission (which later became the FIS), and its racers faced the strongest competitors in skiing for the first time. The results were, as everyone expected, terrible. They only competed in cross-country events, since that's all that they had more or less mastered.

They were just beginners in ski jumping, and the Alpine disciplines had just started to come together as ideas in the minds of racing organisers in various parts of the Alps, and the FIS, primarily due to the prevailing influence of the Scandinavian countries, would keep them out of the official programme for several more years.

The Yugoslav competitors were all behind the ranked skiers, and some not even that, as one of our racers apparently stopped at one of the race control points and remained there, exhausted. He preferred to hang around at the refreshment stand, where he was served by young Czech girls dressed in national costume... Owing to the utter lack of competitiveness of our skiers, the Winter Sports Association in Ljubljana wondered if sending them to compete abroad made any sense at all. As such, after this they were more careful about where and why they allocated funds to send our skiers outside the country.

The next major event was the Olympics in Chamonix the following winter. The alpha and omega of the Winter Sports Association at the time, Joso Gorec, knew well enough that "we cannot succeed, but we have always had a great desire to learn and improve," and in the next sentence he made an interesting statement: "At that time we put the team together so that there had to be the same number of competitors from Zagreb as there were from Ljubljana." But the Croats could compete with the Slovenes in terms of the number of athletes on Yugoslav Olympic teams only at the very beginning. Nowadays it is clear that this was simply because all parties concerned, Slovenes, Croats and the Olympics themselves, were just learning how to ski, and the criteria for making the team were not based solely on sports competitions. As the results indicate, even back then the best Slovene skiers were better than the best Croatians, but clearly not by such a margin that the composition of the national team was not the result of some quiet skiing diplomacy and disputes, which were finally resolved so that the first Yugoslav Winter Olympic team was led by Croatian sports organiser Stevo Hadži, and was made up of the Slovenes Švigelj and Kajzelj and Croats Pandaković and Zinaja.

OUR OLYMPIC PERFORMANCE

The Yugoslav team was the last of the 17 to enter the stadium in the opening ceremony. This last position, dictated by the name of the country in its French translation, was also exactly where our rookie competitors ended up in the actual races. A couple of days before the beginning of the competition, the Slovenian weekly Jutro reported that clearly no better results could be expected from our athletes.

The purpose of the appearance was above all to show "our serious commitment to success in sports at the level of the great nations."

The practical purpose was to offer "an opportunity to expand our sports knowledge and to return to our country with new experiences, which might be able to be taken advantage of at home in order to advance and cultivate the sport of skiing." This was a sincere assessment, even though it sounds silly and contrived in the modern Olympic era.

On 30 January our boys faced their first test, and they were anything but ready for it. The 50-km race, as the longest race in the competition, was already clearly a serious challenge. As if this wasn't enough for their Olympic baptism, the enormous endurance and energy requirements of the race were made much more difficult by the conditions. The course, with a huge elevation difference of 820 metres, was wrapped in paralysing cold, supposedly as low as -20 °C, and occasionally buffeted by snowstorms. Pandaković, Švigelj and Zinaja showed up at the start wearing less than state-of-the-art clothes: light athletic trousers and Sokol gymnastics society shirts! Joso Gorec wrote that our heroes also gained the respect of the competition for the tour skis which they were competing on. But they attracted even more attention for their bindings, which were anything

but suitable for competing against the world's best skiers. They apparently competed using Bilgheri bindings. These stiff and clumsy bindings, which a Tyrolean officer had introduced in the old Austrian Army, were designed for trekking through the mountains, not competition. A museum piece. And their performances were anything but successful.

Our boys fought against the course more than they did against their competitors, and even more against their equipment. Of the 14 control points on the course, Pandaković and Švigelj managed to get to just the second, and that's where their race ended. Zinaja obviously had better equipment, as a result of which the winter before and in similar conditions he had become the first and only Croat to win the Yugoslav national championship, near Rakek, Slovenia. But he wasn't exactly flying over the course either. The official results show him as last being registered at the fifth control point. But Zinaja must have been a mighty stubborn and tough competitor, since he eventually did make it to the finish. But when he arrived, there was nobody there. The race committee had apparently gone to dinner. The race winner, a Norwegian named Haug, had finished the course in 3 hours 44 minutes. It took Zinaja nine hours! A truly Olympic feat.

It was hardly possible that the 18-km race on February 2 would be the scene of yet another equally dramatic Olympic story. The Scandinavians were once again in a class by themselves, and the Yugoslavs were again left at the back. They came closer to the results of the racers from other Central European teams, but in the end only managed to overtake the two Americans. The 50-km race had clearly worn Zinaja completely out, and he once again finished dead last. His 36th place finish was just under an hour slower than Haug's time for his second gold. But at least the Zagreb native made it to the finish line and got to see his race time; the second Croatian skier, Pandaković, never made it to the end. Slovenia's Winter Olympics pioneers fared a bit better. But only a bit. Zdenko Švigelj finished 36 minutes behind the winner in 32nd place. Vladimir Kajzelj, who is remem-

bered more for his feats as a mountain climber than as an Olympian, took 34th place.

THEY WERE UNDENIABLY HEROES

The medals were very far out of reach.

But in view of the conditions and the skill level, equipment and funding they had at the time, it would be unjust to label their appearances a total fiasco.

These days we do sports a great injustice by judging them solely through the lens of victories. No one can fault our Olympic pioneers for their desire to improve, their iron will and above all their fighting spirit, which always has been, and particularly nowadays is, pushed too far into the shadows by the light glittering off the shiny medals, when in fact it is one of the most important sporting qualities and human attributes.

The newspaper *Jutro*, which was published from 1920 to 1945, published an article on 25 January 1924 about three Yugoslavian athletes entitled "Naši smučarji" (Our Skiers). Two of the athletes were Slovenes, Zdenko Švigelj and Vladimir Kajzelj, and the third was the Croat Dušan Zinaja. Zinaja was the best Croatian skier of his time. According to *Jutro*, Zdenko Švigelj was a very promising athlete, while Vladimir Kajzelj was another rising star.

Naši smučarji

Kakor znano, se vrši letos v Parizu svetovna olimpijada, na kateri bodo merili svoje moči sportniki vsega sveta, razun Nemčije, ki od izbruha svetovne vojne ni več zastopana v najvišji sportni organizaciji, v mednarodnem Olimpijskem odboru. Tekme v zimskem sportu (sankanje, smučanje, drsanje) pa se seveda ne morejo vršiti poleti in v velikem mestu, zato jih je Olimpijski odbor nastavljal že za konca t. m. in začetek februarja ter določil kot najprihodnejši kraj slovitih francoski zimskosportni Eldorado-Chamonix. Tekme in z njimi VIII. olimpijada se slovesno otvorijo danes, pravo konkurenca pa se prične šele v par dneh. Opozarjamo čitatele na članek, ki ga prinašamo o chamonixkih tekmah v sportni rubriki na 6. strani današnje številke.



Iz Jugoslavije se udeležijo tekom trije sportniki, ki veljajo danes za najboljše smučarje v celi državi in ki so se večeraj popoldne odpeljali v Chamonix. So to Ljubljane Zdenko Švigelj in Vladimir Kajzelj ter Zagrebčan Dušan Zinaja. Ni samoumejno, da sta v tej častni trojici dva Slovence, saj je smučski sport ravno v Sloveniji najbolj razvit, ker tudi naša ožja domovina, zlasti del Notranjske in Gorenjske, pač tudi najboljše pogoje za razmah in napredek zimskega sporta.

Zdenko Švigelj je član Ljubljanskega sportnega kluba in sportnik, ki mu obetajo vsi strokovnjaki najlepšo bodočnost. Leta 1920, si je ob svojem prvem nastopu priboril prvenstvo Bohinja, l. 1921. prvenstvo Slovenije in l. 1922. prvenstvo Jugoslavije. Tekmoval je lani tudi na Češkem v Novem Svetu in Sumavi. V Chamonixu so bo udeležil istih tekom kakor Zinaja.

Danes objavljamo sliko naših troh reprezentantov.



Prej letom dni se je udeležil tudi mednarodnih tekom v Novem Svetu na Češkem in Zakopanah na Poljskem. V Chamonixu bo tekmoval v smučanju na 18. in 50 km.

Vladimir Kajzelj (T. K. Skala v Ljubljani) je eden naših najmlajših, a kljub temu že uspešnih smučarjev. Lani si je priboril prvenstvo «Skale» v Palnici, pri tekmah za prvenstvo Jugoslavije pa je dosegel 2. mesto. Letos je odnesel zmago pri obeh dosedanjih smučskih tekmah, v Chamonixu bo nastopil na 18 km. Tekma na 50 km se vrši 29. januarja, na 18 km pa 1. februarja. Želimo našim trem mladim reprezentantom kar največ uspeha v borbi za našo lepo trobojnico.

SLOVENIA HOUSE AT THE WINTER OLYMPIC GAMES IN PYEONGCHANG

Olympic Games offer business opportunities

PETER DOKL
 SPATIAL LAYOUT AND INTERIOR DESIGN:
 GREGORCVRHOVEC ARCHITECTS;
 DESIGN: ARNOLDVUGA.

At the Winter Olympic Games in South Korea, Slovenia has a strong representation not just in the tournament, but also in the areas of business and tourism.

For more information on the Slovenia House, contact the deputy secretary-general for finance and marketing at the Olympic Committee of Slovenia, Matic Švab (matic.svab@olympic.si) and the head of the Slovenia House in PyeongChang, Peter Dokl (peter.dokl@olympic.si).



The Olympic Games are the biggest sports event in the world, and bring together almost all the countries on the planet. While the athletes at the Olympic Games usually aspire to perfect performances and the best results, this event has long outgrown the confines of sports. The activities that take place alongside the games are just as important as those taking place in the sports arenas.

An integral part of Slovenia's presence at the Winter Olympic Games in PyeongChang will once again be the Slovenia House, after a hiatus of eight years. Alongside the outstanding results of Slovenia's sports men and women, who now traditionally return from the largest tournaments with medals, a broader representation is also important for promoting the country.

The project has drawn the participation of the company Kolektor and the Slovenian state as the main partners (SPIRIT, Slovenian Tourist Board, Government Communication Office and the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology), while partnerships have also been successfully concluded with some other prominent Slovenian companies, such as ELAN, Alpina, Hosekra and Jezeršek Catering. Foreign partners of the Slovenia House participating in the project are Panasonic, which is providing screens, and Coca-Cola, which has contributed all the non-alcoholic beverages on offer at the site. The national broadcasting corporation RTV Slovenija also has its own Olympics studio in the Slovenia House.

In the Slovenia House in PyeongChang, South Korea, Elan will be showcasing a selection of innovative skis for various skiing experiences. Elan manufactures skiing products in the Slovenian Alps. It has more than 70 years of experience in manufacturing the best skis in the world for those who love the sport, who enjoy the skier's lifestyle, and who like to treat themselves to fun in the mountains. For decades Elan has been developing innovations with a single purpose – to provide a better skiing experience for everyone, from beginner to expert. Through decades of constant expansion of the design constraints, they have been continuously faced with the challenge of designing the best-performing, highest-quality, state-of-the-art products for skiing enthusiasts, so they can enjoy great days on the snow.

Alongside Elan, another company showcasing its products in the Slovenia House is Alpina, which is Slovenia's leading producer and marketer of fashion and sports footwear. It is a development-oriented company with a 70-year tradition and globally established brand. Its main advantage is added value, for ever since 1947 it has been discovering new technologies and research-

ing innovative materials. The company's mission is to develop, manufacture and sell high-quality products that provide a complete experience of movement, while also exceeding user expectations. As experts in footwear, they support their business units in the areas of manufacture, sales and distribution of footwear. The company has manufacturing operations in Slovenia and in subsidiaries abroad. In Southeast Europe, Alpina operates a network of more than a hundred sales outlets, and in other countries around the world it sells through an extensive network of agents and distributors.

Just as importantly as these other aspects, we have not neglected to offer a superlative culinary experience for guests. The selection of food on offer in the Slovenia House is being provided by Jezeršek Catering. This company's vision is to remain the leading provider of catering and restaurant services in the Slovenian market, to become a leading company in Southeast Europe and to rank among the 10 best providers of catering in the European Union. It is pursuing these goals by consistently providing innovative and creative cuisine to suit customer needs.

SLOVENIA HOUSE CONCEPT

The concept, architecture and interior design of the Slovenia House are provided by architects GregorcVrhovec, led by Aleš Vrhovec and Vanja Gregorc Vrhovec, while the graphic design is the work of the ArnoldVuga agency, headed by Nataša Vuga. The Slovenian Olympic Committee selected these firms based on projects they had already completed, but primarily owing to the design of the award-winning Slovenian Olympic Education Centre. Their creative work earned them the Design Achievement 2017 award.

The Olympic Games are an event of exceptional importance. In the context of the Winter Olympic Games Slovenia is equal to the most successful countries in the world. To be lined up at the start with Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, Sweden and the USA is no small feat. And this will also be the case at the Winter Olympic Games in South Korea. The company is good, and opportunity is extraordinary!

The Slovenia House is located in an exceptional and effectively strategic position at the entrance to the Alpensia Winter Centre, in an existing golf club building. We decided to set up a partition structure, a kind of kozolec hay rack, which divides the space into different functional areas. Putting up new wooden walls makes the spatial experience more concentrated. Elements that could impede use have been removed. At the same time a new archetypal space of different ambiances has been established with traditional "antique" wooden details.

The overall design has the ambition of merging the Slovenian tradition of construction (hay rack) and socialising (inn) along with the Korean tradition of recording wishes on lanterns. Moreover it ties together an awareness of the archaic origin of the Slovenian environment and current high-technology achievements, while we have also successfully combined handicrafts and technology, sport and business, Europe and Asia.

The space will be used at the same time by sports people, the media, business people and visitors. The desire is for everyone at any moment to have access to several different spaces in the Slovenia House, where they can rest, concentrate, talk, socialise, get information and carry out media-related activities. Each of these ambiances will have a specific mood, and they will be connected by the wood of the hay rack, screens, large prints on the walls and furnishings.

SLOVENIA HOUSE CONSTRUCTION

The bearing construction is provided by upper and lower beams and columns set 2.4 m apart and 2.55 m high. The construction wood is connected to the diagonals that serve as a design link to traditional Slovenian rural architecture, while at the same

time they are set up in such a way that they form a silhouette of Triglav, a play on the Slovenian Olympic Committee's logo. Attached to these elements is panelling on which is set exhibition material. The wood is a natural colour, rough-finished with a brush, authentic in its massiveness yet at the same time a material that evokes feelings of warmth and homeliness.

The wooden construction is made of spruce, a tree that is one of the three most common in Slovenia. The Hosekra com-

pany needed over three weeks to prepare and make the wooden structures.

Boštjan Hostej, company CEO, says that the company is greatly honoured to be part of the Olympics, and he is certain that the Slovenian Olympic Committee selected his firm specifically due to the very successful international project BIG BERRY. The internationally oriented creative team, which numbers 11 people of different nationalities, will work through their dynamic BIG BERRY brand to seek new opportunities within the Slovenia House.



In referring to the graphic representation of the Slovenia House, please credit the creators: spatial layout and interior design: GregorcVrhovec architects; design: arnoldvuga.

FRANCI PETEK

The former professional ski jumper is the head of Team Slovenia at the PyeongChang Winter Olympics

ALJA PAHOR
PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVES



Franci Petek

Franci Petek, ski jumper, Olympian and the first flag bearer of the independent Republic of Slovenia at the 1992 Albertville Olympics, is the one to head Team Slovenia in PyeongChang, South Korea. As the year is coming to a close, we spoke to him about his preparation for the role of the head of Team Slovenia, what his most cherished Olympic memories are, and how he is reliving the greatest sporting event in the world.

You are about to leave for South Korea as the head of Team Slovenia and thus put yourself in the shoes of your predecessor and Olympian Petra Majdič, who headed our 2014 Winter Olympics team in Sochi. What are your expectations? What are you looking forward to, are you worried?

I am honoured that I get to travel to South Korea in this role. I hope that I can follow in Petra's (Petra Majdič) footsteps, because she proved that a former world-class athlete can be successful in such a position.

I am convinced that we as a team will proudly represent our country. I am not worried, but I am eager to see each and every one of our athletes perform.

You performed at two Olympic Games. Would you say that your experience as an Olympian and former professional athlete is an advantage in leading such an important team? What do you think could be your strengths?

Experience from being a top athlete definitely comes in handy, especially because I can empathise with the athletes competing in the greatest competition there is. In addition to the overwhelming Olympic spirit an athlete might also feel pressure, and that's when someone who has experienced it all before can be very helpful. Everyone involved can expect my support. I always try to listen to and understand others so I can help them as much as I possibly can.

As a member of the 1992 Olympic Team you had the honour to be the first flag bearer for the independent Slovenia at the opening ceremony of the Albertville Winter Olympics. Could that be your favourite Olympic memory, or is there some other moment or event from the Olympics that always puts a smile on your face?

Albertville was a long time ago, but I can clearly remember the opening ceremony. It felt so special, being a young athlete and representing our country. But I could go on and on about moments from Slovenia's rich sporting history that make people laugh and warm their hearts.

Being the director of the Ski Association of Slovenia, most of the athletes in the Olympic team are, in fact, from your ranks. How do you see "your" athletes and their performances in PyeongChang?

Our athletes have worked so hard to be as successful as they are. I know that they will give their utmost at the coming Olympics, too. I also believe that they will represent their team in the best possible light and put many in a very good mood.

This time around your role will be rather different. Athletes are usually aware of the hard work put in by experts of the Olympic Committee of Slovenia in cooperation with the national athletic federations, to ensure everything runs smoothly at the games. This time you are heading the Olympic Team. What are your expectations, what part will you play within the team?

Cooperation between the Olympic Committee, athletic federations, trainers, athletes and other stakeholders has always been positive.

We can once more ensure that Slovenia and our athletes are seen only in a positive light.

I also have a positive outlook on the world, which can inspire others to help them fulfil their dreams.

Which Olympics were the most memorable for you and why? Did you ever manage to watch any other sports?

I would probably have to choose France, because those were my first Olympics, but I have fond memories of Norway as well. Whenever possible we watched our fellow athletes and cheered them on.

To conclude, what would be your advice to our athletes who are preparing to represent our country at the eagerly anticipated 2018 Olympics in February?

Seize this opportunity and believe in yourselves and your abilities. This might be your first, second, third, or perhaps your last Olympics. But you all know how much work it took to be among the best in your sport. I am convinced that you will find that extra bit of energy that will help you accomplish your goals.

TOMAŽ RAZINGAR

The former professional hockey player will be the guide on fan flight to PyeongChang 2018

ALJA PAHOR



Tomaž Razingar.
Photo:Nebojša Tejić/STA

Tomaž Razingar – former hockey player, Olympian, flag-bearer and captain of the Slovenian national hockey team which took a historic seventh place at the Sochi Olympics, is now a hard-working businessman and will be the guide on the Slovenian fan flight to the upcoming Winter Olympic Games in PyeongChang, South Korea.

We spoke with Tomaž about his memories of the Olympics, his plans for the future, and most of all about his expectations regarding the upcoming Games, at which his role will be considerably different to that which he played in Sochi.

Tomaž, you have had a long and successful career; among other accomplishments, you played in 212 games for the national team, participated in eight world championships, and served as captain of the national team for an amazing nine years. Where did all this begin? Who was it that first put a stick in your hands and skates on your feet?

I come from a sporting family. My mother was a rower in Bled and my father played hockey, and it looks like my dad won out. It wasn't long before I had skates and a stick and started playing hockey.

The beginnings of my hockey career started with the Jesenice Hockey Club, one of the best in Slovenia.

When I was young I played a lot of sports, but soon I had to decide on one, and the winner was hockey, of course.

What event from your sporting years is the most memorable for you?

I have a lot of memories... I really enjoyed my time playing professional hockey in America. At the time there weren't many Slovenes who were able to play their sport across the pond. I was lucky to be the first who succeeded in playing there. I went to the St. Louis Blues' training camp twice, and played on their affiliate team, which won the ECHL championship. Unfortunately I never managed to take the

next step, like Anže Kopitar the first Slovene hockey player in the NHL, and the first Slovene to be part of a team that won the Stanley Cup, which he accomplished in 2012 and 2014], who has now lived and played in America for several years.

You went to Sochi as the captain of the national team, but your role in PyeongChang will be completely different. You are going there as the guide on the fan flight, and you and the other fans will be loyally cheering on our athletes. What do you expect from this role and what are you most excited about?

I think the main thing is I will be relaxed. I am happy and proud to have been given the honour to play this role at the Olympics. I am most excited about the fact that I will have the opportunity to see the biggest sporting event in the world from a different perspective. I think that with my experience I will be a good person to talk to for all of the other fans and sponsors who are going there to support our Olympic heroes.

The schedule at the Winter Olympics in PyeongChang will of course be packed and varied. In addition to hockey, which is of course your favourite, our team will also include athletes in other sports and disciplines. What competitions would you most like to see? Who will you be cheering for?

Just like the last Olympics, where I was a participant, I will be cheering for all of the Slovene athletes.

The most interesting competition for sure will be the ski jumping, which all of Slovenia will be cheering for and wishing our eagles good wind under their skis.

Let's get back to the present for a second. What went on in your head when you hung up your skates in 2015? Did you already have a plan for what you were going to do after all the practices and games were over? Was it difficult to leave it behind? How would you describe that period?

I'm one of those athletes who was lucky enough that in addition to my sports career I was also involved in catering and tourism, so after my career was over I was extremely busy. I had to work harder than before, as other people helped me with those things while I was playing hockey. It's true though, when sports is your way of life for twenty years, you sometimes find yourself missing it, and I myself went through two periods when I didn't know what to do with myself, but thankfully they were short, so now I can calmly go on with my life.

In public you are known as an emotional athlete, which is perhaps a little unusual, especially for strong hockey players. What was it like at the opening ceremony in Sochi, when you proudly waved the Slovenian flag and led the way for the entire Slovenian team? Can you compare that moment with the victory against Austria and qualification for the quarter-finals?

I was extremely proud, and still am, to have the honour of carrying the Slovenian flag at the Olympic Games in Sochi. At the same time I knew that there were 65 top-class athletes behind me who all deserved to carry the flag at that elite event. I was mainly extremely proud, but in the end the qualification for the quarter-finals was more important to me. In the end we are all athletes, and we want to succeed at the highest level and have great results.

Today you are a successful businessman, a husband and a father of two.

That's true. I work in catering and tourism. I have more time than before to spend with my family – my wife and two daughters. I really love being a father, since while I was playing hockey there wasn't much time for that. My family often suffered from my absences, so now I am trying to make up for it and take advantage of it as much as possible.

Slovenian fans (in addition to athletes) have often proved to

be great ambassadors for our country. What are your feelings about that?

I think that top-level athletes with long sporting careers develop special emotions regarding our homeland, Slovenia.

To represent your country at a top-level or any sporting event is a special honour. I am inspired by the Slovenian people, our modesty and friendliness. I feel the most 'Slovene' when our athletes' accomplishments demonstrate the power of our small country.

We Slovenes are proof that size is not an obstacle when you have a great sporting heart! We athletes are particularly thankful for the support, delight and tears of joy when we achieve great results. I could feel that at the last Olympics in Sochi, and I believe that it will be the same this year.

What in your opinion is the significance of supporting athletes and cheering them on?

Top-level or professional sports are by their very nature intended for an audience, for the fans. Sports are played and competitions are held for people and fans. When you see that you can make people happy and excited through your work and results, those are really nice feelings. From my own experience I can say that the feelings that you have when you wear the national colours are truly special.

And finally, what about the future? Will you continue to be involved in hockey, perhaps taking a leading position within the hockey federation? Would that make you happy, or are you looking for something else?

Of course I will still be involved with hockey. I really enjoy running the Hockey Academy in Bled together with Anže Kopitar, which enrolls between 160 and 180 participants every year. Anže and I share our knowledge and experiences with young, aspiring players and that gives me a lot of satisfaction. For now my place is here; what the future will bring, nobody knows. But hockey has always been my first love, and that's how it's going to stay.



As captain of the Slovenian hockey team, Tomaž and his fellow players gained an incredible 7th place in Sochi 2014.
Photo: Aleš Fevžer

SLOVENIAN FANS IN PYEONGCHANG

The majority will be supporting the Slovenian hockey team

POLONA PREŠEREN

PHOTO: GREGOR HROMC PERSONAL ARCHIVES

Group of Slovenian ice-hockey fans in Sochi 2014.



A good number of Slovenian fans have set off to PyeongChang, where the majority of them will be supporting Team Slovenia in the hockey event. This is certainly no surprise, as this has been one of the most popular sports in Slovenia since its beginning. It is a true Slovenian team sport that inspires us with the outstanding successes of our national representatives.

The Slovenian people have a close connection to sports. Our story is therefore also a sports story; moving fills us with energy and gives us a boost in reaching our recreational as well as professional goals. Sport is integral to the Slovenian identity, and is an important part of the national brand and one of the reasons for its green colour. Slovenian athletes excel at a wide range of sports, and are thus our front-line ambassadors around the world.

It seems impossible that a nation of just two million could achieve such athletic success. Ever since Slovenia's independence our athletes have won the highest number of medals per capita at major events.

We are likely the only country this small that has qualified for the highest-level competitions in team sports (football, hockey, basketball, handball, and volleyball) and whose exceptional individual athletes have achieved top-level individual results (skiing, cross-country skiing, and ski jumping).

Just like for the last Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, the Slovenian hockey team has qualified for the Games in PyeongChang. They beat Belarus after shootouts and celebrated this heroic achievement for the second time. It should be noted here that Slovenia achieves all this with just a few more than 100 professional hockey players.

LOYAL HOCKEY SUPPORTERS

The fans organised soon after it became clear that Team Slovenia would be 25 men stronger in PyeongChang with the addition of the hockey team. A group has set off to PyeongChang headed by Gregor Hromc. "Our group has been visiting hockey events for a very long time. We are national team supporters and have already been to Sochi and the World Championships, so we decided to go

to Korea too. These are incredible events for us. We love to support hockey. However, since Slovenia also has brilliant athletes in other sports, we will support them as well," says Hromc just before leaving for Asia.

Their group consists of people of all ages, professions and interests, but all with a common passion – hockey.

They will also cheer for other Slovenian athletes in Korea, but this will depend on the hockey game schedule. "We combine pleasure with an experience – sport and exploring the world. It is quite unlikely that any of us would visit Korea otherwise. We gathered, got organised and now we travel on our own budget," says Hromc.

They are in contact with the Slovenian Olympic Committee and the Ice Hockey Federation of Slovenia, as they hope to get a chance to meet with the players in Korea. "We are delighted that Tomaž Razinger, former captain of the national team, is the guide on the fan flight. I hope that we will be able to meet with our athletes."

"We expect the best possible play from our team, especially given their magnificent performance in Sochi," says Gregor Hromc. "Our guys exceeded all expectations there. We allow ourselves to be surprised, and maybe the story will repeat this year. It is true that not all the best players will play, including the best Slovenian player Anže Kopitar, from the NHL. But other teams are missing some key players, too, so our chances are quite good," notes Hromc before the trip to Korea.

There are no special preparations for these supporters, but they never forget their memorabilia – "I feel Slovenia" fan scarves and hockey jerseys are a must, and with this they are ready. They don't have any choreographed routines for the stands, as there usually aren't any dedicated sections at the Olympics for different countries, so one nation's supporters are often scattered randomly around the hall. Despite this small obstacle, they still cheer on their athletes as well as they can.

NO BARRIERS FOR DISABLED SPORTS PEOPLE

Jernej Slivnik set for the Paralympic Games

DRAGO PERKO

PHOTO: DISABLED SPORTS FEDERATION OF SLOVENIA – PARALYMPIC COMMITTEE ARCHIVES

Jernej Slivnik competing in Kranjska Gora.



Sport is a major opportunity for young disabled persons to improve the quality of their lives, maintain their health and be actively involved in society. This has been something courageously pursued by the talented 16-year-old paraskier Jernej Slivnik, who despite an injury to his shoulder is preparing to appear at the Paralympic Games in South Korea.

The barriers are in your head, goes the old saying. In practice this is confirmed every day, over and over again. And this is shown successfully by countless disabled athletes, who despite their visible or invisible handicaps train and push the boundaries of what is possible. Disabled sports are not mere recreation, as some might unwittingly imagine. Disabled sports are serious, and takes their toll, especially if an individual or team wants to keep up with the best in the world. Including in Slovenia, where efforts are being made to finally release such sporting activities from the constraints of social welfare, and to blossom as top-level sports events in their own right.

And now 16-year-old Jernej Slivnik is blazing his own trail among the best, as the sole Slovenian representative at the upcoming Paralympic Games.

WILL I STILL SKI?

"Before the car crash I loved to ski. I was two when I started walking, and six months later I was on skis," says Slivnik, who is a paraplegic. After an accident in which he injured his head and legs, he woke up from a coma. "First, I asked if I would ever ski again," laughs the student of Jesenice Grammar School, where they are proud of his accomplishments, and the team assembled around head teacher Lidija Dornig is working to optimise the young lad's lessons and sports career. For this reason, Jernej is a student in the sports department. Slivnik is in fact the first movement-impaired student in the department at Jesenice Grammar School, which is regarded as a disabled-friendly environment.

Jernej's legs were damaged in the accident, so he ended up in a wheelchair. For this reason he skis on an appropriately adapted monoski. He was lucky in that he quickly got to know the now retired paralympian Gal Jakič. "Gal and his family were always a great help to me," says Slivnik, without hiding his gratitude for his role model, who helped him "cut" the ski trails and make his first turns easier. He was also assisted by what could be called a happy coincidence. In 2009 the first ski camp for the Slovenian Paraplegic Association (the one held in 2018 at Rogla will be tenth) took place right there in Kranjska Gora, which is just over 20 kilometres from Hrušica, where Jernej lives, and he was only too glad to take part in the camp and formally sit on a monoski for the first time. "I remember taking part in the camp. In an interview with the Slovenian commercial television station POP TV I announced that I wanted to go to the Paralympics. I really enjoyed it, even on my first attempt," underlines Jernej, who is a neighbour of Anže Kopitar, the ice hockey player.

TRAINING INJURY

Today the Paralympic Games in South Korea, which will take place from 9 to 18 March 2018, are Jernej's reality. This is also the focus for all the preparations and efforts of his team and the Disabled Sports Federation of Slovenia – Paralympic Committee. Since last August, Slivnik has been preparing for the first high point in his career, but unfortunately such things are never easy. On the first weekend in December, Slivnik injured his shoulder while training in Austria, where he works with coach Roman Podlipnik, alongside deaf skier Anja Drev. "Please keep your fingers crossed at least for the Paralympics to still happen! I'm fighting and not giving up!" he stated on social media after the accident.

THE STUFF OF A CHAMPION

Coach Roman Podlipnik remains optimistic, and believes that they still have enough time to prepare well for the Paralympics, where his young student is set to compete in both technical disciplines – slalom and giant slalom. “Jernej will first need to compete in some world cup competition,” says Podlipnik, aware that his protégé needs to fulfil the formal conditions for appearing at the Games. “We’ve worked hard, and Jernej has made great progress.

If his health keeps up and sticks to his chosen path, he is an outstanding skier, and one day will be a Paralympics champion.

I know what I’m talking about,” says the experienced skiing expert, describing what the future holds for Slivnik, with whom he works with dedication and affection. Previously the young athlete trained under Uroš Pogačnik and Bojan Kavčič, and now, alongside Pod-

lipnik, Jernej and his development are also the concern of fitness trainer Dr Igor Justin and physiotherapist Maša Vida, while Gal Jakič helps with advice.

Podlipnik’s predictions for the talented competitor are also backed up by the results. The youngest athlete in the highest-level world skiing competitions, Slivnik has been competing since this year, when he started in three world cup competitions right there in Kranjska Gora. He had already celebrated a win in his first official competition last year at Landgraaf in the Netherlands, where he took part in the youth slalom. If his injury heals quickly, Slivnik could appear in domestic competitions, as on 11 and 12 January Kranjska Gora will host two competitions in the para alpine skiing world cup. And even if Slivnik can’t start, he will certainly be training.

SPORT HELPS

Jernej loves sports, although it often happens that the parents of

disabled children actually steer them away from such activities, out of excessive concern. However, Slivnik sees things differently, “I advise everyone to get involved in sports as soon as possible. It strengthens the body and the spirit.”

The Disabled Sports Federation of Slovenia – Paralympic Committee and Lidl Slovenia have joined together to take things a step further: giving disabled sports a higher profile among the Slovenian public. A vital component of this is involving young disabled people in sports and other activities.

The partners have therefore set out the programme Become an Athlete, through which they seek to establish an effective long-term system for greater involvement of young disabled people in sport.

Through sport and recreation, young people develop their capacities, strengthen their self-image and in that way can significantly improve their quality of life.

The first steps in the programme will be aimed at taking stock of the current state of affairs and offering workshops for various target groups, and then the partners will begin specific activities at both local and national levels. The Become an Athlete (Postani športnik) system will interweave with and nicely complement the European project Change Your Mindset – Sport4Everyone, an international Erasmus+ project. The underlying philosophy is well expressed by Damijan Lazar, president of the Disabled Sports Federation of Slovenia – Paralympic Committee: “Sport is a major opportunity for young disabled persons to improve the quality of their lives, maintain their health and be actively involved in society. In this way they develop their capacities, strengthen their self-image and improve their psycho-physical abilities. Research shows that individuals who get involved in various sports find it easier to secure employment and meet a life partner.”



Roman Podlipnik is transferring his rich sporting experience to Jernej.



He is successfully combining the career of a ski champion with his school work.

SLOVENIANS ARE A SPORTING NATION

Incredible number of champions for the population size

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ
PHOTO: MANCA ČUJEŽ

At the Begunjščica ridge mountain
in the Karawanks.

It would be hard for anyone to contradict the assertion that the Slovenians are a gifted nation when it comes to sports. Around the world we are even known as a sports phenomenon.

The big names in various sectoral associations often marvel at all the success earned by Slovenian athletes, and even the country's fans have been praised. We could even be described as fanatical about physical activities. For instance, we love en masse running, cycling, mountain walking... and cheering. Visitors coming to Slovenia can only wonder where all this enthusiasm for movement comes from.

Pretty much all the large-scale recreational events break records from year to year, both in terms of participants and the number of fans.

In the past quarter century we have witnessed numerous sports successes, and hard work, perseverance, diligence and conscientiousness are the values that distinguish not just Slovenian athletes, but also a large proportion of the country's recreational sports people.

JUST A FIFTH OF SLOVENIANS ARE NOT INVOLVED IN RECREATIONAL SPORTS

According to Eurobarometer, nearly 60% of Europeans never or rarely engage in sports, while in Slovenia only around 22% of the population are among the inactive. This means that as many as 80% of the population regularly take part in a sporting activity, much higher than the European average. The success of Slovenia's athletes in international competitions also shows how deeply sport is rooted in the nation. The country has always been known as a "skiing nation," and many still have vivid memories of keeping their fingers crossed for Mateja Svet and Bojan Križaj. We consolidated our reputation with Tina Maze, the most successful female Alpine skier that country has produced. The winner of five events in one season, as well as the titles of World and Olympic champion in two events, has been the envy of the world. We are also especially proud of Peter Prevc, Olympic runner-up and big crystal globe winner in the ski jump, who achieved his world championship victory at Planica in 2016.

But Slovenia outgrew the confines of a skiing nation long ago, and since independence it has earned glory in pretty much all areas of sport.

Relative to the size of the population, it is indeed amazing the great range of sports that Slovenians have made their mark on. The nation regularly ranks at the top of lists of the most successful countries in major tournaments by population size, something best illustrated in the Olympic Games. At the pinnacle of world sports

Slovenia also wins distinction in tennis, athletics, swimming, bowls and sailing, and in 2017, basketball.

RECREATIONAL EVENTS – FESTIVALS OF SLOVENIAN SPORT

Numerous recreational events have become festivals of Slovenian sport. Participation in cross-country, marathons and cycle races is growing each year, and it is now expected that the organisers will report record numbers of registrations. It is the same story in the number of people attending sporting events, where crowds of Slovenians go to urge their heroes on to victory. For example, Peter



Slovenia has always been known as a "skiing nation."

Prevc and the so-called Slovenian Eagles drew 110,000 spectators to Planica, and the financial surplus from the four days of the ski jumping festival was between 200,000 and 300,000 euros. The Golden Fox competition at Pohorje brings out more than 20,000 people, and the First Division football match between rivals Maribor and Olimpija at Stožice was watched live by a record 14,500 fans, with around 11% of all viewers tuning in on television. Basketball player Goran Dragić has increased interest in the NBA among Slovenians, while Anže Kopitar is one of the main reasons why we closely follow events in the National Hockey League. Moreover, the Champions League final between Real and Atlético became the most watched football match in Slovenia in the last 14 years. One undoubted reason for this was the Atlético goalkeeper, also the Slovenian national keeper Jan Oblak, who boasts an outstanding record of penalty saves.

For a small country, like Slovenia, it is hard to achieve success in team sports, especially in the most popular ones such as football, basketball or volleyball. But for this very reason those of us who live in this nation below the Alps are more likely to keep abreast of the successes of their compatriots, to cheer even more enthusiastically and be more willing to part with a few extra euros to follow the athletes with Triglav on their shirts.

We often hear that Slovenians are proverbially divided, but the fact is that we are united behind the success of our sporting heroes, as reflected in the inspiring results that the Slovenian ambassadors of sport bring home to us each week.

We thus live in a country which, despite having only a little over two million inhabitants, regularly achieves outstanding success in sports and boasts an enthusiastic audience of fans.

Since 1991, when Slovenia gained independence, we have experienced a good many moments when the nation breathed as one thanks to the country's athletes. Given the solid foundation such successes have been built on, we believe that there are many more such unforgettable experiences to come.



It is indeed amazing the great range of sports that Slovenians have made their mark on.

SLOFIT SYSTEM

Three decades of the Sports Educational Chart

ASST. PROF. DR GREGOR STARC AND PROF. DR GREGOR JURAK
 PHOTO: PROF. DR GREGOR JURAK AND KATARINA BIZJAK SLANIČ

Bending forward on the bench is a measurement task that provides data on the flexibility of the legs and lower back. Low values indicate the risk of injury and incapacity to make leg movements to full amplitude.

Since 1987 the Faculty of Sport of the University of Ljubljana has conducted systematic monitoring of the physical development and fitness of children and adolescents at all Slovenian primary and secondary schools, and the database now includes data on half of the country's citizens.

The monitoring of physical development and fitness has a long tradition in the Slovenian school system, with the first attempts to establish a national scheme dating back to 1970. The pioneering work of the Faculty of Sport has proven to be visionary, since it was only after more than a decade that the Council of Europe supported a similar system, called EuroFIT, which has still not come into population-wide use in any European country. The original monitoring system, called the Physical Education Card, petered out after a decade, a fate brought on by the excessive demands of the measurement tasks and of processing of vast amounts of data with the poorly developed computer technology of the time. Based on the experience of the first attempt, in the 80s researchers at the Faculty of Sport, headed by Prof. Jože Šturm and Prof. Janko Strel, developed a new, simpler test battery and an effective reporting system, which with the help of better developed computer technology enabled the rapid processing of data and feedback for each individual child. After a six-year trial period, when the new test battery and reporting system were tried out on a sample of Slovenian schools, the monitoring system was implemented in 1987 in every school in the nation.

In the initial period the system was intended primarily for sports education teachers, who based on the annual measurements could monitor the development of each child, and proceeding from this they could more effectively plan lessons and adapt them to the needs of pupils.

In the past decade, however, data on the physical development and fitness of children has become an important support tool for policies in the areas of education and public health, and the SLOfit system is synonymous with raising broad public awareness of the importance of ensuring adequate physical activity for the healthy development of every child and adolescent.

Owing precisely to the strong familiarity with taking into account the developmental status of children and adolescents, Slovenia has developed one of the highest-quality systems of school sports education globally, and for this reason the physical fitness of our children is among the highest in the world.



CONCERN FOR EVERY CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT

In April each year measurements of physical characteristics and fitness are carried out at all Slovenian schools, and this covers more than 95 percent of children on a voluntary basis. The SLOfit test battery covers three anthropometric measurements and eight fitness tasks, on the basis of which it is possible to compare the physical development and fitness of each child with the national average and identify those children showing signs of developmental problems, and also those who show exceptional motor potential. Each pupil has their own personal card, an official document in which each year teachers record their progress, and in this way parents at the school gain an insight into how their child is developing in the motor and physical areas, and not just in the cognitive realm.

Parents, with the expert support of sports education teachers, can thus respond to possible problems in their child's development

by encouraging leisure-time physical activity, through inclusion in additional organised sports or by seeking the help of health experts if necessary, and on the other hand children with advanced motor skills can be steered towards more challenging exercise processes in various sports clubs.

This means that with the help of the SLOfit system it is possible to reduce the health risk of children and adolescents associated with physical inactivity, while at the same time it encourages and serves to ensure the optimal development of motor potential in all children.

Consequently, despite the small size of its population and limited financial resources, Slovenia can achieve top results in various sports at the international level.



Skin fold provides data on the amount of fat mass. A high value is a sign of energy imbalance, which increases the health risk of contracting cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes and certain forms of cancer.

SUPPORT FOR POLICIES AT HOME AND ON THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

The SLOfit system is financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, and researchers at the Faculty of Sport offer constant scientific support both for new education policies to promote physical activity, and for health policies aimed at reducing the health risks of children associated with obesity. Since data on the physical development and fitness of children is collected at all schools, this also facilitates monitoring the effectiveness of various interventions and their evaluation.

Since 2007 data from the SLOfit system has also been used by the World Health Organization, and is a component part of the Children Obesity Surveillance Initiative, which in Europe systematically

monitors trends of child obesity and, based on the findings, formulates new policies in the fight against this condition.

DEVELOPMENT TRENDS OF SLOVENIAN CHILDREN

The years of monitoring child development by means of the SLOfit system have shown that Slovenia is one of the few countries to have reversed the trends that came to a head in 2011, after a decade of declining physical fitness and growing obesity, and for six years now the nation has witnessed a reduction in the proportion of obese children and increasing levels of physical fitness, with the latter particularly pronounced among girls. Today's girls are now at a higher level of physical fitness than their mothers were in childhood, while the boys are still slightly behind that of their fathers.



Bar hanging is a measurement task providing data on the strength and stamina of the arms and shoulder area. Low values indicate poor ability to control the mass of one's own body and the risk of inappropriate stabilisation of the upper back. Owing to changing lifestyles, this is the motor ability for which in boys we record the most negative intergenerational trend.



CLOTHING COLLECTION FOR PYEONGCHANG 2018

Triglav – the primary graphic motif

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ
PHOTO: ALEŠ FEVŽER

Slovenia's Olympic athletes who will be competing at the Winter Olympics in PyeongChang will be going there in stylish and recognisable kits. They are a continuation of recent design precepts, with the basic colour combination of green, blue and white. The Olympic collection, which was created by PEAK, was designed by the architect Sandi Murovec, and features Mt. Triglav as the primary graphic element.

Sandi Murovec: "As the designer of all of the Olympic collections since 2012 (London – PyeongChang), I can state with assurance that Slovene Olympians and athletes in general have become recognisable throughout the world due to the selection of the unique colour combination. The new colour scheme of Slovenian sport has also created a new identity, for both the elite athletes and their loyal supporters. This is particularly important, since it is the fans who give victories their true import and are in some way a reflection of the top-level achievements which are most directly transferred to new generations. We of course followed this dictum in designing the Olympic collection for PyeongChang 2018, which is essentially a logical extension of the previous collections. I don't know if it makes sense to talk about innovation, as we are after all only talking about clothes, but we always try to choose the best materials on the one hand and follow the sports fashion trends on the other.

The basic kit, which our athletes will wear at the opening ceremony and at all official events, includes a down jacket, warm-up or trekking trousers, a pullover, a scarf, a cap and gloves. The entire collection is designed so that all of the elements can be combined interchangeably, in terms of both colour and function. We divided the collection into national, formal and casual attire, and the correct way to wear it is set out in a precisely defined protocol.

Regardless of the overall appeal and the relative attractiveness of the design solutions, the success and popularity of each collection depends most highly on the athletes' final results. Let's not forget that we won eight medals at the last Winter Olympics in Sochi!"

The Slovenes were also easy to spot four years ago in Sochi, and the Slovenian down jacket was one of the most sought-after items to trade in the Olympic Village and at events. Murovec believes that the new collection for South Korea will also be a success, and predicted that the most popular piece will be the light down jacket, which will also be available to fans. Olympics-related products will be available at Petrol service stations, Mercator stores and the online retailer OKS.

Bogdan Gabrovec, CEO of OKS: "I believe that the clothing will not only be beautiful, but also victorious."



Franci Petek, Leader of the Slovenian delegation: "Having a unique Olympic collection makes an athlete feel more self-confident."



SLOVENIAN OLYMPIC EDUCATION CENTRE

Foksi and his story of sporting spirit

ALJA PAHOR, ALEŠ ŠOLAR

Foksi is also available as soft toy, so make sure you have one before the Olympic Games begins.
Photo: Arnoldvuga+



In April 2016 the Olympic Committee of Slovenia – Association of Sports Federations opened the Slovenian Olympic Education Centre. This serves to present Slovenian sports people, the history of Olympianism and the Olympic Games through photographs, video content and exhibits. One special feature is the wall of famous athletes –all the Slovenians who have won an Olympic medal from 1912 to 2016. Copies of the medals won are also on display.

The presentation at the Centre begins with the ancient Olympic Games, then continues with the founding of the International Olympic Committee on 23 June 1894 in Paris. Visitors can view the Olympic symbols, the Olympic Torch and flag, and can learn about the details of the Olympic ceremonies. The large wall at the centre shows the entire timeline of the Olympic Games, from 1896 to 2016. There is also a presentation showcasing the engineer Stanko Bloudek, who to date is the only Slovenian to have been a member of the International Olympic Committee. Stanko Bloudek is an exceptionally important sports personality, and was active as a sports person, coach, sports worker and construction engineer. The highest national awards for sports in Slovenia are even named after Bloudek.

The Olympic Education Centre also offers virtual sports, an animation of ski jumping, downhill skiing and highlights from competitions at the Rio Olympics, provided through the latest technology from Samsung. The tour can then continue along the Olympic interpretive trail.

At the Centre, the Olympic Committee of Slovenia carries out various programmes and activities. It organises Olympic Lessons with top Slovenian athletes for children and youths. For young sports people it provides educational and informative workshops, and

also organises events for various target groups, thereby ensuring the promotion of sports and the Olympic tradition.

OLYMPIC LESSON

There is a particularly interesting programme we have called Olympic Lessons. These offer visitors and participants a presentation of the Olympic tradition, Olympic history and symbols, and the achievements of Slovenian Olympians. We offer participants lectures, film presentations, presentations of the originals of various Olympic symbols, we carry out the protocol for the Olympic Games opening ceremony and then in a relaxed atmosphere we compete in various sports challenges. The main thing here is taking part, for we can be stronger as a team, and in this way we pursue the Olympic values of excellence, resilience, friendship and fair play, and through sports we try to implement this in everyday life. In the Olympic Lessons, everyone who tries their hardest is a winner.

The role of our reporters and journalists is also important, because they strive to maintain a high level of professionalism at all times.

There are too many people who have contributed to TV Slovenia's global reputation over the years who deserve to be mentioned. Working for TV is in essence teamwork, and our staff truly sticks to the rule of The Three Musketeers: One for all, and all for one!

FOKSI

Visitors and participants at the Slovenian Olympic Education Centre are also greeted by Foksi, the mascot of the Olympic Committee of Slovenia – Association of Sports Federations. Foksi's story is as follows:

"My home is in the Koroška valley of Topla, I am frisky and curious by nature, and this makes me very popular. Even as a young and impulsive fox cub I devoted myself to sports, and I spent all my time developing sports skills. By training in various sports I really polished my personality and forged it into an admirable mixture of irrepressible will and inspired cunning. I was helped in this by conversations and e-mails full of invaluable advice from my experienced cousin, the wolf Vučko, who really knows about sports.

My determination and perseverance are indispensable support and encouragement for all our sports people. Right from the start I have always felt best in the company of the fans, I most like to share my energy and playfulness with them, and sometimes I even surprise them with a prank or trick. I am a loyal and fierce fan who pushes for team spirit and respects true sports values. I want to transfer these to all of you who accompany me. Through my own example I want to encourage you to choose a healthy and active lifestyle, in coexistence with the wealth of nature that surrounds us.

Through my knowledge and experience I would like to show you how to get around obstacles and find the right way out of hopeless situations, I want to teach you how to think quickly and adapt to every possible situation. As a fox I am a great observer and react quickly, I'm resourceful, never naive and always physically well-prepared – and these are the characteristics of true sports people.

My friends say that I personify energy, courage, strength and perseverance, and as such I represent best the values of Slovenian sport. With every success in sport I never forget to be optimistic and sincere. I am always friendly, and friendship means a lot to me. I wear my team colours and hold my elegant tail, with the symbol of Triglav on the tip, proudly, upright and courageously.

I believe that through my carefree discovery of sports and the right sense of competitiveness, socialising and friendship I will become an indispensable member of the Olympic family, and a support for Slovenian professional and recreational sports people."

The Slovenian Olympic Education Centre is also open for groups, individuals, tourists and anyone else interested in the Olympic tradition and sports, or perhaps in buying some items from the new range of official Olympic gear produced for this year's Games.



The Fox Foksi is a regular sight at all sports events around Slovenia, a mascot who makes everybody smile, both young and adults.
Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

TREND-SETTERS OF MODERN SKI JUMPING

Excellence especially because of teamwork

MIHA ŽIBRAT
PHOTO: KATJA KODBA

“Who the hell are you guys?” John Nienaber, the executive producer of the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, enthusiastically asked our director Dejan Čretnik while watching reruns from that day’s ski jumps.

RTV Slovenia Production team - on air.



“They are trend setters of a modern ski jumping production,” said Walter Hofer, FIS Race Director, in an interview with RTV Slovenia. And we could go on about similar statements, all of which show how valued and respected the production team of RTV Slovenia is at the global level.

TOP QUALITY BROADCASTS OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES AND OTHER SPORTSE

Let’s focus just on the greatest sporting event there is – the Olympics.

It all started in 1984 when our director Stane Škodlar was invited to direct the Olympic weightlifting competition in Los Angeles.

In 1992 the whole team from TV Slovenia was invited to Barcelona to attend the Olympics for the first time. It was responsible for the weightlifting competition and did an excellent job. The Sydney 2000 Olympics were no different. Four years later, in Athens, the TV Slovenia team broadcast the field hockey competition. In 12 days it managed to handle 50 matches at temperatures that never dropped below 30 degrees!

However, ski jumping has always been the domain of TV Slovenia. Worth mentioning is the fact that the organisation’s first broadcast was, in fact, the 1960 ski jumping competition in Planica. The team also excelled at broadcasting ski jumping competitions at the Turin 2006 Winter Olympics. After being praised for their work and innovation, the TV Slovenia team was responsible for filming the ski jumping competitions at the Olympics in Vancouver 2010 and Sochi 2014.

But the Beijing Olympics in 2008 were truly special for all the production staff. Headed by director Stane Škodlar, the team first handled the kayak and canoe competitions, and then moved to another location to broadcast BMX cycling under the leadership of director Dejan Čretnik.

The TV Slovenia team is currently among the best ski jumping broadcasters, especially because of the event in Planica, which is one of the five most popular broadcasts in the world.

However, the only way to stay at the top is to respect and develop the ski jumping tradition in Planica and Slovenia in general. Together we must confidently follow our creative challenges and strive to preserve this truly unique heritage.

However, it doesn’t seem right to only discuss ski jumping, given that the TV Slovenia team has been praised for other international broadcasts from Slovenian venues. This long-standing tradition of high-quality broadcasting is particularly visible in alpine skiing (Maribor and Kranjska Gora), biathlon (Pokljuka), basketball (Euro-Basket 2013), football (matches of the Slovenian team), kayak and canoe (Tacen) and many other competitions, with nearly all of our broadcasts receiving the best possible reviews for their work in such events.

It should be noted that high-quality broadcasts rely not only on skilled camera operators, but on the entire team: the production sound mixer, sound technician, camera control, assistants, secretary to the director, and so on. When all the members work in harmony, the broadcast can truly be outstanding.

The role of our reporters and journalists is also important, because they strive to maintain a high level of professionalism at all times.

There are too many people who have contributed to TV Slovenia’s global reputation over the years who deserve to be mentioned. Working for TV is in essence teamwork, and our staff truly sticks to the rule of The Three Musketeers: One for all, and all for one!



EXCLUSIVE SERIES

Renault Clio 'I feel Slovenia' - the very best from Dolenjska

POLONA PREŠEREN
PHOTO: REVOZ ARCHIVES

Last December, Renault unveiled a limited and exclusive series of cars, the Renault Clio 'I feel Slovenia'. The cars are manufactured at Revoz in Novo mesto, and are intended for Slovenian customers only.

"We are extremely happy to be cooperating with Renault, and that the Clio made in Novo mesto will be carrying the 'I feel Slovenia' brand," said Kristina Plavšak Krajnc, Director of the Government Communication Office and manager of the national brand on behalf of the

'I feel Slovenia' is a strong and proud brand, which in essence combines the beauty of the Slovenian natural environment with the national identity and virtues of Slovenian people.

Thus Renault immediately associated the brand with everything they were proud of during the production of the new Clio at Revoz Novo mesto. The above-mentioned Clio series is intended for anyone who wants a small car with the features of a large one, as the standard equipment that comes with this Clio is similar to that of large, premium cars.

Renault expressed gratitude to the Government Communication Office for recognising the Slovenian-made Clio as an appropriate ambassador for the nation, and therefore allowing the use of the 'I feel Slovenia' brand to designate this limited series of cars. The Revoz factory has been known for many years as one of the finest, highest-quality factories in the Renault Group's global production system. The Clio 'I feel Slovenia', which is produced in this high-quality facility, undoubtedly serves as an excellent ambassador for all of the best things we associate with Slovenia: we are small, but have everything the bigger nations have.

It should also be noted that the Clio is the most common car on Slovenian roads, and its production returned to the country in 2017. Our pride in Dolenjska-made Renault vehicles is shown as production gets underway for the Clio 'I feel Slovenia' limited series, which will be manufactured exclusively in the nation.

Following the well-known slogan “Everything the bigger ones have,” this Clio ‘I feel Slovenia’ series is only available with a luxury equipment package that is usually reserved for premium cars.

I FEEL SLOVENIA

Kristina Plavšak Krajnc, Director of the Government Communication Office, expressed her pleasure at this development. “The Government Communication Office works intensively with the ‘I feel Slovenia’ national brand. We promote it as broadly as possible, but at the same time make judicious use of it. We are aware of the large amount of competition in this globalised world, which applies not just to commercial entities but to countries as well. A strong national brand gives a country additional strength, as well as the products and services it generates. We are pleased that Renault has recognised the power of our national brand.”

The story of the ‘I feel Slovenia’ brand speaks to our natural environment, our country and national identity.

A no less important part of the ‘I feel Slovenia’ brand is played by the people of Slovenia themselves, who are industrious and who enter everything they enjoy with determination, whether it be work, sports, arts and culture, scientific research or leisure time. The ‘I feel Slovenia’ was established in 2007, and its basic purpose as a national brand is to create a positive image and to enhance the recognition and reputation of the country.

THIS TRULY IS A SPECIAL CAR

The Revoz factory previously produced the Renault Clio, but in 2014 focused on the production of the new Renault Twingo and Smart Forfour models. Due to the high sales of Clios on all markets, Renault decided this year to expand their production to the Revoz

Novo mesto factory, and the car is also produced in France and Turkey. Investments to adjust production in Novo mesto were worth more than 800 million euros and the work was done in record time. The investment ensured Revoz stable production for the medium term and higher daily production quantities, as the factory is now running three full shifts. As Kaan Ozkan, the President of the Management Board of Revoz d.d., noted: “Revoz currently operates in the global environment of the Renault Nissan Mitsubishi Alliance, where it holds an important position. The Clio 4 is not only an excellent product but also an assurance that we are providing a successful long-term future for our factory.”

Jean-Pierre Mesic, general manager of Renault Nissan Adriatic, stated he is proud that the Renault Clio is the best-selling new car in Slovenia every year.

“I am also very satisfied that part of the Clio production returned to Novo mesto. We now introduced a special series of Clio, which was developed at Renault Nissan Slovenija only for the Slovenian market with the help of Revoz. The car is truly wonderful. And as for its beautiful name I am very grateful to the Government Communication Office and its director Kristina Plavšak Krajnc. The head office quickly noticed our enthusiasm over the ‘Made in Slovenia’ label, and allowed us to use the ‘I feel Slovenia’ brand as a name for this special series of Clio.”

A positive atmosphere is coming back to the Slovenian car industry, as well as the economy in general, which also has a positive impact on the sale of new vehicles. “The Slovenian car market is growing and customers not only buy more cars, but often also those with very good equipment. Just like the Clio ‘I feel Slovenia,’” said Mr. Mesic. “‘I feel Slovenia’ is a rich, strong and above all very reputable brand. I am convinced that the Clio we are unveiling today will only support the reputations of Renault and Revoz, as well as of the national brand ‘I feel Slovenia!’”

The President of the Management Board of Revoz d.d. Kaan Ozkan, Director of the Government Communication Office Kristina Plavšak Krajnc and Jean Pierre Mesic, General manager of Renault Nissan Adriatic.



Luxury Renault Clio ‘I feel Slovenia’.

CHAIRMAN OF THE ADVISORY BOARD OF KOLEKTOR
STOJAN PETRIČ

The Winter Olympic Games in PyeongChang are also a business opportunity

TANJA GLOGOVČAN
PHOTO: KOLEKTOR ARCHIVES



Stojan Petrič, Chairman of the advisory board of Kolektor and Honorary Consul of Korea in Slovenia

Kolektor is the only Slovenian corporation that has a production subsidiary in the Republic of Korea. It therefore seems logical that Kolektor supports the Slovenia House project. Kolektor doesn't see the Winter Olympic Games in PyeongChang only as a sports event but to a great extent also as a business opportunity, both personally as well as for other Slovenian companies.

Stojan Petrič, with a Bachelor's of Science Degree in Economics, has spent all of his working life at Kolektor, the corporation where he began his career in 1974. Petrič was the General Manager from 1994 till 2014, and under his command in 2002 Kolektor became a 100% Slovene-owned company, after 34 years of foreign ownership. Moreover, it was due to his successful management style that over the 20 years of his leadership Kolektor became more well-known at both home and abroad. He managed to transform the company into a small multinational corporation with a transnational way of thinking.

Kolektor is now one of the economic pillars of the municipality of Idrija, as well as the biggest corporation in the northern part of the Primorska and Notranjska regions in Slovenia, and one of the biggest firms overall in the country. In the years when Kolektor was managed by him it became a global technology leader in its field, and a highly internationalized and diversified entity.

We talked with him about the role that Kolektor has at the Olympic Games in PyeongChang, about the business opportunities for Slovenian companies in the South Korean market, and about the experiences that the company has in this context.

Kolektor is one of the main partners of the Slovenia House at the Winter Olympic Games in PyeongChang. What is his role in this project?

Kolektor is the only Slovenian corporation that has a production subsidiary in Korea, namely Kolektor Sinyung. It is therefore quite natural that we have accepted the invitation of the Slovenian Olympic Committee to sponsor the Slovenia House at the coming Winter Olympic Games in PyeongChang. We are also one of the main sponsors of the Slovenian biathlon team, which has already achieved some enviable results this year through Jakov Fak. We are the biggest sponsor of the Slovenia House; we worked together to select facilities in Korea as well as to attract new supporters. Kolektor is a successful corporation and, as such, it supports this project in terms of both finance and organization.

How are you preparing for the Olympic Games?

Jure Brus, vice-president of the Kolektor Sinyung, helped us with preparations from the very beginning.

The Slovenia House project is designed to use a small amount of funds to incorporate into the Korean environment the feelings and experiences of Slovenian sports, entrepreneurship and hospitality with the characteristics of our building tradition and culture, and thus to connect both countries.

In such an atmosphere we will invite our business partners from Korea and Slovenia, and this will be the place for our Olympians.

You are also present in this country with Kolektor Sinyung. What is your experience with the Korean market?

The Korean market is very demanding, with an emphasis on quality and price competitiveness. We have been in this country for nearly 20 years.

We formed a small company that is leading in its market niche and is also highly recognized and appreciated.

Strong emphasis is placed on the values of respect; subordination to superiors and owners is very important, while the people are hard-working but also very social. They are raising living standards with wage growth and by providing a comfortable environment for leisure time. I have often been surprised by the infrastructure provided to improve the well-being of Korean citizens.

Which sectors of the Slovenian economy are in your opinion the most attractive to this country?

Korea is an export-oriented country with a very developed industrial sector. It is possible to succeed in this market, either with high-tech products, market niches or by providing services that support Korean exports. Similar to other Asian countries, Korea also has the potential to export food products (honey and Korean products, wine, etc.)

Several Slovenian companies will present their services at the Olympic Games. What is your idea?

At the Olympic Games we will present ourselves as the sponsor of the Slovenia House and Slovenian biathlon team. We will also invite some business partners to visit Kolektor Sinyung.

You are also the company that will basically "lead" the Slovenian economic delegation. How do you see this role?

We see our role in searching for and connecting with new business partners. As the Honorary Consul of Korea I can also help in terms of politics. We are a respected corporation, valued both at home and abroad.

In the first place we want to help Slovenia and the Slovenian Olympic Committee. As a supplier of automotive parts Kolektor Sinyung has been, is and will continue to be successful after the Olympic Games.

Kolektor Sinyung company



EUROPEAN YEAR OF CULTURAL HERITAGE 2018

Our heritage: where the past meets the future

ALENKA ŠTRUKELJ



Cultural heritage is a reflection of our collective memory and an expression of our values, identities, religious and other beliefs, our knowledge and traditions. Wherever you look in Slovenia you can find archaeological sites, architecture of medieval towns and castles, and you can also see it in the cultural landscape. You can find it in the wealth of folk tradition, folklore, and the customs and habits passed on to younger generations. It is composed of literature, art, objects, the crafts we learn, the stories we tell ourselves, the food we eat and the films we watch.

Cultural heritage brings together the community and builds a common understanding of the places where we live. It promotes mutual respect and respect for our living environment, and helps us to raise responsible citizens. We inherit cultural heritage from our ancestors, and we thereby take on a commitment to preserve it for our descendants.

Yet this rich regional, national and local heritage is not just Slovenian, but represents our common European heritage, which as such has extraordinary potential for strengthening recognisability, cooperation and common development in the light of the heterogeneous European social structures and common European values, such as respect for diversity, tolerance and intercultural dialogue. For this reason, the European Commission has set itself the goal, through the European Year of Cultural Heritage, which it declared for 2018, of trying to respond to the current challenges it faces, while also offering new scope for preserving and developing cultural heritage, which for Europe is a vital, unique and irreplaceable part of the continent's social and economic potential, and as such is a foundation of our common development.

GOALS OF THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

As underlined by the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor Navracsics, when announcing this project, cultural heritage does not just help us understand our past, but can also help us build the Europe of the future.

For this reason all activities within the European Year of Cultural Heritage are being pursued under the common slogan: *Our heritage: where the past meets the future.*

Special emphasis will be placed on increasing awareness of the importance of cultural heritage for society more broadly; the contributions of cultural heritage to the economy; the role of cultural heritage in European cultural diplomacy; the long-term protection of cultural heritage; and preserving such treasures for future generations. Here there will be a special focus on joint cooperation in promoting European values and making heritage more accessible to young people, while at the same time emphasis will also be placed on protecting cultural heritage and supporting innovations in this area. Measures will include information and promotion campaigns, events and initiatives on all levels – from local to Europe-wide. They will serve to spread key messages and information with regard to examples of best practice.

YEAR OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN SLOVENIA

The role of national coordinator for the European Year of Cultural Heritage in Slovenia has been taken over by the Ministry of Culture, which is itself getting actively involved in celebrating this year.

At an event held at the National Gallery on Sunday 3 December 2017, we formally entered the European Year of Cultural Heritage, and immediately, in line with the slogan, we brought the past and future face to face.

As part of the event, there were traditional Vuzem dances from Metlika, which will soon be declared intangible heritage of na-

tional importance. At the opening, the assembled audience was treated to the appearance of the ambassadors of the year – rapper Rok Terkaj-Trkaj and literary historian Dr Igor Saksida, with a modern interpretation of Prešeren's poetry and folk songs. The event was formally opened by the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, together with a group of children.

Taking place now for the 28th year will be the European Heritage Days, which were later built upon with the Week of Cultural Heritage, as organised by the Slovenian Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage. This will bring together around 500 organisa-

tions that in one week and at 150 locations across the country put on as many as 400 events for around 33,500 visitors each year, more than half of them children. The European Year of Cultural Heritage will also be the focus of this year's 10th Cultural Bazaar, which involves presenting what Slovenia can offer culturally to staff in nursery and other schools, and combines the forces of the Ministries of Culture, Education, Agriculture, the Environment, Health and Foreign Affairs, the Education Institute, Slovenian National Committee for UNESCO, Cankarjev dom and cultural institutions from across the nation. Among the first to be actively involved in celebrating the European Year of Cultural Heritage is

the Slovenian Friends of Youth Association, with this year's Europe in School competition, as part of which, and under the title "Heritage around us: Where the past meets the future," young people will research and present aspects of cultural heritage and express their attitudes towards it.

The celebration of this year will also involve Slovenian museums, galleries and other public institutions in the area of culture and education, as well as various government and non-governmental stakeholders.



The formal opening of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 in Slovenia took place at the National Gallery. Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



Ambassadors of the European Year of Cultural Heritage Rok Terkaj-Trkaj and Prof. Dr Igor Saksida. Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

To this end, the Ministry of Culture has set up a dedicated website <http://www.mk.gov.si/elkd2018>, where they will post updated news, highlights and a calendar of all events organised by public institutions as part of this project. The project has also found a home on social media.

During the year, and in collaboration with the company Costella d.o.o., funds will be collected for renovating a cultural monument. As part of the project in 2018, Costella will put out a special line of their natural mineral water. From the sale of each bottle, labeled with the sign of European Year of Cultural Heritage, they will donate one cent to the renovation of Slovenian cultural heritage. In this way each citizen can contribute a little something towards preserving the country's heritage.

Together, we will present our cultural heritage to everyone, and especially to children and young people, in an interesting and relaxed way, and encourage active dialogue about its role in the future.

2018 
EUROPEAN YEAR
OF CULTURAL
HERITAGE
#EuropeForCulture



The Škofja Loka and its area has a thousand faces of Slovene cultural heritage: from the old castles and manors, towns with historical houses, bridges over rivers and to places with an idiosyncratic architectural heritage. It is the birthplace of Slovene impressionism. It is also a place of one of the most valuable libraries in Slovenia - the Capuchin Library - that among other treasures hides a manuscript of the Škofja Loka Passion from 1721, which is the oldest completely preserved Slovenian dramatic text, complete with director's footnotes. This unique historical re-enactment is still performed every six years on the streets of Škofja Loka which resulted that Škofja Loka Passion Play was enlisted on UNESCO Representative list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.
Photo: Alenka Štrukelj

IVAN CANKAR

Slovene writer, playwright, essayist, poet and political activist

TANJA GLOGOVČAN



Ivan Cankar was devoted to books all his life.
Photo: STA

Ivan Cankar (1876-1918) is, together with Oton Župančič, Dragotin Kette, and Josip Murn, considered as one of the pioneers of modernism in Slovene literature. He is regarded as the greatest writer in the Slovene language, and has sometimes been compared to James Joyce.

Ivan Cankar was born in the town of Vrhnika, near Ljubljana, one of the many children of a poor artisan. After finishing grammar school in his hometown, Cankar studied at the Technical High School in Ljubljana, and started writing, mostly poetry, under the influence of Romantic and post-Romantic poets such as France Prešeren, Heinrich Heine, Simon Jenko and Simon Gregorčič. Another big influence on his style and ideals was the poet Anton Aškerc, who led Cankar to embrace literary realism and national liberalism.

In 1896, he enrolled at the University of Vienna, where he came under the influence of contemporary European literature, especially decadentism, symbolism and naturalism. In the spring of 1897 he moved back to Vrhnika, and after his mother's death in the same year he moved to Pula, then in 1898 back to Vienna, where he lived until 1909.

It was here that Cankar's worldview underwent a deep change. In a letter to the Slovene feminist Zofka Kveder, written in 1900, he rejected positivism and naturalism.

He embraced spiritualism, symbolism and idealism, and became highly critical of Slovene liberalism, publishing an attack on Anton Aškerc's poetry and moving towards radical social activism on a Christian basis. He joined the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party, an Austro-Marxist group active in the Slovene Lands and Istria, even standing unsuccessfully as a candidate in the first general elections to the Austrian Parliament, held in 1907.

In 1909 Cankar left Vienna and moved to Sarajevo, where his brother worked as a priest. During his stay he turned away from his previous anti-clericalism, becoming more receptive to Christian spirituality. The same year he settled in Ljubljana, and although he remained an active member of the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party he rejected its views on nation-building, supporting instead the national and linguistic individuality of Slovenes. Cankar thus began travelling throughout the Slovene Lands, delivering lectures and conferences. The most famous of these were "The Slovene people and the Slovene culture" (*Slovensko ljudstvo in slovenska kultura*), delivered in Trieste in 1907, and "Slovenes and Yugoslavs" (*Slovinci in Jugoslovani*), delivered in Ljubljana in 1913. As a result, Cankar was sentenced to one week in prison for defamation of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. In his last lecture, delivered just after the end of the World War I, he called for the moral purification and rejuvenation of Slovene politics and culture.

Cankar died in Ljubljana in December 1918, from pneumonia, a complication of the Spanish Flu pandemic which was raging at the time.

His funeral was attended by a huge crowd and the highest representatives from cultural and political life in Slovenia, and in 1936 his grave was moved to the Žale Cemetery in the city, a sign of the writer's status in his homeland.

HE DEALT WITH SOCIAL, NATIONAL AND MORAL THEMES

Ivan Cankar is considered one of the primary exponents of Slovene modernist literature, and one of Europe's most important fin de siècle figures. In Slovenia, his best-known works are the play *Hlapci* ("Serfs"), the satire *Pohujšanje v dolini Šentflorijanski* (Scandal in St. Florian Valley) and the novel *Na klanecu* (On the Hill). However, his importance for Slovene and European literature probably lies in his symbolist sketches and other short stories, which, in their mixture of symbolism, modernism and even expressionism, convey a high degree of originality.

AS PERSONALITY HE WAS A SHARP THINKER

Cankar was a relatively fragile personality, a sharp thinker who was able of poignant criticism of both his environment and himself. He was also full of paradoxes and loved irony and sarcasm. He had an unusually sentimental and somehow ecstatic nature, intensely sensitive to ethical issues. He was very introspective: his works, which are to a large extent autobiographical, became

famous for the ruthless analysis of his own deeds and misdeeds. Cankar was an influential author during his lifetime and after, and he was the first author in Slovene who could make a living exclusively from writing.

Moreover, he became even more significant after his death, as his insistence on the cultural and national specificity of the Slovene people meant that he became a key figure for young intellectuals who rejected the centralistic and unitaristic policies of the Serb political elite in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

Cankar was especially influential as a playwright, and his impact really started to be felt in the expressionist theatre of the 1920s, and especially so between the 1950s and 1970s. Moreover, the

works of many contemporary Slovene playwrights and screenwriters, including Drago Jančar, Dušan Jovanović, Tone Partljič and Žarko Petan, continue to show a clear influence of Cankar's concepts.

While Cankar's prose is still regarded as one of the finest examples of Slovene style, his influence as a novelist has faded since the 1960s, while his plays remain among the most popular works in Slovene theatres.

Some of his famous works: *Erotika* (Eroticism, 1899), *Za narodov blagor* (For the Wealth of the Nation, 1901), *Na klanecu* (On the Hill, 1902), *Kralj na Betajnovi* (The King of Betajnova, 1902), *Hiša Marije Pomočnice* (The Ward of Mary Help of Christians, 1904), *Hlapec Jernej in njegova pravica* (The Servant Jernej and His Justice, 1907), *Zgodbe iz doline šentflorjanske* (Tales from the St. Florian Valley, 1908), *Pohujšanje v dolini Šentflorjanski* (Scandal in St. Florian Valley, 1908), *Hlapci* (The Serfs, 1910), *Moje življenje* (My Life, 1914, published in 1920), *Podobe iz sanj* (Images from Dreams, written in 1917–1918, published in 1920).

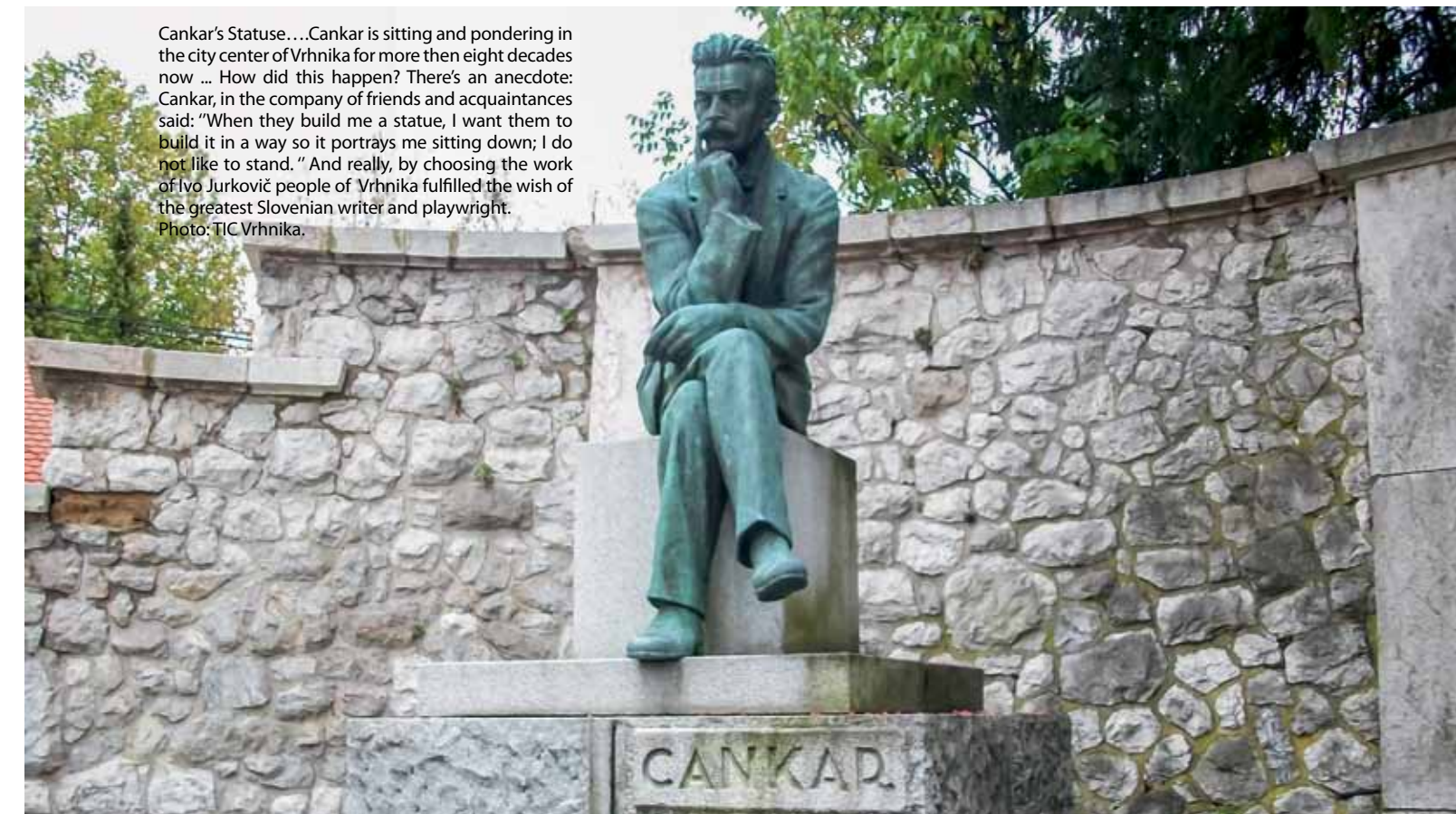
Some of the events in the Year of Ivan Cankar

Cankarjev dom Cultural and Congress Centre in Ljubljana: Festival Cankar on Cankar, ICankar theatre performance, Ivan Cankar: scandal in St. Florian Valley, From the good times (Ivan Cankar letters to Anica Lušinova), Large retrospective exhibition marking the centenary of the writer's death.

City of Vrhnika: Cankar Days - cultural and sports events (April till May): fairs, concerts, sports competitions and tournaments.



Na klanecu 1 is the address of Cankar Memorial House, an important cultural monument of the city center of Vrhnika. Here was born the greatest Slovenian writer and playwright. In the photo is the memorial room of Ivan Cankar. Photo: TIC Vrhnika.



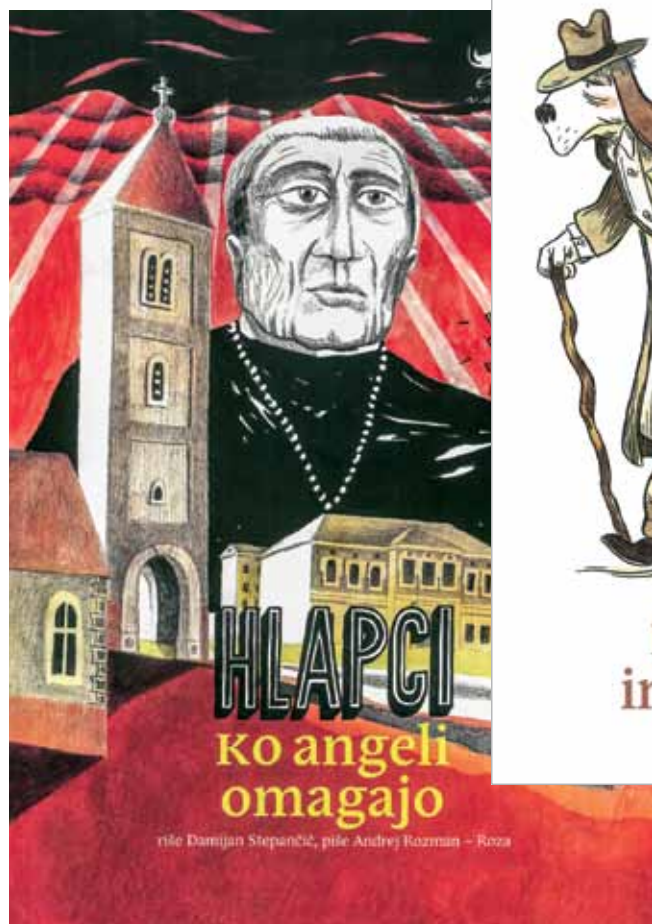
Cankar's Statuse....Cankar is sitting and pondering in the city center of Vrhnika for more than eight decades now ... How did this happen? There's an anecdote: Cankar, in the company of friends and acquaintances said: "When they build me a statue, I want them to build it in a way so it portrays me sitting down; I do not like to stand." And really, by choosing the work of Ivo Jurkovič people of Vrhnika fulfilled the wish of the greatest Slovenian writer and playwright. Photo: TIC Vrhnika.

CANKAR IN A COMIC STRIP

Cankar's ideas are shown in speech bubbles

DR. UROŠ GRILC

"Read Cankar, as he is always relevant."
Boris Pahor



With these words the only living Slovene writer who lived in Cankar's period, 104-year old Boris Pahor, commented on the *Cankar in a Comic Strip* project – the biggest publishing project of 2018, celebrating the year of Ivan Cankar.

Cankar is the greatest Slovene writer in history, and the 100th anniversary of his death is an opportunity to try to bring his work closer to today's readers, especially young people, in a modern, communicative and dynamic way.

Just like Boris Pahor, the creators of the *Cankar in a Comic Strip* project are also convinced that although the writer's works are surprisingly relevant and inspiring today, he does not enjoy an appropriate place in the nation's identity.

Cankar in a Comic Book was developed with cooperation among several experts, authors and institutions, and is the outcome of intense research into Cankar's heritage and an example of teamwork between writers and illustrators. This resulted in bold and relevant interpretations of three of Cankar's works, which act as a strong and integral whole.

These books will not leave readers indifferent, and they will also be of great assistance to teachers in bringing Cankar's literature closer to young readers, and contemporising its interpretation.

The books in the *Cankar in a Comic Book* collection were created by the following top authors and illustrators:

- Andrej Rozman Roza and Damijan Stepančič dissected Cankar's drama *Hlapci* (*The Serfs*) and created a comic strip: **Hlapci – ko angeli omagajo.**
- Boštjan Gorenc Pižama and Tanja Komadina examined Cankar's cycle of sketches *Moje življenje* (*My Life*) and created **Moj lajf.**
- Žiga X Gombač and Igor Šinkovec worked with Cankar's short story *Hlapec Jernej in njegova pravica* (*The Bailiff Jernej and his Right*) and created the comic strip fable **Hlapec Jernej in pasja pravica.**

Why interpret a classic work in a comic strip? Because comic strips are a medium that allows for plenty of freedom in placing a particular work in broader contexts: historical, cultural and political. There is an extra benefit in that comic strips are also considered a subversive form, as were Cankar's works more than a hundred years ago. The communicativeness, relevance and integration between words and images that comics can attract people to read and reflect on Cankar's strong messages.

***Cankar in a Comic Strip* is not "merely" a book project, but also a real campaign for the promotion of reading and an attempt to re-contemporize the exceptional literary heritage of a great writer.**

The books from the *Cankar in a Comic Strip* collection have become bestsellers since their publication, and are accompanied by the Cankar Strip theatre performance, exhibitions of the illustrators' works, pedagogical programmes in schools (held by the Slovenian Theatre Institute) and a literary contest. The Puppet Theatre Maribor is also developing a show based on the volume *Moj lajf*.



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

Žiga X Gombač

Everyone has at some time felt like Ivan Cankar's Bailiff Yerney, when he experienced cruel injustice and only the heart-breaking echo of silence responded to his cries for help.

Žiga X Gombač is a Slovene writer for young people who uses letters, words and sentences as a shield against injustices and the similar baggage of this world.

He already knew what he wanted to become in primary school, where reading books and writing essays meant a safe haven against the pitfalls, hardships and glaring flashes of everyday life. Stories, adventures, plots of all sorts, and the obligatory triumph of good against evil taught him again and again that there is a handful of sunlight out there, which makes it worth trying, living and being.

By the exultant moment when he was given the opportunity to recreate Ivan Cankar's text he had already written several picture books, young adult novels and comic strips, in which he attempted to give readers what books gave him: a look into different worlds, numerous adventures and answers to many questions, even those concerning life.

After reading Cankar's work again, he saw the writer's true greatness and realised that it would require a great deal of effort to someday write texts of such depth and meaningfulness.

In addition to the current comic strip *Hlapec Jernej in pasja pravica* (*The Bailiff Yerney and the Dog's Right*), X Gombač has written several other works in recent years, all very well received among young readers. These include: *Zgodovina Slovenije v stripu* (*The History of Slovenia in a Comic Strip*), *Črno belo* (*Black and White*) and *Skrivnosti mladih levov* (*The Secrets of Young Lions*). The latter has even been translated into Chinese and was published in China this year.

The author lives and works in Ljubljana. He is guarded by a yellow Labrador and two rats, and accompanied by thunderous music and a cup of black tea, which is always full to keep him awake at night.



Photo: Personal archives

Igor Šinkovec

Igor was born in Ljubljana in 1978, where he attended the Ljubljana School of Design. He still lives in the city and creates playful illustrations, animations and comic strips for children and young people. He works in traditional and digital media. As a child he wanted to become a tractor driver or an astronaut, and now spends his working days at a drawing table as a freelance artist. He loves books, and works with publishing companies at home and abroad. He illustrates books and textbooks, and draws illustrations for the magazines *Ciciban* and *PIL* on a monthly basis. His work is on display at group and individual exhibitions, and biennials of illustration.

Igor's most appreciated awards are the *Golden Pear* (*Super zlata hruška*) award for children's literature of high quality, which he received for his work *Od genov do zvezd* (*From Genes to Stars*), the Valvasor Award in 2011 for participation in an exhibition entitled *Skrivnostna smrt mlade Leonore* (*The mysterious death of young Leonora*), and a silver medal at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2005 for the textbook entitled *Matematika 4 Igra števil in oblik* (*Mathematics 4 – The Game of Numbers and Shapes*).

In Igor's opinion Ivan Cankar remains relevant to this day. His work with Bailiff Yerney was a special challenge, not only because of the length and comprehensiveness of the comic strip, but also because of his silent dialogue with Hinko Smrekar, who illustrated the first edition of Cankar's novella.

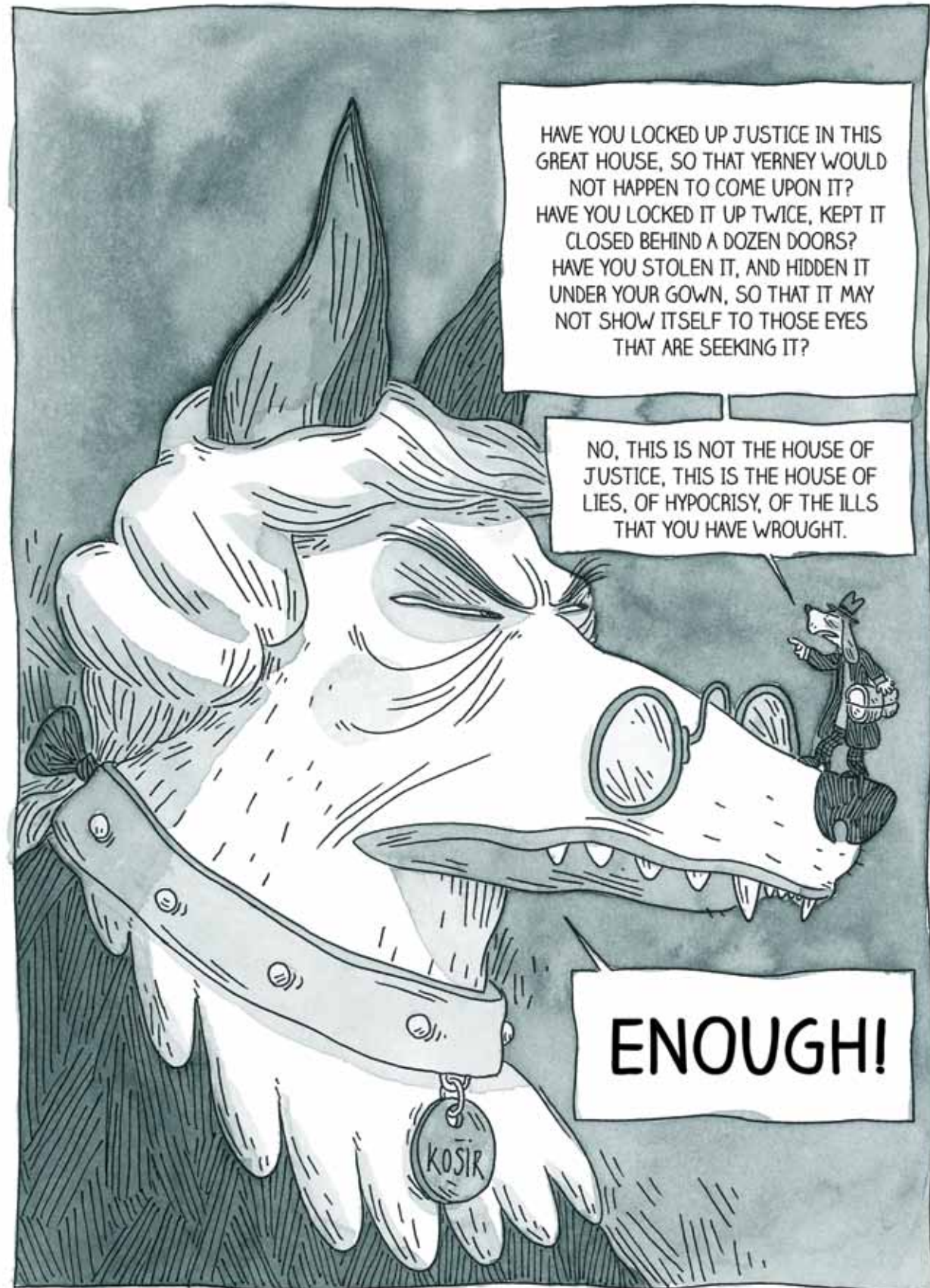
More information at <http://igorsinkovec.blogspot.si/>.

In addition to *Hlapec Jernej in pasja pravica* (Škratelj; 2017), Igor Šinkovec has published several books and comic strips with Slovenian and foreign publishing companies, which include:

- *Doctor! Doctor!* (Julia Donaldson; Pearson Education Ltd; 2012)
- *Top ten worst jobs ever* – illustrated book (Oxford Literacy Independent, July/August 2014)
- *Abecerime* (Miroslav Košuta; Mladinska knjiga; 2014)
- *Lab of Fear*, series 1–4 – illustrated books (February 2015, Michael Dahl, Stone Arch Books)
- *Vse to je tvoje* (Tone Pavček; Založba Miš; 2016)
- *Od genov do zvezd* (Sašo Dolenc; Cankarjeva Založba; 2016)
- *Krasna zgodba* (Maša Ogrizek; Založba Miš; 2017)
- *Kaj se skriva očku v bradi* (Boštjan Gorenc; Mladinska knjiga; 2017)

He has also created three animated works:

- The animated film *Ignatz* (direction and animation: Igor Šinkovec; producer: Sašo Krumpak; 2010)
- The animated film *Egon Klobuk* (direction and animation: Igor Šinkovec; producer: Sašo Krumpak; 2012)
- *Profesor Florian Umek*; a series of interactive games for the Slovenian Museum of Natural History 2006–2014



KURENT

Traditional Slovenian Carnival character on the UNESCO Representative list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

DANILA GOLOB

During Shrovetide Carnival time kurents perform their traditional rituals. According to tradition, with their leaping about and the fierce din of their bells the kurents drive away winter and evil from the land, and invite in spring and a good year.
Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

The wandering kurent figures rank among the more visible traditional Shrovetide Carnival customs in Slovenia, and the kurent is the most recognisable Carnival character, with records of his appearance dating back to 1880. The kurent is also one of the symbols of the Slovenian identity.

The Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage decided in its annual meeting in South Korea to enter the roving kurents on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The Committee noted in its explanation that the kurents bring together various cultural expressions of social practices, performance art, knowledge of nature and traditional crafts. The transfer of traditions and knowledge associated with this practice takes place between generations within families and societies, and includes museums, schools and other educational institutions. The annual preparations for the appearance of the wandering kurents help strengthen interpersonal, regional and local identities.

The entry of Door-to-door rounds of Kurenti on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity marks an exceptional recognition for Slovenia, and especially for all those who work to preserve this unique tradition.

The kurents are now the second aspect of Slovenia's intangible cultural heritage to be placed on this list, with the Škofja Loka passion plays achieving this recognition in 2016.

CARNIVAL KURENTS IN PTUJ

The Shrovetide Carnival of Pust is approaching, and in some strongly traditional Slovenian towns preparations are already under way to drive out winter.

This year, as usual, Ptuj, Slovenia's oldest town, will host the Kurent Festival, in its 58th edition, one of the biggest ethnographic festivals in Europe.

The Grand Carnival Ball and the International Carnival Procession draws costumed figures from all over the continent, and more than 50,000 visitors flock to join the merry-making.

There is no doubt that the kurent, or korant, an original and unique Carnival character from Ptuj, Dravsko Polje and the surrounding area, is an important element of the intangible cultural heritage in Slovenia. The effort put into the kurent character involves a cultural process that helps build genuine interpersonal relations, which are so important in our everyday life and work.

With the loud shaking of their bells the kurents drive away winter and evil from the land, and invite in spring and a good year. Aleš Ivančič, president of the Kurent Ethnographic Society of Ptuj, explains that young bachelors have honoured this ancient fertility rite since time immemorial, and thus was created the story of the living myth, the kurent. At one time they also honoured deceased relatives, and reverence was offered to the spirits. This fairy-tale hero, who is linked symbolically to grapevines, is also known as a god of merriment and wine in Slavic mythology. He is an ethnographic character that can only appear in the time of the year from Candlemas to Ash Wednesday.

FEARFUL CARNIVAL FIGURE

The kurent, who resembles a demon, is clothed in sheepskin, and around his belt hang large cowbells and beautifully embroidered handkerchiefs. He wears a mask on his head and gaiters on his legs. Kurents collect their handkerchiefs from girls, and those with more handkerchiefs on their belts enjoy greater prestige. Traditionally the young kurent lads would also get their colourful wool socks from their girlfriends. The kurent's headgear is made of tanned or sometimes even dyed leather, with openings for the eyes, nose and mouth. Over time people also started adorning their headgear with feathers from domestic fowl, mainly turkeys or geese, and in the past some kurents even used crow feathers. The eyes and mouth are ringed in red, while the nose is shaped as a leather snout. White beans, representing teeth, are attached to the mouth by a thread.

Under the nose are two sprigs of dry garden mint in the place of a moustache, while a long red finely embroidered tongue dangles from the kurent's mouth. Jutting from the headpiece are two cow horns or two thin sticks adorned with bunches of feathers tied together and interwoven with ribbons of coloured paper. A kurent's fearful appearance is further enhanced by his club, which is sheathed in hedgehog skin.

LITTLE AND BIG KURENTS

At one time the kurents were just young, unmarried men, but nowadays women and children also dress up as kurents. Ivančič of the Kurent Ethnographic Society explains that the ritual changed into a mass "veneration of the Carnival time," and the development of the costume gave rise to a period of mass participation, with kurent societies springing up at the beginning of the 20th century. Greater participation led to a break with the traditional rule that only bachelors could wear the costume, and today you can encounter people of all ages and genders in kurent gear. Indeed, the Kurent Ethnographic Society currently has 15 children under 16 years old.

"The children are what drives us," notes Ivančič, "the society is principally intended for them. We want to make it possible for them to recognise the character and ritual as part of the Slovenian cultural identity, and to present it with pride around the world."

The mass involvement seen today is a guarantee that the figure and rituals will certainly not fall into oblivion. The Kurent Ethnographic Society is now entered in the register of intangible cultural heritage, and it cooperates with various institutions at home and abroad. The society is aware of the importance of intergenerational cooperation in transferring cultural heritage, and thus its members are working to hand down the tradition to younger people, and they have their own book and photo collection which these young members have to be familiar with.

THE MYSTERIOUS KURENT

Ivančič recalls that one of the many stories about kurents say that one of them tied Death to a tree with thread, and that during that time no one died. Another says that he was a handsome young man whom women simply adored and would not leave in peace. He took off to a desert and there asked God to give him an ugly face. God heard him and he grew horns. He returned home and the women left him in peace. However, in memory of the once beautiful young man, women started celebrating Shrove Tuesday with riotous merry-making.

The kurent figure has a hint of the mysterious, and the sensations when you dress up as one and give yourself up to the Carnival festivities are quite special.

"The costume gives you power and energy, so you can drive away the bad and bring in the good," explains the president of the Kurent Ethnographic Society. "I could even say that for a moment I know what the gods felt like! You simply can't describe the experience in words".

Kurent at the Winter Olympic Games in PyeongChang

By the entrance to the Slovenia House there will be a display of the kurent costume, one of the cornerstones of Slovenian identity, which is tied to archaic, animist traditions that are still very much alive in Asia. According to ancient beliefs, the kurent is a demon that drives away winter and draws spring back to the land. Although he no longer wields his magical powers, it is not just an ordinary Carnival costume, but still retains something mysterious and powerful.

In the local environment the kurent has long represented much more than merely a costumed Carnival figure, and today being part of a roving group of kurents is an honourable pursuit that people follow and identify with.
Photo: Boštjan Suštar/STA



TREASURES OF THE TECHNICAL MUSEUM OF SLOVENIA

Museum story of sports equipment manufacturers in Slovenia

VLADIMIR VILMAN



Exhibition about the history of Elan and those producers that came before Elan.
Photo: Jaka Blasutto

Many Slovenian museums collect sports and recreation items, including the Technical Museum of Slovenia (TMS). Understandably, sports and recreation are extremely important leisure activities, for many people a way of life, and for some their living. The reasons for collecting are diverse, historical, sports-related and ethnological.

MOTIVES FOR COLLECTING EXHIBITS

In the case of TMS the motive is mainly technical, since in addition to final products we are interested in the machinery and apparatus for making them, the primary raw materials and the technology and organisation of work. Regardless of whether an individual item is the product of a thousand-strong team, or just one single person.

Sports products are a perfect example of how mechanised production and the individual approach of a craftsman are not mutually exclusive, often the contrary.

Sports people and recreational athletes measure their abilities at sports venues. Meanwhile there is constant competition, far from the public gaze, between innovators, constructors, technologists and in sports workshops and manufacturing facilities. They are never in the spotlight or on the winner's podium, although they contribute the lion's share to the quality of sports products, and consequently also to the top sports results.

BEGINNING OF SPORTS EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURE IN SLOVENIA

The use of simple skis on the uplands of Bloke, especially for easier movement through the snowy landscape, was described as early

as in 1689 by the Slovenian polymath Janez Vajkard Valvasor. The founding of the physical training society Južni Sokol (Southern Falcon) in 1862 in Ljubljana marks the beginning of an organised national physical culture movement which required gymnasium equipment. At first such equipment was purchased abroad, until Jakob Oražem of Ribnica set up a fitting workshop in 1882, from which evolved at the turn of the century the first Slovenian sports equipment factory, JOR. Slovenian Olympian Leon Štukelj acquired his gymnastic mastery on JOR equipment. He appeared in seven major tournaments and amassed a total of 20 medals: eight gold, six silver and six bronze. At the Olympic Games alone he won a total of six medals: two golds in Paris 1924, a gold and two bronzes in Amsterdam 1928 and a silver in Berlin 1936. His collection would no doubt have been bigger if the Kingdom of Yugoslavia had taken part in the 1932 Games in Los Angeles.

The first wooden skis and sleds for sports and recreational use were made by many local wheelwrights back at the beginning of the 20th century, of whom Jakob Rozman of Bohinjska Bistrica was the most prominent.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Bohinj and its surrounding mountains were the centre of Slovenian skiing. Before the Second World War another major manufacturer of skis was the Kolb-Predalič general industrial workshop in Ljubljana.

FOUNDING OF ELAN FACTORY

Just four months after the end of the Second World War, a group of young people led by the carpenter and passionate ski-jumper Rudi Finžgar established the commercial cooperative Elan, to manufacture sports equipment. Traumatized and horrified by the cruelty of the war, they longed for a different kind of competition using other means.

Right from their founding, the aim was to manufacture sports accessories for the widest range of sports, and for all seasons – on snow, ice, wood, parquet, asphalt, grass and rock, in the water and the air.

The first major international sales success for Elan was with badminton racquets. The guiding concept for the outstanding sportsman Rudi Finžgar was: *"Who's thinking about sleep or money, the world is waiting for me and Elan."*

ARRAY OF ELAN PRODUCTS

Alongside skis, gymnasium equipment and physical training accessories were the mainstays of the factory. Elan products supplied the majority of athletic, hockey, kayak, rowing, sailing and boxing clubs, as well as mountaineering and rescue societies, they made a variety of equipment for children's playgrounds and a range of accessories for firefighters and for safety at work in general. In its very first decade of operation the factory produced more than 200 different sports items, which demanded total specialisation in individual fields, and this was soon followed by the establishing of its own development institute. In gliding and the manufacture of a large number of different sailing boats the factory achieved superlative, internationally comparable results. The Elan 31 sailing boat won many international competitions. The Elan DG-500 M glider, made in Begunje na Gorenjskem, later modified for long-distance flights at high altitudes, was used by Steve Fosset and Einar Enevoldson in 2006 to achieve the height record of 15,460 m in Patagonia, complete with a safe landing. This aircraft is kept in the Museum of Flight in Seattle, Washington, USA.

PRODUCTION OF SKIS

There can be no doubt, however, that the production of skis ensured for the brand its most prominent international recognition, and it is in this area that the company over and over again raises the bar of quality standards. Many of their products have had a revolutionary influence on global trends in various methods of skiing today, and will continue to do so in the future. Specifically their skis have propelled numerous sports people to stardom. And the manufacture of skis requires very special tools, apparatus, machines and production technology. Just between 1970 and 1980, Elan technologists and engineers designed and built more than 300 new devices and machines which up to that time no other operation in the world had brought into production.

Their skis helped Ingemar Stenmark achieve 86 victories in the World Cup, made it possible for Peter Prevc to be the first to ski-fly 250 m, and Davo Karničar and Marco Siffredi used their skis and snowboards to make the first ski descent from Mount Everest.

SPECIAL APPROACH OF TMS

Compared to other Slovenian museums, TMS has a unique approach to protecting the technical heritage of sports. We do this in two ways. The first is of course the usual way, where we collect items for various kinds of sport and recreation, then restore, keep and exhibit them to the public in Bistra. The other derives from the fundamental mission of TMS as a national museum, which is to encourage individual manufacturers of sports equipment in Slovenia to start setting up their own factory museum collections and perhaps even museums. In the case of Elan, this process is already under way. The factory museum will be set up through the firm's own resources, although we can help them with expert advice and soon also loan them exhibits. TMS is working to get at least a few other manufacturers of sports equipment in Slovenia to follow a similar path. Perhaps Alpina, Planika, Topper, Slatnar, Akrapovič, Dedra, Pipistrel, Albastar, Albatross Fly, Cult, Atair, 777gliders, Goltes, Sense ...

The most appropriate inducement for these companies will be an occasional thematic exhibition, which TMS is preparing at the moment. Each manufacturer has its own story about their origin and development, but they all share in particular a passion for sporting enjoyment, which they want to experience themselves and enable for others.

Some of our sports and recreation equipment manufacturers are simply brilliant at using marketing approaches to increase the recognisability of their products, and some are quite the opposite.

For instance the company Atair of Škofja Loka, which in 2004 made a truly special parachute for the jump made by Felix Baumgartner into the 200-metre wide abyss of Mamet in Paklenica on the Velebit range in Croatia. The first ever. Or perhaps the Planika Turnišče plant, where they physically manufactured – albeit under the Meindl brand, special shoes, again for Felix Baumgartner when he jumped from the edge of space in 2012. And survived, perhaps in part because of the shoes. During the jump, Felix's shoes reached a supersonic speed of 1,342 km/h, but provided normal air pressure for his feet and overcame temperatures down to – 60° C. In contrast, some firms are in no way inclined towards excessive publicity, such as Robert Pečnik's firm Phoenix Fly of Škofja Loka, which is a global pioneer in the commercial production of wingsuits. These are flying suits that can for a moment conjure up for the jumper the feeling of flying like a bird – provided they survive the jump.



The production of skis in Elan.
Photo: Gorenjski Muzej Archives

Jasmina Cibic's project "For our Economy and Culture", developed for the Slovenian Pavilion at the 55th International Art Exhibition - la Biennale di Venezia.
Photo: Personal archives

CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

Soft power counters the hardness of everyday reality

UROŠ MAHKOVEC

Public, or more accurately, cultural diplomacy is an important element in the soft power of Slovenian foreign policy, through which the state achieves an affirmation of its key values in the international community, especially in those countries where it might thereby contribute favourably to influencing other political and economic contacts.

Promoting intercultural dialogue and cultural cooperation in foreign relations, as implemented through the presentation of Slovenian achievements in culture and through the promotion of bilateral and multilateral cooperation, is also the model for Slovenia's overall approach to international relations, one focused on dialogue, respect for the other side and fulfilment of adopted and agreed obligations.

Through two already functioning cultural centres in Vienna and Berlin, artist residencies in New York, London Berlin and Vienna, regular thematic conferences such as the one this coming spring on creative industries, the country is gradually weaving a network of cultural diplomacy.

In this way Slovenia is promoting the fundamental values of its international activities: cultured and respectful mutual relations between states, better mutual understanding and tolerance.

Another important part of public or cultural diplomacy is establishing the status of the Slovenian language around the world, especially as one of the official languages of the EU, and in promoting the use and learning of Slovenian, especially where Slovenian communities are present. Establishing the Slovenian language around the world is in the national interest. For this reason the state offers active support for readers (lectors) of Slovenian at 57 foreign universities, and recently a website was set up to enable people to learn the language in a more contemporary manner.

Slovenian has an important and in particular a constitutive place in the nation's history.

UNIQUE CULTURAL HERITAGE

The EU has declared next year the Year of Cultural Heritage. Slovenian cultural heritage ranges from the unique, 60,000-year-old Neanderthal whistle, the oldest musical instrument in the world, to the telephone of designer Davorin Savnik, which is exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Slovenia is also home to the oldest wooden wheel in the world. A visitor can stroll around ancient finds, medieval buildings, Baroque artwork and art nouveau, attend the Škofja Loka Passion Play at Easter, marvel at the raucous kurent characters – both listed as part of the UNESCO Representative list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity – or enjoy large-scale cultural events in the summer: at Lent in Maribor, or the music festivals in Ljubljana with their decades of tradition.

In 2008, during the Slovenian presidency of the EU as it celebrated the Year of Intercultural Dialogue, a sizeable part of the continent had just abolished internal borders between countries.

The old ideas of a more united cultural space thereby gradually started to become reality.

Today in many parts of Europe these borders are once again gaining prominence, being drawn in people's minds as well as in reality, and not merely within individual cultural spaces, nor within common European cultural values, they are being drawn and built one against another. Through the soft power of public and cultural diplomacy, Slovenia seeks to oppose the hardness of these and similar regressions.

What Slovenian public diplomacy does

- In cooperation with the competent departments at the ministry, diplomatic missions, consulates and other departments, it plans, coordinates and implements the public diplomacy of the Republic of Slovenia.
- It carries out tasks in the area of international cooperation in culture and the promotion of Slovenian culture abroad (with a cultural fund that supports over 150 projects annually).
- It organises major international conferences (e.g. conferences on the Euro-Mediterranean area).
- It takes care of the ministry's artistic fund (mainly pictures), its distribution around Foreign Ministry protocol premises, and at Slovenian residences and embassies abroad. This also involves taking care of artworks that Slovenia received under the secession agreement (the agreement to leave Yugoslavia).
- It participates in various interdepartmental groups and coordination bodies (such as the government interdepartmental working group to promote Slovenia, UKOM, the interdepartmental working groups to mark the anniversary of the First World War, and representing Slovenia (through a governorship) in the Asia-Europe Foundation, ASEF).
- In cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, it collaborates in formulating positions for working bodies in the area of culture within EU working bodies. It keeps abreast of EU activities in culture.
- It offers support to sectoral sports associations in obtaining support for organising major sports events (sports diplomacy) and participates in promotional activities for Slovenia alongside such (World and European championships, the Olympic Games, and so on).
- It collaborates in implementing and promoting individual major events organised by the Foreign Ministry (Africa Day, Gulf Day, Latin America Day, and the like).
- It cooperates with readers (lectors) of Slovenian at universities abroad and with the Centre for the Slovenian Language in Ljubljana.
- It provides, coordinates and distributes promotional material through the diplomatic and consular network (in cooperation with UKOM for promotion of the state, STO for promotion of tourism, and SPIRIT for promotion of investment).
- It coordinates and co-organises presentations and individual exhibitions hosted at diplomatic and consular missions abroad (e.g. the Plečnik exhibition, LES exhibition, Slovenian design, and so forth).



"I Feel Slovenia" Exhibition in London.
Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA

UEFA FUTSAL EURO

The Slovenian capital will host the top event in futsal this year at Arena Stožice

ANDREJ KANDARE
PHOTO: UEFA ARCHIVES



The colours and flags of the countries attending the UEFA Futsal EURO.

The Futsal EURO 2018, under the auspices of the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), will be held in Ljubljana from 30 January to 10 February 2018.

Nine UEFA Futsal EUROs have been held since 1999, with the first tournament in 1996 not officially granted with the status of European Championships. Spain have won an amazing seven European titles. In addition to Spain, Italy and Russia have also taken home gold medals.

All of the former champions will be coming to Slovenia to compete for Europe's most highly coveted title. Portugal are the other key contenders for the title, while Kazakhstan, on their debut, and hosts Serbia, reached the semi-finals last time, something Slovenia would love to achieve too.

QUALIFYING FORMAT

A full 47 countries participated in the qualifying rounds for UEFA Futsal EURO 2018, including, for the first time, football superpower Germany. Just under a year before the final tournament, a group of seven teams emerged from the preliminary round to join the pre-selected groups in the main round. They were Georgia, Moldova, Latvia, Albania, Denmark, France and Montenegro. The 21 countries with the highest UEFA coefficients qualified directly for the main round. As the host nation, Slovenia qualified automatically for UEFA Futsal EURO 2018. In April 2017 the winners of the qualifying rounds booked themselves tickets to Slovenia – Spain, Portugal, Italy, Russia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine and Kazakhstan. The second-ranked teams from the main rounds faced off against each other in two-legged home and away play-offs. Serbia, France, Romania and Poland made it through to the finals.

TOURNAMENT FORMAT

For the finals, the 11 teams which qualified via the qualifying round and the hosts are divided into four groups.

The first pot in the draw included Slovenia, Russia, Portugal and Spain, while the second included Italy, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Azerbaijan, and the third included the play-off winners, Serbia, Poland, Romania and France.

The teams will play for qualification in the quarter-finals following

the round-robin system. Each victory will be worth three (3) points, a draw will be worth one (1) point and a loss zero (0) points. The first and second-ranked teams from each group will qualify for the quarter-finals. The knockout stages begin with the quarter-finals, leading up to the semi-finals, and then to the match for third place and the final match. In the quarter-finals, Group A will go up against Group B, while Group C will meet Group D.

A total of 20 matches will be played at UEFA Futsal EURO 2018. This edition represents a turning point, as it will be the last to feature twelve teams. After this tournament, the UEFA Futsal EURO will be held every four years and feature sixteen national teams.

GROUPS AND FAVOURITES

The clear favourites are the holders Spain, who are far and away the most successful European side with seven titles. Other candidates for medals include the perpetual runner-up Russia, who have made it to the final six times but taken the title only once, and the unpredictable Italians. Ukraine and Portugal have also appeared in the final, and among the participants in UEFA Futsal EURO 2018, Kazakhstan are the only other medal-winners and France are the first team to qualify from the preliminary round. The final tournament being held on their home ground is an opportunity for the Slovenian national side to emulate 2016 hosts Serbia and Croatia at its final tournament in 2012, and put themselves into position to win a medal. However, a medal would represent a break in the tradition of fourth-place finishers, as both of the aforementioned teams lost the last two matches in the competition and ended up fourth. Through their regular qualification for the UEFA Futsal EURO (their appearance in Ljubljana will be their sixth overall and fifth in a row), the Slovenian team have consolidated their place among the top twelve, and they achieved their greatest success in Antwerp, Belgium in 2014, with their first and to date only victory at the final tournament, when they made the knockout round for the first time (they defeated eventual champions Italy 3:2 in the opening match).

A AND B

What a coincidence it is that after playing in the opening match two years ago in Belgrade, UEFA Futsal EURO 2018 will also open with Slovenia vs. Serbia, with the latter finishing fourth when they hosted the competition and eliminated the Czech Republic in the play-offs. From an attendance perspective, the opening match in Stožice should be spectacular, but from a competition perspective the match is one of the greatest unknowns of the tournament. Group A is rounded out by Italy, which won the title in 2003 in front of a home crowd, have appeared in every final tournament since, but had their

worst showing at the last finals in Belgrade, where they had to be content with fifth place.

Group B, which includes Russia, Kazakhstan and Poland, will have a Brazilian flavour, as quite a few naturalised Brazilians play for the Russian and Kazakh national sides. Russia have lost the last three finals of the UEFA Futsal EURO. Kazakhstan first made it to the finals in 2016 in Belgrade and immediately won the bronze medal, while Poland will be appearing in the finals for the first time since 2001.

C AND D

Group C includes another title favourite, Portugal, together with Ukraine and Romania. Portugal, with its superstar Ricardinho, have appeared in the final only once, in 2010, when they lost to Spain. However, Portugal finished fourth at the last FIFA Futsal World Cup. Ukraine have only missed one UEFA Futsal EURO, and have made it to the quarter-finals at the last four tournaments. Romania did not qualify for the event in Serbia, but the tournament in Slovenia will be their fourth.

Spain have never finished lower than third and are the only European national side to have won a World Championship. Group D with the biggest favourites and title holders include Azerbaijan, which also feature naturalised Brazilian masters of the low-bouncing ball, and France, the only finals debutant, which eliminated Croatia in the second leg of the play-offs in Dubrovnik by a score of 5:4.

A YEAR OF EVENTS BEFORE UEFA FUTSAL EURO 2018

The tournament expectations of the top twelve intensified with the events put on by the Football Association of Slovenia (NZS) and UEFA over the course of the year. The opening event, titled "One Year to Go", was held at Arena Stožice on 30 January 2017. The role of UEFA Futsal EURO Ambassador was passed from Belgrade ambassador Dejan Stanković to the former Slovenian national football team member Milenko Aćimović and Slovenian futsal legend Milivoje Simeunović.

On 5 April, exactly 300 days before the beginning of the championships, the first futsal countdown clock was unveiled in front of the Hiša Športa (House of Sports) sports bar in Ljubljana. On 26 June, 2(0)18 days before the start, a seven-kilometre futsal relay was held from the countdown clock to Stožice, in which 174 participants and 13 futsal clubs from all over Slovenia took part, with supporters from the world of football and the most valuable player of UEFA Futsal EURO 2016, the Spaniard Miguelín. The highlight of the pre-competition activities was the final draw ceremony, which was held on 29

September at the Ljubljana Castle, and was attended by UEFA President Aleksander Čeferin, and at which the title of Global Tournament Ambassador was given to Slovenian sports hero Tina Maze.

PRIDE AND OPTIMISM

To the satisfaction of everyone at Ljubljana Castle, and despite the fact that the event was being held in English, Aleksander Čeferin spoke in Slovene and said: *"I am very honoured and pleased to be with you today at the draw for Futsal EURO in Slovenia. At UEFA we are committed to helping with the development of futsal. We hosted the UEFA Under 19 EURO and are now hosting a major men's EURO. All of this is part of our new strategy, which will help futsal strategically and financially. I am very proud that Futsal EURO will be held in our country. I haven't the least doubt that the tournament will be a success. At this time I would like to thank NZS President and my friend, Radenko Mijatović, and thanks also to the City of Ljubljana, which helped sponsor the promotional campaigns. Futsal is played in a small space. Slovenia is a small country. Small but wonderful. And that's how the UEFA Futsal EURO will be. Wonderful. All the best!"*

The Football Association of Slovenia was also optimistic. *"I believe that the competition will have a positive effect on the development of sports in Slovenia, and will undoubtedly also have a good effect on the Slovenian economy and tourism. With regard to Slovenia's play and appearance I am an optimist. I would especially like to thank UEFA, the City of Ljubljana, Šport Ljubljana and the state for their assistance,"* said NZS President Radenko Mijatović.

A NEW SURFACE AND THE CREATION OF FUTSAL HERITAGE

The last major futsal event of 2017 was the organisation of a friendly match against Portugal, fourth at the last World Championships and third in the European rankings, in Arena Stožice.

It should be noted that a new surface was developed by UEFA and its partner Mondo, and tested by the players. It took the workers twelve hours to prepare the court, during which they carefully and precisely laid more than 1100 pieces of laminated parquet, with rubber and special foam added.

With an operational budget of more than 2 million euros, the tournament organisers hope to sell a minimum of 50 thousand tickets. The hope of everyone involved in Slovenian futsal and the fans is of course the success of the home team, but the true legacy of the tournament would be increased interest in Slovenia for the growing sports discipline, which in this ever accelerating world, where sports are increasingly combined with entertainment, is gaining in popularity.



UEFA Futsal EURO 2018 will be the biggest sports event in Slovenia this year.

