

# Sinfo 03

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The latest from Slovenia



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I FEEL  
SLOVENIA

IN FOCUS INTERVIEW: **Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek**

HERITAGE: **Ravne carnival masks**

SPORTS: **SOCHI 2014**

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SLOVENIA

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**Economic growth, and the trust of the international and Slovenian public are the most significant**

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



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Photo: Melanite Likar



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SOCHI 2014

**Slovenian athletes won more medals than in all the other Olympics combined since Slovenia's independence**

Photo: OKS

**SINFO – SLOVENIAN INFORMATION**

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In the photo: Winner of olympic medals Tina Maze

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Photo: Bruno Toč

Tanja Glogovčan, editor

**Slovenia is looking ahead**

In the past week, the Slovenian Government and the ministries presented their past achievements and priority objectives for the coming year. The government of Alenka Bratušek has just completed its first year in office, so this is the central topic of this issue. We have prepared an overview of the work done by the ministries, and an interview with Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek.

The Sochi Winter Olympics and Paralympics are over, but we will not forget the excitement of the cheers for Slovenian athletes: for the ice-hockey team, for Tina, Anže, Teja, Vesna, Peter, Jakov, Tomaž, and all the other extraordinary competitors. According to some statistics for this year's Olympics reveal that Slovenia won the highest number of medals per GDP, and was second only to Norway in the number of medals per million inhabitants. Read about the successes of the Slovenian athletes in the sports pages. The cover features a photograph of Tina Maze with her two gold medals.

Shrovetide was a good opportunity to be positive. There is no need to go to Brazil or Venice, because there is plenty of carnival action to be seen closer to home, in Ptuj, Cerkljica, Ljubljana. But not only there: masks may be seen and traditional Shrovetide doughnuts and pastries may be savoured almost everywhere. If you were visiting Slovenia or if you live here and missed this year's carnival festivities, reserve some time next year to experience Slovenia's rich carnival folk heritage.

Sinfo is now available in the ibook format, as we want to make it accessible to as many readers as possible; there you will find numerous photographs and links to learn more about Slovenia.

You will also find business and fashion columns in this issue, and an article on the extraordinary vocal group Perpetuum Jazzile. We recommend you to read also the interview with the legendary Slovenian actor Boris Cavazza.



Photo: GCO

## Olympic medals for an optimistic Slovenia

Attentive readers will remember my announcement last month that the cover of the March issue would feature Slovenian athletes with Olympic medals. It not only turns out that I was right, but, considering its population, financial resources and climate, Slovenia is ranked number one among the medal-winning countries competing at the Winter Olympics. On the medals podium, it is followed by Austria and the Netherlands. In Sochi, Slovenia won a record-breaking eight medals, of which two gold medals went to Tina Maze, one of the best women Alpine skiers of all time. The Olympic achievements come as a surprise, given the conditions in which the Slovenian athletes train. The economic crisis has significantly cut sponsor funds for developing Slovenian sport, so it must be in the Slovenian genes then...

The successful Olympic performances inspired and united Slovenians as a nation, something we have not witnessed for some time. If the politicians could achieve the same degree of unity as our sports fans, Slovenia's economic indicators would be more favourable. However, things are improving in this respect, too. The government of Alenka Bratušek celebrates its first anniversary on 20 March. When they came to power exactly a year ago, Slovenia was not in good shape: it was hostage to speculative financial markets, and instability and a lack of trust dominated the domestic political scene. Despite many ominous forecasts, 2013 can be described as a positive year. The most recent statistics showing an improvement in economic activity (the final quarter of 2013 saw the economy grow by 2.1%) offer further evidence that international institutions and financial markets have been easing the pressure on Slovenia for some months. To free the country from this pressure was the top priority of the current government and a task it has definitely accomplished. The interest rates on our ten-year bond would have been fluctuating around the 7% psychological ceiling, but have now fallen to 4%. What is more, at the end of February, they reached 4.02%, the lowest value recorded in recent years.

Slovenia's progress has been noticed by the foreign media and experts. The Austrian *Der Standard* writes that the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development is becoming a significant player in Slovenia's economy. It will assist companies in difficulties, but will not become involved with state-owned banks without a strategic partner. The daily emphasises that Prime Minister Bratušek has succeeded where her predecessors had failed for years: she managed to

restore trust in the state and is taking reforms and privatisation seriously. According to Mr Axel Reiserer from the EBRD's headquarters in London, the signals from Slovenia are now positive, since Slovenia demonstrated that it has been tackling real issues such as competitiveness. The Bank will stay in Slovenia for four years; among other things, it will support the development of sustainable energy, as Slovenia has very good natural conditions for this.

Despite the positive signals, Slovenia is well aware that a lot remains to be done and is hence adopting measures postponed by previous governments. One of these is the real property tax, which is being levied in Slovenia for the first time, but which in this form is familiar in the majority of other countries. With various levies to be replaced by a single tax on property, the state has so far collected 0.6% of GDP, which is far below the OECD average of 1.8%. Even when imposed in full, the property tax will contribute around 1.1% to GDP, which is still much less than the average in developed countries. However, one should be fair and admit that the introduction of this law has revealed a number of irregularities, which angered the Slovenian people. In February, households received notifications with estimates of their property tax. The property tax assessments revealed gaps and irregularities in property records, leading to the formation of long queues in front of the mapping and surveying authority's offices of citizens seeking corrections to their property. Discounting the significant number of those who intentionally or negligently failed to provide accurate data in the past, the fact that records have too many deficiencies remains, and was even openly acknowledged by the government, which in turn took measures to reduce the work load of the mapping and surveying authority. Decisions about the amount of property tax to be paid will be issued once the records have been sorted as far as possible, Prime Minister Bratušek assured citizens.

As well as tackling the economic crisis, Slovenia must find a way to eliminate the consequences of the ice storm that in February destroyed a sizeable portion of forests and the transport and energy infrastructure. Glaze ice damaged as many trees as are normally damaged in fifty years, and the damage to roads and transmission lines is estimated at 130 million euros. The final figures of the estimated damage will be published in March, but it is already clear that they will spoil the mood of the Minister of Finance.

## Dialogue with Spain

Slovenian Foreign Minister Erjavec hosted his Spanish counterpart José Manuel García-Margallo on an official visit. The ministers confirmed their interest in enhancing bilateral cooperation and went on to exchange views on topical international issues and matters concerning the EU.

The visit was a continuation of the political dialogue, confirming the mutual interest in enhancing bilateral cooperation and amicable relations between the two countries, particularly in the economy. The counterparts discussed on topical international issues and EU affairs.

The Spanish Foreign Minister was received also by President Borut Pahor, Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek and by President of the National Assembly Janko Veber.



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

Slovenia and Spain have no open issues, while political relations have not been very intensive over the past few years.

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



The move by government comes after the bad bank has been under heavy fire, including from the Corruption Prevention Commission, for lack of transparency in its operations and conflict of interest.

## A proposal for changes to the statute of the BAMC

The government has published a proposal for changes to the statute of the Bank Asset Management Company (BAMC) or bad bank, which aim to secure more transparency in its operations following a wave of accusations about dodgy practices.

In line with the proposal BAMC will need to adopt internal acts that set down in detail the criteria, procedures, rules and monitoring of management processes. The government wants the same transparency when it comes to staffing and to secure independence, the use of objective criteria and transparency in all decisions leading to appointments. This applies both to internal staff and to external contractors, the proposal indicates, pointing to the need for expert criteria and the pursuit of the highest ethical standards. The statute moreover introduces a new chapter on securing integrity and preventing corruption.

## American University in Maribor

Kuwaiti businessman Hilal Arnaout, who has bought the plot that was originally meant for a new Maribor performing arts centre, announced the launch of the "American University in Maribor" at the site in 2017.

The plan is to eventually have 2,500 students enrolled in the private university, which is expected to cost EUR 20m. Half of the students are expected to come from Gulf countries. The professors will be foreign, while the rest of the staff will be Slovenian.



Photo: Andreja Šeren Dobaj/STA

In the left: Major of Maribor, Andrej, Fištravec. In the right: Mr Hilal Arnaout

## First year of office of the Government of Alenka Bratušek

# Economic activity is picking up

The Government led by Alenka Bratušek inherited a very difficult situation: Slovenia was in the grip of speculative financial markets, while an atmosphere of mistrust and instability pervaded the domestic political scene.



Photo: Daniel Novokovič/STA

Ministers of the first Government of Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek, March 2013.

Lifting the country out of this situation was the first task of the Government of Alenka Bratušek when it assumed office.

The latest statistical data show that economic activity is improving (the last quarter of 2013 saw 2.1 per cent growth). Lifting the country out of this situation was the first task of the Government of Alenka Bratušek when it assumed office. At that time, the interest rate on Slovenian ten-year bond was hovering around the psychological limit of 7 per cent, while it is around four per cent today, and the lowest figure in the past three years was reached in February, i.e. 4.02 per cent.

### **STABILISING THE BANKING SECTOR**

The main priorities of the Ministry of Finance also focused on

completely re-structuring and overhauling the banking sector. After conducting stress tests, the Government injected fresh capital into five banks (NLB, NKBM, Abanka, Factor banka and Probanka) and began to transfer the first non-performing assets to the Bank Asset Management Company. The planned privatisations are another step towards improvement.

The Slovenian Sovereign Holding Act, which is intended to centralise the management of all government capital assets and thus achieve more stable and transparent management is before parliament. The ministry's other major goals include the simplification and uniform

organisation of public procurement, while reducing the grey economy was a priority in the area of taxation.

### **BETTER FUTURE FOR THE YOUNG**

A priority of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities was to ensure a better future for Slovenian youth and fight unemployment. Therefore, the Government adopted a package of measures called the Youth Guarantee Programme. Another major achievement of the ministry was to reverse the increasing unemployment rate by increasing funds for public works. Other priorities include promoting employment, a family code, re-or-

Photo: Thierry Monasse/STA



Uroš Čufer, Minister of Finance

ganising social work centres and establishing a system of long-term care.

**FOREIGN INVESTMENT, GROWTH AND THE EVOLUTION OF COMPANIES ARE IMPORTANT**

The measures of the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology in the past year were based on promoting economic growth by ensuring access to appropriate financial resources

for companies and encouraging foreign direct investment. In order to ensure faster withdrawal of European cohesion policy funds, an independent government office responsible for development and European cohesion policy was established on 1 March 2014. Other priorities of the ministry include drafting the Strategy of Economic Development, and seeking to create new jobs, which will have a multiplying effect on the entire economy.

Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA



Anja Kopač Mrak, Minister of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

**ENSURING SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY IN SLOVENIA IS A CHALLENGE**

A new energy act and Slovenia's Energy Concept were adopted; the latter sets the goals for energy provision for the next 20 or 40 years.

Regarding spatial arrangements, the ministry focused on the National Residential Programme and drawing up the basis for development projects in local envi-

The main priorities of the Government also focused on completely re-structuring and overhauling the banking sector.

Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA



Metod Dragonja, Minister of Economic Development and Technology

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



Samo Omerzel, Minister of Infrastructure and Spatial Planning

Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA



Senko Pličanič, Minister of Justice

A major step towards economic recovery was taken with the amendments to insolvency legislation.

Since signing a new coalition contract and undergoing a shuffle which has seen the appointment of new ministers for health, the economy and Slovenians abroad in February, the government has promised to carry out health reform and make fixes to the 2012 labour reform to increase flexibility.

ronments. With regard to infrastructure, another priority of the ministry is repairing the damage caused by glaze ice. The ministry can boast a record withdrawal of European funds, which will ensure the conclusion of railway projects. Another major achievement of the ministry is the adoption of the resolution on the national programme for road safety. The ministry will particularly focus on ensuring sustainable mobility by promoting public passenger transport.



Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

Alenka Trop Skaza, Minister of Health

**A COMMITMENT REGARDING THE JUDICIARY HAS YIELDED POSITIVE RESULTS**

The Ministry of Justice focused in particular on two goals: amending legislation and ensuring the efficient, professional and open operation of the entire justice system. A major step towards economic recovery was taken with the amendments to insolvency legislation. The ministry was also successful in prosecutions for commercial crime and

corruption. The ministry also focuses on promoting mediation in the courts, effective execution and modernising the penal system.

**IMPROVED ORGANISATION OF THE HEALTH-CARE SYSTEM**

In its first year, through amendments to emergency legislation, the Ministry of Health ensured greater revenues for compulsory health-care. The ministry maintained its existing investments in



Photo: Daniel Novaković/STA



Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA



Jernej Pikalo, Minister of Education, Science and Sport

the health-care sector, including the construction of emergency centres, which will be completed by the end of this year. Other priorities include the re-organisation of public health care and ensuring better access to health-care services.

**PROMOTING SCIENCE AND HUMAN POTENTIAL**

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport did not change the existing norms and standards, thereby preserving the quality of public education, while it prevented the inefficient use of public funds. The ministry focused on promoting science and reducing fictitious enrolment at higher-education institutions. In the coming period, it will focus

on developing human potential, which is greatly needed in Slovenia. It has also focused on drawing up guidelines for the development of sports for the next ten years, not only due to the exceptional accomplishments of Slovenian athletes, but because it has recognised sports as having potential.

**THE POSITION OF CULTURE REMAIN THE HIGHEST NATIONAL PRIORITY**

When the Government took office, it made a commitment to restore the position of culture as the highest priority when drawing up policies. Therefore, the ministry introduced solutions to promote self-employment in the culture sector, fixed book prices,



Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

Uroš Grilc, Minister of Culture

protect Slovenian cultural heritage and lay the foundations for a new model of cultural policy and developing the culture market.

**DEVELOPING AGRICULTURES, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

The ministry focused in particular on implementing cohesion policy, prepared the rural development programme and drew up plans to improve air quality. The ministry's priorities include the Rural Development Programme, implementing the Common Agricultural Policy for developing fisheries, drafting a new Water Management Plan, and improving and updating the management of forest and agricultural land.

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In the coming period, it will focus on developing human potential, which is greatly needed in Slovenia.

Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA



Dejan Židan, Minister of Agriculture and the Environment



Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

Gregor Virant, Minister of Interior

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



Roman Jakič, Minister of Defence

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs organised several meetings between ministers, thereby strengthening economic cooperation, and successfully implemented economic policy and particularly promoted good relations with neighbouring countries.

Gorazd Žmavc, Minister without Portfolio for Relations between the Republic of Slovenia and the Autochthonous Slovenian National Community in Neighbouring Countries, and between the Republic of Slovenia and Slovenians Abroad

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



**RESOLVING AN ISSUE THAT REMAINED UNRESOLVED FOR TWENTY YEARS**

With the act on compensation for erased persons, the Ministry of the Interior resolved issues that remained unresolved for over twenty years. The police stepped up the fight against commercial crimes and corruption.

The ministry reached an agreement on additional measures in the area of public sector salaries, thereby lowering the funds necessary for salaries, while continuing to reduce red tape in public administration. Other priorities include ensuring efficient local IT support, developing local administration and implementing the 'SOS for the economy' projects, which focus on providing assistance to entrepreneurs.



Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

Karl Erjavec, Minister of Foreign Affairs

**FIRST TWO STAGES OF TRANSFORMING THE SLOVENIAN ARMED FORCES COMPLETE**

In 2013, participation in international operations and missions continued. Balanced infantry brigades, and centralised logistic support for the command and units of the Slovenian Armed Forces now enable the more efficient performance of tasks, which was also proved with effective assistance during the recent natural disaster caused by glaze ice. The Ministry of Defence also organised the first Comprehensive Regional Ministerial for the harmonisation of regional defence and security cooperation in the Western Balkans and South-Eastern Europe. In future, the ministry will focus on overhauling the medium-term defence programme and strengthening economic cooperation.

**WE ARE DRAWING UP A NEW SLOVENIAN FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs organised several meetings between ministers, thereby strengthening economic cooperation, and successfully implemented economic policy and particularly promoted good relations with neighbouring countries. Currently, the ministry is particularly focused on preparing the hearing at the Court of Arbitration on the border with

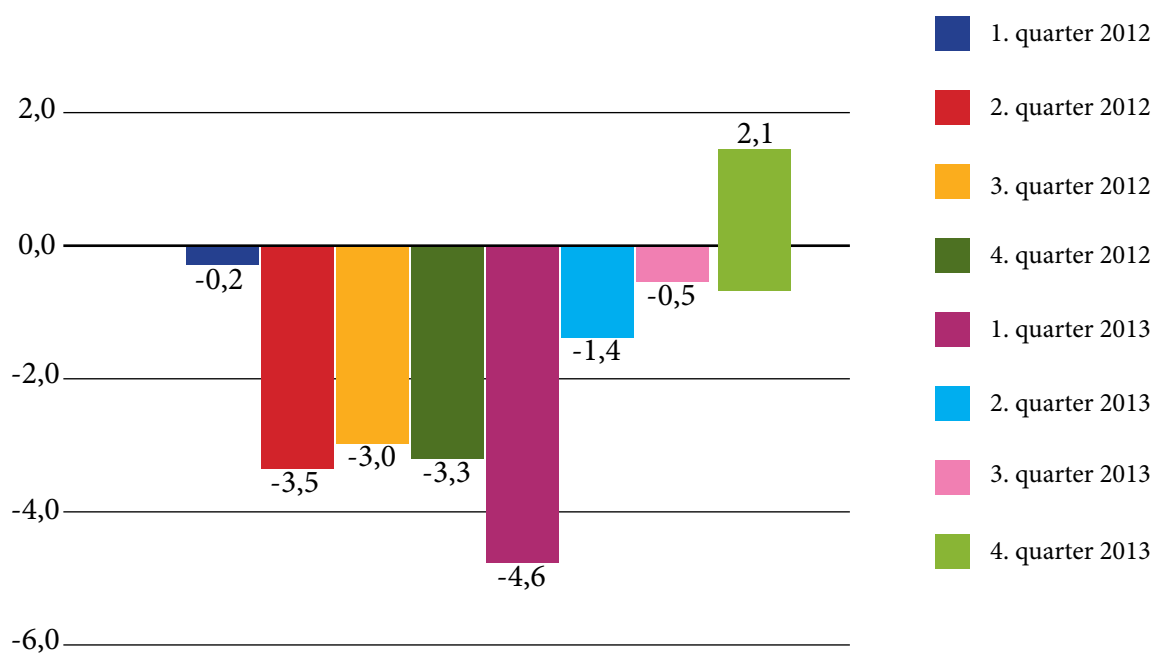
Croatia and continuing activities that contribute to the success of Slovenia's candidature for membership of the Human Rights Council in the 2016-2018 period.

**FOR ALL SLOVENIANS TO FEEL WELCOME IN SLOVENIA AND PRESERVE THEIR NATIONAL IDENTITY**

In July 2013, the Office for Slovenians Abroad organised the third meeting of Slovenians living abroad under the slogan "Welcome Home". Special emphasis was put on economic cooperation with Slovenians living in neighbouring countries and elsewhere around the world. Other priorities of the office include co-financing the activities of societies for developing and preserving Slovenian identity in the areas of language, culture, education and science.

**FUTURE PRIORITIES OF THE GOVERNMENT**

In the coming year, the Government will continue the process of resolute fiscal consolidation and its restrictive budget policy, which has been its priority since taking office. It will also continue the structural reforms defined in the National Reform Programme and National Stability Programme. It is also determined to continue implementing measures to achieve stability in the banking sector.

**REAL GDP GROWTH (% , source: SORS)**

Focused on avoiding the arrival of the troika of lenders (European Commission, European Central Bank and the IMF), the four-party coalition has steered policy away from strict austerity, putting emphasis on shoring up Slovenia's credibility on global financial markets with an all-out effort to fix the ailing banking sector and promises of privatisation.

Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA



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## Alenka Bratušek, Prime Minister

# **Economic growth, and the trust of the international and Slovenian public are the most significant**

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**Alenka Bratušek** was born on 31 March 1970 in Celje. Following her graduation from the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Technology, she obtained a master's degree in the management of non-profit organisations from the Faculty of Social Sciences in 2006. Before entering politics, she worked as the head of the Budget Directorate at the Ministry of Finance. In the early elections in 2011, she was elected to the National Assembly as Positive Slovenia candidate. On 17 January 2013, she was unanimously elected leader of Positive Slovenia by the party's governing council. On 27 February 2013, she was elected Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia by the National Assembly. She thus became the first woman to head the cabinet in the history of independent Slovenia.



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

**The first year in office is behind you. When you assumed office as Prime Minister, you stressed that Slovenia was able to resolve the crisis on its own. What would you highlight as the greatest success of your cabinet in the past year?**

Above all, what you have emphasised yourself. That we were able to resolve the crisis on our own, without foreign aid; that we were able to preserve our sovereignty and have proven to everyone that no one knows better than we do what measures to take. Only just over a year ago, many did not believe that we would succeed. The pressure from the domestic and foreign media was immense; hardly a day went by when we were not being considered as the next domino to fall under the weight of the global and European economic crisis. Therefore, I am perhaps proudest of our persistence, and the fact that we did not doubt for a second that we would be able to do it ourselves.

**You consolidated public finances by rationalising public spending and raising taxes. With regard to the latter, you came under some public criticism. Are you satisfied with the effect of both measures?**

One of the guidelines in consolidating public finances was that measures should be taken on both sides, revenues and expenditure. I am still convinced that this is the right approach, and that we should continue in this way. Criticism was actually expected from some of the public: I do not know any example when citizens happily greeted new taxes with a smile. But we should realise that, to maintain a relatively high level of welfare, we must contribute a bit more funding. I definitely do not defend raising taxes unreasonably. When raising VAT, we paid particular attention to exporters, who are the engines of our economy, and the higher VAT did not affect them, due to the settlement method.

**In the past year, you also planned the sale of state-owned companies or companies in which the government owns the majority stake. Will you continue this process?**

Of course. We are serious about privatisation. Perhaps this is where we are different from former governments: most of them promised privatisation, yet failed to implement it, at least not transparently and successfully. A sales plan has been drawn up, and two of the companies on the list have been sold, while procedures are ongoing with regard to the remainder. Procedures regarding some major companies, such as Telekom, need more time, as they are somewhat more complicated. I should stress that the main guidelines of privatisation are finding a strategic partner and appropriate prices. We do not wish to sell at any price, and we also require the buyer to demonstrate a strategic interest in developing the company. We are

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I hope people do not remember me as the first woman prime minister, but as having done something good for this country and its citizens.

She believes that women can be successful professionals but also have a fulfilling family life.

Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA





In the photo: Prime Minister at debate with the students of Faculty of the Social Science in Ljubljana.

Therefore, I am perhaps proudest of our persistence, and the fact that we did not doubt for a second that we would be able to do it ourselves.

also looking for strategic partners abroad. We have already organised four successful strategic conferences, and we will hold more this year.

**The quality of life is largely based on a sense of security. What are the pillars on which your government builds security, and increases citizens' feeling of trust?**

I agree that the quality of life is based on a sense of security. I am convinced that I could not lead a country where I myself and our citizens do not feel safe. In this regard, I believe that it is crucial that the rule of law is applied and that people are punished for corrupt practises. Lately, I have been hearing that "something is shifting", and that despite what many may have thought, the laws apply equally to everyone. The Government is making efforts to restore trust in the legal systems and prove that no-one is untouchable.

**You have published the concrete results of your Government's work. What is your primary and**

**most significant political goal?**

From the very beginning, it has been economic growth. Despite the negative forecast about the recovery of the Slovenian economy, we have managed to halt the decline in economic growth. According to the latest data from Slovenia's Statistical Office, after eight quarters of decline in economic activity, the economy grew by 2.1 per cent in the last period of 2012 compared to the same period in the previous year. This is an improvement on the most optimistic forecasts about the Slovenian economy. While the figures fill me with optimism, the Government remains committed to continuing the reforms, which will enable us to achieve stable economic growth in the medium term, which will be also felt by citizens.

**One of your Government's major challenges is to resolve the problems of young people. Where do you see the solutions?**

As the coalition agreement states, they are a crucial priority of the Slovenian Government. Their

chances of finding work is the most significant factor, as it has become obvious in recent years that this is why the young leave the country after completing their studies. I most definitely would not like to deny anyone the experience of working or studying in another country, but it is a fact that it is very costly for a country to provide public education to a young person and invest in them, only for them to move abroad afterwards. Therefore, I want young people to see their future in this country too, and not abroad. In addition to jobs, we should also ensure that they have appropriate living conditions, i.e. flats, and other conditions for life.

**For Slovenia, it is now particularly important to enjoy the trust of the international public and find allies. What have you done in this respect in the last year? Can you tell us of any plans for this year?**

I believe that in order to enjoy the trust of the international community it is crucial to deliver on your promises. We lost the trust of the international community because



we made empty promises in the first place: promises on reforms, on changes that never happened. I felt this loss of trust myself during my first visits to European institutions, when I could see in the eyes of the people I met that they did not really believe our plans to overhaul the banking sector and fiscal consolidation. However, the fact that the stability programme was prepared in record time, the changes to the Constitution, the agreement with representatives of the public sector and other measures, convinced them that we were planning to keep our promises. We intend to continue to take this approach.

**What measures is the Government planning to take after the recent ice storms with regard to the purchase of timber from damaged forests? Will Slovenia use this as a business opportunity?**

Slovenia has been affected by a great natural disaster. We have never before faced so much damage from glaze ice. Therefore, it is even more crucial for the Government to take the necessary mea-

asures quickly. In this respect, while repairing the damaged forests is crucial, I cannot see this as a business opportunity, but as damage recovery. Due to the abundance of wood on the market, we should establish a system that emphasises wood as Slovenia's strategic raw material, enables connections between knowledge institutions and the industry, the acquisition of European grants, a higher wood yield, higher added value per employee in the wood-processing industry, the development and introduction of modern technology with high added value and conversion of scrap wood into wood biomass, and new jobs.

**Now a more personal question to conclude. You are the first woman that has managed to get to the top of Slovenian politics, a world still considered very male dominated. How did you feel about it?**

I often say that I do not pay special attention to the fact that I am a woman. I hope people do not remember me as the first woman prime minister, but as having done

something good for this country and its citizens. While it is true that there are more men than women in politics, it would be right for more women to opt for this job, as women have a different approach to politics: we find it easier to reach compromises, and therefore have a better feeling for finding common denominators. Yet it is we women who can do most to increase our numbers in politics.

**This magazine is read by foreign politicians, culture professionals, tourist organisations, diplomats, foreign business representatives and Slovenians abroad. We provide them with information about Slovenia. What is your message to our readers?**

I am convinced that, thanks to you, the readers of Sinfo are aware of how beautiful our country is. Therefore, I hope that those who receive the magazine abroad will visit Slovenia as often as possible, as I am convinced that its natural beauties are the equal of those in almost any other country.

Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek said that Slovenia has and will continue to strive for a peaceful solution of the crisis in Ukraine.

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I believe that in order to enjoy the trust of the international community it is crucial to deliver on your promises.

## Poligon creative centre

# Promoting the idea of youth employment in creative economies, social entrepreneurship and culture

At the premises of the old Ljubljana tobacco factory, a new creative centre called Poligon has opened. It offers opportunities for creative work to members of Slovenia co-working, Slovenia crowd-funding (crowd-sourced fundraising), Rompom and Ljudje.si initiatives. More than half of the Centre's capacities were leased out in a month, but demand remains very high.



Most of the people attending the opening of the Centre were young creative people.

Poligon is the first creative centre in Slovenia. Its operation and leasing of space will be financed from the rent for the working premises.

In addition to the open desk working stations in the common space, Poligon makes available 70 working posts, including individual offices. Most of the latter have been leased out, but 25 working posts remain in the common space. The Centre can accommodate up to 300 people, as the space can be used from morning till evening. There have been ideas to extend the Centre to the

neighbouring premises, which are currently unoccupied.

### THE FIRST CREATIVE CENTRE IN SLOVENIA

Poligon is the first creative centre in Slovenia. Its operation and leasing of space will be financed from the rent for the working premises. Poligon is intended particularly for those young people for whom self-

employment is the only means of ensuring survival. They need an open platform to develop their projects without having to submit three business plans before starting work.

Those renting a desk working station in Poligon on a permanent or temporary basis pay 95 euros a month and are given 'resident' status. An annual subscription of 35 euros





Unlike Slovenia, Norway has hardly unemployed. For this reason, Poligon will connect Norwegian start-ups with young Slovenians wishing to cooperate with them.

gives you the status of a friend. Exchange with co-working group members from abroad will be encouraged through the so-called co-working visa. Holders of these visas will be able to exchange his/her desk working station and a flat for a couple of days, a month or even longer with a counterpart from a friendly co-working area. This means that they will have the chance to work either in Berlin, Vienna, Paris or somewhere else. In Slovenia,

they will be accordingly 'exchanged' for a creative person from abroad.

**WORKING METHODS**

Poligon is based on a method of co-working which will be further upgraded by creative people through various contents. They will be intended for permanent and temporary users. Poligon has two specialised labs: the Maker Lab, focusing on 3D printing, and the Crowd-

funding Lab for preparing crowd-funding campaign projects. In addition, relevant content-based programmes will be designed for the community in order to improve its knowledge and skills and provide for further professional development.

Poligon will also have a library and shop containing the works of Slovenian designers and items successfully developed with the help of Slovenian crowd-funding campaigns.

Poligon is based on a method of co-working which will be further upgraded by creative people through various contents. They will be intended for permanent and temporary users.

The British Council supports this interesting project, which is meant to bring together creative people in Ljubljana, Zagreb, Belgrade and Skopje.



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## Donar

# A story of superb chairs

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Matej Feguš is the owner of the Donar chair manufacturing company. He is exceptional and inspiring in many ways, especially in business. He first worked in the company as a student. He had vision, focus, determination and motivation right from the start. Today, he is the director and owner of one of the most successful Slovenian companies with an international presence.



Matej Feguš is also a mentor to young people, and does a lot of pro bono work. He is convinced that those with the possibility must introduce changes. “We should be looking for good things, good stories,” he says. “I do not rely too much on the assistance of the state or various subsidies, because, in my opinion, the company must find its own place in the world of business. If a company is in difficulties, or it is more reasonable to close it, it should be left to the markets to determine its destiny.” He thinks that Slovenia’s wood industry should be restructured into a furniture industry as part of a creative industry. He has faith in creative industries and the significance and power of design.



Donar brings together its own knowledge and design in order to manufacture perfect chairs in which your body does not feel the stress of prolonged sitting. It swears by ergonomic solutions and high-quality manufacturing practices. Its flexible approach allows the company to meet the needs and standards of individual customers. Most of the chairs are exported. Donar's mission is green, sustainable development, and it is well-aware of the environmental impact of materials. Products must have a long life, although Donar recycles chairs, which are then sold at much lower prices.

**Your business career is really extraordinary. You worked your way up in the company..**

That is true. It all started when the recession hit Slovenia, and the then owner of Donar, who is a generation older than me, was not best suited to continue in the exacerbated market conditions. He prob-

ably wanted to sell the company. While I had very different aspirations, since I was a young man. The company had a lot of potential and energy. We managed to come to an agreement, enabling Donar to embark on a slightly different journey. Owing to the crisis, we lost several major clients and almost all markets, while our market share in Slovenia shrank significantly (we lost 70%-80% of the Slovenian market). Nevertheless, we believed in our vision; we looked for new business opportunities, and at the same time we invested in product development and design.

**This probably suits you, since the company has high expectations of design.**

My first job in Donar was in product development. Very soon, at a furniture fair in 1999, I was awarded first prize by the Designers Society of Slovenia. We built on this story, which I consider to be a milestone in Donar's operations in foreign markets. We were recognised as partners and manufac-

turers capable of developing quality products with top design. We even penetrated the Italian market, which has a rich tradition in design and does not welcome newcomers.

**What is the concept of your chairs? What makes them special?**

Our business model may not be mainstream, but we are more than just a production company: we are a processing company in the classic sense of the word. We focus on development, details, production optimisation and services. Only half of Donar's turnover is linked to a specific service. The added value of our products stems from personalised design, a wide range of colours and adaptability. This is also something that most customers appreciate. We are highly adaptable, and our guiding principle is to tailor chairs to the needs of customers, or to design chairs that are ideal for our customers. We optimise the price performance of our products. Information on potential customers, their wishes and needs (what kind of work they perform,

Donar chairs combine knowledge and design.

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Donar brings together its own knowledge and design in order to manufacture perfect chairs in which your body does not feel the stress of prolonged sitting. It swears by ergonomic solutions and high-quality manufacturing practices.

whether they use a computer or telephone at work, whether they sit for long periods, etc.), is crucial. We also pay attention to the dimensions and requirements of work places. In the final phase, the customers select the image of their final product, thus shaping the company's mission.

**Two years ago, the Danish public administration selected your tender to supply chairs. It seems incredible.**

I have believed for many years that Donar also has the potential to enter Scandinavian markets. Eight years ago, we began to cooperate with a partner operating in Scandinavia and thus, two years ago, landed a contract with the Danish public administration. The entire process leading up to the final product for the Danish customer was quite something. A five-member Danish delegation, including Mads Odgård and an ergonomics expert, visited our company, and together with them we developed chairs according to their needs and standards. These chairs are designed specifically for their civil servants and meet the stringent Danish standards.

As this contract has not expired yet, we are constantly improving the design and upgrading the manufacturing process. Our products meet the most demanding standards. Being a small-scale enterprise, Donar cannot afford to miss a deadline or the target performance of 98%. I should also point out that we were competing with big global manufacturers in this tender. We are very satisfied with this order.

**What order are we talking about?**

The contract was concluded for a period of four years, and every week Donar sends between 300 and 400 custom-designed chairs in different colours to Denmark. Every order is coordinated with their procurement department, which is staffed with experts, not bureaucrats.

**Donar's Beatnik chair is exhibited in the Red Dot Museum in Singapore. It won the 2013 Red Dot Award. What makes the Beatnik so special?**

The Red Dot Award, which confirms our standards and values, was a stepping stone in the company's evolution. It made us more

visible globally, and more interesting to foreign media.

We refer to Beatnik as the sound station chair. Furniture should be enhanced with the modern technology available, establish communication with people, and enable a certain degree of multifunctionality. You do not need your hands to talk on the phone while enjoying the comfort of the Beatnik. At first, we wanted to design a chair in which you could spend a few moments in peace away from the hustle and bustle of the world around you. It was meant for individual customers, but now 90% of Beatnik chairs are sold to businesses. It turns out to be an excellent promotional tool. To this end, we cooperate with Akrapovič, a Slovenian producer of exhaust systems, which developed a special application for testing the sound of different exhaust systems. We integrated their application into our design, so that a buyer of an exhaust system can listen to the sounds of different exhaust systems while relaxing in our chair. Discussions with mobile phone services and other interested companies are underway.

Our business model may not be mainstream, but we are more than just a production company: we are a processing company in the classic sense of the word. We focus on development, details, production optimisation and services.

Beatnik is a special chair with built-in AirPlay technology and Bluetooth interface for Apple lovers.

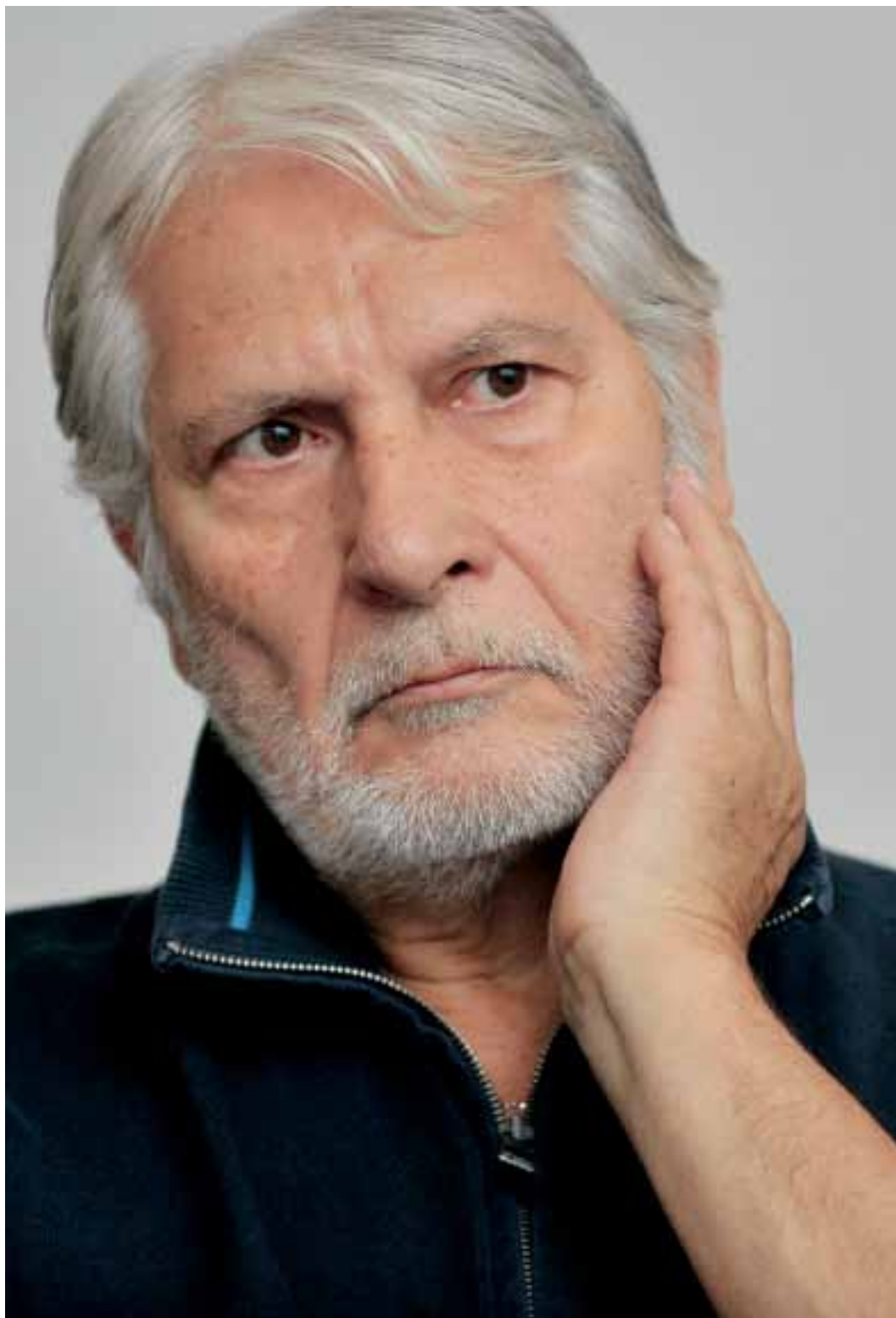


## Boris Cavazza

# The desire to act never dies

If we consider only the roles for which he has received awards, the variety is impressive, from Puba Fabrici in *Gospoda Glembajevi* (The Glembaj Family) by Krleža, Georgij in *Osvoboditev Skopja* (Liberation of Skopje) by Jovanovič, the legendary Scapin in *Les Fourberies de Scapin* (Scapin's Deceits) to the sophisticated, playful Mediterranean characters in Dario Fo's works.

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



**Boris Cavazza**, actor, director and screenplay writer, is considered one of key figures of Slovenian theatre. He has worked in almost all the major Slovenian theatre companies, but most of time he was at Ljubljana Drama and Slovensko mladinsko gledališče. He received a number of awards for his work, including the Borštnik Ring.

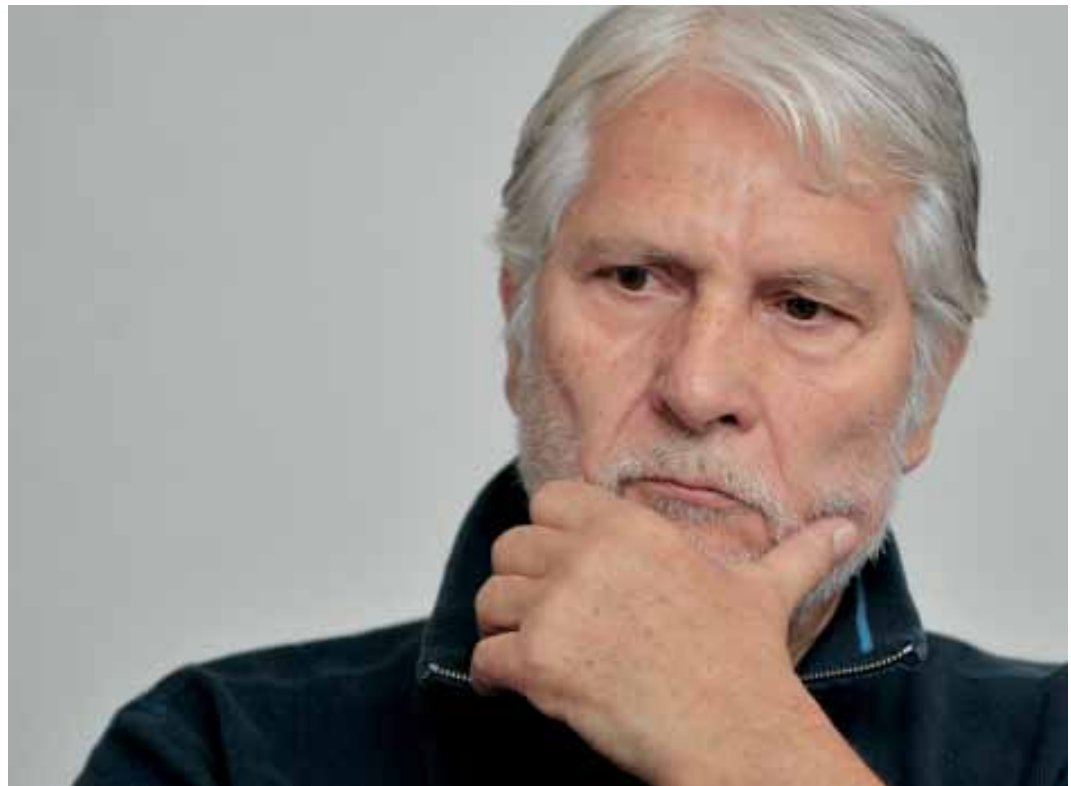


Photo: Tamino Pečelnšek/STA

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For an actor, it is necessary to preserve the child in oneself, to continue to play.

**How do you nourish this variety, is there a formula?**

I would not know. There is no formula. That is your nature. For an actor, it is necessary to preserve the child in oneself, to continue to play. If you lose this and you say, "I'm through, this is not a serious profession", it means that your fire has gone out and you are only good for sitting on the pier and fish (laughs). But I think that all actors have the desire to act. As the years pass the memory is not as quick as before, but the desire never fades.

**You were also a professor at the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television (AGRFT); what is, in your opinion, the major difficulty in the forming of a young actor?**

I noticed that there were very few students who did not have any problems. Each of them came to the academy with a suitcase full of frustrations, and until this is overcome, it is difficult. I kept telling them that on stage they can do whatever they like, all the things that they would never do in real life. That the stage is the only place where they can really open up. But it takes some time before they understand it. They hide; they are embarrassed to show their feelings. But, when this phase is over, some already show their potential as

students, some open up later, and some never, unfortunately.

**Some actors are pursued by their roles. Has this also been your experience?**

No, thank God. The only case that comes to my mind, we taught it also at the Academy, was the case of a Russian actor who played Lenin and identified with the role to such an extent that he was unable to return to his normal life. He finally went mad and ended in an asylum. You must not allow this. When the performance is over, you must step from that universe into the real world. That's that.

**A book on your life, written by Vesna Milek, was published by Študentska založba in 2011. Pain is a recurrent feature in this book. You speak, for instance, of the "the feeling of being constantly alone, alone with your own s.t and your humiliation". What do you mean by that? How do you fight against injustice?**

Against injustice? It is difficult, almost impossible. When you experience an injustice, you are really alone. People around you may comfort you, but if the injustice is profound, it stays with you; it cannot be erased. I am not a vindictive person. At the beginning of my ca-

reer, some colleagues were not very helpful, to put it mildly, and this marked me for life. I never stopped associating with them, though, I really do not bear a grudge against anybody.

**In the 70s and 80 you acted mostly in so-called political theatre, where roles were clearly defined. How do you now view this period? Do you have the impression that, with certain young directors, political theatre is coming back?**

The atmosphere then was unique. In Ljubiša Ristić's day, we performed only political pieces, and everybody knew why. This was a way to fight the establishment; it was popular to be a dissident. Today, I do not see the sense of such committed theatre. Challenging what? Globalisation? That's boring. Although pieces like that are already being written, about characters being sacked after thirty years of work with a letter waiting on their desk. You open the letter and see that you are not wanted any more: please pack your bags and leave. These are topical issues today.

**There is a lot of talk about absence of values. Considering that values have always been the basis for dramatic creation, what do you think might replace these values,**

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I kept telling them that on stage they can do whatever they like, all the things that they would never do in real life. That the stage is the only place where they can really open up.



Viktorji Awards ceremony 2012

**so that we may still see interesting presentations?**

With younger directors, I now have the impression that they tend to overturn everything, so it is sometimes difficult to comprehend what values the piece is about. And in the various committees, there are people who somewhat support this attitude by giving awards to these directors. But the ordinary theatre-goer hates this. For us, this hermetic attitude has no meaning. I sometimes do not even understand the plot. But I think that theatre will rise again, as there are people who think and understand the importance of the actor and the text. Who do not tear up the text, write their own lines, and turn everything upside down. For example, what attracts audiences to Ljubljana's Drama? Mala Drama has the most popular programme; it stages pieces in which the texts can hardly be 'reinvented', which are about people, about relationships. While works presented on the big stage are usually 'full of creative ardour' and often make no sense at all.

**In a way, capitalism has become the 'must' of comedy in theatre, particularly commercial productions? What is your view? Is it possible for an honest actor to express himself in such productions?**

I participated in two commercial productions. The first was *Balkanski špijon* (The Balkan Spy), which actually is not a commercial text, and I insisted that the piece be played as a serious comedy. This is why it was such an enormous success. The second was *5 moških.com* (5 Men.com) in which I participated at the instigation of Jurij Zrnec. But in fact, I quite rapidly got fed up. So I left the project. I personally do not watch these shows. The problem with commercial projects is that actors, by themselves, are not important; the performers are often people who are currently popular and for this reason, are included in the show. In such cases, also the audiences have never been to a theatre before.

**You have also had an outstanding directing career. In your opinion, what is the difference between**

**acting and directing, in terms of self-fulfilment? If there is one, of course.**

I started to direct at the Academy, as in one academic year no student of directing was admitted and I was the only teacher without an aspiring director in his class. And then you say, why not do this for living? Directing is a wonderful experience. As an actor you only care about yourself and somewhat neglect others, but as a director you have to have control of everything. This is a very creative profession. And besides, it's perfect, because afterwards, you don't need to act. You do your directing and leave, while they continue to work hard (laughs).

**What is most important for you now?**

My two sons. This is what is really important to me. Theatre is good. That's what I do. But when it comes to taking decisions, I always take decisions that are best for my little boy.

Source: Adapted from STA

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My two sons. This is what is really important to me.

## Perpetuum Jazzile vocal group

# Thank you for the music

On 9 and 10 November 2013, the Perpetuum Jazzile musical ensemble marked its 30th anniversary with its biggest concert spectacle so far - THE SHOW - in front of an audience of 20,000 in Stožice Arena in Ljubljana.



Photo: Rok Tizan

The history of Perpetuum Jazzile (PJ) began in 1983, when the choirmaster Marko Tiran formed the Gaudeamus choir, which brought together singers performing popular and jazz music. In 1999, the choir changed its name to Perpetuum Jazzile, and in 2001, Tomaž Kozlevčar became the choirmaster, helping the group to achieve immense success. Since 2011, PJ has been

led by Peder Karlsson from Sweden, who is considered one of the leading experts on a cappella groups in popular music. Because PJ needs continuous guidance, and Mr Karlsson visits Ljubljana only once a month, his deputy, Sandra Feketija, an alto and soloist in PJ, has a major role. Sandra Feketija shared her feelings, expectations and love of music with us.

I met Sandra Feketija before the group's scheduled practice. They were also expecting the choirmaster to visit, so she was already looking forward to his visit and practicing together. The friendly and charismatic singer radiates positive energy, which is also the feeling that is created when the entire ensemble sings.

In the photo: Sandra Feketija.

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The friendly and charismatic singer radiates positive energy, which is also the feeling that is created when the entire ensemble sings.



**Thirty years of Perpetuum Jazzile. What are your feelings?**

I am as old as our choir, so I celebrated two anniversaries last year. I was very glad that we remembered everyone who has contributed to the PJ story over the years. I felt truly honoured and am very grateful to the former members for being part of this story and particularly for coming to Stožice, so that I could meet them. It is a fact that without them, there would be no us, the current team.

**Is the spectacular concert in Stožice one of the greatest highlights of PJ?**

I believe it is one of the greatest achievements of the Slovenian music scene, and definitely the greatest achievement of PJ in Slovenia. We had heard that it has been hard to sell out the arena with previous performers, so we expected a similar situation. We were very surprised at the excellent response.

**You have been a member of PJ since 2004. What are the differences between the leadership of**

**Tomaž Kozlevčar and the current choirmaster, Peder Karlsson? How did you experience this?**

The differences are in their approach to work and the arrangements. I must stress that I have the greatest respect for Mr Kozlevčar and I think that he is an incredibly skilful arranger. I believe that there is no-one like him working on vocal music in Slovenia and beyond, because his ideas are really excellent. Mr Karlsson has brought a breath of fresh air to PJ; just like with his former group, The Real Group, he introduced new methods, and an approach to learning and practicing a cappella music. I like it a lot that everything is based on a positive attitude to work and a cappella music, as it provides great motivation, inspiration and enthusiasm. Mr Karlsson is highly eccentric, positive and good-humoured, so it is really great to create a story with him (she laughs).

**First, you were a singer, then a soloist, and now a conductor ....**

I never expected that, and never thought things would go this way. When I joined the choir, I saw PJ as

a great platform for learning, because there had been many people with great knowledge before me. I was very motivated when I joined, so I just absorbed the knowledge. At the end, it paid off: they invited me to take the position of deputy choirmaster, which was two and a half years ago. I do not see it as a job. When you have been a member of PJ for nine years and all of the singers are your friends, you are together on and off stage...It becomes a way of life.

**Mr Karlsson features more soloists. Will he give every member an opportunity? What are his selection methods? Does it depend on the voice, the song?**

Absolutely. He is convinced that there are more talents in the group than we have highlighted before. However, it is true that not everyone is right for everything. Some are good soloists for one kind of music, and others for another. Perhaps the right song has not come along for singers who have not been featured yet.

Since 2011, PJ has been led by Peder Karlsson from Sweden, who is considered one of the leading experts on a cappella groups in popular music. Because PJ needs continuous guidance, and Mr Karlsson visits Ljubljana only once a month, his deputy, Sandra Feketija, an alto and soloist in PJ, has a major role.

Perpetuum Jazzile in Stožice Arena in Ljubljana, november 2013.

Photo: Irena Herak



Everyone in the group agrees that the best things in life come on their own. No-one planned that version with the idea of making a hit, a YouTube sensation. We have always worked according to the principle that if someone has an idea for a song, we provide feedback.

PJ: "The stage is our canvas, we paint with our voices, we blend and combine them into masterpieces. Happy faces drive us forward and reassure us that what we do, we do with all our heart and devotion."

**PJ caused great excitement all around the world with their version of 'Africa' by Toto. Since the recording was posted on YouTube in May 2009, it has had over 16 million hits.**

Everyone in the group agrees that the best things in life come on their own. No-one planned that version with the idea of making a hit, a YouTube sensation. We have always worked according to the principle that if someone has an idea for a song, we provide feedback. For 'Africa', Boštjan Usenik, our manager, had the idea, Mr. Kozlevčar loved it and did the arrangement, and we started working on the song. Sašo Vrabič, our vocal percussionist, found a recording of a South-African choir on the internet who used the element of rain and suggested using that. We loved that idea too. Then...I don't know...our sound technician, Dare Novak, said that everything, the stars and the planets were in the right constellation...We were so surprised to see the number of hits going up, we could not believe it ... (laughs).

**You have made two successful tours of the USA, the most recent one last year.**

The Americans were awaiting us eagerly; we became friends via our Facebook page and also in person. During our performances there, we heard shouts of encouragement and excitement even as we were going on stage. The USA was a great and positive experience.

**You spend a lot of time together, you are friends...Are there any couples in PJ?**

Oh, yes, and the number is increasing (laughs). I believe that there are eight couples now; there have never been as many. I believe this is due to 'Africa'. The more popular we become, the more time we spend together working, practicing, socialising, and once you spend so much time together, things happen on their own.

**Where is PJ heading in terms of selecting songs?**

Perhaps we stopped in the 1980s for a while, because we really like this music. But we want to move on; it is good to do a modern or an

older song, or a classic, and to expand the range of music genres. While we are pretty diverse in terms of genres, we've tended to perform more pop than search for diverse genres. Perhaps we will take this direction, but we have not decided on anything yet.

**What are your wishes for the future?**

That we do not focus so much on where we can get into a market, but that the music is the most important thing. That is why I joined this group and felt the love and joy of music, and I would really like this to be preserved, regardless of PJ's popularity. I would not like popularity to make the group more introverted or affect it negatively. I really would not like that to happen. I would like us to remain true to ourselves and pursue only what we like and not what we think audiences would like. When we started out, this is how 'Africa' happened; this is how our success has always happened. I believe that this is why people like us, for our love of music.

Photo: Irena Herak



Photo: Irena Herak



When voice becomes an instrument... and an instrument becomes the voice, one can hear the pulse of rhythmic freshness and harmonic fusion of Perpetuum Jazzile.

Photo: Irena Herak



## Spring starts with the launch of ‘gregorčki’

Although St Valentine’s Day is more established today as a special day celebrating love, Slovenian folk tradition has its own version called St Gregory’s Day; so the Slovenia version is on 12th of March. Because the birds are chirping in the gardens and bushes, we say that the birds get married on St Gregory’s Day.



‘Gregorčki’ were also launched on the Gradaščica stream in Ljubljana to make the water wash away everything that was bad, all people’s worries and winter.

The people greeted the arrival of the sun and spring by symbolically “throwing light into the water”, as the days were already growing longer, and thus announced the end of having to work by candlelight, oil lamps and kerosene lamps.

This occasion has survived in folk memory as the beginning of spring, because the sun grows warmer, the days grow longer and plants begin to wake up. The old tradition has it that the girls once used to look up at the sky on St Gregory’s Day. The first bird that a girl saw announced what her husband would be like.

According to the old Julian calendar, spring starts on St Gregory’s Day. On that day, Gregory the Great, born about 540 in Rome, celebrated his name day. He was considered the patron saint of miners, masons, manufacturers of buttons, scholars, teachers and students; women prayed to him to be blessed with fertility; he helped people against the plague,

and above all, he was a patron of musicians, singers, choirs and choral singing. In 1582, the calendar was changed from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar, so St Gregory’s Day was moved back and is now celebrated on 12th March, not on the first calendar day of spring. On that date, farmers begin ploughing and taking up other spring tasks in the fields.

### ST GREGORY’S DAY CUSTOMS IN GORENJSKA

When electricity was still unknown, the custom in Gorenjska, and particularly in places with a long artisan tradition such as Kropana, Kamna Gorica and Železniki, was to launch little boats called ‘gregorčki’ on the village stream

on the evening before St Gregory’s Day. The people greeted the arrival of the sun and spring by symbolically ‘throwing light into the water’, as the days were already growing longer, and thus announced the end of having to work by candlelight, oil lamps and kerosene lamps.

Water and fire are two opposing elements – the symbols of iron industry. The little boats launched on the streams were made of a floating platform, usually pieces of wood, boards or parts of an old round straw basket called ‘pehar’. Chips of wood soaked in oil or just candles mounted on boards were placed on this platform. In some places, they also floated wooden clogs decorated with candles.



#### ST GREGORY'S DAY IN LJUBLJANA

The old tradition in Ljubljana and its surroundings has it that birds hold a feast on St Gregory's Day, so people used to hang little cakes from bushes.

#### ST GREGORY'S DAY IN PREKMURJE

A unique celebration was begun by teachers in Prekmurje, supposedly modelled after a Hungarian custom: they introduced "koledovanje", saying that they were 'walking St. Gregory's Day'. Usually, the two best pupils went from house to house, singing a 'kolednica' carol and asking for gifts.

#### ST GREGORY'S DAY TODAY

With the electrification of the 20th century, the custom lost its original meaning, but it has never been forgotten by the "gasars" (residents of the narrow Cerkvena Street with Zgornji most (Upper Bridge) over the Tržiška Bistrica stream). The Tržič Tourist Society and the Museum of Tržič have seen to it that the custom has survived to the present day. The traditional launching of 'gregorčki' on Tržiška Bistrica stream has been carried on by the pupils of all the primary schools, affiliated primary schools and kindergartens in Tržič. Their imagination has

no limits, and they always exhibit their products before they launch them.

In the last decade, the custom has caught on in urban areas and is mainly a social event, with kids having the most fun. Present-day "gregorčki" vessels are in the form of houses, churches, hay-racks and even genuine works of art made of cardboard, wood or paper. Today, as was the case almost five decades ago, the children compete to create the most beautiful vessel.

In the days leading up to St Gregory's Day, children used to make vessels of various shapes, colours and sizes, mostly in the form of houses, in which they placed a candle.

Today, as was the case almost five decades ago, the children compete to create the most beautiful vessel.

Gregorčki illuminated rivers and streams to greet the spring.



## Ravne Carnival masks

# Uglies and Beautifuls in action

Above Kobarid and below the slope of Krn lie the villages of Drežniške Ravne, Jezerca and Magozd, where the traditional Ravne Carnival takes place every year. Slovenia has declared it a living masterpiece of national importance, granting the Ravne Carnival the highest national award.



Uglies

The main organisers of the Carnival celebration are the local bachelors consisting of only unmarried young men who are aged seventeen or over when they join. Early in the morning, one week before Shrove Saturday, the men gather at the village dairy. At about half past seven, they prepare and start the Carnival procession marching through Ravne along a forest path to Magozd and from there to Jezerca and then to upper Drežniške Ravne, ending in lower Drežniške Ravne, where the Carnival masks ('pustovi') are awaited by crowds of local people and visitors from other places. The main event takes place in the afternoon in the centre of the village.

### CARNIVAL CHARACTERS AND MASKS

The Ravne Carnival masks present an old pagan wedding, which is evident from the composition of the procession itself, consisting of three groups: 'the Beautifuls', special costumes and 'the Uglies'.

At the head of the Carnival procession is a leader followed by an accordionist and drummer who play the Carnival anthem, which gives a walking rhythm to the whole group, and who are also responsible for order and discipline. They are followed by two couples of Beautifuls (wedding guests), followed by the Couple,

the mother and father of all Carnivals.

The Beautiful couple are a bride and groom, and since all the masks are worn by young men, they are carefully chosen. Great attention is paid to differences in height, and the men have to be good dancers. In 2011, the image of the Beautiful characters was changed and became even more traditional, since they wear old-fashioned costumes.

After that, the Ugly masks appear, forming the biggest part of the group. The Uglies consist of several Ugly masks, Death helping the characters of the Ugly to chase children around the vil-

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The Raven Carnival has been declared a living masterpiece of national importance.



lage, and 'Korpar', a character carrying a basket on his back (a big wicker basket), which used to contain ashes for the Ugliers. He also chases children. Because of their faces and scary wooden masks, the Ugly characters are the most notable. The Ugliers' task is to keep intrusive and inquisitive children away from the procession of Beautiful masks, so that the latter can carry out their mission undisturbed. The children run away from the Ugliers, who hit them with stockings filled with ashes. The Beautiful and Ugly masks, the most distinctive figures at Ravne Carnival, are joined by other special costumes: gendarme and robber, resident of Resia, chimney

sweep, postman, doctor, gypsy woman with child, fatty, peasant man and peasant woman, person carrying a straw man, hunter with a rabbit and others.

The Carnival procession stops at every house, except where there has been a death in the family in the previous year. Before entering a house, the leader of the procession must negotiate with the householder to let them in and to demonstrate that they come with good intentions and bring good luck and drive out evil. Only the Beautifuls and then special costumes enter the house. The Beautifuls dance, the lady of the house acts as host and gives them different treats such

as home-made food and drink and contributes a cent or more to the Carnival cash box. Nobody in the procession talks, except the leader. The Carnival celebration ends at about seven in the evening, when the entire procession bids farewell by walking around the village square in lower Drežniške Ravne.

On Shrove Tuesday, the Carnival figure is secretly shot and there is a commemoration ceremony before the audience in Drežniške Ravne in the evening. The most beautiful part of the funeral is the funeral procession from the square in Ravne to the stake at Na bregu above Jezerca, where the Carnival figure is burned.

Different images of the Carnival.

The Ravne Carnival masks present an old pagan wedding, which is evident from the composition of the procession itself, consisting of three groups: 'the Beautifuls', special costumes and 'the Ugliers'.



In the photo: Mitja Kanalec

**MITJA KANALEC, MASK MAKER**

The authentic masks of the Ugliers worn by the young men at the Carnival are made locally. The participants in the Carnival group do not make their own Ugly masks, they are made by a master who manufactures masks to order. In recent years, they have been made by Mitja Kanalec from Drežniške Ravne.

**When did you start making Carnival masks and how did the idea of making them come about?**

I made my first mask when I was a child. I focused on making masks more seriously when I joined the Carnival bachelors. The idea of making masks cropped up when I realised that there was no one who could make them and because I have always enjoyed creating something out of wood.

**What is the process of making masks like? How much time do**

**you need on average to making an Ugly?**

I carve face masks from lime, paint them, then fix ram's horns on them and attach the sheepskin which covers the rear part of the head. It is very difficult to estimate the time invested in making a mask, since I usually work in the evenings when I have time. I think I need approximately 20 hours of work to make an Ugly mask.

**What do the Ugly and Beautiful masks look like? And about their significance: what role do the Ugliers and Beautifuls play?**

The mask of an Ugly consists of a wooden face part, ram's horns and sheepskin. The person is dressed in a waistcoat of sheepskin and trousers with strips of fabric, and bells fastened to the back of the belt, while the hands are bare and covered with soot. He carries a stocking filled with ashes, by means of which he drives away curious children from the Carnival procession.

The figure of the Ugly represents a devil. The mask has a hat with a white silk fabric veiling the face. The Beautiful woman character is dressed in a white blouse and skirt, while the man is in black trousers and white shirt. The masks of the Beautiful represent a bride and groom in the Carnival procession, which represents an old pagan wedding.

**Have the Ugly and Beautiful masks changed? Do you follow tradition?**

The masks have changed only minimally, since we make every effort to maintain the original form and follow tradition.

**And which Carnival mask you wear when you participate in the Carnival celebration?**

I no longer wear Carnival masks, since only men who are over seventeen and single may attend the Carnival procession.

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The participants in the Carnival group do not make their own Ugly masks; they are made by a master who manufactures masks to order. In recent years, they have been made by Mitja Kanalec from Drežniške Ravne.





#### LIVING MASTERPIECE OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE

The Raven Carnival has been declared a living masterpiece of national importance. Renato Bric, a representative of the Ravne Carnival and Mitja Kanalec, the Carnival mask maker, are aware of the importance of this national acknowledgement and are very proud of it. Young and adult men from the area of the Ravne Carnival masks (Ravenski 'pustovi') invest a lot of time and effort in preparing the Carnival festivities; however, their goal is to maintain the tradition and to preserve the Ravne Carnival as one of the most authentic in Slovenia. New generations of young men are there and we are certain that they will make every effort to preserve the Ravne Carnival celebration. May this living masterpiece prosper and be passed on from generation to generation.



The final product of Mitja Kanalec work.

# Prince of the Carnival

## Take off your bleak faces and put on colourful carnival masks

Some typical carnival masks in Slovenia are of ethnographic significance. One of these is the Prince of the Carnival, who traditionally launches the carnival festivities in Ptuj. The idea of the Prince of the Carnival was born in 1999 and adapted to the Ptuj carnival tradition. Princes of the Carnival have existed elsewhere in Europe since the Middle Ages, and have been part of the Ptuj Carnival since 2000.



Photo: Gregor Mikar/STA

The Prince of the Carnival Miroslav Slodnjak at Carnival parade.

The Prince of the Carnival is a figure linking the idea of the Rhine River basin carnivals to Balkan folklore carnivals, to which belongs Ptuj with its Kurentovanje and its central folklore mask – the Kurent.

The Prince of the Carnival is a figure linking the idea of the Rhine River basin carnivals to Balkan folklore carnivals, to which belongs Ptuj with its Kurentovanje and its central folklore mask – the Kurent. When defining the character of the Prince of the Carnival, the topical issue was what values he should convey. It was decided that the Prince of the Carnival could only be someone committed to preserving the Kurentovanje tradition in Slovenia and elsewhere in Europe. So it is essential that the prince is a Kurent or other traditional carnival figure from the Ptuj area. In Ptuj, most carnival figures are male.

### THE PRINCE KEEPS ALIVE THE KURETOVANJE TRADITION

The Prince must meet the following Shrovetide requirements: he must be a respected citizen; he must have been a Kurent or other carnival mask in the previous or more Kurentovanje; he must have participated in the organisation of Kurentovanje; he must be active in preserving the tradition of Kurentovanje, and be involved in promoting the 'Kurent country'.

The Prince of the Carnival is selected by a dedicated commission, usually consisting of a rep-

resentative of Ptuj Municipality, the Artistic Director of Kurentovanje, and the Ptuj representative in the Federation of European Carnival Cities (FECC). Each year, the commission calls on all Kurent and folklore societies to propose their candidate for Prince of the Carnival. The Prince is installed on St. Martin's Day (Martinovo), 11 November, at 11 hours and 11 minutes. This event, called also the autumn feast, is considered the beginning of the winter carnival. The Prince's mandate expires on the following St. Martin's Day, when the new Prince is crowned.

The tasks, duties and compe-



tences of the Prince of the Carnival, the only such figure currently in Slovenia, are as follows: at the inauguration of Kurentovanje, the Mayor of Ptuj gives him the keys and 'command' of the town, which he holds, on behalf of all the masks, for the time of Kurentovanje, until Ash Wednesday. Since 2003, he has impersonated a historical figure from his town, as chosen by the historian Marija Hernja Masten (with insignia, attire, guardsmen). During the Shrovetide, he represents the Kurentovanje, Ptuj Municipality and all other neighbouring municipalities and carnivals in Slovenia and abroad, is the master of ceremonies at key carnival events, and leads parades.

#### **MIROSLAV SLODNJAK, THE PRINCE OF DORNAVA**

The current Prince of the Carnival is Miroslav Slodnjak, im-

personating the historical figure of the Prince of Dornava. He is the first Prince to have held the sceptre for two consecutive years, and will continue to hold it until 2015. He is a successful entrepreneur and has been an active member of the Cigani Dornava ethnographic society for a number of years. This society nominated him as candidate for the job.

In the past two years, the Prince of the Carnival has participated in the election of the Wine Queen, organised a series of Prince's Feasts where guests were offered traditional food and wine from Štajerska, and paid regular visits to towns and cities in Slovenia and cities with a Slovenian population abroad. He has visited several manufacturing companies at Štajerska, such as the poultry company Perutnina Ptuj, and participated in the autumn festival Klopotec

in Ludbreg. For the second year now, he has had the privilege of inaugurating and leading the Ptuj Carnival, the Kurentovanje, during which he also met with representatives of national and local authorities. Of course, the main responsibilities of the Prince are concentrated during Kurentovanje, when he symbolically takes authority over the town from the Mayor on behalf of all masks. From this moment, he is the master of ceremonies at Kurentovanje events and leads all carnival parades.

In the words of the Prince of Dornava: "I command and invite you during the festivities to take off your bleak everyday faces and put on the variegated masks of Shrovetide and joy, and join us with a song in your heart and a smile on your face. Let the Carnival be our feast of joy and merriment."

Kurents wear a sheepskin garment, a chain with bells attached around the waist, a furry mask, and leg warmers.

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The current Prince of the Carnival is Miroslav Slodnjak, impersonating the historical figure of the Prince of Dornava. He is the first Prince to have held the sceptre for two consecutive years, and will continue to hold it until 2015.

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



Along with the Prince of the Carnival, the characteristic masks of the Ptuj area are: the ploughmen, who symbolically plough cottage yards for good crops; children's masks such as pigs, female and male fowl, and fairies; followed by an old woman carrying her old man, bears clad in fur and jute fabric, large and small "rusas" that bring good health to horses and cattle. Of interest are Jürek (Green George) and Rabolj (the Winter Demon), almost forgotten spring masks which were revived in the 1980s. Younger, with only some decades of tradition, are the Gypsies from Dornava. Special groups include the masks of dormouse hunters from Cirkovci and young men pulling a trough (kopanja) from Markovci, who appeared only when no girl was married in the village before the Shrovetide. The procession of masks includes the spearman, which is actually not a carnival mask. The most popular masks are the feathery Kurent from Ptujsko polje and the horned Kurent from Haloze and Lancova vas, who, according to folklore, repel winter and attract spring. Kurents traditionally accompany ploughmen and dance in groups, generally together with the Devil.



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

## Taste the Delicacies of Dolenjska

The Delicacies of Dolenjska is a collective brand that covers more than 100 exclusive high-quality food products which increase the visibility of Dolenjska through their particular stories and local added value. The Association for the Revitalisation and Development of Trebnje (DROT) is leading the project.



Dried fruit and several types of tea.



Drinks of Dolenjska.

“The Delicacies of Dolenjska is a project so thoroughly planned that no other project in Slovenia can match it as regards this type of culinary content

The foundations of the Delicacies of Dolenjska project were laid by the DROT several years ago through the Country Bunch project, which established that the Dolenjska region lacked tourist products and its own trademarks and also needed a comprehensive approach to promotion and development.

In the two years of its existence, the Delicacies of Dolenjska project has linked 15 suppliers that offer their own high-quality and innovative, but traditional, products. A visual identity was created and a common brand developed. The selection of appropriate agricultural products was carried out in cooperation with culinary, wine, ethnology, beekeeping, architecture and other experts. The providers were carefully selected to ensure that their products offer quality, tradition and innovativeness, and have a local character, convey a message and guarantee product origin. The inclusion and relevant requirements are laid down in the Rules on the collective brand ‘Delicacies of Dolenjska’ and the conditions for granting the right

to use it. The number of suppliers has been increasing steadily, expanding the range of products on offer. Špela Smuk, who manages the project, is convinced that, given the vibrant interest and the variety of excellent products, the increase in the number of suppliers will at least triple this year.

The distinguished Slovenian ethnologist Janez Bogataj is also participating in the project, and according to the DROT, his contribution has been indispensable. Bogataj wrote stories to match every product, which not only adds rich content, but also conveys important ideas about Dolenjska. The DROT greatly appreciated his professional guidelines on rules and norms. Bogataj believes that the Delicacies of Dolenjska project is a welcome new idea that supports efforts to increase the visibility of Slovenian cuisine; he explains that this project goes beyond the mere offer of particular products at points of sale: it marks the beginning of a shift in the entire Dolenjska culinary area. “The Delicacies of Dolenjska is a project so thoroughly planned

that no other project in Slovenia can match it as regards this type of culinary content,” Bogataj stresses.

**THE BEST OF..**

Venison salami and other dried meat products, goat cheese with truffles and other home-made cheeses, elderberry syrup, dried porcini mushrooms, smoked apple vinegar, liqueurs, various types of honey, jams, dried fruit and home-made biscuits can be found among the Delicacies of Dolenjska; pubs and restaurants also offer numerous less famous traditional dishes, drinks and wines of Dolenjska. The products are offered for sale in special wooden sideboards exhibited in the most popular tourist sites in the region, in selected pubs and restaurants, in a mobile shop in the Land of Hayracks in Šentrupert and also in an online shop. According to the DROT, the range will be developed, upgraded and enriched.

“I trust that all of us who come from Dolenjska – people, companies, local communities and

Home-made biscuits.





hospitality and tourism service providers – will identify with the Delicacies of Dolenjska, take them for our own, reach for them often, proudly serve them to our guests and thus convey an important message about Dolenjska,” says Špela Smuk, the manager of the project.

In cooperation with its partners (the Institute for Sustainable Development of Temenica and Mirna Valley, Esplanada, the Land of Hayracks in Šentrupert, Rakar Inn and Interflash Tourism), the DROT carries out activities, seeks new providers and manages the selection of high-quality products. A permanent Delicacies of Dolenjska Culinary Group has been established to assess the products, and Tanja

Lešnik Štuhec will set up a system of granting the right to use the collective brand in the coming months.

The organisation of the 1st ‘JAM 2013’ International Festival was among the most important activities. This year, the sweetest festival in Slovenia will be held on the first Saturday in October; the collecting of samples for assessment begins in August.

#### VISIT DOLENJSKA

“In this part of Slovenia, nature and people create delicacies that arrive at your table, acquaint you with original tastes and bring a new perceptive,” says Mr Bogataj in the catalogue presenting the Delicacies of Dolenjska, which



not only taste, but even look delicious and tempting, and he adds that these tasty and original dishes will not only bring happiness, but also guide us through the daily life and festivities of the people responsible for their quality.

“The Delicacies of Dolenjska are built on solid foundations and, together with experts, we intend to develop them further. We trust that the Delicacies of Dolenjska will make Slovenia proud and that the exclusive offer will be recognised as protocol, business and personal gifts and experience and be perceived as a message of quality sent by our country,” said Špela Smuk, the manager of the project, expressing her expectations.

#### Delicacies of Dolenjska

Venison salami and other dried meat products, goat cheese with truffles and other home-made cheeses, elderberry syrup, dried porcini mushrooms, smoked apple vinegar, liqueurs, various types of honey, jams, dried fruit and home-made biscuits can be found among the Delicacies of Dolenjska



Venison salami.

## Lisca and Cheek by Lisca conquer foreign markets

Lisca, a company in Sevnica, was established in 1955 as a small craft workshop for mending stockings and dressing buttons. The workshop grew to become a company specialising in lingerie. It has witnessed rapid development and its brands Lisca and Cheek by Lisca have successfully expanded to foreign markets.



Lisca Fashion Lingerie Pascal. This spring will colour lingerie into fashionable fresh springtime colours.

Today, most Lisca products are sold in Europe and the company is a well-known manufacturer of ladies lingerie, swimwear and blouses; its products meet the wishes and needs of women for high-quality products that are fitted perfectly to a woman's body and satisfy their desire for beauty, charm and self-confidence.

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### INVESTMENTS IN THE LISCA BRAND

For some time, the company worked for other renowned European companies. Despite its engagement as a contract manufacturer, Lisca developed its own lingerie line and devoted increasing assets and energy to creating and promoting their own brands. At that time, two-thirds of their products were manufactured

under the company's brand and one-third under others. In 2008, Lisca made the important decision to start selling its products exclusively under its two brands: Lisca and Cheek by Lisca. "The launch of the company's brands on the market gave us better control, more room to manoeuvre and opportunities for the prosperous future," the company says, adding that they have knowledge and skills which place their lingerie and swimwear brands on a par with foreign competitors.

### WHAT KIND OF WOMAN WEARS LISCA PRODUCTS?

Lisca is a fashion brand intended for women who demand the most from their lingerie, for women who enjoy wearing it to

please themselves and others. It is a synonym for the best fit in combination with a modern look; depending on the situation, it can be romantic, playful, daring or seductive, but always charming and elegant. The Lisca series offer a complete range of products designed for different types of female consumers to suit their life style and use for various occasions and purposes. "The Lisca brand is intended for women who know what they want," the company says.

The Cheek by Lisca brand is designed for women well-versed in fashion who are looking for multifunctional lingerie with the characteristics of upper clothes. The Cheek products are principally designed for the needs of





woman consumers who radiate energy and exuberance and wish to be daring, attractive and dressed in the latest fashion. In March, the first Cheek by Lisca store is to open in Ljubljana; together with the fashionable new collections, the lingerie and swimwear lines sold exclusively by this store will bring a new freshness to the market.

#### EXPANDING TO FOREIGN MARKETS

Lisca worked and cooperated with some European companies in the past and therefore has been present in foreign markets for many years. It has established a tradition of marketing its creations and products under its own brands. After the former common state disintegrated, the markets in Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia remained important for Lisca; its subsidiaries established there now assure the company's presence and their brands' visibility in these markets.

Although the Slovenian market was important for the biggest company in Sevnica, Lisca soon realised that it was too small to

secure the company's long-term survival and growth. A stronger presence in the company's foreign markets and expansion to new ones was vital. Germany has been one of the company's main markets; actually, it is its third-biggest market. In the last year, exceptional progress was recorded in the Dutch market. "It takes many years of hard work to succeed in a new market. New paths and channels must be sought and the marketing must not be managed in the same way as in our traditional markets," the company explains. Lisca is present in more than twenty markets; it focuses additional attention on its strategic markets, which include not only Germany and the Netherlands but also Italy, Czech Republic, Russia and Turkey. In the Czech Republic, in Prague to be exact, Lisca runs its own stores, where numerous events are organised with a view to strengthening its brands in the Czech market and thus increasing their visibility in shopping centres offering Lisca lingerie. In the last two years, significant progress has been made in the Italian and Turkish markets. The Russian market is the most specific, be-

cause of its size and the fact that it is partly closed, which requires a different approach and long-term projects.

Selection Lingerie Amour. The lingerie line Lisca Selection for spring - summer 2014.



Lisca is a fashion brand intended for women who demand the most from their lingerie, for women who enjoy wearing it to please themselves and others.

Goran Kodelja, Director General of Lisca, at the fair in Paris.

**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SLOVENIAN AND FOREIGN BUYERS OF LISCA'S PRODUCTS**

The company explains that differences between the markets do exist, but are somewhat dependant on the sales channels and the market presence time frame. In Slovenian and other traditional markets, collections made of natural materials, cotton and modal make up an important part of our offer; trendy models in fashionable season colours and cuts are also in demand. Regarding foreign markets, the demand for large-size models outruns the demand for products made of natural materials. And this is one of very important competitive advantages of Lisca's lingerie, which offers a wide range of sizes ensuring the best fit and modern feminine design. "These features open many doors for us amidst strong competition in foreign markets," Lisca explains, adding that in some markets proven models are most in demand, while in others new models are preferred; some markets favour minimalism and

functionality, while others prefer feminine patterns and looks. Lisca's offer is rich and versatile and presents a variety of products to satisfy different tastes and needs.

**SUCCESSFUL PRESENTATION OF LISCA AT THE FAIR IN PARIS**

In the end of January 2014, Paris once again hosted the largest international lingerie manufacturers, including Lisca, at the Salon International de la Lingerie. At this largest lingerie fair in Europe, Lisca presented the autumn/winter collection for 2014 of both of its brands, Lisca and Cheek by Lisca. It is a well-known fact that Lisca not only follows fashion trends, but also creates them. Some of the Lisca designs were again selected to predict new fashion trends in upcoming seasons. This time, Lisca convinced the fair's jury with its Rebecca and Sparkle series from the Cheek by Lisca collection. This proves again that Lisca remains an international trendsetter among lingerie makers.

**LISCA PLANS 2.1 MILLION EUROS PROFIT THIS YEAR**

Lisca sells less than 20 per cent of its products on the domestic market and exports more than 80 per cent of its products. The visibility of the Lisca and Cheek by Lisca brands has increased in recent years, along with their sales. "We are becoming more and more recognisable throughout Europe and remain the leading provider of lingerie and swimwear in the markets of the former Yugoslav republics (Adriatic area)," Lisca says. The Italian, German, Russian, Turkish and Dutch markets have seen the biggest expansion in sales. Last year, the company generated 1.7 million euros in profit and reduced its debt by 3.1 million euros. The company plans to achieve sales revenue of 30 million euros and generate a profit of 2.1 million euros in 2014. Throughout its 50-year history, Lisca has accumulated ample knowledge and experience. It has devoted much attention to the quality of its products and succeeded in preserving its true originality.

The Cheek by Lisca brand is designed for women well-versed in fashion who are looking for multifunctional lingerie with the characteristics of upper clothes.



In the left: Nightwear Lisca Paloma. In the right: Lingerie Witty Cheek by Lisca

## SOCHI 2014

## Slovenian athletes won more medals than in all the other Olympics combined since Slovenia's independence

The most successful Olympic Games so far are over. Never before have Slovenian athletes achieved so many top rankings. The overall tally of eight medals is more than the total number of medals from all previous Games combined. This is probably more than even the most optimistic winter sports fans on the sunny side of the Alps could have imagined or even dared dream of.

Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA



The two gold medals of Tina Maze, who attained in Sochi what had been missing in her rich career, the silver and bronze medals of ski-jumper Peter Prevc, who proved at 21 that he had the nerves of steel of a master of big competitions, another silver and bronze for snowboarder Žan Košir (he was Slovenia's flag-bearer at the closing ceremony), who at first was unhappy with his med-

al, as he lost the gold by a hair's breadth; and the bronze medals of the cross-country skier Vesna Fabjan and the biathlete Teja Gregorin, for whom this was the best possible way of saying goodbye to Olympic Games. Slovenia really made a great impression at the Olympics in Sochi.

Besides all that, the 66-strong Slovenian Olympic Team, the

strongest so far, also achieved a number of placings among the top ten which, because of the number of medals, unfortunately remained almost unnoticed.

We will remember the Sochi Games for the extraordinary tally of medals, for the outstanding placings and for Slovenia's ice-hockey team's unexpectedly making the quarter-finals.

We will remember the Sochi Games for the extraordinary tally of medals, for the outstanding placings and for Slovenia's ice-hockey team's unexpectedly making the quarter-finals.

**The President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor:** “My presence at the Olympic Games is support for winter sports and our excellent athletes for their brilliant achievements.”



Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

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It is my hope that many of those who eagerly watched these Games will actively engage in sports activities themselves. In particular, I would like to see parents encourage their children to participate in sports activities.

Photo: Rasto Božić/STA



**Janez Škrabec, General Manager of Riko:** “We won a contract for a smaller project, to construct one of the Sochi Villages, for around 2.5 million euros, which is not much, but this is the largest project won by any Slovenian company in Sochi. This is our reality. As far as I know, no foreign companies – apart from the Austrian ones – were successful in Sochi.”

**Jernej Pikalo, the Minister of Education, Science and Sport:** “With Vitaly Mutko, the Russian Minister of Sport, we discussed the possibilities of enhancing cooperation on sports between our two countries, and encouraging the exchanges of professionals. We spoke about the legacy of the Olympic Games and the possible uses of the Olympic infrastructure after the Games.”



Photo: Daniel Novaković/STA

**Petra Majdič, captain of the Slovenian Olympic Team in Sochi:** “Because of the successes of Slovenia’s ice-hockey team, our presence was strongly felt among both the athletes and the spectators. I found sensational not only the medals won, but also the attire of our athletes, who were very fashionable and recognisable. There were about 200 fans from Slovenia who supported us at the venues. We were encouraged by our sponsors and guests, and I am particularly happy with the team spirit shown by our athletes, who went to events all dressed in the ‘official’ colours and cheered their colleagues from the stands. Every medal won makes me immensely happy. The first hero, of course, is Peter Prevc. After he won the medal, all the other athletes were much more relaxed, and one exploit followed another. It is my hope that many of those who eagerly watched these Games will actively engage in sports activities themselves. In particular, I would like to see parents encourage their children to participate in sports activities.”



Photo: Nebojša Težić/STA

The overall tally of eight medals is more than the total number of medals from all previous Games combined. This is probably more than even the most optimistic winter sports fans on the sunny side of the Alps could have imagined or even dared dream of.

Tina Maze, Peter Prevc, Žan Košir, Teja Gregorin, Vesna Fabjan and the hockey team carried the reputation of Slovenia around the globe. Ski jump silver and bronze medallist Peter Prevc proved at 21 that he had the steel nerves of a master of big competitions.

In the photo: Vesna Fabjan, Tina Maze, Peter Prevc, Teja Gregorin, Žan Košir

**Janez Kocijančič, President of Slovenia’s Olympic Committee:** “This is just a confirmation that we are among the leading winter sports countries. I was really impressed by the exploits of our ice-hockey team, who made it to the quarter-finals, and by the positive atmosphere that could be felt among the ‘lynxes’.”



Photo: Anže Malovrh/STA

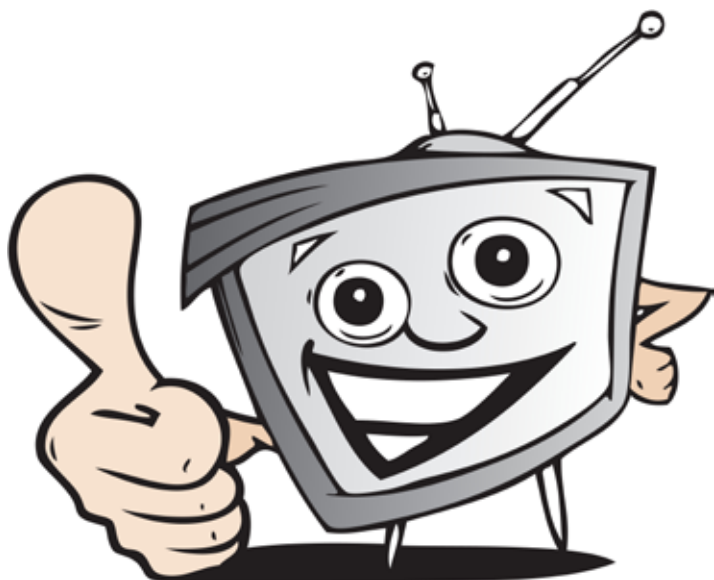


Photo: OKS archive

## Slovenians at the Olympics

### Attractive and experienced

Photo: Egor Fantasov/Mostphotos



#### OLYMPIC SKI-JUMP EVENTS WERE BROADCAST BY SLOVENIA'S TELEVISION TECHNICAL TEAM

In 2011, when the Sochi Olympics Jumping Centre was completed, Televizija Slovenije (TVS) was chosen to broadcast ski jumps during the Games. For TVS, this is the eighth time it broadcast an Olympics sports event, and the third time in a row for ski jumping. This is not a surprise, as its excellent broadcasting of ski jumping events from Planica, the cradle of ski jumping, has won the TVS team a world wide reputation. Forty-five cameras were used in Sochi. Producer Janko Bolka and his team visited the ski jumping centre three times before the Olympics in order to check the conditions that could have an affect on broadcasting the event. "At the beginning, there was just a huge construction site. We were knee-deep in mud," Bolka says, recalling his first visit to the site at the end of 2012. There was no snow at all, so the organisers decided to begin stocking up on snow in the mountains beforehand. Specific features? The ski jumps are laid on a concrete structure the in-run is icy.

#### SKI JUMPS IN ESTO SADOK BUILT BY A SLOVENIAN CONSTRUCTION TEAM

Slovenian constructors from Planica, who have extensive experience in building ski jumps, were awarded the contract to construct two jumps for the Olympic ski-jumping centre. This was a historic occasion for the 22-strong construction team, who had no difficulty coming to grips with the extreme conditions at the site. The team is very proud of a job well done. The two ski jumps, like most of the structures at the ski-jumping centre, were built from scratch. They are located in the village of Esto-Sadok, five kilometres from Krasnaya Polyana.

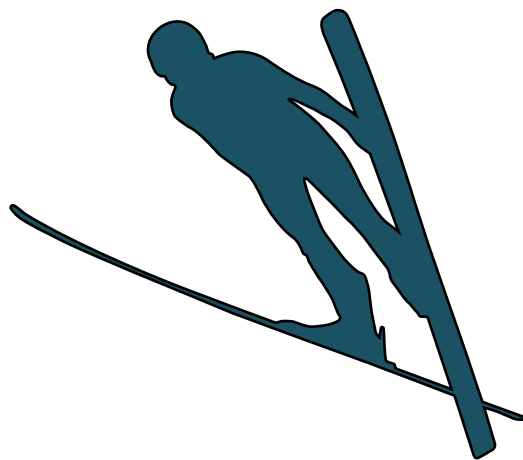


Photo: Mostphotos



#### TINA MAZE ONE OF THE SEXIEST COMPETITORS

A week before the grand opening of the Sochi Olympics, Business Insider, a US news website published a list of the 'hottest' athletes at the Sochi Olympics, including the 'Slovenian sensation' Tina Maze.

**VANESSA MAE, THE VIOLIN PLAYER, MET THE STANDARD TO PARTICIPATE AT THE SOCHI OLYMPICS ON THE SLOPES OF KRVAVEC IN SLOVENIA**

The 35-year-old violin virtuoso competed in four games and just made it to Krasnaya Polyana. A classical musician, who, because of the Games, put her musical career on hold for some time, achieved her dream of being an Olympian skier.



**FILIP FLISAR'S EPIC MOUSTACHE WINS THE APPROVAL OF AUDIENCES AT SOCHI**

“And now, watch the young man with the best-looking moustache, from Slovenia, Filip Flisar.” This was how BBC commentators announced our best free-style ski cross competitor, the 26-year-old Filip Flisar from Maribor, who was grinning into the camera from behind the starting gate. Although in Sochi, Filip did not win a medal, he certainly won the sympathies of numerous spectators. In past years, his moustache became his trademark, so much so that even his helmet is decorated with little moustaches. The handlebar moustache was a hot topic with numerous media, and extremely popular on Twitter. Yahoo commented that Flisar had won the moustache Olympics; the Daily Mail considered his moustache as the hippest in Sochi, while NBC found them downright epic.



**DUOL CONSTRUCTED THE OLYMPIC TRAINING ARENA FOR THE RUSSIAN ICE-HOCKEY TEAM**

The training arena for the Russian ice-hockey team was erected in Krasnodar. The arena has a stand that accommodates 1500 spectators, a restaurant and a locker room area. The Slovenian company Duol, which specialises in constructing balloon tents for sport and other facilities, has been working in Russia for some time and already covered more than 600 sport facilities, including FC Locomotiv Moscow's soccer stadium, which is the largest balloon tent in Russia. In other countries of the former Soviet Union (Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan) over 1100 structures are covered with Duol balloons.



**BEER GLASSES FROM HRASTNIK GLASSWORKS**

Hrastnik Glassworks is one of the world's major producers of branded beer glassware. The Glassworks, which are part of the Carlsberg Corporation, prepared a special beer tumbler for the Sochi Olympics. Their standard beer glass shape was used and adapted to the customer's desires concerning decoration. The glass had to be perfect, which was not a problem, as Hrastnik Glassworks makes one of the purest glasses in the world. Hrastnik Glassworks exports 97% of its production, and is renowned for the purity of its glass, the ability to quickly respond to client's demands, and for its technically advanced and innovative production. The Glassworks specialises in three production lines: glassware, glass packaging and lighting.



Photo: Archive of iCode



## Slovenian team admitted to an elite U.S. accelerator

The iCode, a Slovenian entrepreneurial team, was admitted to the Tech Wildcatters, an elite U.S. accelerator.

In addition to the investment of 25,000 dollars, for the next three months the team will be able to use the network of renowned mentors to further develop its solution, find its first customers and prepare for the next investment phase. The iCode solution is an invisible code, which advertisers, film studios and television content producers insert into existing contents such as television and Internet video advertisements, films, etc.

The team members: Aljaž Andrejaš, Kristijan Pukšič, Luka Druks, Matija Vrbovšek and Rok Ajdnik.

Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA



## Tina Maze rejoins the elite club

Slovenian skiing champion Tina Maze is among six female athletes shortlisted for Laureus World Sportswoman of the Year, the most prestigious sports awards in the world.

Other nominees are German football player Nadine Angerer, U.S. swimmer Missy Franklin, Jamaican sprinter Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, Russian pole vaulter Yelena Isinbayeva and U.S. tennis player Serena Williams. The Laureus Academy wrote that Tina Maze produced one of the most amazing seasons ever seen in skiing.

Photo: Ziga Camernik/Mosphotos



## Never give up

For the second consecutive year, the Never Give Up sports and humanitarian association, staged a charity run in Bled entitled Ruth's Run to honour the memory of Ruth Podgornik Reš.

To honour her memory, the Never Give Up sports and humanitarian association named the charity run after her. A registration fee of ten euros was charged and the total amount thus raised was given to three socially disadvantaged families selected by the Association with the assistance of the Friends of Youth Federation.

Photo: Andreja Šršen Dobaj



## Traditional Old Vine pruning

The 35th traditional pruning of the Old Vine, the world's oldest vine, which grows in front of the Old Vine House in Lent in Maribor, was carried out.

The pruning of the Old Vine has grown into a recognised annual event that draws numerous visitors from near and far to the bank of the River Drava. It opens a cycle of events dedicated to the Old Vine which end with the ceremonial gathering of the Old Vine's grapes in autumn. Some of the Old Vine's cuttings are traditionally presented to towns at home and abroad. This noble vine is registered in the Guinness Book of Records as the oldest vine in the world. Its grapes produce about 25 litres of wine every year.



Photo: Feature/Mostphotos



## Mediterranean producers of olive oil

At “Maslina”, the international competition of Mediterranean olive growers in Split, olive oil producers from Goriška Brda won 14 gold medals for quality and were second best in the category of pickled olives for olives from the Drnovšček farm.

The event was attended by 657 olive growers from ten Mediterranean countries. Some 435 samples of extra virgin olive oil were presented for evaluation. There was also a special category for evaluating bottle design, labels and gift packaging. Among over 100 Slovenian olive oil producers, nine members of the Brda Society of Olive Growers and Goriška Brda Wine Cellar entered the competition, and all of them won golden medals. The “Brici” also won high awards for their labels. The success of the Goriška Brda olive growers and Goriška Brda Wine Cellar, which won gold medals in a tough international competition, testifies to the excellent quality of their extra-virgin olive oil, which is boutique class.

Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STAI



## Onaplus prize for Jolka Milič

Onaplus magazine has chosen individuals whose actions and wider social insight constitute superlative achievements within the society. This year, the first place went to the translator, publicist and poet Jolka Milič.

The first prize was awarded to Jolka Milič following the newspaper Delo's assessment that Milič's rich translation work, in which she has made Slovenian readers more aware of the poetry of Romance languages and transposed our poetry to the Italian-speaking world, “is additionally enriched by her sensitive literary and cultural critical writings which address the critical, severe and uncompromising reader and observer, like herself”.

She was awarded the title “Ona 365” in Cankarjev dom by the editor-in-chief of Ona and Onaplus magazine, Sabina Obolnar. In her keynote address, the Prime Minister, Alenka Bratušek, paid tribute to the achievements of the other prize winners.

Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STAI



## Medals for services, valour and honourable action

The President of the Republic, Borut Pahor, conferred the Medal for Services on scientist Roman Jerala. Mojca Senčar, Marija Vegelj Pirc and a pilot Matevž Lenarčič received Medals for Valour. The Medal for Honourable Action was awarded to Mehmedalija Alič.

The scientist Roman Jerala was decorated by President Borut Pahor for his services in the promotion of Slovenian science and higher education in the international arena. The President of the Europa Donna Society for the fight against breast cancer, Mojca Senčar, was awarded the Medal for Valour for her dedicated, professional and humanitarian work in the fight against cancer. The founder and President of the Society of Cancer Patients, Marija Vegelj Pirc, received a Medal for Valour for her selfless work with cancer patients. Mehmedalija Alič received a Medal for Honourable Action for his participation in the excavation of human remains in the St. Barbara pit and Huda jama. Pilot Matevž Lenarčič was decorated for bravery, integration of knowledge and technological achievements associated with the protection of the Earth.

Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STAI



## Round and Round

Singer and flautist Tinkara Kovač will be the 20th musician to represent Slovenia at the Eurovision song contest, taking the pop tune “Spet/Round and Round” to Copenhagen in May.

The song, which was selected as Slovenia's entry to Eurovision in a televised competition, was written by Tinkara Kovač and Hannah Mancini, Slovenia's representative at last year's Eurosong. Tinkara Kovač was selected the winner in two rounds of phone voting, after yesterday's finalists were selected by a panel of judges.

Photo: Domen Grögl/STA



## Nothing Is Impossible

Ljubljana, Slovenian Book Days, 14 – 18 April 2014

This year's Slovenian Book Days event will be held under the title "Nothing is Impossible". Slovenian publishers will present their books, while the cultural programme will offer concerts, events for children, prize competitions and literary readings. An open-air stage will be built where Slovenian writers can read their works, and publishing companies can present their recent publications. Books will be offered at discount prices.

For more information see: <http://www.visitljubljana.com>

Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA



## Planica Ski-Jumps and Smile & Drive Open Air Planica

Planica, 20 – 23 March 2014

Planica is the cradle of ski-jumping. Since 1934, the ski-jump designed by the constructor Bloudek has attracted crowds of spectators eager to see record-setting jumps. Planica has witnessed more than 60 world records, including the first jump over 100 metres by the Austrian, Sepp Bradl, in 1936, and the first jump over 200 metres by the Finnish ski-jumper, Toni Nieminen, in 1994. Until 2011, Planica held the world record in ski flying: in 2005, Björn Einar Rønne reached the 239-metre mark. In addition to the competition, visitors can enjoy concerts and other events? included in Smile & Drive Open Air Planica.

For more information, see: Planica  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4UpVhskJQhc&feature=youtu.be>

Photo: Antonio Guillen/Mosphotos



## Istrian Marathon

Koper, Izola, Piran, 13 April 2014

The Istrian Marathon is unique. Why? Because it is the most beautiful, the most picturesque, and the most natural marathon in Slovenia. It is the only marathon in Slovenia with a track that runs along the seaside. You can try different distances, 42, 21, or 9 kilometres, or simply join the recreational run and enjoy the scenery. The marathon is organised by Društvo Istrski maraton.

For more information, see: [www.istrski-maraton.si](http://www.istrski-maraton.si)

Photo: Archives of GCO



## Furunga

Trnovo pri Novi Gorici, 29 – 30 April 2014

Furunga is a traditional two-day festival during which a tree is felled to make a maypole and hauled from Trnovski gozd to Nova Gorica. On the first day, the tree (called mast) is felled by hand in the old way and loaded onto a cart; the cart is decorated, the harness prepared and the horses are harnessed to the cart, which is made ready to descend towards Trnovo. On the second day, once again, the horses are harnessed to the cart and the cart is decorated with garlands and prepared to descend towards Nova Gorica. You can accompany the cart, which makes several stops, on foot, and once in Nova Gorica, you can help to raise and decorate the maypole.

## Ljubljana celebrates 2000 year of Emona

Ljubljana and its surroundings hide numerous Roman ruins. In its day, the predecessor of Ljubljana, Emona, was an important military outpost. To mark 2,000 years of Emona this year a lot of events is already arranged in Ljubljana.

One of the interesting monuments of Emona period is Emonan citizen. A top a stone column next to the remains of the walls of Ancient Emona stands a replica of a gilded bronze statue of an Emonan patrician. It was excavated in 1836 at the site of a Roman cemetery in front of the Kazina building in Ljubljana. According to Roman custom, graves were located outside the city walls. The cremated remains of the deceased and some objects were discovered next to the statue. These artefacts reveal that the deceased was a wealthy citizen of Emona living in the early 2nd century under Emperor Trajan.

The hollow statue of the Emonan citizen measures 154 cm in height. Braced on the inside with an iron rod, the sculpture is attached to a rectangular stone pedestal. The lower right forearm is missing. The statue depicts a young Emonan dressed in the typical Roman toga, with a tunic underneath, which was a symbol of Roman citizenship. The pose was modelled on statues in Rome.

Well-preserved Roman bronze sculptures are rare, as most were melted down for the precious material. Privately commissioned monuments of local Roman dignitaries are even less common. The Emonan citizen is thus one of few surviving private monumental portraits. This statue decorated the grave of a wealthy and prominent Emonan. Roman sculptures adorned public and private rooms. They were usually tools of imperial propaganda, honouring emperors and their victories.

