

# Sinfo

MAY 2010

BUSINESS • CULTURE • ENVIRONMENT • POLITICS • SPORTS



**The biggest voluntary  
environmental action  
project in Slovenia**

41 PEOPLE

# PETRA MATOS & ALEŠ PEVC

Heading the biggest voluntary environmental action project in Slovenian history



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**Veronika Stabej**  
Director

## THE FUTURE IS OURS

**W**E OFTEN HEAR THAT THE FUTURE BELONGS to the young, who are also an important motor of development, knowledge, research and innovation. This is, in fact, one of the themes of this month's In Focus section.

The second topic covered in this month's In Focus section is Slovenia's contribution to international development cooperation and humanitarian aid. Youth is also a factor here – Slovenia is a new donor country that currently implements the greater part of its development cooperation multilaterally, while in the future it will also endeavour to strengthen the bilateral segment of development aid.

This issue of Sinfo really is 'young'. Elan and youthful freshness also characterise Slovenia's European Environment Commissioner Janez Potočnik, interviewed in this issue, and the writers of this month's Ambassador's Letters – Igor Senčar, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia to the European Union, and Mihela Zupančič, Head of the European Commission Representation in Slovenia.

The little flowers we offer you on our spring platter are young too...

This month's People section introduces two outstanding young individuals – Petra Matos and Aleš Pevc, the organisers of the largest voluntary environmental campaign in the history of Slovenia, 'Let's Clean Up Slovenia!' During the event, which took place on 17 April, at least 250,000 volunteers (more than 12% of the total population) cleaned up 7,000 illegal rubbish dumps and collected over 60,000 cubic metres of waste.

Impressive figures, and yet more proof that nothing is impossible. You need to be prepared to make your dreams come true and, if necessary, to work hard for them. To bring people together. And of course to believe in success.

“  
NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE. YOU NEED TO BE PREPARED TO MAKE YOUR DREAMS COME TRUE AND, IF NECESSARY, TO WORK HARD FOR THEM. TO BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER. AND OF COURSE TO BELIEVE IN SUCCESS.”



Cover photo Daniel Novakovič/STA

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# ARBITRATION AGREEMENT CONSISTENT WITH THE CONSTITUTION

Mateja Malnar Štembal

Photo STA

**B**ASED ON A REQUEST BY THE GOVERNMENT, THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT HAS DELIVERED an opinion on the border arbitration agreement with Croatia and has found it to be consistent with the Constitution and the Basic Constitutional Charter. In the opinion of the Constitutional Court, the agreement does not demarcate the border, but merely establishes a mechanism for peaceful settlement of the border dispute.

In the grounds of its opinion, the Court has, for the first time, clearly stated that the existing maritime status before independence enjoys the protection of international law based on the principle *uti possidetis de facto*. The Constitutional Court has also recommended that the constitution be changed before the arbitration court rules, as it might reach an unconstitutional decision.

After the delivery of the Constitutional Court's decision, the presidents of the parliamentary parties agreed to propose to the members of the National Assembly the calling of a legislative referendum on the arbitration agreement issue.

This was done after the coalition parties, which had submitted a proposal to call a preliminary referendum last year, expressed their opinion that the referendum on the arbitration agreement was no longer required due to its consistency with the constitution.

In mid-April the National Assembly ratified the arbitration agreement concerning the border with Croatia. As expected, only the members of the governing coalition voted in favour of the agreement. The ratification of the agreement will be followed by a subsequent legislative referendum, which is expected to be held during the first half of June.

## 'Parliament Ratifies Border Arbitration Treaty'



## Visit by the Dalai Lama

EARLY IN APRIL, THE TIBETAN SPIRITUAL leader the Dalai Lama visited Slovenia for the second time.

In his addresses and speeches, the Dalai Lama repeatedly pointed out that the key to happiness lies in mutual trust, and that humanity can survive only by uniting. According to the Dalai Lama,

what counts most is inner beauty, which is achieved through compassion, trust, respect and love. Advancing those values was, he said, also the main purpose of his visit to Slovenia. The Dalai Lama emphasised that his visit was not political and that his main goal was to meet and talk to the people.

# New Minister of Health

SINCE THE START OF APRIL, SLOVENIA has had a new Minister of Health. Dorjan Marušič, a doctor, mathematician and manager by profession, has been employed previously by the Ministry and has twice held the office of State Secretary.

The measures presented by Marušič, which, in his view, can prevent the public health fund from “plunging”, were backed by the majority of members of the parliament. Along with organisational changes in hospital operation and management, changes in the emergency services and active disease prevention, Minister Marušič also supports a revision of health-insurance rights.

In addition, Marušič intends to review the national prevention programmes Zora, Dora and Svit, with the aim of providing solutions for the health-care system for the next five or ten years.



Minister Marušič also intends to enforce a strict separation of the work of physicians in the public sector from their work in the private sector, and to start implementing,

along with various partners from the health-care sector, measures to provide a financially sustainable health-care system as soon as possible.

# Slovenian Prime Minister at the meeting of heads of Central European States



AT THE BEGINNING OF APRIL, THE Slovenian Prime Minister, Borut Pahor, attended a working dinner in Prague, at which the US President, Barack Obama, hosted leaders from 11 Central and

Eastern European countries.

In his address, which was focused on security issues discussed at the working dinner, Prime Minister Pahor highlighted the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

He presented to the participants a number of dilemmas that have arisen in dealing with the issues around the future of that country. In the view of Mr Pahor, not only a peaceful, but a promising and prosperous future has to be ensured for the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Prime Minister Pahor also thanked the US Government for the support for the Brdo process expressed by the US Deputy Secretary of State, James Steinberg, during his recent visit to Slovenia. According to Mr Steinberg, the US strongly supports the Brdo process, through which Slovenia had decided to face a “major challenge”. The US will support Slovenia’s efforts to bring together all regional leaders and try to solve problems in a pragmatic way, he said

In his address, Prime Minister Pahor also welcomed the new US-Russia Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), which was previously signed in Prague by President Obama and his Russian counterpart, Dmitry Medvedev.



Gregor Golobič  
Minister of Higher Education,  
Science and Technology

# FROM CAIRO DECLARATION TO LJUBLJANA ACTION PLAN

Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology Photo STA

**S**LOVENIA'S MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, in cooperation with France and Egypt, joint presidency holders of the Union for the Mediterranean, and with the Spanish Presidency of the EU Council, will hold a Euromediterranean ministerial conference on the area of higher education, research and innovation in member states of the Union for the Mediterranean in October at Brdo. Participants from more than 40 countries are expected to attend the event. This is the second such ministerial meeting, after the first one in 2007 in Cairo.

# STATEMENTS ABOUT EMUNI UNIVERSITY

Portorož, April 1, 2010



**H.E. Ms Nicole Michelangeli**  
Ambassador, Embassy of the French Republic

"EMUNI is really a place of dialogue. I could assess it when I was there on 26 February: spontaneous testimonies of students and academics, stemming from different countries of the UfM, proved EMUNI's ability to promote the sharing of experiences serving a common culture in higher education."

**H.E. Mr Ahmed Farouk**  
Ambassador, Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt



"I consider EMUNI as one of the main pillars to bridge the gap between north and south Mediterranean countries; through its intensive programmes, I believe that EMUNI is helping to achieve a common ground of understanding among students and professors which will definitely help to achieve a better future for the region."

The purpose of the meeting is to assess the achievements of cooperation among partner countries in the area of higher education, research and innovation in the period since the Cairo conference, and to strengthen existing cooperation through new approaches and methods. To this end, an action plan is being drafted by experts from Union for the Mediterranean member states, and this should be adopted by ministers at the meeting. The plan will supposedly contain the objectives of further cooperation, specific projects to achieve these objectives, and mechanisms that will facilitate the implementation and financing of these projects.

Since the areas of education, research, technological development and innovation were not given sufficient attention in the first period of the Barcelona Process, at the 8th EUROMED conference in Tampere in 2006, foreign ministers agreed on the need to call the first Euromediterranean ministerial conference on higher education and scientific research. That conference was held a year later in Cairo. The Slovenian contribution at that conference was a proposal for the founding of a Euromediterranean university, (now EMUNI), based in Slovenia, incorporated into what was called the Cairo Declaration, which contains the conclusions of the conference.

EMUNI University, an international university headquartered in the Republic of Slovenia, is one of the six key initiatives of the Union for the Mediterranean. It is designed as an international network of universities, which in 2010 already has 141 members in 37 countries. Through participation in the academic and research spheres – particularly through the linking of participating institutions, exchanges of students, higher education teachers and researchers, the formation of joint study programmes and research projects - the university will be one of the key players in the formation of the Euro-Mediterranean higher education and research area. Furthermore, through its activities the university will play a supportive role in the linking of various nations and cultures in the region and contribute to the realisation of the other priority focus areas of the Union for the Mediterranean.

And how do they see the mission of EMUNI University outside the borders of Slovenia? The Slovenian Minister for Higher Education, Science and Technology, Gregor Golobič, will host the conference. We put some questions to him before the start of the conference.

## **Why did Slovenia decide to host the Euromediterranean ministerial conference on higher education, research and innovation?**

We decided to do this because in organising it we see an excellent opportunity to present Slovenia as a Mediterranean partner, especially in the field of higher education and science, which is a priority for Slovenia among the six key initiatives of the Union for the Mediterranean.

## **As Europe builds a common European higher education and research area, the member states of the Union for the Mediterranean are hoping to take a decisive step in the process of setting up a common Euromediterranean higher education and research area. Why, and what added value would this bring?**

The areas complement each other. The European higher education area is also the focus of great attention in the non-European member states of the Union for the Mediterranean. After the adoption of the Cairo Declaration, many of them have even fulfilled certain principles of the Bologna Process. The Mediterranean region is gaining importance as a priority EU region,



and alongside the Western Balkans, as a priority region for Slovenia. We are delighted that last year four countries of the Western Balkans (Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Albania) were accepted into the Union for the Mediterranean.

The added value lies in the fact that the ministers at this conference will adopt an action plan that brings the promise of specific steps to fulfill the commitments of the Cairo Declaration. Slovenia's concrete contribution at the conference will be in the envisaged adoption of an initiative to set up a new working body for higher education, which will have the job of fulfilling the action plan.

### **How do you see the role of EMUNI in the Euromediterranean area?**

Its role is educational, research and intercultural. The EMUNI mission is well defined. But the university still needs to get up and running, and this will be facilitated by accredited courses and exchanging professors and students within the region. We should realise that a high-quality university takes years to build, so it needs the support of all partners in the region, especially cooperating higher education and research institutions. I intend to appeal to ministers for this at the actual Brdo conference. Meanwhile a project such as the EMUNI university will be just one of a mass of projects that we will hope to have in greater numbers in the future. An extremely important part in the selection and promotion of projects has been played by the recently established Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean. In selecting and promoting projects, the Secretariat will be greatly helped by the two working groups for research and higher education, which will also be responsible for fulfilling the action plan.

### **The conference will be at Brdo. Why aren't you holding it by the sea?**

Since we already presented Slovenia's Mediterranean face to guests from the region two years ago at the inauguration of EMUNI, we now want to show them its other faces and our capital city. Indeed Slovenia is unique in that four entirely different geographical regions overlap in such a small area, these being the Mediterranean, the Alps, the Karst and the Pannonian plain. Just as a joke we could say that the conference will be located between the Adriatic Sea, which is part of the Mediterranean, and the former Pannonian Sea. ●

Just as we were going to press the organisers of the ministerial conference took the decision to postpone the event to autumn 2010 as a result of the ongoing problems with air traffic.



### **H.E. Ms Anunciada Fernández de Córdova Ambassador, Embassy of the Kingdom of Spain**

"Spain supported the candidacy of Slovenia to be the seat of EMUNI from the beginning. Slovenia and Spain share a common Mediterranean identity. I am sure that the 2nd Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Higher Education, Research and Innovation of the Member States of the Union for the Mediterranean will be a fundamental contribution for the UfM summit to be held in Spain in June."

### **Mrs Rodi Kratsa Vice-President of the European Parliament and President of the Working Group on EMUNI**

"EMUNI is now a reality. We should all work together at national and European level in order to facilitate the circulation of students, academics, researchers and knowledge in the Euro-Mediterranean region and to promote a high level of cooperation, skills and outcomes."



Vice-President of the European Parliament and President of the Working Group on EMUNI within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA), Mrs Rodi Kratsa signing the EMUNI Charter during the inauguration ceremony of 9 June 2008.



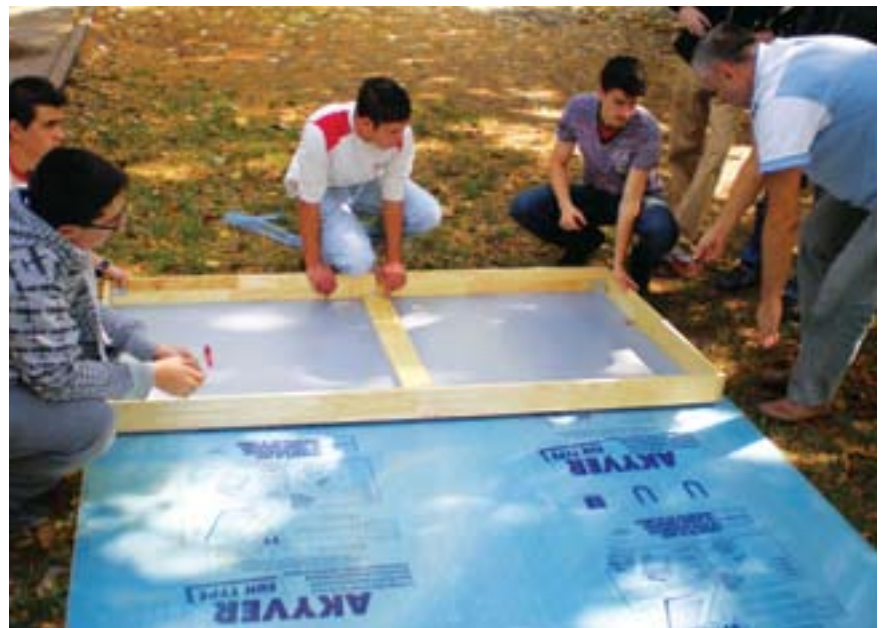


**H.E. Mr Amr Moussa**  
**Secretary General of the League of Arab States**

"The Euro-Mediterranean University has become a Slovenian landmark in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, a step of significant importance in enhancing relations between the two sides of the Mediterranean. It was a historic moment for me to participate in the inauguration of the University on 9 June 2008 and to join the honorary board of the EMUNI Foundation. The establishment of such an institution is an important step in boosting intercultural dialogue in our Mediterranean society of nations."

**Dr Joseph Mifsud**  
**President of EMUNI University**

"EMUNI is a non-traditional university, with an open concept of a university without walls, which acknowledges the fact that expertise lies in different parts of the Euro-Mediterranean region. In line with the project concept of the Union for the Mediterranean and the importance of regions, communities and hence universities, EMUNI is an innovative example of a bottom-up initiative which attempts to focus on applied and trans-disciplinary academic areas of teaching and research in the intercultural dialogue world. It is therefore a university without walls, building academic expertise on the concept that south-north and south-south cooperation throughout the enlarged UfM is distinctive, opportune and valid in a just-in-time manner. Through EMUNI, the mobility of ideas and knowledge, without distinction of provenience, is a sine qua non in the souk of research and employability opportunities." •



# SLOVENIA'S INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND HUMANITARIAN AID

## WHAT, HOW AND FOR WHOM

Compiled by Tanja Okorn Virant,  
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Photo George Stiff, Jovan Draganovski, Katja Celin Yere, BOBO

**When speaking about development cooperation and humanitarian aid, there are three basic questions to be answered, both in programme and project based approach:**  
**What** are the sectoral priorities and the scope of activities?  
**How** – defining the channels and mode of providing assistance;  
**and for Whom** - identifying the target group in a developing country.

### Evolution

In 2004 Slovenia was the first transition country to complete the graduation process at the World Bank and with respect to its level of economic development officially **became a development assistance donor**. In 2005 Slovenia created a national NGO platform for development cooperation and humanitarian aid, and the **International Development Cooperation Act** was adopted in **June 2006**. The Act defines the objectives and methods of long-term planning, financing and implementation of Slovenia's international development cooperation and among other things stipulates that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the national co-ordinator of international development cooperation. >>>



**2004**  
**The Republic of Slovenia becomes a development assistance donor**  
**2006**  
**International Development Cooperation Act of the Republic of Slovenia**  
**2008**  
**Resolution on International Development Cooperation of the Republic of Slovenia for the period until 2015**

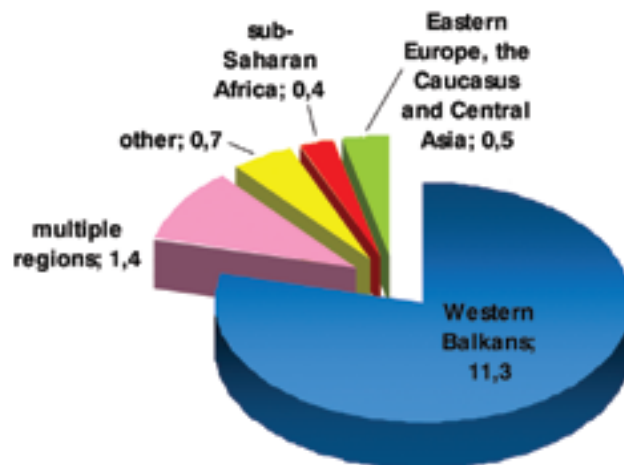
In 2008 the National Assembly adopted the **Resolution on International Development Cooperation for the period until 2015**, which defines the geographical and sectoral priorities of Slovenia's development cooperation and determines the mechanisms for its implementation. Until 2010 Slovenia's official development assistance was decentralized, i.e. the line ministries had their own budgets for development assistance. During the 2009 discussions on a new programme oriented budget the decision was taken to merge bilateral development funds. As a result approximately one half of the total bilateral funds was allocated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which allows for programming, increased coordination, transparency and efficiency of international development cooperation.

**Priorities**

Considering the proximity, shared history and institutional soundness as well as the achieved levels of political and economic relations with the **Western Balkan countries**, Slovenia attaches particular importance to this region. Slovenia has therefore allocated around two thirds of its total bilateral development assistance to these countries (79% in 2009). The cooperation with **Montenegro and Macedonia** is conducted on a programme basis, while cooperation with the other countries in the region is conducted on a project-by-project basis. Slovenia has also concluded international development cooperation agreements with all Western Balkan countries (the agreement with Kosovo has not been ratified yet).

The second priority region is **Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia**, where the priority country is **Moldova**, with which Slovenia has also concluded an international development cooperation agreement. The third priority region is **Africa**, which is primarily the target of multilateral development assistance directed towards the least developed countries of sub-Saharan Africa. In the medium term, Slovenia endeavours to establish an active bilateral development cooperation programme with one or two African countries, and, within this framework, is strengthening cooperation with the Cape Verde Islands.

In terms of content, Slovenian development cooperation is focused on the development of programmes and projects primarily designed to promote **good governance** and reinforce the rule of law. Particular emphasis is placed on respecting human rights and providing equal opportunities; responding to the needs of children and implementing their rights; **social services** (technical assistance, education, scholarships) and **environmental protection**, in particular sustainable water management. Special attention is dedicated to the **empowerment of women** as a cross-cutting theme of development cooperation.

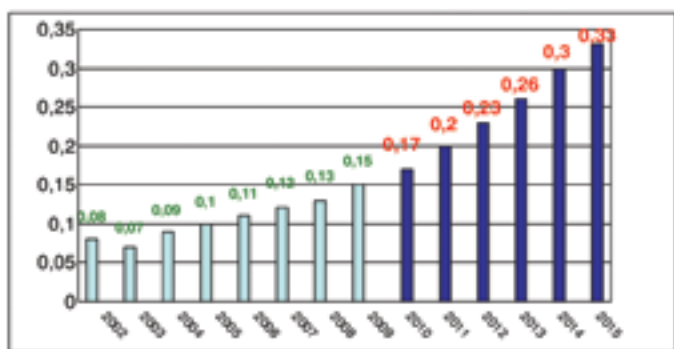


**Allocation of Slovenian bilateral official development assistance in 2009 (in millions of EUR)**

## Scope

In accordance with the international commitments and the goal of achieving the targets of official development assistance as determined within the framework of the EU, Slovenia together with the other new EU Member States has undertaken to **raise the level of development assistance to 0.17% of GNI in 2010 and to 0.33% by 2015**. In 2009 Slovenia allocated 0.15% of its GNI (€ 51.2 m) to development assistance, and its share will continue to increase in the future in accordance with its capacities.

### Slovenian official development assistance until 2009 and Slovenian commitments as part of the EU 12 from 2010 until 2015 (in % of GNI)



## Channels

Slovenia is a new donor country, which means that the mechanisms of development cooperation are still being established and that the major part of **development cooperation is implemented multilaterally**, particularly through EU development programmes, and to a lesser extent through UN organisations, programmes and agencies. Slovenia allocates a major part of its bilateral assistance for programmes and projects carried out by Slovenian institutions and non-governmental organisations.

**Slovenia has (co-)established the following institutions in the field of international development cooperation:** The Foundation "Together" - Regional Centre for Psychological Well-Being of Children, International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance - ITF (demining), Centre of Excellence in Finance - CEF (capacity building in the field of public finance), Centre for European Perspective - CEP (assistance to countries in their efforts to join EU), Centre for International Cooperation and Development - CMSR (research and consulting) and Centre for eGovernance Development - CeGD (support for the development of e-administration in South-Eastern Europe).

Cooperation with the institutions which were (co-)established by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and other public institutions and non-governmental organisations is co-ordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which also prepares and carries out public calls for tenders for non-

governmental organisations and other calls in the field of development cooperation. In Slovenia the majority of non-governmental organisations that work in the field of international development cooperation formed an **umbrella platform in 2005 called SLOGA (Slovenian Global Action – www.sloga-platform.org)**.

## Humanitarian aid

Considering the increasing number and strength of natural disasters, Slovenia has been devoting special attention to the humanitarian aid. In accordance with the Resolution on International Development Cooperation of the Republic of Slovenia, Slovenia's operations in the field of humanitarian aid are focused primarily on **assisting children in post-conflict situations**. In 2009 Slovenia responded to several humanitarian disasters; one of the most prominent projects was the rehabilitation of children from Gaza initiated by dr Danilo Türk, the President of the Republic. The project was carried out by the ITF in cooperation with the Soča University Rehabilitation Institute (www.itf-fund.si). Slovenia also supports projects of non-governmental organisations in the field of humanitarian aid. This year, Slovenia responded generously to the consequences of the earthquake in **Haiti**. The Government of the Republic of Slovenia contributed EUR 585,000, Slovenian NGOs contributed a further EUR 770,000.

## Awareness Raising

In order to increase the visibility of Slovenia's international development cooperation, in October 2009 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs held the first annual Slovenian Development Days aimed at raising public awareness of the importance of international development cooperation at the time of the global financial and economic crisis and about the third millennium development goal - gender equality. In 2010 the central topic of the Slovenian development days will be the implementation of the millennium development goals.



**MEDNARODNO RAZVOJNO  
SODELOVANJE SLOVENIJE  
SLOVENIA'S DEVELOPMENT  
ASSISTANCE**

The visibility of Slovenia's international development cooperation will be further reinforced in the future by means of a logo (see the draft of the logo above). The logo will be officially launched at the presentation of the development cooperation and humanitarian aid report for 2009 in May 2010. >>>

The logo was designed by GIGOdign+ Communications, which was selected through a call for tenders for a corporate identity of the state administration. For this purpose, a new font was designed which is also used in the logo. The colours of the logo were drawn from the existing colour system used at government and promotional level, with nuances drawn from the rich palette of Slovenia's natural environment.



**Statement by DRAGOLJUBA BENČINA, State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in role of Minister for International Development Cooperation**

Slovenia is a young development assistance donor country. We are aware of the importance of development cooperation, therefore we try to eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development throughout the world. We establish partnerships with developing countries through political dialogue and cooperation with civil society. Particularly in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe we focus on programmes and projects of good governance, reinforcing the rule of law and promoting sustainable development. In the coming years, we are planning to expand Slovenia's development cooperation to the African countries which are most in need of assistance. We place special emphasis on gender equality and empowerment of women, since we believe that women can be the key actors in development. I personally believe that with the combined strength of the developed countries together with the developing countries all of the Millennium Development Goals can be achieved and thus we will provide a bright future for the coming generations of all nations.

### Sectoral priorities

1. good governance and social services
2. environmental protection
3. empowerment of women

## PRESENTATION OF SOME OF THE PROJECTS OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS WHICH WERE FINANCIALLY SUPPORTED BY THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

**Rehabilitation of children from Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo:** A project of rehabilitation of children from Ukraine who suffer from the consequences of the nuclear accident of Chernobyl has been running since 2005 (carried out by the Red Cross of Slovenia – [www.rks.si](http://www.rks.si)). The project will be carried out in 2010 and 2011 as well. Another project for rehabilitating children from BiH who come from difficult economic and social post-war circumstances has also been carried out since 2005. In 2009 the project was expanded to include children from Kosovo (carried out by the Krog (Circle) Institute – [www.zavod-krog.si](http://www.zavod-krog.si)). The project will also be carried out in 2010. The rehabilitation is carried out at the Youth Health Resort at Debeli rtič with the financial support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia.

### Sustainable Energy for Sustainable Development in BiH, Macedonia and Ukraine:

The purpose of the project is to strengthen the role of sustainable energy (efficient consumption of energy and renewable energy resources) in politics and education and thus to contribute to increasing energy security, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and eliminating energy poverty in these countries. In the framework of the project activities promoting sustainable energy were carried out at pilot locations in the countries concerned, which included primarily the preparation of educational materials, holding workshops on sustainable energy for teachers and students, the introduction of practical measures (from isolating windows to installing solar panels) and the holding of discussions between various stakeholders. The project was carried out in 2008-2009 by the Focus association for sustainable development ([www.focus.si](http://www.focus.si)).

**Statement of a participant of the project:** “With the help of the Sustainable Energy for Sustainable Development project, the Electrical Engineering Secondary School in Tuzla developed into a solid example of good sustainable energy practice in the region. The connection of the theory and practice of sustainable energy was popular with both the teachers and the students, and became an attractive example of good practice for all of the schools in the area.” George Stiff, Centre for Ecology and Energy, Tuzla, BiH

**Stories of the weavers (Burkina Faso):** In 2008 a project entitled “Women, the Fair-Trade Weavers of Burkina Faso” was carried out, which provided 10 women from the area of Bobo-Dioulasso with basic education in weaving,



weaving equipment and inclusion in a group of producers in the framework of the local organisation Kafuli, which operates according to fair trade principles. In 2009 a project entitled “Processing cotton in women’s hands” was carried out which enabled the weavers to attend an additional weaving class and a thread dyeing class, and the opportunity to make a profit from textile orders. With the help of local seamstresses and tailors, their textiles were used to create the first fair-trade clothing collection from Burkina Faso in Slovenia. The women are sharing their knowledge of weaving, but they will need more help with selling their products in the future. In 2010 and 2011 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia will co-finance the implementation of a project entitled **“Achieving Sustainable Development in the Countryside through Responsible Tourism and Fair-trade Connections in Burkina Faso”**. The projects are being carried out by the Humanitas Association ([www.humanitas.si](http://www.humanitas.si)).

**The project “Development of the Nyamirambo-Kigali Women’s Centre and the development connection of Rwandan and Slovenian Non-governmental Organisations” (Rwanda):** The purpose of the project was the strategic empowerment of the Women’s Centre and various other Rwandan non-governmental women’s organisations, especially partner organisations of the Rwanda Association of University Women, and the establishment of development co-operation and teaching exchanges between Rwandan and Slovenian non-governmental organisations. The project, which has been carried out since 2007 by the Peace Institute, arose from an initiative of eighteen women in the local community in response to the direct needs of women and children and the general needs of the local community. In 2009 a study tour was organized for four members of a non-governmental organisation from Rwanda,

who stayed in Slovenia for a period of three weeks and met with numerous non-governmental organisations and individuals. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia supported the project in 2009, and will continue to support it in 2010 and 2011. The project is carried out by the Peace Institute ([www.mirovni-institut.si](http://www.mirovni-institut.si)).

**Necklace for a Better Life (Kampala, Uganda):**

Immaculate is a single mother who lives with her five children in one of the poorest districts of Kampala, which is populated mainly by women who fled the northern and eastern parts of Uganda as refugees. Immaculate is an English teacher by profession, but teaching English at the local school does not provide her with sufficient funds for everyday survival. Using her knowledge and skills at making paper jewellery she began training women in her community. Most of these women make their living by working at a quarry, where they are paid less than \$1 a day, or an average of \$25 a month. With the help of the free courses organised by Immaculate, the women have found employment which brings them increased economic and social independence. They earn around \$100 a month through selling their products. Today the **“Sunny Skies Women’s Project”** has 350 members, but the project will need additional financial support, as the group is facing financial problems arising from their informal organisational structure. In 2010/2011 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia will support a project of **establishing an organisational structure in order to empower the women of the Sunny Skies Women’s Project**. The project will be carried out by Slovenian Philanthropy ([www.filantropija.org](http://www.filantropija.org)).

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More information about Slovenia’s international development cooperation and humanitarian aid can be found at <http://www.mzz.gov.si/en/development>.

**"Implementation, especially in the area of waste, water and nature will be a central issue during the whole mandate."**

# JANEZ POTOČNIK

European Commissioner for the Environment

This year will be clearly the most important for the future of biodiversity, next year will be dominated by resource efficiency, and 2012 by water related questions, says Potočnik. He also wants to find a proper resolution to the issue of soil protection at EU level as soon as possible.

Vesna Žarkovič Photo STA

**The first serious task of the new European Commission is currently the new 10-year economic strategy. What makes a good strategy and what will your contribution be?**

Success will be measured in various ways, but if we want an economy that is more knowledge-based, more innovative, and more resource-efficient, then we will need to focus on smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. My contribution will involve making sure that the economic changes needed really do come about. That means pushing for the creation of markets for eco-innovation, and influencing colleagues so that the economic policy reforms called for by the Strategy are properly implemented. We won't green our economies unless the environment, climate, energy and economy ministers all work together.

**You have called for a holistic shift in the way we look at the environment, which is one of the main challenges of your mandate.**

**What does this actually mean?**

There are three areas I want to focus on for now. The first is resource efficiency, one of the flagship initiatives under Europe 2020. The goal is to help decouple economic growth from our use of resources and to support the shift towards a low-carbon, eco-efficient economy. This will stimulate green innovation, green growth and jobs.

The second is biodiversity. The challenge is to move biodiversity loss out of the shadow of climate change and to treat it as a priority in its own right. This year, the International Year of Biodiversity,

is the ideal moment to make this happen. We need to achieve much wider recognition of the fact that biodiversity is not some kind of environmental luxury but is in fact the life support system of our planet and the basis of all human prosperity and well-being.

My third major priority is to ensure EU legislation is properly implemented and enforced. A surprising amount of damage is done to the environment through non-compliance with, and inadequate enforcement of, laws that are already on the statute books. I want to ensure that the legislation we have in place is used effectively.

“ THERE ARE THREE AREAS I WANT TO FOCUS ON FOR NOW. THE FIRST IS RESOURCE EFFICIENCY, THE SECOND IS BIODIVERSITY, AND MY THIRD IS TO ENSURE EU LEGISLATION IS PROPERLY IMPLEMENTED AND ENFORCED. ”

**As the new European Commissioner for the Environment, you recently stated that you were going to instruct your team to discuss with their Slovenian counterparts the difficulties involved in the implementation of European environmental legislation. You believe that Slovenia is less than exemplary in reducing emissions and increasing renewable sources. Has this process already begun? What should Slovenia's first priority be in the environmental field, in**

**view of the fact that a range of problems exist with regard to putting environmental legislation into effect?**

I should say straight away that the situation in Slovenia regarding the implementation of EU environmental legislation is not too bad. There is a low number of infringement cases (out of 466 environment-related cases in April 2010, only 6 of them concerned Slovenia). Slovenia has been particularly successful in its timely and correct transposition of EU environmental legislation, the high percentage of territory designated as Natura 2000 and the successful reduction of SO2 emissions.

But there are of course some problems. I'm thinking of the implementation of legislation in the areas of air pollution, waste and urban waste water treatment. Some of these issues touch upon the problem of upgrading the environmental infrastructure, which is both costly and time consuming. I would therefore encourage the Slovenian authorities to make appropriate use of the possibilities offered by the EU structural funds and the EIB instruments.

My services have already begun discussions with the Slovenian authorities as to the possible date of the first "package meeting" concerning the implementation of the EU environmental legislation in Slovenia. The meeting is planned to take place in the first half of 2010.

**One of your major tasks will undoubtedly be the implementation of adopted environmental legislation. >>**



**Around 80% of national legislation in individual countries is based on European legislation which Member States have adopted themselves, but the Commission is responsible for ensuring that it is put into effect.**

**How do you intend to do this?**

Environmental legislation mainly comes in the form of directives that need to be transposed into national legislation. The Commission helps Member States ensure the correct transposition and implementation in various ways, including discussion and exchange platforms with national experts, and guidance documents and implementation action plans for key directives. As the guardian of the Treaty, the Commission can also launch infringement proceedings and take Member States to Court if necessary. But EU environmental legislation is also the national environmental legislation of the Member States, and that's why citizens and NGOs should make full use of the national channels of redress, through national administrative bodies and national judges.

The Commission organises workshops on EU environmental law with national judges and prosecutors to help improve enforcement. One such workshop was held in Slovenia in March, on the topic of EU waste legislation.

**Jo Leinen, the chair of the parliamentary committee that conducted your hearing in January, stated that one of your most important tasks is that of giving the right weight to the environment portfolio, since it is in competition with at least the climate action and energy portfolios. Do you see the separation of climate action from environment in the new Commission as a good decision?**

We certainly will be working closely together, and we are already. Most immediately, making sure that the Europe 2020 strategy proposal to create a resource efficient Europe is endorsed by EU leaders and will happen in practice, is a shared priority for both of us. More generally the close links between climate change and other environmental issues, not least biodiversity, forests and water, make it essential that we work closely together

to develop the best solutions. I see a very positive side here. Previously, the environment and the climate had only one voice in the Commission: now they have two.

**There is no doubt that the Copenhagen Accord is weak but it would have been even worse if a binding agreement that was relatively unambitious and insufficient had been reached.**

**Where do we go from here?**

We fight on, of course. The seriousness of the climate problem will not simply go away. The goal is a global climate agreement that is comprehensive, ambitious and legally binding. The EU wants to have this as soon as possible, but it's clear after Copenhagen that we are going to have to be patient. Countries like India and China don't appear to be ready for a legally binding deal, and there is uncertainty over when the US will be able to pass climate change legislation. But we have to keep pushing, while bearing in mind the need to be realistic and pragmatic. So that means implementing the Accord, even if we do want more, and ensuring that the fast-start financing comes on stream.

**As European Commissioner for the Environment, you cannot get involved in the internal problems of your own country, but would it be correct to say that you keep a close eye on events in the environmental sphere in Slovenia?**

At the Commission you have no nationality – that's the major difference from the Council – and you try to look at the bigger picture. Besides, Commissioners defend common European interests. Similarly as members of the government, who take an oath before the National Assembly that they will act in the interest of Slovenia, the Commissioners take an oath before the European Court of Justice that we will protect common interests of the Union and that we will not take decisions based on the interests or instructions of any country.

Of course I'm very proud to be Slovenian, and I want the best for my country. Therefore it is logical and also expected from me, that I help clarify national positions and ensure balanced proposals. The Commissioners are also

seen as an informal link with their home countries and we try to present to the public and to politicians the European Commission's positions, the reasons behind its proposals and so on.

**One other very topical issue in Slovenia falls within your purview – the issue of gas terminals. What is the position of the European Commission and what do you think about Slovenia's possible court action?**

At the European level, there are two directives for impact assessment in the preparation of projects or programs with potential transboundary effects: one related to projects (EIA - Environmental Impact Assessment); the other relating to programmes (SEA - Strategic Environmental Assessment). These directives require that countries make a full environmental impact assessment on the basis of quality and relevant data and carry out cross-border consultations in the preparatory phase of the project. The Commission's role is to monitor the processes in accordance with the directive, therefore, its role is primarily procedural.

At this stage of the process, different procedures are still ongoing. I hope that bilateral discussions and an active and constructive approach will lead to a solution that is acceptable to both sides.

The Commission is certainly willing to continue to offer technical assistance to both sides in finding solution for this issue. Of course I will continue to monitor how things develop closely, as this issue is important for both the Slovenian and the Italian publics.

**How do you see the Koper gas terminal project in connection with the power station?**

The fact is that Member States in the European Union have very different domestic energy 'mixes', which is quite sensible. So, it is up to individual countries to decide how they want to do things. While deciding on the different mix, countries have to take into account the commitments taken at European and also international level, including those which will protect the environment.

I know about the Koper gas terminal



project. It is like all other possibilities, which consider future Slovenian energy options, worthy of serious public discussion, expert and political evaluation. The project isn't in the pipeline for projects to be funded through Cohesion policy funding for Slovenia in the current 2007-2013 programming period, nor has it been proposed for co-financing with the European Investment Bank. What this means is that the project has not been evaluated by my services yet and I can not comment on it at this stage.

**Two other current projects are the construction of the sixth block at the Šoštanj Thermal Power Plant and the second block at the Krško Nuclear Power Plant. Is the development of a sixth block at Šoštanj sustainable from an environmental point of view?**

I wouldn't like to comment at this point on the environmental sustainability of this project as, according to information I have, studies are still on-going at the national level. As already mentioned, it is up to individual countries to decide on their own energy mix, but they have to take into consideration both the Kyoto Protocol commitments and the commitments on the share of renewable energies, when making far reaching decisions on important energy infrastructures. In the case of Slovenia, the share of renewable energy sources in 2005 was 16 percent and by 2020 it should reach as much as 25 percent.

I would also like to highlight two things. First, investments in energy have to be evaluated in the light of both long and short-term objectives. And more importantly, we have to ask what kind of future Slovenia wants to have: a clean environment and a modern competitive economy or one that relies on old structures (which is to a larger extent a general problem also in the EU)?

**What is your view on the acceptability of nuclear energy?** Member States have sharply differing



“AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, WE HAVE TO ASK WHAT KIND OF FUTURE SLOVENIA WANTS TO HAVE: A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT AND A MODERN COMPETITIVE ECONOMY OR ONE THAT RELIES ON OLD STRUCTURES (WHICH IS TO A LARGER EXTENT A GENERAL PROBLEM ALSO IN THE EU)?”

attitudes to nuclear power so the Commission takes a neutral stance. Those that want to use it can do so providing they meet accepted safety standards, and Member States that don't want it or are phasing it out are free to do that too.

Nuclear power is one of the possible answers to the question of providing stable and low carbon energy in the long run. During my previous mandate I proposed, together with Commissioner Piebalgs (who was responsible for energy at that time), a strategic energy technology plan (SET plan). This promotes the development of technologies in wind, solar, bio-energy, carbon capture and storage and the development of a new concept of energy networks, including the new generation of nuclear fission. We believe that the problem of ensuring a stable, environmentally friendly energy supply is too serious in order not to explore all potential options.

**Wind power is a frequently mentioned topic. Green energy is, of course, a paradigm, but the question is: is it environmentally acceptable?**

All energy sources have environmental impacts, not least the fossil fuels we have traditionally relied on. The whole point about renewable energy sources

is that they are meant to have a lower environmental impact and lower or zero carbon emissions; but of course they must be managed properly. Wind power is environmentally acceptable but, as with any other form of energy production, sensitivity to the environment and to the concerns of local people is needed in choosing where to site wind turbines and wind farms. It is obviously important to choose locations where bird populations will not be affected and which will not spoil particularly attractive landscapes.

**What will be the decisive factor when it comes to judging whether your five-year term of office has been successful?**

At this stage I know that this year will be clearly the most important for the future of biodiversity, next year will be dominated by resource efficiency, and 2012 by water related questions. I also want to find a proper resolution to the issue of soil protection at EU level as soon as possible. Implementation, especially in the area of waste, water and nature will be a central issue during the whole mandate. I want to be able to say there has been good, clear progress on each of these issues. In addition, with the 6th Environmental Action Plan finishing in 2012, I want to have put in place an ambitious successor to it by the time I leave this office.

The most important indicator for success will be the level of cooperation I manage to achieve with my colleagues in the Commission, and of course the results of that cooperation that follow. Environmental protection could really work if it is truly embedded in all our policies and in our daily life. We live in market economies and the right market signals to the producers and consumers, as well as the internalisation of environmental costs, will be vital for our long term sustainability, if we are serious about achieving our goals agreed in EU Strategy 2020.

# PAYMENT INDISCIPLINE

Additional foreign analyses will be used to assess the justification for the construction of Block 6 at the Šoštanj Thermal Power Plant, which could cause increased emissions of greenhouse gases, a situation that could cost Slovenia dearly. Slovenian European Commissioner Janez Potočnik, who is currently responsible for environmental protection, stated that important projects that will be operating after 2020 have to take account of the commitments of the Kyoto Protocol and European atmospheric and energy stimulus packages, which foresee a 25-per cent share of renewable energy sources in 2020.

Vesna Bertoneclj Popit, Delo Photo STA



**Boštjan Vasle,**  
Director of the Institute for  
Macroeconomic Analysis and  
Development

European decree regulating order in the payment system has been poor.

In order to improve payment discipline, the Government has amended the Financial Operations Act, which is expected among other things to introduce mandatory protection of payments with bills of exchange for public procurements. It is expected to accelerate the flow of money in the economy, accelerate procedures in the courts and provide better protection for creditors.

**P**AYMENT DISCIPLINE, WHICH WAS NEVER A MAJOR attribute in Slovenia even in better times, has assumed mass proportions during the crisis and is already blocking development in some areas. Small companies and individuals who worked as subcontractors have come to the quickest end in these conditions. In these circumstances some observers have suggested the arrangement of a general reconciliation of claims and liabilities. An initiative from the Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Public Legal Records and Related Services (Ajpes) was supported by both the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which recommended that its members participate in the reconciliation, and President Dr Danilo Türk, who also stated that the Government has to adopt measures to control the lack of payment discipline.

However, attitudes towards a multilateral reconciliation vary, as some people believe that companies should do business only with reliable customers. But it has been shown in the past that this is not always possible, and small companies have often been forced to wait for payment by large ones, since they hoped that they would get their money sooner or later. Some observers also made reference to the courts' poor and time-consuming decision-making and procrastination. Dr Damjan Možina of the Faculty of Law in Ljubljana stated in the magazine *Pravna praksa* (Legal Practice) that Slovenia's implementation of the

Meanwhile, the Office of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development, led by Director Boštjan Vasle, has established that the one-per cent economic growth forecast for 2010 will not be achieved, and forecast a rate of 0.6 per cent. According to OMAD Slovenia will now require four years or more to return to the GDP level before the outbreak of the economic crisis. The main culprit for the lower growth is supposed to be construction and weak growth of investments, while analysts are recording a slow rise of Slovenian processing industries. According to analysts, construction is expected to remain in a serious crisis this year, and will more strongly affect those who build apartments on spec and are having a very difficult time selling them, while on the other hand some other contractors, especially Slovenia's largest construction firm SCT, have found work abroad, in both Albania and Libya, and will be renovating the runway at the Ljubljana Airport. Those who have not managed to find such solutions are in real trouble.

According to Dean of the Ljubljana Faculty of Economics Dr Dušan Mramor, all forecasting is risky in the current conditions. In his opinion, the risk of economic growth being lower this year is lower than the possibility of its being higher. Every so often Slovenia's central bank, the Bank of Slovenia, also weighs in with its opinion of economic movements. In the opinion of

Governor Marko Kranjec, the Slovenian economy will experience moderate growth this year. According to the Bank of Slovenia, the gross domestic product will increase by 1.3 per cent, while personal consumption is expected to stagnate or even decrease slightly, public consumption will increase by half a per cent, investments by 2.6 per cent, employment is expected to decrease by 2.3 per cent, and inflation this year should be 1.6 per cent. The Governor also warned about growth of salaries, which is supposed to exceed productivity and negatively affect competitiveness, all the more since labour costs per product unit are expected to increase much more than for example in Germany. Therefore it will be very important how economic policy regulates costs and salaries policy, warned Governor Kranjec.



Marko Kranjec  
Central bank Governor

Opportunities for higher economic growth depend mainly on the movements of Slovenian exports. A questionnaire by the newspaper Delo among the largest Slovenian exporters indicated that total exports this year are expected to increase by around three per cent, of which exports to the European Union will increase by five per cent. On the other hand, the exporters forecast a reduction in imports, which are expected to decrease by a full 14 per cent in comparison with 2009. In view of the relative import dependency of the Slovenian economy, this is not a good sign for higher economic growth. Otherwise, the highest total exports last year were achieved by Revoz, a subsidiary of Renault of France, the Gorenje Group of Velenje, the Krka pharmaceuticals company of Novo mesto, Koper car manufacturer Cimos and the SIJ Group (Slovenian Steel Industry) of Ljubljana.

In connection with imports it should be noted that the largest exporters are not also the largest importers. The majority of large exporters export more than they import. The Bank of Slovenia however forecasts that this year will see a five-per cent increase in exports and a three-per cent increase in imports.

At the end of March the Employment Service of Slovenia reported 98,893 registered unemployed, which included just over 14 per cent seeking their first employment. More men than women are unemployed, while the percentage of older persons, who have a more difficult time finding employment, continues to rise.

Owing to the ageing of the Slovenian population, the Government is preparing an amendment to retirement legislation, whereby the retirement age is expected to be raised to 65 for men and 63

for women. The long-term goal is supposed to be the same retirement age for both men and women, and the assessment period for pensions is expected to be extended from the current maximum of 18 years to 34 years. According to the Government, this should ensure the long-term stability of the pension budget, but the move received sharp criticism from the trade unions, which warned that increasing the retirement age would strongly affect workers who became employed early in life and those who work in difficult working conditions. Although the Ministry of Labour states that special work conditions will

be taken account of for these workers, the trade unions are calling for a referendum. The announced changes to labour laws, which will shorten the period of notice for redundancies and reduce severance pay, also caused a great deal of dissatisfaction. In this the Government followed the will of the companies, although

in the last year or two they have fired so many workers, in some cases due to bankruptcy, that the unemployment figures are approaching the figures during the time of the dissolution of the Yugoslavian market and Slovenia's independence.

Due to the announced changes to pension and labour laws the trade unions are threatening to hold a general strike, since the legislative changes do not have a sufficient social character as provided for in the Slovenian Constitution. The trade unions also believe that the amounts of pensions are too little dependent on individuals' pension contributions. On the other hand, the value of the deposits

that employees pay into the pension funds has decreased due to the crisis.

The Government, which is looking for a partner to reform the Slovenian Railways, is allegedly searching for a manager for this task abroad. Additional foreign analyses will also be used to assess the justification for the construction of Block 6 at the Šoštanj Thermal Power Plant, which could cause increased emissions of greenhouse gases, a situation that could cost Slovenia dearly. Opinions in Slovenia regarding the justification of this investment are divided. Slovenian European Commissioner Janez Potočnik, formerly in charge of science and technology and now responsible for environmental protection, stated that important projects that will be operating after 2020 have to take account of the commitments of the Kyoto Protocol and European atmospheric and energy stimulus packages, which foresee a 25-per cent share of renewable energy sources in 2020. ●

**'The Office of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development, led by Director Boštjan Vase, has established that the one-per cent economic growth forecast for 2010 will not be achieved, and forecast a rate of 0.6 per cent. According to OMAD Slovenia will now require four years or more to return to the level of GDP before the outbreak of the economic crisis.'**



# MIHELA ZUPANČIČ

## Head of the Representation of the European Commission in Slovenia

**T**HE PRIORITIES SET BY THE EUROPEAN UNION, THROUGH THE new European Commission and newly elected European Parliament, clearly reflect primarily the fact of a high level of interdependence, not just in internal, European terms, but also, and most importantly, in global terms. The priority areas on which the Union is focused at this moment will therefore come as no surprise, and they accord with the priority topics at the national level within the EU and in the global arena: an exit strategy from the crisis and a sure path to economic recovery.

The fact that action is needed urgently is quite clear from the data. Over the past two years, when the priority was on taking steps to shore up as much as possible the collapse of financial markets, some seven million people lost their jobs; today 23 million people, or 10 percent of the European workforce, are unemployed. Industrial output has fallen by 15 percent, dropping to the level of 1999. Public finances are in serious danger – on average the budget deficit in the EU is hovering around 7 percent. Public debt has increased by 20 percent, and will remain high in the foreseeable future.

This clear internal challenge can in no way be separated from the comparably intense global challenge. The world has not stopped because of this crisis. On the contrary, the world's economy is speeding ahead, but the challenge remains the same – Europe is not in competition with the cheap labour force of the (rapidly) developing countries. The main competition is enhanced investment in research, knowledge and new technologies, in which the rapidly developing parts of the world are accelerating their investment and reaping the fruits.

Lessons from the past teach us that the European Union is successful when it works together in the common interest. Here we have to face up to the clear realisation that economic realities are moving faster than political realities. And this leads us to the conclusion that Europe does not just need greater economic coordination, but most importantly a more decisive and coherent response on the political level.

The institutional tools for such action are available and set up. We entered the new year and the new term of the European Commission with the new Lisbon Treaty. As many critics assert, this is a complex text of jurisprudence that ordinary people find hard to understand. Since the EU is a complex *sui generis* creation, a union of the Member States and its citizens, it would probably be impossible to completely avoid this. Nevertheless, the complexity of the Treaty's text in no way diminishes its usefulness in newly acquired possibilities.

Put more simply, the Treaty enables the faster adoption of legislation, which in circumstances demanding rapid responses, is vitally important for success. Decision-making procedures at the EU level are clearer and more transparent, and they facilitate the greater involvement of national parliaments in supranational processes. The same applies to the

organised civil society, for which the new Treaty also provides a place as well as better levers for influencing processes on the supranational level. Both are vital for making processes more democratic, which will ensure not just better understanding, but also higher-quality decisions.

The new institutions provided by the Treaty grant the Union the possibility of greater coordination and better strategic leadership of processes (President of the European Council) as well as clearer representation in the international arena (the High Representative for Foreign Affairs). The institution of President of the European Council was put to the test this March, when the European Council summit was held for the first time in the new format. Judging by that meeting, the Union can look forward to stronger strategic summit leadership, and above all to stronger coordination of all the responsible players in adopting Union's strategic guidelines.

The office of the foreign policy representative and the European External Action Service are still being shaped. The essence of the changes lies not just in establishing the new institution, which will bring together the national and supranational diplomatic corps for the first time in the service of the common interest. The process will signify primarily a change in the work mentality, both for European and national diplomats and officials working in the area of foreign affairs. The objective: a single and above all stronger European voice in the global context.

And this brings us back again to the initial consideration. Successfully eliminating the consequences of the grave economic crisis and ensuring the success of European society in the future will require two steps: closer internal cooperation and a more coordinated international presence. Analyses of the situation have been done, along with the measures that need to be taken. The European Union has the tools, including the new Treaty. So we are not consequently testing out the Union's capability to recognise challenges and its intellectual capacity to define the right solutions. What is being tested are first and foremost the political will to take action and the solidarity, the motive force of a common European drive to move beyond short-sighted individual interests in favour of the common – and thereby individual – good.

It was on 9 May 60 years ago that the then French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman set out the declaration that laid the foundations for the European Union. In that context, the challenges and aims in post-war Europe were very different, and the first institutional set-up that was developed to facilitate integration was also very different from that of today. Yet the spirit of integration has not changed. Europe, wrote Schuman, will be built on tangible achievements and on the basis of solidarity. An idea whose value time does not diminish. On the contrary, each new period and new challenge continually affirm the validity of that fundamental premise of European integration. ●



# IGOR SENČAR

## Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia to the EU

**T**HE EUROPEAN UNION IS UNDERGOING A YEAR OF STERN TESTS: it will be necessary to design an effective strategy for economic recovery as a response to the economic crisis, from which we will otherwise escape with an insufficient level of economic growth to be able to enjoy the former level of prosperity. It will be necessary to respond as effectively as possible to the threat of climate change. In view of the key strategic challenges that the global community is facing, the EU will have to become an even more recognisable and influential factor.

In the last two years of financial and economic crisis, the EU Member States have once again realised, in initially attempting to take action on their own, how such measures have quickly proved to be insufficient. At the climate change conference in Copenhagen at the end of last year we were surprised by various key players with huge political influence, which they used effectively to benefit their own interests. This was not to the benefit of the EU and the interests of humanity in general, given the urgent need for sufficient measures to be taken in the face of the fast-growing consequences of global atmospheric warming.

Sixty years ago a family of free, democratic European countries faced numerous economic, security and political challenges no smaller than those on our horizon. Their reasonable response to them arose from a clear understanding of their inevitable interdependence: *L'Europe ne se fera pas d'un coup ni dans une construction d'ensemble: elle se fera par des réalisations concrètes créant d'abord une solidarité de fait*. The European integration process – at first the European Coal and Steel Community – was the substantiation of this solidarity, manifested in a concrete response to the burning questions of security on the Continent and to the need for economic reconstruction.

We are in a year in which we are testing the operation of the Treaty of Lisbon, which brings various significant new features to the Union. Its key strategic contribution is more permanent leadership at the level of the European Council, in the area of foreign affairs and within the framework of the euro area. One of the key advantages of longer-term leadership is that it allows the development of longer term strategic thinking, a more coherent work programme and to realize a greater continuity of action. A system with a stronger political centre is better suited to response and strategic action in crisis situations.

In the first month of the taking effect of the Treaty of Lisbon the members of the European Council decided to take matters regarding a response to the economic challenges into their own hands: The European Council is adopting the fundamental elements of the new strategy for growth and jobs (EU2020 strategy) and is watching over their implementation. Improved co-ordination of the economic policies of the Member States will be required, as will their increased commitment to implementing the strategy. Therefore it is reasonable that the European Council be the central authority for its implementation, since in the final

analysis when it comes to the adoption of key economic guidelines at the national level everything depends on the heads of the governments. The European Council discussed the key outlines of the Commission's proposed EU2020 strategy in February and March, and the work should be completed at the June session. The Member States agreed on a mechanism for action with regard to the consequences of the difficult public financial situation in Greece. A strategic discussion was also begun on how to preserve the achievements of the Copenhagen conference without abandoning the larger ambition of achieving a sufficiently wide consensus on the effective measures required in order to avoid the potentially catastrophic consequences of atmospheric warming.

The operation of the new system is therefore being tested while we are facing our greatest challenges. Defensive reactions are expected upon the introduction of the new system. What will be the relationship between the influence of the permanent presidency and the rotating six-month presidency that heads the sectoral composition of the Council (except for the Council on Foreign Relations)? How can we design a more coherent co-ordination of the economic policies in the euro area? How can we design a European foreign relations service which will give Member States a true sense of ownership or participation in it? And what is a suitable share for a given member?

But in the end, it is political will to take joint action and solidarity that are put to the test. Throughout the history of the European integration process the effective responses to great challenges were always based on the recognition of the concreteness of the problem itself, and on the formation of ambitious responses which facilitated effective joint action. Today these solutions can be seen as major compromises with a view to the future, compromise that resolved concrete issues and increased solidarity within the family of European nations. In the very beginning of the integration process, five years after the end of the War, it was the establishment of equality between France and Germany as a foundation of the new system, and the autonomous High Authority, predecessor of the European Commission. Other such historic is only the first in a series of major compromises also include the creation of the internal market and the introduction of a common currency. It is urgent that the Member States and the EU institutions, like each time in the past, realistically face and thoroughly analyse the concrete common problems with the understanding that these are shared challenges to which the individual European countries are no longer able to respond effectively on their own. Merely searching for advantages for oneself will not generate an effective response to these challenges for either individual members or the community at large. The only effective means is concerted, co-ordinated action. The path to success for each member separately lies only in searching for mutual benefits.



# KOGOJ-FABIJANIĆ, THE SEARCH FOR AESTHETIC UTOPIA

On 31 March a joint exhibition of works by Slovenian designer Oskar Kogoj and Croatian architect Nenad Fabijanić opened at the Glyptotheque sculpture museum of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts. The exhibition was opened by the Prime Ministers of Slovenia and Croatia, Borut Pahor and Jadranka Kosor, who are also its patrons.

Alenka Ivančič, Vesna Žarkovič Photo Daniel Novakovič / STA

**A**S BORUT PAHOR SAID AT THE opening, the title of the exhibition is very inspiring – Kogoj and Fabijanić in the Search for Aesthetic Utopia. And since, as he admitted, he is unable to stop being a politician, he decided take advantage of the opening of this remarkable cultural event to say a few words about his first experiences with Jadranka Kosor as regards utopia.

He explained that at their first meeting there were very few opportunities to realise the dream they shared, that of restoring friendly relations between two nations currently at odds because of issues that had remained unresolved for many years. Today he believes that they have succeeded in this endeavour.

In the Prime Minister's words, the two artists both represent the ambitiousness, accomplishment and creativity of the two nations in the artistic sphere. The artists know why they decided to call the

exhibition a 'search for utopia', while his own experience in both personal and political life tells him that neither the world of the beautiful nor the world of the good is possible without positive utopias and without people who live them and believe in them.

In her address, Jadranka Kosor recalled her first meeting with Pahor last July at Trakošćan Castle, when only a few people believed that they would be successful. On that occasion there was more talk about their clothes than about their political goals. At the exhibition opening, a celebration of creativity, friendship and understanding, she was able to say with satisfaction and joy that she and Pahor have succeeded in building solid bridges of friendship and cooperation between two friendly nations, Slovenia and Croatia.

Kosor added that she was happy and honoured to be one of the patrons of this magnificent exhibition by two magnificent

artists and friends. She also expressed the hope that the exhibition, which after Zagreb will go to Slovenia, will spread a message of friendship, understanding, creativity and art, and show that only together can we build a good European future.

Ariana Kralj, the director of the Glyptotheque, underlined the fact that both Slovenia and Croatia have artists who are important and creative figures in the European context and who have opened new directions in their own media, and that today, in the early years of a new century, we are thus able to talk about a confirmation of all their efforts to date.

She explained that the exhibition 'The Search for Aesthetic Utopia' began life as a remarkable project by the two artists that was promoted and coordinated by the Government Communication Office of the Republic of Slovenia in conjunction with the Glyptotheque of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts. The exhibition has benefited from excellent cooperation between all the partners involved in the project – Slovenia's Government Communication Office, the Croatian Ministry of Culture, the Glyptotheque and the Slovenian Embassy in Zagreb. Kralj also explained that after leaving Zagreb the exhibition will be on view in Ljubljana.

Oskar Kogoj and Nenad Fabijanić, both internationally recognised artists and the winners of numerous prizes and awards, have despite their many differences – of character, working medium and worldview – been involved in a creative dialogue for 24 years. They are united by a close connection with nature and their own environment and with heritage, by a thirst for knowledge, by their acceptance of the new, and by their indomitable desire to seek truth and beauty in the aesthetic perfection of soft organic forms and its depiction in natural materials such as wood, stone, precious metals, ceramics and glass. Their joint projects are without exception examples of model intercultural cooperation and connection. For them there are no barriers and no borders. This is the secret of their success and of the timelessness of their artefacts and creations in today's world of consumerism, fashion and transitoriness. ●

# ALEKSANDRINKE – SLOVENIAN WOMEN IN EGYPT

Jože Osterman Photo Archive SIM

**T**HE “ALEKSANDRINKE”, SLOVENIAN women who owing to the difficult economic circumstances in what was at the time Italian Primorska at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century went to Egypt in search of employment, many of whom remained there, are a special phenomenon among Slovenian emigrants who should not be forgotten. They were between 4800 and 6000 mostly young mothers and girls from the Gorica area who worked in then-flourishing Alexandria and Cairo, mainly as maids, nannies, cooks and nursemaids for the families of wealthy townsfolk, the majority of whom were European. The economic heyday of Alexandria, which paralleled the construction of the Suez Canal in the second half of the 19th century, made it possible for Slovenian women to earn at least twice as much as they would at home in the economically straitened Gorica area, and spread the good reputation of disciplined, hard-working and well-kempt Slovenian maids far and wide. The situation in Cairo, 250 km away, was the same. The town chronicles speak clearly about how valued Primorska women were in Egypt, stating that a full 195 bourgeois families were vying for three Slovenian maids, as there simply weren't any more available. At the same time, their good reputation led to some of them going back to Egypt several times, many of them to stay.

The Slovenian women performed difficult tasks, as they were the ones who made the existence of the bourgeois families possible. Yellowed photographs show us images of attractive, well-dressed and elegant women; they were sophisticated ladies of whom we can be justifiably proud. However, the fate of these emigrants so far from home was also sometimes harsh: they left children and families at home, and when they returned years later they often were unable to re-establish genuine relationships with



their own families. Moving letters from separated people expressing longing for each other are a significant part of the cultural heritage that the Aleksandrinke left behind, and bear witness to their close connections to their homeland.

Both of the cities' cemeteries still have many graves bearing Slovenian names, where members of the once-strong Slovenian emigrant colony were laid to rest. At the beginning of the 20th century this colony numbered around 5000 capable and ambitious people, who in addition to numerous Slovenian and later also Yugoslavian associations also maintained a Slovenian school and church, and managed some well-known companies. Later the numbers and power of the Slovenian community began to wane, but even today in both cities (at the turn of the century the population of Alexandria was as much as around 40% European) you can still find quite a few people with Slovenian roots.

Over the past decade a special association from Prvačina near Nova Gorica has undertaken to preserve the cultural

heritage left by the Aleksandrinke, and have researched this part of our history and raised awareness of its significance. The initiative was first seized by the Slovenian Emigrants Association, and then by the Government Office for Slovenians Abroad, and a lot of things began to happen because of this. In 2007 a memorial plaque for Slovenian women in Egypt was installed at a home for school nurses in Alexandria, where they most often gathered, and in 2009 a special exhibition was held, which was hosted by the Slovenian Ethnographic Museum, at a gathering of Slovenian emigrants at the Nova Gorica Museum in the Kromberk Castle, and later in the hall of the Slovenian Emigrants Association in Ljubljana. At the end of March of this year we Slovenians dedicated a memorial plaque to our countrywomen in the Christian part of the cemetery in Cairo, which was unveiled by the Slovenian

Ambassador to Egypt Borut Mahnič, the President of the Society for the Preservation of the Cultural Heritage of the Aleksandrinke Dejana Baša and Secretary Janez Rogelj. ●





MORE INFORMATION  
[www.lunagitana.si](http://www.lunagitana.si)

# LUNA GITANA (GYPSY MOON) IN THE SLOVENIAN SKY

Mojca Medvedšek Photo Archive Luna Gitana

**W**HEN WE HEAR THE WORD flamenco we first think of the style of music, singing and dance that originated in Andalusia, Spain. It is an artistic expression whose roots go back far into the past – borne of an unbelievable and complex mixture of cultures and civilisations which met and commingled in that region. Flamenco is a magical art; it has a special energy and touches us with its invisible mystery – an unwritten message from antiquity, sleeping in the depths of the soul of the artist, who calls it into the present through the ritual of singing. It has raised people's spirits since time immemorial, and it is no wonder that it is on the

must-see list for many visitors to Spain. However, the true authentic dancers and artists are found only in the place from whence flamenco originated, and where it is still a part of everyday life: Lower Andalusia (Andalucia Baja). You have to search for it in the triangle between Cadiz, Seville and Huelva, where the people still dance, sing and play mainly for their own enjoyment, and it is a part of every family, religious and other celebration.

The idea of founding the Slovenian flamenco cultural/artistic association Luna Gitana (Gypsy Moon) was born on a summer's eve right there, in Lower Andalusia.

A magnificent round orb shone

mysteriously from the vault of the heavens, the second full moon of the month. Superstitious Andalusians call it luna azul – a blue moon – and they believe that it will grant any wish that you ask of it.

The flamenco summer seminar started in the town of Sanlúcar de Barameda (Cádiz) in 2004 by Inma Lobato, flamenco teacher and artistic director of the Spanish cultural association La Argentinita, was coming to an end; a small group of Slovenian aficionados de flamenco attended at her invitation. The atmosphere crackled with emotion and there was no lack of yearning on this special occasion. But the strongest was



that we would continue to gather in this atmosphere of dancing and friendship.

This was the beginning of an arduous journey, on which a group of girls whose dancing skills had up to that moment been gleaned at all sorts of seminars in Slovenia and Spain embarked without any means of public financial support. However, with a great deal of enthusiasm, volunteer work and perseverance they established an association and a space where they could meet, promote the flamenco culture they had experienced in Andalusia and hold flamenco courses in Slovenia, where there is a lack of dance instructors educated in this style.

It was also the beginning of a surprising and close collaboration with the Spanish association La Argentinita from the province of Cadiz and its teacher, the artist Inma Lobato. Under her mentorship, underscored by the affiliation of the two associations in 2006, and with her ardour, enthusiasm and friendliness, the Luna Gitana association was able to organise intensive dancing seminars in Slovenia, and on her initiative the first Ljubljana feria was held in Dvorni trg in August 2007. In Andalusia this is a huge, picturesque citywide outdoor celebration, a true cultural and gastronomic event, at which the townsfolk gather to enjoy local specialities and a glass of wine with music and dancing over several nights. And for a moment that atmosphere was brought to life in Ljubljana; although the Ljubljana feria lasted just a few hours, it made a strong impression on the several hundred people who attended.

The year 2007 was a turning point in the collaboration of the two associations, among other things with regard to the scope of their activities – the annual intensive August seminar in Ljubljana has been joined by a seminar for training dance therapists and a flamenco seminar in Bosnia (Bosanska Krupa, Luna Una, BIH), which was established for victims of war violence. An expanded project entitled Flamenco en el Este received financial support from the Andalusian Agency for the Development of Flamenco, based in Seville, and its former director, the present Minister for Equality Mrs Bibiana Aído, who recognised it as a priceless



opportunity for exchanging and expanding cultural and social values. On her visit to Ljubljana, during the presentation of the project, she emphasised the importance of the uninterrupted tradition of Inma Lobato's dancing seminars, "which bring us not only original dance and artistic expression, but also traditional Andalusian values and way that Andalusians understand life."

The projects of both countries and the associations continue, moving into new places, introducing new ideas and plans, and bringing in new objectives, hopes and challenges.

In March 2010 the members of the Luna Gitana association participated in a flamenco festival in Jerez, where the current director of the Andalusian Agency for the Development of Flamenco Francisco Perujo spoke about the importance of the Flamenco en el Este project at a press conference, and added that "flamenco can never become humanity's cultural heritage without humaneness." Thus with the support of the Andalusian government this magical art with its power to heal has helped several families to survive who

had been torn apart by war, as well as the bodies and spirits of numerous women in Slovenia, who have fought other battles and other wars during peacetime.

Despite the physical distance between Slovenia and Spain, through the efforts of these two tiny cultural cells a thin strand has been woven between the two, allowing regular exchanges between these apparently very different cultures, which in our shared area of Europe at least symbolically links the Mediterranean and the Mediterranean sense of life, music and dance.

The story of the collaboration between Luna Gitana and La Argentinita is an undoubtedly fine example of successful putting into practice of Spanish-Slovenian cultural cooperation with a sustainable vision, which began due to the thirst for knowledge, a better understanding of the flamenco tradition and intercultural associations, and grew into a friendly dialogue based on multiple shared values, which are being lost in today's world of fast profits; it is a true story of dedication, sacrificing for the sake of ideals, preparedness for volunteer work and mutual respect for cultural differences. ●

# CANKAR'S THE SERVANTS IN NOVO MESTO

Dramatist Ivan Cankar is a constant source of the most interesting theatrical challenges and investigations on the Slovenian stage, and the public's interest in his shows was commensurate.

Jože Osterman Photo Boštjan Pucelj



OWING TO THE FACT THAT THERE have been fewer opening nights of Cankar's works recently, when just a few decades ago they were nearly flooding Slovenian theatres, public interest in these projects has again increased.

In view of the almost provocative role being played in Slovenian theatre in the new interpretations by Slovenia's youngest professional theatre, the Anton Podbevšek Theatre of Novo Mesto, the staging of Cankar's *The Servants* (*Hlapci*), perhaps the playwright's most penetrating work, under the direction of Matjaž Berger, was a first-class event. The play, in which Cankar, after the resounding defeat of the liberals in the 1907 elections, angrily asserts that their fundamental quality is that of servitude, has in one hundred years on Slovenian stages had performances that have achieved cult status, and are difficult to improve on. Berger, like Cankar, is most interested in the universal question of why a servant seeks a master, and why he humbly obeys him, which is undoubtedly an important social question even in

this day and age, both in Slovenia and abroad. Berger responds to the question in his own unique style with, as he himself says, an annotated edition of *The Servants*, i.e. through a somewhat deconstructed drama and using the device of inserting philosophical tractates borrowed from thinkers such

as Blaise Pascal, Etienne de la Boetie, Hegel and Louis Althusser. Berger states that it is impossible to give any timeless or universal answer to the question, so he attempts to resolve the dilemma through an analytical exploration of individual situations and conditions, through which he nevertheless forms a more general response about the motives behind human subservience to masters.

Berger's projects are always accompanied by incredible scenery and technical effects, and *The Servants* is no exception. Since the show is a co-production between the Novo Mesto theatre and the Prešeren Theatre from Kranj, to which both companies contributed a lot of good actors and materials, we were treated to a show worthy of the finest Slovenian stages. The classical theatregoing public might lift their noses a bit at this fragmented staging of Cankar's play, but on the other hand the concept of engaged theatre offered by Berger is interesting for younger audiences, and evokes memories of celebrated theatrical catharses which have become all too rare on the modern stage. ●



# THE SAME IS NOT IDENTICAL – 62ND ANNUAL CONCERT

Polona Prešeren

**T**he members of the Academic Folklore Group France Marolt have made sure that it is neither the same nor identical to so many years before, as they stage their annual concert in Slovenia's main cultural venue, Cankarjev dom. They have presented this year's concert to their faithful following with the title *The Same is not Identical* (Isto ni enako), and have promised that despite the limited treasury of Slovenian folk dance, audiences will not see identical performances of the same dance.

With this 62nd annual concert the "Marolters" have shown that regardless of the required moves, any dance, including

folk dance, can be different each time, since the dancers perform and reinterpret the dance depending on their experiencing of it at the time.

The AFG France Marolt is a folklore group with a faithful audience and a long tradition. It currently numbers 125 members. Audiences who come to folklore group performances always expect something new. And the magic of the France Marolt performances is the fact that dances known and seen before are always brought to life in slightly different ways, since the dancers perform in ways that reflect their experience in the moment, and this is different for those dances they have

performed many times, compared to those they are encountering for the first time. So the same dance is never identical.

The folklore group was founded in 1948 by the first Slovenian ethnomusicologist, France Marolt, in this way laying the foundations for the biggest folklore group in Slovenia. As they say about themselves, today they are a motley band of individuals linked together by a love of dance, singing and Slovenian traditions. "Once you've joined the group, Marolt quickly gets under your skin and completely takes you over", they write on their website. The artistic director of the group is the ethnochoreographer Mirko Ramovš. •

## GUEST STAR AWARD FOR FOREIGN PERSONALITIES OF THE YEAR IN SLOVENIA

Vesna Žarkovič

**T**HE SLOVENIA TIMES AND RADIO Slovenia International have presented their Guest Star awards for a sixth time this year. The organisers said that awards were intended to highlight foreigners who have chosen to work in Slovenia, and whose talents and personality have helped create a modern, open and tolerant society in Slovenia. Winners were announced in four categories at the presentation, in the fields of culture, business, diplomacy and sport, based on voting by readers of the Slovenia Times and Radio Slovenia International listeners. The diplomatic award went to the Indian ambassador, Villur Sundararajan Seshadri, in recognition of his work to strengthen relations between India and Slovenia. The award for the world of business was presented to the CFO of Iskraemeco, Bahaa

Eldin Abdullah. The organisers stated that under his leadership the company had started to make a profit once more, and he had successfully managed to introduce international financial reporting standards in just six months. The winner in the field of culture was the multi-award winning ballet dancer Lukas Zuschlag. The winner of the sport award was Ivan Hudač, the head trainer of the skier Petra Majdič. The event host's, Brane Krajnik, director of the Slovenia Times, said the aim of the Guest Star project was to highlight the achievements of individuals who had come from abroad and left their own mark on Slovenian life. "Their knowledge and experience can be a source of inspiration to us. Their presence among us has made a significant contribution to opening Slovenia up to the world

in so many different fields, particular those we have chosen to recognise, culture, business, diplomacy and sport." Nominees for the awards in the field of cultural achievement also included the dancer, Nadiya Bychkova, the writer, Erica Johnson Debeljak, and the director of the RTV Slovenija symphony orchestra, En Shao. In the business category, voters could choose from a short-list with, in addition to Bahaa Eldin Abdullah, the CEO of the BSH domestic appliance company, Rudolf Klötscher, the director of the Slovenian-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Gertrud Rantzen, and the director of Slovenia Invest, Jaqueline Stuart. The diplomats nominated for Guest Star 2009 were the Egyptian ambassador, Ahmed Farouk, the Indian ambassador, Villur Sundararajan Seshadri, the Macedonian ambassador, Samoil Josif Filipovski and the Chinese ambassador, Zhi Zhaolin. In the sporting field, the short-list included Ivan Hudač, head trainer of skier Petra Majdič, Liudmila Bodnieva, member of Krim handball club, Glenn Hoag, head trainer of ACH Volley, and Gilles Jaquet, trainer of Slovenia's national snowboard team. •

# MALA DRAMA PREMIERES MUCK'S VEHIKEL, WITH ITS SCOPE FOR TRAGEDY AND CATHARSIS

On 9 April the Mala Drama theatre staged the first performance of Kristijan Muck's play *Vehikel* (Vehicle).

Vesna Žarkovič Photo Peter Uhan



**T**HE BAPTISMAL PERFORMANCE OF *Vehikel* also marks the departure of this playwright and actor from Ljubljana's Drama theatre house after four decades of collaboration, and now he will be devoting himself to a professorship at the performing arts academy, AGRFT. At a press conference, director Zvone Šedlbauer pointed out the extraordinary complexity of the script.

Šedlbauer said that owing to its complexity, when they were rehearsing the text they frequently sought the help of the author. Using morsels of substance the director tackled the presentational dimension of the story, which changes from a dialogue with *déjà vu* elements into poetry and non sequitur.

The script is composed of two separate parts. Stage adapter Vilma Štritof described the first part as a series of trivial peripeteias of three skiers, whom the threat of an avalanche leads to seek refuge with a recluse, the semi-scientist inventor

Tesnikar, who is studying the universe.

The characters of the skiers, played by Saša Pavček, Iva Babič and Rok Vihar, who lack any solid values and whose personal relations are ruined, represent a diametrical opposite to Tesnikar's world. His view of the world and humanity is clear, and is firmly rooted in his environment and its fundamental truths. As the stage adapter has observed, the play brings up a theological issue, for the self-taught scientist Tesnikar wishes to find the sense and essence of everything living and existing. Later Tesnikar explains that the essence of his relationship with God lies in the fact that he, too, loves his fellow humans in all their misery, just as God the Creator supposedly loves them.

Questioned whether the play *Vehikel* has an autobiographical quality, the author Muck responded that he sees himself most as Tesnikar, seeking to grasp the essence of everything in existence. The word vehicle means

a motive mechanism or something causing a shift. The title itself implies and heralds a journey into the past, which in the play is triggered by an avalanche. The author believes that this leaves the issue of tragedy and catharsis open at the same time. The main guiding principle has come from Werner Heisenberg's assertion: atoms are a constituent part of points of observation. In *Vehikel*, Muck therefore poses a fundamental question: how should we be? He observes the world from several points of view, so his dramatic language is constantly changing style, mode and point of departure and is marked by its time. Language is therefore the nucleus and key to the theatrical situation. *Vehikel* is an extensive work in several dimensions, a critical reflection that opens up issues of fundamental things, avoiding the everyday circus and being stuck on mere appearances. Indeed Muck sees the point of theatrical tangibility in opening up to infinity. •

# RED DOT DESIGN AWARD:

Seven awards for Slovenia this year

Ana Mrzlikar Photo Gigodesign, Versor



“  
**AT THE CEREMONY  
 ANNOUNCING THE AWARDS,  
 WHICH WAS HELD ON 15  
 MARCH IN ESSEN, SLOVENIA  
 WAS SHOT TO THE VERY PEAK  
 OF INTERNATIONAL DESIGN  
 ATTENTION, SINCE NO LESS  
 THAN SEVEN SLOVENIAN  
 PRODUCTS EARNED A RED DOT.**  
 ”

**T**HE DESIGN CENTRUM NORDRHEIN WESTFALEN IN THE German city of Essen is one of the oldest and most highly regarded European institutions in the field of graphic design, multimedia and general design. It has been presenting awards for design ever since 1955, and in 1992 its competition concept was enhanced and internationalised, acquiring a corporate image in the form of a red dot. The red dot design award is a prize that has acquired worldwide distinction and recognisability owing to the way the competition is organised, and to the impartial judging assured by independent top names in the world of design. The internationally recognisable red dot sends the message of the highest quality in the design field, and the recognisability of the award has been growing from year to year even outside design circles.

This year 4252 products were competing for the prestige award, and they were submitted for the competition by 1636 companies from a full 57 countries. At the ceremony announcing the awards, which was held on 15 March in Essen, Slovenia was shot to the very peak of international design attention, since no less than seven Slovenian products earned a red dot.

In the category of industrial design, red dot design award product design trophies were received by: Elan's SLX waveFlex race skis, the Unisash Arx View casement window from Kovinoplastika Lož d.d., Promise cross-country ski shoes from Alpina, Sitty urban furniture, Art-Me individual surface transformation of façade elements and the Flying Doughnut parking system from Versor d.o.o. The Cher range of bathroom furniture from manufacturer Kolpa d.d. also received an honorary red dot in the industrial design category. >>>



**red dot** award  
 product design



### Three awards for the Gigodesign studio

No less than three of the seven award-winning products came from the Gigodesign studio. “The fact is, you don’t get outstanding achievements just by chance,” says Miha Klinar with certainty. He is the creative director of industrial design at Gigodesign, which also won the competition for the public administration’s corporate image. “For the second time in three years, one of the award-winning products is skis from Elan, and our studio is now in its seventh year of working with them. The second red dot award has gone to the innovative Unisash window system, which Gigodesign has created in cooperation with Kovinoplastika of Lož, and we secured the third award with the independent project for an innovative urban furniture element, the Sitty seat.” Regarding the importance of industrial design, Miha Klinar says: “The role of industrial design is closely linked to innovation and seeking optimal solutions, from the production phase to end use of a product. Only through innovation can we ensure added value of a product, and only an economy that is aware of this will be successful in the future.”

### Alpina footwear wins award again

Alpina, the leading Slovenian manufacturer and marketer of fashion and sports footwear, received the prestigious international design award this year for the third time in a row. This year the prize-winning product was the Promise cross-country ski shoe, which was presented this February as a new feature on the market at the biggest winter sports fair in Munich. The shoe, which “promises more”, uses the best manufacturing technology and the best materials, and has outstanding technical and thermal properties. It is water resistant, but allows the foot to breathe, it is comfortable and adjusts to various foot shapes. The minimalist design and aesthetic appearance of the shoe are intended for professionals

as well as those recreational cross-country skiers who want the best. It should also be pointed out that at the end of its life, the shoe is almost entirely biodegradable. The Promise shoes have resulted from the work of the project leader Igor Zupan, industrial designers from the Jure Miklavc Studio, numerous experts from Alpina and external collaborators. “One of the aims of this company is to consolidate our international profile, and receiving three successive red dot awards and the American Good Design award of course raises the profile of Alpina around the world and at home. These awards are very important in foreign markets for the standing of a company and brands, and their value is gradually increasing at home, too. Alpina is constantly increasing its exports to the very demanding foreign markets of northern Europe and America, and today every third cross-country ski shoe in the world bears the name Alpina, and even more are produced in Alpina factories,” says Alpina’s managing director Matjaž Lenassi, obviously pleased with this new award.

### Fastest and best-looking skis

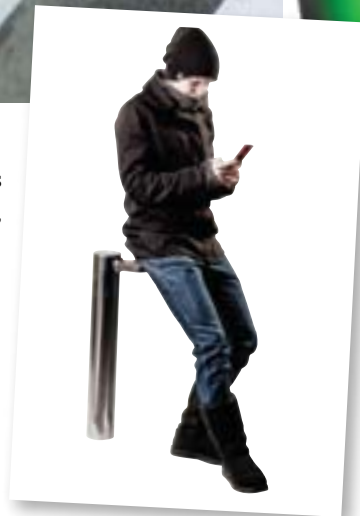
Elan received its red dot award for the first time in 2007 for its SpeedWave series, while this year it has won an award for its SLX Waveflex competition ski. These skis, which the majority of Slovenian skiers use to compete for the World Cup, feature revolutionary technology. “The process of designing skis is challenging, and includes a great many inputs that need to be sorted out before you introduce the product to the market. The 3D design and graphic image must ensure coordinated emphasis on the key messages and main technology of the product,” say the Elan designers with conviction. “The red dot design award for the SLXWaveFlex skis proves that Elan is a leading ski industry brand in the design field that regularly wins this kind of major award, something that all of us at Elan are very proud of,” stresses Elan product manager Luka Grlic.

“**ELAN RECEIVED ITS RED DOT AWARD FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 2007 FOR ITS SPEEDWAVE SERIES, WHILE THIS YEAR IT HAS WON AN AWARD FOR ITS SLX WAVEFLEX COMPETITION SKI.**”



### Sitty innovative seat

“Sitty is a folding seat that returns to its original position after use, and eases the burden on local space. It is a response to the needs of cities, which are increasing the surfaces for pedestrians and closing central areas to traffic, in the desire to revive city cores and to accommodate increasing environmental awareness and ensure high-quality urban life. There is a growing need in urban centres for new city infrastructure solutions that encourage socialising, meeting and also rest, along the increasingly long routes taken by city users on foot, but at the same time do not shut down the flow of people,” says Miha Klinar of Gigodesign, where the award-winning product was designed and developed. “Of course the award is welcome, since Sitty is a new, as yet unestablished product that is still seeking market routes to the international market.” Sitty was made by the Primorska company Petrič d.o.o., which is best



“ **SITTY WAS MADE BY THE PRIMORSKA COMPANY PETRIČ D.O.O., WHICH IS BEST KNOWN FOR MANUFACTURING AND SETTING UP THE UNIQUE WIND-RESISTING FENCE ON THE ČRNI KAL VIADUCT.** ”

known for manufacturing and setting up the unique wind-resisting fence on the Črni Kal viaduct.

### Art-Me, façade elements from Trimo

Trimo d.d. of Trebnje is one of the top European companies offering original and comprehensive solutions for steel buildings, roofs and facades, steel structures, containers and soundproofing systems. “We are a global company with an almost 50-year history, and our trademark has a successful presence in 54 countries. We also have a direct presence, through our own companies, representatives and agents, in 27 countries. We have production facilities in Slovenia, Russia, Serbia and Dubai,” according to Trimo promotional literature. They received the red dot award for the Art-Me product, the custom surface transformation of façade elements.



### Flying Doughnut

The Maribor company Versor d.o.o., which received an award for its Flying Doughnut parking system, was competing for a red dot for the first time. The international professional jury was won over by the modern appearance and imaginative concept behind the indicator-detector unit for individual parking spaces. “Owing to the innovative and imaginative design of the product, which enables extraordinary 360 degree visibility, and given the special design of the audio channel, which facilitates better exploitation of ultrasound sensors, the unit is reminiscent of an American ring doughnut, and this has given it the name “flying doughnut”. And the arrangement of the LED diodes around the rim of the product reminds you of a flying saucer,” says Versor managing director Dejan Rojko of the product. »



### **A revolutionary but simple window**

Kovinoplastika Lož d.d. in cooperation with the Gigodesign studio received the red dot award for their Unisash Arx View casement window. “The idea of the casement window is as revolutionary as it is simple. At the start of the design process, we asked ourselves, what in fact is the basic function of a window, if not to let as much light into the space as possible. So with Kovinoplastika of Lož we developed a universal casement window with a major reduction in component elements, and at the same time maintained and improved the window functions. The new window in larger formats lets in up to 20% more light than ordinarily, and at the same time it ensures energy savings on heating and lighting the space,” say the Gigodesign team. The Unisash Arx View can be installed in PVC, wooden or aluminium window frames.

“ **THE IDEA OF THE CASEMENT WINDOW IS AS REVOLUTIONARY AS IT IS SIMPLE. AT THE START OF THE DESIGN PROCESS, WE ASKED OURSELVES, WHAT IN FACT IS THE BASIC FUNCTION OF A WINDOW, IF NOT TO LET AS MUCH LIGHT INTO THE SPACE AS POSSIBLE. SO WITH KOVINOPLASTIKA OF LOŽ WE DEVELOPED A UNIVERSAL CASEMENT WINDOW WITH A MAJOR REDUCTION IN COMPONENT ELEMENTS, AND AT THE SAME TIME MAINTAINED AND IMPROVED THE WINDOW FUNCTIONS.** ”

### **Honorary award for Kolpa**

An honorary red dot award was also received by the Cher bathroom furnishings from manufacturer Kolpa d.d. in cooperation with the Grafik in Fanatik studio of Nova Gorica. “The furniture sets out and heralds a new concept of the usable space in various rooms such as the living room, hallway, kitchen and corridors. Developed with an emphasis on design and product quality, it addresses bathroom furniture needs for boating, caravans and small living spaces. Installed in a small space, the furniture reveals a diversity of use, creating a new living environment and maintaining the standard and functionality of traditional bathroom furniture. At the forefront are functionality of the environment and the creation of space and new dimensions,” is how the Cher furniture is described by Kolpa.

As every year, following the conclusion of the award presentations – this year’s presentation ceremony will be on 5 July in Essen – the award-winning products will be displayed in a special exhibition hall within the Design Centrum, the biggest design museum in the world, covering 4000 square metres of surface area. In time all the products will be incorporated into a permanent section of the museum collection.



# LIKE TO GO WHERE NOBODY HAS GONE BEFORE

Dr Jure Leskovec comes from Šentjošt nad Horjulom. He is 29 years old, and is a professor of computer science at American Stanford University, where he researches large computing, information and social networks. His favourite foods are typical Slovenian specialities such as žganci (corn mash), štruklji (dumplings), and potica cake. He currently has 633 friends on Facebook... These are just some of the data on the young Slovenian computer researcher that you can find on the Internet.

Sanja Rubinič Photo Andraž Kavčič

**B**UT AT THE SAME TIME THEY ARE PERHAPS THE KINDS of data that Jure and his team would use for their research, which aims to analyse the numerous, varied and difficult to see areas of human activity.

“My group deals with the Internet and social networks. The idea is that the majority of human and social activities now leave traces on the Internet and on computers. Therefore people leave digital traces of their activities behind them, which we can then study. In this respect we are currently heavily involved in modelling large social networks and forecasting the behaviour of their users. For example, for Facebook we developed a procedure that forecasts the new connections (new friends) that the user will add pretty well” explains the young Slovenian.

Jure’s research interests also include electronic media. He says that currently 10 million new articles, news items and blogs are posted on the web every day. Jure and his team pick out short phrases from them and follow them. “This allows us to determine and measure what people are talking about with a high degree of precision. We perform an analysis of media discourse on a sample of tens of millions of articles per day and construct models that forecast the impact of individual news items and the influence of the media on their diffusion.”

“Both of our team’s current projects are linked by the idea that using computers and the Internet we can “measure the pulse” of individuals and human society as a whole. Therefore the Internet



serves as a telescope looking into the lives of hundreds of millions of individuals, which we then analyse with computers and construct models for forecasting future events and trends. In this way we can really be the first to model people like a large cloud of gas, where the movements of individual atoms are very difficult to predict, but the gas as a whole behaves fairly predictably,” he explains with infectious enthusiasm.

## Slovenian Balthazar

Jure Leskovec was never an average person, as can be clearly seen from his resume. He worked at the Jožef Štefan Institute when he was still a secondary-school student at the Bežigrad gymnasium in Ljubljana. After completing his undergraduate studies at the Faculty of Computer Science and Informatics at the University of Ljubljana, he began graduate studies in computer science at Carnegie Mellon University in the United States. Since last autumn he has been an assistant professor at Stanford University in California, where he mainly lectures and serves as an advisor to doctoral candidates.

He says that this is his first real job “across the pond”, although as a student he participated in a lot of internships at American research laboratories, specifically Microsoft Research, Yahoo Research and Hewlett Packard Laboratories. He was hired by Stanford despite huge competition – 300 candidates from all over the world applied for the job, of whom 10 were invited for >>>

interviews. “When you apply you submit a resume, two short essays, one about research plans and the other about teaching plans, and three or four references. The interview lasts two days and is really tiring. It includes one hour of lecturing, which has to satisfy both experts and lay people, and two full days of half-hour meetings with various professors. Although the position of assistant professor at such a respected university sounds great, and young professors have as they say full freedom and support, the system is pretty demanding and unforgiving.”

In seven years the university will decide whether to offer him tenure and regular employment, or whether he will have to seek new employment elsewhere. Approximately 50% of candidates at Stanford receive tenure. On the basis of recommendations they will assess his research achievements, teaching, the success of his students etc. Interestingly, the university pays professors for only nine months, as long as the school year lasts, while they have to finance the other three months solely through external research projects. Leskovec already has them set up.

Jure works with the top professionals in his field. Asked whether there are any companies that he has not had any contact with but would like to hook up with, he answers: “None at all. In this respect Stanford is in the best possible place. Stanford lies in the heart of Silicon Valley and so to speak lives and breathes with it. All of the high-tech companies are practically across the street or have research laboratories here.”

Jure becomes more loquacious when the conversation turns to the differences between Stanford and Slovenian universities.

“Stanford is about 10 times smaller than the University of Ljubljana. There are more PhD candidates here, but 10 times fewer undergraduate students than in Ljubljana. Professors here are primarily involved with advising and teaching doctoral candidates; for undergraduates we have teaching assistants who mostly teach and for the most part do not do any research.

The philosophy at Stanford is that “every bath must stand on its own legs”, which means that every professor also has to stand on his own legs. As a consequence, there is very little bureaucracy here and the professors, regardless of their rank, have a lot of freedom to design their research and curriculums. Thus as a professor I can put together a new subject quickly and teach it the next semester.

In general the university is very flexible, the programmes are modern and interesting from both a scientific and a practical viewpoint. Both the university and the professors are aware that we are preparing our students for work in industry or academia. And the students are also relatively pragmatic – they attend the lectures where they learn the most and which will do them the most good. Undergraduates more or less put their schedules together themselves, and at the doctoral level there are no prescribed or mandatory lectures whatsoever. Therefore you can see whether the lectures are good or the subject is useful just from the number of students enrolled.”

## From putting pens together to the cover of the Washington Post

Dr. Leskovec has received numerous international awards. He attracted global attention working on a project for Microsoft Research, where he and his 26-year-old colleague Eric Horvitz proved something that up to then had been considered just a fun theory – that two total strangers on the Internet are separated by only 6 social connections. They carried out the largest analysis of a global social network to date – an analysis of conversations on the Microsoft Instant Messenger network. They registered more than a billion conversations a day among 240 million active users. They received coverage from many global media outlets such as the BBC, Der Spiegel, the Washington Post and others.

He thinks that one of the best qualities a good researcher can have is a desire to discover the world around him. “I like children, who in their own way are the best researchers. They look at the world without moulds and preconceived notions, and look at problems in a carefree manner. We scientists often find “bold” ideas which are impossible for many people to conceive of, and then through a lot of effort and hard work turn it into a result, something graspable and true – that says something new about the world.” When asked what it is about research that he finds most interesting, he responds concisely: “Going where nobody has gone before.”

Jure is constantly aware of his connection to his hometown and Slovenia. While living in California he has made contact with Slovenian emigrants, and goes home three or four times a year. He says that he is proud of the fact that despite living in the USA for six years, he still has very good contacts with his homeland, and that he likes to return home whenever possible.

In the near future he sees himself in America. For the next few years he will be connected with Stanford, doing research and advising students. He does not think much of the expression “brain drain”.

“I think it’s more or less an empty construct. We should be happy that people go abroad in search of new challenges and that they are successful there. Probably the easiest thing to do is sit in Slovenia and whine about how the brains are draining. I think that it would be better to focus on the good side of this phenomenon and try as a nation to take the best advantage of it

that we can. I would like to mention the “air bridge” to Slovenia, which has brought the best Slovenian students to Stanford and allowed the establishing of collaboration with Slovenian laboratories. If we start slowly, thoughtfully, organically, from the bottom up, it will succeed and the bigger our presence the better our recognition will be, and the easier it will be.”

For young people who would like to follow in Jure’s footsteps, he recommends hard work, a good deal of modesty and a lot of courage. The impressive young man from Šentjošt recommends the borrowed but in his opinion very useful advice from The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy: “Don’t Panic!” ●

“ **GOING WHERE NOBODY HAS GONE BEFORE. DON'T PANIC!** ”

# MISTER SYMPATICO IS THE BEST

Dejan Zavec defends the title of world champion in front of his home crowd

Andrej Stare Photo STA



**T**IVOLI HALL, ONE OF SLOVENIA'S MOST IMPORTANT sports facilities, experienced new heights on 9 April, when it was the venue for the battle for the title of IBF world welterweight champion (up to 66.7 kg) between Dejan Zavec and Argentine Rodolfo Martinez. Since 1965, the hall has been the scene of 17 world and European championships in table tennis, ice hockey, ice skating, gymnastics, basketball, bowling, weightlifting and handball.

For one night, the sold-out Tivoli Hall became the Slovenian boxing "Las Vegas" (the US city which has hosted the largest number of prestigious boxing matches to date). Dejan Zavec, 34, of Ptuj, once again displayed his exceptional skill, combativeness and tenacity. He successfully defended his world champion title in front of his home crowd. Rodolfo Ezequiel Martinez was a tough and difficult opponent. The match was a draw right to the 12th round, when Zavec ended the fight less than a minute before the end of the final round with a series of brutal blows which left the Argentine completely helpless. Tivoli Hall was filled with boxing fans from Slovenia and other countries, especially from Magdeburg Germany, where Zavec trains and spends a great deal of time. The Kurents, traditional figures who had travelled from Dravsko polje to cheer on boxing star Zavec, were thrilled once again.

This was not the first time that Tivoli Hall hosted boxing; 35 years ago Ljubljana native Srečo Weiner vied for the title of European

champion in this Mecca of Slovenian sport, and he was among several reputed guests (including Slovenian Prime Minister Borut Pahor) to attend the biggest boxing match in Slovenia to date. Zavec hurt his wrist at the beginning of round three, so he had to be exceptionally careful about using his left hand, but he didn't allow his opponent any opportunities to wrest his title away.

After the match Zavec glowed with pride, since before him only legendary gymnast Miroslav Cerar, who took the title of world champion in the pommel horse in 1970, had risen to the top step of the world podium in Tivoli Hall. His victory and defence of his world champion title at home has special significance and value.

Dejan Zavec has matches coming up in which he will defend the title of world champion. The day after the match his team announced that in about four months he will defend his title against Rafael Jackiewicz of Poland. He is the only boxer to defeat Zavec to date, but in disputed circumstances. We are all hoping that the match will be in Ljubljana again. The Pole is the number one contender for the title of IBF world champion. For now there are no real possibilities that the heads of the four international boxing associations (WBA, WBC, WBO and IBF) will decide to combine the title of world champion. The last effort fell through when an attempt was made to combine the WBO and WBA titles. Boxers Manny Pacquiao of the Philippines and Floyd Mayweather of the US (who remains undefeated with 40 wins in 40 fights) had already arrived at the weigh-in on the day before the fight, but the organisers, who had collected 20 million dollars, demanded an additional doping test for both fighters. The two teams agreed to cancel the fight, so we will have to wait a little longer for a match between the best boxers in the welterweight category.

**“ ZAVEC ONCE AGAIN DISPLAYED HIS EXCEPTIONAL SKILL, COMBATIVENESS AND TENACITY. ”**

Zavec is untroubled by the behind-the-scenes wrangling in the other three boxing associations and will begin training for the defence of his world champion title tomorrow. Regardless of who his next opponent is and where the match will be held, we will soon be seeing the best Slovenian boxer of all time in the ring

again. The major success of the organisers at Tivoli Hall and the incredible success of Dejan Zavec guarantee that we will be seeing a lot more fights at the highest level.

Boxing has now become one of the most popular sports in Slovenia, and Dejan Zavec one of the top Slovenian athletes, in the company of Tina Maze, Petra Majdič, Robert Kranjec and others who have reached the highest pinnacles of world sport. •

# THE STORM FROM GALJEVICA

Andrej Stare Photo STA



**T**WENTY-SIX YEARS AGO THE KRIM WOMEN'S HANDBALL club was founded in Galjevica (a district in south-west Ljubljana) and began youth and member activities. The Krim sports club has a long tradition. At one time the club's sporting activities were headed by its footballers, but in the 1960s the club team ceased to exist. Handball has always been very popular in this part of Ljubljana, particularly in the primary schools. Handball is the youngest team sport in Slovenia. It was brought to Ljubljana by German POWs after the Second World War. In those days handball was an outdoor sport played on a football pitch and was known as hazena. Each side had 10 field players and a goalkeeper on the pitch at any one time. Later, handball began to be played on outdoor asphalt courts. Following the Munich Olympics in 1972 it became an indoor sport. At the time that the Krim women's handball club was founded, by far the best handball team in Slovenia was Olimpija, which played an important role in Yugoslav handball. But Krim went from strength to strength and, just before Slovenia became independent, won the Slovenian handball league for the first time. In 1993 and 1994 Krim was runner-up to Olimpija in the national championship. Since 1995 the girls from Galjevica have won 15 consecutive national championships. They have also won the Slovenian Cup 16 times and have thus become the most successful Slovenian women's sports collective of all time.

“ **KRIM'S GAME HAS BECOME A MODEL FOR OTHER TOP TEAMS FROM NORWAY, DENMARK, RUSSIA, AUSTRIA AND SPAIN.** ”

One of the main architects of Krim's first successes was without a doubt the club's then president Zoran Janković (today Mayor of Ljubljana). His long-term strategy has taken Krim to the very top of European handball. The girls from Galjevica have twice won the EHF Champions League (2001 and 2003), reaching the final on three other occasions (1999, 2004, 2006). They have also won the European Club Championship twice (2003, 2004). This makes Krim one of the most successful European handball clubs of all time. During the period of the club's greatest successes, Krim was managed by two highly regarded coaches, Vinko Kandija and Tone Tiselj. Krim has always fielded outstanding foreign players

alongside the very best Slovenian handballers. These players have toned Krim's extremely aggressive and effective game and have at the same time been models for the home-grown players. Names such as Nataliya Derepasko and Maryna Vergelyuk (Ukraine), Ana Matuszewska (Poland), Luminita Ditu (Romania), Olga Tchetchkova and Liudmila Bodnieva (Russia), Cecilia Leganger and Katja Nyberg

(Norway), Katalin Palinder (Hungary) and players from the countries of the former Yugoslavia have achieved world fame with Krim. Krim's game has become a model for other top teams from Norway, Denmark, Russia, Austria and Spain.

Krim has nurtured many top players in its ranks, which makes the role of its youth team coaches all the more important. In

addition to national team members Simona Šturm, Anja Frešer, Branka Mijatović, Deja Doler, Tanja Oder, Tanja Polajnar and Milija Tomšič, Krim has cultivated a generation of young players who will shoulder the main burden of the team in the years to come. Although Krim has not managed to reach the final stages of the Champions League this year, the club has attracted the attention of the handball world with the performances of its young and combative team featuring 10 home-grown players aged between 18 and 21. Alongside experienced foreign players (Maryna Vergelyuk, Liudmila Bodnieva, Andrea Lekić), the club has also brought in a number of younger foreign players (Szandra Zacsik, Jelena Grubišić, Ana Miriam De Sousa, Dragana Cvijić), who have already demonstrated outstanding handballing skills. With the help of local players who only yesterday were part of the youth team (Maja Zrnec, Urška Vidic, Alja Koren, Tjaša Prebil, Tamara Mausar, Alja Janković, Ana Gros, Tina Rojc, Neja Šuberl), Krim's game has once again become European and very distinctive. Young players (the average age of the team is 22) have gained the necessary experience, while the older players have used their knowledge to complement Krim's new success in the EHF Champions League.

After 14 years, Marta Bon, a former Olimpija player and member of the national team, has returned to the coach's bench. She

led and coached Krim from 1991 to 1994. A professional who has devoted her life to handball, she has been able to make the most of the hidden talents and abilities of her players. The unwritten rule in handball is that "a good goalkeeper is half a victory". Krim today has two outstanding goalkeepers, Jelena Grubišić of Croatia and local veteran Sergeja Stefanišin. The latter has earned herself the nickname "Buddha" because of her excellent defending: people say she has a hundred hands. And what is the secret of Stefanišin's return to the ranks of the world's best goalkeepers? Perhaps her tenaciousness and her excellent work with coach Roland Pušnik. The latter was himself one of the finest goalkeepers in the world in the 1980s and 1990s, the winner of a gold medal at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. Thanks to his enormous knowledge and experience, Pušnik has been able to help both goalkeepers maintain top form throughout the season. And so the Krim women's team has gained a new physiognomy. The role of the outstanding Romanian goalkeeper Luminita Ditu, who defended in Ljubljana for almost a decade, has this year been taken over by Stefanišin and Grubišić.

Krim is well on the way to new laurels in the national league and the national cup competition. The signs are that by the end of this season the number of triumphs at home and abroad will have risen to 37. This makes the girls – "the Storm from Galjevica" – one of the most successful teams of all time in Slovenia. ●

## The World's most important sporting trophy visits Slovenia

Vesna Žarkovič Photo STA

**A**S PART OF ITS WORLD TOUR OF 84 COUNTRIES in 255 days, the most prestigious sporting trophy in the world, weighing over six kilograms and standing 37 centimetres tall, arrived in Ljubljana on 28 March. The original trophy of the International Football Association (FIFA) World Cup competition set off from Zurich last September to promote this year's World Cup in South Africa.

The prestigious trophy, which symbolises much more than just football, was in Ljubljana for two days. The event was made possible, above all, by Slovenia securing a place at the World Cup finals. When national coach Matjaž Kek encountered the 18-carat gold trophy he said with a smile: "I must get a good look at it. I will probably never be as close to it again."

Delo CEO Jurij Giacomelli: "We are extremely proud to have the Cup here at Delo. We are happy that so many people have had the chance to see the trophy close up and even have their photograph taken with it. This is the original, and so we are particularly grateful to Coca-Cola for making this possible. Of course, it would not have been possible without the members of Slovenia's football team. Once again I congratulate them on reaching the World Cup finals."

The Trophy Tour event took place in close cooperation with



the Football Association of Slovenia, whose president Ivan Simič invited all supporters travelling to South Africa to visit the Slovenian House in Johannesburg.

Uroš Kanduč, General Manager, Coca-Cola Slovenia: "I am very pleased that you have come to see the greatest icon in world sport, which we have managed to bring to Slovenia. It is clear that this Cup stirs up special feelings in Slovenians." The Cup continued its tour in Belgrade. ●

# WILD FOOD IN SLOVENIA

Do not be misled by the title, the wild food this article looks at is nothing other than the varied, nutritionally rich and culinarily intriguing world of edible wild plants.

Dario Cortese Photo Dario Cortese

**T**HEY GROW IN MEADOWS, IN river and stream valleys, by the sea, in woods and forests and also in gardens and fields where people often wrongly call them weeds. In Slovenia there are around 3000 species of wild growing plants, of which almost one half are edible. We reach this high estimate of edible wild plants in Slovenia on the basis of two encyclopaedias on edible wild plants in Europe (François Couplan: *Le régal végétal*, Guido Fleischhauer: *Enzyklopädie der essbaren Wildpflanzen*), which each list over 1500 edible wild plants. Most of these grow in Slovenia, since its specific geographic position at the transition of the Alpine, Pannonian continental plain and Mediterranean worlds make its flora extremely diverse, with plants from all three macro-habitats to be found here.

So, we are literally walking over food. Over very high quality food as it happens, since edible wild vegetables generally contain three to four times more vitamins and minerals than their cultivated counterparts. They are also very rich in bioactive substances, such as flavonoids, carotenoids, glucosinolates and others, which are celebrated for offering significant nutritional preventive aid against the diseases of civilisation or modern life. In fact, edible wild plants are of varying use – some more useful, some less – but they include tens of excellent plant species that exceed any cultivated species of vegetable in taste and aroma as well as the variety preparation methods, before one even mentions their significantly higher nutritional value. Many are also common elsewhere in Europe, some are adapted to warmer habitats only, while some are extremely specialised, growing only in salty ground near the sea. Below are some of the most

common, the most typical and most useful species of wild plant to be picked in Slovenia from spring to autumn. They are prepared in a range of different ways. Young leaves, shoots, and flowers are eaten raw, generally mixed in a salad. Aromatic plants are used to prepare various spreads based on skuta (curd cheese), tofu or various cooked and pressed legumes. More developed leaves, buds and shoots should be steamed or cooked in a small quantity of water, and then used with the liquid as well, since some of the minerals will now be in the water. Oil and dressing is added to taste and they are then served as a side dish. They can also be served in a similar manner to spinach, and they are also very suitable for vegetable pastries. Do not forget wild soups and stews as well.

## Common Chickweed

(*Stellaria media*, Navadna zvezdica)

Frequently found as a weed in gardens. The young shoots have a pleasant aroma of young corn, and are very suitable for salads.



## Wild Garlic, Ramsons

(*Allium ursinum*, Čemaž)

This ever popular wild plant is rampant in damp parts of river and stream valleys and shady beech woods. Gather the leaves, buds, flowers and young fruit. All parts taste similar to garlic and can be used in salads and spreads and to season

food in the same way as chives. It is also suitable for soups, sauces and in other cooked dishes. During cooking they lose their pungent taste and become slightly sweet. You can also make a pesto, crushing the leaves with salt and adding ground hazelnuts or almonds and olive oil, which is also a preserve.

## Dandelion

(*Taraxacum officinale*, Regrat)

This is without doubt the most popular species of wild plant in Slovenia. By early spring the young leaves are already on sale in markets, and gathering dandelion leaves is nigh on a national sport. The most common preparation method is as a vinegar-dressed salad with warm potatoes and lardons. In addition to using the leaves for salad, the buds can also be pickled. The flowers are suitable as decorative garnish, while older leaves can be cooked and prepared as a cold salad with or without potato, but always seasoned with olive oil, and perhaps wild garlic too.

## Stinging Nettle

(*Urtica dioica*, Koprive)

Who does not know the nettle? Yet few people are aware that nutritionally it is one of the richest plants there is. The young shoots and tips of more developed plants are cooked and prepared as a vegetable side dish or like spinach. They are also excellent for soups, sauces and vegetable pastries.





### A simple snack on a country walk

On a walk along a river in spring, you will undoubtedly come across wild garlic and nettles, so make sure you have some bread and butter with you, and you have at least a half-wild meal already. Collect some wild garlic leaves and nettle shoots, cutting the first and crumpling up the second. It is a little known fact that nettles can also be eaten raw, they just need to be crumpled and rubbed beforehand to break the stinging hairs after which they no longer sting. Spread the butter on the bread and add lots of the wild garlic and nettle.

### Hop

(*Humulus lupulus*, Hmelj)

At least a thousand years before the hop (or more accurately its female flower cluster which is referred to in the plural: hops) was used as a flavouring and stability agent in beer, it was in widespread use as a food. Young hop shoots are excellent raw or briefly cooked, and prepared with or without egg, or used as a wild green spaghetti. Wild hop is very common in Slovenia in damp habitats near water.



### Ground Elder, Goutweed

(*Aegopodium podagraria*, Regačica)

This very common plant, often seen as a weed, is very tasty in its first phase of

development, with an aroma like parsley and carrot, to which it is related. Collect the young leaves and serve in all kinds of salad. Excellent with beans.

### Wild Asparagus

(*Asparagus acutifolius*, Špargelj, ostrolistni beluš)

Broken wild asparagus shoots, sautéed with pancetta and served with egg, are a traditional, strong dish in Slovenia's Primorska region, where this very tasty plant grows wild. Along with dandelion and wild garlic, this is one of the best-loved of the edible wild plants, and in season is also seen on sale in markets.

### Sea Beet

(*Beta vulgaris* ssp. *maritima*, Divja pesa)

This ancestor of beetroot and chard, which it closely resembles, is found near to the sea. It is prepared in a similar manner to chard or spinach, cooked briefly and seasoned with olive oil and garlic.

### Good King Henry

(*Chenopodium bonus-*

*henricus*, Stajska metlika)

Once cultivated, this plant was forgotten after spinach took its place throughout Europe. It is nevertheless an excellent plant, particularly suitable as a vegetable side dish, and in soups, stews and vegetable pastries. Gather young leaves and shoots. It grows at higher altitudes, most commonly in mountain pastures.



### Winter Savory

(*Satureja montana*, Kraški šetraj)

Bushes of this very aromatic plant grow in sunny, dry habitats, particularly near the coast and in its hinterland. Collect the shoots before they flower, and use similarly to wild thyme. Winter savory is >>>



### Sauerkraut with beans and winter savoury

Soak a cup of beans in water overnight. Rinse the next day, and cook in fresh water. In another pan add a kilogram of sauerkraut, add water to cover the sauerkraut, add a large bunch of winter savoury shoots and cook until soft. Then mix the drained beans to the sauerkraut and season with olive oil or lardons. Do not add salt as the sauerkraut is already very salty.

particularly suitable for seasoning dishes with beans or meat.

### Wild Thyme

(*Thymus serpyllum* agg.,  
Materina dušica)

One of the greatest of all the wild herbs. Various species grow, particularly in sunny, stony habitats from lowlands to mountain areas. Gather the shoots before they flower, and the whole plant when in flower. It can be used fresh, chopped finely, or dried and then chopped. It is suitable for seasoning all kinds of food, vegetables, meat and even fruit.

### Wild asparagus with curd cheese

Heat olive oil in a pan, add a cup of broken wild asparagus stems and cook over a moderate flame for 5 minutes. Then add a cup of skuta (curd cheese), salt to taste and cook for a couple of minutes. Season with a little more olive oil before eating.

### Marsh Samphire, Glasswort

(*Salicornia europaea*, Navadni osočnik)

This very useful plant grows in salty, sandy ground that is often flooded by sea water. The shoots are succulent and salty; food served with samphire

needs no salt adding. It should be steamed and served with butter or olive oil. You eat it by pulling the edible flesh from the core with your teeth, or removing the cores in a bowl beforehand. •









# PETRA MATOS & ALEŠ PEVC

## Heading the biggest voluntary environmental action project in Slovenian history

Mateja Malnar Štembal Photo Mateja Jordovič Potočnik

**W**E FREQUENTLY HEAR THAT ONE person alone cannot change anything. But so often just such individuals turn that idea on its head. People who want and are able to change things. They share a desire to improve the world around us. Such people do not subscribe to the idea of something being impossible.

Petra Matos and Aleš Pevc are two such people. They are heading the

biggest voluntary environmental action project in Slovenian history, Let's Clean Up Slovenia! (Očistimo Slovenijo!). They are ready to fulfil their dreams, and to devote their precious free and other time to achieving something for the common good. They are not driven by a desire for financial success, but are both fuelled by the energy of like-minded people and supporters of the project. They are both aware that you have to start with your

own example and work at convincing others. And they are willing to work hard to achieve that, even if it means 10 to 16 hours a day.

Petra is first and foremost an ardent ecologist, a fervent traveller and dedicated explorer of the world. Her inspirations include nature and also an understanding of the world within each individual, while as a geography graduate her degree dissertation focused



**‘She is inspired by the words of Gandhi – Be the change you wish to see in the world – and she wishes to walk that path.’**

on the very issue of waste management. Her dissatisfaction over the level at which this area had been organised in Slovenia led her to join a group involved in raising awareness of this issue. Then when the Ecologists Without Borders society was founded, she was elected its president.

So she has vowed to try with all her might to make the world a better place to live in for all living beings, and through the action Let’s Clean Up Slovenia! she is putting into practice what she has always wanted.

Aleš, too, has been actively involved in numerous ecological projects as well as healthy lifestyle projects. Since 2005 he has been the organiser and head of the environmental clean-up campaign Each to their Garbage Bag. He also co-founded the National Substantive NGO Network for a Healthy Lifestyle and he is a founding member of the voluntary environmental movement WWOOF Slovenia, which promotes voluntary

work on organic farms in Slovenia and around the world.

Aleš believes that the point of life is not to solve problems, but rather to grasp them and to steer ourselves towards a different way of life. He also believes that people for the most part have a good grasp of things and are aware of problems, while the slightly bigger challenge is to focus on action that will show results immediately and not in 10 years’ time.

These two positive people, both of them outstanding young volunteers, have gathered together a fine group of like-minded people, and they have decided to clean up from Slovenia the large quantities of garbage that lie everywhere, and at which many people would rather look away than clear it up. That includes litter near schools, kindergartens, in city centres and on footpaths and hiking trails.

The whole thing started with a short film about a successful action in Estonia that circulated by e-mail and inspired numerous people. Petra sent it to as many as 200 e-mail addresses, and her contacts to a further 400 addresses. Aleš says that after circulating the chain e-mail they put out the idea of a meeting, which was attended by 18 people, who decided there and then to put the ideas into practice. That “founders’ meeting” was attended by two members of the current core leadership group of the project, Janez Matos, whose job is to produce the first register of illegal waste tips in Slovenia, and Nara Petrovič, who also learned from his friends in Estonia about the project to clean up the country in one day.

These two very modest volunteers often stress that the project has not involved just the core organising group, which the media mention most frequently, but that around 1100 volunteers have helped in the actual organisation and implementation of the action throughout Slovenia. They point out here that it was not just individuals that were important, and everyone

together acted like a snowball, rolling and getting bigger and bigger.

As mentioned earlier, the project Let's Clean Up Slovenia in One Day! has been modelled on the project Let's do it, Estonia!, which was carried out in Estonia in 2008. On the clean-up day, 3 May 2008, some 50,000 volunteers (4% of the population) gathered together in Estonia, removing 10,000 tons of garbage in just five hours (in normal circumstances the state would require three years and more than 22 million euros).

The basic aims of the Slovenian action have been to mobilise 200,000 volunteers on 17 April 2010 and to carry out the biggest environmental action in Slovenia to date, to make the first digital register and national map with the locations of as many illegal tipping sites as possible, to remove at least 20,000 tons of illegally dumped waste, to bring together all the environmental actions that take place in the spring on one day and in a common purpose, and to raise awareness and educate people towards improving their attitude to waste management.

The organisers of the action have been pleasantly surprised by the initial response of people and organisations. The action has even been supported through honorary patronage by the entire national leadership of Slovenia – Dr Danilo Türk, President of Slovenia, Dr Pavel Gantar, President of the Slovenian National Assembly and Borut Pahor, Slovenian Prime Minister, while numerous companies and organisations have helped with financial sponsorship. The biggest success is that Petra and Aleš, together with their group of associates and helpers, have managed to attract such a mass of people, and to bring together in their common project almost all the Slovenian environmental organisations as well as a good number of famous personalities.

The whole action was an unqualified success. The number of participants exceeded the most optimistic expectations: 250,000 volunteers (more than 12% of the total population) helped clean up Slovenia, clearing away 7,000 illegal rubbish dumps and collecting over 60,000 cubic metres of waste.



**‘Aleš believes that the point of life is not to solve problems, but rather to grasp them and to steer ourselves towards a different way of life.’**

**So who merits most praise for the project's success?**

First and foremost those people who

actually care about the kind of world we live in. People who do not look away when they encounter a problem that no one else wants to deal with. People who are not afraid of the seemingly impossible. People who believe in cooperation and success.

You have to start somewhere; and that includes projects to lead and draw people together. This has undoubtedly worked very well for Petra and Aleš. They have been able to rouse a mass of people from their apathy and lack of organisation. Through their enthusiasm they will certainly leave an imprint on other, similar, projects too. ●



# CHARMING LOKA MUSEUM

Jože Osterman Photo Museum archive

**T**HOUSAND-YEAR-OLD" ŠKOFJA LOKA, the history of which dates back to 973 when the German emperor Oton II bequeathed the area to the bishops of Freising from Bavaria, is one of the oldest towns in Slovenia, and has an exceptionally rich cultural heritage. The town, which together with its vicinity had a population of just over 22,000 in the 2003 census, is today an interesting mix of the old and the new, as the old town core with its numerous beautiful monuments has been surrounded on all sides in recent decades by new buildings, including numerous blocks of flats and commercial buildings, and a separate commercial zone directly to the east of the core. This type of development may not have been the best thing for the old town, as the architectural contrast between the past and present is excessively sharp, and some of the town's views have been irrecoverably lost. The inhabitants are aware of this, and today there are quite a few institutes and civil initiatives attempting to correct this imbalance and make the town largely harmonious once again. The town, whose tradition is unbelievable rich and known

throughout the country, undoubtedly deserves it.

The old Loka Castle, which soars majestically above the town and speaks clearly of the town's former glory, has been renovated and is the first clear sign of the return of the old splendour. For several decades it has housed one of the best-known and most well-visited museums in Slovenia. The fifty thousand visitors who line up to view its collections every year is in Slovenian terms a truly large number, with which the museum competes with places like Bled Castle and Ptuj Castle, which have also been converted into museums. But if we take into account the fact that Bled in particular is a true tourism Mecca, where a tour of the museum is more or less mandatory, and that similar could be said about Ptuj, which is nothing less than the oldest town in Slovenia, the number of visitors to the Loka Museum is in fact an extraordinary phenomenon, since there are no other circumstances or legends that would compel so many people to visit the town. The Škofja Loka castle and museum thus thrives on its own renown, which is a source of particular pride to the museum

staff. Last year they celebrated the 70th anniversary of its founding and the 50th anniversary of its residence in Loka Castle.

Visitors are quickly convinced that this is indeed the case. While they might raise their eyebrows at the somewhat difficult and quite steep path that leads up the castle hill from the old town square, known especially for the presentations of the Škofja Loka Passion, in the next moment they will be repaid handsomely with a view of the superbly renovated castle courtyard and the wonderful view that it affords. The pleasant garden that lies behind the castle hides a special attraction, the famous Škopar House. This is an old serf's house, which was moved here with all of its furnishings from the part of town where the feudal serfs once resided, and mirrors the way of life in the times around the 16th century. The castle itself has now been renovated for a year, and its bright and well-tended facade sparkles in the sunshine with a light that fills one's heart with optimism. The interior arrangements are in harmony with the exterior: upon entering the long, wide and selectively furnished hallway



**‘Loka Castle ranks among Slovenia’s finest museums precisely because of the quality of the exhibited materials, and this is what makes it so worthwhile to visit.’**

which runs along the entire length of the building on the main floor, the visitor is instantly aware that they have entered an edifice which is cherished by its staff and maintained with a great deal of love.

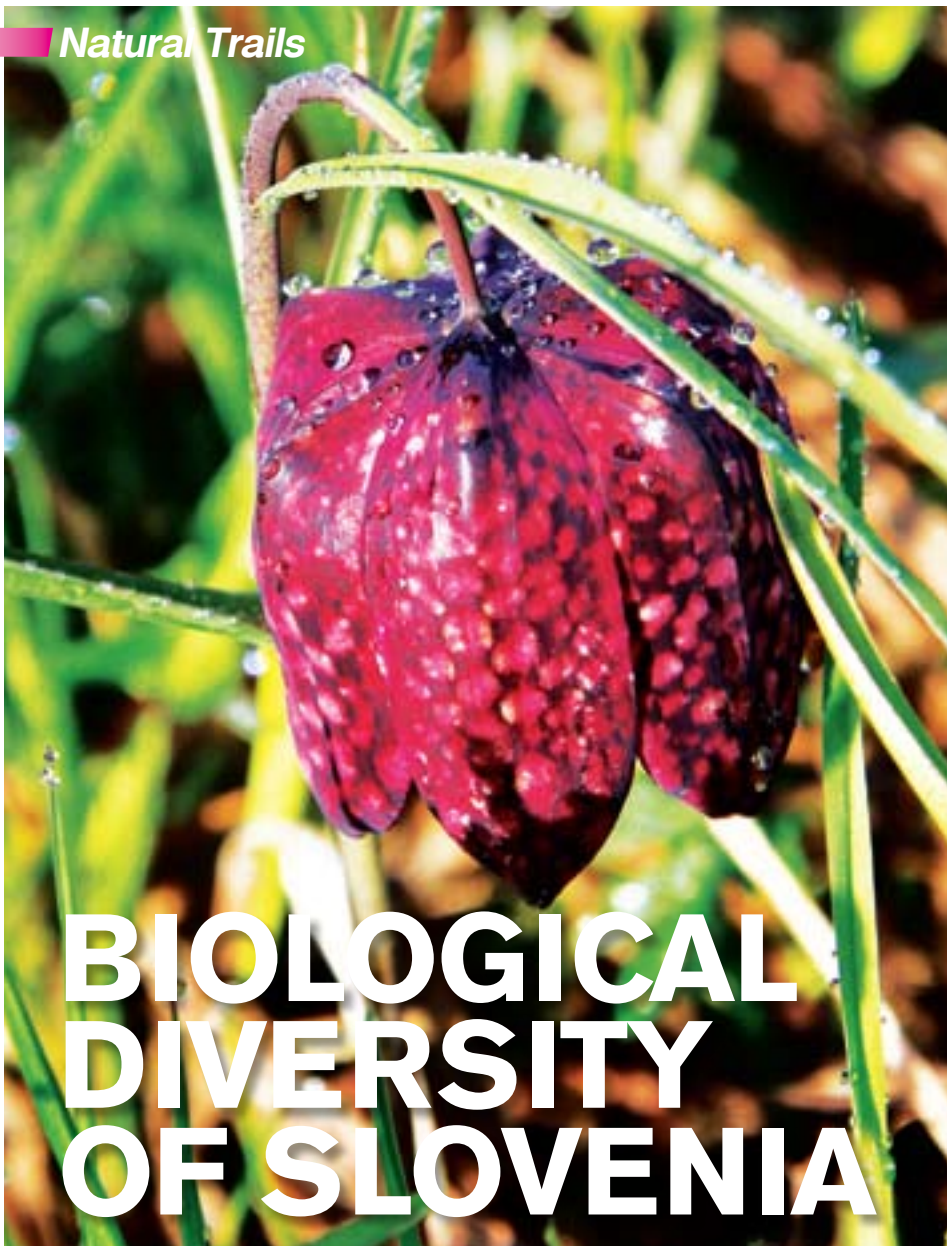
Within the framework of the Slovenian museum network, through which the state provides a legal structure for the distribution of work among the museums and establishes a sort of professional and operational hierarchy, the Loka Museum is a complex type general-purpose museum with archaeological, historical, culturo-historical, art-historical, ethnological and natural science collections. The museum houses the natural and cultural heritage of the Škofja Loka area, and its carefully arranged collections of remote and more recent history cover an exceptionally long period, from the aforementioned 973 to 1983 – more than 1000 years. The management is presently courting the idea of establishing a collection reflecting the most recent period, starting from the emergence of independent Slovenia, which is causing them difficulties primarily because the museum – despite the castle’s imposing size – already fills up

every available space, and any additional exhibition will require at least a partial reduction of the existing collections. The dilemma of how to proceed is not at all an easy one, as any new selection of the exhibited materials, of which the majority are first-rate exponents of high value which substantially exceed mere local significance, would mean putting many exceptional pieces into the museum’s storerooms and out of the public’s eye. Loka Castle ranks among Slovenia’s finest museums precisely because of the quality of the exhibited materials, and this is what makes it so worthwhile to visit.

What are the Škofja Loka museologists most proud of? Director Jana Mlakar, who when we visited had just returned from Brussels, where her museum had put on a magnificent exhibition by painter Franc Novinc, opened by no less a personage than the president of the Flemish government, places quite a bit of faith in the fine arts, as in recent years they have held some truly exceptional exhibitions. Škofja Loka and its vicinity is in a way a sort of “artists’ preserve” in which so many of the great names in every generation of Slovenian painters have been born that it’s hard to keep track of them. The list begins with famous painter and teacher Anton Ažbet, continues with the renowned impressionist Ivan Grohar, and among more recent artists we can mention the Šubic family, France Mihelič and Boris Jesih. It is easy to understand therefore why the museum places such an emphasis on painting. Part of the work that the museum has dedicated to its greatest painters has already been completed: for

several years the museum has operated the France Mihelič Gallery in a large building in the town called the Kašča, which besides the castle is the main centre of the Loka Museum’s artistic events. The castle hall, where art exhibitions are also held, is one of Slovenia’s liveliest places where such events are organised. Openings attended by 400 or 500 people are no rarity; connoisseurs of such happenings in Slovenia will know that such numbers of visitors are achieved only at the openings of the largest retrospectives of the greatest names in Slovenian art at the country’s biggest galleries. This is proof that it is possible to promote the fine arts in local, often even undervalued artistic environments! The extensive list of fine art exhibitions held in the past three years, which would not dishonour any of the large Slovenian galleries that specialise exclusively in art, also speaks of the lofty ambitions of the fairly small staff, which numbers a total of 11 full-time employees and four employees that the municipality finances through public funds.

While their lively exhibition work is quite closely tied to the fine arts, it could in no way be said that other areas are neglected. The museum genuinely charms the visitor with its orderliness and pleasing installations, which lift the visitors’ mood. The Tavčar Room, dedicated to the writer, liberal politician and former mayor of Ljubljana Ivan Tavčar, is a true little gem owing to various pieces of the writer’s original furniture, a wonderful children’s cradle which was in its time owned by the Serbian Karageorgevich dynasty, and perhaps most due to the celebrated iron chest of Polycarp Kalan, the mysterious character from Tavčar’s cult novel *The Visoko Chronicles*, known to every Slovene. The Tavčar Room is otherwise a part of a lovely exhibition of the turn of the century era, when the town was inhabited by a combination of relatively wealthy bourgeois townsfolk and tradesmen, with a high level of lively cultural activity. The town’s connections with its trades are borne witness to by the extensive collections of Škofja Loka trade activities, which in terms of space – besides ethnology – make up the largest part of the permanently exhibited collections. ●



# BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY OF SLOVENIA

Slovenia – extraordinary variety in a small area

Jože Prešeren Photo Darinka Mladenovič, STO

**I**N 2006 THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY declared that 2010 would be the International Year of Biodiversity, in response to a proposal from Brazil, a country with extraordinary biological diversity and at the same time one of the countries with the most species at risk of extinction. Slovenia has undertaken activities in this International Year with great willingness and without reservations, since coincidentally this year also marks the 90th anniversary of the initiative put forward by the then Museum Society in favour of official nature conservation in Slovenia, an area in which we were among the first in Europe. Circumstances have of course changed considerably since then, but many of the

ideas from decades ago are still current. Today numerous government departments are involved in nature protection and there is an active non-governmental sector. A different legal system has been established, the country has numerous protected areas, and many plant and animal species enjoy special protection. Nature protection is a particular focus in the Triglav National Park, which is under government jurisdiction, and in numerous local parks which are the responsibility of individual municipalities and where particular care is also devoted to the whole of the flora and fauna of this area.

Most of the activities in Slovenia during the International Year of Biodiversity are

organised by specialist institutions or by NGOs such as Umanotera and others. The calendar of events lists almost 100 different activities including lectures, international conferences, specialist guided tours, workshops, festivals and other events. Despite all the difficulties currently facing the world, data from Slovenia in the field of biodiversity are still quite optimistic: although Slovenia accounts for just 0.004% of the Earth's surface, its territory is home to more than 1% of all known living creatures and over 2% of terrestrial and freshwater species, a fact established years ago by experts. The coexistence of over 22,000 species of living creatures in such a small area makes our country one of the naturally richest in Europe! Using different figures, we can also put it like this: the territory of Slovenia is home to 15,000 species from the animal kingdom, 6,000 from the plant kingdom and 5,000 from the fungus kingdom. Of the species living in Slovenia, 850 are found here and nowhere else in the world. These are known as Slovenian endemics. Biodiversity is one of Slovenia's greatest riches, but one of which we are too little aware, say the experts. The above facts, surprising to many, are mainly the result of Slovenia's position in an interesting geo-tectonic area and at the junction of several bio-geographical regions: Mediterranean, Pannonian, Alpine and Dinaric. Other decisive factors are the varied relief and the climate, while human factors also make a contribution, since Slovenia is also a crossroads of Slavonic, Germanic and Romance cultures.

## Some animal species are disappearing

Despite the positive figures, NGOs in particular warn that the diversity of life in Slovenia is getting smaller. The main culprits for this are pollution of surface and underground waters, soil and air pollution, and the direct destruction of individual natural areas as a result of the development of industry, agriculture and the construction of the roads network. A lack of awareness of the importance of biological diversity is also often to be noted. Particular attention needs to be drawn to the fact that modern motorways, for example, interrupt the connections between specific

areas of animal migration, while the hunting of certain animals has gone beyond the permitted limits. The greatest harm, however, is caused by pollution. The main causes of the disappearance of certain species of animals are air pollution and contamination, the pesticides used in agriculture, various forms of land reclamation, the spread of urban areas, mass tourism, the introduction of non-native species, and so on.

The list of animal species that are endangered or no longer appear on the list of the Earth's living creatures is already a long one. They include various species of birds and other animals. According to some estimates, 90% of fish, 83% of reptiles, 58% of birds and 43% of mammals in Slovenia are endangered. On the other hand, the country has surpluses of some animal species, to the extent that they can even be 'exported', as was the case some years ago with the Slovenian bears introduced on a trial basis in the Pyrenees and parts of Italy. Then there is the case of the lynx, the largest European feline, which became extinct in Slovenia early last century but was subsequently reintroduced. Now the lynx population in Slovenia is once again threatened. The reasons for this are various – it is partly the result of illegal hunting and partly due to other factors, including genetic factors, since all the lynxes in Slovenia are the descendants of a relatively small colony. As a result, the lynx is becoming the most typical example in Slovenia of a 'biodiversity crisis', where various species of animals are at risk.

## Biodiversity and national parks

The fundamental mission of many national parks around the world is the protection of nature in the broadest sense of the term. This also applies to the Triglav National Park, the only national park in Slovenia. The majority of national parks, including Slovenia's, are also open to tourists. This makes it harder for the parks to fulfil their obligations. The director of the Triglav National Park, Martin Šolar, says that they are not afraid of ordinary tourists but that they do worry about large-scale



international events such as the Biathlon World Cup, which takes place every year on the Pokljuka plateau, inside the national park. Naturally, the park's management is constantly drawing attention to the strict nature protection regulations that must be observed in the case of such events.

The director of the Triglav National Park says that when we look at the park as a whole, we see that nowhere in Europe is there such a varied spectrum in such a self-contained area – not only in the sense of species but also in the sense of ecosystems, landscape types and so on. 'The Triglav National Park is without a doubt a biodiversity hotspot!' says Šolar.

The Triglav National Park is also the area of Slovenia that attracts most climbers and hillwalkers, which can be a two-edged sword. On the one hand, the initiative to found the park actually came from climbers, who remain the most active custodians of its natural beauties, while on the other hand it is increasingly evident that mountain huts are the main cause of environmental impact in the park. It is generally the case, however, that the situation with regard to nature protection in the park is a lot better than it was some decades ago. The majority of people who visit the mountains have a good awareness of nature protection and these days it is rare to see a climber or hillwalker dropping litter or otherwise damaging the natural environment. 'The international definition of a national park states that it is a protected area managed

mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation: first protection, and then the recreational component,' says the director of Slovenia's only national park.

## Optimism remains

The term 'biodiversity' is a relatively new one, only in use around the world, and in Slovenia, since 1980. The first United Nations-sponsored conference of experts and government representatives on environmental issues took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (the Earth Summit). Since then biodiversity (or biological diversity), a concept that includes the entire diversity of the living world, has been a generally accepted term. Given the thousands of currently endangered species, both animals and plants, it may be the case that we will only fully realise the importance of biodiversity once many forms of life no longer exist on Earth. Many people claim that we have already reached the crisis point, since many species are on the point of extinction and, unfortunately, in the majority of cases it is human beings who are to blame. Generally speaking, humanity is still too little aware of the importance of our dependence on and connection with nature. All too often we forget that we ourselves will feel the consequences of a reduction in biodiversity. Yet the official position of international organisations and any governments remains a vision and a goal – to halt or at least significantly reduce the decline of biological diversity. ●



**I FEEL  
SLOVENIA**



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Photo Darinka Mladenovič