

# Sinfo

May-June

The Best from Slovenia

**IN FOCUS**  
Green Excellence

**I FEEL  
SLOVENIA**



**I FEEL  
SLOVENIA**

# Sinfo

**SLOVENIAN INFORMATION**

May-June 2019

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Photo: Bruno Toič

## THE GREEN AND PASSIONATE HEART OF SLOVENIA

Nature is not something to be taken for granted. As individuals, we are constantly faced with the decision of whether to respect nature and contribute to its conservation, or to exploit it to serve our own interests. Now that spring has well and truly arrived, and summer is just around the corner, there will be many more opportunities for taking a break outdoors. Slovenians can still pride ourselves on having many green spots; hence we should continue on our chosen path, namely to continue to keep Slovenia green. This is another reason why our national slogan is I FEEL SLOVENIA.

This issue features stories about people who have made history in terms of conserving nature, and explores contemporary initiatives, particularly in diplomacy. Slovenia's heart beats strongly for not only nature but also sport. Slovenians are passionate sports fans, and particularly enthusiastic about team and winter sports. Recently, we were cheering on our two basketball stars Goran Dragić and Luka Dončić at the game in Miami, and supporting our Slovenian Eagles in Planica with fire in our hearts.

Be green, enjoy green and foster respect for green. And why not treat yourself to a picnic? Just in case you have forgotten the fresh smell of green fields, the colours of butterflies, the taste of water, and the feel of soft grass.

*Tanja Glogovčan*

**Tanja Glogovčan, Executive Editor**

**8** LIFE PROGRAMME  
Living well, within the limits of our planet

**12** SLOVENIA, MOVING TOWARDS A CIRCULAR ECONOMY  
Slovenian companies have among the best practices with regard to a circular economy, and these are resonating across the globe

**16** ZERO WASTE TOURISM  
Slovenia – the only country with a zero waste capital city, zero waste hotel and zero waste events

**20** POSITIVE EFFECTS OF THE GREEN ECONOMY  
Inspiring green innovations in companies, investments and politics

**28** THE ŠKOCJANSKI ZATOK  
Emerald in the green heart of Koper

**32** THE PAHERNIK FAMILY FROM VUHRED  
The Pahernik Foundation advocates close-to-nature forest management and provides scholarships

**36** FISHING IN SLOVENIA  
Slovenian fishermen are true nature lovers

**40** BUSY BEES  
In the world of bees, women are equal to their male colleagues as entrepreneurs and experts

**54** SLOVENIA, ONE OF THE FIRST AREAS IN EUROPE TO HAVE A ZOO  
The exotic enclosure below Rožnik has brought delight for 70 years

**76** THE THREE SEAS INITIATIVE IN SLOVENIA  
An initiative that aims to stimulate more rapid development in our neighbourhood

**88** SLOVENIAN FANS UNIQUE IN PROMOTING THE COUNTRY  
Thank you, Slovenian fans, for being so committed in supporting our athletes





#### GREEN EXCELLENCE

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit. Let's thus develop the excellent habit of treating nature with respect.

## LIFE PROGRAMME

# Living well, within the limits of our planet

MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND SPATIAL PLANNING, THE LIFE SLOVENIA TEAM  
PHOTO: BARBARA ZAKŠEK



In Slovenia and the European Union, environmental efforts are moving in the direction of a low-carbon society, the circular economy, resilient ecosystems, and sustainable macroeconomic development models. We want to live well, within the limits of our planet.



As our understanding of the characteristics of environmental challenges in Europe and their interdependence with economic and social systems in the globalised world increases, we are becoming increasingly aware that, with the existing knowledge and established management methods, and without any major changes, we are ill-equipped to cope with these challenges.

**In the EU, we have an indispensable assistant to help with the implementation of changes and the improvement of environmental protection measures – the LIFE programme.**

This is a European financial mechanism intended exclusively for measures related to environmental protection, nature conservation and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

#### **LIFE – MORE THAN A QUARTER OF A CENTURY OF SUPPORT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION WITH THE HELP OF EUROPEAN FUNDS**

Slovenian applicants have been using non-refundable funds under the European financial mechanism LIFE for over 25 years to tackle concrete problems pertaining to the environment and nature. Since 1993, Slovenia has received almost EUR 69 million of European funds for 52 LIFE projects, whose total value is EUR 135.5 million. With LIFE projects, Slovenia has not just received funds, but also obtained an opportunity to implement measures

with incalculable effects on the preservation and restoration of vulnerable ecosystems and to test and introduce many new green technological system solutions in agriculture and industry.

**This year, two integrated LIFE projects, LIFE-IP NATURA.SI and LIFE IP CARE4CLIMATE, have begun to be implemented for the first time in Slovenia.**

One of the main characteristics of such integrated projects is that they are implemented over a large geographical area and need to have additional sources of financing. Considering that Slovenia is one of the European countries with the greatest degree of biodiversity, with as much as 38% of its national territory included in Natura 2000 – a European network of special protection areas – the purpose of the first of the aforementioned projects is to improve the management of the Natura 2000 network.

#### **THE OBJECTIVE IS MORE EFFECTIVE FIELD WORK**

Slovenia's system of development planning, on which the Natura 2000 Management Programme is also based, is well-developed, particularly with regard to natural resources such as forests and waters, and fishery and hunting. Accordingly, 267 species and 60 habitat types are protected on 355 Natura 2000 sites. However, reports show that the level of preservation of certain species and habitat types is decreasing. We have noticed in practice that, despite good planning, the management of the Natura 2000 network is not equally effective in all areas.

Scarce Large Blue (*Phengaris teleius*)

Despite protection, certain species are becoming increasingly threatened and some typical habitats are being degraded. With better management, we aim to reduce threats to species and improve the condition of the habitats they need to survive. That is why we have prepared and successfully applied for the integrated LIFE project for nature – LIFE-IP NATURA.SI, the purpose of which is to correct these shortcomings.

We will improve the management of Natura 2000 sites by strengthening cooperation between key sectors and stakeholders. We plan to update the Natura 2000 Management Programme and establish a national system of biological monitoring. This will enable us to continuously provide improved data on the condition of species and habitats. At eight selected Natura 2000 sites we will implement specific measures such as preventing overgrowth, removing invasive species, and restoring and maintaining the favourable conditions of water bodies; all this with a view to improving the state of the natural environment.

**Fifteen partners from state and public administration are participating in this eight-year-long project, whose value is over EUR 17 million, and three research institutions and two private institutes will contribute their knowledge and experience to the scheme.**

So far things have been promising; however, good cooperation will be crucial for the project's success, and we are confident that we will soon be able to report on the first positive results.

Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*)

## SLOVENIA, MOVING TOWARDS A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

# Slovenian companies have among the best practices with regard to a circular economy, and these are resonating across the globe

MARJANA DERMEJ, GOVERNMENT OFFICE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND EUROPEAN COHESION POLICY



The awareness that continued growth of today's economic production, on a planet with limited resources, is not possible, has been growing in recent years. Following nature's example of not wasting anything in its processes, and where every end is also a new beginning, measures for the transition to a circular economy are being increasingly applied. There are a growing number of countries and companies which put the concept of a circular economy at the centre of their policies, together with the search for solutions to development challenges. The transition to a low-carbon circular economy is becoming a constant in development planning documents in Slovenia, and the inspirational best practice examples are resonating across the borders of our green country.

The concept of a circular economy is relatively recent, and comprehensive and progressive solutions for its realisation are very rare, even on a global scale. It is therefore exceptionally important to learn about best practices and to consider the possibilities of integrating them into the local environment. Such opportunities are also being offered by European Commission programmes. State institutions are increasingly being included in interregional cooperation projects aimed at strengthening the effectiveness of development policies. The Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy is participating in two Interreg Europe projects in the field of the circular economy. In the context of the SYMBI and Retrace projects, we learned about examples of best practice in partner regions. In Slovenia, we can pride ourselves on the numerous inspiring examples of successfully introducing ideas from the broader concept of a circular economy.

### IN INDUSTRIAL SYMBIOSIS

So as to reduce negative environmental impacts, Aquafil Slo has decided to recycle synthetic waste, such as flooring and fishing nets, into high-quality raw materials for the production of fine nylon yarn. Econyl® yarn, which has the same characteristics as if it were made of petroleum products, can be regenerated over and

over again for an infinite number of times without compromising quality. Aquafil Slo is also reducing environmental impacts by using 100 percent certified green electricity and transferring excess thermal energy to the nearby Atlantis Water Park, where they use it for heating.

The steel manufacturer Štore Steel is also joining industrial symbiosis. The company obtains waste metal from numerous companies and offers its by-products to others. These by-products include scale, which is used by Gorenje to make washing machine weights, and slag, which is used by Ekomineral in the manufacturing of asphalt.

### DESIGNING SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS

Design is undoubtedly one of the cornerstones of the transition to a circular economy. So as to enable the longer use of products and ensure that the used materials are returned into the circle in the form of high-quality raw materials at the end of the product's lifespan, special consideration is already needed during the design phase. Donar, a furniture-making company and recipient of the Green Product Award 2018, places great emphasis on product design.

**Their Nico Less chair, which has been designed by Primož Jeza, is made of recycled felt (60 percent recycled plastic bottles and 40 percent recycled non-woven textile materials) using just heat and pressure.**

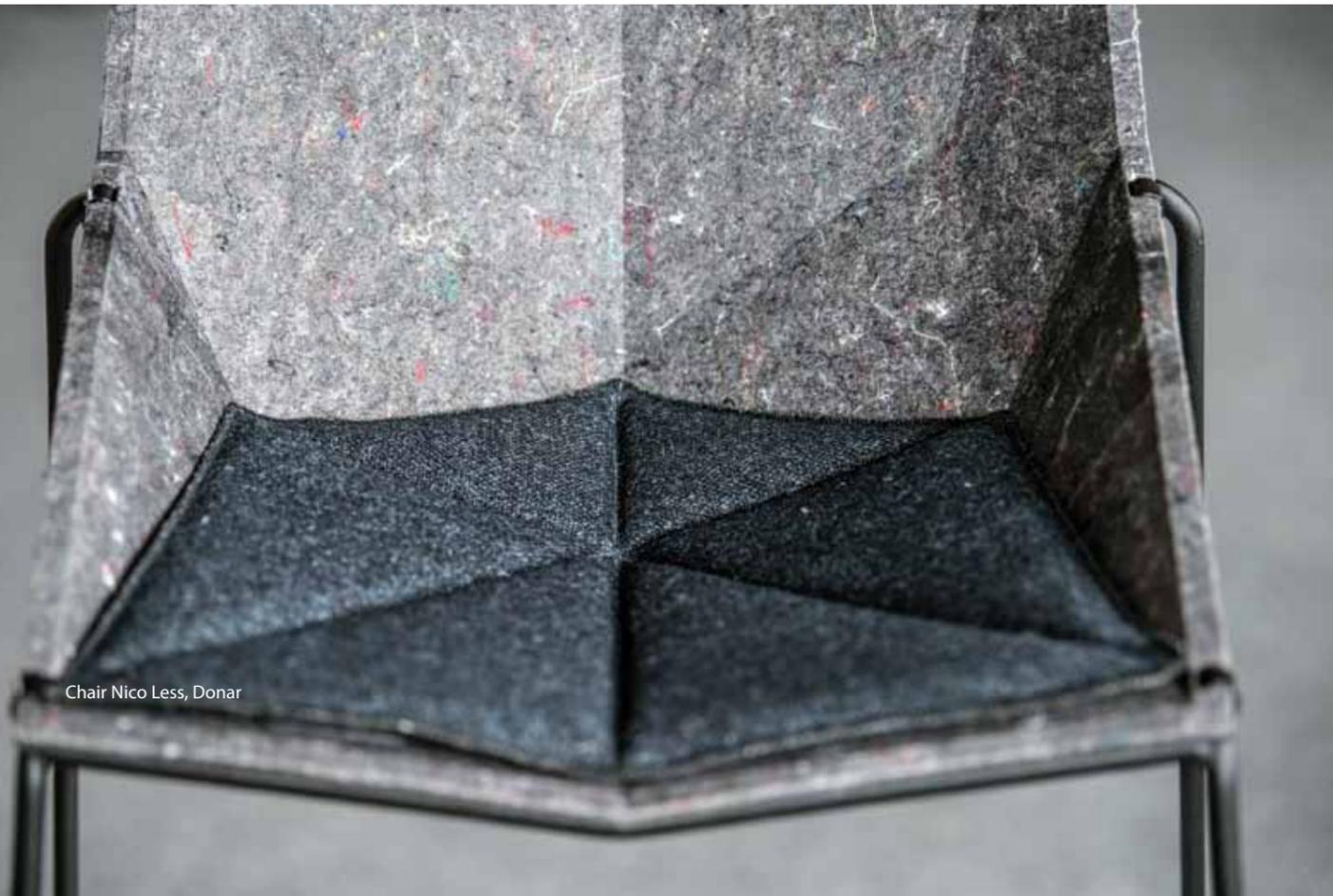
The chair received the Green Product Award 2018 in the furniture category, and also won the Red Dot Product Design 2016 award.

**LIVING LAB FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF INNOVATIONS**

The interesting practices recognised in the context of the Retrace project include the InnoRenew Centre of Excellence, which is co-

funded from European funds for the Horizon 2020 programme of the Republic of Slovenia and by the European Regional Development Fund. The centre, which operates in the forest and wood sector, searches for solutions which help companies implement development innovations. One of the main pillars of the project is the Living Lab, which fosters a culture of open innovation and sets up an environment for the development of new value chains and business models. Various users participating in the Living Lab contribute to the development of new ideas, products, and services.

**Among them are also Donar and MSora. The latter presented the results of the WINTHERWAX project in the context of Retrace.**



Chair Nico Less, Donar

With the support received from the Horizon 2020 programme and in cooperation with project partners, the company developed e which are surface-treated with Silvacera®, based on natural wax. The windows, which are marketed under the registered WINTHERWAX® trademark, represent a global innovation.

**SLOVENIAN SMART METERS IN DUTCH HOUSEHOLDS**

The examples of best practice seen across the globe also include the work of IskraEmeco, which designs and manufactures smart meters. In 2015, the company, together with four Dutch electricity distributors, won the green contract to install 1.6 million smart metres by 2020. The Fair Meter project is one of the key elements of the first extensive implementation of smart metering in the Netherlands, a country which is considered a circular economy champion. The smart meter combines the best practices of a cir-

cular and sustainable economy.

**In the context of the Fair Meter project, the main challenges of the electronics industry of today are tackled (i.e. energy intensity, work standards, use of conflict minerals (3TG), lack of raw materials, and electronic waste).**

These challenges are taken on by establishing control over the entire supply chain, enforcing the highest standards, and reducing risk exposure in unstable raw materials markets across the globe.



Window WINTHERWAX

## ZERO WASTE TOURISM

# Slovenia – the only country with a zero waste capital city, zero waste hotel and zero waste events

KATJA SREŠ  
PHOTO: POLONA PONIKVAR



Hotel Ribno – the first Slovenian Zero Waste hotel

Slovenia, a green boutique destination offering five-star experiences, can pride itself on a multitude of flattering titles, including the most beautiful, the safest and the most hipster country. Five Slovenian municipalities have more beds for tourists than they have for local people, and every year records are broken in terms of visits to the country on the sunny side of the Alps, which is also one of the cleanest countries in the world. A question that is often asked around here is how long Slovenia will be able to fly the green flag and, on that basis, top sustainability lists.

Last year Slovenia recorded over 15 million overnight stays. On average, guests produce at least 1 kilogram of waste daily, resulting in 15 thousand tonnes more waste in Slovenia. In Bled, the capital of cream cakes and *pletna* boats (wooden flat-bottom boat with a pointed bow and the stern widened with a step to enable passengers to enter, propelled with the special *stehrudder* technique where the oarsman is standing and rowing with two oars), as much as 70% of the waste is produced from tourism.

### ZERO WASTE SLOVENIA

“Counting your chickens before they hatch,” said the Municipality of Bled, undertaking, as one of the nine Slovenian pioneers, to reduce the amount of waste and improve their separate collection. On their path to a zero waste society or a society with less municipal waste, they are supported by Ecologists Without Borders in the national Zero Waste organisation for Slovenia, which is part of the Zero Waste Europe network.

After four years of membership of the Zero Waste network, waste in Bled has not disappeared, of course.

**But this is not the main purpose of the concept, which has been developing in more than 350 local communities around**

**Europe, including the Slovenian municipalities of Bled, Ljubljana, Vrhnika, Log-Dravograd, Borovnica, Gorje, Radovljica, Slovenske Konjice and Žalec. Waste will always be produced, and the zero waste concept is merely a map of different paths to help us reduce the amount of waste.**

We are obviously on the right track, considering that, with concerted efforts, all the aforementioned municipalities have succeeded in preventing a total of 15,750 tonnes of mixed municipal waste from being generated, thereby saving 3 million EUR. A positive side effect of this project is the forging of ties and cooperation between all the stakeholders involved.

### ZERO WASTE HOTEL

One such hotel is Hotel Ribno, the first Slovenian zero waste hotel. After two years of introducing measures to reduce waste and ensure the separate collection of waste, Hotel Ribno has succeeded in achieving that 92% of the waste is collected separately. But this process required much more than just filling out forms. Without the commitment of the management and employees, who often weighed and examined the waste, it would not be possible to ob-

tain such a title. It is crucial to change the entire operational policy and introduce measures such as placing bins for separate waste collection in hallways and offering food without packaging. Each and every step matters.

**ZERO WASTE EVENTS**

At the other end of Slovenia, the zero waste map has been used by the organisers of the *Jurjevanje* folklore festival in Bela Krajina, Art Camp and *(Z)mešani festival*. They have consistently promoted the separate collection of waste and have been introducing measures to prevent waste from being produced – they have been striving to reduce the use of plastic for one-time use and installing drinking water fountains at festival sites, with their responsible attitude to the environment also being reflected in the content of their programmes. All the aforementioned examples of good practice demonstrate that the zero waste concept is about much more than just waste. By selecting appropriate measures, we can reduce impacts on climate change, also due to reduced energy and water consumption and sustainable mobility.

**The alpha and omega of a successful transition to a zero waste society is communication. Visitors taking a stroll around the symbol of Bled will not benefit from drinking water fountains and bins for separate waste collection if they do not even know they exist.**

However, improved communication increases the level of services, providing a significant competitive edge. The trend towards green has also been demonstrated by other tourism providers, who have visited our Slovenian zero waste pearls and are following their example. Moreover, this trend is also reflected in the media, which can no longer overlook zero waste practices when covering environmental topics. Accordingly, records are being broken not only with the numbers of overnight stays but also with media coverage of zero waste, which has increased threefold in the past four years. This a good thing.

**ZERO WASTE TOURISTS**

As individuals, we can also contribute to reducing the impact of tourism on the environment; in 2011 the tourism industry was responsible for the generation of 48 tonnes of waste, accounting for 14% of all generated municipal waste at a global level. We should avoid the use of plastic items for one-time use, support environment-friendly accommodation and events and, at tables laden with delicious food, bear in mind the amounts of food going to waste. We should avoid buying useless souvenirs, should borrow our camping equipment and should not forget to separate waste. Surveys show that, when on holidays, people behave in a much more wasteful way, which is why we should reflect on how individual changes can help us make a great impact together. With our green behaviour, we should set an example to others when travelling around the world and to foreign tourists in Slovenia.

**remains a green spot on the world map for a long time to come. We should see the five stars mentioned in the first paragraph become a reality. We are on the right track. We can pride ourselves on being the only country in the world with a zero waste capital city, a zero waste hotel and zero waste events.**

As Matija Blažič, the director of Hotel Ribno, said on being awarded the title of Zero Waste Hotel: *“Today, we might positively stand out as someone who is breaking new ground in this area, but in a few years’ time, any company that will not apply this concept will stand out, the same as we do now. The only difference being that they will stand out in a negative way.”* Let Slovenia be the first one to stand out, setting a positive example to others.

**Together, we can make sure that Slovenia continues to fly the green flag and**



## POSITIVE EFFECTS OF THE GREEN ECONOMY

# Inspiring green innovations in companies, investments and politics

ANA STRUNA BREGAR, THE CEO OF THE CENTRE OF ENERGY EFFICIENT SOLUTIONS AND A MEMBER OF THE MANAGERS' ASSOCIATION OF SLOVENIA, AND JURIJ GIACOMELLI, THE CEO OF GIACOMELLI MEDIA MANAGEMENT AND CONSULTING LTD AND A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MANAGERS' ASSOCIATION OF SLOVENIA

PHOTO: MANAGERS' ASSOCIATION OF SLOVENIA ARCHIVES



Green streets in BTC City shopping center.

Society and the economy are facing the greatest challenges of the 21st century – those of climate and energy. This year's World Economic Forum in Davos has put climate change high on the list of the main risks to the world economy.

A shift towards the green economy, which has a smaller impact on the environment, is no longer just the fantasy of environmentalists, but a necessary fact. In ensuring competitiveness and complying with environmental policies, companies are required to reduce costs and work towards sustainable development; on the other hand, this provides them with new, innovative business opportunities.

**Many countries, companies and investors have already identified the measurable financial and environmental benefits that a green economy can offer, along with business advantages and improvements to their knowledge, experience and reputation. Slovenia is one of those countries.**

Legislative requirements, obligations to constantly improve environmental and energy management, and the directive on the disclosure of non-financial information, which is mandatory for companies with more than 500 employees, compel companies in all sectors (construction, mobility, energy, agriculture, tourism, finance, insurance business, etc.) to move towards greener, more circular and more sustainable operations. This applies to what companies do and the services and products they provide. The Eco Fund and SID Bank also promote the energy efficiency of Slovenian companies with financial mechanisms.

The Centre of Energy Efficient Solutions (CER), a network promoting the innovative green economy, strives for the development of an intensive green economy that has the answers to climate change. Members of CER are advanced companies from the energy, construction and mobility sectors: BMW, BTC, ELES, Etrek, Jelovica, JUB, Gartner Arhitekti, Knauf Insulation, Lapp, Lotrič Meroslovje, Lumar, OMV, Petrol, Plan-Net Solar, Proinco, Porsche Slovenija, Renault, Resalta, Slovenijales, Smartis, SODO, Termo Shop, Tondach, Velux and Wienerberger.

### FOR GREATER INNOVATION AND COMPETITIVENESS TOURISTS

The broader concept of a green and low-carbon economy highlights the reduction of negative impacts on the environment and regulatory frameworks that promote such investments, encouraging companies to pursue them as priority development directions. Meanwhile the concept of transitioning to a circular economy defines the systemic shift towards promoting innovation and competitiveness on the basis of opportunities arising from changed global management conditions and the acknowledgement of the absolute scarcity of resources in the natural and social environment.

**In Slovenia, the circular economy has become one of the country's strategic development priorities and is included in the key national documents, such as the Vision of Slovenia 2050 and the Slovenian Development Strategy 2030.**

Companies that use the most advanced business practices in this field include the Slovenian plants of the international company Aquafil (formerly Yulon), which has developed a regeneration business model of nylon production from waste fishing nets, carpets and other waste material. Slovenian companies that use advanced business models include also Knauf Insulation, Valtrex, the representative of the Italian paper giant Lucart Group in Slovenia, which has received an award from the World Economic Forum for its material cycle, and energy companies, such as Gen-i, Petrol, Butan Plin and others. For several years now, the Pulp and Paper Institute has been carrying out the innovative circular CEL.CYCLE program, in which they have included their members and the majority of the Slovenian paper industry. SID Bank has recently intro-

duced the Circularity Assessment Model into its business practice, which enables it to evaluate and systematically monitor its clients' business models and, according to their level of circularity and circular potential, define the range of suitable financial instruments and adapt interest rates and other lending conditions. Some of the good practices that should be highlighted are the systematic approach of the City of Maribor to the management of waste, water and the sewerage system, and the practices of several Slovenian public utility companies, including: Snaga, Komunala (Izola), Okolje (Piran), Saubermacher and others. The Petrol group has also identified the transition to the circular economy as an opportunity for new business models, greater resource efficiency and the creation of new green jobs.



The Urbanscape green roof system

## EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

### **Knauf Insulation: The Urbanscape green roof system**

Knauf Insulation puts its commitment to an increasingly green economy into action with projects such as the Urbanscape green roof system. This is a Slovenian innovation – a non-combustible natural growing medium that is made of virgin rock mineral fibres without any additives. Green roofs have a favourable cooling effect – they reduce overheating, store runoff, cool the structure, clean the air, reduce carbon dioxide emissions and provide a natural habitat for various organisms.

### **BTC City: With Mission: Green, they produce green energy from renewable resources**

Mission: Green is one of BTC's cornerstones, along with its business unit tasked with making sure that sustainable development becomes an integral part of business practice and decision-making. As part of this mission, among other things, BTC produced 1,677,655 kWh of green energy from renewable resources in 2018 and, with efficient energy use projects, compared to the base year 2010, saved 11,147,376 kWh of energy, reduced impacts on the environment by 5,781,922 kg of carbon dioxide, and planted 13 new trees and 400 shrubs.

### **Petrol: More than 100 locations with chargers for electric cars**

The Petrol group has been actively increasing its energy independence and efficiency, along with the share of renewable energy sources in the markets where it operates. In the long term, it aims to create a green energy mix, including options for sustainable mobility. In Slovenia it has established a network of public e-chargers at more than 100 locations, which are used by more than 90% of all electric car drivers in Slovenia. Petrol's sustainable focus is also present in towns – in terms of energy and the management of all natural resources.



Chargers for the electric cars

# NATURE PROTECTION TECHNICIAN

## For biodiversity conservation

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ

PHOTO: BIOTECHNICAL EDUCATIONAL CENTRE LJUBLJANA ARCHIVES



Building feeders, nesting sites, insect hotels...

Conserving biodiversity is a government priority in Slovenia. Pursuing sustainable development requires new, previously unknown professions, one of which is nature protection technician, which falls under the category of so-called green-collared jobs. These green jobs or careers focus on sustainable development, renewable energy sources and reducing the environmental impact of businesses, agriculture, construction, and public services, and also on the revitalisation of degraded areas.

Given the high levels of pollution, nature protection technicians have ample employment opportunities in green careers. These new professions contribute to the preservation of our nation's rich natural and cultural heritage, and are especially relevant throughout Slovenia in terms of scientific research, environmental protection, landscape aesthetics and recreation facilities.

The four-year upper secondary programme at the Biotechnical Educational Centre Ljubljana focuses on raising awareness of and preserving and furthering the natural and cultural values of sustainable development.

**Nature protection technicians acquire the ability to use their expertise to solve concrete problems in their area of expertise, following environmental protection legislation, discern the impacts of human activities on the environment, remediate degraded areas by adopting a technological approach and environmental remediation (i.e. ecosystem restoration) techniques, and inform the public about the significance of natural assets and their protection, and about the possibilities with regard to environmental protection and spatial planning.**

Moreover, they can cooperate with other professionals in drafting measures in relation to spatial planning and monitoring the implementation of environmental measures, provide oversight and guided tours of protected areas, analyse environmental parameters, and plan and manage production processes by using natural and renewable energy sources. They are further capable of teamwork and project work, engaging in written and oral communication with co-workers and others using basic terms, and they acquire the competences needed for using scientific literature, technical and technological documents, technical regulations and standards in their work.

### GOOD EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Nature protection technicians may be employed in institutions tasked with conserving natural and cultural heritage, in research laboratories, bio-wastewater treatment plants, institutions offering guided tours in protected natural areas, biodiesel production plants, wood biomass production plants and power plants, co-generation power plants, landfills and bio-waste recycling plants, solar and wind energy plants, composting plants, water management and public service companies, waste treatment and recycling plants, spatial planning companies and public bodies, plant treatment facilities, coordination groups fostering sustainable development, and various industries (agro-alimentary, pharmaceutical, chemical and so on).

### ONE OF THE TEN LARGEST SCHOOL CENTRES IN SLOVENIA

Offering nine upper-secondary and two higher education pro-

grammes, the centre helps students and adults acquire not only general knowledge, but also specialised know-how and competences in veterinary science, alimentary science and food processing, bio-technology, environmental protection, hospitality and tourism. Furthermore, it provides training for workers in companies, the food industry and hospitality facilities. The Centre organises courses in confectionery, bakery, and cooking, as well as veterinary and computer courses and cooking workshops for children. Constantly pursuing quality in their programmes and activities, the Centre offers students and adult participants the best possible learning environment for achieving positive educational results.

**The Centre has also established fruitful collaborations in international mobility. At the career centre students are provided advice on possible educational or career paths.**

The Centre has always ensured excellent working conditions and encouraged its staff, among other things, to pursue professional development and training. Considerable attention is devoted to job satisfaction, which is why the Centre obtained the Family-Friendly Company certificate. They are also engaged in the local community with numerous activities, projects and programmes.

#### **KRUHARIJE IN CUKRNIJE CONFECTIONERY AND BAKERY**

The Centre's confectionery and bakery shop, called KRUHarije in CUKRnije, sells confectionery and bread made in-house, and since 2014 it has managed the Primula Tea House located at the University Botanic Gardens Ljubljana. In 2015, the Centre opened the first School Veterinary Clinic in Slovenia.

**Since November 2015, the Centre has also participated in the educational and commercial activity Učilna okusov at Lju-**



Constructing wetlands for wastewater treatment.

**ljana Central Market, which offers local produce and traditional dishes that are typical of the Slovenian regions.**

In October 2015, it also launched the KULT316 Centre for Cuisine and Tourism, a unique example of the modern educational approach to hospitality, tourism, alimentary and culinary sciences. Open to the public, the new premises allow students to gain practical experience in realistic circumstances. With its modern equipment, the facilities can host a variety of events. The facilities comprise a demonstration kitchen, training kitchen, a hospitality training guest room, conference hall, wine cellar, information centre, restaurant and coffee shop. For the past three years, they have also been home to the first training micro-brewery in Slovenia.

#### **PROFESSIONAL CAMPS**

Beside theoretical knowledge, students acquire practical skills in environmental protection during field trips and professional

camp extending over several days, which make up more than 20% of the programme. During the first year of the upper-secondary programme, pupils attend an introductory camp to get to know each other, while later the Centre holds thematic camps where pupils build upon their knowledge with daily activities held outside. In their second year, pupils go to the Štajerska region where, in cooperation with the University of Maribor, they learn about environmental remediation, different ecosystems and their self-cleaning capacities, permaculture vegetable gardening, and more. In the third year, the camp is held in Bohinj, where pupils analyse the environment and stakeholders needs to produce clear guidelines for the area's development, bearing in mind three relevant aspects: tourism, the local population, and environmental protection. In the fourth year, with classes on guided tours in nature, pupils must organise the introductory camp for the first year pupils, which takes place in Zapotok nad Igom, and a field trip to a selected Slovenian town. Each year, pupils also undergo 14 days of practical training with an external employer, attend different field trips and participate in international exchanges.



Analysis of aquatic macroinvertebrates – determining the watercourse quality.

## THE ŠKOCJANSKI ZATOK

# Emerald in the green heart of Koper

TANJA GLOGOVČAN



The semi-saline (brackish) Škocjanski zatok with nesting islets, coastal wetlands and tidal marshes where various halophyte species grow comprises almost three quarters of the Škocjanski zatok. The halophyte perennial plant – swamp sea-lavender (*Limonium angustifolium*) blooms from July to September and has violet flowers.  
Photo: Miroslav Kastelic

The Škocjanski zatok Nature Reserve is a Mediterranean wetland covering 122 hectares, and at the same time the largest brackish marshland in Slovenia. This is a wonderful place to go for a trip, a walk, or a jog, and it also has an interesting educational trail.

The formation of this nature reserve is associated with the urban development of Koper and its surroundings. In the past, Koper was an island where the sea cut into the land, forming three small bays: Semedelski Bay, Škocjanski Bay, and Polje Bay. Salt harvesting has been one of the dominant activities in this area since the Roman times. In the 19th century, salt pans covered the smaller part of the area, enclosing the island of Koper in a semicircle from the south side. Salt pans were separated by the River Bradaševica, which lay its deposits there. The larger part was located on the north-eastern side of Koper, i.e. on both sides of the River Rižana. When, at the beginning of the 20th century, the price of salt began to decrease, resulting in the gradual decline of salt harvesting, Koper and its surroundings changed too. The Port of Koper's construction also had a major impact on the appearance of the area. The Škocjanski zatok has existed since 1957, when an 877 m-long dike between Koper and the outflow of the Rižana was built.

### EDUCATIONAL TRAIL

The educational trail runs between the reeds and open water bodies, with nicely arranged posts featuring information boards about the animals and history of the place. The most widespread salt-tolerant plant species growing in the brackish the Škocjanski zatok include the common glasswort (*Salicornia europaea*), swamp sea-lavender (*Limonium angustifolium*) and saltworts (*Sarcocornia fruticosa*). A special feature of the Škocjanski zatok is its reedbeds.

**The Škocjanski zatok is especially important because of its rich biodiversity, with over 1,400 different plant and animal species having been recorded so far.**

Birds are extremely important: in the last 15 years as many as 252 bird species have been documented in the area, which accounts for 60% of all the species that have been observed in Slovenia. Among animal species, insects prevail (more than 360 species of butterflies, over 300 species of beetles, 41 species of dragonflies, etc.); moreover, 36% of the mammal species (25 species), 41% of the amphibian species (seven) and 41% of the reptile species (eight), present in Slovenia have been found here.



Podolian cattle, the old Istrian breed, helps balance vegetation by grazing, delighting visitors and reminding them of the old times when harmony between humans and animals reigned in everyday life.  
Photo: Miroslav Kastelic



Common kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) is a species that is present in the Nature Reserve area throughout the year, but it does not nest in the Škocjanski zatok. Photo: Danilo Kotnik

The Škocjanski zatok area is also important in the broader international context, as many bird species valuable in Europe and worldwide, as well as endangered species, stop over during their migration and wintering.

**PROJECTS FOR THE REGULATION OF THE ŠKOCJANSKI ZALIV**

The latest project, which was launched last year, is the IMPRECO project, which is aimed at preserving ecosystem services by strengthening the biodiversity potential of protected areas, and preserving ecosystems through transnational cooperation. Before this, the projects of AdriaWet 2000, Natura Primorska, Restoration of the Škocjanski zatok, Facilities in the Škocjanski zatok Nature Reserve and the Škocjanski zatok – an outdoor classroom for everyone, had been successfully implemented. All these projects were financed from the EU budget, and are the result of successful cooperation between different countries.

**PROTECTION OF NATURE**

The Škocjanski zatok Nature Reserve was protected by the Škocjanski zatok Nature Reserve Act in 1998, and its protection was continued by the adoption of the Škocjanski zatok Nature Reserve Decree in 2013.

**Besides its protected status, the Škocjanski zatok is also an Ecologically Important Area (EPO), and part of Natura 2000, a European network of Special Protection Areas declared by the member states of the European Union.**

The Škocjanski zatok is like an emerald, precious and brilliant in its green colour. Let us keep it like that for our successors to enjoy.



European tree frog (*Hyla arborea*)  
Photo: Miroslav Kastelic

## THE PAHERNIK FAMILY FROM VUHRED

# The Pahernik Foundation advocates close-to-nature forest management and provides scholarships

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ

PHOTO: ARCHIVES OF CARINTHIAN REGIONAL MUSEUM



The last four generations of the Pahernik family, from the early 19th century to the first decade of the 21st century. They lived under the rule of different empires and states: the Austrian Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the first and second Yugoslavia, and the Republic of Slovenia. They survived wars, they had to leave their home and land and start new lives abroad in Argentina and the United States, but all the while they were like the mighty Pohorje trees, whose roots defy storms: they remained upright, conscious Slovenians willing to help their village, homeland and people.

The Pahernik Foundation is a unique foundation at the University of Ljubljana that preserves the tradition of close-to-nature forest management. Established in 2005, it is funded from the annual proceeds from forest management. It also grants scholarships to the best students of forestry and finances scientific and research activities in this field.

*“Although Vida Ribnikar was not a forester, she knew exactly what the forest meant to her father, so she wanted to continue his noble work and this wonderful story, which is now being nurtured by a group of equally extraordinary people,”* explains Mateja Kišek, forestry expert and recipient of a Pahernik Institute scholarship.

### MODESTY, FRIENDLINESS AND KINDNESS – FOUR GENERATIONS OF THE FAMILY

From the mid-19th to the mid-20th century, the Pahernik family from the Drava Valley contributed significantly to development in all walks of life, from the economic and national to the cultural, social and political.

**The Paherniks were important and wealthy owners of extensive forests in the Pohorje hills. Besides taking exemplary care of the forests, they also engaged in saw milling, the lumber trade, transporting lumber by rafts and boats on the Drava, generating electricity, as well as cultivating hops and fruit, among other activities. As nationally conscious Slovenians, they contributed to the strengthening of the Slovenian identity in an ethnically mixed area.**

In a period with a strong policy of Germanisation, Pahernik's home was a pillar of Slovenian identity. The family generously supported local Slovenian societies and various other establishments, while their loans helped people in desperate situations. The beginnings of such charitable activities go back to the first half of the 19th century, when Franc Pahernik made good money from Pohorje wood. His grandson Franjo Pahernik focused his efforts and knowledge on introducing new methods of forest management that took into account their natural development, and is regarded as the pioneer of applying close-to-nature forest management principles in the Drava Valley. Although he lived to be 94, he did not see the restitution of his 552 hectares of Pohorje forests. As Kišek notes, *“This was a time of the violent exploitation of forests – plundering, in fact – in the form of clearing woodland and other major interventions. Pahernik, however, is considered the Drava Valley's pioneer of close-to-nature forest management, which means that forests are treated according to the principles of nature. Let us take, for example, selection-managed forest, where young and small as well as biggest and old trees are typically found in a small area. Although it sounds impossible, it is true that the close-to-nature approach in such a forest takes each tree separately and considers what is best for it and its surroundings. The highest economic value is that of stands of spruce, fir and beech, and if we apply close-to-nature management, the forest will remain the same even after 50 years. Franjo Pahernik had an extremely good sense of the forest, but he was also lucky to be able to manage areas that made a selection-managed forest structure possible. Such areas, namely, encompass no more than ten percent of Slovenian forests.”*



Franjo Pahernik with wife Marija, daughter Vida and son Vojko in 1925. Franjo was a great patriot, advocating the strengthening of Slovenian identity in the nationally mixed Radlje district.

**From the mid-19th century, north-western Pohorje became one of the liveliest wood trade areas in Slovenia, and following the many glasshouses that had been set up in the past, numerous sawmills were erected by the Pohorje streams. The wood they produced was sold to traders by the Drava, who used covered šajka boats to transport it further, all the way to the Black Sea.**

After the First World War, these boats were replaced by rafts that could each transport up to 90 cubic metres of wood at a time. People who knew how to deal with wood established the appropriate infrastructure and made good money from it. In Pahernik's times all wood was local. Now, however, we no longer appreciate the value of wood. Globalisation has made the market so open that one can obtain any kind, from anywhere. Thus the price of wood is falling, and merchants are not as wealthy as they used to be.

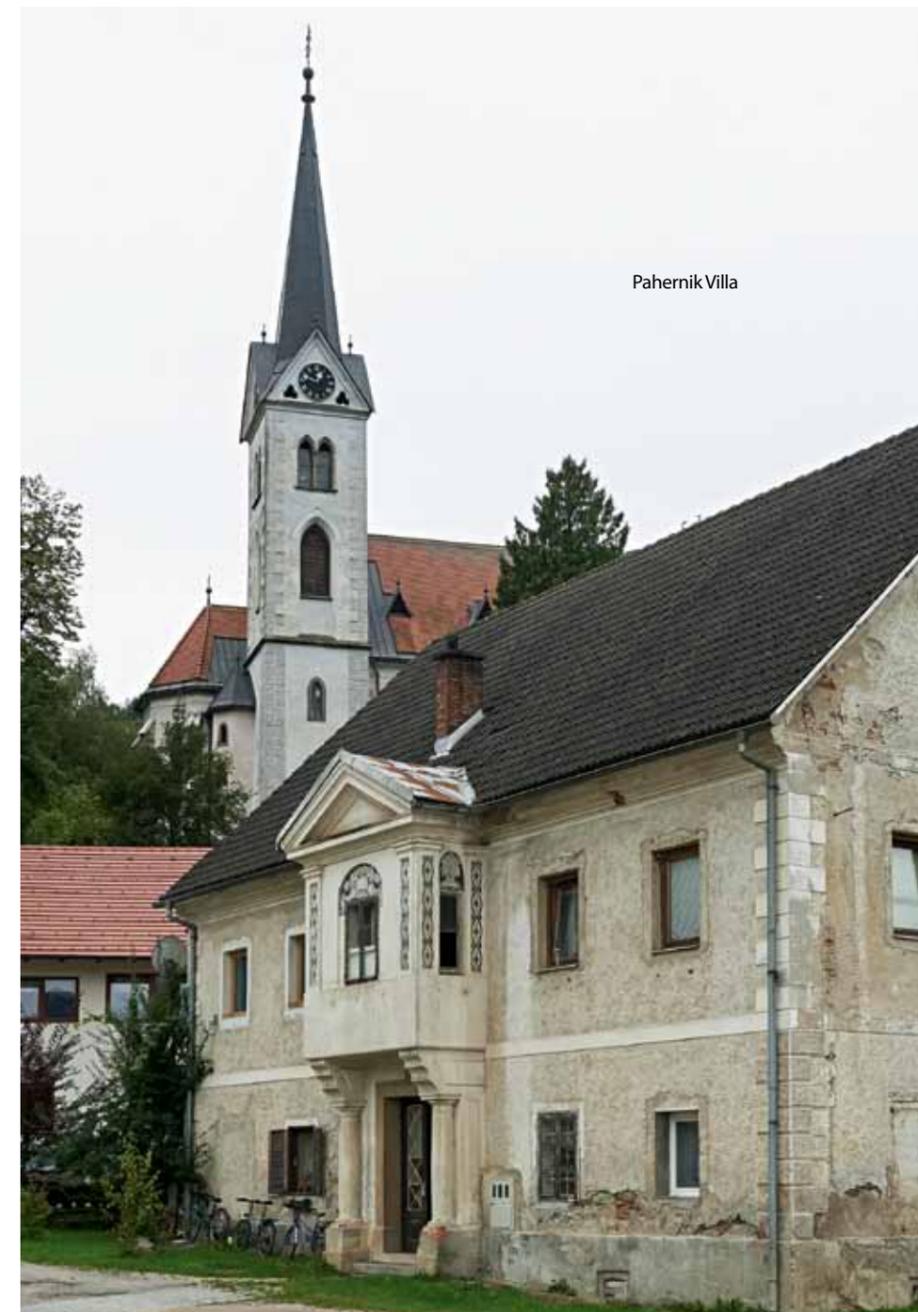
Franjo bought new land, and by 1913, his estate grew to its final size. He annually cut up to two thousand cubic metres of coniferous trees and up to 800 cubic metres of deciduous trees. He built a sawmill driven by his power station on the Vuhred stream. Built in 1909, it brought electricity to Vuhred even before Ljubljana and Maribor, where kerosene lamps only disappeared after World War I. Four years later, he built a house near Bolfenk in Hudi Kot, reserving a part of the premises for a primary school and thus enabling children to be schooled in their native village.

#### PAHERNIK'S VALUES ARE STILL ALIVE

Franjo Pahernik's values and efforts live on in the professional approach and work of young forestry experts. The best among them receive scholarships from the Pahernik Fund. The criteria for receiving financial support are strict. *"Interest in the scholarship is great, but not many are granted,"* says Mateja Kišek. *"There were only five recipients in the first generation of eligible students. The criteria are average grades above 8.6, participation in research projects and at conferences, published articles and recommendations from professors. I received EUR 500 per month for my master's studies and now the Fund covers the tuition fee for my doctoral studies, which is EUR 3,300 a year. As a young employee, I could not have afforded to follow doctoral studies without the scholarship."*

**The Pahernik family left a strong mark on Vuhred and the Pohorje Upper Drava area, and traces of its members remain highly visible until today. Franc Pahernik set a great example to his descendants, who followed it consistently.**

The most prominent and active member of the family was Franjo Pahernik, while his daughter Vida was able to overcome injustices and resentments and donate valuable forests for good purposes in order to benefit current and future generations. We can thus return to the idea written about the Paherniks in the *Slovenec* newspaper in 1886: *"This is the home of money, but also – and this is the greatest value of all – of modesty, friendliness and kindness."*



Pahernik Villa

## FISHING IN SLOVENIA

# Slovenian fishermen are true nature lovers

TEA KNAFLIČ



Fishing in the Soča river  
Photo: STB archives

In today's society, when food no longer needs to be caught for our survival, we can still see a lot of enthusiastic fishermen casting their lines into rivers, lakes and seas. They patiently sit and wait for their catch or eagerly fly fish. Very often, they unhook the fish they have caught and let them go. Even if such behaviour seems absurd, there is more to it than meets the eye.

The beginnings of fishing in our country delve deep into the history of humankind. In the Middle Ages and before, as well as in the beginning of the modern era, fishing was an absolute privilege of the rulers of countries. They awarded the fishing rights to the gentry and monasteries. When such rights were solely in the hands of nobility, the church and other rich citizens, anglers observed no rules and fished as they pleased. This was also the case in Slovenia until 1880, when 31 sports fishermen founded the Carniolan Fishing Club in Ljubljana. The newly formed club sought to make fishing more organised and advanced and to build its own fish farm. The result was a prescribed protection period for fish, the minimum allowed catch size, and protection for fish breeding grounds. A ban on fishing could be imposed on individuals, although this would be enforced on rare occasions. This marked the beginnings of sport fishing in Slovenia and the formation of organised fishing in the common interest. The first fishing club initially comprised only around 30 members, but membership increased to 400 members and even to around 1000 members after World War I. Fishing cooperatives were established in 1945, and in 1953 those fishing clubs merged into a single organisation. The cooperation between fishermen resulted in the first competition in fishing and fly-distance casting, which was held in 1954.

The development of fishing in Slovenia is outlined in specialist magazines. In 1934 the first fishing and hunting magazine was launched. Shortly after World War II, in 1949, *Ribič (Fisherman)* magazine was published independently for the first time, and is still in circulation today.

## **CURRENTLY, THERE ARE 64 FISHING CLUBS INCLUDED IN THE FISHING ASSOCIATION OF SLOVENIA.**

Slovenian fishermen regularly organise cleaning campaigns around fishing districts, monitor the number of fish in our waters and ensure order at angling spots.

**Fishing clubs play an important role in conveying their concerns for nature and their knowledge to young people.**

In doing so, they teach them to respect the environment. Young fishermen under the age of 18 join a fishing club, take a fishing exam and engage in the sport accompanied by mentors. This enables them to learn the right attitude to the living environment and the piscine life cycle, and to become familiar with zootic diversity in the water. They are taught how to breed and release fish into watercourses. It is essential that they respect the natural environment.

## **THE SOČA MARBLE TROUT IS CONSIDERED TO BE THE QUEEN OF SLOVENIAN FISH.**

The Slovenian freshwater ecosystem is diverse. There are 77 species of freshwater fish, including 33 species of permanently protected fish. Sport fishing favours 20 fish species.



A good catch in the Gorenjska region, 1930s.  
Photo: Archives of the Fishing Section at the  
Technical Museum of Slovenia

**One of them is the Soča marble trout, the autochthonous fish of all the rivers belonging to the Adriatic Sea basin.**

This species of trout is the queen among all fish in Slovenia. Unfortunately, it is endangered for several reasons. One is due to the introduction of brown trout into their natural watercourses, which caused crossbreeding between the two species, and the autochthonous Soča marble trout was once on the verge of extinction. Taking into account other factors that may have a negative impact on the life of fish, we can conclude that a concern for this species is highly justified. For the past ten years and more, fishing clubs have stepped up their efforts to re-introduce the Soča marble trout into its namesake river. These trout grow between 50 cm and 70 cm in length and weigh from 2 to 4 kg. However, when the watercourse is sufficiently deep, not too fast and abundant with food, they can grow up to one metre and more. Trout are predators, which feed on smaller fish and hunt at dusk, which the young fish feed on insects and vegetation.

**YOU ARE SPLENDID, LIMPID DAUGHTER OF THE HEIGHTS!**

Your course is lively and gentle  
Like the walk of highland girls.  
You are serene as the mountain air,  
You are loud as the vigorous  
Chant of the highland youth –  
You are splendid, daughter of the heights.

*Simon Gregorčič, To the River Soča*

The Soča is a magnificent river surrounded by breath-taking natural wonders, making a 96 km journey through Slovenia. At its source, the Soča river is a beautiful, cool Alpine stream, but when heavy rains come it turns into a torrent rushing down the riverbed. The river's middle course features flowing rapids, pools and deep artificial lakes, offering a wide choice of fishing options. Besides the indigenous marble trout, anglers can find a wide range of fish, such as brown trout, barbel, grayling, rainbow trout, and chub. They can decide on natural-bait fishing or fly-fishing.

Deep accumulation lakes are the only areas on the Soča where it is allowed to fish by boat and spin fish for giant marble trout. The best time to catch is during the first months of the fishing season or towards the end of it. An angler needs to know that giant marble trout are dormant in their hiding places and become active, preying on smaller fish, early in the morning or late in the evening.

Catch and release has become a popular method of angling for visitors in Slovenia, which allows fishermen to have more fishing days per year and to slightly lower the prices of fishing permits, which can be bought online or in person.

Slovenian fishermen consider a concern for nature to be as important as the catch itself, if not even more so.

**Respect for nature and living beings is an integral part of this hobby, and they are proud to share this knowledge and behaviour.**

Since sport fishing combines elements such as patience, ingenuity, enjoyment of nature and peace, as well as excitement, it is not surprising to see that this hobby is becoming more popular.



Monks fishing merrily; an old postcard posted in 1925.  
Monks from the Carthusian Monastery Bistra also had their own pond.  
Photo: Archives of the Fishing Section at the Technical Museum of Slovenia

## BUSY BEES

# In the world of bees, women are equal to their male colleagues as entrepreneurs and experts

TANJA GLOGOVČAN  
PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVES



Franja Zagorc is an urban beekeeper. Although urban beekeeping has been a feature for some years now, such beekeepers are still in some ways beginners and pioneers.

Beekeeping runs in the Slovenian genes, and many families have a beekeeper in their midst. Moreover, beekeeping in Slovenia is no longer just about obtaining honey, it is also increasingly an innovative business opportunity. Although it is true that in beekeeping circles men are still in the majority, women in no way lag behind their male colleagues in their dedication, resourcefulness, knowledge and success.

Such is the case with Malči Božnar, Franja Zagorc and Nika Pengal. Their stories are in many respects different, but they all share a spark, an energy and enthusiasm when they speak of their work with bees. From their words you can see that their vocation or hobby brings them joy and inspiration.

## URBAN BEEKEEPER

Franja Zagorc is a beekeeper who was born into the craft, since she comes from a beekeeping family, with her grandfather and father both keeping bees. In 2015 she took a beginners beekeeping course run by the Slovenian Beekeeping Association at Brdo pri Lukovici, and in 2016 she started keeping bees in Ljubljana. She now has the AŽ apiary close to the city cemetery of Žale and the largest shopping centre in Ljubljana. So Franja is an urban beekeeper who at the moment is just obtaining honey, noting that *"the foraging in Ljubljana allows me to make excellent flower and linden honey"*.

**Her trademark is apt and playful, with the name Ljubljanski FRAjer. This is a play on words from the names Franja and Jernej (her boyfriend, who sometimes helps her out) and the whole phrase in Slovenian means something like Ljubljana cool dude.**



Although producing honey is for the moment still her hobby and she has a full-time office job, her plans are for something bigger. In the future she also wants to produce pollen, propolis and royal jelly, and perhaps to design her own cosmetics line. She has dreams of one day running her own company and being independent.

*"Beekeeping has taught me a lot of patience. Nothing happens overnight, often there can be surprises when you open up the hive. Working with bees also calms me a lot,"* says Franja.

As a young beekeeper she feels that it is very important to have a mentor. *"I'm grateful to my father for helping me. Beekeeping might give the impression of being easy, but that's not the case."*

**This urban beekeeper also feels it is important for towns and cities to be as green as possible.**

*"I would ask people in cities to plant a lot of plants that can be used to produce honey, since they help the bees and us too. Without these wonderful and intelligent creatures, there would be no life on our planet. And in the countryside, farmers should preserve nature by farming as ecologically as possible."*

### GOSPODIČNA MEDIČNA

The young beekeeper Nika Pengal, who is also an apitherapist, takes the view that women are gentler beekeepers. She managed to turn a difficult situation, where she could not find work as a heritage studies graduate, into a success story with her brand *Gospodična Medična (Maid of honey healing)*. On her very first contact with bees she fell in love with the world they represent. She started off with eight hives, and now she has several million associates. Her working day is very active and passes quickly. Nevertheless, she comes home every day full of energy. She gets up at around six and drives to Jelovica or some other location removed from the city hubbub and pollution, and spends a large part of the day with her bees. In winter she does the seasonal chores – melting wax, making new frames for honeycombs, wiring them (as frames need to be wired), cleaning up and repairing the beekeeping accessories and hives, and spreading knowledge of apitherapy and bees in various talks and discussions.

**The Honey treasure is one of her hit products, since it contains all the primary bee products such as honey, pollen, propolis and royal jelly, and she is convinced that it drives all illness away, and if something does hit you it passes quickly and doesn't drain you.**

Her products include the honey chewing gum ČUBI (pronounced CHEW-BEE), which won a prize in one of the competitions for young start-up companies. Since this product requires a very large amount of pure wax, its production is limited at the moment. It is in fact a kind of medication, and not chewing gum in the traditional sense. It is very effective at treating sinus problems, it cleans the mouth, and helps prevent cavities and bleeding gums.

Although bees take first place in her professional life, she also has an ace up her sleeve with archaeological knowledge. She is interested in the history of bee products in general, for instance how propolis was used in the past and so forth. She shares her knowledge with others at various talks for school and university students, or for the general public.

Recently Nika also gave a lecture in America at a conference devoted to apitherapy, where she talked about the practice in Slovenia and a special massage with honey, and in Spain she gave a presentation on forest beekeeping and apitherapy at a conference entitled Forest products that are not wood.

*Gospodična Medična* is unstoppable. Nika is also very active in her local environment, and in this she and other beekeepers are actively supported by the municipality of Domžale and by various private donors.

**She is working together with other local beekeepers in the Domžale Beekeeping Society to construct a new apiary (intended for the disabled, children, tourists and anyone on a walk) which is part of the wider attractions along the Kamniška Bistrica river.**

Along this bee path, the Society will link together two apiaries, with instructive panels placed in between them offering information on the world of bees. At the start and end of the trail it will be possible to observe a beekeeper at work with bees in the apiary.

*Gospodična Medična's* apiaries are painted in pastel colours, and this is an expression of freshness and youth, as well as determination. Nika has indeed shown her determination by blazing her own trail, which has demanded courage and brought success.



Nika is a mobile beekeeper. For this reason her work is even more connected to nature, since she must predict from the signs she reads in the wild where the forage will yield honey.

### PRODUCTS INCLUDE HONEY WITH PIECES OF GOLD

Malči Božnar is not a beekeeper in the traditional sense, but an entrepreneur heading the Božnar family beekeeping business. She was one of the first people, even back in Yugoslavia, to start offering honey and other bee products in a slightly different way, one could say in *a hundred and one ways*. Malči Božnar was also one of the key supporters of the first Apimondija in Slovenia, in 2003, when enthusiasm over the use and production of honey started to grow.

Malči Božnar never wanted a honey shop, but now she has had one for nearly 30 years. Until recently there were six workers employed alongside her. For several years now her son and daughter have also worked in the company.

**Her entry into beekeeping did not originate from a family tradition, but through collaboration with Professor Jože Rihar from her time studying food science at the Biotechnical Faculty in Ljubljana, where she gained a degree focused on pollen.**

Today the Božnar family exports its bee products, which are not just made from their own honey but also obtained from other cooperating beekeepers, around the world. Their products include, for instance, honey shampoos, honey chocolate, honey cosmetics and even something called Goldhoney – honey with pieces of gold.



In the lovely and unspoiled environment of the Polhov Gradec hills stands the Božnar House of Honey. The driving force behind the Božnar beekeeping business is Malči Božnar, who is never lacking in sweet ideas for new ways to use honey.

Innovations are in fact an everyday thing for the company. On the Honey Days, a now traditional event they have been organising for many years, they have presented honey with various additions, honey sweets, honey biscuits, honey burgers, various alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages made with honey, such as honey beer, along with confectionery and other items.

**Malči Božnar can also see the world beyond her doorstep. This means the Božnars are very active in the local environment.**

From the middle to the end of this May, the Božnar House of Honey together with the Post and Telecommunication Museum, Polhov Gradec Manor and municipality are organising an EU project, My Project 2019, which is financed with European funds. For 20 years now Malči Božnar has also been a member of the folklore group Grof Blagaj of Polhov Gradec.

Like any woman, she likes to take care of herself, and swears by honey cosmetics. *"I use Bee Beauty honey shampoo, which smells of rosemary and lavender and has a very soothing effect on the body, in part because of the addition of honey and propolis. For face care I use the locally made Bee Beauty cream with beeswax, honey, royal jelly and propolis."*

### USING HONEY FROM THE CARNIOLAN BEE

The territory of Slovenia is home to a grey bee subspecies, the Carniolan bee – *Apis mellifera carnica*. The Slovenian women beekeepers introduced in this story use this subspecies of bee and its honey for their products.

**All three are aware that World Bee Day, which will be celebrated this year on 20 May for the second time, is an important day for humankind.**

Without bees, there would be no pollination, and no life. For this reason, as one of them said, we ourselves work to ensure that bees will have their own green and ecologically friendly spaces. In this way we will help maintain life on Earth.



The Carniolan bee (*Apis mellifera carnica*)

## HERITERRA - FROM NATURE TO HUMAN AND BACK

# A modern-day interplay of archaeology, botany, heritage and agriculture through sustainable tourism

MATIJA ČREŠNAR, ANJA VINTAR



Cup from the early Iron Age (9/8th century BCE) found during archaeological excavation at Pivola.  
Photo: Anja Vintar/project archives

Archaeological heritage can be an endless source of knowledge and inspiration. This applies also to archaeological traces of the development of farming and the cultural landscape between the Stone Age and the end of the Middle Ages, which are under the microscope of the multi-year international project PalaeoDiversiStyria.

This combines the results of modern archaeological research from the area of north-eastern Slovenia and Austrian Styria with the knowledge of botanists and food experts, along with the needs and capacities of local agriculture and other regional providers. The common interests of the project partnership and the wider circle of interested individuals have enabled the development of new, fresh tourism products, brought together under the tourism brand Heriterra.

**The project is founded on the rich archaeological heritage in the region and on the years of international professional collaboration of institutions that are focused on the research, preservation and promotion of cultural heritage on both sides of the border.**

The Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia, Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana and the Universalmuseum Joanneum in Graz (Austria) have joined efforts for almost a decade now to enrich the treasury of knowledge about our past. In their research they have now joined with experts on botany and agriculture from the University of Maribor and University of Graz along with numerous external associates. The joint research project is yielding an abundance of new knowledge. However, for successful promotion this must be followed by a professional search for and testing of new, sustainable ways of presenting heritage to



various target groups. An important part is also being played by the municipalities of Hoče-Slivnica in Slovenia and Großklein in Austria, which have offered solid support in channelling expert findings into sustainable tourism.

European support for the cross-border project PalaeoDiversiStyria – examining the palaeo landscape of Styria and its biodiversity from prehistory to the discovery of the New World – has enabled the close cooperation of researchers in the fields of archaeology, botany, archaeozoology, gastronomy, agriculture and tourism, who together with local producers and craftsmen have developed the tourism brand HERITERRA.

### THE BASIS ARE MODERN RESEARCH OF OUR ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE

On the mention of archaeology, many people get sparkles in their eyes, some are entertained by thoughts of mummies in mysterious Egyptian pyramids, famous film heroes or the gold of the ancient Americas. Others are more familiar with archaeological excavations and the presentation of finds in museums, which are the most traditional activities that the researchers and guardians of our cultural heritage have pursued ever since the birth of archaeology more than a century and a half ago. However, technological advances and the development of new research methods have made archaeology one of the most exciting modern scientific disciplines. The archaeological science of today has indeed begun a new chapter of what is called interdisciplinary archaeology, since with the help of findings from other sciences it is uncovering numerous details from the distant past.

**An important direction of development of archaeological research can be seen in archaeological geophysics and what are called remote sensing methods, such as airborne laser scanning.**

By including these methods, archaeology has steered itself into a wider arena. Research is therefore no longer focused solely on individual archaeological sites such as settlements or cemeteries, but on the entire cultural landscape that surrounds them and where in the past people farmed, gathered goods, travelled and so on.

Another direction in which archaeology is developing is made possible by the variety of analysis methods used on the discovered objects. By researching carbonised archaeological remains

from fireplaces or the charred ruins of buildings we can determine which raw materials were used in the past for construction, for making tools or for food. By analysing ceramic ware we can find out the kind of clay from which a pot was originally made, and even what was prepared in it. Bone remains can also reveal the eating habits people had in the distant past, which diseases beset them or whether they suffered any kind of deficiencies and so forth.

**A VIEW OF THE PAST IS A VIEW OF THE FUTURE: HERITERRA**

But mere archaeological knowledge, even if it is enriched with multifaceted analysis, still does not represent an attractive product with the potential to become an important part of sustainable tourism. However, when archaeological heritage offers up its true aroma, when it gains flavour and is served on a wooden board or in a traditionally designed historical ceramic bowl, it is reawak-

ened. Perhaps we could even dare to say that it is not just the way to someone's heart that goes through their stomach, but also the way to knowledge of cultural heritage. There have already been plenty of curious and amazed looks on tasting the project's recreations of ancient dishes.

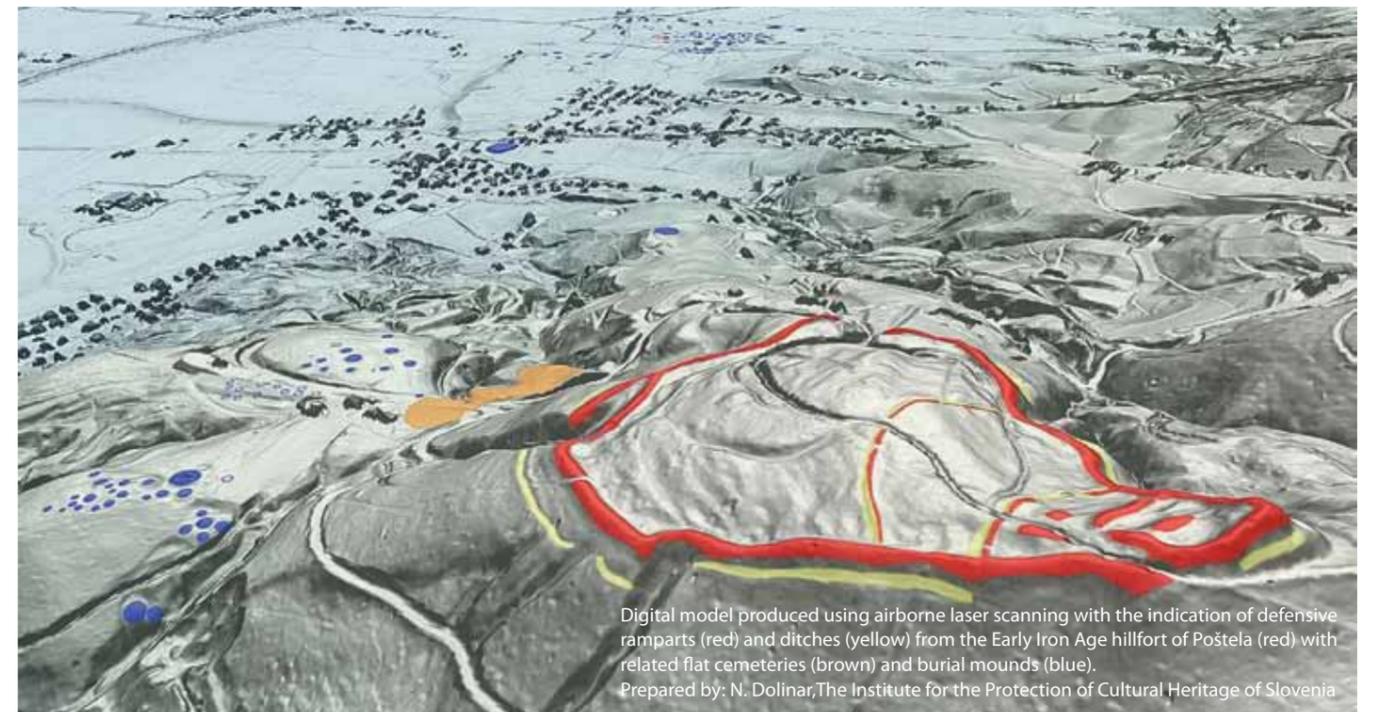
**An enchantment with the heritage of Slovenian and Austrian Styria is visible by knowing that, for instance, even in the Stone Age they were cultivating einkorn wheat in this area, that in prehistoric times they made wonderful metal knives and spits for roasting the meat of wild and domesticated animals, and that**

**the Romans brought pine nuts, dates and pomegranates to these lands.**

The excitement of the people living in the region is also evident in the fact that at the end of the 15th century their lands were visited by Paolo Santonino, the lay emissary of the Aquileia Patriarch. In his travel journal he left us quite a few heavenly descriptions of medieval dishes from the time just before the discovery of America and then new, by now traditional plants, such as potatoes and maize. The story of the Heriterra brand has only begun. Increasing numbers of new providers are joining in, with products from food to beverages and traditional crafts that contribute to reviving and preserving this form of cultural heritage. In this way our desire for a close interweaving of archaeological and wider cultural heritage with a higher quality of life in the present is gaining an increasingly clear form, offering hope that this will be the case in the future, too.



Archaeological workshops at the Art Kamp festival.  
Photo: Anja Vintar/project archives



Digital model produced using airborne laser scanning with the indication of defensive ramparts (red) and ditches (yellow) from the Early Iron Age hillfort of Poštela (red) with related flat cemeteries (brown) and burial mounds (blue).  
Prepared by: N. Dolinar, The Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia

## THE SUSTAINABLE ORIENTATION OF SLOVENIAN MOUNTAIN HUTS

# Each year more environment- and family-friendly huts are open in the Slovenian mountains

ANA KRAŠEVEC



Children enjoying a beautiful day at one of the mountain pastures in Kranjska Gora. Photo: STB archives

In recent years Slovenian tourism has broken records, and visitors are increasingly drawn to our mountains. While welcome, this brings an increasing burden on the sensitive mountain environment. The biggest challenge is to find a compromise between comfort and concern for the environment. Certain necessary comforts, such as showers, heated rooms, and a large selection of food, produce a greater quantity of wastewater, more energy consumption and more waste overall.

The Alpine Association of Slovenia (the AAS) is well aware of this and has implemented successful projects to promote the environment-friendly and energy-efficient management of mountain huts and to raise awareness in the younger generation about the importance of protecting the mountain environment.

**Slovenian alpine clubs manage 180 mountain huts, shelters and bivouacs. In order to promote a reduced environmental burden on the mountains and to attract children and their parents to mountain huts, the AAS awards certificates for environment (since 2012) and family-friendly mountain huts (since 2013).**

The certificates are valid for four years, after which the mountain huts must renew them. The huts see the certificates as an additional form of promotion, and raising the awareness of visitors with regard to environmental issues as part of their mission.

### ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY MOUNTAIN HUTS

In order to obtain an environment-friendly huts certificate, each hut must provide evidence of a commitment to careful and inte-

grated behaviour towards the sensitive mountain environment. Since in Slovenia most mountain huts are situated in remote, naturally sensitive areas, and with the aim of increasing visitor numbers due to their higher and better established environmental standards, the AAS introduced a special certificate for mountain huts whose overall operation impacts the environment as little as possible. This certificate, in the form of a document and sign with the inscription Environment-Friendly Mountain Hut, is a clear message to visitors that the alpine club, indirectly through the caretaker or manager, is striving to minimise disturbance to the unspoiled natural environment around the hut and beyond it. To obtain a certificate, the mountain huts owners must meet demanding criteria which the AAS committee verifies on site. There is particular concern for reducing the impact of visitors in Triglav National Park.

By awarding environment-friendly hut certificates the AAS is seeking to ensure the environment-friendly and energy-efficient management of mountain huts, since the comfort offered by huts to hikers and alpinists can burden this extremely sensitive environment with more waste, greater energy consumption and increased transportation.

### FAMILY-FRIENDLY MOUNTAIN HUTS

Following its successful initiative for easing the environmental burden on the mountains, the AAS began intensively devoting

itself to the issue of how to attract families with children to huts. The certificate and sign saying Family-Friendly Mountain Hut sends a message to visitors that the staff constantly work to make staying at the hut a pleasant and unforgettable experience for the youngest hikers and their parents. The process of obtaining a certificate involves verification of the readiness of the hut staff to receive families, including those with very young children, with due attention and understanding of their specific needs. These include the position of the hut in terms of enabling relatively easy access for families; properly tended mountain trails and car parks at the trailheads; appropriate surroundings at the hut for the undisturbed activities of children and families; special features in the surroundings of the hut that are interesting for children; and where possible a special programme of activities for families.

**Through the family-friendly certificate the AAS seeks to attract children and their parents to huts, and to ensure that they will have a good experience there.**

So it is only those huts whose operations are adapted to the specific needs of families that can gain the title of a family-friendly hut. This means, for example, that the fixtures and furnishings of the hut are child-friendly, such as with high chairs, protective sides around

beds, a space with toys, along with a child-friendly menu. In many huts there is also a children's area with picture books.

**EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE IN COMBINING THE TWO**

The first certificate successfully promotes awareness of the importance of protecting the sensitive mountain environment, while the second attracts families with small children – we could say that taken together they promote a healthy lifestyle and concern for the environment from the earliest age.

One of the huts that has both certificates is the mountain hut at Planina pri Jezeru, which is located in the mountains to the north of the Bohinj Lake in Triglav National Park. The alpine club that manages it understood the importance of cultivating the interest of the younger generation already in the early 1980s, when environmental issues were not yet so well promoted and the mountain environment was not visited in such numbers as it is today. Their more than thirty-year tradition of summer mountain camps for preschool children is truly impressive: together with Hans Christian Andersen Kindergarten in Ljubljana they have been organising one-week camps every year since 1988 (the camp was even running during Slovenia's Independence War), and each year they host three or four groups of six-year-olds. This means that in 31 years around 1,800 children have attended the camps and the alpine club is rightly very proud of this.

**Drago Dretnik, the Alpine Association of Slovenia :** *"If we want to continue the tradition of the Slovenian people as a mountain people, we must ensure the safe introduction of our youngest ones to this beautiful world. Visiting the mountains with children is a unique opportunity for adults to reshape their view of hiking, where it is children taking us into the hills – not us taking them! Children do not have high goals, the peaks and rock faces are not a challenge for them that need to be conquered. The mountain landscape is a backdrop for their fantasies. Hiding among clumps of mountain pine, running through alpine meadows full of wild flowers and forgetting about time and space. Family-friendly mountain huts are the starting point for experiencing the mountains in an entirely different way."*

**Together with mountain guides and preschool teachers, the children go on daily hikes to become familiar with the beauty of the mountains, alpine flowers and animals, and at the same time they learn how to use mountain equipment and the rules of safe walking in the mountains.**

Almost every year the children at the camp are also visited by mountain rescue teams or rescue dog handlers, who present their work, while the little mountaineers also get to try their climbing skills on a boulder. All these unforgettable experiences mean that the camp remains a lasting memory for the children, and the mountains are imprinted deep in their hearts. Almost all of them return later with their parents, and many of them become regular or at least occasional hikers for the rest of their lives. The first camp participants are now sending their own children to the mountain camps – and thus the cycle continues. This tradition has become a model for other mountain societies, which have started organising similar activities. After all, it is true that nature is the best teacher.

In summer camps, children experience genuine contact with nature, get to know the flora and fauna, learn the rules of safe hiking in the mountains, and also try out rock climbing.  
Photo: Tomaž Rusimovič



## SLOVENIA, ONE OF THE FIRST AREAS IN EUROPE TO HAVE A ZOO

# The exotic enclosure below Rožnik has brought delight for 70 years

TANJA GLOGOVČAN  
PHOTO: ZOO ARCHIVES



At the end of January 2019, two Asian lions were brought from Poland (ZOO Łódź).

Balloons, masses of children, dancing, partying, songs and a great deal of fun for all. That's how it was back in March when Ljubljana ZOO presented its new acquisitions – an Asian lion and lioness. Yet all the festivity was not just about the king and queen of the animals, but also because this year Ljubljana ZOO is celebrating its 70th anniversary. And this grand anniversary was thus, in the most appropriate way, crowned by these new arrivals. Indeed, the best belongs to the best.

Ljubljana Zoological Garden is a very fine ZOO, which continuously enriches its kingdom of animals as well as adding new content and expanding what it offers. Slovenians are also lucky that the ZOO is part of a forested area and nature park, which gives an even stronger impression of being placed in the wild, and on warmer days it offers a refuge from the sun. While children have fun in the playground, adults can enjoy a coffee in the café right next to it, while everyone is happy to have a scoop of ice cream.

### THE NOBILITY HAD PERMANENT MENAGERIES OR ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS

The oldest mention of a menagerie in the Slovenian lands can be found in the Celje Chronicles, in which it was written that the Celje Count Herman II gave Janez Kozjiski the Brežice menagerie (den Thiergarten in Rann). This refers to Brežice Castle, first mentioned in 1249. The next record of menageries in written sources is also related to the Counts of Celje, who had a collection of animals sometime before 1451.

**Maximilian I of Habsburg, who became Emperor in 1493 after his father's death, stayed in Celje several times and next to the old chief city of the Celje Princes, in the nearby forest, had a large zoological garden built. This means that the Slove-**

**nian lands already had a ZOO, of sorts, in 1441, even before the one in Vienna that dates back to 1452.**

With great probability we can therefore claim that this was the oldest ZOO in Central Europe. This points once again to the power of the Celje Counts and Princes.

Before the ZOO that we know today, Ljubljana already had some permanent menageries, and occasionally travelling one or circuses would come through, offering audiences some exotic animals alongside clowns and various performers to marvel at. These included lions, elephants, rhinoceroses, sea horses, zebras and tigers. Certain individuals also had exotic animals as pets. Today it is impossible to imagine, but at one time it was not at all unusual for a lady to stroll the city with a monkey or a gentleman with a cheetah or zebra.

### EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH A ZOO IN LJUBLJANA

The first official initiative for a ZOO in Ljubljana was probably launched by the leadership of the National Museum in Ljubljana, which at the beginning of 1927 sent to the city authorities a letter entitled *Establishing a Zoological Garden*.

They were prompted to do so by an offer from hunters, who by chance had caught in a trap a then protected golden eagle and

saved its life. Since they did not wish to release it back into the wild, and following the example of Zagreb and Split, they proposed that Ljubljana should also establish a ZOO with native animals. Those two ZOOS expressed a willingness to help with individual specimens, and also with their experience.

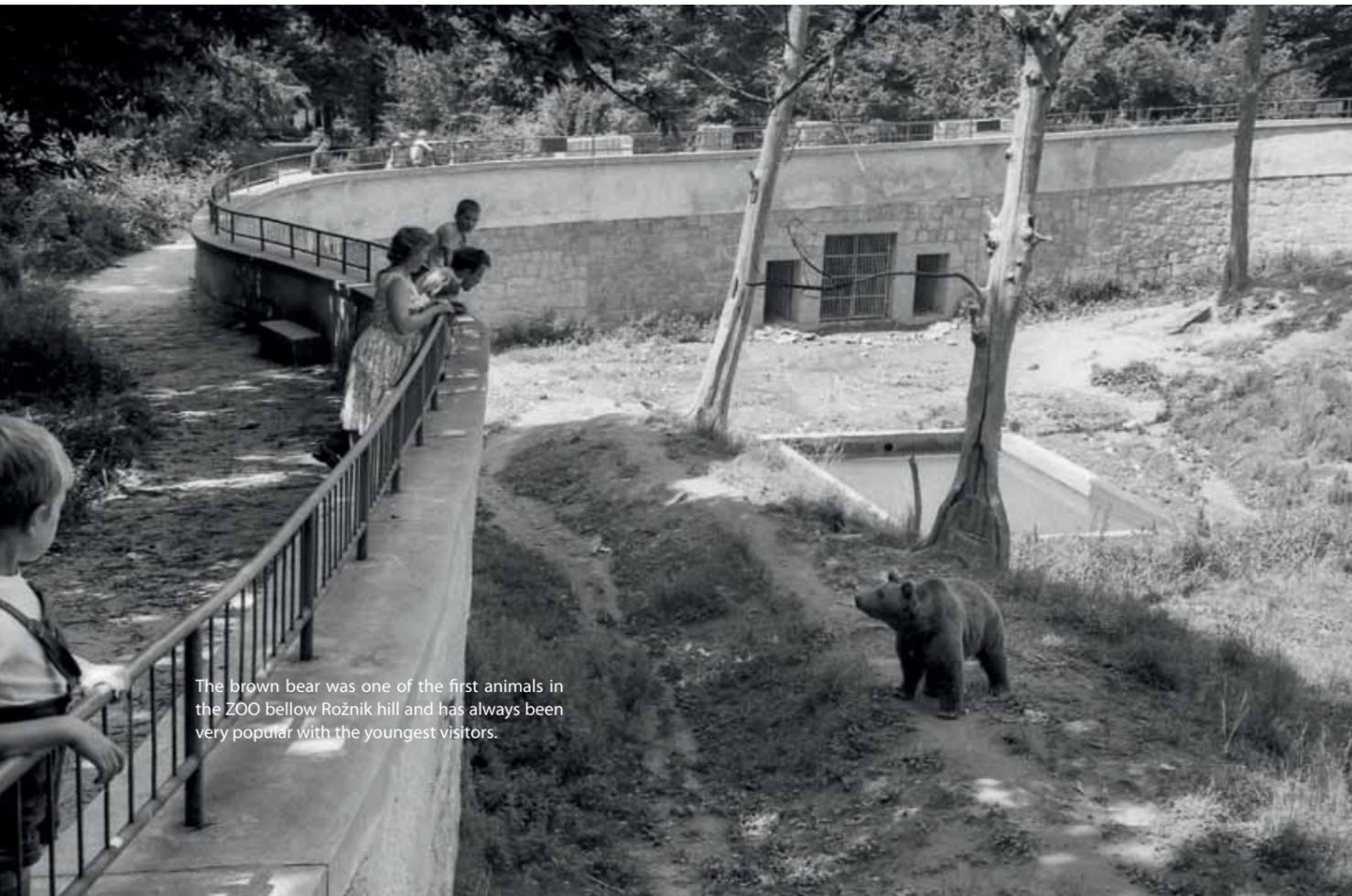
#### THE ZOO BELOW ROŽNIK

Ljubljana residents could see exotic animals at occasional exhibitions, such as the Ljubljana Trade Fair, and native species, for instance, in Tivoli Park, the city's biggest park. There was also a collection next to the Hotel Slon. In connection with the Hotel Slon (elephant), there is an interesting story about an elephant which supposedly stopped with its owner in the inn that stood there in

the 16th century. The present-day hotel is understood to derive its name from that.

The first permanent location of Ljubljana ZOO was in the place where the RTV Slovenija station now stands, but that was for only two years.

**The ZOO has only been located below Rožnik since March 1951. To begin with it covered 18 hectares of land, held 251 animal species, had 13 employees, and around 55,000 visitors each year. The first animals were storks, a mouflon, roebuck and bear.**



The brown bear was one of the first animals in the ZOO below Rožnik hill and has always been very popular with the youngest visitors.

After the death of the President of the former Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, in 1981, ZOOS around the country received the majority of the animals from the park he had on the Brioni islands. In this way a few antelope, a young monkey and a pair of lions found their way to Ljubljana.

Today Ljubljana ZOO has 41 employees. They have their own kitchen for the animals, where they prepare the food themselves. The fruit and vegetables they receive are top quality, and fit for human consumption. The majority of the keepers have a knowledge of veterinary or zoological science, while there are also biologists, teachers, veterinarians and administrative staff with a variety of skills.

The ZOO below Rožnik is a modern institution and meets all the lat-

est guidelines. It ensures appropriate food for the animals, 24-hour veterinary care, their healthy activities, environmental enrichment and appropriate living conditions, as well as companion animals of the same species.

Ljubljana ZOO also has its own nutritionist, who provides guidelines on how food for the animals should be prepared, the ingredients and in what quantities. All of this is provided in a manner that matches best the natural conditions (for instance, animals in nature do not eat the same quantity of food every day, so in the artificial environment they do not receive identical portions every day). The kitchen staff prepare unusual combinations of various foods, ranging from vegetables, fruits, nuts, eggs and protein supplements to dairy products, and make around 200 meals a day. They also weigh



Keepers are responsible for independently providing the day-to-day care and maintenance of animals and the exhibits in which they are housed.

the animals frequently and in this way keep track of their physical condition. The staff work to ensure that visitors do not feed the animals, since this harms them.

**In veterinary terms too, Ljubljana has one of the more innovative ZOOs. They use advanced techniques for research and examinations (bloodsucking insects and leeches – in other words, without using syringes).**

They collaborate a lot with the Biotechnical Faculty in Ljubljana and also with other ZOOs, the longest such collaborations being with ones in Germany, along with the ZOOs in Moscow and Vienna. Animals are not sold to other ZOOs around the world, but rather are exchanged depending on the wishes, capacities and needs of each institution. Ljubljana ZOO is also a permanent member of the European Association of ZOOs and Aquaria

(EAZA), the World Association of ZOOs and Aquaria (WAZA), the computer information system for keeping records of wild animals in ZOOs, Species360, and of the European ZOO Educators and International ZOO Educators (EZE and IZE) organisations.

Several endangered species have also found a home at Ljubljana ZOO. These include the endangered subspecies Rothschild's giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis rothschildi*), the Moluccan cockatoo (*Cacatua moluccensis*), Ruffed lemur (*Varecia variegata variegata*), Black-capped squirrel monkey (*Saimiri boliviensis boliviensis*), Yellow-cheeked gibbon (*Hylobates gabriellae gabriellae*), Persian leopard (*Panthera pardus saxicolor*), Siberian tiger (*Panthera tigris altaica*), Red panda (*Ailurus fulgens fulgens*) and Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*).

#### CHILDREN BECOME IMPORTANT

At the end of the last century special attention was paid to children. Young visitors were most enthusiastic about what was called the children's mini ZOO, where there were mainly domestic

animals and their young, such as the *Göttingen minipig*, mini goats and mini sheep. In that period they organised the first Children's Day at the ZOO, and the option of spending holidays there, and such activities still brighten the day for children.

There is a growing number of people with annual season tickets, and increasing numbers also have their birthday celebrations at the ZOO, while children can enjoy the chance to be an animal keeper for a day, and there are magic shows and Christmas and Easter events.

#### A PEEK INTO THE FUTURE

A group of experts in a very wide range of fields collaborates at Ljubljana ZOO, working every day to ensure the wellbeing of the animals and satisfaction of visitors. The ZOO will continue to develop as a modern zoological garden with the continued introduction of high standards for animal care, construction and equipping of living spaces for the animals, the development of innovative practices in veterinary care and the introduction of modern methods and new programmes of education for visitors.

**Currently a new development plan is being drawn up, for in the future the ZOO would like to bring to Slovenia penguins, tapirs, rhinoceroses, otters and more. For its 70th anniversary they want to be able to carry out soon as possible for renovation of the remaining fencing and build a new clinic and kitchen for the animals, an education centre for visitors and a renovated entrance with an administrative office, shop and ticket office.**

Each animal species that arrives at the ZOO brings a new story, a new experience, and each animal brings a different kind of joy. Even after 70 years, we will certainly be glad to keep going to Ljubljana ZOO in the coming decades, too.



Children's playgrounds is set to be an amazing play space for kids.



The staff in the ZOO has a very close relation with the animals. In the photo: the red panda (*Ailurus fulgens*).



ARCHITECT MIHA ČEBULJ

## In search of responsive poetic architecture

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ  
PHOTO: MCA ARCHIVE – MIHA ČEBULJ ARHITEKTURA

Miha Čebulj

Last October, at the opening of the 16th Month of Design Festival, organised by Zavod Big, the jury selected as the winner in the private interior category from among ten proposals the House NB in Podgorje pri Slovenj Gradcu project, headed by MCA – Miha Čebulj Arhitektura – with architects Miha Čebulj and Špela Štern.

*“The House NB interior project introduces a new, dynamic and softer organic approach to Slovenian architecture. Such an approach is often more difficult to manage, but it is successfully and consistently implemented in the selected project”,* explained the expert commission in support of their decision.

Miha Čebulj perceives space as a dynamic system of diverse elements and relationships between them. *“Even today, I explore with passion what architecture actually is,”* he answered when asked about when he became aware that he wanted to work in this profession. His work sees him engaged both on construction sites and in the conceptual pursuit of inspiration in observing nature and its poetics. This includes, for example, the rustling of tree canopies in the wind and their interplay with the golden afternoon sunrays.

**He is inspired by architecture that is born from vigorous effort, intense observation and disciplined evaluation, free of prejudice, with the aim of creating a modern and critical space that stimulates thought.**

Miha Čebulj experiences architecture as a spatial catalyst, bringing together social and cultural content balanced by a relationship between poetics and geometry, which sets order in a given space. Not a static order, but a dynamic one.

### THE CREATIVE FOCUS IS ON DYNAMIC SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

The prize-winning house impresses with its deliberate, out of the ordinary appearance at very first sight.

**It breaks off the heritage of Slovenian modernism, offering its own expression, which is closer to the global heritage of architectural highlights.**

Miha Čebulj developed these during his post-graduate studies in the Netherlands. *“In Rotterdam, I came into contact with international views on architecture and with working methods that explore the functioning of our built environment in a disciplined manner. In this spirit, we managed to develop a creative and targeted debate on architecture with the clients that contracted the award-winning house. We proceeded from an unencumbered reflection on the basic premises of living at the given location, which are reflected in the design of the house and its experience in direct interaction with the environment. During the first site visit, we were drawn in by the infinite panorama spanning over the valley and its ideal solar position. We undertook the house’s planning pragmatically, focused on the desire to preserve the given location’s qualities and atmosphere to the greatest extent possible. On the north-eastern side we laid out service premises such as a garage, wardrobe, and bathroom, and on*

*the south-western side we created a large open lounge, which constitutes the continuation of the existing terrain under the designed shelter. The clients wanted to have a winter garden, which is represented by the aforementioned lounge. It is divided into functional subsections such as the raised platform with the dining table, library shelter, floating stone kitchen island and recreation area in the gallery of the two-level space. Functional sub-sections facilitate customised use of the house, depending on the season and different parts of the day.*

*The house is a shelter that grows inseparably from the ground, providing a soft, rounded core." It opens towards exceptional views along the valley and plays with natural light. Where necessary, the*

shell pragmatically closes against the wind or unwanted looks. The house's exterior and interior are inextricably linked and allow the use of space throughout the seasons. The southern terrace lies in the deep shade of the roof canopy, whereas on the eastern terrace we can catch the first warm rays of spring. Thus on winter days the homeowners can enjoy reading in the library while being gently warmed by the low sun. Large roof canopies shield the house from overheating in the summer, and in the winter they allow the sun to fully permeate the house. The premises are arranged around a two-story space with a fireplace in the central part of the home, spreading the heat gradually into more private parts of the house, such as bedrooms and bathrooms.

The house in Goričko is functionally adapted to the terrain. Spaces of different heights offer a spatial experience nestled in the natural environment. Architectural elements perform several functions – the balcony in front of the bedroom becomes a roof canopy that provides shade for the living room.



**INCENTIVE FOR DESIGNING AN INNOVATIVE AND RESPONSIVE ARCHITECTURE**

With its exploratory and bold overtones, the approach to the house's design departs from the prevailing architectural solutions found in the Slovenian space, so the award it received is indeed an incentive to design innovative and responsive architecture. *"The house builds on a reflection on the primary relationship between humans and their environment in an unencumbered manner, with a genuine search for real and functional connections between the processes of living. It tries to understand and evaluate the actual causes and consequences in a dynamic relationship between them,"* says Miha Čebulj when asked what he thought convinced the jury to make the award.

**His method of work is the only constant trait of his architecture, leading the creative designing process with precision. The final product is always dependent on the location and client, and the multiple contexts in which architecture is created. Each location is specific and dependent on the type of natural and cultural features.**

Good architecture requires intensive and professional cooperation among the client, the architect and the contractor. Miha Čebulj believes that the best projects are born out of open and creative communication between these participants in the construction of a building. He is also convinced that we have a lot of excellent architecture in Slovenia, to which he would like to contribute with a slightly more exploratory and bolder approach.



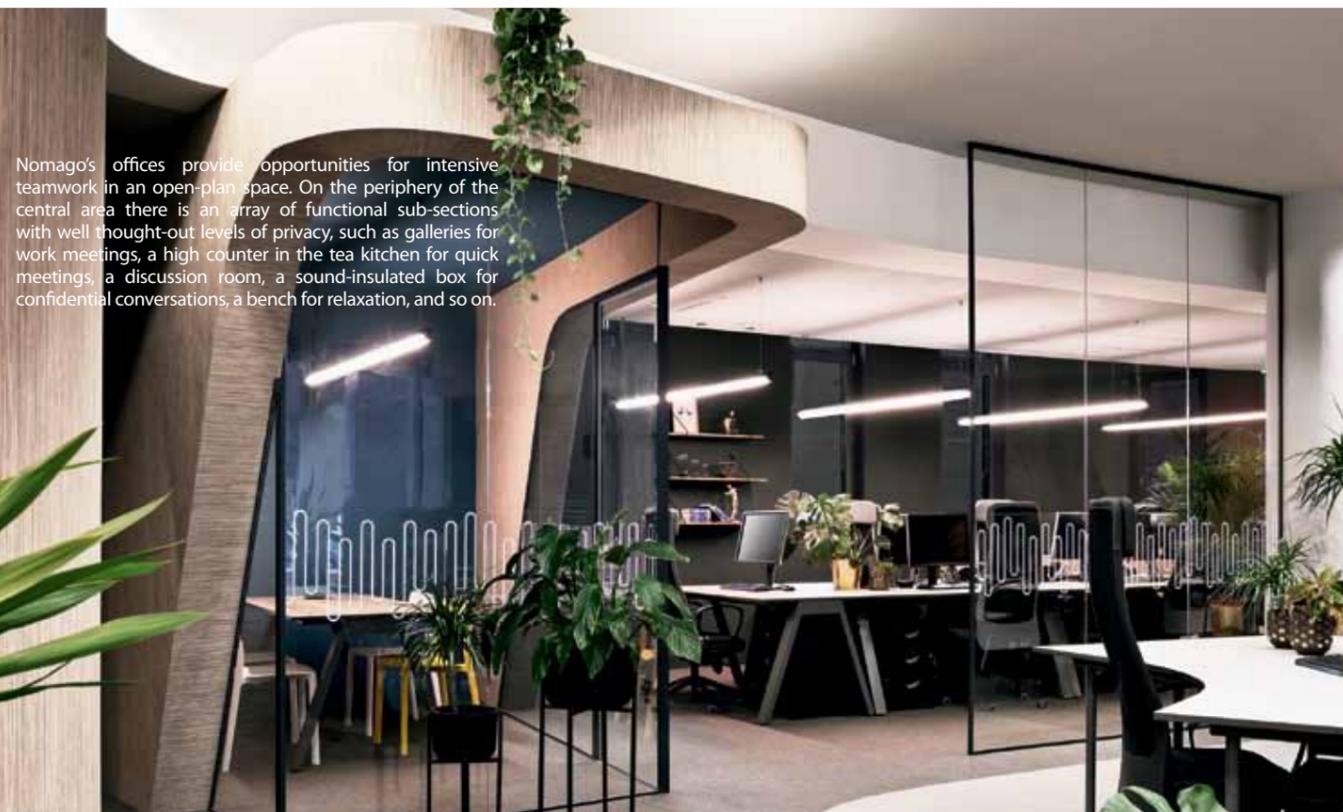
The house is in direct interaction with the environment.

### SPACE IS DESIGNED NOT ONLY BY A RATIONAL APPROACH, BUT ALSO BY POETICS

Miha Čebulj perceives the responsiveness of architecture as a quality that attempts to harmonise both natural and social features and tendencies in the space. He engages in projects of varying magnitudes, from the design of furniture to large buildings. His inspiration is drawn from an understanding of natural and social processes. By observing the built and natural environments and their interaction in the space, he analyses the connections among the elements, their relationships and the interrelationships among these. Čebulj's subtle perception of various phenomena and his penetrating interpretation of events thus become the subject of poetic transformation.

These premises also stimulated the design of the perforated part of the award-winning house's façade. The perforated façade is the

result of external and internal parameters invoked by the specific features of the location and the functions of the interior ambience. A light-permeable membrane provides for diffused lighting in the bedroom, wardrobe and other rooms that require a higher degree of privacy. At the same time, it shields these spaces from the eyes of neighbours and unwanted looks of passers-by. Perforation using different-sized openings within a diagonal network constitutes a continuous passage to openness within a uniform façade membrane. The passage between the architectural elements composed of windows and the façade is not clearly cut but gradual and mimics passages in nature, such as the unidentifiable contact of the sea and the coast. Similar principles apply to the canopy of the tree standing in all its glory in front of the perforated façade. The perforation of the façade membrane makes a practical use of both the advanced technologies, such as computer-controlled cutting of thermal insulation, and simple and accessible materials, such as plastic drainage pipes.



Nomago's offices provide opportunities for intensive teamwork in an open-plan space. On the periphery of the central area there is an array of functional sub-sections with well thought-out levels of privacy, such as galleries for work meetings, a high counter in the tea kitchen for quick meetings, a discussion room, a sound-insulated box for confidential conversations, a bench for relaxation, and so on.

And how does the house match the way of life of the people living in it? Emotional and family ties closely connect the house's users to the edge of the plateau on which the house is located. The house reflects the inhabitants' modern way of living and thinking, free of prejudice.

**Architecture works between people and the environment, both of which are highly dynamic and cyclical systems. Nevertheless, architecture remains static and is a human artefact that resists the passage of time.**

Perhaps the time is coming when people will learn to coexist with space and time in a less arrogant manner, and in accor-

dance with cyclical oscillations as the basic building blocks of our environment. In some parts of the world, houses are already understood as organisms that can be adapted or developed over time through the use of new materials and technologies that call for new ways of planning and building of our built environment. *"Thinking about architecture where houses would become more vital, healthier, stronger and more beautiful over time, is interesting. It means architecture that, through dynamic responsiveness, consolidates and upgrades its material, substantive and poetic potential in reasonable seasonal and longer periods of time. The eternal and seemingly contradictory space utopia of dynamic architecture, at the threshold of a possible biological revolution, seductively beckons us toward its vastness of unforeseen revelations,"* he mentioned.



Sportina Digi Hub: the client wanted to have an impressive space dedicated to work and meetings, to serve as a fertile ground for the innovative creation of new fashion guidelines. Its design is therefore bold in order to stimulate new ideas. Discarded window dressing props, which for years had lain abandoned in forgotten, dusty warehouse corners, were given a second chance to impress and surprise in Digi Hub.



Olga Košica is a fashion design graduate, and she also trained abroad. She acquired her Master of Art degree in Goldsmithing, Silversmithing, Metalwork and Jewellery at Royal College of Art in the United Kingdom. Had she not pursued a career in jewellery, she would have been a historian or archaeologist, as these fields are where her inspiration comes from.  
Photo: Maya Nightingale

## OLGA KOŠICA

# From a powerful story to a subtle elegance that unfolds into a piece of must-have jewellery

TANJA GLOGOVČAN

It is inspiration that distinguishes Olga Košica's jewellery, the division between the defect and the perfect where the interesting starts to occur. Her work also has a strong message.

Olga Košica designs jewellery that tells stories, and each piece makes the person wearing it part of the story that provided her artistic inspiration. She designs a variety of jewellery, from collars, earrings, rings and bangles. They are all made with many techniques and materials: silver, gold, copper, steel, plastic, resin, textile, glass and semi-precious stones. Silver is her personal favourite. Even though her jewellery is unique, it is priced moderately and quite affordably. She says that her customers decide on a particular shape and material for many reasons, but the price is far from the decisive factor. Her broad range of outstanding jewellery convinces those who are in love with wood as well as those who follow tradition and insist on gold.

### JEWELLERY IS MORE THAN MERE DECORATION

Košica designs jewellery that lasts. Not only in the material sense, but in that those who wear her pieces never lose interest in them, and her jewellery also has a quality that lasts.

**Each piece carries strong meaning. It is not surprising that the Lencia Dragon Collection she created for Zlatarna Celje was also presented by the former skier of skiers, Tina Maze, who won a string of victories in her sports career and reached for the stars.**

Olga Košica found inspiration for her collection in Tina's success and her strong character, while the idea came from the Chinese dragon. This ancient symbol of the Chinese Emperors, signifying power and greatness, emerges through the interlacing jewellery lines shaped like a dragon's silhouette.

### 3D DESIGN FROM THE TEAM OFR JEWELRY

In a way, Olga Košica and graphic designer Rok Marinšek are innovators in this technique and see it as a creative adventure. They are trained designers and throw themselves into every 3D design as if into a research project: they prepare the concept, the story, and explore the possibilities of different technologies. Their first joint collection was made of plexiglass and was very graphic.

**The 3D technique allows a kind of mathematical upgrade of the details, but derives from an organic form rather than mathematics. This technique allows artists to create details that cannot be seen with the naked eye or that are otherwise impossible to make.**

In contrast to manual work, digital processes enable the transformation of microscopic details into organic objects – exquisite pieces of jewellery.



Ring - titled CORAL REEF, material: silver and enamel, Degree show piece, London RCA  
Photo: Mimi Antolović

Košica and Marinšek took the challenge at the initiative of Chinese designer Masha Ma. The credit for this collaboration goes partly to Andrej Skok, a stylist who has been working with the Chinese designer for quite some time. Their jewellery is in high demand in Slovenia, but orders come mainly from abroad, and mostly from China, Taiwan and the United Arab Emirates. At the beginning, they were pioneers in this field, but recently the number of designers who have taken on this challenge has been increasing. Despite the growing competition, the two Slovenian designers remain at the very top of their field, as evidenced by numerous prizes, won in Slovenia and abroad. They are also regular participants in Paris Fashion Week – an achievement not matched by many designers, while Ljubljana Fashion Week also has the privilege of their participation.

**THE GREATEST PRIZE IS A BEAUTIFUL AND UNIQUE PRODUCT**

Exceptional work rarely goes unnoticed, and as early as 2012 Olga won the Young Creative Fashion Entrepreneur Award in Slovenia. This enabled her to spend some time in London, where she had the opportunity to learn from world-renowned fashion and design gurus. The most recent award Košica has won was given by the Designers Society of Slovenia for her current jewellery collections. The jury wrote: *“The Flamboyant Collection mirrors the concepts of bold, provocative, dramatic; the Punk Collection draws from the Hong Kong underground, contemporary punk subculture, and the science fiction aesthetics of the film 2046. In the Garden Revisited Collection, designers Olga Košica and Rok Marinšek froze organic, realistic plant patterns into ice or polyamide dust using 3D printing.”*

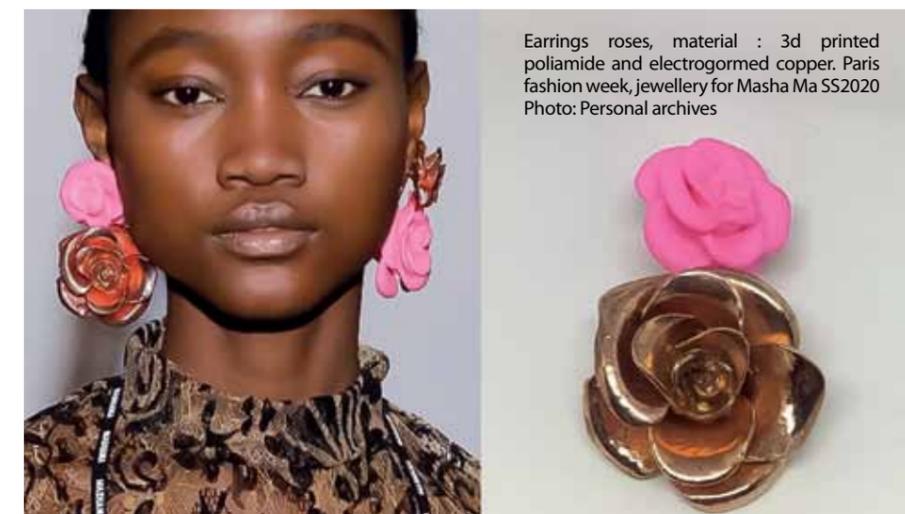
**She is a young designer, yet she has already presented her jewellery at exhibitions in Slovenia, the UK, Chile, Italy, Australia, Turkey, Germany, Austria, China, Norway, and Poland, to name only a few of the countries where her work is known.**

Olga is keen to pass on her knowledge as a visiting lecturer at the Ljubljana School of Design and the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering (Textile Department, Chair of Textile and Fashion Design), and is also the author of professional articles. Recently, her main engagement has been in presenting the use of 3D printing techniques in designing jewellery.

**PRECIOUS JEWELLERY IS NOT NECESSARILY EXPENSIVE**

Creativity and dedication are important. These are the qualities that Olga holds paramount and admires most in other artists, and that she herself puts into practice. All her success is thus a side benefit coming from devoted work and study.

To be precious, jewellery need not be expensive. Undoubtedly, though, the jewellery pieces Olga Košica designs are indeed precious, as they are unique and hence perfect. Furthermore, she makes jewellery that every woman can wear. It is chic and playful, yet strong and elegant. Just like women.



Earrings roses, material : 3d printed poliamide and electrogilded copper. Paris fashion week, jewellery for Masha Ma SS2020  
Photo: Personal archives



Dragon collection, Tina Maze, Lencia by Zlatarna Celje  
Photo: Zlatarna Celje archives

## A GASTRONOMIC STAR IS BORN – THE EUROPEAN FOOD SUMMIT

# Ljubljana, once the European Green Capital, today the European Culinary Capital

KATJA ŠTURM  
PHOTO: MATIC KREMŽAR



With a vision of becoming the most influential culinary event in the region, organiser Jezeršek Catering in partnership with Slovenian Tourist Board and Ljubljana Tourism and a number of sponsors have been combining efforts in developing and evolving the event.

From 16 to 19 March 2019, the organisers of the European Food Summit, namely Jezeršek Catering in partnership with the Slovenian Tourist Board and Ljubljana Tourism, undoubtedly conjured up a memorable culinary experience for all participants.

Thanks to this unique platform, Slovenia claimed its place at the top of European gastronomy, while Ljubljana was hailed as a culinary capital, this year hosting the most famous chefs worldwide, including the master chef Ana Roš, the *God of Food* Andrea Petrini, numerous Michelin star chefs, and the world's most influential food critics and digital influencers.

**The event brought together the most prominent people from the world of gastronomy, attracting great interest at home and abroad, while at the same time delighting both culture lovers and those who love snow.**

On 16 March, the organisers of the event partnered with the Open Kitchen festival, Ljubljana Tourism and the Gourmet Ljubljana brand to offer a surprising combination of authentic Slovenian dishes prepared by bistros and restaurants, paired with spectacular wines along with various types of gin, spirits and craft beer. The Open Kitchen event helped the European Food Summit take off, with the Saturday programme beginning and concluding in the magical atmosphere of the Križanke complex.

**The highlight of the day was definitely the exceptional Gourmet Ljubljana**

**Crawl, combining culture, cuisine and strolling around the city in collaboration with selected cultural institutions and the best chefs Ljubljana can offer, producing a unique food walk.**

At DobraVaga Gallery, which used to be fish shop, Jakob Pintar (*TaBar*) impressed visitors by focusing on local ingredients, accompanied by an art exhibition entitled *Fresh Fish*. This was followed by an astonishing presentation by the chef Janez Bratovž (*JB Restaurant*) and an accompanying exhibition of black and white photographs entitled *The Spirit of the City, with Tihomir Pinter around Ljubljana Old Town* at the Kresija Gallery. At the Museum of Illusions, the plates of master chef Jorg Zupan (*Atelje*) brought a touch of magic, while at the Town Hall, participants could revel in the creations of Igor Jagodic (*Strelec Restaurant*) and painter Gregor Pratneker, who created the large oil paintings on canvas known as *Into the Nature*. Peter Kovač (*Maxim*) served his creations at Ljubljana Castle wall, while chef Mojmir Šiftar (*Evergreen*) unleashed his muse at the finally pop-up eatery back in the Križanke complex.

On Sunday, 17 March, the Slovenian Tourist Board organised an I Feel Slovenia culinary tour for journalists. First, they set out to explore eastern Slovenia, and then continued the tour at Hiša Franko restaurant, where they were welcomed by chef Ana Roš

and the debut of her new spring menu. Entranced by the 5-star culinary experience, the journalists were also impressed by the genuine kindness of the people, and the fact that all meals were prepared from local, seasonal and home-grown food.

At the same time, Krvavec hosted the *Gourmet on Snow* event, where participants indulged in the creations of chefs Ago Špacapan (Špacapan House), Luka Gmajner and Marko Magajne (Galerija okusov), Tomaž Bolka (Gostilna Krištof), Sebastjan Elbl (Bled Castle Restaurant), Tadej Gašperin (Pikol), and Tomi Češek (Zebra Patisserie), who proved that culinary delights can also be experienced outside the walls of high-end restaurants. Surrounded by the Kamnik-Savinja Alps, the guests concluded their evening with a once-in-a-lifetime culinary experience

dubbed the *I Feel Slovenia Cable Car Dinner*, organised by Jezeršek Catering and Gostilna Krištof in the charming ambiance of Krvavec's ski slopes.

The main event of the European Food Summit was the professional conference, held at Ljubljana Castle on 18 March and organised by the Slovenian Tourist Board, titled *Food – The bridge toward the sustainable identities of European cultures and nations*. Moderated by Andrea Petrini and Ana Roš, the conference gathered world-class Michelin-starred chefs, who presented inspiring speeches and insightful conclusions, extending beyond the mere promotion of chefs and their restaurants. The line-up of speakers included the chefs Andoni Luis Aduriz (Mugaritz, ranked 9th on the World's 50 Best Restaurants, two Michelin stars, Spain), Jor-

dan Kahn (Destroyer and Vespertine, USA), Andreas Caminada (Schloss Schauenstein, ranked 47th on the World's 50 Best Restaurants, three Michelin stars, Switzerland), Christophe Pelé (Le Clarence, two Michelin stars, France), Esben Holmboe Bang (Maamoo, ranked 35th on the World's 50 Best Restaurants, three Michelin stars, Norway), Leonor Espinosa (Leo Restaurant, Best Female Chef of Latin America 2017 and among Latin America's 50 Best Restaurants, Colombia) and Riccardo Camanini (Lido 84, named Chef of 2017 by Identità Golose, Italy), as well as the following media experts Georges Desrues (Italy), Ivan Brincat (Food and Wine Gazette, Belgium), Joe Warwick (World Restaurant Awards, United Kingdom), two sustainable food systems researchers, namely Afton Halloran (Independent Consultant on Sustainable Food Systems, Denmark) and Roberto Flore (DTU Skylab – Technical Uni-

versity of Denmark, Denmark), and other influential figures in the Slovenian culinary world, such as Valter Kramar (Hiša Franko, Hiša Polonka), Anka Lipušček (Planika Dairy), Mateja Gravner (Gravner Winery) and Lior Kochavy (Open Kitchen).

The main takeaway from the conference was that sustainability is not a value in and of itself, but more of a guiding principle that needs to be taken into account, while a sustainable approach should become an intrinsic part of the culinary world, ranging from the source to the plate. The speakers also pointed to an interesting paradox, which is increasingly affecting the entire world, not only high-end restaurants, but the whole food industry in general.



The main event was the professional conference in the Ljubljana castle.



The European Food Summit has brought together the greatest minds in culinary, art and media sectors whose stories will aim to motivate listeners to engage in more progressive thinking and work toward a brighter and more sustainable future.

**Following Brexit and the closing of borders, the UK could be heading for a culinary catastrophe due to its dependence on trade in fruits and vegetables, but experts also warned about the pitfalls of a country excessively opening up to the outside world, which could impinge on the culinary identities of smaller nations.**

We should thus reject culinary imperialism, and instead stand behind sustainable gastronomy, which prioritises variety in tastes, approaches and experiences.

The evening ended with a sold-out Experience dinner with top chefs, and this year Ana Roš was joined by the Italian culinary virtuoso Riccardo Camanini and the Slovenian master chef Luka Košir.

On the last day, 19 March, the excitement moved again to the ski slopes of Krvavec. The day kicked off with the Argeta Exclusive Breakfast hosted by Luka Košir, followed by the Gourmet on Snow

event with Gorazd Potočnik (Sladkozvočje), Sebastijan Kovačič (Hiša Torkla), Tomaž Bevčič (Rizibizi), Urh Kapelar (Skipass Restaurant, Kranjska Gora) and Uroš Klinec (Klinec Plešivo), along with the Italian chef Nicola Dinato (Feva Ristorante, one Michelin star), who has gone viral thanks to his unique *fried mountain air* dish. Despite less than optimal weather conditions, caterers and wine-makers honoured the tradition and took to the slopes to compete for the podium in the Audi Gourmet Cup, proving that, whatever the weather, nothing gets in the way of food and fun on the snow.

The European Food Summit thus became the newest star on the list of the most important European food events, one that will

catch public attention for days, and even years, to come. We are positive that the event stimulated a number of ideas that will continue to inspire us, as confirmed by its organiser, Martin Jezeršek. *“The European Food Summit is now over, and the response has been overwhelming. We haven’t completely recovered from our efforts during this four-day period, but we’re slowly starting to realise that we might have created something truly remarkable and unique. To those suggesting that we might have bitten off more than we could chew, we proved that Slovenians should take a more ambitious stance, and adopt a more confident outlook on the future. And that future starts today, when we begin planning the European Food Summit 2020 and how to make things even better.”*



The Gourmet on Snow event



I Feel Slovenia Cable Car dinner.

## THE THREE SEAS INITIATIVE IN SLOVENIA

# An initiative that aims to stimulate more rapid development in our neighbourhood

TIMOTEJ ŠOOS  
PHOTO: DAVID FARTEK



On the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of June 2019, the Three Seas Initiative Summit will be held in Slovenia and hosted by the Slovenian President, Mr Borut Pahor. Based on the potential and dynamism of the states and societies of Central and Eastern Europe, and at the same time noting the limited interconnections between different sectors of these, the Three Seas Initiative aims to stimulate more rapid development of the region encompassing the Baltic, Black and Adriatic seas.

Also on the same dates the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, Centre for European Perspectives and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia are organising the second Three Seas Initiative Business Forum. The event will be held under the patronage of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, Mr Marjan Šarec.

### THREE SEAS INITIATIVE BUSINESS FORUM

The Business Forum will focus on four key areas: energy, infrastructure, digital interconnectivity and innovation, as well as the cross-cutting topics of transatlantic relations, security and water.

**Some 500 representatives of the private sectors and governments of the Three Seas Initiative states are expected to attend the forum to discuss the development of the region within the above-mentioned priority areas. Other participants will include high representatives of EU institutions, the United States, and Germany, as well as business people from the wider region.**



## Three Seas Initiative

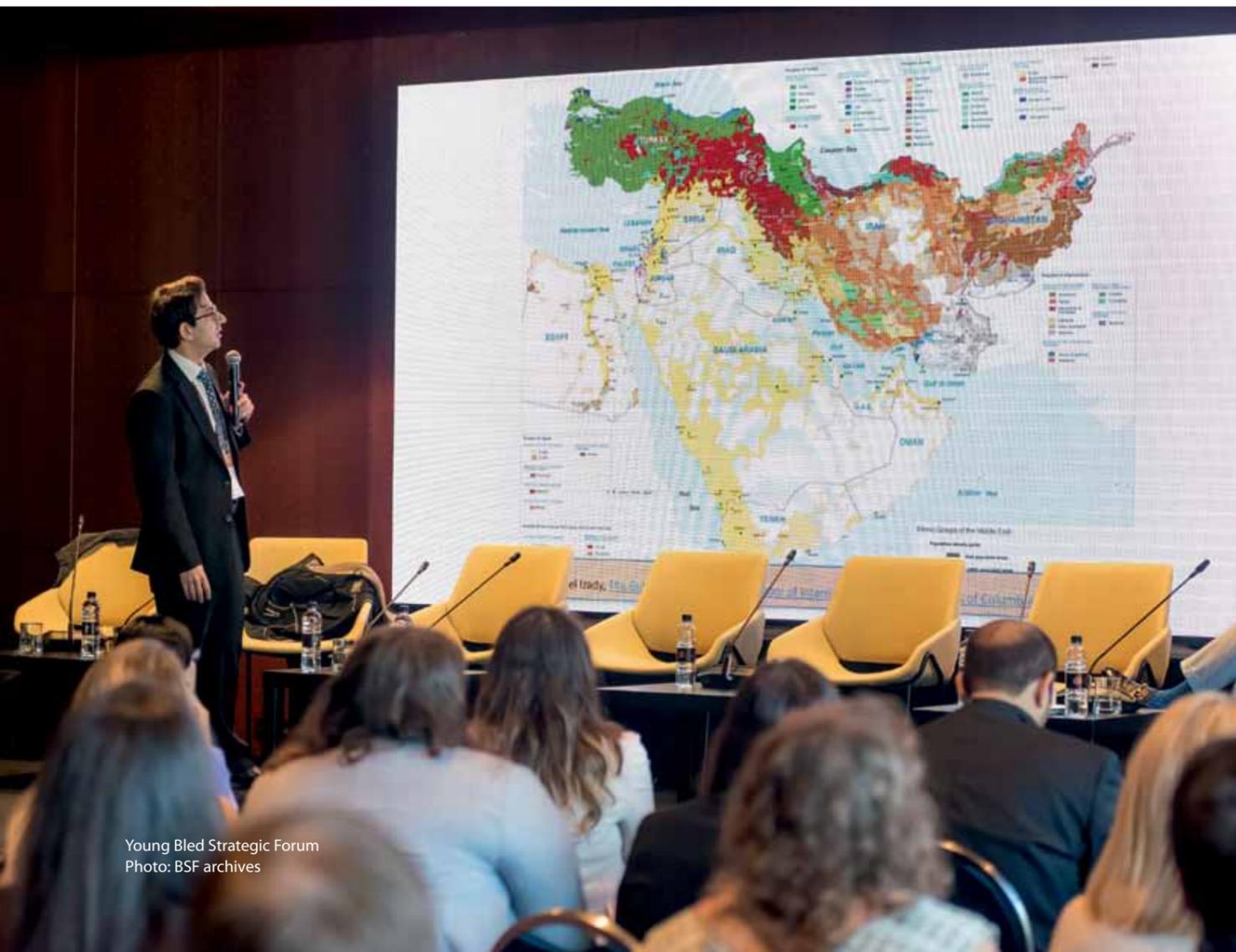
Slovenia, 5 - 6 June 2019

Slovenia advocates an inclusive Three Seas Initiative that will work towards a united Europe and strong transatlantic cooperation to tackle strategic investment projects in the region. Slovenia strives to ensure active and clear inclusion of the European Commission in the Initiative to strengthen EU cohesion and avoid the risk of overlap. We would also like to link the Initiative's efforts with the existing EU mechanisms and EU macro-regional strategies. It is essential to improve infrastructure connections between the participating states in order to build an area of stability and prosperity, which in turn can greatly contribute to wider EU stability and prosperity.

# BLED STRATEGIC FORUM

## (Re)sources of (in)stability

MELIHA MUHERINA



Young Bled Strategic Forum  
Photo: BSF archives

Bled Strategic Forum international conference, which will take place on 2 and 3 September 2019 this year, will address the availability, geographical distribution and allotment of strategic resources (natural, capital, human, etc.). (Re)sources have a strong influence on relations between different actors, and are among the main factors of (in)stability in the international order.

People are leading longer, richer and better lives than ever before. However, growth, wealth and well-being all have their price. The sources of global instability have become more complex, dispersed and unpredictable.

Levels, droughts, floods, storms, abnormal weather patterns and water shortages, prove that we have crossed several planetary boundaries.

**The effective management of strategic resources maintains stability, reduces security risks and improves living standards, whereas uneven and unfair distribution leads to inequality and the concentration of resources in power centres.**

**The manner in which the global economy deals with our limited natural resources has a great impact on the Earth's climate. If we do not radically change our direction then we will soon need another planet, although no *Planet B* exists.**

Globalisation has not only polarised society, but also caused the rise of non-state actors, including international corporations. At the peak of human development, the West is confronted with the challenge of maintaining economic growth, preserving the welfare state and securing key democratic decision-making tools. Moreover, the alienation of citizens from institutions, mistrust of administrative structures and the unfair distribution of assets fuel nationalistic and populist movements and rhetoric. One of the main topics that the Forum wants to address is climate change, which is increasingly becoming a source of instability and friction in the Western world.

This means that we have to change how we produce and consume. It also means that our economic model must be transformed from linear to circular, so that resources are reused, recycled and reprocessed. Throughout history, resistance to change has constituted an important barrier to innovation-based progress. How to convince those who fight against such changes that the transformation into a green economy is economically meaningful and creates new jobs? How can we demonstrate that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will lead to lasting prosperity? These are some of the climate change issues that will be addressed by the Forum, which will also try to provide the appropriate answers.

### OPENING QUESTIONS ABOUT (IN)STABILITY

The lack of progress since the Paris Agreement on Climate Change has clearly shown that we still have a lot to do in terms of climate action. The negative effects of climate change, such as rising sea

### THE SITUATION IN OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

Slovenia, as one of the main supporters of the EU's enlargement to the Western Balkans, should do more to transpose good environmental

practices to its neighbourhood, as environmental impacts do not acknowledge borders. The six Western Balkan countries (WB6) face serious problems on the road to EU integration in terms of energy transition and environmental protection. The environment has never been placed high on the agenda of party elites and political authorities.

**The belief that the environment has no political significance is a conscious political decision, one that gives rise to the majority of environmental problems.**

The political marginalisation of environmental issues is also reflected in the latest EU strategy for the Western Balkans, which neither mentions the environment nor addresses its issues, although this is presumed to be one of the main areas of focus in Europe. Such an attitude by the EU creates problems for local environmental organisations, whose efforts to set the environment as a priority political task are undermined by such documents. What the WB6 countries need is an appropriate integration of the environment in the requirements of the accession process, which would then serve to determine their national agendas.



Strategic Forum Bled 2018. Overcoming the boundaries of trust between people and institutions.  
Photo: Nebojša Tejić/ STA

#### THE MAIN TOPICS OF THE WB6

- **Environmental awareness**, which stresses how a lack of awareness of decision-makers about EU climate policy and a lack of a strategic vision in line with sustainable development can lead to incomplete implementation and enforcement of existing legislation, and slow adaptation to new EU requirements. The lack of adequate expertise in public authorities causes misunderstandings among them (i.e. between various ministries), as well as the misinterpretation of EU policy. The measures to ensure energy transition and environmental protection are often understood as burdens rather than as opportunities for economic growth. Moreover, public companies, which are still key players in the energy market, fail to perceive the changing business environment as conditioned by the energy transition. It is crucial to accept the still missing laws in this field as well as harmonise the existing ones, and, above all, to consistently implement environmental legislation.
- **Pure energy** addresses the topic of our dependence on fossil fuels, as evidenced by the fact that, in the WB6 countries, nine new thermal power plants are planned. Decision-makers allocate significant public budget funds to subsidise the use of fossil fuels, leading to more CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. In general, the transition to renewable energy sources in the WB6 countries is very slow, and the region is considered unfriendly to investments in renewable energy. Moreover, current business models do not include the involvement of local communities, neither in the decision-making process nor in the investment phase, which often causes disputes and hinders the implementation of projects.
- **Clean air** and air quality problems are among the most commonly addressed environmental issues in all WB6 countries. The poor quality of ambient air is caused by the extensive use of fossil fuels, a high proportion of relatively old vehicles and poorly developed public transport. Large companies often go beyond emission limits, and they justify this by their role in providing jobs within the community. Energy efficiency is considered one of the most important measures in the fight against air pollution, which is highly correlated with the rule of law and is often a costly but effective measure in the long run. However, it is necessary to develop action plans at the local level in order to reach solutions that will benefit everyone.



## 8<sup>TH</sup> AFRICA DAY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

# European-African partnership is important part of foreign affairs

SUZANA SEAPTEFRATI

PHOTO: MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ARCHIVES



# Dan Afrike Africa Day Journée de l'Afrique

Africa Day is an international conference organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia as part of the Bled Strategic Forum. This year event is held under the auspices of the President of the Republic of Slovenia.

The Africa Day was first organised in 2012 with a view to celebrating the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity/African Union.

The 8th conference will take place on 15 and 16 May 2019, and is organised in cooperation with the Club of Former Slovenian Ambassadors and in partnership with the European Commission and Chatham House – the Royal Institute of International Affairs based in the United Kingdom.

The event is generously supported by the City of Ljubljana. The conference aims to improve policy outcomes for citizens in Europe and Africa as a result of a deeper understanding and strengthened cooperation between the two continents.

### MAIN FOCUS

This year's conference will address economic transformation, inclusion and employment, while stressing the importance of the European-African partnership.

**Expert policy discussions will focus on human capital development, including quality education, technical and vocational education and training, and skills development to match the demands of the changing labour market. Topics will also include environments promoting opportunities of decent work and productive employment, and the dynamics of economic migration and brain drain.**

Particular attention will be paid to policies and initiatives to reduce inequality and to foster accountable governance, and the role of civil society. In this light, this year's presentations will cover means to improve business environments, the role of the private sector, and the promotion of responsible business practices within and between regions, while also addressing inclusive and sustainable industrialisation, civil infrastructure needs, circular economy, and cultural and creative industries.

The second part of the conference will be dedicated to growing economic and investment opportunities in Africa, to be presented by African delegations, as well as to cooperation with relevant Slovenian companies. Slovenia and African states have already established the transfer of knowledge and business partnerships; nevertheless, there remains a large unexplored potential for a further development and enhancement of economic relations between Slovenia and African states.

Special emphasis will be placed on beekeeping and bee products. A visit will be organised to the Beekeeping Academy of Slovenia, established recently in response to a growing demand from abroad for the rich knowledge of Slovenian beekeepers. The Academy offers the opportunity for Slovene and foreign experts from different fields to work together to share beekeeping expertise and good practices, as well as to take advantage of this broad base of knowledge.

Representatives from political, business, academic and cultural spheres from Africa and Europe, as well as members of the diplomatic corps and international organisations, are invited to participate in the conference, which will also be open to the wider public.

### A CULTURAL PROGRAMME

The conference will be complemented by a cultural programme presenting the rich heritage and contemporary culture of Africa. The cultural programme was prepared in cooperation with Zavod Afriška Vas, the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, the Velenje Museum, the Slovenian Cinematheque, Mladinska knjiga – Kozorcij Bookstore, the Ljubljana City Library, and Kresija Gallery. The programme includes concerts, dance performances, film projections, literary events, workshops for adults and children, and an open air African market.

The purpose of the Africa Day conference is to improve policy outcomes for citizens in Europe and Africa, as well as to enhance bilateral ties between Slovenia and African countries, with an emphasis on economic and cultural cooperation.

# THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN DAYS 2019

## Challenges facing the economy, environment and scientific research in light of foreign policy

JANA STRGAR



After the successful first international Latin American and the Caribbean Days conference in 2018, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is organising the second, LAC Days 2019, which will be held from 20 to 24 May 2019 in Ljubljana and Piran.

This year's conference will build on last year's by exploring the potential for strengthening interregional and bilateral links between Slovenia and LAC countries in terms of the economy, environment and scientific research. Another aim of the conference is to make Slovenians more familiar with the region through cultural and promotional events that will take place along with the main programme. The conference will be attended by representatives of Slovenia, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, EU institutions, as well as individuals from the business community, educational and scientific institutions and research agencies.

### DEBATE ON STRENGTHENING MUTUAL COOPERATION

The introductory panel on 20 May 2019 will focus on fostering mutual cooperation, both bilateral and in international organisations, and other initiatives where Slovenia and the LAC countries share similar views on many topics, including on the environment. Then a research workshop will be held from 20 to 23 May 2019.

**The specific focuses of the introductory panel will be on the possibilities of strengthening integration in the fields of environment, water management and the circular economy.**

The panel will be composed of representatives from Slovenia, LAC countries, EU institutions, the EU-Latin America and the Caribbean Foundation (EU-LAC Foundation), and representatives

from the business community and academic institutions. Water and the environment are topics where there are a lot of synergies between Europe and the LAC region, as can be seen from the EU-LAC Action Plan, which highlights the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development with a focus on climate change.

**Collaboration in science and research will be the focus of a three-day workshop aimed at fostering cooperation and sharing experience between the scientific and research institutions of EU member states and LAC countries.**

Emphasis will be placed on the preparation of joint projects under EU programmes, such as Horizon 2020. Part of the workshop will be devoted to *Slovenian Day*, including the presentation of Slovenian expertise and experience, and will be held at the Marine Biology Station of the National Institute of Biology in Piran and at the Jožef Stefan Institute in Ljubljana. The workshop partners are the EU-LAC Foundation and the Bavarian Research Alliance (BayFOR).

### THERE WILL ALSO BE MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESS MEETINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Part of the LAC Days 2019 conference will be aimed at finding opportunities and possibilities for economic cooperation with the

countries of the region. The Slovenian business environment and Slovenian companies with an interest and experience in operating in the region will be presented.

**The presentation of the LAC countries' markets and the possibilities for co-operation and inclusion of Slovenian business partners in these markets is also planned, and B2B meetings for participants will be organised.**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia is organising the second LAC Days conference within the Bled Strategic Forum, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, the Ministry of Finance, the Slovenian Research Agency and several scientific research and other institutions.

**AND THAT'S NOT ALL ...**

The Latin America and the Caribbean Days 2019 conference will be enriched by a number of cultural and promotional activities, including a festival of Latin American films in the Slovenian Cinematheque, a literary evening and many other interesting events. The programme will be published on the website of the Slovenian Cinematheque ([www.kinoteka.si](http://www.kinoteka.si)) and on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia ([www.mzz.gov.si](http://www.mzz.gov.si)).



The international conference Latin America and the Caribbean Days 2018.  
Photo: Nebojša Tejić/ STA

## SLOVENIAN FANS UNIQUE IN PROMOTING THE COUNTRY

# Thank you, Slovenian fans, for being so committed in supporting our athletes

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ  
PHOTO: STA ARCHIVES



Fans who went to the basketball spectacle in Miami this year.

*Slovenia is in basketball heaven. Slovenia is European champion. History is being written. They're not dreams, it's all true.* These and similar lines were the headlines on 18 September 2017, when the Slovenian national team became European champions in Istanbul.

On that day, the Slovenian Railways company offered people free transport to a reception in Ljubljana, as did the city buses, while the airplane with the golden team touched down at Brnik Airport precisely at 7 pm, so the television channels Pop TV and Kanal A could begin their main news programme with a live broadcast that was watched by almost everyone in the nation.

In the days and weeks that followed there were various receptions, while the victorious players, their sweethearts and mothers became permanent features of the front pages, and 17 September 2017 will forever remain in our memories as the golden day of Slovenian basketball.

**Yes, Slovenia was truly gripped by basketball fever. Euphoria without parallel, infused with a huge dose of optimism.**

After the semi-final victory against Spain, team captain Goran Dragić said self-confidently: *"We are going for gold, and I hope that as many people as possible in Slovenia will be there for us."* Three days later, 7,000 Slovenians went to Istanbul, then the day after the final 20,000 and more awaited the players in Ljubljana's Kongresni trg square, the scene of so many historic events.

*"I'm inspired by the Slovenians. For a number of years I've gone to sports events, but I've never experienced such a friendly attitude. All credit to you, Slovenian brothers,"* the STA quoted Slobodan, a fan from Belgrade, as saying that same day.

### SLOVENIAN FANS ONCE CARRIED THE NAME OF SLOVENIA TO MIAMI

At the latest basketball spectacle in Miami, Slovenian fans once again carried the name of the country across the world.

**The enthusiastic way they cheer and their goodwill, sporting behaviour and mass attendance at games have become an example to fans everywhere. Television broadcasts devoted much time to showing the Slovenian fans at the game, decked out in their green scarves, flags and wearing souvenir shirts for the match.**

This last touch was due to the work of the Slovenian Government Communication Office, together with the Slovenian Tourist Board, Basketball Association and Miha Pogačar, who presented the fans who went to Miami for the game with T-shirts saying I feel Slovenia, plus fan scarves, with 2,000 such packages being made for the fans.

In the past, Slovenian football fans also carried the name of Slovenia around the world, and their support did a huge amount to promote the country.

### THE FANS ALWAYS LEAVE A BIG MARK IN PLANICA

Foreign journalists reporting on Planica regard it as a unique venue for ski flights. Alongside the extraordinary landscape, they are stunned by the atmosphere created by the fans and jumpers in the valley below the Ponce mountains.

*"I'm here for the first time and in one word I can say: magnificent,"* is how one of the German photo journalists described it in the press centre. *"I've already seen plenty of World Cup venues, but Planica is truly special,"* added Jan Simon Schäfer, one of nearly 160 foreign journalists at the event. He noted that the combination of fans and the surroundings is something unique. *"Both the local and foreign supporters really give it their all."* Polish jour-

nalist Wojciech Kruk-Pielesiak compared the atmosphere to his home venue in Zakopane. *"The fans here are similar to the Polish ones – they're totally devoted to this sport. So they come in large numbers even when the Slovenian jumpers are not doing too well, and they always create an amazing atmosphere."* During his visit to Planica, Kantar was most impressed by the size of the crowd and the atmosphere it conjured up: *"I'm here for the first time, and I must say I'm surprised at the atmosphere. I'm familiar with that from the New Year competitions, and this here is a match for that in every respect."*

We thank you, Slovenian fans, for being so committed in supporting our athletes, who are winning more and more top contests with your help.



