

Sinfo 05

ISSN 1854-0805

May 2014

The latest from Slovenia

IN FOCUS: Slovenia and its maritime identity
WONDERLAND: The Slovenian coast
HERITAGE: Piran salt

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IN FOCUS 8

Slovenia and its maritime identity

We are and we will always be a European country on the sea side of Triglav

Photo: National Museum of Contemporary History archives



WONDERLAND 36

The Slovenian coast

Yesterday, today and tomorrow

Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik/Mostphotos



HERITAGE 42

Piran salt

Salt flower with a distinctive fragrance of the sea

Photo: Ubald Trnkoczy/Spirit

**SINFO – SLOVENIAN INFORMATION**

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Translation: Secretariat-General of the Government of the Republic of

Slovenia, Translation and Interpretation Division, IOLAR d.o.o.

Language editing: PSD Translation

Printed by: Collegium Graphicum d.o.o., Slovenia, Number of copies: 3500

Photo on the front page: Barbara Kožar/Spirit

In the photo: Piran

Government Communication Office: www.slovenia.siGovernment Communication Office: www.ukom.gov.siGovernment of the Republic of Slovenia: www.vlada.siSPIRIT: www.slovenia.infoSlovenian Chamber of Commerce and Industry: www.gzs.siSlovenian Chamber of Craft: www.ozs.siJapti: www.japti.siLjubljana Stock Exchange: www.ljse.siStatistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: www.stat.siState Portal of the Republic of Slovenia: <http://e-uprava.gov.si>

Photo: Bruno Tožič

Tanja Glogovčan, editor

A big maritime heart

The Slovenians are a nation with a mighty, hundred year old maritime heart. This edition of Sinfo is thus dedicated to some of the creators of Slovenian maritime identity. These individuals are active in various fields and through different aspects: in entrepreneurship, science or through artistic expression, manifested in their life stories and challenges. There is also a glimpse into the Slovenian maritime history.

The economical aspect and people with an entrepreneurial spirit are important for any maritime country. Slovenia has a port and its own ships. And it also has promising young people, who still decide for a life at sea.

We visited Luka Koper (Port of Koper) and Splošna plovba Piran (International Shipping and Chartering Ltd.) and interviewed a ship captain who spent the time of his professional career at sea. His life experience motivates and inspires young people for this profession.

Slovenians love to visit the coast as it is also geographically located very near to any town or city. While strolling through the streets of Piran, Izola, Strunjan, Portorož, Ankaran and Koper, one always get a uniform impression: they all have a different identity, yet with a diverse history and vibe. Some of these towns are presented in more detail in text and some through the eye of a photo lens. Enjoy reading the articles and viewing the unique photography.

To this day Slovenians maintain a loving and respectful attitude towards maritime cultural heritage – through hobbies, sports and gastronomy. We have thus made an interview with the best Slovenian sailor; we also talked with an aficionado of old boats and visited an old tradition inn.

Still, do not stop just by reading the articles. Go and visit the Slovenian coast and all your doubts will be overcome. You will feel that Slovenia is also a country with a big maritime heart.



Photo: GCO

Test of democratic maturity

The year of 2014 will without a doubt be one of the most politically diverse and interesting years in more than two decades of Slovenia's independence. It is characterized by economic and financial circumstances, which have, however, after five years of recession, slightly improved, and which suggest that Slovenia has reached the bottom of the crisis and that the circumstances started to improve again. According to the European Commission's forecasts for Slovenia, economic growth in 2014 and 2015 is projected to reach 0.8% and 1.4%, respectively. Brussels has also significantly adjusted its forecasts for Slovenia, whereas in February this year it still predicted a 0.1 percent contraction in gross domestic product (GDP). After a long period of time, even the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) predicts the growth of the Slovenian economy. The fact that things are changing for the better, is evidenced by the Fitch rating agency, which changed its ratings outlook for Slovenia from "negative" to "stable". There are some more encouraging data: required yields on Slovenian government bonds fell to 3.38% which is the lowest rate since 2007, which is considered one of the most economically prosperous years (GDP growth was 6.1%).

Of course, this does not mean that Slovenia finally crawled out of the crisis and that everything is in order, however, these trends suggest that after wandering through the heavy seas, the ship finally turned in the right direction. The hardest part is behind us, but maintaining direction will be no easier task, as evidenced by the extremely lively and sometimes unreasonable political developments in the country, which led to the resignation of the Prime Minister and early elections. Slovenian voters will attend no less than four elections this year, which should show a clear new distribution of political power.

It will begin on 25 May with the European Parliament elections. The content of these elections, however, is not very different from the elections to the National Assembly, which means that these elections will show a perfectly credible political orientation in the country. A referendum on the new Law on Archives, which will be held two weeks later, will be a noteworthy indicator of political opinion polls. This will be a dress rehearsal for all political parties before the major elections, namely early parliamentary elections to be held in mid-July, possibly in September, after the end of the school holidays (when

this article was written, no dates have been fixed yet). At the end of this "super election" year local elections are planned to be held in October, when 212 Slovenian municipalities will decide on a new mayor.

In addition to the inevitable structural reform, political stability is also necessary in order to continue the positive trends of economic growth, but due to the lively bustle that I have described, the political stability is not self-evident, but rather the opposite. Many are amazed by such political developments in Slovenia and a lot of them consider such lively atmosphere and dribbling as a necessary part of a democratic growing-up of a country, which is, however, hardly more than twenty years old.

However, the democratic maturity of the country will be put to the test in the final stages of deciding on a dispute over the sea border between Slovenia and Croatia. In early June, the final act of resolving this international dispute will begin at the Arbitral Tribunal in The Hague with an oral hearing. This dispute concerning the maritime borders lasts for twenty years and all this time it has greatly hindered relations between the two countries. Politicians have failed to solve it. The signing of the arbitration agreement can certainly be considered as an intelligent action of Slovenian (and Croatian) policy. The Arbitral Tribunal shall determine the course of the maritime and land border between Slovenia and Croatia, Slovenia's junction to high sea and the regime for the use of the relevant maritime areas. Decision of the Tribunal is final and binding for both parties.

The decision to let the maritime border be determined by an international court has had a beneficial effect on the political climate between the two countries, and in particular, it prevented the politicians to use the dispute to gain political points by provoking national sentiments. Slovenia as a country at the crossroads of several cultures and countries also has an undisputed maritime tradition, which is indelibly woven into its national identity. Perhaps you did not know, but there were 53 Slovenian admirals in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and Slovenians were thought to be the most important maritime nation in the empire. Two Slovenians were also commanders of the Austro-Hungarian Navy.

Slovenia and Croatia in the last stage of the arbitration procedure

With the opening of the hearing before the Arbitral Tribunal, Slovenia and Croatia began the final stage in the resolution of the border dispute. Since entry into force of the Arbitration Agreement, both countries have prepared their argumentation and submitted documents to support their positions. They will now begin the final step of the procedure, the hearing before the Arbitral Tribunal.

Photo: Jure Kos/STA



“For Slovenia, the boundary arbitration is of crucial significance. To determine the boundary, the critical date is 25 June 1991, the day when Slovenia and Croatia declared its independence. The Arbitral Tribunal shall determine the entire course of approximately 670 kilometres of the land boundary, which was never clearly defined between the republics of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The Tribunal also has to define Slovenia’s junction to the High Sea, which is Slovenia’s vital interest. It also needs to determine the maritime boundary and the regime for the use of maritime areas. The case is extensive and demanding. Slovenia is well prepared for the hearing and has nothing to hide. Therefore, I regret that Croatia has not agreed to open the hearing to the public,”

said Simona Drenik, one of Slovenia’s two agents.

BRIEF HISTORY

Slovenia and Croatia have tried to agree on the land and sea boundary since declaring independence. The first decade after the independence was marked with the efforts of the former prime ministers Janez Drnovšek and Ivica Račan, which resulted in the first serious attempt to resolve the border issue, **the so-called Drnovšek–Račan agreement**, which never came into force.

Although the border dispute remained on the list of bilateral issues, the next serious attempt took place in 2007, when a de-

cision of principle was made to submit the dispute for resolution before the International Court of Justice or to arbitration. More intensive negotiations took place in 2009 before Croatia joined the EU, with the involvement of the European Commissioner for Enlargement, Olli Rehn. After a series of meetings, the prime ministers Borut Pahor and Jadranka Kosor signed the Arbitration Agreement on 4 November 2009 in Stockholm (at the time, Sweden held the Presidency of the Council of the EU) and agreed to submit the unresolved border issue to arbitration.

WRITTEN PLEADINGS CONCLUDED

In accordance with the Arbi-

2013, February - Memorial of the Republic of Slovenia

Slovenia and Croatia have tried to agree on the land and sea boundary since declaring independence.



Photo: Daniel Novaković/STIA

At the Castle Trakošćan (Croatia), the then Prime Ministers Borut Pahor and Jadranka Kosor established a framework to solve the border issue.



Photo: Richard Semik/Mostphotos

The oral hearing in the arbitration process between Slovenia and Croatia will take place in the Peace Palace, The Hague, in June 2014.

tration Agreement, all written pleadings are confidential. They began on **11 February 2013** with the submission of the **memorials**, in which the countries presented their positions. These were followed by counter-memorials, i.e. responses to the factual and legal positions of the other side. The **counter-memorials** were submitted on **11 November 2013**.

Following Slovenia's request, the Arbitral Tribunal approved the submission of the **replies** to the counter-memorials, which were to provide additional clarifications of the facts and newly submitted documents; these were submitted on **26 March 2014**.

TEN DAYS FOR ORAL PLEADINGS

After consulting the parties, the Arbitral Tribunal decided to hold a hearing between **2 and 13 June 2014** before the Arbitral Tribunal in The Hague in the Peace Palace at the seat of the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

At the end of January, Slovenia proposed to Croatia to reach an agreement which would allow



Photo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs archive

Sir Michael Wood

Following Slovenia's request, the Arbitral Tribunal approved the submission of the replies to the counter-memorials, which were to provide additional clarifications of the facts and newly submitted documents; these were submitted on 26 March 2014.

Slovenian and Croatian public to directly follow the hearing. Croatia rejected the proposal and insists on holding the hearing behind closed doors. Both countries have already agreed to the publication of the award.

The subject of arbitration was very clearly defined by Slovenia and Croatia in **Article 3 of the Arbitration Agreement**:

- the course of the maritime and land boundary between the Republic of Slovenia and the Republic of Croatia
- Slovenia's junction to the High Sea
- the regime for the use of the relevant maritime areas

Article 4 of the Arbitration Agreement also obliges the Tribunal to apply the rules and principles of international law, and with regard to the junction and regime, also equity and the principle of good neighbourly relations in order to achieve a fair and just result; in addition, all relevant circumstances must be considered.

THE MEMBERS OF THE TRIBUNAL

The Arbitral Tribunal has the following members: three (**Gilbert Guillame**, **Vaughan Lowe**, and **Bruno Simma**) were agreed on by the two countries and selected from the list compiled by the European Commission, while each country also appointed a member of their own choice. Slovenia appointed **Jernej Sekolec**, while the member from Croatia is **Budislav Vukas**. The Tribunal is chaired by **Gilbert Guillame**.

Slovenia is represented by the agents **Simona Drenik** and **Mirjam Škrk**, and counsel and advocates **Alain Pellet**, **Sir Michael Wood (20 Essex Street)**, **Rodman R. Bundy (Eversheds LLP)**, and **Daniel Müller** and their assistants **Alina Miron**, **Eran Sthoeger**, **Natasha Harrington (Eversheds LLP)** and **Maja Menard**.

The decision is likely to be published in 2015.



Simona Drenik, LL.M.

Photo: Personal archive

After consulting the parties, the Arbitral Tribunal decided to hold a hearing between 2 and 13 June 2014 before the Arbitral Tribunal in The Hague in the Peace Palace at the seat of the Permanent Court of Arbitration.



Prof Mirjam Škrk

Photo: Tarnino Petelinšek/STA



Prof Alain Pellet

Photo: Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Slovenia and its maritime identity

We are and we will always be a European country on the sea side of Triglav

Slovenian maritime identity was created by maritime officers, ship-owners, scientists, politicians, lawyers and economists, who significantly contributed to the development of Slovenian maritime affairs. Being aware of this part of history is especially important during current discussions on the maritime status of Slovenia.



Ship Ljubljana

Among cities that are often mentioned in discussions on Slovenian maritime directions, the crucial role is played by Trieste. This city was strategically very important for the Slovenian politics already in the time of the Habsburg Monarchy – before the First World War it was home to more Slovenians than Ljubljana.

Among cities that are often mentioned in discussions on Slovenian maritime directions, the crucial role is played by Trieste. This city was strategically very important for the Slovenian politics already in the time of the Habsburg Monarchy – before the First World War it was home to more Slovenians than Ljubljana. With the end of the Habsburg Monarchy, Slovenia lost its connections to Trieste, as the Entente Powers assigned it to Italy, together with the Slovene Littoral, by signing the Treaty of London in 1915. At the end of the World War II, Yugoslavia lost its chances to join Trieste and thus Koper assumed the role of Slovenia's maritime connection with the world. The first Slovenian maritime company – Val – was established in 1954; it was later

renamed to Slovenija linije and is today known under the name Splošna plovba. In 1957 Luka Koper (Port of Koper) was founded, which evolved into an important port in the North Adriatic.

DEVELOPMENT OF ECONOMY AND SCIENCE

Danilo Petrinja was the founder of the Port of Koper and its director for a decade. He was the type of economist who could achieve a lot despite the fact that he did not have a university education. Many of his contemporaries agree that without him, the Port of Koper would not exist today. At that time, the development of the port was depending on faster connections to the hinterland, especially by building railways. In the following

years, he remained active and participated in discussions on the development of the coast. He claimed: »Koper must and can create conditions for the development of an industrial zone.« Mr Petrinja was aware, perhaps more than some Slovenians today, of the European importance of the largest Slovenian Adriatic port.

The formation of the Slovenian maritime identity was significantly influenced by **Michelangelo Zois**, once the wealthiest Carniolan. Around 1727, he founded a trading company, took over the trade in Venice and expanded it to German States, Switzerland and Anatolia. In 1768 he founded a third trading company, which took advantage of the importance of Trieste and



asserted itself by buying house wares and ships. He saw Ljubljana as an economic link between Central Europe and the Adriatic Sea. He was awarded for his extraordinary business achievements with the hereditary nobility (Edelstein) in 1739 and the baronetcy in 1760.

His son, baron **Sigmund Zois von Edelstein**, took over father's trading company and ironworks related to maritime traffic. He was not interested in the sea only because of political and business motives but also because of science. In his library, he had a collection of books related to the sea fauna, systematization of sea animals and plants, charts, and he also made a list of freshwater and salt water fish, that were known

at that time in Carniola. He saw Ljubljana as an intellectual link between Central Europe and the Adriatic Sea.

An important role in the development of marine economy was played by **Josip Gorup**, who became the vice president of the Hungaro-Croatian shipping company in the time when Trieste and Rijeka were developing into two main ports in the Adriatic. Patriot, patron and successful financier Josip Gorup was well-known in all parts of Slovenia, as well as in Europe. His work in Trieste, Vienna and Rijeka was of great importance. He had a number of other important jobs, namely he was the manager of the Croatian bank and savings bank. Moreover, he was one of the founders of the

spinning mills in Ajdovščina and of the Carniolan building company. For some time, he was also the representative of the district Postojna-Vrhnika-Lož in the Carniolan provincial assembly. Josip Gorup was one of the wealthiest Slovenians at that time. He regularly dedicated a part of his incomes to scholastic, cultural and charity institutions.

SLOVENIAN SAILORS

Baron Wilhelm von Tegetthoff was born in Maribor and is said to be one of the best admirals of the 19th century, renowned for his innovative tactics and outstanding leadership. He took part in the Austrian blockade of Venice as well as in the Crimean War. Together with the explorer Theodor von Heuglin he

Port of Koper in 1960.

The first Slovenian maritime company – Val – was established in 1954; it was later renamed to Slovenija linije and is today known under the name Splošna plovba. In 1957 Port of Koper was founded, which evolved into an important port in the North Adriatic.



Sergej Mašera

Michelangelo Zois

Vilhelm von Tegetthoff

It may be true that Slovenians are numerically a small nation, but they have a strong and centuries-old maritime heart. Today we have the sea even in our Constitution, on the coat of arms and flag. Slovenia is therefore not only a country on the sunny side of the Alps, but much more – a European country on the sea side of Triglav.

sailed the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, where Austria wanted to establish its colonies. He also travelled to Brazil with the Archduke Maximilian's expedition. In 1861 he was assigned the command of the Austrian navy fleet in the region of Levant. In the war for Schleswig-Holstein in 1864, Tegetthoff combated the Danish captain Eduard Suenson in the Battle of Helgoland. He won a »Pyrrhic victory« with two frigates and was awarded with the admiral's flag and promoted to Rear Admiral. In 1866 he defeated the Italians in the battle near the island of Vis and was immediately promoted to Vice Admiral. He received telegrams with congratulations by Ferdinand Maximilian, Emperor of Mexico, and Vice Admiral Hans Birch Dahlerup, former Commander in Chief of the Austrian navy. Tegetthoff was awarded the Commander's Cross of the Military Order of Maria Theresa and made honorary citizen of Vienna. After the victory near the island of Vis, Tegetthoff appealed Franz Joseph, Emperor of Austria, to join the hinterland of the Dalmatian coast, which would protect the area necessary for the development of naval bases.

Anton Haus joined early the Austro-Hungarian Navy. Later on, in the 1880s, he taught at the Maritime Academy in Rijeka and in 1891 he wrote the book *Oceanography and Maritime Meteorology*. In 1900 he participated at suppression of the Boxer Rebellion in China as a com-

mander, where he stayed until 1902. He also worked as a fleet inspector and became commandant of the Austro-Hungarian Navy and succeeding the Admiral Rudolf Montecuccoli, who promoted Anton Haus to Admiral. He was the only officer in the Austro-Hungarian Navy to receive the highest rank during his lifetime.

National hero of Yugoslavia **Sergej Mašera** worked in the period before the World War II as an artillery officer in Yugoslavia. At the beginning of the war he worked on the Destroyer Zagreb, which was anchored in the Bay of Kotor, the biggest and the most important naval base of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. There was a lot of confusion present among the navy crew because they did not have enough objective information on war and there was also a lot of false information. The artilleryists on the Destroyer Zagreb were always in readiness because the probability of enemy air raids was very high. After the announcement of the capitulation of the Yugoslav Army, the crew of the Destroyer Zagreb abandoned the ship by order of the commander. Only two men remained on the ship – the lieutenants of the battleship and former classmates of the VII class of the Naval Military Academy, Sergej Mašera and Milan Spasić. To prevent the ship from being captured by the Italian Royal Navy after the capitulation of the Yugoslav Army, the two men blasted it on 17th April 1941. Both officers stayed

on board of the sinking ship. In 1973 they were proclaimed National heroes of Yugoslavia. The Maritime Museum in Piran is named after Sergej Mašera since 1967.

Before the World War II **Ivan Kern** had the rank of battleship captain and commanded the division of torpedo ships. When the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was attacked in 1941, captain Kern escaped from the Bay of Kotor and surrendered to the allies of the British Royal Navy. Forming a new government in exile, Ivan Kern was in charge of the Department of the Navy under the Ministry of Transport of the Yugoslav government in London. He remained at this position until the discussions on the transit of the Royal Yugoslav Navy to the Partisans. The Royal Yugoslav Navy supposedly had only two torpedo ships, an inoperative submarine and ten torpedo boats. The discussions took place on the island of Vis but were unsuccessful because of British obstruction. Kern was aiming for the Yugoslav cargo ships, which were on the side of the allies, to sail under the Partisan flag. By order of the Yugoslav President Tito, he was promoted to Rear Admiral in 1945.

MARITIME LAW IN SLOVENIAN LANGUAGE

Stojan Cigoj, a lawyer, wrote the first history of the Slovenian Law in his mother tongue. In 1974, he published two important monographs: *Pomor-*



Ship Bela Krajina - Piran

sko pravo Jugoslavije (Maritime Law of Yugoslavia); the following year he published another book, subtitled *Posli pomorske plovbe* (Legal Practice on Maritime Transport). These monographs represent an extremely detailed system description, rich with domestic and foreign jurisprudence and doctrine. All his life he was active in the field of maritime law development: he was solving issues of marine insurance, limitation of ship-owner liability, forms of maritime contracts, disaster relief, guarantees, etc. He wrote the following regarding the Maritime Law: »Maritime law is not only a spontaneous formation of a certain area, but it has developed from sources that are common to people who live by the sea.«

MARITIME INNOVATORS

Historian **Miroslav Pahor**, who

was also a director of the City Museum in Piran, has for many years argued that Slovenians are a maritime nation. He tried to prove this fact with numerous Slovenian naval successes: not only with dugout, old boat of our ancestors found in Nabrežina and in places by the Trieste sea, but especially with high pine ship masts, oak ship keels with naturally curved naval timber, flax and hemp ropes, and especially numerous sailors, seamen, naval officers, shipbuilders and ship-owners, who worked in the shipping industry.

EVEN IN A SMALL BOAT

As a member of the EU and as a maritime country, Slovenia today seeks to play an active role in finding a balance between economic, social and environmental aspects of European shipping. The key to success lies in the in-

tegration and new opportunities. This represents the foundation, which was built by the creators of Slovenian maritime identity and is also an excellent starting point for contemporary Slovenian maritime identity. Slovenia was, is and will continue to be a maritime country.

It may be true that Slovenians are numerically a small nation, but they have a strong and centuries-old maritime heart. Today we have the sea even in our Constitution, on the coat of arms and flag. Slovenia is therefore not only a country on the sunny side of the Alps, but much more – a European country on the sea side of Triglav. Even in a small boat it is possible to sail the world.

Summarized: Tvorci slovenske identitete by Andrej Rahten, 2010

Even in a small boat it is possible to sail the world.

Shipping is a global market

Ships of the Splošna plovba company transport their cargo all over the world

The company started 60 years ago by operating two cargo-carrying vessels for the wider Mediterranean area and a fleet of smaller ships to provide for cargo transport and the carriage of passengers in short coastal navigation. Today, Splošna plovba is one of the oldest companies in Slovenia's Littoral region. It operates 21 vessels globally as part of its tramp vessel services and regular liner services. Splošna plovba ranks as a medium-size shipping liner, with its 21 vessels having a total load bearing capacity of 850,000 tonnes.



Splošna plovba company

Photo: Nediljko Baric



The company concentrates on shipping various types of cargo. Most of its fleet is made up of multi-purpose ships transporting the so called bulk cargo and general cargo, such as timber, wood, containers, coal, petrol coke, iron and nickel ore, clinker, sulphur, iron products, cereals, ferrous scrap, chemical fertilisers etc.

Egon Bandelj, Chairman of the Splošna plovba Board, views the current situation as extremely unstable. He explains: "This market is very unstable as it largely depends on the demand for transports. With few ships available in the shipping market, the fares increase and vice versa. A number of other factors also influence the prices of fares. The company operates exclusively in the international market where competition is fierce. For a shipping company to remain competitive, it constantly needs to modernise and update its fleet. The vessels in the Splošna plovba

fleet have an average age of 10 years - a figure below the world average."

TRANSPORT USERS HAVE A MULTINATIONAL PROFILE

This is a global company operating exclusively in external trade. The last time their ship entered the Port of Koper was nine years ago. How is that possible? "We do not choose among ports to transport cargo. We always look for the most competitive offer. Shipping is a global market and we are perfectly comparable with global fleets. We share the common destiny of the shipping market. There is fierce competition among shipping companies and each shipping company wants to remain competitive. Currently, the largest shipbuilders in the world are the Chinese, followed by the Koreans and the Japanese."

There is no doubt that seafarers dedicate their lives to their ships.

How are they recruited? "We seek to recruit new employees among foreign nationals, as there is a shortage of them in Slovenia. The Secondary Nautical School no longer trains engineers with the right profile. In addition, few people are willing to spend their entire working careers as seafarers. Many give up seagoing work by the time they are 30 or 40. Our crews are multinational with most seafarers coming from the Philippines. In total, about 450 seafarers are responsible for the safe and smooth operation of the Splošna plovba fleet. An average crew is made up of about 20-21 seafarers who spend 6-8 months servicing a ship. As a general rule, working on a ship is organised in shifts: 4 hours of work followed by 8 hours leisure time. Such a schedule applies to all weekdays except for seafarers who are responsible for ship maintenance and those working in administrative services.

Seafarers may be assigned to the

Egon Bandelj, Chairman of the Splošna plovba Board

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Ship Tolmin - a small ship designed to carry bulk cargo.

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deck department, engine department or administrative department. In Slovenia, aspiring seafarers are trained in the Nautical and Technical Educational Centre and in the Faculty of Maritime Studies and Transport, both institutions being situated in Portorož. For certain professions, candidates may qualify simply by having a certificate from an appropriate technical school. In addition, aspiring seafarers have to pass a further educational programme in accordance with the International Convention on Standards of Training Certification and the Watch-Keeping for Seafarers (Convention SCTW).”

THE ENGINE ROOM IS THE HEART OF A SHIP

Ships in the Splošna plovba fleet are equipped with engines whose capacity is between 5.280

kW and 40.040 kW, thus enabling a speed of 12.5-18.8 knots (nautical miles per hour). To illustrate this in practical terms: One of the more recent vessels, used for bulk cargo transport, has an engine which weighs 212 tons, is 6.44 m long, 8.58 m high and 3.15 m wide. Its capacity is 9.480 kW. Apart from the engine which takes up the majority of the engine room space, ships are usually equipped with three diesel generators to produce electricity, as well as various pumps, separators, compressors and other machines, all of which ensure the safe operation and well-being of the crew.

How does the state support shipping? “Slovenia has a shipping-friendly legislation and its tax system is modelled on those practised in other European countries. The EU thus ensured

that administrative authorities of shipping companies continue to operate in their respective home countries; otherwise they would not be able to withstand competition. “

Have there been any negative experiences with pirates? “Of course there have been, but fortunately none of those bad. When traversing danger zones, armed guards are hired to protect the ships and the crews. Pirates may be rather merciful to the crews. Their main goal is to obtain money from the shipping company. There was a case of a pirate attack where the crew timely managed to shut itself in a secured space from which it called for assistance. Subsequently, a nearby naval ship intervened and ousted the pirates. The situation was resolved favourably.”



A RETROSPECTIVE: THE ERA OF STEAMSHIPS

In 1956, the Yugoslav merchant marine was decentralised and the Splošna plovba company was allotted 6 steamships: They were called Gorica, Ljubljana, Bihać, Dubrovnik, Neretva and Kornat. The ships were in poor technical state, their average age was almost 39 years and their speed reached 8-9.5 knots. All of them were used by the allies in World War II, while some had even been utilised in World War I. With the exception of the Ljubljana, all of the originally coal-driven ships were subsequently remodelled to enable combustion with residual fuel oil. By taking over the aforementioned ships and acquiring used ships of the type of Liberty, soon after its foundation the Splošna plovba company began to establish itself

in the worldwide tramp vessel market. Several Slovenian seafarers started their professional careers on the aforesaid ships.

FROM STEAMSHIPS TO MODERN, MOTOR-DRIVEN SHIPS

The development of the shipping industry demanded rapid adjustments. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Splošna plovba acquired the first newly built ships. Ships of the Splošna plovba fleet were built in the Uljanik shipyard in Pula (Croatia), as well as in Japan, Belgium and Spain. In 1971 Splošna plovba sold its last classical steamship. By acquiring modern new ships and used liners, Splošna plovba was poised to become a shipping line company. Splošna plovba introduced its first significant regular routes in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The first route took an eastward

path around the world while the second one established a connection with the USA. In both routes, liner ships transported general cargo.

Upon Slovenia's independence in 1991, Splošna plovba was left without a field for liner operations. The situation called for a transition from tramper-liner operations to predominantly tramper operations. Splošna plovba maintained only the regular route India-Far East-India (now the Genshipping Pacific Line) and, until 2001, the timber transport line. By focusing on tramper operations, Splošna plovba adjusted itself to market needs and specialised in transporting bulk cargo. A few years ago, the company purchased two ships for container transport, thus diversifying its operations.

Ship Pohorje - designed to carry containers.

By focusing on tramper operations, Splošna plovba adjusted itself to market needs and specialised in transporting bulk cargo.

Andraž Novak, President of the Management Board of Port of Koper

One of the best ports in the region

Luka Koper (Port of Koper) is an international Slovenian port that links Central and Eastern Europe with the Mediterranean. The majority of freight flows come from the Strait of Gibraltar and Suez Canal. Through the presence of important global shipowners, the port maintains maritime links with all parts of the world.



Photo: Archive of Port of Koper

Andraž Novak was born on 2 November 1966. After several years of service in the merchant navy, where he achieved the position of chief mate (first officer), he studied marine engineering at the Faculty of Maritime Studies and Transport in Portorož and finished his studies in 1995. Since 1995 he has occupied various managerial positions at Port of Koper including director of break bulk operations at the General Cargo Terminal. In 2008, he completed specialist post-graduate studies at the Faculty of Maritime Studies and Transport. He was appointed member of the Sales Operation Management board in January 2014 and on April 11, 2014 he became President of the Management Board.



At the beginning of the interview, Andraž Novak, President of the Management Board of Port of Koper, who has also spent several years in the merchant navy, underlines the multifunctional character of this port and the fact that it is of crucial importance for Slovenia.

Which important historic milestones of Port of Koper still have an impact on its appearance, operation and commercial orientation and what are you most proud of in the history of the company?

This year, the Port of Koper celebrates its 57th anniversary. The establishment of the port became a reality thanks to the idea and persistence of a small group of enthusiasts who saw Koper as an opportunity to replace the connections to the Port of Trieste that were severed after World War II. From the beginning, the port was meant to have three piers and it was built gradually, with seabed dredging and back-filling of the hinterland areas that were later used to build warehouses. Luka Koper still maintains its original mission of a multi-purpose port, which means that we handle all types of cargo, with the exception of crude oil and liquid petroleum gas. During the recent economic crisis, the multifunctional char-

acter proved to be a good strategic decision because we were able to compensate the loss of cargo in one product group with the increase in another.

What is your core business? Which activities, services and goods is the priority?

As I have mentioned before, we are a multi-purpose port. Our core business covers cargo handling and warehousing. We are specialized to handle a broad range of cargo, such as containers, cars, liquid cargo, bulk cargo, such as coal and iron ore, break bulk cargo, such as soya, cereals, minerals and similar material, general cargo, such as fruit, vegetables, timber, household appliances, paper, coffee, sugar, iron products and other. Sometimes we also handle so-called project cargo, such as locomotives, components for factories, military equipment and vehicles, for example, the turbines for Krško nuclear power plant were handled in the Port of Koper. In short, we deal with numerous different types of cargo. Of course I have to mention the Cruise Terminal, which is important for port of Koper but even more so for the development of local tourism and Slovenian tourism. Our priority is containers because an increasing amount of cargo arrives in

containers (even cars and liquid cargo). That is why we plan to invest in this segment in the next few years, where the competition is also the strongest.

What is your vision? Is it true that you plan to become the leading port operator and global logistics solution provider serving the countries in this part of Europe? How will you realise it?

It is true and to a great extent we have already realised this goal. We are the first port serving Austria, which means that Austria carries out the majority of maritime transport through Koper. We are the first container port for Hungary. I probably don't even have to mention Slovenia, although one third of the cargo we handle is intended for the Slovenian market. Besides, we are the largest port in the North Adriatic when it comes to the number of containers handled and the second-largest vehicle port in the Mediterranean. How do we do it? With large investments in port infrastructure. By the way, port infrastructures in neighbouring ports are financed by the government but in Slovenia, we have to finance it by ourselves, from our income. In addition, our customers are satisfied with our high-quality services and agree that we are very professional and

Port of Koper is a logistical and distributive hub for Central and Eastern Europe.

Port of Koper still maintains its original mission of a multi-purpose port, which means that we handle all types of cargo, with the exception of crude oil and liquid petroleum gas.



The key to the future development of North Adriatic ports, such as Koper (Slovenia), Trieste (Italy) and Rijeka (Croatia), is co-operation.

flexible. The basis for all that is of course the exceptional geostrategic position of the port.

Your two main competitors are the Port of Rijeka in Croatia and the Port of Trieste in Italy. Are you competitive, are you better than them and if not, how are you going to improve?

The Port of Koper and ports in Trieste, Rijeka and Venice are members of the North Adriatic Ports Association (NAPA). The motto of the Association is a neologism “coopetition”, which means cooperative competition. We are aware of the fact that our common competition is represented by the ports of Northern Europe that still attract the majority of maritime traffic of goods. We cooperate to show the world that the North Adriatic is the shortest maritime route between the Far East and Central Europe. When the ships arrive to the Adriatic Sea it is up to each port to attract them. All North Adriatic ports have the same task, which is to increase the container capacities of the port. At the moment, all NAPA ports together handle less than

two million containers; based on a study that we have ordered, the collective potential is six million. We still have a long way to go.

What is the cargo throughput of Port of Koper for Slovenian and foreign customers?

Almost one third of total goods handled in the port are intended for the Slovenian market. The rest is in transit, and mainly intended for Central and Eastern European markets, of which Austrian market is the most important. We also handle almost one third of the goods for Austria and for several consecutive years we have been the largest Austrian port, which means that Austria carries out the majority of its maritime transport through Koper. The second major market is Hungary, especially when it comes to container transport, and it is followed by Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Germany. Italy is also important percentage-wise, particularly for bulk cargo because the Italian ports along the Adriatic coast cannot accept such large ships or they do not have suitable warehousing facilities.

You plan an extension of some piers, a construction of Pier III and seabed dredging. Will you be able to realise those big structural projects and which one will most likely be carried out?

Currently, we are working intensively to dredge the seabed at the container terminal because our customers announced the arrival of larger ships with bigger draught in autumn. Dredging is a regular activity in Port of Koper because of the configuration of the seabed and our need to maintain its depth. Besides dredging we plan an extension of Pier I for another 100 m as allowed by the national spatial plan. In the medium and long term we plan to extend Pier II and construct Pier III, but unfortunately for the time being the investment in the latter exceeds our capabilities.

The Italians have been proposing a rail link between Koper and Trieste, which would be beneficial for Koper, as it could use the Italian railway network. What is happening in this field?

Port of Koper does not oppose the

Currently, we are working intensively to dredge the seabed at the container terminal because our customers announced the arrival of larger ships with bigger draught in autumn.



rail link between Koper and Trieste, but this should not be done at the expense of the second Rail Track that we have been talking about for 20 years. This winter showed us how vulnerable we are in the field of railway transport. This is particularly relevant for the Port of Koper, where 60 percent of the cargo travels by rail. This is one of the highest percentages in Europe.

It is important to keep the Slovenian Sea clean. How do you maintain a responsible approach towards the environment?

It is not just the sea that is important, we also take care of the air, noise emissions and light pollution. The waters are monitored by our fleet of ecological survey vessels but we are active in all these fields because we are fully aware of the negative impact of port activity on the environment in which it operates. Consequently, we try to minimise adverse effects on the environment. While doing that we also ensure full transparency. I think we are the only European port that makes the infor-

mation on levels of noise and dust particles publicly available on-line on our website. This is also a place where all the information related to the sustainable development of Port of Koper is published.

How do you cooperate with the local community? After all, you are the source of noise, congestion, pollution etc.?

We are aware that we demand a lot from the environment, especially since we take up a lot of space. We try to give something back. We have already mentioned our activities in the field of environmental protection. We are the strongest supporter of sporting, cultural, educational and research activities and humanist life in the city and in the region. We strive to incorporate in our vision the city and the inhabitants in the surrounding area. We are one of the most accessible ports because people can see with their own eyes that the Port of Koper is tidy, green and that there are no sinister chimneys. We have also planted olive trees in the port and we produce around 100 litres of virgin olive oil every year.

Port of Koper also has sister ports. Do you deal with similar problems and solutions? Which ones?

We have some sister ports around the world. We are a member of several associations on a regional and European level. We visit each other and participate in individual projects. The majority of ports deal with similar challenges and dilemmas when it comes to business and environment.

Final question - do you think that Slovenians will stay a maritime nation, among others also thanks to the good/better performance of Port of Koper?

The Slovenians are insufficiently aware that they are a maritime nation. We have one of the best ports in the region and the only one in the country where the comparative advantage in relation to the land-locked countries is on our side. Besides that Slovenia does not have a lot of resources so logistics services, provided mainly by the port, are the activity that the government should place the main emphasis on and invest in.

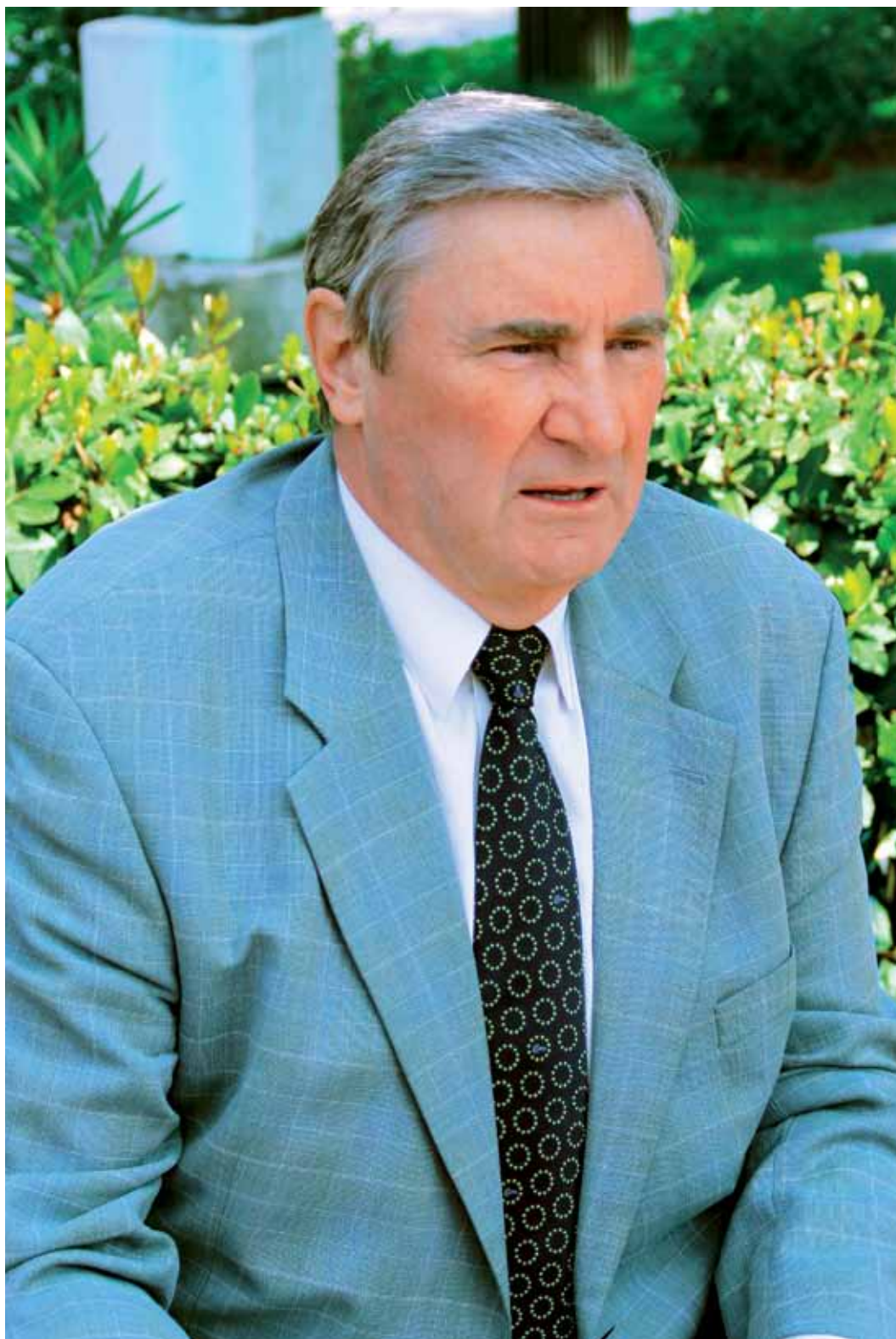
Existing and planned transport connections to the countries in Central and Eastern Europe, which will gain access to the sea through the Port of Koper, are a great opportunity for Slovenian economy.

We have one of the best ports in the region and the only one in the country where the comparative advantage in relation to the land-locked countries is on our side.

Captain Giorgio Ribarič

Seaman is the best export

Giorgio Ribarič was a captain throughout his naval career. He completed his studies at the Maritime High School in Piran and after graduating was employed by the company Splošna Plovba Piran. He believes that in Slovenia a naval career is a promising career for the future.



I was one of the few of my generation who spent all his professional career navigating the seas, and working for a domestic ship-owner too, which I am particularly proud of. I was a captain for 27 years and spent 30 years at sea.

Did you get a job immediately?

Yes, I got one immediately and also nowadays young graduates get jobs straight away. At that time, the majority of us – then young people – were employed in Yugoslav naval companies, but now there are many opportunities for Slovenian seamen to get employment abroad. If I remember correctly, in my generation there were 54 people in the nautical department and 47 in the engineering department. I got a job immediately after graduation, starting my career as a second deck officer on the ship Litija. I passed my examination as ocean-going master with the Harbour Master's Office in Koper in 1977. I was very lucky in my career. The first ship under my command was the Postojna, which I took command of in 1980. Until my retirement in December 2006, I sailed the seas on different ships for Splošna Plovba or its subsidiary company Genshipping Corporation. I was one of the few of my generation who spent all his professional career navigating the seas, and working for a domestic ship-owner too, which I am particularly proud of. I was a captain for 27 years and spent 30 years at sea.

You had a successful career. Do you think that the profession of a captain is a demanding one?

I always enjoyed the profession. But of course every profession has its difficulties. In a naval profession, one is often away from home, but this is a characteristic of the profession one gets used to. I do not regret taking up the career, despite the fact that sometimes I was at sea for 18 months. Times were different then. We were at sea on smaller ships and the crew number was higher in that time. When we landed at a port which was close to home, the odd seaman would make a quick visit home. We agreed on almost everything and got along very well with each other. Nowadays, the majority of employment contracts are signed for only six or seven months. If I am not wrong, the shortest employment contracts for the cargo ships of Splošna Plovba are concluded for four months.

As a captain, you were responsible for all the crew, navigation strategy and communication with the company. This was a great responsibility. How did you tackle the challenge?

Prior to becoming a ship's captain, I did all the jobs there were. To gather experience, I had to take on the dirty work as well! I believe this is very important. The captain is responsible for everything. In my opinion, modern nautical navigation relies on sophisticated devices too much. I believe that the captain of a ship must, first and foremost, be very well acquainted with classical nautical tools and have a sound knowledge of navigation without using electronics. Accidents will always happen, of course – one cannot foresee everything. It is important to be able to communicate appropriately with the company as well as with the crew. Mere technical knowledge is not enough: communication skills are also needed. One cannot learn communication skills all at once: it takes some time to master them. But without such skills, one cannot succeed. Mastering these skills takes about two years. In a certain sense, my generation was a pioneering one, but I would like to note that Splošna Plovba provided us with a very solid foundation. We worked on cargo ships.

Did you ever encounter pirates?

Yes, we did. On one such occasion we locked ourselves in the so-called safe room and tried to reach an agreement with the unwelcome guests. Usually pirates just want to get their hands on the cargo. Luckily, I never found myself in serious danger during my career. Of course piracy remains a problem, in particular in Africa.

You are still very active in your profession. You encourage more young people to decide on this career.

Yes, I try to be active. I wish more young people would recognise this profession as a profession of the future. In this field, Slovenia has a lot of experience: it is a maritime country and its schools and teachers are distinguished by their great expert knowledge. In this profession it is possible to get a job immediately after graduation, which is a great advantage in the present situation. To the best of my knowledge, Japan and other countries are very interested in our graduates. However, I also believe that in this profession more attention should be paid to the knowledge of foreign languages. In addition to English, a seaman should have at least a pas-

sive knowledge of Spanish. Italian and German, which are spoken by many Slovenians, are not global languages, but Spanish certainly is.

How do you assess the future of this profession in Slovenia?

In particular, the young should be more encouraged, including with grants. I was lucky, as my father was a ship's captain and my family had enough resources to finance my studies. Unfortunately, not everyone is so lucky. The profession is beautiful indeed. I saw a lot of the world and met many interesting people. But it is also true that in the past it was better appreciated and that we enjoyed more privileges. I am very pleased that women captains are deciding to take up the profession. In my opinion, the future lies in large tankers and also in passenger ships. Slovenia should adapt to these trends. From the expert's point of view, Slovenia has a very good starting point and should be more aware of it. According to the information I have, Europe currently has a shortage of approximately 50,000 seamen. Shipping is a driving force of the world's economy and therefore it is a great opportunity for Slovenia. A seaman is the best export Slovenia can offer to the market, and therefore he should be well educated and trained.

You are also the President of the Association of Shipmasters and Chief Engineers in Maritime Transport of the Republic of Slovenia. What are you involved with?

The Association of Shipmasters and Chief Engineers in Maritime Transport of the Republic of Slovenia enables its members active participation in all the most important decisions for its members related to professional and social issues. Special attention is paid to provision of legal and solidarity assistance and the Association frequently works with the Faculty of Maritime Studies and Transport. We, the older generation, like to share our experience with the young. The Association also extensively cooperates with the Confederation of European Shipmasters' Associations (CESMA). In a certain sense, Slovenia represents a bridge between the Southern Balkans and the rest of the Europe, which is a great responsibility for us.

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Vinko Oblak

Scent of Mullet in Piran's Past

For as long as it is known, Slovene fishermen have lived in symbiosis with the sea, which has become a part of the common Slovenian history. Anyone who loves the sea loves fishing, sailing and values maritime tradition. In these parts, the sea is the centre of all life. It is the key element that enables locals to survive. In the past, the Northwestern towns of Piran, Koper and Izola have been the centres of fishing.

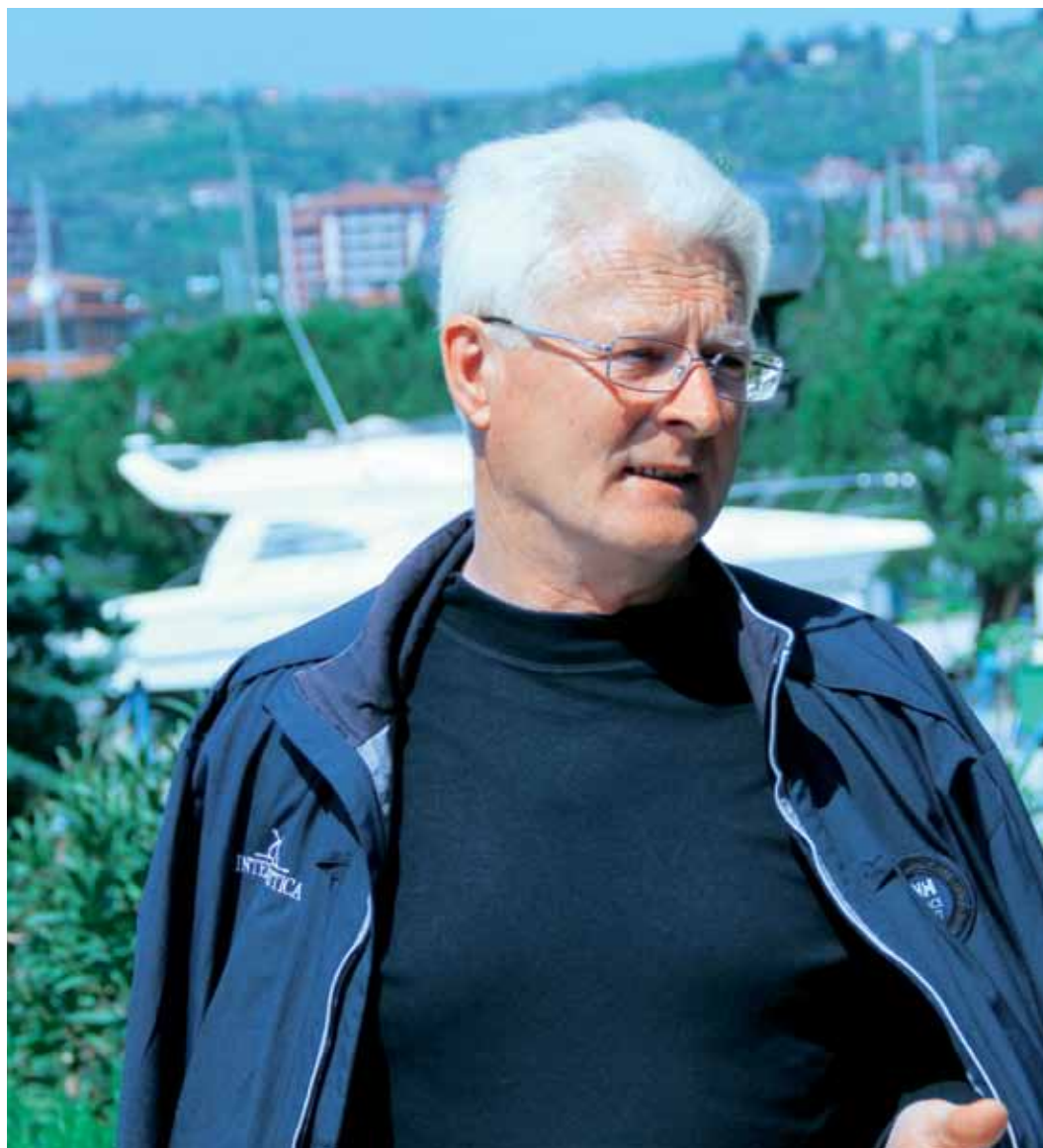


Photo: GCO archive

The oldest known written source that mentions fishing is published in the monograph on the Piran pergament charter.

The life of Vinko Oblak has been touched by the sea as well. He has devoted most of his free time to researching Slovenian maritime history and traditions. Today he works at the Marina Portorož, while one of his previous jobs was to sail the high seas with the Splošna Plovba shipping line. He says Slovenians are not sufficiently aware of their being a fishing nation, too. Al-

though nowadays researching fishing and maritime traditions presents a big part of his life, fishing was never his profession. He preferred to fish as an angler, already as a child he had angled with a thread and home-made hook. Despite that, he has had first-hand experience with handling, cleaning and repairing fishing nets, and, naturally, selling fish.

GIFT FROM THE PATRIARCH

The oldest known written source that mentions fishing is published in the monograph on the Piran pergament charter. "In the charter from 1173 AD it is written that the patriarch Val-doricus of Aquileia awards the cloister in Belinghi with an estate near Piran, and other possessions, including Sečovlje fishing



As food caught by fishermen would quickly go off, fish were preserved by salting, drying (by wind, sun, or in drying rooms), marination (in vinegar, oil, salt, or spices) or smoking (in smoke, or heat). Preservation by freezing is a comparatively recent method.

grounds,” says Oblak with an emphasis. Though the document is significant because of its age, the mention of the fishing grounds in Sečovlje bay makes it particularly important. The text confirms that the Sečovlje fishing grounds have been an important economic resource since ancient times.

IZOLA, IN THE PAST THE MOST CHARACTERISTIC FISHING TOWN

While in the past, residents of seaside towns would take their boats out to the sea in the afternoons to catch their supper, this has nowadays fallen out of fashion. “Izola was considered the most characteristic fishing town, particularly after fish plants had opened. Until the second half of the 19th century, fishing has

been mostly done for one’s own needs. After the opening of the first fish plant, and the development of a fish processing industry, fishermen increasingly began to work with the industry. Men would fish and regularly sail to sell their catch on the fish markets of Trieste, Izola and Koper, as well as women, who very early started to work at the plants.” The French company Société Générale Française C.A. established here the first plant as early as 1879. The plant, which has changed its name and owner a number of times, is still active, now widely known Izola Delamaris. In 1882 a Viennese businessman Carlo Warhanek established a plant in Izola that, in addition to fish tins, produced agricultural fertiliser from fish waste.

FISHING SCHOOL

Vinko Oblak explains that due to the emigration of Istrians to Italy, many of them fishermen, professional fishermen have been widely sought: “That is why already in 1950 there were initiatives for the establishment of a fishing school. In 1951 a fishing school with a one-year programme was established. The curriculum comprised core subjects, navigation and fishing basics, and specialised subjects. In the first years, the school also operated its own ship, the Soča. After graduating from the school, most of the students found work in fishing companies Ribič Piran and Riba Izola. The school, whose programme had towards the end been extended to three years, was closed in 1971.

The history of Slovenian fishing shows that hardships were no stranger to the fishermen. The heaviest blows to them were injustices surrounding fishing permits, foreign fishing fleets engaging in unregulated fishing in Slovenian territorial waters, secret agreements between governments and at times somewhat unreliable legislation.

Mullet fishing in the Portorož marine reserve no doubt had an important place in Slovenian fishing. The catch averaged between two or three to ten railway carriages of fish (a carriage weighs 10 tons). The catch was important, in the town of Piran it was the most significant event of the year.

Fishermen used to fish by trawling (with a fishing net being pulled along the sea floor), purse seining (net laid in a circular form), and dredging (fishing equipment dragged across the sea floor). Net fishermen used various types of nets (bottom-set grillnet, single-walled nets, three-walled nets, combined and floating nets). Fishermen also used various fish traps (fyke net, "saltarel", "seraja", pot). They also used longline, pot, fished at night with artificial light, and gathered marine organisms ("aquaculture").

LOST OPPORTUNITIES

"Mullet fishing in the Portorož marine reserve no doubt had an important place in Slovenian fishing. The catch averaged between two or three to ten railway carriages of fish (a carriage weighs 10 tons). The catch was important, in the town of Piran it was the most significant event of the year. A big catch meant a feast for all citizens of Piran and the surrounding countryside, and the fish were shipped all the way to Trieste. The scent of mullet pervaded the town of Piran," tells Vinko Oblak.

Of all the means and types of fishing in the Gulf of Trieste, tuna fishing has been the most profitable. Slovenians had exclusive rights to tuna fishing, as testified by the Adriatic coast fishing regulation issued on 7 August 1835. It granted the coastal residents complete ownership over the Northern part of the Adriatic.

The method Slovenian fishermen used to fish for tuna was unique to these parts and can therefore legitimately be named Slovenian tuna fishing, to differentiate it from other fishing methods. It was characterised by the special use of nets, scouting posts and the orthographic position of the Karst edge. The last great catch was in 1954, when at one time more than 800 tuna fish were caught. With that, however, the old tradition of Slovenian tuna fishing had come to an end.

Fishing became increasingly less profitable, forcing fishermen to take up other professions. Slovenian vessels have also completely faded from memory. One of the authentic sea vessels was "čupa", a type of canoe first attested in 1621. Using čupa, in 1730 Slovenian fishermen caught a whale.

DISAPPEARING SLOVENIAN FISHERMEN

To prevent overfishing, the European Union began to decrease the size of fishing fleets, a decision generally greeted by Oblak. However, he stresses that: "the fishermen that give up fishing are entitled to compensation and are reimbursed, provided they send their vessels for scrapping. In this way, invaluable maritime heritage is being destroyed." Oblak is convinced this could be resolved with a special fund. Fishermen who would want to give up their trade would be provided compensation, without being forced to destroy their boats and fishing equipment. The material heritage would be passed on to a museum, which would have to guarantee the vessels would not be used for fishing. On the other hand, the fishermen could, on special occasions, present traditional fishing methods, preserving the memory of a profession that was once a vital source of income for the local population. Such an arrangement would pave the road for a fishing museum that was already in the past proposed by the Sergej Mašera

Maritime Museum.

SLOVENIANS HAVE ALWAYS FISHED IN THE ENTIRE GULF OF PIRAN

If we return to the issue of arbitration, the most important aspect is chronology, from which point in time we look at the issue, believes Oblak: "One thing is certain: until recently, Piran fishermen have fished in the entire Gulf of Piran."

"Since the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the fishing area has been reduced considerably, and the legislation has changed. Much too frequently the legislation has been copied without sufficiently verifying the effect it will have in our specific case. Here fishing experts could have done more," says Oblak as he voices his critique.

The history of Slovenian fishing shows that hardships were no stranger to the fishermen. The heaviest blows to them were injustices surrounding fishing permits, foreign fishing fleets engaging in unregulated fishing in Slovenian territorial waters, secret agreements between governments – among others between the Yugoslav and Italian government – and at times somewhat unreliable legislation.

"Slovenians are certainly a nation of fishermen, too. Yet, in the future, will we be able to recognise that as an opportunity?" wonders Vinko Oblak. Will we?



Photo: Simon Podgoršek/Mostphotos

Mussels grower Mitja Petrič

Freshness of our mussels is ensured with optimal logistics

Mitja Petrič from Izola has been a mussels grower since 2005. His company's main activity is growing the Mediterranean mussels and its farms are located along the coast of Debeli rtič, Strunjan and Sečovlje. He also harvests shellfish, offers diving services and performs underwater construction works. Protection of the sea is also one of the company's activities.

Photo: Maurizio Pujlese



Recently we have renewed the mussel farm, which brought great optimization to our production system. The investments were 60% co-financed through the measure “Productive investments in aquaculture”, which makes part in a package of EEC measures for fisheries under the managing authority Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Agricultural Markets and Rural Development.

When did you start growing mussels and which species do you grow?

First we started harvesting wild mussels like warty venus (lat. Venus Verrucosa) and Noah's Ark shell (lat. Arca Noae). Expansion of activities in the direction of shellfish farming has been an obvious upgrade of our work. We started with mussels farming in 2005 by signing the concession contract for the cultivation of Mediterranean mussels (lat. Mytilus Galoprovincialis) and clams at the Debeli rtič area. After that we have received the concession for the Strunjan and Sečovelje areas. Our growing area comprises a total of 95,355 m². As a result of the modernisation of growing species we are planning to produce 300 to 400 tons of Mediterranean mussels and 6 tons of clams per year. Recently we have renewed the mussel farm, which brought great optimization to our production system. The investments were 60% co-financed through the measure "Productive investments in aquaculture", which makes part in a package of EEC measures for fisheries under the managing authority Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Agricultural Markets and Rural Development.

Can you describe the process of mussels growing? How long do the mussels need to grow to be suitable for harvesting?

The cultivation technique of Mediterranean mussels is relatively simple. Additional food is not needed for this type of breeding. The Mediterranean mussels' growth is caused by seawater filtration that provides food for the mussels' growth and development. Usually they are growing in the tidal area, where they do not have the right conditions for constant growth and development due to the shallow waters. Artificial farms provide better growing conditions for the Mediterranean mussels in a natural environment. The Mediterranean mussels are constantly surrounded by nourishing seawater and constant growing conditions are provided.

Mediterranean mussels are grown in growing lines which are 170 m long. These areas are composed of carrier floats with a volume of approx. 160 l. The floats are fastened together with a load-bearing rope

at the distance of approx. 10 m. Clusters of mussels in growing nets are hanged on load-bearing ropes. The mussels reach the suitable size in 16 to 18 months depending on the conditions (water temperature, density of population etc.). During growth Mediterranean mussels need to be transplanted at least once. The planted offspring grows slowly through the growing net's holes. Consequently, when the majority of Mediterranean mussels grows out of the net, they have to be transplanted to growing nets with larger holes. Excessive mussels' overgrowth can be prevented with a correct transplantation. Mature mussels that reach the commercial size are harvested with an appropriately equipped boat. The mussels are then sorted on the boat. Before they are sold in the domestic market they are bacteriologically purified in the Centre for purification and shipping of mussels. Foreign buyers provide bacteriological purification themselves.

Clams are also cultivated using a breeding system in which additional food is not used. The clams' growth is caused by seawater filtration that provides food for the mussels' growth and development. The clams usually grow in the areas with natural sand. Their growth depends on the water temperature. The optimal growing temperature ranges from 12 to 20°C. The artificial farms provide the best growing conditions for clams. The water temperature at the farm is constantly as close to the optimal temperature as possible.

What is the process of distribution and the sale of mussels? Which market is the most interesting for you at the moment?

Closeness of Italian market is very important for Slovenia. It is one of the largest in Europe, and in order to meet its demands between 20 and 30% of its consumption has to be imported, which is why we currently sell all our mussels to Italian wholesalers.

One of your main goals is to meet the needs of our target consumers by providing healthy and superior quality seafood produced using modern, environmentally friendly technologies.

Shellfish such as mussels and

clams are very nutritious and are a valuable source of unsaturated omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids. They are rich in vitamin B1, high in protein and minerals such as iodine, zinc and phosphorus. Freshness is essential in shellfish consumption, which is why we provide optimum logistic to our clients, which means that mussels are delivered from the sea to the wholesale store within the same day.

Protection of the sea is also one of your important activities.

In 2013 we purchased a new vessel to expand our core business to other complementary areas, namely, providing underwater works in shellfish farms and ports as well as protection of the sea. Protection of the sea is an activity of general interest and is carried out in cooperation with the Administration of the Republic of Slovenia for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief for training and interventions at sea. The vessel serves to set booms in case of spillage of hazardous substances into the sea. The booms limit the spread of hazardous substances into the environment. The project was 85% co-financed through a tender of FLAG "FISHERMAN" for implementation of the Local Development Strategy, which was approved by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment for Sustainable development of fisheries areas - axis 4.

What are your plans for the future?

We are in the final stage of optimization of the production process. In the future, we plan to expand our supply by breeding new species of mussels.

Which mussels are the most delicious according to your taste? Do you prepare them by yourself? Can you share any recipes with us?

Clams are certainly the most appropriate for special occasions. They are most commonly eaten raw served on ice with lemon as an appetizer, gratinated or prepared in a risotto or pasta.

Steamed or grilled Mediterranean mussels are an indispensable dish on the menu if you are hosting a larger group of guests.

Freshness is essential in shellfish consumption, which is why we provide optimum logistic to our clients, which means that mussels are delivered from the sea to the wholesale store within the same day.

Steamed Mediterranean mussels with a white wine sauce

Preparation time: 30 min

Ingredients for 4 persons:

- 3 kg fresh Mediterranean mussels in shells
- 6 grains of garlic
- 4 spoons of chopped parsley
- 4 dl white wine
- 4 spoons of olive oil
- 3 spoons of bread crumbs

Clean the mussels with a kitchen knife to remove the threads between the shells and rinse under running water. Remove the mussels which are already open. Chop the garlic and parsley. Heat the olive oil in a pot and add the mussels. Stir a minute or two then add the garlic. Cover with a lid and cook for 5 minutes and mix occasionally during cooking. Add wine, parsley and bread crumbs, mix well and cook for approx. 5-7 minutes. Check if the majority of the mussels is open. Serve the dish. Be sure to remove the mussels that have not opened.

Clams with pasta

Preparation time: 15 min

Ingredients for 4 persons:

- 300 g spaghetti or wide noodles
- 600 g fresh clam in shells
- 2 grains of garlic
- Mediterranean spices
- 1 dl white wine
- Olive oil

Wash the clams together with shells in water to remove residues of sand, and then place them in a pot with wine, garlic and Mediterranean spices. Cover the pot and cook for 5 minutes on high heat. Drain the mussels, filter the remaining liquid and enrich it with 2 tablespoons of olive oil added to the obtained sauce. Add the cooked pasta to the sauce and serve warm.

We love Slovenia

When speaking of a certain country, we cannot discount its core – its people. People are what give a country its character, its soul, and that special something that sets it apart from other countries. Similarly, the design, the identity of the national brand I Feel Slovenia was born from that which makes Slovenians special.



The elements of this brand represent the common denominator of Slovenians and Slovenia, as well as other aspects of the country and its society. The story of Slovenia and its national brand is therefore the story of Slovenia itself. Just two million people, the number of people in our country, shape us significantly, and give us certain uniqueness.

A SOCIETY OF INDIVIDUALS WITH COMMON GOALS

We are committed and we are ardent in whatever we undertake, putting all our energy into it, regularly setting the bar, as we are all full of élan. We are always active and on the move, which is attested by our – almost prover-

bial – industry. We do not hide our desire for validity. We do whatever we like as individuals. As a result, we do not share one grand feature which would stand out, but we do form small, niche points of interest, which are tangible for all of us, and which express our character. By making our personal interests a reality, we have preserved our Slovenianism throughout the centuries. We love Slovenia, we feel it, and we want to preserve it for future generations.

We are a nation of individuals who, exactly because it was made possible for us, follow our personal desires, and we would like to give that back to society – with charity work, by collabo-

rating with associations, and by organizing local events. We join associations, which are often founded on volunteerism. We know the meaning of solidarity, as our numerous volunteer firefighters and other volunteers showed, when Slovenia was encased in ice this winter. They did everything in their power to help the people affected by the natural catastrophe. This is the way we as individuals like to contribute to the society we live in, and to show how much we care about Slovenia.

Family and health are among our highest values, as well as responsibility, a symbiosis with nature, and athleticism. Safety is important to us, which is some

Family and health are among our highest values, as well as responsibility, a symbiosis with nature, and athleticism.



thing you can acutely feel in Slovenia. It is interesting that, although we travel often, we rarely move, as we are fond of the environment in which we live, and we are connected to it by tradition. We are individualists, but at the same time team-players. We believe in solidarity, as proven by our numerous associations which work on an exclusively volunteer basis.

CULTURE IS WHAT MAKES US SPECIAL

Slovenian is a language, one of the few that uses – in addition to singular and plural – the dual. We are known for speaking foreign languages well. In terms of culture and art, the story of Slovenians is quite unique: almost every Slovene is a poet, painter,

chef, dancer, sailor, vintner, fisherman, musician, actor, blogger, or sculptor. We can make art out of whatever it is that we love. In addition to being jacks of all trades, the qualities of which have been passed down through the centuries from generation to generation, Slovenians have been quite successful also in the modern arts, which are accessible to every generation. On the other hand, our various cultural events are also very well-attended.

SLOVENIANS HAVE CONTRIBUTED CONSIDERABLY TO THE GLOBAL WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE

Even during the times when research was conducted only by candlelight, scientists were caught up in their fascination

with things which were incomprehensible or misunderstood by the majority of us. In their zeal for understanding, they knew no boundaries.

That eagerness is still alive and well, as are the innumerable scientific discoveries, athletic achievements, taste for the spice of life, commitment to sustainable development, responsibility for future generations, our respect for nature... all of this shows that we Slovenians can and will. Beyond any doubt.

**I FEEL
SLOVENIA**

We are known for speaking foreign languages well. In terms of culture and art, the story of Slovenians is quite unique: almost every Slovene is a poet, painter, chef, dancer, vintner, musician, actor, blogger, or sculptor.

Toshl

A Personal Finance App

Can you say how much money you spend each month on petrol and food, on toys and gifts? You may be able to give an answer off the top of your head, but wouldn't you rather know the precise number? It would definitely make for better planning and more careful spending.



Photo: Olo Zan

Toshl: Domen Zajc, Jure Vizjak, Dejan Pelzel, Klemen Polanec, Matic Bitenc, Miha Hribar, Matic Oblak (absent), Janez Vreček (absent).

The flood of tools for tracking and managing your finances is old news, but most tools have not proved very user-friendly. Many users could not log and tag their expenses regularly, which unfortunately was the only way of getting a clear picture of your

spending, says Matic Bitenc, the CEO of the Slovenian start-up that took these shortcomings into account when developing a brand new tool. They called it Toshl.

Toshl is a personal finance app that allows users to track their monthly budget by entering their expenses and income and tagging them with the help of a daily reminder which they set for a specific time of day. The user's balance and spending is translated into attractive visualisations, and a reminder is built in so that users do not forget to pay

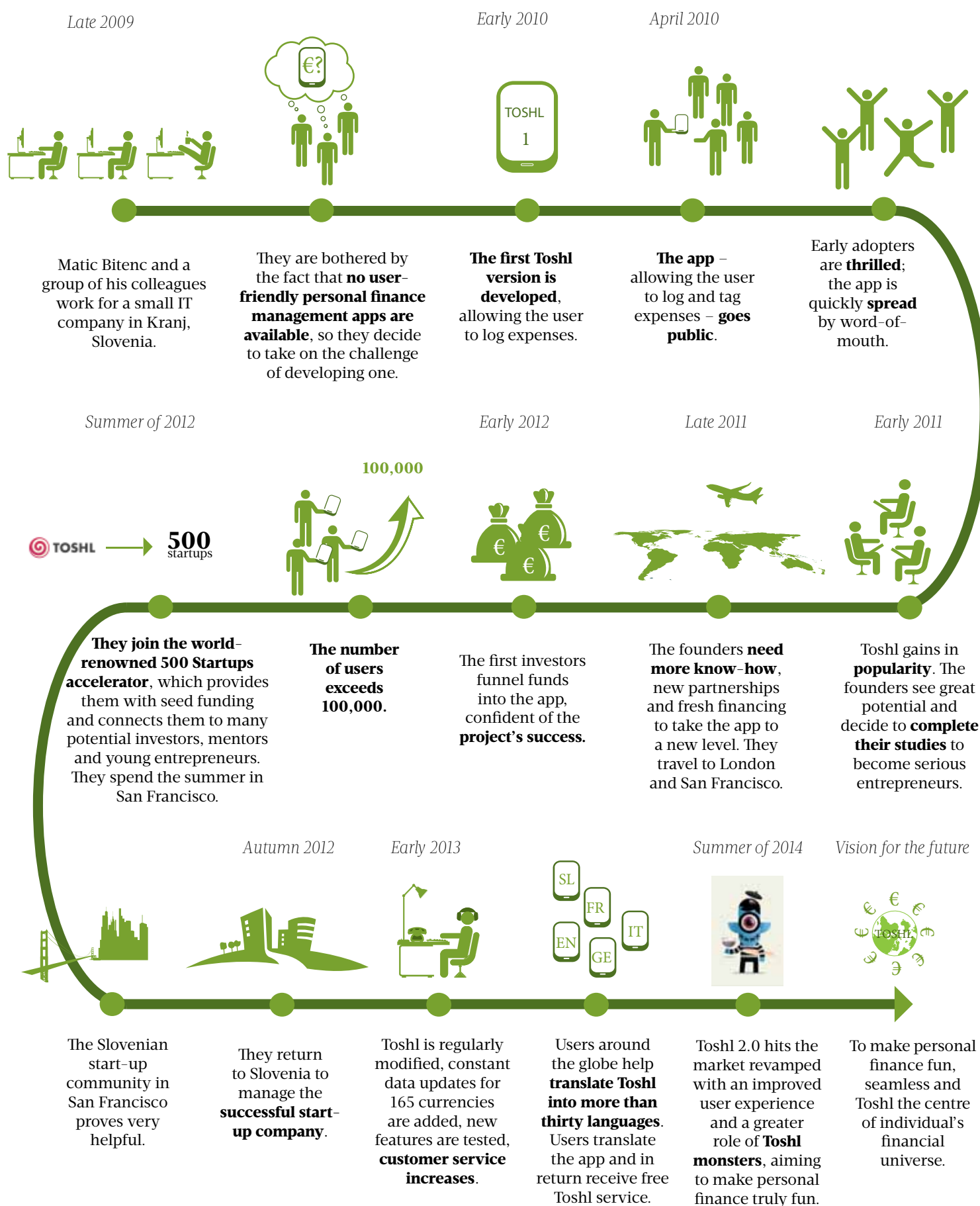
their bills. Toshl is available on the web and can be downloaded to phones or tablets. The app is free to download and use, but more advanced features require a premium subscription. But what makes Toshl different from every other personal finance management tool? In Bitenc's opinion, Toshl's main advantage is the simplicity of data entry: users can enter expenses as they arise and easily track spending.

The platform now boasts 1.7 million users from more than 100 countries, and they all seem to agree with Bitenc.

Toshl's main advantage is the simplicity of data entry.



From a simple idea to the fully-fledged app, here is the story of how this successful project was brought to life by a group of young Slovenian programmers and entrepreneurs.



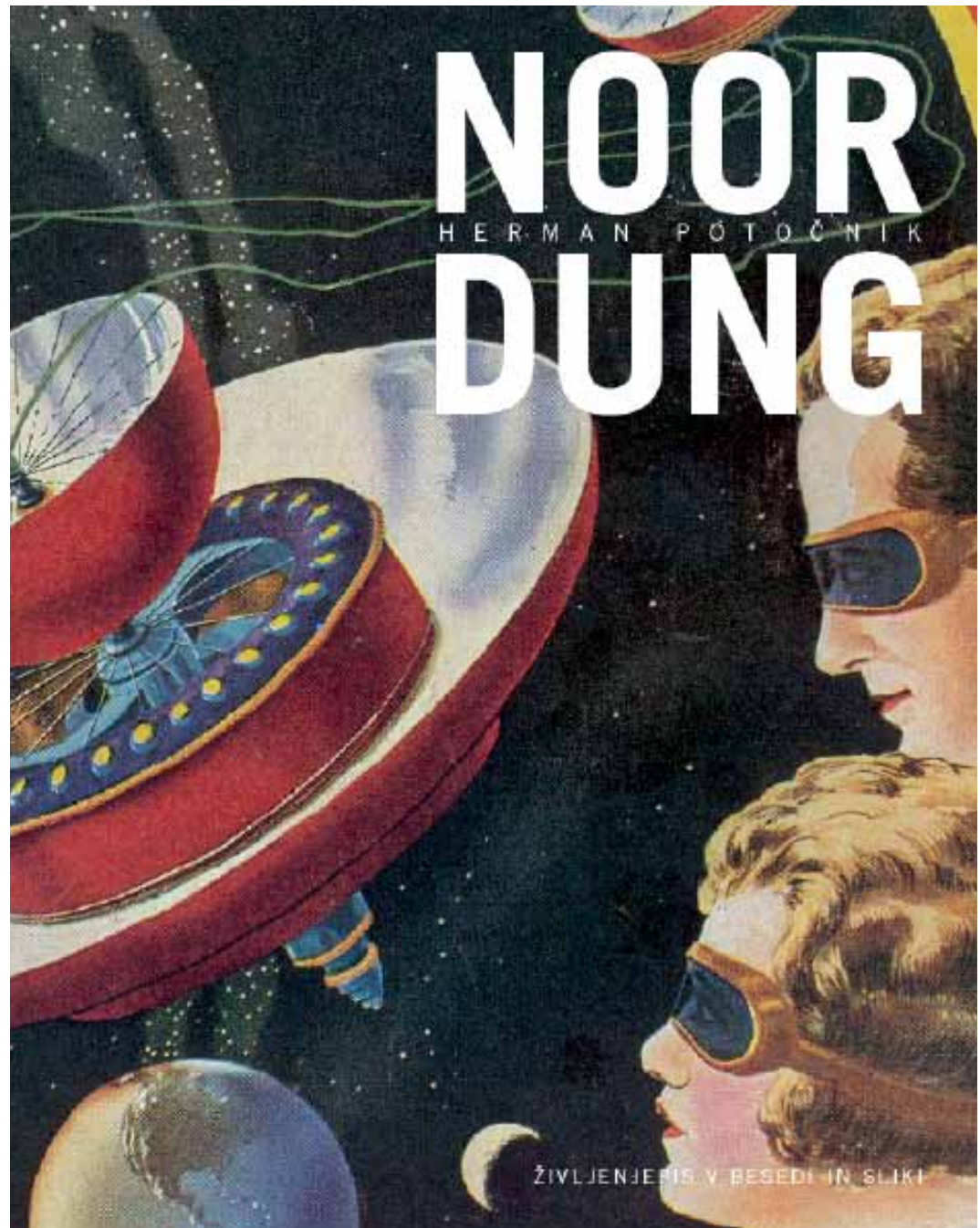
Herman Potočnik Noordung

The life of a shooting star

On 11 April 2014 the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in Vienna - Austria co-organised a celebratory unveiling of a gravestone placed in memorial to Herman Potočnik Noordung, a pioneer of space technology.

The achievements of space technology have time and again confirmed Potočnik's far-sighted predictions and preserved him in the historical memoirs of science, to which he devoted his life.

Front cover "biography"



Meanwhile the Mayor of Vienna, Michael Häupl, immortalised the memory of Potočnik's exceptional scientific accomplishments by granting him an honorary grave.

CELEBRATION CEREMONY IN MEMORY OF NOORDUNG

The celebratory ceremony in memory of Noordung took place in the Evangelical cemetery

Simmering in Vienna. The large audience was welcomed and addressed by Andrej Rahten, Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia in Austria, followed by speeches by Boštjan Žekš, Advisor

to the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Andrej Fištravec, Mayor of Maribor, Karl W. Schwarz, Ministry Counsellor at the Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture of the Republic of Austria and Primož Premzl, the main initiator of the event. The ceremony, in honour of his exceptional scientific achievements and the man that was Herman Potočnik, was also attended by Astrid Rypar from the Department of Culture of the City of Vienna. A cultural note was added by the concert performance of "Sound of the Universe" by the Hugo Wolf Chamber Choir from Maribor.

The memorial cenotaph was blessed by Bishop of the Evangelical Church in Slovenia, Geza Filo and Michael Wolf, Chairman of the Cemetery committee of the Evangelical Augsburg community and Helvetic Church in Vienna.

In the afternoon later that day, Premzl presented a book titled Herman Potočnik Noordung –

življenje v besedi in sliki (Herman Potočnik Noordung – his life in words and pictures) at the Slovenian Scientific Institute of Vienna. With a colourful narrative, he took the audience through the important biographical points of Potočnik's too-short life, which some compared to that of a shooting star's – a tiny piece of an immense universe, that appears suddenly, shines brightly for a short while, then disappears forever.

But the memories of the life and work of Herman Potočnik have not disappeared. The achievements of space technology have time and again confirmed Potočnik's far-sighted predictions and preserved him in the historical memoirs of science, to which he devoted his life. The tribute to him, on 11 April 2014, at his last resting place, has again revived the memory of his person, wide and unlimited – just like the universe.



Photo: Simona Meninger

Tombstone

Herman Potočnik, born in Pula (Croatia) in 1892, on the periphery of the then Austro-Hungarian Empire, had Slovenian parents – his father Josef was from Slovenj Gradec and his mother Maria (maiden name Kokoschinegg) was from Maribor. After his father's death in 1894 the Potočnik family relocated to Maribor where young Herman spent the better part of his childhood in the capital of the Slovenian region of Štajerska, which today thrives on the memory of the famous "fellow citizen".

He studied at the University of Technology in Vienna, Faculty of engineering in the department of electrical engineering, and he graduated in 1925. Not long after, in October 1928 (the year of publication is noted as 1929), under the pseudonym of Herman Noordung, his book "Das Problem der Befahrung des Weltraums. Der Raketen-Motor", appeared in Berlin and brought him the reputation as one of the founders of space technology. In this book he outlined a plan for a breakthrough into space and human habitation there, he considered the technical solutions to the questions of space medicine, while at the same time warning about the dangers that advancement in space technology could bring. Potočnik is considered the inventor of synchronous orbits for geostationary satellites; his rocket motor became the predecessor of the modern reactive motor.

After his death in August 1929, as a member of the Evangelical Church, he was buried in the Evangelist cemetery in Vienna. Over the years, however, the rent for his gravesite was left unpaid and in 1967 was leased to someone else. All traces of Noordung's grave were slowly lost...until 2012, when it was again uncovered by a local history enthusiast from Maribor, Primož Premzl. With the help and guidance of other professionals, Premzl focused his energy on the placement of a new memorial plaque in memory of Potočnik, which was ceremonially unveiled on 11 April, 2014. The ceremony was organised by the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in Austria together with the City Council of Maribor, the Slovenian Scientific Institute of Vienna and the Primož Premzl Office of the Arts in Maribor. It is no coincidence that the date selected for the ceremony was so close to 12 April: the day on which, in 1961, Y. Gagarin was the first man to travel into space and for that reason (in memory of that) The International Day of Human space Flight is being celebrated.

The celebratory ceremony in memory of Noordung took place in the Evangelical cemetery Simmering in Vienna. The large audience was welcomed and addressed by Andrej Rahten, Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia in Austria.

An exhibition of Slovenia's historic cities opens in Brussels

Mystical and magical places

Slovenia's old city centres are attractive, somewhat mystical and magical places with many undiscovered spots. In late March, an exhibition showcasing the beauties and landmarks of Slovenia's historic cities opened in the premises of the European Parliament in Brussels.



The opening of the Cities of Culture exhibition in Brussels.

The cities featured in the exhibition are Idrija, Koper, Kostanjevica na Krki, Kranj, Novo mesto, Piran, Ptuj, Radovljica, Slovenske Konjice, Škofja Loka, Tržič and Žužemberk.

The initiator of the exhibition, entitled The Cities of Culture, was Tanja Fajon, Slovenian MEP, while the organisation was carried out by members of the Association of Historic Cities of Slovenia. The purpose of the event is to present the beauty of old Slovenian cities and particularly the characteristics as well as the artistic and historical values of city centres.

The exhibition thus features beautiful and attractive motifs from some of the oldest cities which, since 2001, have been joined in the Association of Historic Cities of Slovenia. The cities featured in

the exhibition are Idrija, Koper, Kostanjevica na Krki, Kranj, Novo mesto, Piran, Ptuj, Radovljica, Slovenske Konjice, Škofja Loka, Tržič and Žužemberk. These cities retain a large part of Slovenia's most valuable cultural heritage. All of them have old city centres which are preserved as cultural monuments but at the same time provide for a vibrant and modern urban lifestyle. The photographs at the exhibition also feature some of the exceptional cultural events and festivals with historic backgrounds, which continue to take place in the city centres.

THE GOALS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF HISTORIC CITIES OF SLOVENIA

The Association of Historic Cities of Slovenia endeavours for an all-round preservation of cultural monuments. The Association is aware that historic cities are millennia old masterpieces whose rich heritage embellishes Slovenia. The aim of the Association is to preserve what endows Slovenia with its soul. As Natalija Polenc, the representative of the Association, said upon the opening of the exhibition in Brussels: "We wish to present Slovenia's cities and their centres as rich



cultural treasures. These are old cities and it is precisely their long history that makes them romantic, attractive, as well as mystical and magical. At the same time, these are also young cities. Their youth may be seen and felt in numerous events, cultural festivals, concerts, exhibits, as well as in the sparkling urban life which adds to the spirit of these cities.”

Host Tanja Fajon highlighted the importance of connecting the heritage of Slovenia’s forefathers with modern and attractive trends. She underlined the importance of preserving rich cultural heritage and further emphasised the charm which distinguishes Slovenia’s old city centres. Their charm is that they can easily be visited within one

day. Fajon went on mentioning that Slovenia is the only country in the world with the word ‘love’ in its name and added that Slovenians take great pride in their country particularly due to its natural assets.

Peter Bossman, the Mayor of Piran and a keynote speaker at the event, underlined that the goal of connecting cities is to raise awareness of the cultural heritage of Slovenia’s forefathers and to revive the city centres. Bossman invited the guests to visit Slovenia. The exhibition was officially opened by Matjaž Šinkovec, the Ambassador of Slovenia in Belgium. Šinkovec expressed satisfaction at the fact that Slovenia’s historic cities are being displayed in Brussels,

but also warned of the issue of the decay of city centres, which drives many activities and events to urban peripheries.

The exhibition was attended by numerous Slovenian and foreign guests who relished in some Slovenian culinary dishes and a pleasant cultural programme. All guests were delighted at the natural and cultural riches of Slovenia. They were invited by the organisers to soon visit Slovenia and feel the atmosphere of its old city centres.

The Cities of Culture exhibition will be continued in Slovenia where it will be shown in the individual member cities of the Association of Historic Cities of Slovenia.

The opening of the exhibition was enriched by a dance group from Žužemberk performing medieval dances.

We wish to present Slovenia’s cities and their centres as rich cultural treasures. These are old cities and it is precisely their long history that makes them romantic, attractive, as well as mystical and magical.

The Slovenian coast

Yesterday, today and tomorrow

The Slovenian coast is short, yet it is very diverse. The most prominent towns are certainly Koper, Portorož and Piran. Each of them has a completely distinctive vibe: a commercial, entertainment and cultural centre. Those are the first associations.



Photo: Simon Podgoršek/Mosphotos

Furthermore, you should not overlook the Museum of Salt Making, the Tartini house, the Sečovlje Salina and the Strunjan Nature Parks, the Socerb castle and the frescoes in Hrastovlje as well as the Forma viva.

Sečovlje saltpan

Photo: Simon Podgoršek/Mostphotos



Nowadays, different venues from galleries and theatres to numerous outdoor events give these towns their respective cultural vibe. You can notice the fusion of different cultural influences just by listening to the conversations of locals, taste the treats on the Istrian market of Koper or stroll among the stalls at street antique fairs in Piran.

Interesting architectural, ethnological and other cultural heritage is showcased in two central museums, being the Koper Regional Museum and the Sergej Masera Maritime Museum of Piran, as well as with numerous smaller collections. Furthermore, you should not overlook the Museum of Salt Making, the Tartini house, the Sečovlje Salina and the Strunjan Nature Parks, the Socerb castle and the fres-

coes in Hrastovlje as well as the Forma viva. Throughout the year the following traditional events take place in the Slovenian Istria: the Asparagus Festival, the Saltpan Workers' Festival, the Festival of Refoššk, From Winemaker to Olive Grower, the Festival of Olives, Wine and Fish, the Sagra Village Festival, the Fishing Holiday, St. Bartholomew's Festival, Sweet Istria, St. Martin's Day, and the Persimmon Festival.

Piran

The Slovenian Istria is opening its doors to everybody and wins everyone's heart.

Strunjan

Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik/Mostphotos





Izola

Throughout the year the following traditional events take place in the Slovenian Istria: the Asparagus Festival, the Salt-pan Workers' Festival, the Festival of Refošk, From Wine-maker to Olive Grower, the Festival of Olives, Wine and Fish, the Sagra Village Festival, the Fishing Holiday, St. Bartholomew's Festival, Sweet Istria, St. Martin's Day, and the Persimmon Festival.

PORT TOWN

The oldest settlement of the Koper island dates back to the times of the Roman Republic. Towards the end of the Roman Empire there was a large settlement located on the island. And in the late classical antiquity it was one of the strongholds of the Claustrum Alpinum Iularium defence system.

During the 8th century the Slavic people settled in the hinterlands of the Istrian towns. In 932, Koper established connections with the Venetians who ensured safer seafaring. However, they slowly subdued the town through various treaties. Until 1208, the town was ruled by the Istrian border counts and the Aquileia Patriarch. During this period it retained its statutes. After a longer time of independence, Koper and other towns of Istria came

under the command of the Venetians in 1279. In the 15th century, it obtained a privileged position in the commercial and administrative areas. At the turn of the 15th century money exchange offices, banks and craft workshops were established in Koper. More and more Slovenians who practised salt making, fishery and agriculture moved there.

It should also be noted that the plague ravaged the town in the years 1630/31, drastically reducing the town's population. The town's population finally recovered in the middle of the 17th century. The important role of Koper as a commercial power lasted until 1719 when Trieste and Rijeka were proclaimed as free ports. However, Koper lost its important maritime and trade role with the downfall of the Venetian Republic (1797) and com-

pletion of the Vienna-Trieste railway line.

Strong economical development of Koper started after the year 1954 when the London Memorandum was signed. In 1957 they started to build a port – the Port of Koper on the eastern side of the old town. Following that year, more and more Slovenians as well as people from other parts of Yugoslavia started moving into the town.

Recently, Koper was put on the map of cruise ships that choose this Mediterranean town as one of their tourist destinations. The town offers excellent public bathing areas and nearby there is also the Škocjanski zatok (Škocjan marshes) – a wetlands reserve rich in plant and animal life (220 bird species, 18 fish species, frogs, reptiles, etc.)

SLOVENIAN LAS VEGAS

Its start can be traced back to Roman times. The archaeological finds give evidence to the numerous estates that were located on prestigious locations. Later on churches, monasteries, villas, houses of colonial farmers (colons) and hotels were erected. The most important role in the history of Portorož was held by the monastery of Saint Laurence where the Benedictine monks used highly concentrated sea water – brine and the black saltpan mud to treat rheumatic disorders, oedema and other diseases. The board of aldermen became aware of the possibilities for the development of tourism only in the 19th century. Following the year 1885, the arrival of many hotel guests dictated the construction of villas and guest houses. In addition, it also encouraged circles of intellectuals, bankers and entrepreneurs in 1890 to establish a joint-stock company for building a spa and bathing house in Portorož and erect the first grander hotel – Palace Hotel. Spa tourism was later interrupted by the World Wars I and II and, therefore, tourism of the town began to thrive more intensively only after the year 1970.

Sea, salt, wind, Mediterranean fragrances, palms, roses and evergreen plants, relaxation, entertainment and sociability are the words which you could most easily use to describe the atmosphere in present-day Portorož. The Central Maritime College Portorož, the Faculty of Maritime Studies and Transport and the College of Tourism and Hotel Management operate in Portorož. Moreover, the head office of the Splošna plovba Piran, International Shipping and Chartering, Ltd is located there as well.

A TOWN OF NARROW STREETS

The old port town is located at the tip of the Piran peninsula. They started building villas already in the Roman period. However, denser settlement oc-

curred only after the end of the Roman period. Slavic colonisation started at the end of the 6th century with violent Avaric and Slavic invasions into Istria. For a long time Piran held good relations with the Venetian Republic that provided protection, but the town also endeavoured for its independence and sought an ally in the town of Koper. In the 19th century Imperial Austria once more brought prosperity to Piran. This was mainly due to the salt-pans since Austria considerably expanded the Sečovlje salt-pans with the revival of salt production.

Currently, Piran is a tourist town. It retained its medieval layout with narrow streets and closely-built houses that ascend from the coastline in a cascading fashion towards the top of the town hill and thus give the entire ambient a typically Mediterranean character. The main square – the Tartini Square – got its name after the composer Giuseppe Tartini who was born in Piran. Tartini was a violinist, composer and musical educator who composed more than 300 musical pieces, some of which belong among the best musical creations of the 18th century. However, the town has one additional peculiarity: the modern open air sculpture collection on the Seča peninsula opposite Portorož. The international Forma Viva Sculpture Symposium was established in 1961 under the initiative of the Slovenian artists Jakob Savinšek and Janez Lenassi.

Piran mainly offers boutique tourism. The narrow streets hide many small boutiques with artworks. The town often hosts various exclusive concerts and shows on the Tartini Square or in one of the winding streets. And although you might think that the Slovenian coastline is short, you will find out that it is extremely picturesque while travelling along it. Besides Koper, Portorož and Piran you will be also astonished by other towns: Izola, Strunjan, Lucija, Ankaran, Sečovlje, etc. The Slovenian Istria is opening its doors to everybody and wins everyone's heart.



Photo: Irena Tomaszewska/Mosphtotos



Photo: Simon Podgoršek/Mosphtotos



Photo: Simon Podgoršek/Mosphtotos



Photo: Jure Porenta/Mosphtotos

The Old Hand

A unique old-style wooden boat in Piran

»When I saw the almost sunken and ruined boat, I said to myself that it has to be mine.« And his wish came true.



Photo: Janez Mužič

The Old Hand

The Piran pier offers a magnificent view on the swinging old boats that are the pride of their owners.

In 1982 he rescued his beauty that was falling apart and looked like a thatched roof rather than a boat. He brought it to Piran and turned it into a beautiful queen of the sea.

The long-time president of the Association of old-style boats amateurs of Piran Janez Šabec told us that his Old Hand (Stari maček) has been defying the effects of sea and time for 108 years. In addition to that it is the oldest Slovene boat. 32 years ago he had saved the ruined boat and carefully restored it. »It has all the characteristics of big boats« said Šabec: a new set of sails, a beautiful kitchen and a toilet.

He safely floats with his beauty along the Dalmatian coast (in Croatia). The 9 meters long wooden boat was previously named Saint Nikola but its owner renamed it the Old Hand. The name originates from his scout days.

He is member of the Association of old-style boats amateurs of Piran. The association counts approximately 30 old-style boats owners. The members of the association traditionally gather in mid-May at an International old boat regatta in Piran. The Piran pier offers a magnificent view on the swinging old boats that are the pride of their owners.

Significant amounts of money and working hours are invested for their maintenance every year. Their capabilities are demonstrated at the regatta from Portorož to Piran. Šabec has experienced lots of adventures at sea. In particular, he remembers the Barcolana regatta. He finished the regatta second in the old-boats category out of 60-80 participants. Šabec told us that women are unwanted abroad the Old Hand during the Barcolana or other regattas. In his experience, women bring bad luck during competitions. Otherwise they are most welcome aboard.

PIRAN REGATTA

The unique Piran regatta that takes place in May was first organized 36 years ago. Since then it is organized once a year in the Gulf of Piran. Similar »old-timer« events are not common in Istria and Dalmatia (Croatia), however, they are quite popular in Italy. Usually about 28 boats participate in the competition. Some of them are more than hundred years old carefully maintained boats, others are of a later date but constructed according to old plans. Tourists as well as nostalgic locals are impressed by attractive scenes offered by the event that is part of the nautical heritage.

The regatta's purpose is socializing. During the competition

Italian, Croatian, Austrian and Slovenian boat flags are flapping in the wind. The competition is about socializing with old boats' enthusiasts. The community of Piran supports the regatta as well as the Salt pans Feast and the Boat Procession from Piran to Strunjan. The Association includes 30 boats and 60 sea enthusiasts. The association members do a lot of work by themselves and they help each other as boat restoration is an expensive hobby, however, it significantly contributes to the preservation of nautical heritage. Over the last decades wooden boats are being replaced by boats made of plastic. Despite the members' strong efforts and investments, only one or two boats are saved from ruin per year in Slovenia.



Photo: GCO

Left: Janez Šabec
Below: The Old Hand at the open sea.

Photo: Janez Mužič



Piran salt

Salt flower with a distinctive fragrance of the sea

At the end of April, Piran salt was registered with a protected designation of origin by the European Commission. After grinding, a grain of salt has a distinctive fragrance of the sea.



Photo: Aarstudio/Mosphotos

Sečovlje saltpan

Piran salt is sea salt that is extracted exclusively in the area of the Sečovlje and Strunjan saltpans from the natural mat, the so-called petola.

Piran salt is sea salt that is extracted exclusively in the area of the Sečovlje and Strunjan saltpans from the natural mat, the so-called petola. Petola is a one-centimetre thick, artificially cultivated crust consisting of cyanobacteria, gypsum, carbonate minerals and to a smaller extent, also clay. Petola has a dual role – on the one hand the salt does not mix with sea mud and hence it is cleaner and whiter. It also functions as a biological filter that retains the incorporation of individual heavy metal ions into the salt crystal.

USING ONLY TRADITIONAL TOOLS

Piran salt is produced following a more than 700-year old tradition of the daily collection of salt using only traditional tools, and which is done exclusively on a manual basis. During the crys-

tallisation, salt forms into white or grey crystals with possible remaining natural impurities. Because of the collection method, the crystals are fragile and quickly soluble.

After grinding, a grain of salt has a distinctive fragrance of the sea. Piran salt – salt flower crystallises on the surface of the brine in the crystallisation pools which gives it a special distinctive crystal structure that holds the brine. The form of the crystal and the brine which it holds contribute to its faster solubility. Piran salt is unrefined and is not washed; therefore it contains naturally balanced minerals and no additives.

SALT-PAN WORKERS' FESTIVAL

Every year, usually in the month of April, the town of Piran and

the Sečovlje Salina Nature Park organise a traditional event – the Salt-pan Workers' Festival. The purpose of the event is primarily to show the life of salt-pan workers in the past, and today. Salt used to be worth more than gold. It is especially evident from the so-called salt contracts. Thanks to the salt trade, the inhabitants of Slovenia living by the sea have not felt any shortage. Of all the salts from the Mediterranean basin which the Venetian Republic traded with, the northern Adriatic variety, produced on petola, was the most highly valued. It was the cleanest, whitest and firmest. It is interesting to note that until the 18th century the collection of salt flower – that very product that is most valued and commercially viable today – was strictly prohibited.

Photo: Domen Grög/Mostphotos



Salt – pan worker.

Photo: Aarstudio/Mostphotos



Sečovlje Salina Nature Park.

The Mediterranean cuisine

Well known and appreciated throughout the world

The Fritolin fish restaurant is a modest and unassuming place, at least from its outer appearance. It is a small, but cosy establishment in the centre of Portorož, at the sea coast. The restaurant is unique by having its own fishing boat and most of the fish are caught on the same day as they are offered to guests.



Photo: Oran Tanapajakul/Mosphotos

Mussels, white wine and parsley

Fritolin started as a small canteen with barely two tables. It gradually expanded and now offers a good deal of tables and the number of guests is also increasing.

“Fishermen’s huts may be poor, but they are tidy. Fishermen are sober-minded and prudent people. They know how to make their goulash-like soup for lunch. They like conversing and smoking their pipes. Life has toughened them and their life expectancy is unusually long.”
Edition Istrien from 1863 (in: Vinčec 2009, p. 90)

The owners of the restaurant are former fishermen, too. They also own a fish shop, which was once located in the same place where the restaurant stands today. The restaurant is proof that the outer appearance is not enough to win guests. Offering fresh food and

kind services may be more important. And there are plenty of both at Fritolin, as it may be seen by the long queues of people patiently waiting to get a free table. In order not to keep too many people waiting, the restaurant does not serve coffee or deserts, as these would make guests stay longer. Given the limited number of available tables, the restaurant cannot afford to do so. Fritolin started as a small canteen with barely two tables. It gradually expanded and now offers a good deal of tables and the number of guests is also increasing.

Like any good restaurant, Fri-

tolin offers seasonal dishes. Throughout the year, guests may relish delicious Mediterranean calamari, which are said to be larger and tastier than other sorts of squids. Due to increasing demand, Fritolin may soon no longer be able to fulfil all the expectations of its guests, whose growing numbers are exceeding the restaurant’s original capacities. Fritolin claims to offer the cheapest prices of all restaurants. For health reasons, the oil in which fish are cooked is changed 2 to 3 times a day. Calamari and fish soup are the most popular choices of Fritolin’s guests. Its staple foods are tomatoes, on-

ions, bay leaves and other herbs. Most of the guests are Slovenians, but there is also an increasing number of guests from Russia.

Mediterranean cuisine is praised as being healthy and promoting longevity. Its benefits are recognised both by medical experts and food specialists. Most dishes are simple but absolutely delicious and are made from natural and healthy ingredients. The Mediterranean diet is primarily based on plant foods like vegetables – aubergines, courgettes, red peppers, artichokes, tomatoes, cereals – wheat, rice, spelt, corn, barley), legumes – chickpeas, peas, beans, fruits–grapes, figs, peaches, apricots, fresh spices – basil, thyme, rosemary, marjoram and olive oil. Olive oil has been a staple part of Mediterranean cuisine since ancient times. Due to its high content in unsaturated fatty acids (up to 80 per cent), it is considered to be beneficial to the heart and the vascular system. Fish and other sea-

food are also an important part of Mediterranean food, particularly blue fish such as sardines, tuna, mackerels and anchovies, all of which are abundant in the Mediterranean sea. Fish are rich in iodine, which is an important element in the healthy functioning of thyroid gland. They are also rich in proteins which promote an overall healthy organism and in omega-3 fatty acids which protect the heart and the vascular system.

Here are some typical Mediterranean dishes to help bring a warm Mediterranean aroma into your home: aubergine mousaka, paella with meat, sausage and shrimps, meat lasagna, ratatouille, falafel, tapenade, salad Nicoise, bouillabaisse, grilled anchovies and vegetables, Mediterranean fried chicken, shish kebab with rosemary, spaghetti with seafood, greek chicken shish kebab, baklava with almonds and pistachios, tiramisu.



Photo: GCO

Fritolin is always full and it is often necessary to book a table.

Photo: Valery Baneira/Mosphotos



Tuna

Vasilij Žbogar

The best Slovenian sailor

Vasilij Žbogar first sailed in a two-seat sailboat 470 and later in a laser sailboat. After years of hard work that he put into sailing, good results followed with an Olympic bronze medal in Athens 2004, and a silver medal in Beijing in 2008, which made him the first Slovenian to have won an Olympic medal in sailing.

I believe it is one of the most beautiful ways of spending leisure time because you are closely connected with nature and not so much with the everyday life on the coast. There is no mobile phone signal and you feel no burdens.

Žbogar was named Slovenian Sportsman of the year in 2004.

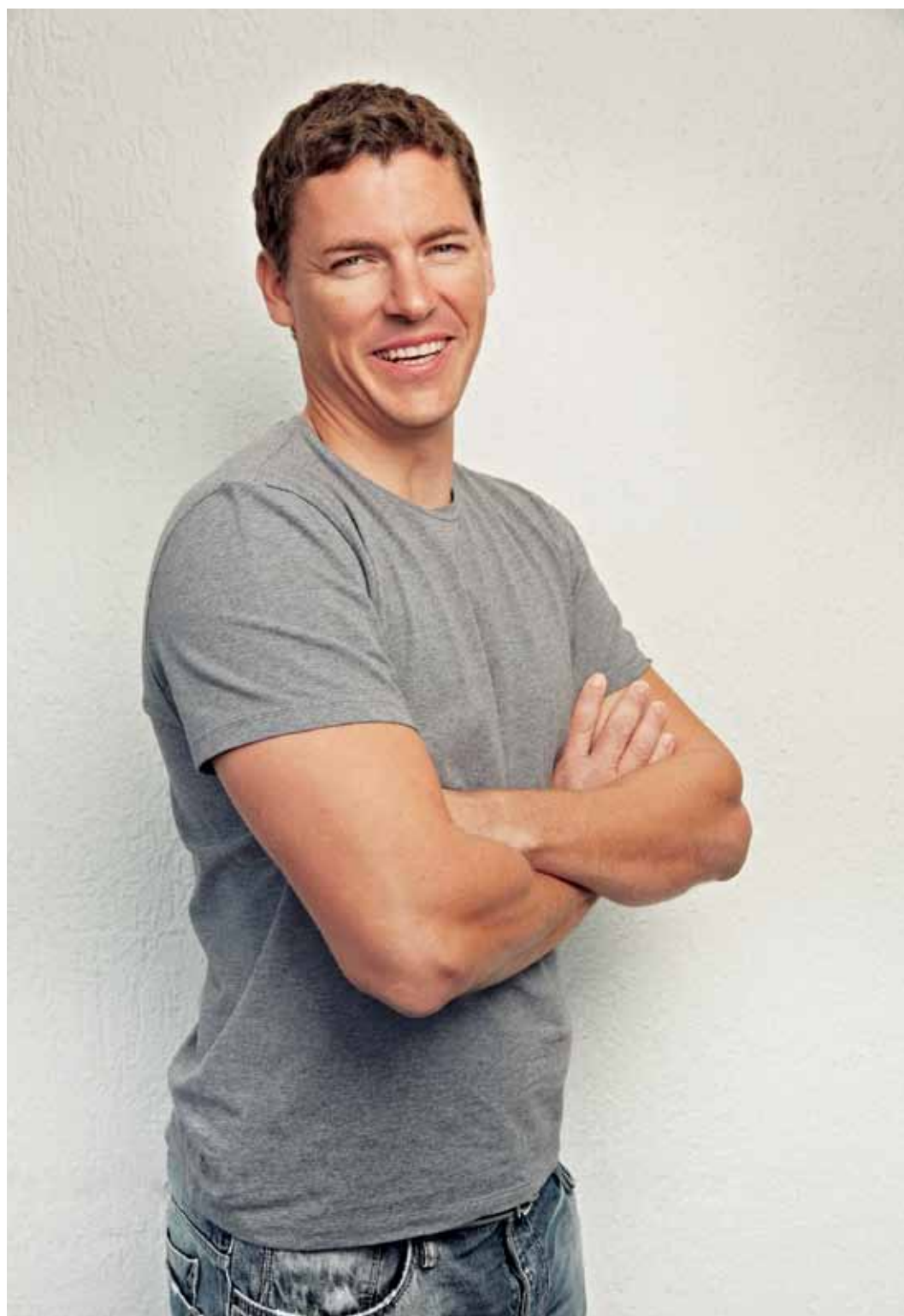


Photo: Personal archive

Photo: Blaž Samec



You have been sailing along the Slovenian coast since your childhood. How did you begin sailing? What are the qualities that a sportsman like you must have?

Like most of the children living at the coast my first experience with sailing was in the sailing school. I first got on board a sailboat aged 7 in the sailing class Optimist in the Burja Izola sailing club. Most children at the coast, and the same thing is still happening nowadays, take up sailing at school in the 2nd and 4th grade. I believe that the qualities are very similar in all sports: perseverance, discipline, desire to succeed, being calm and having a good team! Sailing is a very complex sport that demands a lot of patience because you depend on the nature. Regattas last for 6 days where you spend all the time at sea constantly adapting to weather conditions. Sailing is a combination of both stamina and the skill to control the sailboat.

What are your observations – is there more or less vessel traffic on the Slovenian sea nowadays?

Certainly the vessel traffic has increased considerably in the last period but this is mainly during

the summer. In winter time we are alone on the sea. During the winter there is an increase in visitors only on weekends but it gets crowded on the sea in the summer – our sea dwindles.

What about the summer, do you think that the number of Slovenian tourist vessels, namely sailboats and motorboats is bigger compared to when you started sailing? Are Slovenians a maritime nation that spends their leisure time on the water?

Since I began sailing there was always a lot of vessels on the sea. The only difference is their size. There used to be only smaller vessels on the sea but nowadays you can see vessels of 30 metres and more. Slovenians are a maritime nation in all respects and are also among the most respectful and diligent sailors. Moreover, Slovenians are a maritime nation not only with regard to sailing but also because we manufacture and design sailboats. The company Iskratel is one of the leading manufacturers of the electrical motors for winches. Otherwise I also believe that there is not one Slovenian who does not wish to go to the sea – swimming or

sailing. Let us not forget of the Slovenian seamen – Jure Šterk who sailed around the Atlantic Ocean eight times, the Indian Ocean two times and the Pacific one time. He once sailed around the world in a 6-metre sailboat that he built himself.

What is the interest shown for the sailing sport by the public and youth?

It is very different in individual countries. You can find extremes where sailing is a part of life for example for people living in New Zealand or Australia. But considering that we have a very short coast line, the interest of public and youth is relatively high. Of course, the situation could be better but still more than 300 children visit our sailing club's courses every year. Out of those, 4 to 5 children take up training seriously every year. Unfortunately we have limited capacities. For sake of safety only 6-12 children can train together weekly. Mostly it is the children from coastal towns – Koper, Izola and Piran that take up sailing. However, we would like to include more children from other parts of Slovenia but because this is a sport

His motto is "Crack, but don't give up!"

Like most of the children living at the coast my first experience with sailing was in the sailing school. I first got on board a sailboat aged 7 in the sailing class Optimist in the Burja Izola sailing club.



Upwind -downwind

The main goal is the September World Championship in Santander (Spain) where the first entries for participating at the Olympic Games 2016 in Rio de Janeiro will be given.

that is practised on a daily basis it makes it hard to accomplish this logistically.

Last year you took part in America's Cup as a skipper. Do you believe that a competition on such a level could be organized along the Slovenian coast?

Yes, absolutely. Currently I am also discussing the possibility that one of the America's cup regatta qualification legs would take place in one of the Slovenian coastal towns. Because of its proximity, the Slovenian coast would be interesting for people from Switzerland, Italy and Germany although we would naturally need financial resources for the realisation. Otherwise the America's Cup is a competition where the cup winner competes with a challenger. Each competition has a date, course area, required number of wins and the length of competition set according to the agreement between the defender and the challenger. The America's Cup is one of the most prestigious and oldest international sport competitions.

The catamarans with which you

competed in the America's Cup are very fast vessels. Can you give an estimate of how quickly would you sail the Slovenian coast by moderate South wind or bora?

In less than 30 minutes. With good bora winds and by 40 knots you would need even less than half an hour.

What are your goals this year?

The main goal is the September World Championship in Santander (Spain) where the first entries for participating at the Olympic Games 2016 in Rio de Janeiro will be given. This year's Finn European Championship will take place in May in the French town of La Rochelle, which will be an important test for me before the September World Championship in Santander in Spain.

You won a bronze medal at the Olympic Games in Athens; and in Beijing you won a silver medal in the laser category. Then you moved to the finn category. How are preparations for the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro coming along?

The preparations are underway.

At the moment I am preparing for the fulfillment of norms required for participation at the Olympic Games. Sailing is a complex sport that is practised from dawn to dusk. Besides training at sea, good physical training is also important. It is a difficult sport that takes whole day - besides physical fitness one also has to have knowledge of sailboat control (sails and masts).

How do you otherwise spend your holidays (do you perhaps go sailing in private time)? Do you practice other sports?

It has been almost 5 years since I had a real vacation. Although this may sound strange considering the fact that I spend days on the sea but I like to go on vacation with my sailboat. I believe it is one of the most beautiful ways of spending leisure time because you are closely connected with nature and not so much with the everyday life on the coast. It is the best form of relaxation. There is no mobile phone signal and you feel no burdens. Otherwise I am also cycling and rowing but it is all part of the training.

The Škofič brothers

We want to leave a mark in the Slovenian rugby history

In Slovenia, rugby is a rather marginal sport that does not enjoy much public interest. Therefore, that Saturday in April when the Ljubljana Žak stadium was packed full it seemed even more like a true rugby festival.



Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA



Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA

However, the European Nations Cup competition between Slovenia and Bulgaria with the deserved Slovenian victory was not the only thing that attracted attention. It also had a special family background. The Škofič brothers represented Slovenia at the competition: Jack (28), Max (25), Archie (22), George (21) and Frankie (18). They are not professional athletes and are active in other fields as well. Jack is an economist, Max a graphic designer, Archie a mechanical engineer, while George and Frankie are still students. Max particularly excelled at the competition and was in the end chosen as the best player of the competition. He said: »We liked it. We enjoyed it. The supporters were phenomenal.«

SLOVENIAN ANTHEM BRINGS OUT TEARS OF JOY

The brothers live in England but have been visiting Slovenia since their early years. They have relatives in Šentilj in the Štajerska region. As children they have already visited their Slovenian relatives together with their grandfather and father. This time they were invited to Slovenia by the Rugby Union.

They are following the situation

in Slovenia. They were used to do that since their childhood because their father and grandfather taught them passionately about cultural heritage and encouraged them to learn more about Slovenia. Usually they visit Slovenia during the Easter holidays and they are happy to participate in the traditional Slovenian ceremonies.

They are not fluent in Slovenian language; however, they know the basic phrases and know the words of the Slovenian anthem. They say the following about their language learning: »We know the basics of Slovenian language and with this visit we also learned a few new words. Because we are planning on coming to Slovenia more often, we are going to start learning the language.« Jack even cried at the sound of the Slovenian anthem. »Tears came to my eyes because the atmosphere at the stadium was incredible. I felt that the people present there welcomed me and this touched me deeply. I felt that the chance of the joint performance with my brothers here in Slovenia was really something special. It reminded me of my dad's dreams of us playing in his father's home country. I felt a strong connection with my fellow countrymen

and that is why it touched me so much.«

The Škofič brothers could not stop praising the Slovenian hospitality. »Everywhere we went we met friendly and open-hearted people. It seemed like we really belong here,« is what they said. For them a special honour was also the presence of the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, at the game: »We were very honoured when he personally came to congratulate us and took some pictures with us.«

LEAVING A MARK IN THE RUGBY HISTORY

They are also familiar with the Slovenian sports. »We are aware of the rich history in winter sports and athletics and recently also in team sports. But you do not have true rugby players in Slovenia. And we hope that we will be the ones that could leave a mark in the rugby history in Slovenia.«

In the end they all yelled in one voice: »I feel sLOVEnia!« And their pure feeling of respect and love towards the homeland of their father and grandfather and therefore their own was heartfelt.

Škofic brothers with the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor.

We are aware of the rich history in winter sports and athletics and recently also in team sports. But you do not have true rugby players in Slovenia. And we hope that we will be the ones that could leave a mark in the rugby history in Slovenia.

Slovenians foster a special attitude towards horses

The Equestrian centre Celje, one of the most state-of-the-art centres in Slovenia, hosted a first-class equestrian sport event from 1 and 4 May with 200 performing horses from 17 countries.

At the CSIO 3 Nations Cup* Celje 2014 the riders competed in the Olympic discipline of show jumping under the auspices of the Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI). Besides the support of sponsors and the local community, the contest was enabled by the co-organiser Kap jumping. The latter is an organiser of a series of international horse show jumping competitions that are known for high-standard of organisation and balanced athletic programme.

The four-day international event reached its peak on Friday 2 May with the Nations Cup team competition and on Sunday 4 May when the World Cup Grand Prix competition took place.

On Friday, the Celje equestrian festival was marked by the Nations Cup competition. Slovenia took eighth place after a streak of bad luck and injuries to two horses. However, Tomaž Laufer qualified to appear at the World Championship in August in Normandy. First place went to the Luxembourg team while Poland,

Italy and the Czech Republic shared the remaining podium places. The latter two shared third place.

BACK ON THE CALENDAR

After a decade, Slovenia returns to the prestigious equestrian sport event calendar with the Celje competition. Besides the high-standard organisation and a very good turnout, the event was also marked by an interesting accompanying show programme. The owner of the equestrian centre and the head of the Slovenian national team, Hugo Bosio, pointed out that the preparation and organisation of the event took several months, and required the efforts of more than 50 people. A very good response by sponsors should be noted, since without sponsors the competition could not be carried out at such a level. The organiser's wish is for the event to become a tradition. In addition, it is gratifying to know that the citizens of the princely town of Celje took the event as their own, which was confirmed by

the already mentioned good turnout.

THE NOBLE LIPICA STUDS

In Slovenia, equestrian and riding sports boast a long-lasting tradition mostly due to the fact that Lipica Stud Farm has been breeding the world renowned white Lipica studs for more than four-hundred years. But did you know that a Lipica stud is black at the time of its birth? The Lipica Stud Farm is the oldest European stud farm that continuously breeds the same horse breed. Besides being of a great Slovenian pride, the noble Lipica studs fascinate the aficionados of classic riding of the Spanish Riding School in Vienna, with sports dressage and animal drawn rides.

AWE AND LOVE

According to Hugo Bosio, Slovenians foster a special attitude towards horses. "We feel in awe towards horses and they respond in the best way possible, because they know how to accept and return love."

However, the equestrian event was much more than just a sports competition. It also had a social and business dimension. The already traditional reception for 200 VIP guests where friendly and business relations are fostered also immensely helps to increase the visibility of the equestrian sport in Slovenia and at the same time the visibility of Slovenia in Europe and worldwide.

In November 2014, the World Cup for indoor horse show jumping, the FEI World Cup Celje 2014, will take place for the fifth time in a row at the Equestrian centre Celje. The organiser would like to exceed last year's equestrian event, in which 310 horses and 123 competitors from 22 countries took part.

We feel in awe towards horses and they respond in the best way possible, because they know how to accept and return love.

Nations Cup Celje 2014

Photo: Hugo Bosio



Picturesque Slovenian Istria

The end of March in Brussels was marked by a photography exhibition “ART SI” that took place at the seat of the European Parliament, and presented Slovenian Istria through photography and local culinary treats.

The exhibition featuring four young Istrian photographers who find inspiration in the scenic landscapes of Slovenia was organised by the Slovene Member of the European Parliament Mojca Kleva Kekuš. Črt Butul, who handled the selection process, explained at the opening ceremony that the aim of the exhibition was to jointly convey the narrative of Slovenian Istria through photography and cuisine.

Three of the exhibitors, Polona Iskra, Katja Pintar and Martin Peca, study, while Jaka Varmuž works as house photographer for the Koper Theatre. Their means of expression is photography; either traditional photography, or modern digital techniques, all of which made for a varied and diverse exhibition. The purpose of the event was to present works of young photographers to the MEPs and the European Parliament officials, who found many a kind word for their photographic abilities, said Mojca Kleva Kekuš at the opening, complimenting the talented young artists.

The culinary part of the presentation was left to the hands of the Butul family, who have for years been making culinary delicacies using products of Slovenian Istria, and have been organising numerous workshops on their farm in Manžan, promoting healthy nutrition. On this occasion, the Butul family presented a few typical products from their Mediterranean vegetable garden, and other Istrian treats. During their visit to Brussels, the Butul family also presented their activities and culinary treats at Slovenia’s Permanent Representation to the EU in Brussels.

ART SI exhibition with its home-made treats and excellent wines and olive oils had been a great success with the visitors; its tale of food and photography portrayed a tangible image of Slovenian Istria.

Photo: Personal archive of Mojca Kleva Kekuš



Slovene member of the European Parliament Mojca Kleva Kekuš with exhibitors and the Butul family members.

