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SLOVENIAN INFORMATION
2022

www.gov.si

Published by
Government Communication Office

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Translation
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Language editing
Amidas

Print
Collegium Graphicum d.o.o.

Number of copies
3500

ISSN
1854-0805

ALL THAT IS BEST ABOUT CHALLENGES



The unfamiliar, which we are faced with, is frequently called a problem, since we have to tackle at least one unknown. In doing so, we feel the sense of unwanted, wrong, absence. At the point when the unknown becomes a challenge, we see a new aspect. It is still difficult to solve, but surmountable with a suitable attitude and rewarding at the end. So, it is very foolish to want an absence of all problems. As we thus limit ourselves in finding our capabilities and limits. Once we accept the journey as a challenge, only the sky is the limit.

And there are great challenges ahead. For the entire world and Slovenia.

In June, a new Slovenian Government led by Dr Robert Golob was sworn in. Below, we present its key priorities and vision. A lot of attention is also dedicated to sports, as the Volleyball Men's World Championship is about to take place, an excellent sporting spectacle, which will not only be a great sporting event, but an opportunity for Slovenia's promotion, connection, exchange of experience and intercultural cooperation. We Slovenians can certainly call ourselves champions. Not only in sports. Also in literature, science, culture, etc.

In addition to the topics above, we also present the orientation of the Slovenian foreign policy, activities during the European Year of Youth, plans for the project, Slovenia, Guest of Honour at the International Book Fair in Frankfurt 2023, Slovenian cuisine and the business projects.

Finally, all that is best about challenges: Do not limit your challenges, challenge your limits.

Tanja Glogovčan Belančič, Editor-in-Chief

- 8** 15TH SLOVENIAN GOVERNMENT
Key priorities – mitigating the impact of rising energy and food prices
- 12** Address by the Prime Minister, Dr Robert Golob
- 18** PETER GRK, SECRETARY GENERAL OF BSF'
17th Bled Strategic Forum, The rule of power or the power of rule
- 22** SLOVENIAN DIPLOMACY DAY
Slovenia marks 30 years of membership in the UN
- 28** MEN'S WORLD VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONSHIP
Join us for an electrifying experience
- 42** FRANKFURTER BUCHMESSE 2023
Promotion of Slovenian literary creativity abroad
- 50** SYMBOLS OF SLOVENIA
A Brief History of the Symbols of the Slovenian State
- 56** PLEČNIK'S LIBRARY
Created for All Times
- 64** 2022: THE YEAR OF TARTINI
The 330th Anniversary of the Birth of a Virtuoso from Piran
- 72** MOVING FROM THE SPORTS EDUCATIONAL CHART TO SLOFIT
Be fit, get into SLOfit
- 88** CIRCUS FUSKABO
Inspiring children and youth to live a creative life



15TH SLOVENIAN GOVERNMENT

Key priorities – mitigating the impact of rising energy and food prices

VESNA ŽARKOVIĆ



In June, the 15th Slovenian government began its work. The new government's key priorities include mitigating the impact of rising energy and food prices, the COVID-19 exit strategy and de-escalating the situation in healthcare, and restoring confidence in the functioning rule of law.

On Wednesday, 1 June, the ministerial team of the 15th Slovenian government took its solemn oath at the National Assembly. The team is headed by Robert Golob, President of Gibanje Svoboda (Freedom Movement), who received his mandate to form the government on May 25.

The government was formed by a coalition of the parties Gibanje Svoboda, the Social Democrats, and The Left, which together have a total of 53 deputies in the National Assembly.

The government consists of 18 members, i.e. 17 ministers in addition to the Prime Minister, Dr Robert Golob. Three members are ministers without portfolio. Tanja Fajon, President of the Social Democrats, Luka Mesec, Coordinator of The Left, and Danijel Bešič Loredan, Minister of Health, were appointed Deputy Prime Ministers.

The new government also emphasises cooperation and dialogue with social partners and the broader civil society.

Immediately after taking office, the government started to work on the most pressing issues – first adopting short-term measures to stabilise the situation, and then tackling long-term systemic changes. The challenges posed by the aggravated global situation call for cooperation and a common approach in order to manage them – by both national and EU stakeholders.

MEASURES TO MITIGATE RISING PRICES

On 7 June, the Prime Minister's Working Group on Rising Energy and Food Prices Mitigation held its first meeting and started drafting preliminary proposals and measures. On the food side, these focus on alleviating the high costs of farming, while on the energy side they focus on motor fuels. The Working Group, headed by Prime Minister Robert Golob, stressed the need to "take targeted measures over a short period of time". Members of the Working Group include the Minister of Economic Development and Technology, Matjaž Han, the Minister of Infrastructure, Bojan Kumer, the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, Irena Šinko, the Minister of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Luka Mesec, and the Minister of Finance, Klemen Boštjančič.

DECREE SETTING ELECTRICITY PRICES FOR HOUSEHOLDS AND SMALL BUSINESSES

On 15 July, the government issued a decree setting electricity prices for households and small business. The decree sets a maximum permitted retail price of electricity for household customers and for small business customers, as well as for consumption in the common premises of multi-apartment buildings and common premises in combined multi-apartment and business buildings. Despite some recent price increases, current prices for households are much lower and are still based on pre-crisis prices. Prices for households offered by different suppliers vary considerably, with the difference between the cheapest and the most expensive supplier being almost double. In some cases, we observe a trend of suppliers' introducing higher tariffs for new customers, while keeping them lower for old customers. Due to the significant differences in prices, suppliers are getting ready for po-

tentially higher upsurges of new customers who were previously customers of more expensive suppliers, or of those suppliers who ceased to operate.

SIGNIFICANT ANNUAL SAVINGS

The maximum permitted price for electricity for customers with a connection power equal to or less than 43 kW who are not household customers is EUR 0.13800/kWh for a higher daily tariff rate, EUR 0.09900/kWh for a lower daily tariff rate and EUR 0.12400/kWh for a single daily tariff rate. In addition to capping the price of electricity for the decree's application period, the government will also reduce the VAT rate to 9.5% and maintain a 50% reduction in excise duties.

For the average household customer, this will lead to around 15% to 30% (from EUR 110 to EUR 334) in annual savings, or up to 56% (up to EUR 1000) in annual savings for customers of the most expensive supplier, taking into account the published market prices of suppliers that would apply as of 1 September 2022 without the application of the price regulation measure. The regulation, taking into account current prices, will bring between 2% and 37% (between EUR 50 and EUR 1760) of annual savings to the average small business customer. Multi-apartment buildings, which are currently customers of the largest supplier, are expected to gain around 36% in annual savings compared to the published market prices, which means savings amounting to around EUR 400 per year.

In 2023, new increases in electricity prices are expected on the market, but as a result of the adopted decree, prices will not rise.

Accordingly, household customers, multi-apartment buildings and small business customers will in fact save even more in the coming year, as the regulation also prevents additional price increases. According to government calculations, these additional savings amount to around EUR 400 for the average household, around EUR 800 for small business customers and around EUR 500 for multi-apartment buildings.



DECREE SETTING NATURAL GAS PRICES

On 22 July, the decree setting the prices of natural gas from the gas distribution network entered into force, under which maximum retail gas prices will be set for all groups of protected customers.

It will apply from 1 September 2022 through 31 August 2023.

The decree sets the maximum permitted retail price for natural gas from the gas transport and distribution network for household customers, for final gas customers supplying heat to several households through a shared combustion plant owned or co-owned by these households, for primary social services and for customers who are small business customers as at the date of entry into force of the decree, as determined by the Gas Supply Act.

As of 1 September, the maximum retail price for household customers and household customers sharing a combustion plant will be EUR 0.073 per kilowatt-hour (kWh), and for primary social services and small business customers it will be EUR 0.079 per kWh, all net of VAT. The gas consumed by household customers sharing a combustion plant will be calculated for billing purposes in accordance with the existing cost distribution keys specified in contracts or agreements concluded between building managers and apartment owners, or in agreements concluded between apartment owners.

The decree also provides that suppliers may not cease supplying gas

to these categories of customers and may not refuse to conclude a supply contract with new customers from these categories, and that customers shall not lose their right to change supplier. This part of the decree is already applicable today.

The government also extended the validity of reduced excise duties on energy products and electricity as of 1 August until cancellation, and announced a reduction of the VAT rate on all energy products from 22% to 9.5%.

The Ministry of Infrastructure is working intensively on the final plan to achieve the goal of increasing solar power capacities.

Prime Minister Robert Golob said that they plan to set up "giant solar power plants" to be available to households within the next three years. It is a medium-term measure, re-launching the process of solarisation or the construction of solar power plants in Slovenia. These community power plants are giant solar power plants that will be interconnected and available to Slovenian households at a known price through the community platform. The construction of solar power plants is one of the three measures to be applied in the electrical power field.

MEASURES TO ENSURE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM STABILITY

At the extraordinary session of the National Assembly held on 14 July, deputies adopted the Emergency Measures to Ensure the Stability of Healthcare System Act by 48 votes in favour and 27 votes against. The intervention legislation, submitted by the government to the parliamentary procedure under the emergency procedure, was drafted by the Ministry of Health under the leadership of Minister Danijel Bešić Loredan and interferes with several healthcare acts. Among other things, it addresses long waiting times in healthcare and/or reduced access to health services. Bonuses for increased workload and for special working conditions in less developed municipalities will help in achieving this goal. The financial impact of this act is estimated at over EUR 200 million.

The aim of the act is to stabilise the healthcare system and provide patients with appropriate medical treatment.

The Ministry wants to assess the situation objectively by March and focus on patients.

Among the main solutions and in addition to bonuses for increased workload at the primary healthcare level, the Ministry of Health highlights the need to professionalise the institutes' councils, the mandatory implementation of an annual internal audit in public health institutions, a new office for supervision, quality and investment in healthcare and the payment of all provided healthcare services that exceed the regular scope of the programme. This measure, i.e. the payment of the provided services without a ceiling, will enter into force on 1 September and will last until the end of next year. Minister Bešić Loredan expressed his expectation that, based on this act, the waiting lines would be cut by half within a year. The Minister expects to receive the first reliable data on the waiting lines by September 15.

At the same time, the act also transfers responsibility for carrying out administrative and systemic supervision, quality and investment in healthcare and the inspection control of waiting lists or waiting periods to the office for supervision, quality and investment in healthcare. The government appointed Aleš Šabeder, former Minister of Health, as the office's acting director.





FOREIGN POLICY

Slovenia will continue to firmly support the enlargement of the EU to the whole Western Balkans region.

With the start of accession negotiations, a new chapter is being written for the people of North Macedonia and Albania, and Slovenia will continue to provide support and is ready to assist in the progress of the negotiation process.

In light of his appearance at the European Council meeting in June, Prime Minister Robert Golob sent a letter to President of the European Council Charles Michel and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen on the granting of EU candidate status to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).

The letter's key messages are the need to take into account the realistic situation in BiH and the changed geopolitical reality in Europe, and to grant EU candidate status to BiH based on the achievable conditions set out in the letter. Both communications, including the holding of free and fair general elections in October 2022, are, in the opinion of the Republic of Slovenia, the basis for granting the EU candidate status to BiH at the December meeting of the European Council.

As pointed out by the Prime Minister after his meeting with the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Olaf Scholz, the Berlin Process must be continued and the Western Balkans should be kept at the forefront of the EU enlargement process.



A clear European perspective for the Western Balkan countries is the best guarantee for security, stability and progress in the region.

The EU must deliver on the commitments made to the Western Balkan countries and make positive decisions as part of their progress towards membership, while at the same time finding ways to accelerate the processes in these countries, which have not achieved significant developments in this area for more than 20 years. It is about encouraging the public, especially young people, that the door to the EU can be open if there is the political will to cross the threshold.

THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY RATIFIED THE PROTOCOLS FOR FINLAND AND SWEDEN'S ACCESION TO NATO

On 14 July, the National Assembly ratified the NATO accession protocols for Sweden and Finland. Sweden and Finland, hitherto neutral countries, applied for NATO membership on 18 May due to the changed security situation, and the accession protocols with them are subject to ratification by all 30 current members of the Alliance.

Prime Minister Robert Golob, who addressed the deputies ahead of the vote and urged them to unanimously support the ratification of the protocols, stressed that Finland and Sweden's decision to join NATO was of historic significance. According to him, the accession to NATO of these two countries, which have been neutral for decades or even centuries, is a direct consequence of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. "Without it, there would be no application, let alone accession," he said. The Prime Minister also pointed out that in the last year it has become clear that NATO is a defence organisation that was founded in another era, but has found its new mission in taking care of the collective security of its members.



Address by the Prime Minister, Dr Robert Golob



I am pleased to address you on behalf of the fifteenth Slovenian Government, which took office at the beginning of June this year. We live in challenging times, but we know that we are stronger as a community when we strive for common goals and when we are guided by the desire to offer a stable future to the younger generations. This is everyone's responsibility and only together can we turn these difficult times into challenges that a responsible society tackles strategically, long-term and effectively.

Our vision is first and foremost about ensuring social justice and solidarity while also building a knowledgeable society. We see an accessible public health system and the preservation of quality public education as the cornerstones of the social state. Through a knowledge-based society, we can create an added-value environment, in which individuals develop their talents and qualities, and do what helps them grow and develop personally. Increasing the resources and opportunities for the involvement of young Slovenian scientists educated abroad in the work of universities and research institutes is one of the strategic objectives in the area of strengthening the importance of public education. Steps towards achieving these goals will be set alongside urgent measures to ensure prosperity, confidence in the development of society and care for all vulnerable groups.

Slovenia, like the rest of the international community, is facing the difficult and far-reaching consequences of the coronavirus epidemic and the Russian aggression against the independent state of Ukraine. The energy crisis, food and energy prices are today priority issues for all governments. If ever, then today, in these historically challenging times, solidarity must not be just an empty phrase, but a tangible act of support and a visible attitude of all the Member States of the European Union.

The unity of the European Union will certainly continue to be reflected in our response to the on-going war and our common efforts to end the violence against the people of Ukraine. Its candidate status, which Slovenia unreservedly supported, is a step towards guaranteeing democracy and the sovereignty of the invaded country. The Slovenian Government also supports the efforts of the countries of the Western Balkans to gradually move closer to the European Union. I believe that the continuation of the European enlargement policy towards the countries of the Western Balkans is the best guarantee for the security, stability and progress of the region that deserves a determined and ambitious European policy.

Only through solidarity, cooperation and integration can Europe successfully face all the current challenges. No individual solution can be better than a European solution – only together can we find solutions

for the society of the future, for tackling the energy crisis and for a successful green breakthrough.

The current crisis has shown that we need to build our energy solutions on renewable energy sources, especially wind, solar and a new generation of nuclear technologies, mastered by the West. We will, therefore, work to promote investment in the green transition and alternatives to ensure energy security.

During our mandate, we will strive to maintain our place at the heart of Europe, as Slovenia remains an active and reliable member of the European Union, supporting efforts for a stronger and more resilient Europe by strengthening cooperation with countries, their capitals and their institutions. We will continue to support the rule of law and effective long-term European solutions to common challenges such as energy and food security, the green and digital transition, supply chains and preserving health.

An opportunity to seek views and innovative solutions to the challenges we face in Slovenia and the world is also The Bled Strategic Forum. For many years, it has brought to Slovenia a wide range of participants from various fields, enabling strategic dialogue and lasting international links.

Furthermore, the success of top Slovenian athletes and the successful staging of major sports events undoubtedly contribute to Slovenia's visibility. At the end of this summer, Slovenia will host the Men's Volleyball World Championship. I am delighted that our country was successful in its bid to co-organise this important competition at the highest level. Slovenia is ranked very high in volleyball and I would like to see the Slovenian national team reaching for the top places again.

In addition to sports, let me also highlight culture. It is actually one of the cornerstones of our country. Next year, Slovenia will be the main guest at the most important international book fair in Frankfurt. This cooperation is important for the visibility and positioning of Slovenian authors and Slovenian creativity in the publishing field in the German-speaking countries and the world at large.

Maintaining an open society and ensuring equal opportunities, to which non-governmental organisations from various fields of social activity make a strong contribution, are indispensably linked to our work. The cooperation between politics and civil society certainly contributes to the development of the best solutions.

We have challenging tasks ahead of us, which, with cooperation, patience and mutual respect, we will surely not only achieve, but actually surpass.

PETER GRK, SECRETARY GENERAL OF BSF

17th Bled Strategic Forum The rule of power or the power of rule

ZARJA BREGANT



BSF Secretary General Peter Grk
Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

This is the first Bled Strategic forum after two years of pandemic – the Covid-19 crisis, in its original form. What can we expect?

This year we are organising already the 17th Bled Strategic Forum, which in a short period of time has established itself as one of the major strategic events in Central and Southeastern Europe. As in previous years, there will be high-level politicians, executives and members of civil society who will be discussing and finding solutions to the most pressing issues we are facing in Europe but also elsewhere in the global community. I am very glad that audio-video addresses are now last year's news and physical panels with full halls are hopefully again the reality we are living in. Of course, some of the digital advances we have made in the last couple of years will be utilised again and serve as a tool to make the Forum even better and more exciting.

The rule of power or the power of rules is this year's title. What does this symbolise?

Just as we thought we were out of one crisis, we came sliding into another one. The whole world is living in very uncertain and unstable times. I can speak for many when I say that when we woke up on the morning of the 24th of February we could not believe our eyes – the world as we knew it had literally been crushed overnight. Nobody thought that war in our immediate neighbourhood would be something we would now be living with for more than 100 days. Rules that were universally accepted disappeared in a moment with the Russian aggression on Ukraine and the postulates of international and humanitarian law collapsed. An era of uncertainty and instability on so many levels started.

What is the future of Europe in these uncertain and unstable times? The debate on the future of Europe has just ended, where does the EU go from here?

That's the million-dollar question, isn't it? To tell you the truth, I don't know how the discussions surrounding our common future will evolve, but the BSF will certainly serve as a platform where difficult and I would say necessary questions will be asked and hopefully some of them also answered.

The Russian aggression on Ukraine has put in motion some of the processes that will need to be adequately addressed in order for the EU to play a meaningful and responsible role in the global community.

Here I'm talking about our capacity to be strategically autonomous in all those areas that will determine how we are going to live as Europeans in the future – energy security, food security, industry, defence and foreign relations. On the other hand, the EU must preserve the fundamental values, norms and principles it was built upon – this is a guarantee of a peaceful, democratic and sustainable future for us all.

We are living in times of war and a great security crisis in our neighbourhood. We all listened to Michel's speech on our common Europe together with the Western Balkans. Will this play a key role in our common security?

Currently, when we speak of the future of Europe, security is again at the forefront of our debates, due to the current Russian aggression against Ukraine. Many argue that strategic autonomy starts in our immediate neighbourhood, so it would be hard to imagine a geopolitical Union without a clear and ambitious policy towards the countries of the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership. The repeated statements of EU politicians on the importance of these regions need to be backed up with practical steps and commitments. The EU will need to make a choice – whether to continue its policy of strategic patience or to deliver on its promises. In order to ensure a prosperous future of the European continent, we will need to adequately address the needs and wishes of the Western Balkans and the Eastern partnership countries – the sooner the better for our common security, now and for the future.

You are also a specialist on the Western Balkans question. Enlargement has always been a feature of the BSF; will this year be any exception?

I am always glad that ministers and other high-level politicians

from the countries of the Western Balkans so positively respond to our invitations to the Bled Strategic Forum. We will have one or perhaps even two panels on this topic – I am talking about the Western Balkans and their future relations with the EU. It is no secret that the whole enlargement process is not where it should be. One could argue that the last 20 years have been lost due to the lack of ambition on the side of the EU to make tough but necessary strategic decisions and the lack of enthusiasm for the necessary reform processes on the side of the region. It's a vicious circle, where everyone is waiting for a magic wand to solve everything and put things back on track. After dealing with this issue for such a long time, I can tell you that there is no magic wand, no

easy solution or quick fix, but there can be and must be a better and more determined effort from all sides in order to bring the region closer to the EU. This is not a strategic choice; it's a necessity for both – the EU and the region. All other scenarios are dangerous and unpredictable.

And what are the other topics that you will be addressing at this year's Bled Strategic Forum?

We are again witnessing a rise in conflicts, consecutive shocks in the economic and financial sectors, and a dramatic change in the geostrategic situation in Europe.



The BSF will address these also in the light of the growing need to respond to humanitarian crises, to strengthen our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to take decisive steps in the struggle against climate change.

In such light, a large part of the BSF will be devoted to questions regarding multilateralism in this new reality, not just because Slovenia is a candidate for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council and maintaining a rule-based international order is crucial for us, but because in this global community we need to address these complex international issues by working together. We will discuss water, food and energy security, but also human rights in times of crisis. There will also be a special focus on cyber security, disinformation and climate change (preparations for the next COP27 in the context of the current crisis).

Going from one crisis to another, human rights are constantly being put to the test. In the near future, we will face food and water security problems. Will we be able to preserve our rights and make them even more secure in the future?

As you said, from crisis to crisis, then a pause and another crisis. We are finding that human rights are losing the ground supporting them.

In this context, the BSF will try to address and discuss human rights in the context of this new reality, where basic human rights have been under constant attack, be it because of the Covid-19 crisis, climate change, the war in Ukraine or the crisis of disinformation. All of the above is confronting the European Union (and the world) with

the difficult task of determining how to protect and uphold basic human rights, which are the backbone of a functional and rule-based international order.

What was the BSF's biggest win last year and what are you striving for this year?

Let's put it like this – organising a big conference two years in a row in the middle of the pandemic and still creating an interesting debate involving panellists with clashing opinions is a win in itself. So this year, when we are hopefully back to normal – we are striving for another step, a Bled Strategic Forum that stays with you beyond just the 29th and 30th of August, but also into the future.



Address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tanja Fajon



Minister of Foreign Affairs Tanja Fajon.
Photo: UKOM

As the first woman holding the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs in the history of Slovenia as an independent state, I am pleased to have the opportunity to outline some of the priorities in the field of foreign and European policy.

I have taken up my new post at a time when the world is making enormous progress, but also facing numerous difficulties, such as ruthless global competition, climate change, consequences of the pandemic, rising inequality, crumbling foundations of the multi-lateral world order and strengthening of security risks, disregard for international law, return of nationalism, and so forth. We are witnessing shifts in geopolitical relations. The war in Ukraine is undermining the global order and raising new questions about the future of the EU and the perspective of its neighbouring regions.

All these crises make the future uncertain, filling people with fear, anger and mistrust. The current reputation of politics is very poor.

All these problems call for effective solutions that can only be achieved through change. Our common goal is a successful Slovenia with a successful foreign and European policy. The key to achieve all this is full respect for the Constitution and the EU's fundamental values, commitment to multilateralism and strengthening of international law, including wide-ranging cooperation and dialogue between all – from the government structures and the economy all the way to the civil and professional public.

I will strive to restore dignity, credibility and trust to the Slovenian foreign, European and security policy at home and abroad. My vision is to develop a coherent and inclusive foreign policy, and build a modern and active Foreign Ministry. I would like to provide a fresh impetus to diplomacy and the entire foreign policy apparatus, so that we can effectively respond to global challenges.

Policy-making must be based on strategic reflection and decisions should be taken in cooperation with professionals and democratically. I envision our Ministry as an innovative hub of ideas for strengthening the position, prosperity and security of Slovenia.

Slovenia can effectively contribute to peace, peaceful conflict resolution and sustainable management of our planet. This should be at the heart of the key Slovenian foreign policy initiatives and platforms, such as the Bled Strategic Forum, which I would like to upgrade during my term of office.

I would like to consolidate the alliances and partnerships with like-minded countries, including, of course, the core members of the EU. A great deal of my attention will be devoted to the Western Balkans region, with which we share a common past, and also cultural and human ties. As a developed member of the EU and the OECD, Slovenia is expected to increase funding for development and humanitarian aid. I would like to give due weight to this area of work, including by re-establishing the directorate-general for development aid. I would also like to set up a global challenges department to respond to the important priorities of a green future — from climate change and sustainability to migration processes and intergenerational dialogue. Following the example of other EU member states, I will appoint a climate envoy. In addition, a more comprehensive monitoring is needed in Ukraine — not only in terms of politics, but also in terms of humanitarian and security issues and post-conflict reconstruction, for which I will set up a special working group. The newly established Strategic Council for Foreign Affairs will also meet soon.

There is a great deal of work ahead, and I am sure that we will carry it out successfully, in the spirit of dialogue, cooperation and positive communication.

SLOVENIAN DIPLOMACY DAY

Slovenia marks 30 years of membership in the UN

JANA LORGER

PHOTO: MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ARCHIVES



For Slovenian diplomacy, 2022 is a year of many anniversaries, especially anniversaries of the establishment of diplomatic relations. A special place, however, goes to the 30th anniversary of Slovenia's accession to the United Nations (UN), which we celebrated on 22 May.

Admission to the United Nations on 22 May 1992 was the final act of establishing a new state, a special moment of international recognition for Slovenia and a great diplomatic success, which is why the date was declared Slovenian Diplomacy Day.

During its membership in the UN, Slovenia has built a reputation as a credible, accountable, active and recognisable member that consistently advocates effective multilateralism, regularly fulfils its obligations to the organisation and fully supports the principles of the UN Charter.

In the three decades of its membership in UN forums, Slovenia has established itself as a country that strives to respect and further develop international law and human rights law. It is a modern and green country, ready to take its share of responsibility for tackling global challenges.

In recent years, it has profiled itself especially in environmental matters, sustainable water management, food security, global health and green reconstruction for recovery from the pandemic and strengthening the resilience of societies.

It is committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and can boast very good results. In 2021, it ranked 9th among 193 countries according to the index of achieving sustainable development goals. It is also active as regards current pressing issues, such as energy and food security. Particularly noteworthy are Slovenia's initiatives within the UN

Human Rights Council, where it also focuses on non-traditional challenges and topics: climate change and its consequences, hybrid action, COVID-19 pandemic, artificial intelligence related to human rights, the issue of aging societies and the importance of water in connection with peace and security and development. It should be pointed out that Slovenia was one of the co-initiators of the resolution on the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and the resolution on the rights of the elderly.

One of the greatest diplomatic successes is the proclamation of World Bee Day at the UN General Assembly, which is celebrated every year on 20 May at the initiative of Slovenia.



Slovenia also strives to address global challenges through active membership in specialised agencies, programmes and other UN bodies; among others, it has been a member of the UN Human Rights Council, the WHO Executive Committee, the UNESCO Executive Committee, the UNICEF Executive Committee, the UN Development Programme Executive Committee and the UN Population Fund, the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), the Board of Governors of the IAEA and the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS). In June this year, for the first time since joining the UN, it was also elected to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for the 2023–2025 term. In addition, Slovenian representatives are successful in running for high positions within the UN. Since January, Dr Marjan Osvald has held one of the highest positions in the UN system – Deputy Director General of the Universal Postal Union (UPU), while Dr Vasilka Sancin is currently a member and vice-chair of the Human Rights Committee.

Slovenia is gaining importance in the international environment also in the field of development of new technologies. The International Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence (IRCAI) established at the UNESCO General Conference in 2019 has its headquarters in Ljubljana. It is the first and only centre in the world directly focusing on artificial intelligence.

Within the framework of the United Nations, Slovenia pays special attention to maintaining international peace and security. It has been participating in United Nations peacekeeping operations and missions since 1997, when the first Slovenian troops were sent to the UN mission in Cyprus. In 2019, the Centre for Education and Training for Participation in Peacekeeping Operations and Missions (POTC) was established in Slovenia. Our country is a strong advocate of the Women, Peace and Security initiative.

In 1998 and 1999, Slovenia was a member of the UN Security Council. In August 1998 and November 1999, it also presided the Security Council. Through its work at the United Nations so far, Slovenia has shown that it can make a decisive contribution to building trust between members, which is crucial for the secure future of the planet in times of complex and multifaceted challenges. This led to the decision for its repeat campaign for a seat on the UN Security Council for the period 2024–2025. The slogan "STRENGTHENING TRUST – PROTECTING THE FUTURE" emphasises the commitment to act as a positive force for partnership between nations in effective multilateral cooperation. Our guideline will be to act as a connecting link ("strengthening confidence"), to contribute to the more effective functioning of the UN Security Council and to successfully tackle modern challenges together ("protecting the future").

Slovenia can also boast two official visits from the UN Secretary General. In 2008 and 2012, then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visited Slovenia, highlighting its important role in connecting the Western Balkans with the European Union and praising Slovenia's peace efforts, especially in the region. He also highlighted its contribution in the areas of development and humanitarian aid, demining and the promotion of intercultural and inter-faith dialogue. In 2010, Kofi Annan also visited Slovenia as former UN Secretary General.

The 30th anniversary of Slovenia's accession to the UN was celebrated in Slovenia as well as in New York, Geneva and Vienna.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with the United Nations Association for Slovenia, led the "30 Years of Slovenia in the UN" campaign, whose aim was to bring the UN and Slovenia's achievements within it closer to the general Slovenian public, especially young people.

From 1 to 30 May, a certain aspect of Slovenia's activities in the UN or in one of the specialised agencies was the topic of a daily Facebook post. The campaign ended on 31 May with a virtual round table "30 years of Slovenia in the UN – a look into the past and future", which was also open to the general public and in which panellists discussed the path already travelled and the challenges and opportunities ahead.

In New York, Slovenia marked the 30th anniversary of its accession to the UN with a 2Cellos concert and a reception jointly organised by the Permanent Missions of Slovenia and Croatia to the UN. The UN premises hosted a joint reception of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Slovenia, which were admitted to the UN on the same day, 22 May 1992. In the 30 days before the anniversary, the Permanent Representation in New York daily published articles on social media about Slovenia's activities in the 30 years of its membership.

In Geneva, Slovenia celebrated its 30th anniversary of joining the UN and other international agencies, including the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) with a series of contributions on social networks, for which it used the archive material from 1992.

In the presence of Tatiana Valovaya, Director-General of the UN Office in Geneva, it combined the anniversary with World Bee Day and dedicated it to these important little pollinators, who also work diligently in Ariana Park next to the Palais des Nations in Geneva, and detailed the role of beekeeping in humanitarian and post-conflict circumstances.

The commemoration was rounded off by a reception on the occasion of Statehood Day, where participants had the opportunity to get to know the "tastes of Slovenia", and the audience was addressed by the former President of Slovenia and a member of the UN Academic Council, Dr Danilo Türk, whose solemn speech sum-

marised the three decades of Slovenia's membership in the UN.

In Vienna, too, the 30th anniversary was joined with the celebration of World Bee Day, which was proclaimed in 2017 at Slovenia's initiative. The exhibited "3D-Kranjica" – a printed 3D model of Carniolan Honey Bee in a ratio of 1:100 – attracted thousands of visitors at the UN headquarters in Vienna. At the same time, with the help of Slovenia, wild melliferous plants were planted in international territory and a Slovenian hive with a family of Carniolan bees, which are already pollinating the UN gardens in Vienna, was also installed. At the main event, Ghada Waly, Director General of the UN Office in Vienna, highlighted 30 years of excellent cooperation with Slovenia and the importance of Slovenian activities in raising awareness of the role of pollinators, biodiversity and nature protection.



Marking the 30th anniversary of Slovenia's UN membership in Geneva included a reception on the occasion of the Statehood Day.

MEN'S WORLD VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Join us for an electrifying experience

ANA OBLAK, JERNEJ TOMAZIN

Volleyball match on the Ljubljanica River in 2019
Photo: Volleyball Federation of Slovenia



From 26 August to 7 September, Slovenia will host the men's World Volleyball Championship. The event will reach 2.3 billion sports fans around the world.

Slovenia will co-host the volleyball spectacle and the most important volleyball competition under the auspices of the World Volleyball Federation (WVF) together with Poland, and the Volleyball Federation of Slovenia (OZS) is firmly convinced that they will once again justify their reputation as a top organiser of events at the highest level. According to OZS President, Method Ropret, the world's top-level competition will have a major impact: "This is a truly exceptional event and we have a demanding candidacy and coordination process behind us, including tough negotiations.

As far as the OZS itself is concerned, it is clear that we have done a lot in the last period both in organisational and results terms and we are very highly ranked in both segments.

All this had to happen in a very short period of time, but with all the activities mentioned above, and also on account of the great reputation that Slovenians enjoy after organising many events in recent years, we managed to secure our country to host four of the six pre-competition groups, the eighth finals and also the quarter-finals. We will be here to watch the very best national teams, including the current Olympic champions France, the current European champions Italy and the multiple world champions Brazil. Our national team is also here, having won silver three times in the last four European Championships. All of this shows what a great tournament we have ahead of us and the high level of volleyball that will be played in Ljubljana. At this point, I would like to invite people to come to Stožice and watch these outstanding national teams perform. It is undeniable that there will not be a World Championship on European soil for at least the next 12 years. The opportunity is truly unique and I believe that

we will seize it. I would like to say a special thank you to both governments, who have really listened and responded positively and given us a great deal of support in the extremely short period of time that we have been given.

I would also like to thank the Government Communications Office and the Slovenian Tourist Board for their proactive approach and all their support.

I am confident that together we will carry Slovenia's name around the world, especially as the World Championships will reach almost a third of the world's population, according to the available data."

A GREEN AND SPORTS-ORIENTED DESTINATION

The Government Communications Office, which owns the I Feel Slovenia brand, and the Slovenian Tourist Board, which has successfully promoted the brand in the tourism and sports sectors, will play a major role in promoting the World Championships and Slovenia as a green, boutique, sustainable and sports-oriented destination.

"Major international events and the success of Slovenian athletes strengthen Slovenia's visibility and reputation as a great destination for sports tourism and active experiences. The organisers estimate that 2.3 billion sports enthusiasts around the world will watch the men's World Volleyball Championship matches, and the Slovenian Tourist Board will encourage them to take an active holiday in Slovenia by highlighting the I feel Slovenia brand and sending a clear message about the country's commitment to sustainability. The World Volleyball Championships is one of the

most important and high-profile international sporting events that our country is hosting this year and it is an opportunity to highlight the story of a green destination for great active experiences, in partnership with the organiser of the Championships and other participating institutions," said Ms Maja Pak, MSc, Director of Slovenian Tourist Board.

THE NATIONAL PLAYERS ARE ALSO LOOKING FORWARD TO THE VOLLEYBALL SPECTACLE

After the 2019 European Championships, the World Championships will be a new volleyball spectacle that our national players are looking forward to. They have produced outstanding results in recent years, already proving their worth in the Nations League this season, and they now face a new challenge and, above all, the desire to go as high as possible at their home World Championships. "First of all, I would like to thank President Ropret for bringing the World Championships to Slovenia. So far, we have not even been close to talking about such a event. For us, the national team, this is something extraordinary. The first time we qualified for the World Championships, it was phenomenal. We got our second appearance with a good performance at the Eu-

ropean Championships and a high world ranking. But when we found out that the World Championships would be at home, our motivation, enthusiasm and energy increased even more. We want to improve the 2018 result. We will do our best to play as well as possible, to leave our hearts on the court and hopefully we will all finish the World Championship in Slovenia happy," said national team captain Tine Urnaut.

Slovenia will host 16 of the world's top 24 national teams on the group stage, as well as the eighth-final matches and two quarter-final showdowns.

According to Gregor Humera, Secretary General of the OZS, there is a lot of interest in the championship, and both local and foreign fans can look forward to a varied accompanying programme: "All group stage matches, four a day, and the knockout matches will be played in Arena Stožice, which has already seen one of its highlights with the 2019 European Championships. We are looking forward to something similar this time around. Together with the Government

Communications Office and the Slovenian Tourist Board, we have prepared an extraordinary supporting programme. One of the most important events has already been the volleyball match on the Ljubljanica River, which was certainly one of the highlights of the promotion. Not to forget the preparation tournament in Maribor, which we are extending to other parts of Slovenia, and above all the big event for local and foreign journalists on 25 August, where we will be presenting, among other things, the Slofit programme. Once again, a fan zone will be organised in front of the Stožice Arena during the World Championships, with a full programme of accompanying events, catering and concerts taking place there throughout the tournament. The fans will definitely be well looked after."

The World Cup in Slovenia and Poland will kick off on 26 August, with Brazil and Cuba playing the first match at Arena Stožice and Slovenia taking on Cameroon for the opener.

Join us for an electrifying experience!



Volleyball World Beach Pro Tour Futures tournament
Photo: OZS

Volleyball is one of the most popular sports, played competitively or recreationally by more than 800 million people worldwide. Volleyball fans filling the stands at volleyball spectacles and even more sports enthusiasts following the action on screens and online platforms have propelled volleyball to the top of the sporting pyramid. The International Volleyball Federation boasts the most member countries with a record 222.

Following this rapid development is the **Volleyball Federation of Slovenia**, the umbrella organisation for volleyball in Slovenia, which has four official sports under its umbrella - volleyball, beach volleyball, snow volleyball and seated volleyball. In Slovenia, volleyball is one of the most widespread and fastest growing sports, played in 88 clubs with more than 5,000 young volleyball players. Volleyball is the most popular sport among girls and it is also very popular with many recreational players.

In recent years, Slovenian volleyball players have been achieving outstanding results. They have excelled both in competitions in the younger age categories and in the members' competition, where our boys have delighted us with three silver medals at the last four European Championships and have made Slovenian volleyball dreams come true time and time again. With the silver medal at the U23 World Championships, our girls are still the biggest Slovenian women's team sport success story.

SPORTS TOURISM

Tourism and sport go hand in hand for the international visibility of a sustainable and active Slovenia

MAŠA PUKLAVEC



The Slovenian Tourist Board has identified sports tourism, i.e. active outdoor recreation and sports events and preparations, as the main communication theme for 2022 and 2023. This year and next year, the Slovenian Tourism Board will devote even more attention to the promotion and development of this important and promising tourist product of Slovenian tourism. International sports events in Slovenia and abroad, where Slovenian athletes impress with their successes, are extremely important in terms of promotion. One of the most important international sports events to be held in Slovenia in the autumn is the Men's World Volleyball Championship, which has been moved from Russia to Slovenia and Poland.

THE WORLD VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONSHIP IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO PROMOTE THE SLOVENIAN TOURISM STORY

The FIVB World Volleyball Championship, the hosting of which was originally awarded to Russia but had to be cancelled and a new organiser found, will take place between 26 August and 11 September in Slovenia and Poland.

In Slovenia, the matches will take place at the Stožice Arena in Ljubljana, and the Slovenian Tourist Board, as a partner of the event, will promote and highlight Slovenia as a green and sporting destination through a number of activities.

To this end, the Slovenian Tourist Board has prepared a comprehensive communication plan, which includes a number of activities, from branding the locations with the national I FEEL SLOVENIA brand, off-line and online advertising, a video featuring the outstanding Slovenian volleyball players, Rok Možič and Jan Kozamernik, social media posts, which have an extremely large number of followers, sports-themed content on the tourism website www.slovenia.info, and the active promotion of the fan atmosphere which highlights the Slovenian sporting heart.

INTERNATIONAL SPORTS EVENTS RAISE THE VISIBILITY OF SLOVENIA

The Slovenian Tourist Board is strengthening Slovenia's visibility among sports enthusiasts and active leisure enthusiasts by highlighting the I FEEL SLOVENIA brand at sports events, as these reach several million people. Among the biggest international sports events in Slovenia this year is the EHF European Handball Championship for Women (Ljubljana, Celje, Skopje, Podgorica), where the Slovenian organisers will not only focus on the sports aspect of the event, but will also use the fact that it is the biggest women's sports championship in the history of the Republic of Slovenia as a platform for many other messages.

The main message will be sustainable development – the first major sports event in the country with a professional team in this field will be organised – and within this, in particular, the empowerment of women in sports and society.

In addition, there will be the Golden Fox, the Vitranc Cup, the FIS Ski Flying World Cup Finals (Planica), Giro d'Italia – Slovenian leg, the Tour of Slovenia road cycling race, and the Men's Ice Hockey

World Championship, Division I, Group A (Ljubljana). Among the events abroad, it is worth mentioning the Olympic Games, the World and European Championships (the European Men's Basketball Championship this September) and well-known cycling races, including the Giro d'Italia, the Vuelta and the Tour de France, which, thanks to the outstanding success of Slovenian cyclists, proved to be an excellent opportunity to highlight Slovenia. The Slovenian Tourist Board has made excellent use of these and has accompanied this high-profile sports event with a wide range of promotional activities: leasing the most prominent advertising space on the YouTube channel during the race, a new landing site to promote fan frenzy, virtual props that in-

clude filters as well as the so-called GIFs, promotional videos (a video about Pogačar and a video quiz in which Pogačar and Roglič test their knowledge of Slovenia), the Strava club Cycling fans of Slovenia, in which members accumulate cycling kilometres, a raffle, the I FEEL SLOVENIA pavilion on the opening stage of the race in Copenhagen, and last but not least, the branding of the Slovenian fans who watched the race live – let's remember, the royal 12th stage of the Tour de France was watched live by between eight and ten thousand Slovenians, who flooded the Alpe d'Huez and, with their hearty cheers, attracted the attention of numerous media and flooded the TV screens on France's national holiday.



CONNECTING IS THE KEY

The STO aims to contribute to the creation of a coherent and sustainable set of actions and events that will bring long-term economic, social and promotional benefits to Slovenian sport and tourism by bringing together key stakeholders in the field of sport and tourism and by acting in a coordinated manner. In order to coordinate the co-operation of key stakeholders in the field of sports tourism and to prepare strategic orientations and priority actions in the field of sports tourism, the STO Expert Group on Sports Tourism was established in 2022 to prepare the Action Plan for the Development and Marketing of Sports Tourism in Slovenia 2022–2023. This will be the basis for

marketing and promotional activities in the field of sports tourism in Slovenia, with a focus on sports events and athletes' preparations.

ATHLETES – AMBASSADORS OF SLOVENIAN TOURISM

The STO continues and upgrades its co-operation with top athletes, ambassadors of Slovenian tourism, with whom it has been building Slovenia's global visibility as a tourist destination for many years.



This year, Janja Garnbret joined the ambassador athletes Tadej Pogačar and Primož Roglič (through the Jumbo Visma club). Arrangements are also being made to continue cooperation with Luka Dončić and Ilka Štuhec, as well as with Rok Možič – who, along with Jan Kozamernik, recently filmed a promotional video for the STO in which the volleyball players test their knowledge of Slovenia's tourist attractions through the elements of a beach volleyball match. The My Slovenia campaign will involve young promising Slovenian athletes. With the Slovenian umbrella sports organisation, the Slovenian Olympic Committee, the STO carried out communication activities for the Beijing Winter Olympics, and this year the STO also participated in the first Slovenian international sports film festival, held in Rogaška Slatina, and will also participate in the 2023 European Youth Olympic Festival in Maribor. Looking ahead to the sports year 2023 is certainly inspiring: already at the beginning of the year, Slovenia will be hosting the Nordic World Championship in Planica, followed by the European Rowing Championship in Bled and the European Women's Basketball Championship.

HOT BASKETBALL YEAR

One of the most high-profile events was a set of promotional activities, that the STO, in partnership with several Slovenian institutions, carried out with the Dallas Mavericks, for which our basketball ace Luka Dončić plays.

There, in March and April, the Slovenian Tourist Board organised a series of promotional presentations of Slovenia as a tourist and economic destination on the American market. The promotional activities started in March with an NBA game under the slogan "I FEEL SLOVENIA night", followed in April by the "Texas Feels Slovenia" business conference, which was originally scheduled for March 2020 and postponed due to the pandemic. The business



I feel Slovenia night in Dallas with Dunking Devils.
Photo: STO



International sports events in Slovenia and abroad, where Slovenian athletes impress with their successes, are extremely important in terms of promotion.
Photo: STO

conference took place in Dallas on 8 April and offered an excellent opportunity for Slovenian economy representatives to meet with American companies, and to promote Slovenian tourism, a Slovenian tourism workshop was also held in conjunction with the conference.

The STO is also strengthening its cooperation on the basketball court through promotional activities with the Basketball Federation of Slovenia on the occasion of the Slovenian national team's appearance at Eurobasket 2022 in Cologne in September. Thus, in addition to the branding and placement of the I feel Slovenia brand and the use of the #ifeelsLOVEnia hashtag in official communications, as well as the provision of signed prizes for the raffle and the presence of the selector at the STO business event in Cologne on 5 September, a short promotional video featuring Slovenian basketball players and the Dunking Devils acrobatic group will be filmed during the summer to invite foreign tourists to Slovenia.

SPORT IS PLACED IN THE CRADLE OF SLOVENIANS

At the crossroads of Europe and with a well-maintained sports infrastructure, Slovenia is becoming an increasingly attractive destination for athletes training for and competing in major sporting events, as well as for travellers looking for an active outdoor holiday. Hospitality and sports values are an important part of Slovenian tradition and culture. It seems that for Slovenians, sport is something that is placed in the cradle at birth – it is not important when we take our first steps, but is certainly so when we first ski, swim, or climb one of Slovenia's great peaks. This gives us an excellent foundation on which to develop various sports activities and facilities and support services that are becoming an increasingly important part of the Slovenian economy. By supporting sports, the Slovenian Tourist Board promotes Slovenia's core values and spreads them around the world through its activities – so that sport is an important generator of Slovenia's social and business excellence every day.

Nova Gorica and Gorizia: The 2025 European Capital of Culture

POLONA PREŠEREN
PHOTO: JURIJ PALJK/STA



Slovenia's Nova Gorica and Italy's Gorizia will together form the 2025 European Capital of Culture. They were awarded this prestigious title along with Chemnitz, Germany.

The European Capital of Culture is an honour that is awarded to two cities every year following a complex international selection process. The title winner designs and carries out an original programme of art and cultural events throughout the year to highlight the richness of Europe's cultural diversity, its shared history and heritage, and to promote mutual understanding through the universal language of creativity. The title brings many positive effects that extend beyond the year in which a city holds the title. The project's cultural, economic, urban planning and social legacy revives the present and the future of cities and the residents of communities within the region.

Experience shows that the title also offers the selected cities other benefits in the form of enhancing their image in the eyes of their own residents, raising the cities' international profile, boosting tourism, breathing new life in the cities' culture and regenerating them in general.

Slovenia has participated in this initiative once before, when the 2012 European Capital of Culture title was awarded to Maribor, together with partner towns of Murska Sobota, Novo mesto, Ptuj, Slovenj Gradec and Velenje.

With its slogan GO! BORDERLESS – and as the European Capital of Culture, GO! 2025 – Nova Gorica is a special story in which memories of the past are interlaced with visions for the future, creating a concrete, participatory and effective cultural strategy that aims to improve the long-term quality of life of the people living in the entire border area.

It connects Nova Gorica and Gorizia, which together strive to overcome their own specific challenges.

The two cities were divided by war and reunited through co-operation and close friendship. They thus set themselves an ambitious goal of becoming a cross-border European Capital of Culture.

The central theme of GO! 2025 is the co-existence and cooperation between both countries, especially in the border area.

We can thus expect an interesting, future-oriented, and sustainable programme, which enhances the special features and richness of this unique cross-border area.

The centre of all events will be Europe Square (Trg Evrope / Piazza della Transalpina), which since 2004 has been a sign of the symbiosis between two cultures at a border. A border which, after Slovenia joined the European Union, has only been a symbolic one. The planned activities seek to revitalise the urban space, present the shared heritage of the cross-border area and provide the expertise needed to facilitate cultural production that knows no borders and is connected with the fundamental values of European culture. A total of 600 cultural events and over 60 projects are planned for 2025 as part of the European Capital of Culture.

EUROPEAN YEAR OF YOUTH 2022

Let the voice of youth be heard

DANILA GOLOB



Young people are important agents of change and essential for building peaceful and democratic societies. In the wake of the global pandemic and faced with the ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, their voices are becoming ever more relevant. The European Year of Youth provides an opportunity for Europe to listen carefully to its young people and to better shape the Union in their mould.

The European Year of Youth 2022 was described by the European Commission as "a year dedicated to empowering those who have dedicated so much to others," as President Ursula von der Leyen pointed out in her speech on the State of the Union 2021. The year, which is entirely dedicated to young people, strives to empower, encourage and enrich them with new experiences and ways of cooperation, inspiring them to take an active civic role in society.

The principal goal is to encourage all young people to voice their opinions and participate by sharing their vision as to the key topics of the year and their hopes for the future of Europe.

In addition, the European Commission wants to ensure the visibility of and promote European values while spreading messages of solidarity among young audiences and supporting Ukraine through various activities.

Highlights of the European Year of Youth 2022 are the involvement of young people in European and national policy-making, equality, sustainability and the green transition, mobility and mental health, and quality employment with education and training opportunities for the Europe of the future.

VOICE YOUR VISION

The European Commission has developed a new digital 3D platform named "Voice Your Vision", which aims to empower young



Europeans from different backgrounds to present their vision of the future. The platform offers them an open space where they can express their views on issues regarding employment, inclusion, peace and security, climate change, education, mental health and many other topics. Young people can record a personal message, which is presented in all official European languages (as well as in Norwegian, Turkish, Serbian, Macedonian and Icelandic). Once added, each voice generates its own, unique 3D waveform than can interact with every other recording on the platform – and enables everyone to listen to any voice, in any language, on any device at any moment.

The European Commissioner for Youth, Mariya Gabriel, said that 'Voice Your Vision' is personified through a young, meaningful, dynamic, and an open spirit of co-creation defined through the Year of Youth.

One that also functions as a timely enabler for Europe's Youth to show up, speak up and share their concerns and ideas about the future. 'Voice your Vision' could not have come at a more relevant time for all youngsters, not only as European citizens – but also as members of a society that is now, more than ever, experiencing testing times."

On the importance of the European Year of Youth 2022, Commissioner Gabriel added: "We ask all young people to get involved and engage now. Their voices are a vital component of Europe's journey to growth, knowledge, innovation, opportunity and better, more relevant youth-oriented solutions. We will listen attentively and ensure that youth policies can be developed in more open and collaborative spaces, and that all voices are listened to and addressed this year and beyond."

ACTIVITIES IN SLOVENIA

Member States encourage the participation of young people at

national and local levels in a number of activities. The website of the European Year of Youth (europa.eu) already contains more than 1,650 activities across Europe, inviting young people to work together constructively.

Slovenia also follows the goals of the European Year of Youth. The Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth, MOVIT, the National Agency for EU Erasmus + Programmes: Youth and the European Solidarity Unit, the Youth Council of Slovenia and the MaMa Network jointly carry out activities taking place throughout Slovenia. So far, more than 76 activities have been organised within the European Year of Youth, and according to Igor Jesih, the national coordinator of the European Year of Youth in Slovenia; at least another 40 are planned in the coming months.

The most important events include regional meetings with young people for the preparation of the National Youth

Programme and the central event of the European Year of Youth, the Sound of Youth, which took place on 27 May 2022 in Ljubljana.

"The purpose of this event is to present to young people what the ministries already offer and implement for young people, but also to let young people present to the general public what they are doing in the field of environmental change, sustainability and, last but not least, to exchange ideas and wishes," said the Director of the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth, Dolores Kores. At the event, various activities for young people, a fair of youth organisations, a cultural programme and a youth dialogue were prepared. The central thread of the event was how to keep our planet as green as possible and how to involve young people in shaping their own future and being active in doing so, thus co-creating their common future. The Sound of Youth, at which we celebrated the European Year of Youth together with young

people, was connected through the mentioned dialogue with decision-makers, educational content, interactive workshops on various topics and a cultural and musical programme.

All information on activities in Slovenia is available on the portal www.mlad.si, which is targeted at young people, youth organisations, individuals working with young people and the general public, and is designed for the transfer of information within the sector and the presentation of good practices.

The European Year of Youth is in full swing, so young people still have the opportunity to participate, come up with ideas and seize the opportunity offered by their year. Let their voice be heard.



My Company 2022

Young people learn entrepreneurial competences

JANI DRNOVŠEK

PHOTO: MY COMPANY ARCHIVES



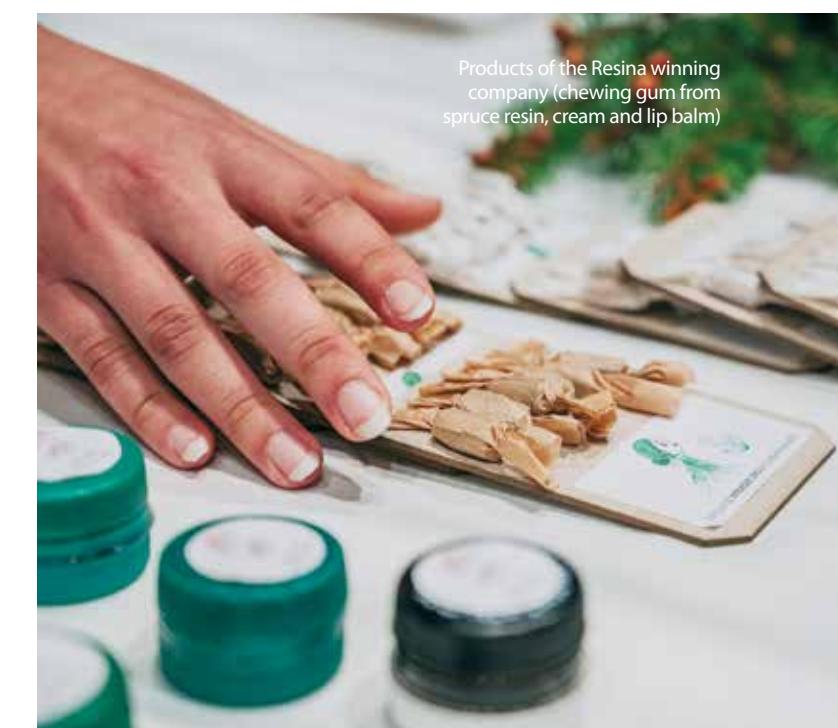
The Institute for the Promotion of Youth Entrepreneurship carried out the ninth JA national competition, My Company, in the 2021/2022 academic year. The Junior Achievement (JA) programme is a learning programme for secondary school students, who get to experience various phases of managing a company, from the establishment to liquidation, with an emphasis on obtaining experience in business management.

The national competition or the so-called marketplace of secondary school companies is a project of the JA programme in which the participants get the opportunity to present their best entrepreneurial product/service at the final event and compete in various entrepreneurial skills. In addition to the product/service innovation, the total or final score also includes a report about the project, valuation of the product entrepreneurial idea, a promotional film about the product/service, a set-up of an attractive stand and a presentation of the secondary school company. Various committees select the best company as per the selection of JA Alumni members or regarding the product originality attained, effectiveness of meeting the objectives in regard to the circular economy, which was particularly highlighted in this academic year, or the connectivity of the product with the "I Feel Slovenia" brand.

SECONDARY SCHOOL COMPANY OF THE YEAR

The secondary school company which, according to the expert jury, performs best in all fields receives the title of "Secondary School Company of the Year" and attends the European competition, "GENE-E", where they compete against their peers from other European countries.

The Resina company won this year in the total of all categories, designing innovative cosmetics and chewing gum from spruce resin. The products were wrapped in the packaging of recycled plastic bottle caps.





Član JA Worldwide

In the past academic year, 26 schools, 56 teachers and 480 students who established 110 secondary school companies participated in The Company Programme. As many as 69 secondary school companies applied to the JA national competition. For the first time, the organisers had to carry out regional selections in Ljubljana, Koper, Celje and Škofja Loka. The final event featured 26 companies.



SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

In this year's competition, the companies were especially encouraged to think about how to best utilise the effects of the circular economy when designing a product or a service, including the use of recycled materials and raw materials. The European Institute for Innovation and Technology (EIT Raw Materials) became involved in the competition in connection with the promotion of these guidelines, and the secondary school companies were able to participate in their project, "Skills for the future".

I FEEL SLOVENIA

The students were also encouraged to design their products for the purpose of promoting the Slovenian national brand "I Feel Slovenia", which is managed by our Office.

Such products were used for Slovenia's promotion during the Presidency of the EU Council in the autumn of 2021 and they displayed the functionality of products in everyday life, ecological orientation and the use of natural and recycled materials.

The students' main guideline was the word "feel", so that the product could be felt through smell, taste, hearing, sight and touch. First place in this category went to the company Mladi peki, which represented Biotechnical Educational Centre Ljubljana and its School of Food Processing. Second place was won by the ComforTable from the Diocesan Classical Gymnasium of St. Stanislav's Institution, and third place went to Rozgo, from the same secondary school as Mladi peki.

Mladi peki produced hand-rolled pasta with no additives. In the pasta dough, they also used leftover bread from shops. The products were packaged in organic edible packaging and the sale packaging was made of paper.

ComforTable made small computer desks to make working from home easier, enabling people to use their laptops on the floor, in bed or on the couch. These desks can be folded and are light to carry; they can be used for various purposes. They are made in Slovenia from waste wood. During remote work, these desks solved the problem of excessive use of laptops in one place.

The name of the **Rozgo company** is linked to the harmful invasive non-native plant, goldenrod, which, as the students discovered, has exceptional medicinal properties and can be used for compresses on legs, to accelerate the healing of wounds and reduce inflammation. As a tea, it increases the secretion of urine, and an infusion of goldenrod can be gargled to soothe inflammation of the oral cavity and pharynx. The company made creams and tea blends with goldenrod. The creams were sold in glass containers and the tea blends in recycled paper bags.



YOU ARE ALL WINNERS

Jožica Rejec, Director of the Institute for the Promotion of Youth Entrepreneurship (Junior Achievement or JA Slovenia), addressed the secondary school students, as follows,

"Everyone who succeeded in completing their projects is a winner. The competences obtained, but above all, the fact that you dare to try and work in a team, will be of use to you in your everyday lives and also professionally, in companies or as sole proprietors."

ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS

KNOF - (k)creativity nourishes our fantasy

JANI DRNOVŠEK
PHOTO: KNOF ARCHIVES



There is only one Earth, there is no planet B. How can we survive? It is crucial to find a sustainable way of life. As a society, Slovenians discard 40,000 tonnes of still useful things that end up in waste incinerators or at landfills. If large quantities of these are reused, the need for making new products is reduced.

The number of companies promoting such an ecological way of life and trying to organise various activities is growing. One of these is the social enterprise, Knof, the beginnings of which date back more than ten years ago.

One of their first ecological projects was the Stara šola boutique, where you can buy well-preserved second-hand clothes, books and household goods. Several boutiques have been opened so far in various local environments and, by donating such products, residents support the operations of the boutique and the company.

ANSWER TO INSTANT CONSUMERISM

The company also offers products to its customers in an online shop, collection.Knof.si, and is thus adapted to current shopping trends.

The KNOF collection is a response to the trend of instant consumerism and includes a selection of top furniture, fashion and decor brands, selected vintage clothes from the Stara šola boutiques, iconic pieces of furniture and decor from the Salon, furniture with character, and other upcycled items that have been upgraded by young designers.

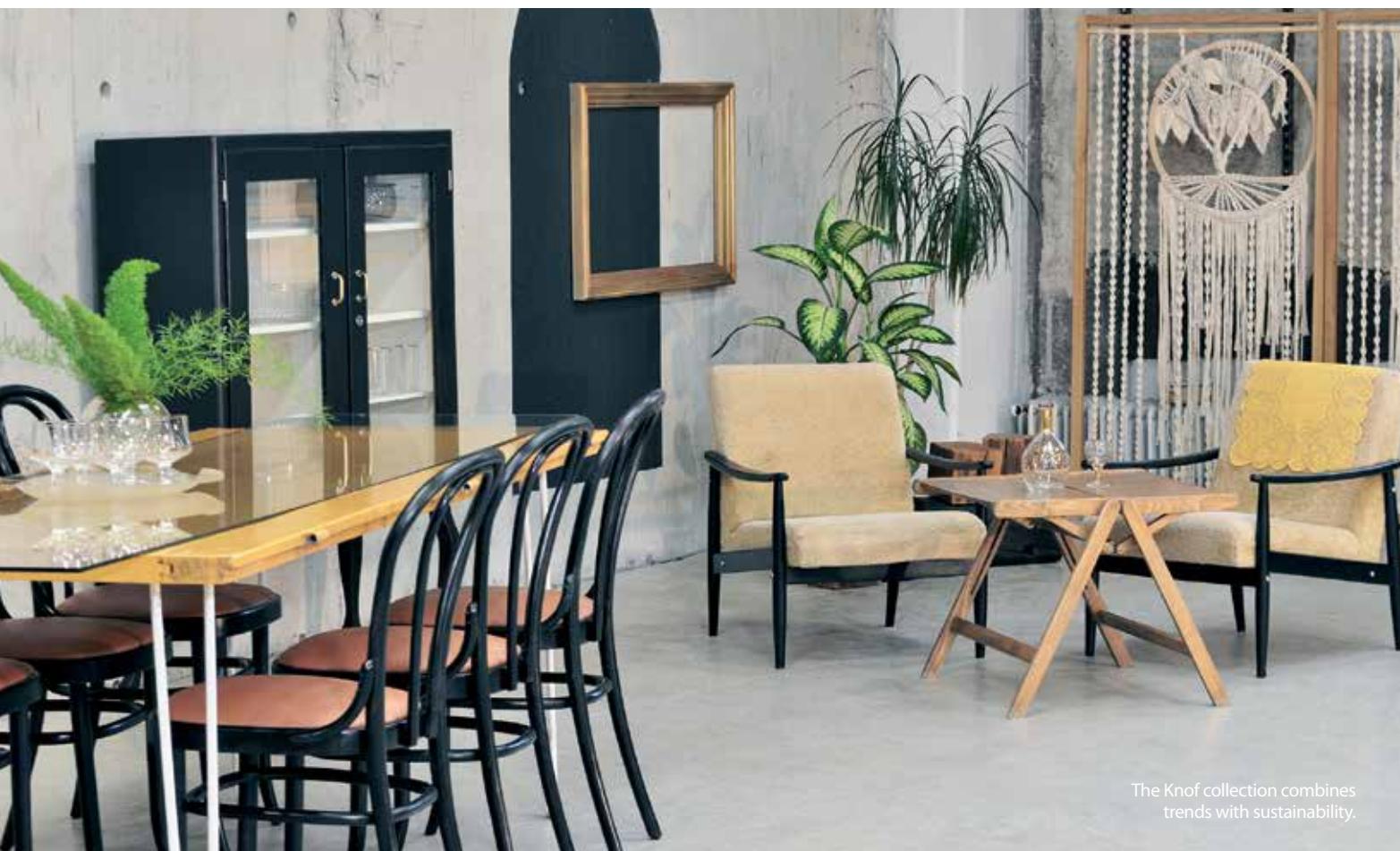
They particularly focus on original products of established Slovenian designers (Niko Kralj, Branko Uršič, Oskar Kogoj), recognised brands (Stol Kamnik, Meblo, Mura, Jugoplastika and others) and furniture with upgraded design that follows global trends in colour and style. The upgraded products are distinguished by visual perfection, quality and originality.

Knof is also involved in several other projects. A reused furniture salon measuring 1,000 m² opened in Krško, in which a workshop for renovation, repair, upholstery or furniture restoration is operating. Free removal of bulk waste is enabled by the Kostak public utility company. Still usable furniture is brought to the Salon, where carpenters renovate it in a creative way. The craftspeople also visit customers' homes to renovate old furniture that would otherwise be discarded by its owners.

In cooperation with the paint producer Chemcolor, Knof developed a finishing paint with the lowest possible environmental footprint to renovate old furniture and extend its life span. Prior sanding is not necessary, and with the first application the paint easily covers wood, stone, metal, glass, ceramics and plastics. The paint is protected against UV radiation and can be used on outdoor surfaces when two coats are applied.

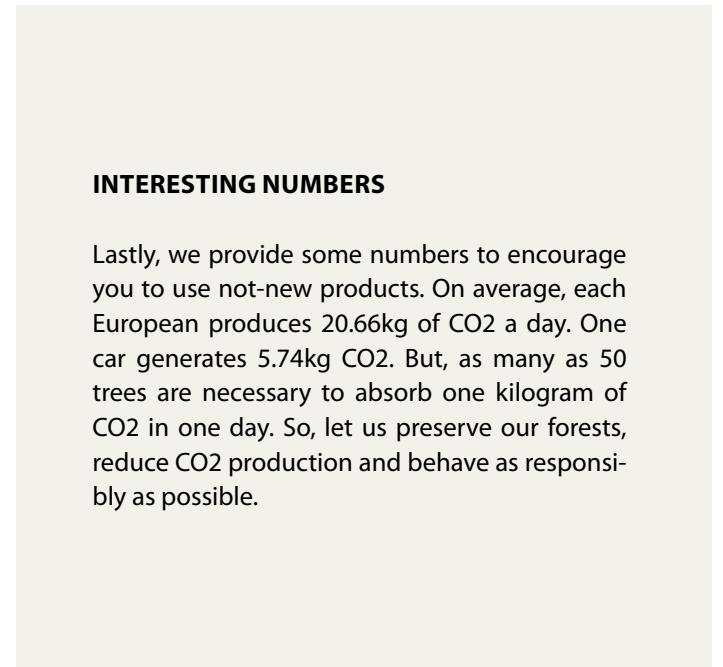
The 'plastic fantastic' service is used in Knof to process waste plastic into new products and includes testing of the type of plastic, grinding and injecting molten plastic. End products are made on the basis of prototypes.

In its Stara šola boutiques, Knof also encourages customers to use their own or returnable packaging for their purchases. We know specialised shops where items are sold without plastic packaging and the items themselves are made from natural or recycled materials.



These include homeware, natural cosmetics, personal hygiene products, cleaning products, kitchen utensils, essential oils, wooden products and various foodstuffs.

Together, the companies Kostak and Knof have designed a product, a "responsible wooden grave candle". This is their response to the fact that Slovenians are at the very top globally when it comes to using candles per capita, as we discard between 16 and 23 million candles in cemeteries annually. The majority of candles can be recycled, but the quantities are too large for companies that deal with recycling. To reduce the use of plastic candles, the companies developed a wooden, reusable and degradable symbolic candle.



FRANKFURTER BUCHMESSE 2023

Promotion of Slovenian literary creativity abroad

KATJA KIRBIŠ, SLOVENIAN BOOK AGENCY
PHOTO: SLOVENIAN BOOK AGENCY ARCHIVES



The project "Slovenia, Guest of Honour at the International Book Fair in Frankfurt 2023 – a model for sustainable international promotion of Slovenian literary creativity abroad" is co-financed by the Republic of Slovenia and the European Union under the European Regional Development Fund.



The project "Slovenia, Guest of Honour at the International Book Fair in Frankfurt 2023 – a model for sustainable international promotion of Slovenian literary creativity abroad" is a national project for the promotion and enhancement of the export potential of Slovenian creativity in the field of Slovenian literature and illustration.

Slovenia's presentation as Guest of Honour at Frankfurter Buchmesse 2023 is a unique opportunity to focus attention on our national book production and rich creativity and tradition in literary creation in the broadest sense not just anywhere, but within the context of the largest international fair in the world. A fair that enjoys an enviable and great reputation and captures the attention of the publishing and bookselling industries and that of the media. Frankfurter Buchmesse is one of the world's largest book fairs. It lasts six days and is intended for the translation, publishing and other expert public linked to books and the publishing industry. More than 2,100 publishing houses, agencies and publishing associations exhibit annually at Frankfurter Buchmesse. The fair is visited by more than 36,000 B2B visitors from more than 100 countries and some 37,000 B2C visitors from 85 countries. Artistic events organised by publishers and international performers from various countries and interviews with authors take place simultaneously with the fair. International journalists and media regularly report on the fair.

Slovenia is a country in which a creator's expression in the field of illustration and literature texts is traditionally on a high level.

Slovenian authors and illustrators are gradually engaging in strong global competition. The realisation of the Frankfurt 2023 project may yield benefits that cannot be evaluated in terms of money.

As a product, the book has a marketable, but also a broader everyday social and political significance, as it contributes to the preservation of the Slovenian language and cultural identity, increases Slovenia's visibility and reputation, and enhances the potential of preserving the vitality of the Slovenian cultural heritage.

The project's objective is to improve the reputation and visibility of young people's, children's and other literary creativity of the last thirty years, the recognisability of Slovenian creativity and economy, and tourism in Slovenia and internationally. With regard to literary translation, Slovenia has become a particular success story in recent years. By presenting selected authors and the programme, we wish to enhance this reputation even further. Special attention will also be dedicated to educational publishing services; key international study and publishing meetings in Frankfurt and curatorial meetings in Ljubljana have already been organised this year. Several key calls for Slovenian and foreign publishers were published, which were financed from the EU Cohesion Fund. The aim is also to present Slovenia as a culture that

understands the key cultural, technical and development challenges of today and the significance of deep reading in the screen era of publishing.

As Guest of Honour at Frankfurter Buchmesse, Slovenian Book Agency has already prepared an overall design, which was harmonised with the requirements and recommendations of Frankfurter Buchmesse and will be revealed at this year's autumn press conference in Frankfurt.

SLOVENIA: GUEST OF HONOUR AT FRANKFURTER BUCHMESSE 2023



Dr Dimitrij Rupel,
Director of Slovenian Book Agency and Head of Project



Dr Dimitrij Rupel is the author of many works of fiction, and books on sociology and international affairs. This former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia is an internationally acclaimed politician and academic. He is currently Director of the Slovenian Book Agency and head of the Frankfurt 2023 project. He earned his PhD degree in sociology and is considered one of the key Slovenian politicians who contributed to Slovenia's independence. Rupel is Professor Emeritus and a former rector of the New University. He currently lectures at the Faculty of Government and European Studies, the European Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Slovenian and International Studies.

We are certain that the national and international public will appreciate the quality of Slovenian graphic designers whose creativity will contribute to the literary, cultural and tourist visibility of Slovenia. A series of non-literary events taking place in theatres, galleries and libraries will also be organised within the hosting preparations and their objective will be to present Slovenia as a country worth visiting. There will also be a gastronomic presentation of Slovenia, as has been the case for all past guests of honour. The key roles are played by the Head of the Project, Dr Dimitrij Rupel, Slovenian curator Dr Miha Kovač and German curator Dr Matthias Göritz. A group of the most distinguished experts, authors, publishers and external advisers was engaged, and a specialised PR agency with an excellent knowledge of the German literary market was selected. We are looking forward to meeting you at this year's Frankfurter Buchmesse 2022 and in our formal literary pavilion in 2023.

SLOVENIA: GUEST OF HONOUR AT FRANKFURTER BUCHMESSE 2023



Dr Matthias Göritz, German curator

Dr Matthias Göritz is a German writer, poet, playwright and translator, a polyglot who also translates from Slovenian. For a number of years, he has been considered one of the best translators of poetry into German and has translated a number of contemporary Slovenian works independently or as a co-translator. After studying philosophy and literature, he lived for several years in Moscow, Paris, Chicago and New York. Göritz is currently a professor at the Washington University in St. Louis, USA.



Dr Miha Kovač, Slovenian curator

Dr Miha Kovač is a full professor at the Department of Library, Information Science and Book Studies of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana. In his career as an editor and a publisher, he worked as the editor-in-chief of Mladina magazine, the editorial director of the Slovenian edition of National Geographic, the editorial director and head of general publishing at the DZS publishing house and the editorial director at the Mladinska knjiga publishing house. Kovač was a visiting lecturer at Oxford Brookes University and the universities in Vilnius and Osijek.

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF ELA PEROCI

“I don’t write for children, I write to children, and that’s how I talk to them”

DANILA GOLOB



This year, Slovenian literature marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of popular children's writer and poet Ela Peroci. *Muca Copatarica* (Slipper Keeper Kitty), *Moj dežnik je lahko balon* (My Umbrella Can Turn into a Balloon), and *Hišica iz kock* (House of Blocks) are her most famous contemporary fairy tales, with generations of Slovenian children growing up with them.

Ela Peroci was born on 11th February 1922 in Sv. Križ pri Rogaški Slatini. Already as a young girl, she wanted to become a teacher. After graduating from high school, she enrolled in a course at the National College of Education in Ljubljana, but it was interrupted midway through World War II. In 1954, she graduated from the Faculty of Arts Department of Pedagogy, University of Ljubljana. After the end of the war in 1945, she began teaching at elementary schools. From 1948, she worked as a journalist and was part of the editorial team of the children's magazines *Pionir* and *Ciciban*. From 1955 to 1962, she worked in the editorial office of the magazine *Mladi svet*. She got a job at RTV Slovenia on Radio Slovenia's youth education programme, and from 1962 until retirement in 1978 was the editor of the children's show *Radijska šola*.

CONTEMPORARY URBAN STORIES

The material for her literary works was often drawn from her own childhood memories, but it was motherhood that had the greatest impact on her writing. The main characters in her fairy tales are her daughters Jelka and Anka, who, along with her neighbours' children, were the first to hear her stories. In the more recent stories, the writer's grandchildren are characters as well.

“I don’t write for children, I write to children, and that’s how I talk to them,” the writer said on one occasion. For almost 40 years, she created Slovenian children's literature, developing an enchanting type of contemporary urban fairy tale. In the mid-1950s, she advanced a certain form of short story in which reality and fiction intertwined, creating a fairy tale atmosphere. She placed children at the forefront, focused on their position

in the family and described their hardships. She wanted to help children identify with the main characters in the stories and see themselves in them.

Her first published short story was *Moj dežnik je lahko balon* (My Umbrella Can Turn into a Balloon), which was illustrated by Marlenka Stupica. To date, the book has been printed more than one hundred thousand times.

The most famous and also the most popular among the books is *Muca Copatarica* (Slipper Keeper Kitty), featuring the beautiful illustrations of Ančka Gošnik Godec, which first came out in 1957.

In this story too, the writer describes everyday, simple things that intertwine with the imaginative world, in this way representing a child's experience of the world. *Muca copatarica* (Slipper Keeper Kitty) has been staged as a puppet show many times.

There followed many other fairy tales, among them *Hišica iz kock* (House of Blocks), *Majhno kot mezinec* (Small As the Thumb), *Na oni strani srebrne črte* (Beyond the Silver Line), *Ptičke so odletele* (The Birds Have Flown Away), *Siva miš ti loviš!* (Grey Mouse, You Catch) and the collection of stories *Za lahko noč* (Good Night Stories), which was first published in 1964 and republished on the 90th anniversary of the writer's birth. She wrote poems (the collections *Rišem dan* (I Draw the Day) and *Ko živim* (When I Live)), radio and puppet shows and texts for television.



Pošta Slovenije issued a special stamp on the 100th anniversary of the birth of writer Ela Peroci.

SUCCESSFUL AT HOME AND AROUND THE WORLD

Ela Peroci became one of the most established Slovenian children's authors. She has received numerous awards for her writing, including the Golden Book Plaque three times, the Levstik Award in 1955 and 1956, twice received a diploma from the International Board on Books for Young People, and in 1971 was the first children's writer to receive the Prešeren Fund award. Her stories have been translated into many languages.

In 1970, she wrote a letter to all children of the world for the International Day of Children's Literature, which is a great honour and a recognition of Slovenian children's literature.

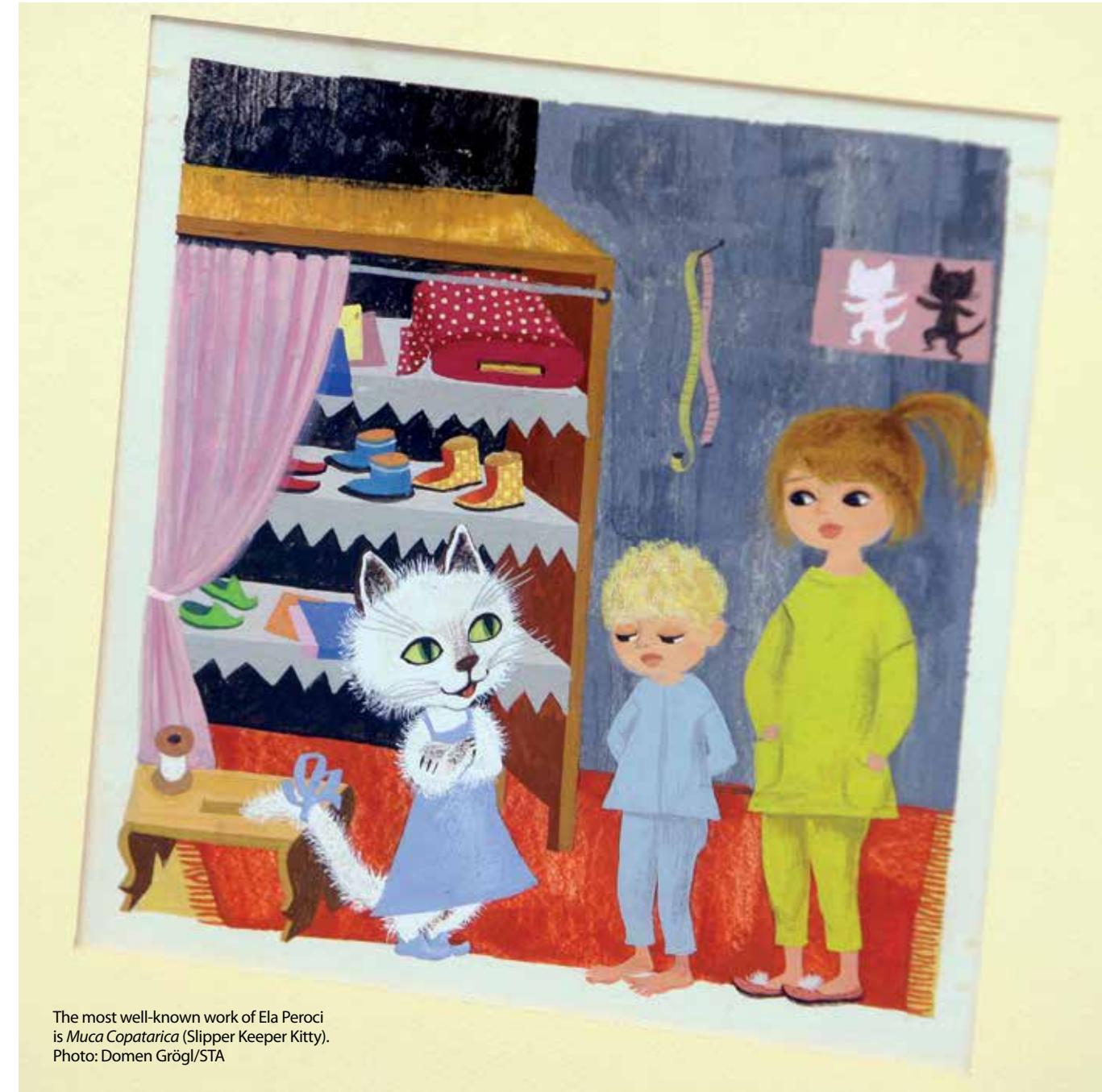
In it she expressed her wish "that the most beautiful books would open the windows on the world and a human life to all children of the world, and that these books would also create a path from person to person, bringing them happiness and peace, from country to country, all around the world."

A COLLECTION OF ELA PEROCI'S BEST FAIRY TALES

On the 100th anniversary of Ela Peroci's birth, the book *Med pravljice* (Into Fairy Tales) – a collection of her most beautiful fairy tales – was published. Among them are the six most famous, superbly illustrated picture books that have made an indelible impression in the memory of several generations of children in our country. The illustrations in three fairy tales have been reworked for the book. The writer's daughter Jelka Pogačnik wrote an introductory text in the book, full of memories of her mother, and the book also includes the story of *Amalija in Amalija* (Amalia and Amalia), illustrated by her daughter Anka Luger Peroci. The accompanying text was written by Peter Svetina, who ranks the writer at "the very top of European post-war fairy tale authors".

***Muca Copatarica* (Slipper Keeper Kitty) and *Moj dežnik je lahko balon* (My Umbrella Can Turn into a Balloon) are still among the best-selling books in Slovenia.**

The writing of Ela Peroci is universal and contemporary, and sympathetic to today's child, who can easily be found in her stories. Even today, *Muca Copatarica* (Slipper Keeper Kitty) encourages our youngest to tidy away their slippers. Alternatively, they float with Jelka's umbrella into a fairytale world where everything is possible.



The most well-known work of Ela Peroci is *Muca Copatarica* (Slipper Keeper Kitty).
Photo: Domen Grögl/STA

THE KRESNIK AWARD

A Hundred Years of Blindness

VESNA ŽARKOVIĆ

PHOTO: JURE MAKOVEC/STA



Roman Rozina has won the Kresnik Award for the best novel of last year for *Sto let slepote* (A Hundred Years of Blindness), a chronicle of Slovenia's mining district in the 20th century. The award bestowed by the Delo media house comes with a cash prize of EUR 7,000. The Kresnik was awarded for the thirty-second time.

In the novel, the jury recognised the extremely rich and precise language. "Although the densely woven narrative slightly idealises the characters as well as mythicises the milieu, it is not done in a disturbing manner, let alone blindly.

The novel is an insightful portrayal of a time that no longer exists and an environment that is still here, with many reminders that will be preserved – not least because Roman Rozina knows how to see them," states the justification.

The jury added: "Few authors succeed in novelistically describing a long century in a single book. It is even rarer in Slovenian literature for the turbulent 20th century to be described in such detail as the writer Roman Rozina has displayed in his 550-page novel *Sto let slepote*. The saga of the Knap family, a member of which is the blind from birth Matija, begins as a gloomy fight with the merciless land. In the mining district, the underground world is intertwined with shafts, so in Podgorje, the author's imaginary village in Zasavje, the earth relentlessly sinks and swallows fertile soil and homes as well as the immaterial dimension: the future of the peasants living there. The cracking of the terrain in May 1900 also brings about a fatal rift in time for the Knaps. They descend into the valley, into life in a workers' colony, with the father sinking ever deeper into the mine in order to tease the devil, as Rozina writes. From here, the author guides the reader through all the imaginable dark and light places where life takes his exquisitely drawn and extremely plausible protagonists, whether it be their intimate choices, including superstitious performances, or collective struggles, ideological clashes or the eclipse of wars, and everything else brought by the 20th century and resonating even in the remotest of spots. In *Sto let samote*, the jury recognised the extremely rich and precise language. Although the densely woven narrative slightly idealises the characters as well as mythicises the milieu, it is not done in a disturbing manner, let alone blindly. The novel is an insightful portrayal of a time that no longer exists and an environment that is still here, with many re-

minders that will be preserved – not least because Roman Rozina knows how to see them."

Sto let slepote is set in Zasavje. In an interview with the journalist Ksenija Horvat before the announcement of the winner, Rozina said that he basically tried to show a human story in the fascinating 20th century, in which he deliberately set this environment. After gathering various information, he set his imagination free. By talking to people and consulting newspapers, he slowly wove his story.

The other four nominees were Davorin Lenko for *Triger*, Andrej E. Skubic for *Krasni Dnevi* (Wonderful Days), Dušan Šarotar for *Zvezdna Karta* (Star Map) and Marjan Žiberna for *Dedič* (Heir).

Roman Rozina was born in 1960 and lives in Oreohovica near Izlake. After graduating in journalism, he got a job at a local newspaper in Zagorje, then worked for the national television, as a freelance journalist and at a development agency, and finally became a freelance writer.

Since 1997, he has researched journalism related to the present and past of Zasavje. He has written about 30 works on this topic.

His literary works include short stories and novels *Štiri Sneguljice in Palček* (Four Snow Whites and the Dwarf), *Galerija na izviru Sončne ulice* (The Gallery at the Source of Sunny Street), *Štirje v vrsti* (Four in a Row), *Županski kandidat Gams* (Gams the Mayoral Candidate) and *Zločin in ljubezen* (Crime and Love). He has two previous Kresnik nominations.

Besides the Kresnik, the Delo media house this year introduced the Young Pen award for young authors and another for young literary critics. This was the culmination of a two-year project promoting the work of the younger generation of poetry, fiction and drama authors. The Young Pen award was conferred on poet, writer and translator Tanja Božić and the winning critic was Sašo Puljarević.

WOMEN WRITERS ROUTE

The first Council of Europe Cultural Route based in Slovenia

TINA HUREMOVIČ, MATEJA JANČAR



The Women Writers Route has been certified as a Council of Europe Cultural Route. This cultural-tourist route is the first of the 48 selected Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe to be based in Slovenia.

The Route is dedicated to 14 women authors from the early 20th century. It invites visitors to follow in their footsteps and take part in various events in six countries.

PATH TO THE FIRST CULTURAL ROUTE BASED IN SLOVENIA

The new Cultural Route was launched five years ago at the initiative of the international foundation Forum of Slavic Cultures. In 2017, the first conference was held in Ljubljana, where Stefano Dominioni, Director of the European Institute of Cultural Routes (EICR) at the Council of Europe, explained the steps towards establishing a cultural route with the Council of Europe's brand. Being aware that this was a multi-year project, the Forum of Slavic Cultures embarked on training within the EICR, implementing programme activities, expanding the network, and seeking out, partners, local communities and, of course, women, the central characters of the Women Writers Route. At the end of 2020, the Women Writers Route Association was formally established and registered in accordance with the rules.

Following an evaluation by experts from the EICR and a presentation at its headquarters in Luxembourg, the Women Writers Route was awarded the certificate in May this year.

A healthy number of Slovenian institutions and organisations are already included in the programme, and the Women Writers Route is the first one based in Slovenia, said Dr Andreja Rihter, President of the Women Writers Route Association and Director of the Forum of Slavic Cultures on the occasion of the happy news. The Slovenian Ministry of Culture has also highlighted the importance of the Cultural Routes, believing in their great poten-

tial and the necessity of inter-ministerial cooperation for the sustainable management of activities linking heritage and tourism, education and creativity, with a focus on young people and the participation of local communities.

WOMEN WRITERS — PIONEERS AND INTERCULTURAL MEDIATORS

The Women Writers Route is dedicated to women authors from the early 20th century. It aims to bring together the works and lives of European women writers, presenting them to audiences through dynamic and inspiring activities and stories, while deepening the exploration both of women's literature and of the life stories of women who have contributed greatly to shaping European values. In many Slavic literatures, women writers only entered the cultural sphere in the second half of the 19th century and were therefore pioneers in exploring new paths, often as intercultural mediators. "If I might borrow a term related to geography, since it is a cultural route, I could say that they often had to carve out a literary landscape by themselves, because no one had done it before them. The more of them there were, the more paths there were," said Dr Katja Mihurko Poniž, professor at the University of Nova Gorica and Chair of the Scientific Council of the Women Writers Route Association.

The women writers whose paths will first be followed on the Women Writers Route, come from seven countries: Elisaveta Bagryana, a poet and translator from Bulgaria; Divna Veković, the first female Montenegrin dentist, who translated the classic poem The Mountain Wreath into French; Ivana Brlić Mažuranić, a Croatian writer for children and the first woman member of the

Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts; Marija Jurić Zagorka, the first Croatian professional journalist, a writer and feminist; Maria Konopnicka, a popular Polish writer, poet, translator and activist; three Slovenian artists — the writer, translator and feminist Zofka Kveder, the poet and translator Lili Novy, and the poet Ljubka Šorli from the Primorska region; Jelena Dimitrijević, a Serbian world traveller, poet and writer; Desanka Maksimović, a well-known Serbian author; Isidora Sekulić, a Serbian writer and polyglot; and three well-known female literary voices from Russia — poets Anna Akhmatova and Marina Tsvetaeva and poet, playwright and editor Zinaida Nikolaevna Gippius.



THE WOMEN WRITERS ROUTE TOUCHING ALL SEGMENTS OF SOCIAL LIFE

The certificate is an excellent stepping stone for further work and network expansion.

The main activities will be organised on important dates throughout the year, from International Women's Day to the authors' birthdays, and include a wide



The Women Writers Route is the first of the 48 Council of Europe Cultural Routes to be based in Slovenia.

range of various events: from storytelling and drama performances to creative and educational workshops and exhibitions, guided tours, excursions, walks, and expert conferences.

The activities will target various age groups, from the youngest to pensioners, and also the expert communities. As many as six of the 16 Members of the WWR Association are from Slovenia (the Municipalities of Ljubljana and Loški Potok, the Forum of Slavic Cultures, the University of Nova Gorica, the School of Humanities, the University of Primorska, the Vodnik Homestead).

An important addition to the Women Writers Route in Slovenia will be Biciklistinja – Cycling Route across Loški Potok and Bloke, dedicated to Zofka Kveder.

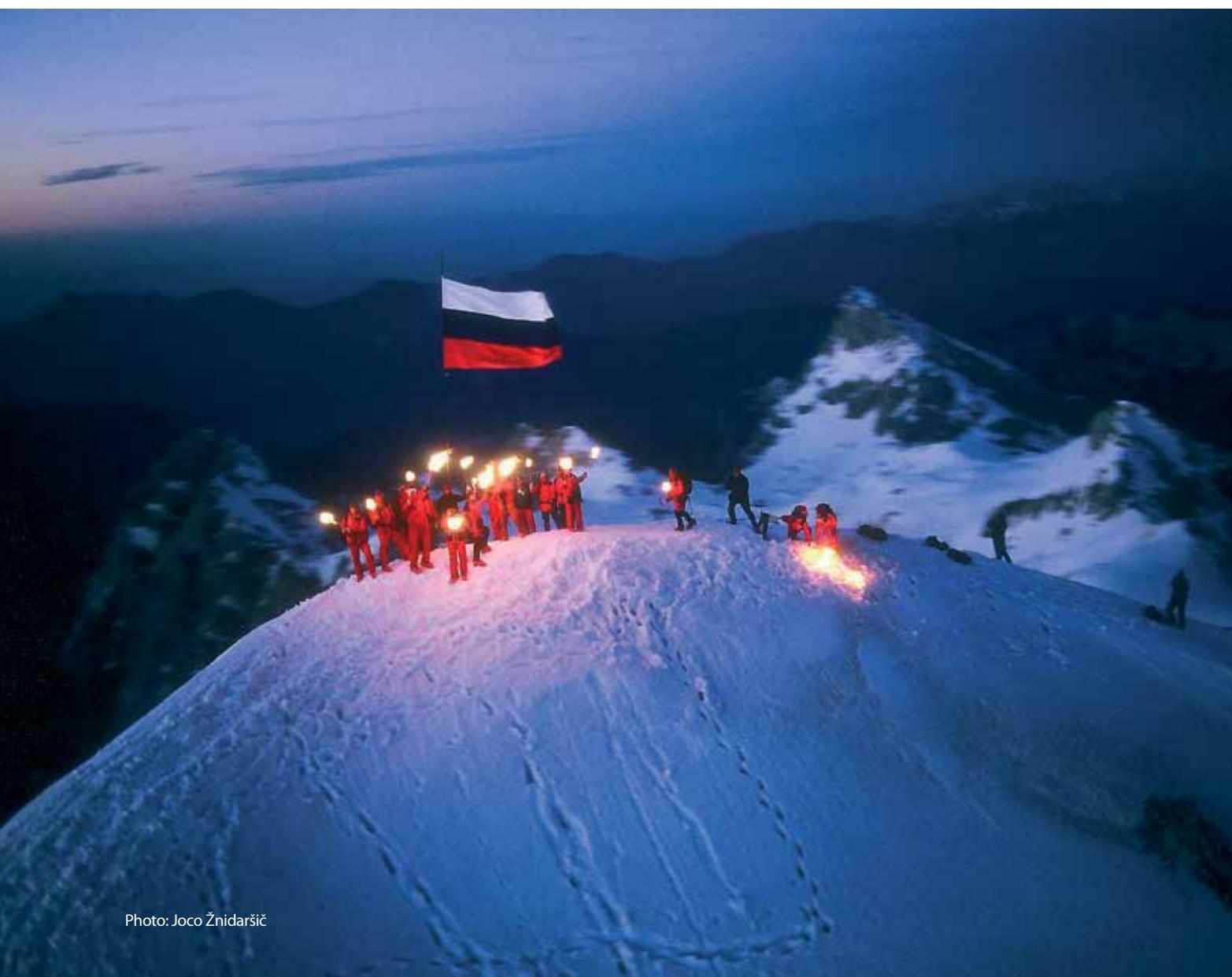
This is an interdisciplinary student project undertaken by the School of Engineering and Management and the School of Humanities at the University of Nova Gorica.

The official awarding of the certificate will take place at the 11th Annual Advisory Forum on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe in October in Crete.

SYMBOLS OF SLOVENIA

A Brief History of the Symbols of the Slovenian State

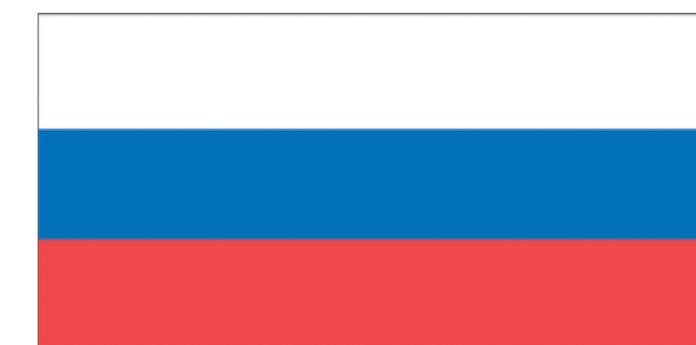
ALEKSANDER HRIBOVŠEK, MATIJA KENDA



Throughout history, Slovenians have identified themselves with various symbols, which depended on their provincial affiliation and given historical circumstances of the time. The foundations of Slovenian national symbols began to emerge in the 19th century within the spirit of the awakening of nations. With the proclamation of the independence of a sovereign Republic of Slovenia, the Slovenian nation acquired national symbols comprising the national coat of arms, flag and anthem.

THE SLOVENIAN NATIONAL FLAG

In the middle of the 19th century, the Habsburg Land of Carniola was considered the most Slovenian land, thus its symbols, which originated from its coat of arms and flag (white-blue-red), were accepted as Slovenian symbols also by Slovenians in peripheral lands. The flag was first raised by Slovenian students in Vienna in March 1848 during the revolutionary upheaval, and in Ljubljana on 7 April 1848. The flag was used to decorate national reading rooms and national conventions. In the following decades, the Slovenian flag was increasingly displayed on the occasion of religious and national holidays. In the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the national flag was banned, while during the Second World War both the national liberation and counter-revolutionary parts of the Slovenian nation fought under it.



On the evening of 7 April 1848, when the German part of the National Guard was to raise the German flag on the tower of Ljubljana Castle, Slovenian students from Vienna, led by Lovro Toman, marched into the Zlata Zvezda hotel, the building located today at Wolfova Street 8 in Ljubljana, with a white-blue-red flag in their hands. That night, a storm was said to have torn away the "Frankfurterica" (the black-red-yellow flag) from Ljubljana's castle.

THE FLAG OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA



At the time of gaining independence in 1991, the project for the selection of the national flag took into account and integrated the historical national white-blue-red flag. The coat of arms of Slovenia was added thereto and on 25 June 1991 the flag was defined and incorporated into the Slovenian Constitution. Slovenia's flag was first displayed on the occasion of the proclamation of independence on 26 June 1991 at Trg republike in Ljubljana. In the days that followed, it became a symbol of independence, in addition to marking a new independent state.

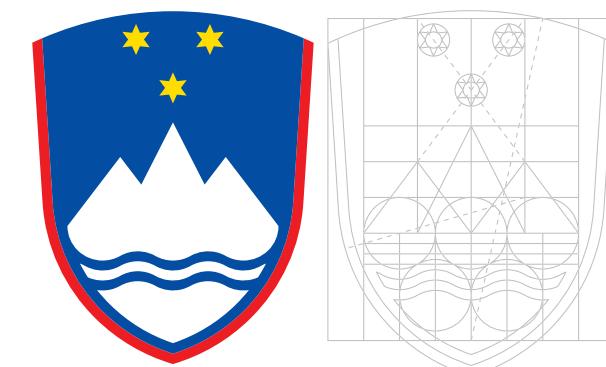


Raising the Slovenian flag on the occasion of the declaration of independence on 26 June 1991.
Photo: Srdjan Živulović/Bobo

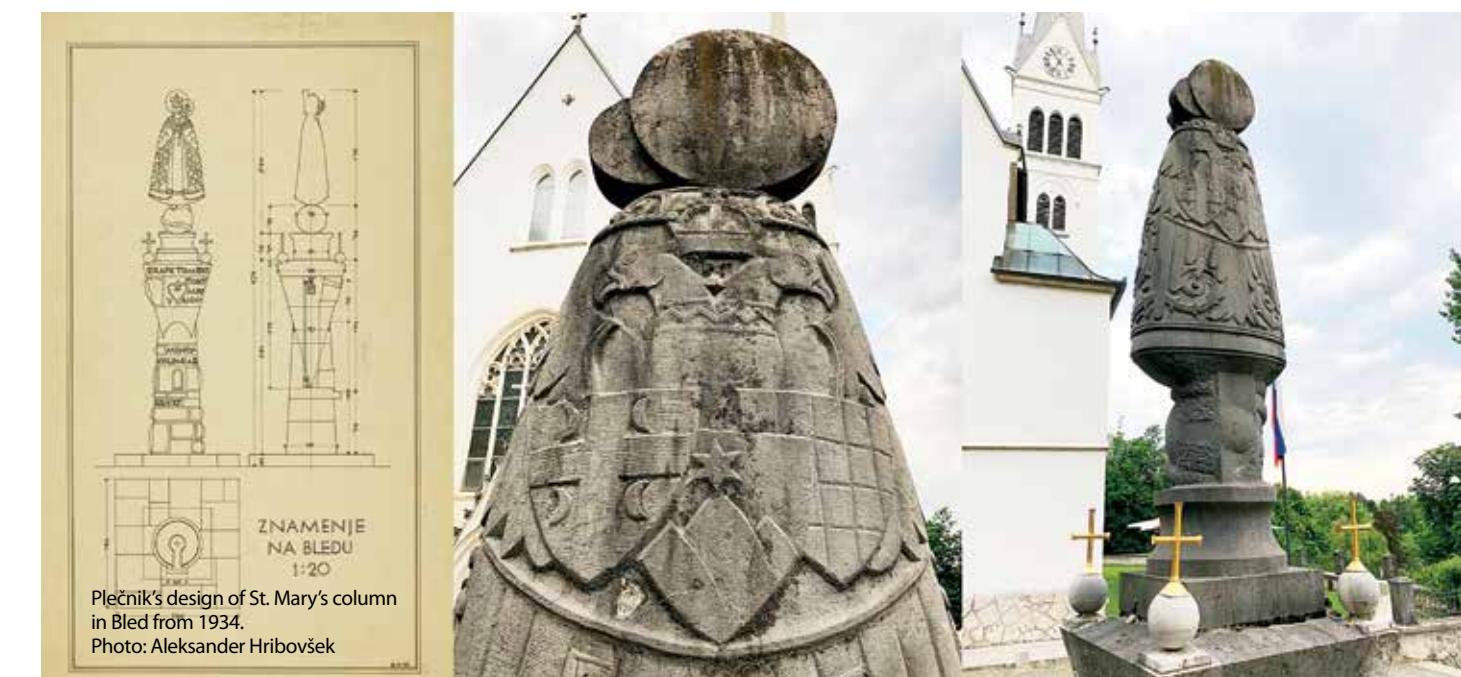
TRIGLAV AND THE COAT OF ARMS

Until the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918, the coats of arms of the historical Habsburg territories were the bearers of Slovenian territorial symbolism and identification, but after the First World War they were not desirable as symbols of the nation. During this time, Triglav as a symbol of Slovenians began to make its way as a pan-Slovenian symbol. As part of the coat of arms, it was first depicted in 1934 by the architect Jože Plečnik in the design for St. Mary's column in front of the parish church in Bled. On the wings of the two-headed royal eagle, Plečnik depicted three coats of arms of the then Yugoslav nations, designing the Slovenian coat of arms as Triglav, crowned with the six-pointed star of the Counts of Celje. During the Second World War, Triglav appeared as a symbol of the Liberation Front and the Slovenian Covenant, and in 1947 it officially appeared as a state symbol in the new Slovenian Constitution of the People's Republic of Slovenia, which introduced Triglav into its emblem after the war.

As early as in 1990, before the decision to create an independent and sovereign state of Slovenia was taken, there were quite a few discussions and proposals regarding potential new Slovenian symbols. In April 1991, the



Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia published an open competition for the design of the coat of arms of the Republic of Slovenia. The competition was won by the sculptor Marko Pogačnik, who in the coat of arms depicted Mount Triglav under the three stars of the Counts of Celje and two waves representing Slovenia's waters at the bottom of the shield.



Plečnik's design of St. Mary's column in Bled from 1934.
Photo: Aleksander Hribovšek

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

The first Slovenian anthem, today the people's anthem, was the song Naprej (Forward). It was written by the Slovenian poet and writer Simon Jenko. His friend Davorin Jenko set it to music in 1860. The song Naprej has always been a stronghold for Slovenians in their national struggle. After the founding of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the first and last verses of the song were incorporated into the national anthem as its third part.



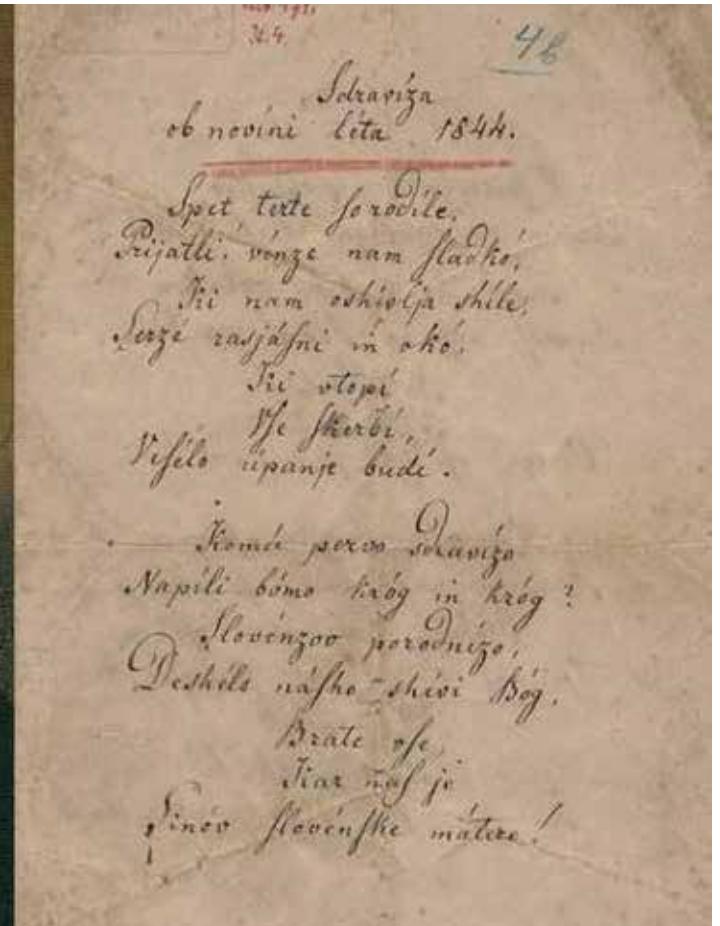
Today, the Slovenian people's anthem is the anthem of the Slovenian Armed Forces, which is played at military ceremonies after the national anthem.



France Prešeren and the first two stanzas

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

Slovenia's anthem is a choral composition entitled *Zdravljica* (A Toast) by the composer Stanko Premrl, which was published on 1 January 1906 on the basis of lines from France Prešeren's poem *Zdravljica*, which he had called *Zdravica* in its first version. It was inspired by the "Liberté, égalité, fraternité" motto of the French Revolution. In its form, it is a carmen figuratum, as the written stanzas resemble the shape of a wine cup. During the turning points in the political events and disintegration of Yugoslavia, the song's importance was further strengthened, and Slovenians elevated it to anthem even before it was officially recognised as such.



The message of *Zdravljica* and the Slovenian anthem extends beyond the time of this poem's origin, as it speaks of the understanding, tolerance and coexistence of all nations, the goodness of people, and mutual respect and tolerance, which is also the motto of today's and all future human societies, and at the same time the only guide to the survival of humanity.

WELCOME HOME 2022

A meeting of Slovenians from the neighbouring countries, from around the world and those living in Slovenia

ANA ŠKET

PHOTO: GOVERNMENT OFFICE FOR SLOVENIANS ABROAD ARCHIVES



At the beginning of summer, Slovenians from the neighbouring countries, from around the world and from Slovenia gathered again in their homeland at the traditional event, Welcome Home, which took place in Ljubljana and Novo mesto between 30 June and 3 July.

The programme started at the National and University Library in Ljubljana. The visitors saw the exhibition, "Plečnik's Library: Created for All Times", and attended a concert by the mixed chamber choir, Ljubljanski Madrigalisti.

On Friday, the programme continued in Novo mesto.

The attendees discussed the topic of "The first, second and post-Yugoslavia in yesterday's and modern Slovenian migrations" at the meeting hall of the hosting municipality.

The discussion was followed by an opening of the exhibition by Dragan Gačnik of Zenica entitled "Ab ovo" in the Kocka Gallery. On this day, three exhibitions opened at the Miran Jarc Public Library and a lecture on painter Maksim Gaspari was held.

Saturday started with football. At the final match of the 7th football championship of Slovenians living around the world, the best two teams went head-to-head, i.e. the team of Slovenians from Argentina – United Slovenia and the team of Slovenians from Austria – SAK Celovec. After a tightly contested game, the latter won this year's championship title. In the afternoon, the programme continued in the Main Square in the centre of Novo mesto. Mladi Celovčani, a group of young puppeteers from Austrian Carinthia, presented a puppet show, Little Witch, for the children.

This was followed by the central ceremony at which Matej Arčon, Minister for Slovenians Abroad, and mag. Gregor Macedoni, Mayor of Novo mesto, addressed and welcomed the visitors from the neighbouring countries and around the world.

The cultural programme included the Lipa vocal group from Austria; the Živanit folkore group from Veneto in Italy; a chamber choir from Szentgotthárd in Hungary; Armando Nuñez from Ven-



ezuela and Urban Debevec from Italy, who joined forces for this particular performance; the Encijan mixed choir and the Mimo ritma music group from Croatia; Klementina Savnik and Danni Stražar from Sweden; the Drava Augsburg folklore group from Germany; the Camerata Slovenica mixed choir and the children's folklore group of the Triglav Banjaluka Slovenian Association from Bosnia and Herzegovina; the Association of Slovenians Kredarica from Serbia; Rast 51, the secondary school graduates of the Slovenian secondary school course of headteacher Marko Bajuk; and Branko&Dani from Argentina.

The audience, among whom were a number of compatriots who came on holiday to their homeland from different corners of the world and the neighbouring countries, acclaimed the performers with enthusiastic applause.

The visitors were able to stop at the stand of the Government Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Slovenians abroad and learn more about the work of the Office and the scenic sites of Slovenia. The day dedicated to Slovenia ended with a concert by the band, Prifarski muzikanti.

This year's celebrations ended on Sunday with the 28th camp of Slovenians around the world and an exhibition in Ljubljana by the academic painter Klavdija Nose from Argentina.

ARCHITECTURE IN A NEW REALITY

The Open House Slovenia Festival displayed excellent Slovenian architecture

VESNA ŽARKOVIĆ



The largest festival of architecture, real estate and quality spaces, Open House Slovenia (OHS), took place between 27 and 29 May. The mission of the festival was to bring quality architecture closer to the general public. The festival featured a broad selection of new, renovated and other interesting buildings which could be viewed in the company of expert architects, owners and users. This year's theme, Architecture in a New Reality, raised important questions about the role and significance of architecture now and in the future.

The time in which we live is testing our civilisation on very different levels. The planet, society, economy, the environment, culture and values are changing faster than people can respond and grow accustomed to them. Architecture has a significant impact on the quality of life of an individual and the whole of society. With the OHS Festival, the organisers wanted to highlight the role of architecture, which can only be realised in society by means of an in-depth understanding of its mission.

Architecture and people are joined in a common, limited space. Following the experience of recent years, when a lack of connection and cooperation has become ever more present, the idea of returning to the world before the epidemic is called into question. It seems that our world in the future will have to be planned and designed in a new and different manner and in a broader context. Architecture enables the resolution of spatial issues and designing of spaces in new contexts.

The post-COVID-19 era has created an opportunity to design architecture and a social vision of space that is based on inclusion, quality and sustainability.

New ways of living, working and learning, new infrastructure, new technologies, meeting of energy needs, CO₂ emissions and sustainability, new partnerships, etc. require careful consideration and the formulation of new answers. At the time of the forthcoming recovery, it would be sensible to consider whether, rather than returning to the life before the coronavirus, it would

not be better to find new solutions for better and more sustainable living in the context of the new reality. Architecture and architects could contribute greatly to this.

ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN FOR AN EQUITABLE FUTURE AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE 27TH BIENNIAL OF DESIGN

The 27th edition of BIO Ljubljana opened in the Museum of Architecture and Design at the end of May.

The theme of BIO27 is Super Vernaculars, which explores a growing and ambitious movement that takes inspiration from vernacular architecture and design intelligence to shape a more resilient and equitable future.

BIO Ljubljana (BIO27), the oldest and one of the leading design biennials in the world, is this year curated by the independent British curator, Jane Withers. It combines forward-thinking and environmentally conscious designers, architects, thinkers and researchers from around the world and presents technologies that imitate the old practices and skills of our ancestors, are environmentally friendly and in harmony with the land. Based at the Museum of Architecture and Design (MAO) and created in cooperation with the Centre for Creativity (CzK), the biennial comprises the Super Vernaculars exhibition, a presentation of five production platform commissions, and a varied programme



of discussions, workshops and other interesting events taking place at other locations in Ljubljana.

The theme of Super Vernaculars responds to the environmental situation, climate change and subsequent social problems at home and abroad, and indicates and provides solutions, MAO Director Bogo Zupančič stated initially. He added that good design and architecture are increasingly responding to the changed needs of the environment and society in the local and global world, and highlight the change in our mentality, social responsibility towards the world and the associated new economic paradigm.

"To think super vernacularly means to operate in a sustainable and high-technological way, while staying connected to local traditions, i.e. hybrid, synthetically and multi-layered. Design and architectural solutions primarily seek inspiration in the local environment, Europe and from certain innovative global examples," said Zupančič. According to him, BIO27 wishes to highlight how rich Slovenian knowledge is when it comes to materials and coexistence with the environment.

"Such functioning sprang from need and is being passed on from generation to generation. The theme of the biennial wishes to encourage visitors to design a regenerative future. The presented projects successfully combine tradition and knowledge of specific communities with modern design and architectural approaches, which means that solutions are sustainable, respectful, but also radical," MAO Director stated. BIO is one of the oldest and leading design biennials in the world.

AWARDS FOR ARCHITECTURAL ACHIEVEMENTS

At the event held in the Grand Hall of the National Gallery in Ljubljana, the Plečnik Fund presented the Plečnik Awards, the highest honour presented for achievements in modern architectural creativity in Slovenia. The awards were conferred on Matija Bevk, Vasa J. Perović and Johannes Paar for the New Gallery and Casemates in Wiener Neustadt, Aljoša Dekleva for architectural realisation, Tina Gregorič and Lea Kovič for Novo Brdo 2 Neighbourhood, and Marko Studen, Jernej Šipoš and Boris Matić for the Cukrarna renovation project. The Plečnik Award was handed to Matija Bevk, Vasa J. Perović and Johannes Paar for the project of the New Gallery and Casemates in Wiener Neustadt, which is, according to the jury, distinguished by exceptional siting at the location, a consistently attested relationship between the historical structure and new architectural interventions, the almost magical atmosphere of the interior and superb execution.

CUKRARNA WINS THE INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL AWARD, LIFE CHALLENGE 2022

Cukrarna, a new gallery in Ljubljana, has won the Baumit company's Life Challenge international architectural competition. The expert jury selected the Ljubljana gallery project, implemented by the Scapelab architectural studio, as the best architectural solution and façade for 2022. The Baumit company biannually selects the most beautiful and interesting European architectural solutions which feature their façades.

Ljubljana's Cukrarna Gallery won among 322 competing projects from 23 countries, and Ljubljana will thus host the next closing event of this architectural biennial in 2024.

Cukrarna was competing in the category of Historical Renovation. The building was constructed in the first half of the 19th century and has been falling into disrepair for many years. Following a devastating fire in 1858, it was also a refuge for artists of Slovenian modernism, such as Dragotin Kette, Josip Murn Aleksandrov, Ivan Cankar and Oton Župančič, which is why it has come to be preserved as a cultural symbol in the national consciousness and enjoys a historical monument status.

The project of its renovation was entrusted to the Scapelab architectural studio. The key idea, which was recognised by the competition's jury, was to carve out all internal structures of the building, preserving only the historic envelope, and convert it into a multi-functional space for contemporary art. "The New Cukrarna represents a revolutionary new space in the cultural infrastructure of Ljubljana. It is a programmatic attractor at the edge of the city centre, regenerating a formerly derelict urban area."

Slovenian architects were successful at previous Baumit international competitions. In 2016, they received two nominations and one category award, and they won in two categories in 2018. Three Slovenian projects were in the 2020/21 final selection when LAB Arhitekti d.o.o. won in the category of Multi Family Residential with Murgle Apartments. Slovenian architect Lenka Kavčič was also in this year's expert jury and defined Cukrarna as a great architectural accomplishment. Kavčič states that as several Slovenian projects are regularly competing among numerous other projects, this proves that Slovenian architects are among the very best in Europe.

The Baumit company, which specialises in façade systems, is presenting the Life Challenge Awards every second year. They were first presented in Vienna in 2014.





Plečnik's Library: Created for All Times

VESNA ŽARKOVIĆ

A library is something that is important not only for us, but for everyone and all professions equally. All classes of population should find their inspiration and salvation in the library. It is something created for all times. So, no effort is too small.

Jože Plečnik, 1933

In Plečnik's Year 2022, when we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the great architect's birth, we dedicate special attention to commemorating his exceptional and fundamental contribution to Slovenian cultural and scientific heritage. On 15 June 2022, the exhibition, Plečnik's Library: Created for All Times, opened at the Exhibition Hall of the National and University Library (NUK).

The exhibition features the story and history of Plečnik's Library, situated on Turjaška Street, one of the most unique library buildings in the world.

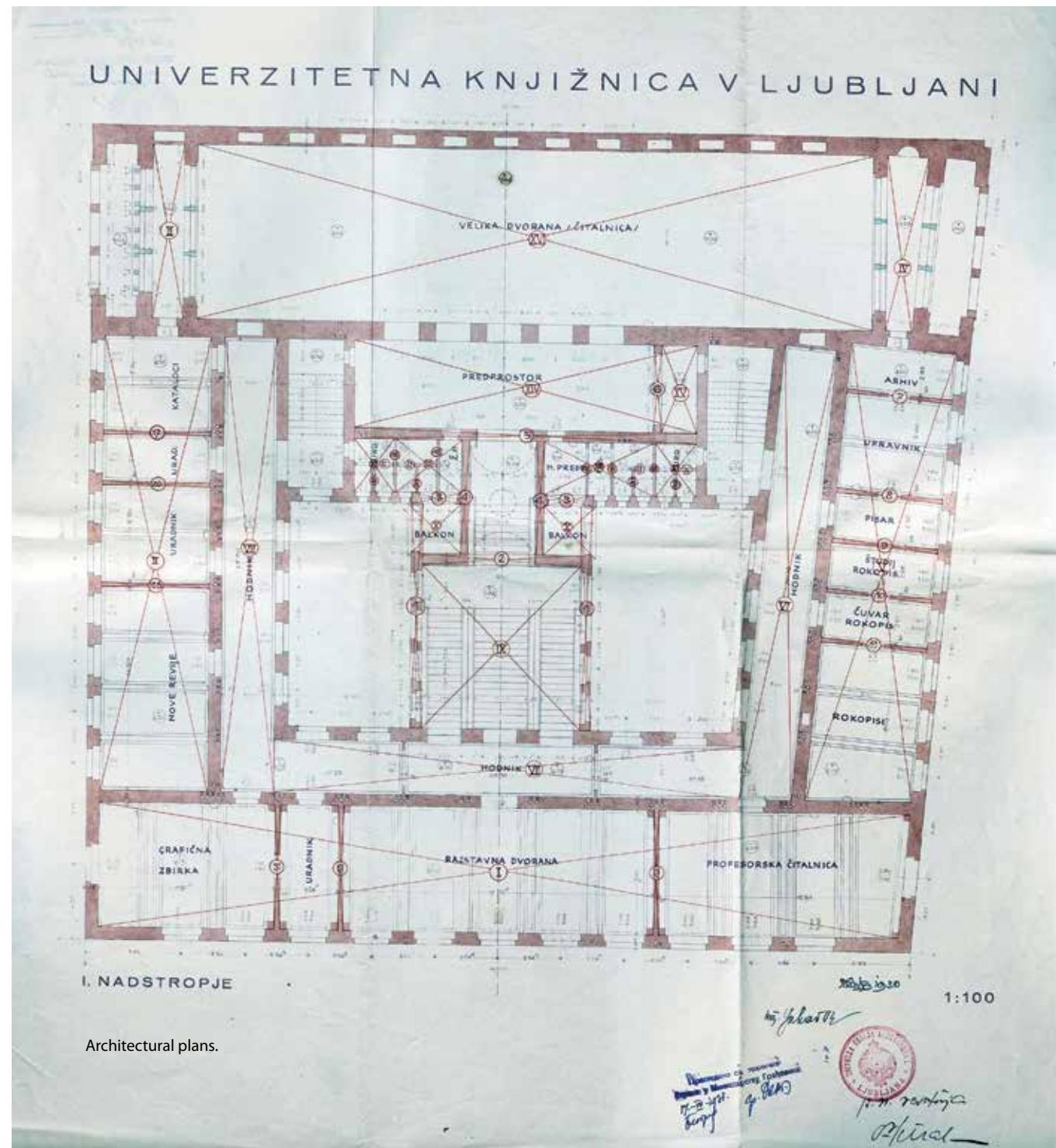
Plečnik's architectural plans and other documents that were part of the efforts,

planning and construction of the new library will be on display, including material from the archive of the Academic Campaign for the Construction of University Library and other collections.

The exhibits also include photographs of events and prominent personalities and contributions gathered from newspapers, magazines and other publications that wrote about the necessity of building the library and reported on the progress of the construction works. Furthermore, several items which have stories linked to the master architect and his library palace will also be on display.



Through the story of its planning, creation and construction, the exhibition aims to contribute to the knowledge and discovery of Plečnik's work with a selection of details, objects and highlights.



Architectural plans.

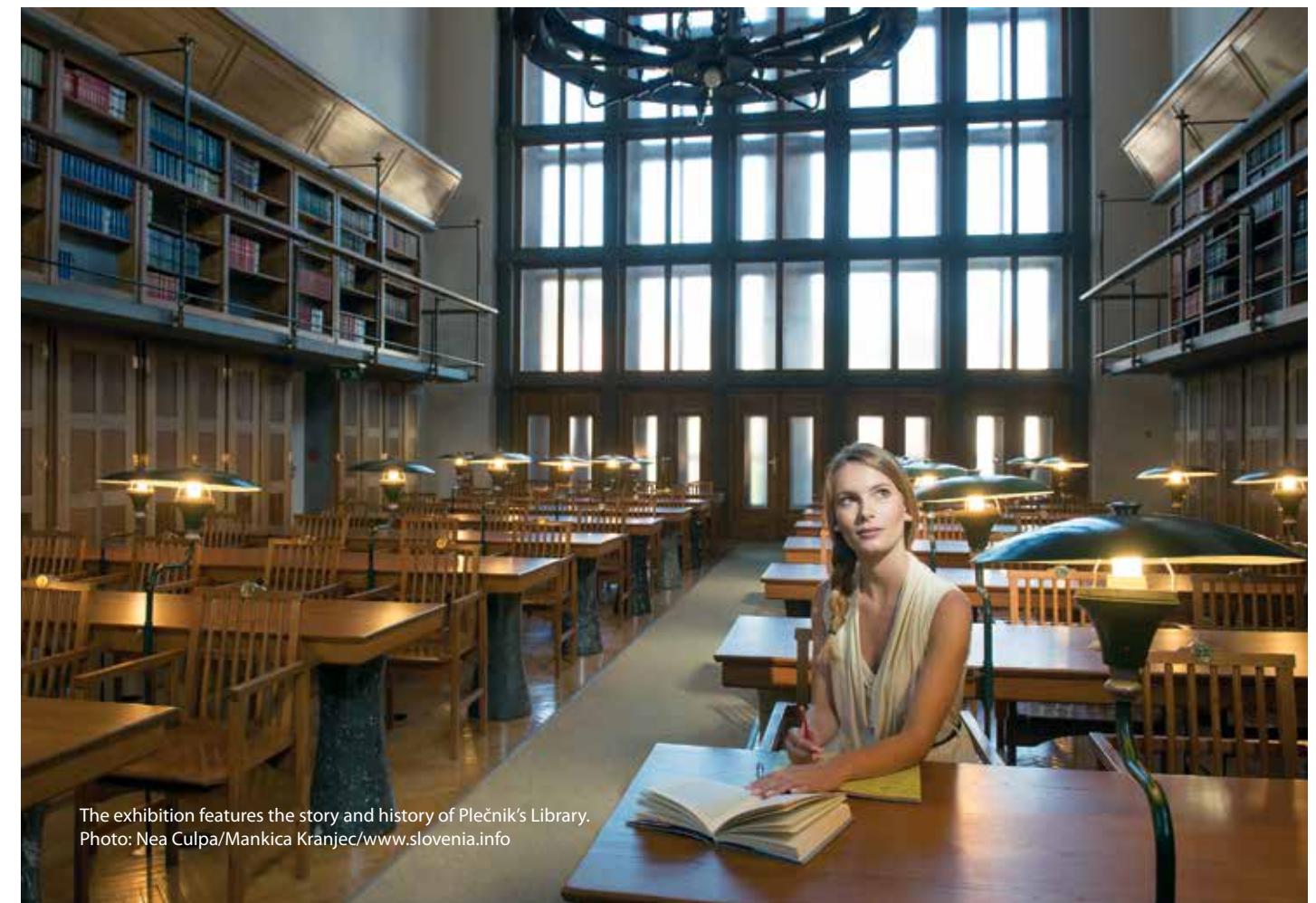
The exhibition authors include Dr Damjan Prelovšek, an accomplished art historian and one of the greatest experts on Jože Plečnik, Prof. mag. Tadej Glažar, Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Ljubljana and Žiga Cerkvenik (NUK); the exhibition was designed by Maj Blatnik (NUK).

The exhibition will be open until 12 November from Monday to Friday between 10.00 and 18.00, and on Saturdays between 9.00 and 18.00.

The exhibition is also accompanied by the Plečnik Notebook,

which provides a unique insight into the architect's creative world. It is made from quality paper and is inspired by a notebook used by Jože Plečnik, and a VIP Plečnik 150 Card, with which NUK joins other institutions featuring central exhibitions, book discounts, exclusive viewing and other benefits in Plečnik Year. The notebook and the card are available at the NUK store.

In cooperation with the Museum of Architecture and Design, a hosting exhibition is presented in the Plečnik Corridor about the project that led to the entry of Plečnik's works on the UNESCO World Heritage List: The Works of Jože Plečnik in Ljubljana – Human Centred Urban Design. The exhibition's authors include Špela Spanzel, Tomaž Štoka and Dr Bogo Zupančič. Photographs by Dr Damjan Prelovšek can be viewed in the NUK Café.



The exhibition features the story and history of Plečnik's Library.
Photo: Nea Culpa/Mankica Kranjec/www.slovenia.info

PLEČNIK'S LECTARIJA

The tradition and importance of candle-making and honey product crafts

VESNA ŽARKOVIĆ

PHOTO: SLOVENE ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM ARCHIVES



Plečnik's Lectarija tells a story of honey products and candles, craft knowledge and cooperation, friendship, love, and two families linked by Ljubljana and Slovene architect Jože Plečnik.

On 1 June, the Slovene Ethnographic Museum (SEM) inaugurated the permanent exhibition Plečnik's Lectarija as part of the programme marking the 150th anniversary of the birth of architect Jože Plečnik, which Slovenia is celebrating in cooperation with UNESCO. The author of the concept of the exhibition and the curator is Dr Tanja Roženberger.

The plans for Lectarija, the domestic arts and crafts shop on Congress Square in Ljubljana, run by Robert Freyer and Henrieta Krbavčič, were drawn by architect Jože Plečnik in 1938.

With fine furniture, lamps and miniatures in his inimitable style, he created a special space and paid tribute to craft products.

His source of inspiration for these plans was Krbavčič's workshop on Trubar Street, which he liked to visit and where the products made from wax and gingerbread inspired him with their harmony and beautiful materials.

The furnishings from both establishments, Lectarija and Krbavčič's candle and honey product workshop, are now museum pieces stored by the Slovene Ethnographic Museum. Now reunited in the new permanent exhibition, Plečnik's Lectarija, they testify to the architect's deep understanding and appreciation of craftsmanship. They also bear witness to the tradition and importance of candle-making and honey product crafts, the ties between the Krbavčič and Freyer families, and the memories of their descendants.





MUSEUM SHOP LECTARIJA

The exhibition displays the furnishings of Lectarija, the former domestic arts and crafts shop that was set up at 5 Congress Square in Ljubljana in 1939. The exhibited items include wooden display cabinets, a table and a bench, a display window with a brass spiral that served as a frame for arranging items on sale, an immense round table made of artificial stone, and a wooden chandelier with candles laid out in a circle. The wooden rim of the chandelier is decorated with messages – selected sayings by the architect: *From the eye speaks the soul. / Time flows but says nothing. / Gold does not rust. / The wife makes the man.*

The furniture, dating back to the end of the 1930s, was made from Pokluka spruce in the Hreščak joinery workshop in Ljubljana, while the spiral was made by well-known Ljubljana metalworker, and close colleague of Plečnik's, Alojzij Pernat.

In 2000, the shop's furnishings were donated to the Slovene Ethnographic Museum by Agata Freyer Majaron and Rok Freyer, the son and daughter of Henrieta and Rok Freyer. Lectarija was duly restored by the museum and added to the programme of the newly opened exhibition building as the Museum Shop Lectarija and as a cultural heritage site in 2004.

During the preparations for the commemoration of the Year of Jože Plečnik in 2022, Lectarija became a museum piece and was moved into the museum as permanent installation known as Plečnik's Lectarija.

Today, it is the only fully preserved shop interior designed by the architect.

KRBAVČIĆ'S WORKSHOP

Krbavčić's workshop, which stood at 55 Trubar Street in Ljubljana, is also linked to Plečnik and his Lectarija. Hence the exhibition introduces the ambiance of Krbavčić's shop, whose tradition dates back to the interwar period, when Plečnik himself would drop by.

Master craftsman Krbavčić's skilled hand and superb products were a rich source of inspiration for him.

Krbavčić's workshop and shop closed in 1996 after his son and last proprietor Andrej Krbavčić shut down the business, leaving the whole inventory to the Slovene Ethnographic Museum. The shop's furniture dates back to 1934, while the candles and honey products date mainly from the 1990s. The exhibition also features some of Jakob Krbavčić's (1907–1988) personal documents, examples of his hand-carved wooden and gingerbread products, handmade wooden moulds for honey bread, decorative items, various kinds of candles, and additional shop inventory.

LETTERS FROM 1935

Jože Plečnik was associated with both shops as well as with the families that ran them. He praised Jakob Krbavčić's craft products in a letter written in 1935: "Today, I gave two guests from Prague a pair of your Candlemas candles: the one that is wonderfully simple and beautifully twisted into a spiral and raised in the middle, and then the one that has mainly this form [...] Seeing people of such good taste be so fond of these things made me feel quite proud!"

Jože Plečnik's close contact with Lectarija is also reflected in his side notes and correspondence with Henrieta Krbavčić, later Freyer, the main initiator



Paper bag for bagging products.

of the shop. On 6 January 1942, he wrote: "Honoured lady, [...] please be so kind as to accept my heartfelt best wishes for the New Year. As I have nothing better, I take the liberty to offer you this as a souvenir (stored at home, not at the shop, of course)."

In 2021, the selected work of Jože Plečnik was added to UNESCO's World Heritage List.

Thanks to the exhibition "Plečnik's Lectarija", the Slovene Ethnographic Museum also sheds light on the architect's lesser-known work and endeavours, as well as his attitude towards handicrafts.

The exhibition was prepared in cooperation with members of the Freyer and Krbavčić families: Agata Freyer Majaron, Rok Freyer, Aleš Krbavčić and Andrej Krbavčić. The museum's installation of Jakob Krbavčić's shop is based on the 2018 exhibition "Gingerbread making operates with small change", curated by Andrej Dular at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum.



2022: THE YEAR OF TARTINI

The 330th Anniversary of the Birth of a Virtuoso from Piran

DANILA GOLOB

The monument to Tartini on the main square in Piran.
Photo: Miran Kambič/www.slovenia.info



Tartini 330 Piran-Pirano

As of 8 April 2022, 330 years had passed since the composer and violinist Giuseppe Tartini was born in Piran. The Slovenian seaside town, which has been hosting the Tartini Festival for many summers, will be honouring Tartini with many events.

Giuseppe Tartini was introduced to the violin at a very tender age and dedicated his entire life to this instrument. An encounter with composer and violinist Francesco Veracini was very important for his musical advancement. Tartini improved his violin technique, but also experimented with the violin bow and technically perfected it by extension. At the end of 1719 he went to Venice, where he held violin classes mainly for students from noble Venetian families. In the spring of 1721, he returned to Padua and, as a renowned musician, was appointed principal violinist and conductor of the orchestra of the Basilica of Saint Anthony. In 1728 he founded the famous violin school La scuola delle nazioni. Students came from all over Europe, which earned him the nickname 'Master of Nations'. Tartini's theoretical didactic works are very important as well. Especially well-known is his letter to a pupil, Madalena Lombardini, in which he briefly and concisely summarises the essential instructions for playing the violin, which are still followed and quoted today by violin teachers and textbooks. His disciples widely spread his playing technique as well as his teaching approach.

Tartini wrote mainly instrumental music, devoting almost all his work to the violin. His opus consists of over 300 pieces.

The most famous and most frequently performed works are the violin sonatas, with the most famous among them being The Devil's Trill.

IN TARTINI'S FOOTSTEPS

In Piran the presence of the famous composer and violinist can be felt at every turn. A monument to Tartini stands on the main square – Tartini Square – and his birth house nearby is open to visitors. In addition to valuable museum exhibits, the memorial room also houses Tartini's original written material. The greatest treasure of the memorial room is his violin.

In 1910, the Tartini Theatre was opened in Piran, which showed silent films. Subsequently, the theatre increasingly acquired the character of a city hall, in which various meetings and celebrations were held. Today, the Tartini Theatre hosts many cultural and business events.



Every summer, the city of Piran hosts the Tartini Festival, which takes place in the extremely acoustic cloister of the Minorite monastery.

This year – the proclaimed Year of Tartini – there will be more than 70 different events dedicated to the "Master of Nations".

More than 40 domestic and foreign partners, co-organisers and project sponsors participated in the preparation of the programme. The events scattered throughout the year are part of regular festival programmes and an additional festive pro-

gramme on the occasion of the 330th anniversary of the birth of the famous virtuoso. More than 40 concerts, more than ten exhibitions and music events for young people, guided tours of the Tartini Trail, and scientific, oenological and promotional meetings will be organised.

Tartini's year opened on 26 February 2022 at the Portorož Auditorium with a wonderful concert by the New Chamber Orchestra "Ferruccio Busoni", conducted by maestro Massimo Belli with the famous violinist Salvatore Accardo.

The audience enthusiastically welcomed violinist Salvatore Accardo and thanked him for his excellent performance with a standing ovation. The successful concert was an introduction to the excellent performances that followed: a concert by maestro Stefan Milenković with the Camerata Academica Chamber Orchestra Novi Sad, a Statehood Day concert with the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra, violinist Anna Tifu and conductor Marco Angius, a concert by the Italian violinist Allessandro Quarte with the Filarmonici di Roma chamber orchestra, a concert by the Venice Baroque Orchestra with violinist Chouchane Siraos-sian, and a concert of baroque music by students from the Giuseppe Tartini Conservatory of Trieste.

In addition to the promotion of cultural heritage and cultural tourism related to Giuseppe Tartini, one of the goals of the project is to bring classical music closer to a wider audience. To this end, four concerts of the Tartini 330 programme will be accompanied by introductory presentations with a musical explanation.

Giuseppe Tartini, a world-famous violin virtuoso, teacher and scientist, was a man who knew how to bring music and culture closer to people. The Year of Tartini is an opportunity to get to know even better the rich cultural heritage of Piran, the artist Tartini and his creations, which will be performed by excellent musicians.

All events to take place in the Year of Tartini are described in the programme booklet, which is available on the website www.tartini.eu

The presentation of the book *Tartini Violinist Fencer* with the musical accompaniment of the Padua L'Arte dell'Arco Orchestra.
Photo: Jadran Rusjan



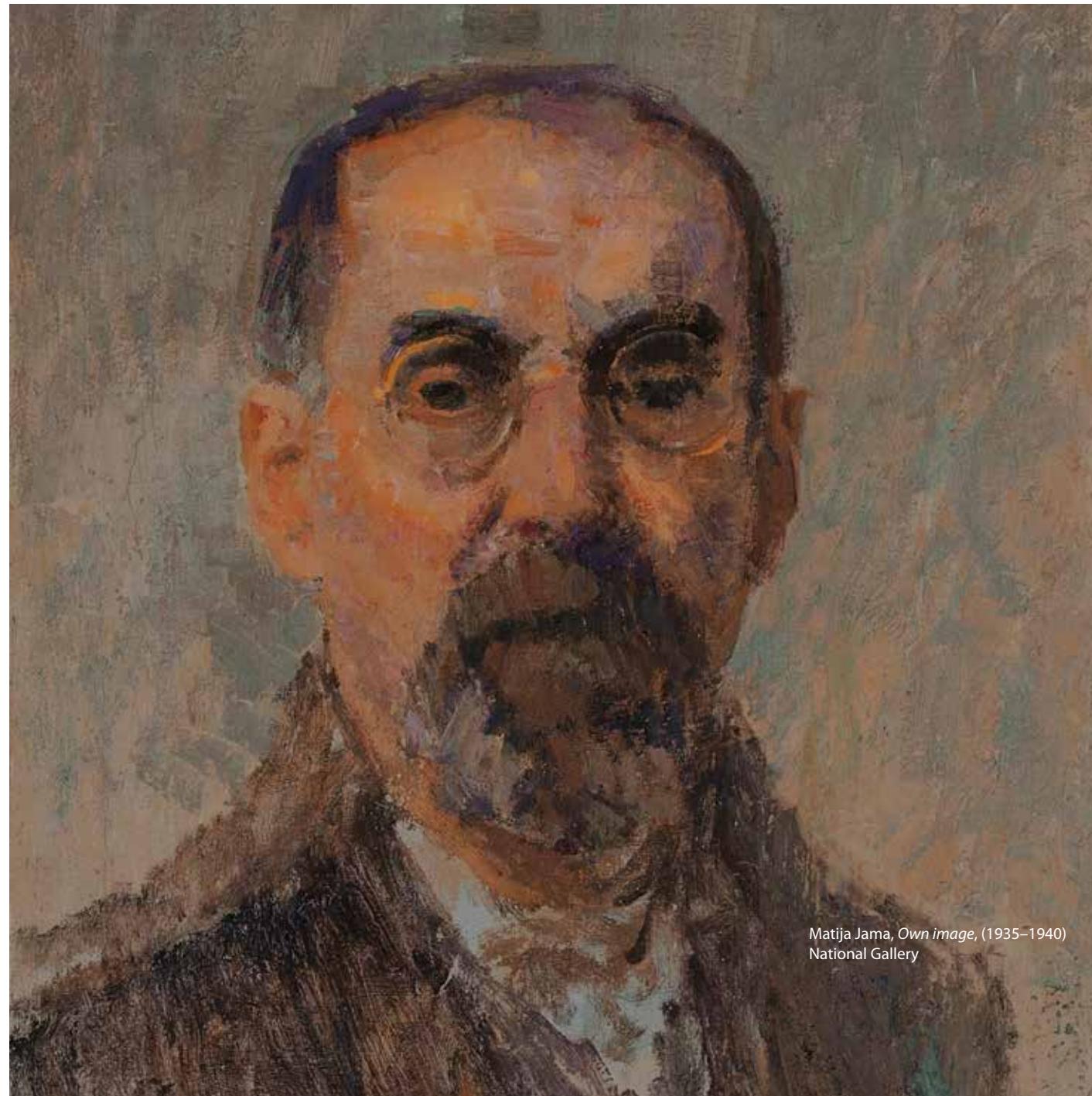
Violinist Stefan Milenković and the Camerata Academica Chamber Orchestra Novi Sad played a beautiful adaptation of *Carmina Burana* to an international audience.
Photo: Jadran Rusjan



PAINTER MATIJA JAMA

Slovenian Impressionist Fine Art in Changing Light

TANJA GLOGOVČAN BELANČIĆ



Matija Jama, *Own image*, (1935–1940)
National Gallery

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of Matija Jama, one of Slovenia's most important painters. Like most Impressionists, he delighted in painting amidst nature. During his lifetime, he created more than 450 works.

He was born on 4 January 1872 and died in 1947. By nature, he was a serious, ascetic, extremely hardworking, reserved and quietly spoken man. Buddhism and theosophy were two of his passions, he believed in the reliability of astrology, took an interest in parapsychology, was a vegetarian, and paid attention to the findings of natural science (the science of colours) in his work. He married the Dutch painter Louise van Raders and they had a son and two daughters.

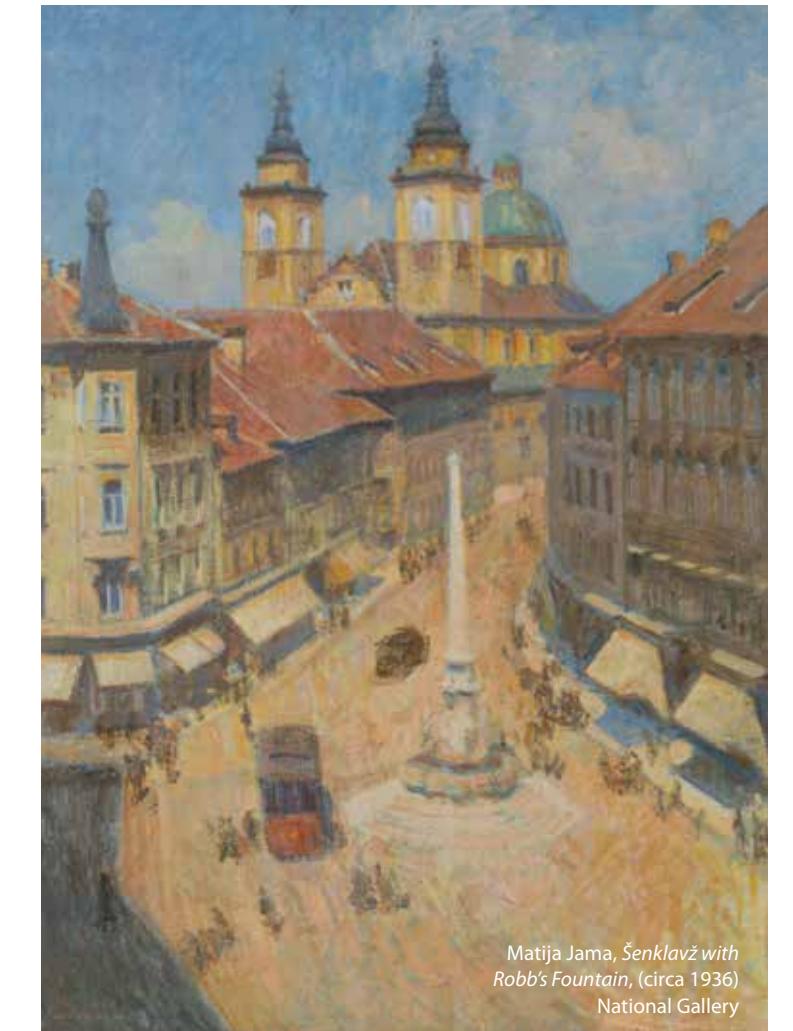
He worked in various parts of Europe, specifically in Austria, Croatia, Germany and the Netherlands.

During his stay in the Danube region, he acquired a bicycle with all his painting equipment and a caravan. After World War I, however, he continued to paint only in Slovenia and Croatia and became an important painter of Lake Bled, the Upper Sava Valley, the Plitvice Lakes and Ljubljana, especially with his views of the Town Square.

LOVE OF COLOURS

The essence of his painting is the light of nature and human harmony with it. Honey light in yellow and orange predominates. He also produced posters and illustrations for the works of Ivan Cankar. His greatest masterpieces are oils on canvas.

His most recognisable motifs are Willows in the Mist, Croatian Farmer in the Sun, Bridge over the Dobro, and the later motif of the Circle Dance.



Matija Jama, *Šeneklavž with Robb's Fountain*, (circa 1936)
National Gallery



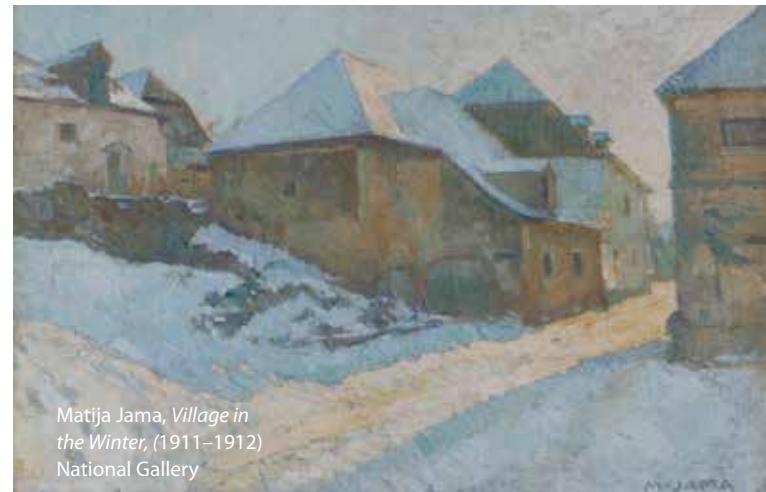
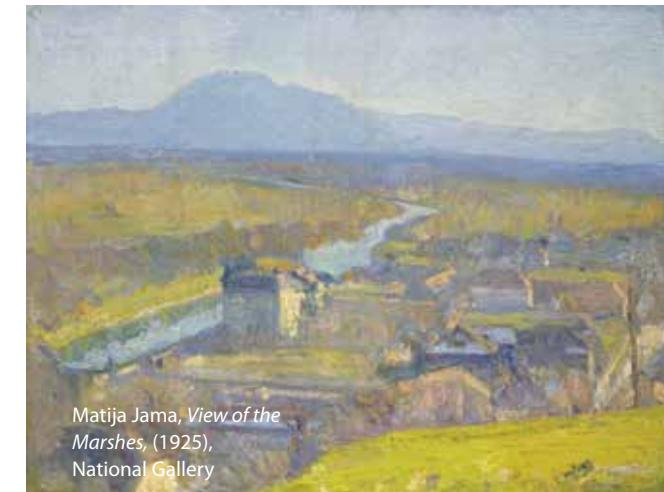
His portraits are less well known to the public. Exceptions are the portrait of Leo Souvan and his sister Rozi with her two children. There are also a few self-portraits.

He loved colours from a young age. He made them himself, from various herbs and flowers, and used them to colour a wide variety of newspaper illustrations. Photography was also a challenge for him. Although he consistently painted in nature, he regularly took photographs of his motifs, and then occasionally included his finished paintings and their photographs in the catalogues of his annual exhibitions.

To commemorate his life, the National Gallery in Ljubljana also organised the exhibition "Zastiranja" (Veils), 15 works of art from the gallery's permanent collection, and the art competition for primary school children "Impressions from my place".

723 artworks were submitted from all over Slovenia, and 35 artworks were on display at the National Gallery until the end of July this year.

Impressionism is an artistic style that developed in France at the turn of the 20th century. The most famous Slovenian Impressionists are: Ivan Grohar, Rihard Jakopič, Matej Sternen and Matija Jama. The characteristics of Slovenian Impressionism are a lyrical, gentle, dreamy mood (*štimunga*), an intimate feeling of the motif and thick, pasty applications of colour.



MOVING FROM THE SPORTS EDUCATIONAL CHART TO SLOFIT

Be fit, get into SLOfit

GREGOR JURAK



We love sports.
Photo: LightField Studios/shutterstock.com

In Slovenia, the physical fitness of children and adolescents is monitored annually for the duration of a child's entire schooling period. This system has been in place since 1987, and was previously known as the "Sports Educational Chart".

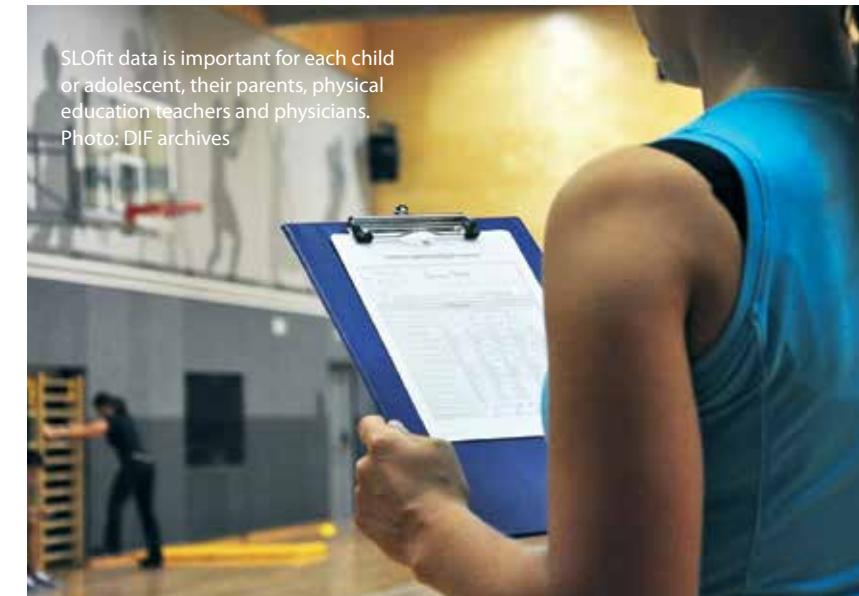
SLOfit, as it is called nowadays, monitors the physical and motor development of all school children in Slovenia and enables educating reports on this development. The SLOfit fitness database is therefore one of the largest databases of child fitness in the world, holding health-based data on more than 40 birth cohorts of children who have been followed for approximately 13 continuous years (an age span of 6-19 years).

In 2016, SLOfit researchers developed a free-for-use online application system called "My SLOfit", which provides schools and individuals administrative support for collecting, storing, and better understanding their physical fitness data.

The My SLOfit application is constructed as a vital diagnostic, surveillance and educational tool and can be used across one's life span. Individuals can choose to share their data with health and exercise experts, which enables individual to improve their quality of life by incorporating more structured exercise into their busy schedules. My SLOfit also promotes reducing health risk behaviours that promote the development of noncommunicable diseases (e.g. sitting) and provides parents better insight into their child's development. The SLOfit system results are used as the basis for individualised physical education classes based on students' needs and abilities, it can be used as an intervention programme, and can be a valuable tool for connecting to the health care system in a coordinated manner.

SLOFIT AS A DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR DETERMINING POPULATION HEALTH

During the 2000s, the SLOfit database enabled researchers to detect and monitor consistent fitness declines amongst primary



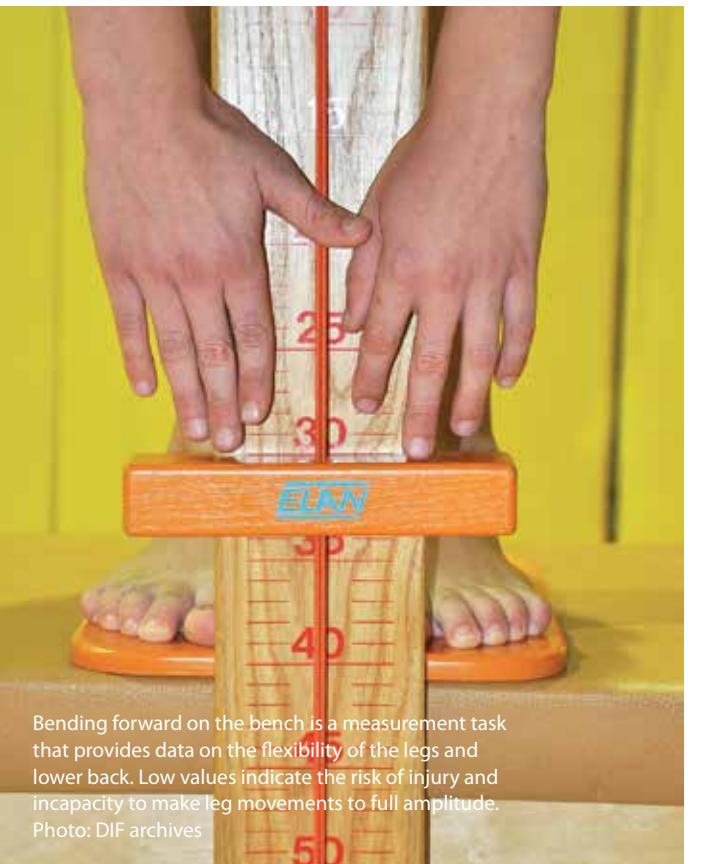
school students. These changes prompted SLOfit researchers to petition the government to fund a physical activity intervention programme called "Healthy Lifestyle". This programme has since been recognised as one of the first interventions worldwide that was able to reverse the negative trends in childhood obesity and halt significant fitness declines at the primary school level nationally.

Moreover, due to the consistent nature of the SLOfit national surveillance system, the SLOfit team was the first group in the world to detect large, systematic declines in the physical fitness of children during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

SLOfit researchers responded rapidly in order to incorporate national physical activity interventions for everyday citizens throughout the COVID-19 crisis; including by drafting national Physical Activity guidelines, SLOfit testing found the greatest decline in child fitness since systematic testing began more than 30 years ago. Only two months of self-isolation had erased over 10 years of hard-fought health gains acquired from the national public health policies and physical activity interventions.

LIFELONG PHYSICAL FITNESS MONITORING

In the past two years, the SLOfit team has been redesigning and implementing an upgraded strategy to enhance the usability and impact of the original SLOfit system with the addition of SLOfit Lifelong. SLOfit Lifelong includes older generations, aged over 19 years, in an expanded format that allows individuals to check and evaluate their physical fitness well into adulthood and as they age. SLOfit Lifelong has created a unique research platform with the intention of studying the predictive validity of health-related fitness in youth and the subsequent influence thereof at older ages. Every year, a new cohort will enter the physical fitness surveillance system, enabling a continuous flow of novel data. Thus,

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

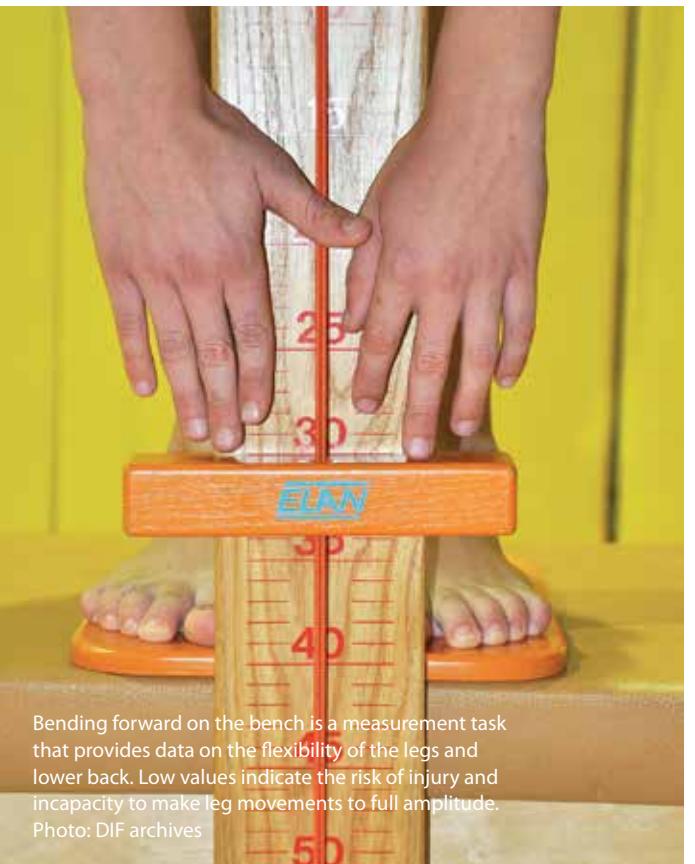
In 2021 Slovenia was the first country in the world to implement lifelong surveillance and monitoring of physical fitness for its entire population.

KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION

SLOfit makes the most of both traditional (e.g. print, television appearances, radio) and more recent communication channels (Facebook, a YouTube channel, Instagram, website) to reach the general and professional public in Slovenia.

The SLOfit platform remains one of the most cost-effective and informative resources for the lay public to find expert physical activity and physical fitness information.

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



It is reinforced by the latest scientific references and provides individual feedback and tips to those who need it the most. Moreover, the educational content on Facebook and Instagram offers concise information for adults and children alike, and videos on YouTube are mainly produced to encourage individuals to move more, fostering a cultural standard of being active for all Slovenians. Through this integrated SLOfit infrastructure, researchers can offer up-to-date educational content to improve the health and physical literacy of Slovenian citizens.

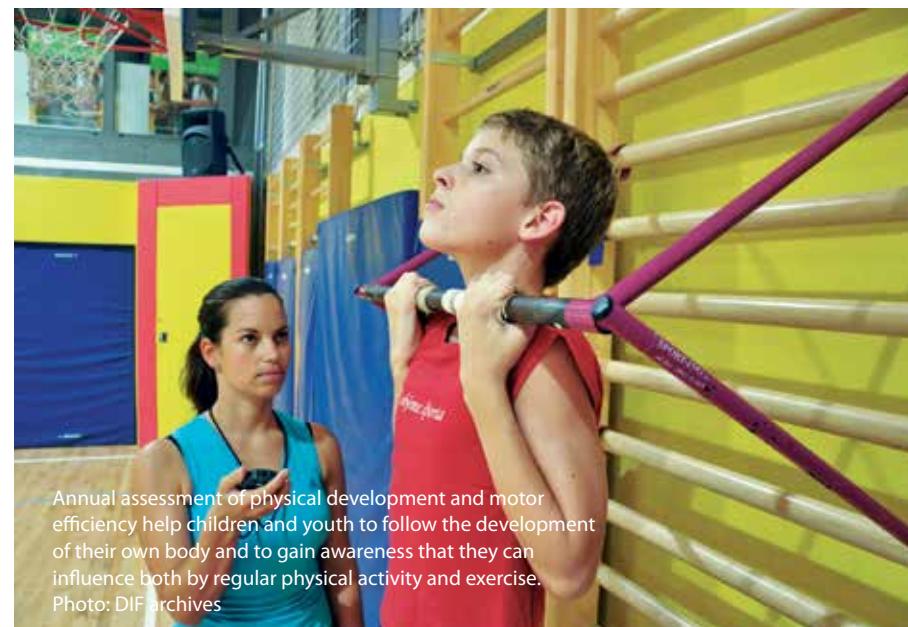
The SLOfit physical fitness surveillance system informs the Slovenian population of their fitness status.

From these annual surveillance test results, policymakers, principals and teachers can adjust how individual PE classes are conducted. SLOfit feeds back to policymakers to inform education and public health policy changes at the level of the Ministry. It is therefore hugely impactful from a pedagogical and epidemiological standpoint. SLOfit Lifelong now promotes the monitoring of inter-generational physical activity and fitness, noting that everyone can benefit from activities that improve health, well-being, and physical literacy. SLOfit researchers are using both online and offline communication actions to further advocate for long-term fitness surveillance across Europe.

More information can be found at:
<https://www.slofit.org/>
<https://www.facebook.com/slofit.org>
<https://www.instagram.com/mojslofit/>
<https://www.youtube.com/c/SLOfitSlovenia>



Physical fitness is one of the most important determinants of health.
Photo: DIF archives



Annual assessment of physical development and motor efficiency help children and youth to follow the development of their own body and to gain awareness that they can influence both by regular physical activity and exercise.
Photo: DIF archives

SLOfit facts

- annual monitoring since school year 1981/1982
- more than one half of the entire population of Slovenia are included
- over 7 million sets of measurements
- over 200,000 measured children and adolescents annually



Children from Slovenia are among the fittest in Europe, for example the average result of the 12-year olds in Slovenia is at the 80th centile of their Spanish peers



With the average height of almost 181 cm in boys and 167 cm in girls at age 18 Slovenian population is among the tallest in the world



Physical efficiency index of primary-school children increased from 49.7 in 2011 to 50.5 in 2015



The share of overweight children declined for 1.9 % between 2011 and 2015



There are considerable differences in nutritional and fitness status of students in different secondary-school programmes



In 2014 grammar-school boys were able to persist in bent arm hang 15.2 seconds (25 %) more than boys from vocational schools and girls from grammar schools 14.8 seconds (38 %) more than their peers from vocational schools



Body mass indeks of 11- to 19-year olds between 1939 and 2015 increased for one third among boys and one fifth among girls

In 2015 muscular strength of arms and shoulders was 12 % lower than in 1991, which influences poor posture and increases risks of spinal problems in adult life



Children from Slovenia are among the fittest in Europe, for example the average result of the 12-year olds in Slovenia is at the 80th centile of their Spanish peers



In children, who were in the past years included in the Healthy Lifestyle project, aerobic fitness improved for 3 %



In 2014 the male grammar-school students were 2.1 cm taller and 1.7 kg lighter than students from vocational schools while the difference in females was 2.3 cm and 1.6 kg



When a grammar-school student covered the 600 m running distance a vocational-school student covered only 525 m



In 2015 children were 6 % heavier than in 1991



In 2015 children showed 6 % less aerobic endurance than in 1991 which had negative impact on their health and academic performance



In 2015 children were 1.3 % taller than in 1991.



Between 1991 and 2015 triceps skinfold increased for 13 %

CIRCUS FUSKABO

Inspiring children and youth to live a creative life

TANJA GLOGOVČAN BELANČIĆ



Circus Fuskabo is the ambassador of the I Feel Slovenia brand.
Photo: UKOM

Nowadays, children spend a lot of their time on the computer, on the phone, in front of the TV, but do not play enough with their peers outside. For some of them, this is because they are not interested in more creative challenges, and others because their parents cannot afford to include them in music schools, sports activities, creative workshops and the like. And so, the story of Circus Fuskabo begins.

Skala, a centre of opportunities for children and youth, undertook circus activities after hosting the Parada circus group from Bucharest in 2011. The charity project "Circus for a better tomorrow" was hosted in various parts of Slovenia to promote the social circus and obtain funds for further street work in Romania.

Following a similar principle, the centre for children and youth launched activities for youth from problematic families with negative patterns.

They organised circus workshops within the "Minibus of Joy" field programme.

DISCOVERING AND DEVELOPING THE CREATIVE POTENTIAL OF ALL CHILDREN

Circus is not just a form of art but a way of life. Diversity and differences are two essential characteristics of the circus. Any dream is welcome. The art of the circus provides youth aged between five and 30 with countless options to develop their creativity while stimulating personal growth. Circus Fuskabo makes its activities available to anyone, including children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. They take small steps to produce a magnificent performance.



At the circus, young people juggle, perform diabolo tricks, balance exercises and aerial acrobatics, perform on the trapeze, dance on silks, lyre and ropes, perform poi exercises, show hula hoop and levistick skills, perform partner acrobatics, etc.

Zef Berišajski, the circus manager, says: All the time, with every ball that falls, with every descent from the globe, with every failed move, we learn that mistakes are part of progress. That persistence in repeating and correcting mistakes is what really counts.

Circus Fuskabo does not rely on the perfect coordination of circus figures but places the emphasis on cooperation.

Many mistakes and persistent work lead to personal progress and mastery of a skill. Persistence is a skill many of us, particularly children and adolescents, lack while living on the fast lane."

He also points out the value of cooperation on the path to success: "Exercise elements don't mean anything in themselves. The magical power of a circus performance only comes to life when members creatively bring them together in sets of coordinated figures, in unusual interactions with the figures of the participants."

Some young people spend all day at the circus if they feel safer there.



No one chases them away. They can even do their school homework there.

In addition to the circus manager, Zef Berišajski, trainers and animators are secondary school and university students.

CIRCUS AS A PLACE WHERE DIVERSITY IS ACCEPTED

Circus Fuskabo became an associated member of the CARAVAN youth and social circus network in 2013 and a full member in 2021.

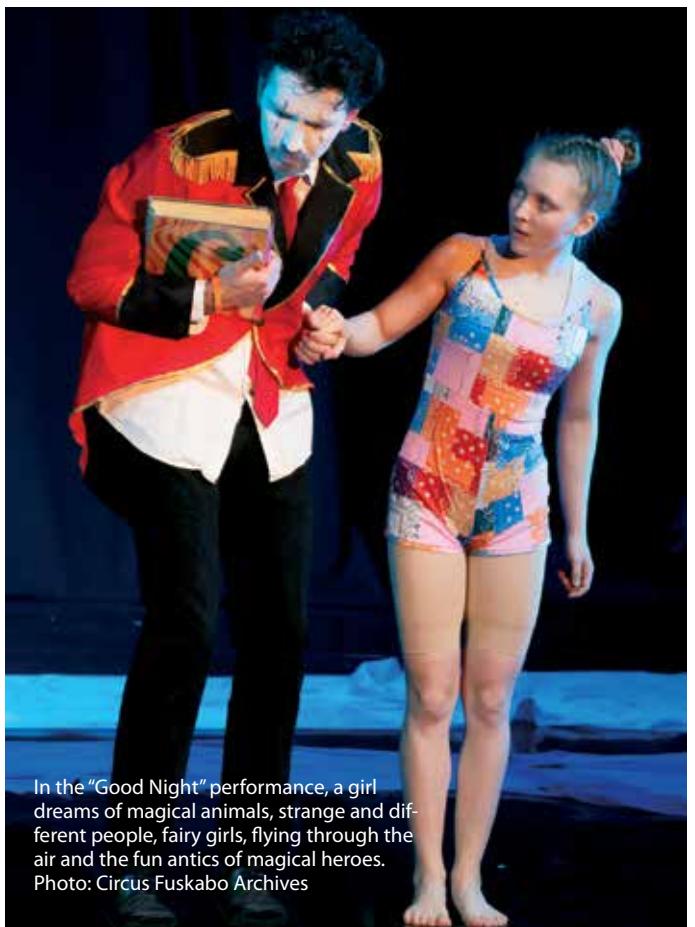
They actively participate in the network through research, training and exchanges, obtaining experience from other European circus schools operating in this field.

Project partners include: AltroCirco (Italy), CIRQUE-ON (Prague, The Czech Republic), Ecole de Cirque de Bruxelles (Brussels, Belgium), Galway Community Circus (Galway, Ireland), Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde (Bagnex, France), Sorin Sirkus (Tampere, Finland), Upsala Zirk (Saint Petersburg, Russia), Zaltimbang' (Luxembourg, Luxembourg), Sirkhane (Mardin, Turkey), Palestine Circus School (Ramallah, Palestine).

The project is financed through the Movit national agency, ERAMUS+, Youth in Action – youth worker mobility.

The art of the circus as a tool for social inclusion is an effective means to educate young people who have fewer opportunities. The Caravan network has been carrying out research on social circus since 2009. It is co-financed by the European Commission. The Caravan partners, including Circus Fuskabo, provide international training in social circus, intended for trainers with basic knowledge of circus skills, who wish to obtain enhanced circus skills to prepare and conduct social circus training. They include most Slovenian trainers and trainers from other countries who come on exchanges.

This year, training is organised in Finland, Ireland and Italy, while Slovenia hosted the training last year.



In the next three years (programme until 2025), Circus Fuskabo will focus on six key programme areas: social circus, youth circus school, the promotion and expansion of the work method outside of the working environment of Ljubljana, active participation in international projects and research, development programme for trainers and assistant trainers, the creation of a group for circus productions.

Young artists from various circuses come on exchanges. Circus Fuskabo has been successfully participating in the project "Assistant trainers sharing knowledge", aimed to design a curriculum for young trainers."

The Slovenian social circus has also been participating in a two-year Erasmus+ project, the aim of which is to plan and design a training module on the circus as a cultural meeting.

BUBBLY AND INTREPID YOUTH

Members and developing their potentials and ideas are at the centre of the circus programme.

Riding a monocycle, performing dizzying circus acrobatics, tight-rope walking, juggling, dancing ... the circus is always playful, colourful and attractive.

The most successful circus productions include Circus Land, Magical Forest and Good Night.

Circus Fuskabo has performed these at many major events, including during the European Year of Youth 2022 project.

They are also the ambassador of the I Feel Slovenia brand, as it fosters the values that distinguish this brand: healthy, creative, special and unique.

This year, the Circus takes part in partnership with the Government Communication Office, the Volleyball Federation of Slovenia in preparation for the 2022 Volleyball Men's World Championship to be hosted in Slovenia and Poland, and the Faculty of Sport as part of the same event.

A circus artist who was on exchange in Slovenia wrote:

After a long night in the bus, I set foot in Ljubljana so well-rested. I had the contact of Skala's association thanks to Ophelie. Helping by an old map, I managed, somehow, to meet them! Zef, the circus project manager, and all his team received me with open arms. I was going to stay 2 weeks with them. I started to discover how works the association ; participating into circus activities : I helped children, assisted teachers during their classes, I led workshops, and managed to create moments of pedagogical exchange with circus teachers. The circus school offer 2 social classes per week. It's open to everyone and free. Children are around 5 and 15 years old. Everyone come to train and learn what he wants and teachers advise, help, guide them and share their knowledge. It was during an afternoon in a poor neighborhood that I truly realized the importance of social work.

3 days a week the Skala's minibus is coming at 3pm at the foot of those big and grey buildings. When we arrived, the weather was rainy and only one boy was waiting at us in the square. He helped us to take all the material out of the van: tables, chairs, games, table football, pens, balls, gas and coffee for mothers who will cook it and share it while children play! During 3 hours, we played with them, spoke, animated workshops... Kids know the team which is here to support them. It's like a big family and every time the minibus comes even if it's snowing or raining and the people from the neighborhood know it!

Circus activities are less and less present to leave space for others and to concentrate them into Skala's premises. I spent this afternoon there, speaking how I could, playing, enjoying, living! When this wonderful 6 years old girl came to me and hug me so strong, I realized how our work there was important!

The European Senior Ladies' Team Championship at Volčji Potok

POLONA PREŠEREN



Slovenia is a green, attractive and healthy destination offering numerous opportunities for outdoor sports activities. The idyllic natural environment also provides a wonderful background for the golf courses in various parts of the country. A wide range of golf and training courses is available to golfers in Slovenia.

The varied landscape in Slovenia offers a variety of natural backgrounds, from grassy fields, the karst terrain, Pannonian plains and low hills, to courses at the foot of the Julian Alps. In addition to being well tended, the key characteristics of Slovenian golf courses are easy access, openness and a wide selection of training opportunities. They are suited for any type of player, from beginners to individuals who want to improve their skills, as well as for children and families. For many, the club and the ball, the diverse hole layouts and extensive golf courses are the perfect way of spending their holidays and free time in an active, healthy manner.

From 28 August to 4 September, the Arboretum Golf Course near Kamnik and Ljubljana will be hosting the European Senior Ladies' Team Championship.

Last year, the Spanish team triumphed at the championship in Germany. Representatives of the following 19 countries will compete against one another at Volčji Potok: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, England, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Scotland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland.

"As always, friendships will be enhanced by the friendly rivalry which this event provides, and I wish all competitors a happy and enjoyable championship," said Jan Hubrecht, President of the European Golf Association, welcoming all the players and their accompanying teams.

The Arboretum Golf Course at Volčji Potok is among the more popular in Slovenia, attracting many golfers every year. Dear golfers, welcome to Slovenia!



Slovenians Are Top Athletes

POLONA PREŠEREN



Slovenians are closely connected with sport, and we like to spend our free time engaging in various sporting activities, either indoors or outdoors. Staying active is simply in our genes. This has led to exceptional achievements in Slovenian sport over the past decades, which have set numerous important milestones. Along with these, word about Slovenian fans and their enthusiastic cheering has spread across the globe. This year, too, Slovenian athletes have already delighted us with new, outstanding performances.

THE OLYMPICS

Forty-three Slovenian athletes participated in the Winter Olympics in Beijing, and they won seven medals.

Four of these were brought to Slovenia by ski jumpers: the two gold medals were won by Urša Bogataj in the women's ski jumping category, and by Nika Križnar, Urša Bogataj, Timi Zajc and Peter Prevc in the mixed team ski jumping event. The silver medal went to the men's team competing in the large hill event, composed of Lovro Kos, Cene Prevc, Timi Zajc and Peter Prevc. The bronze medal went to Nika Križnar in the women's normal hill event.

Another two medals were secured by the Slovenian snowboarders Glorija Kotnik and Tim Mastnak. The two of them created amazing Olympic stories: both won the medal on the same day and in the same discipline, only Glorija won it in the women's category and Tim in the men's. The Slovenian collection of Olympic medals was rounded off by the silver in Alpine skiing, won by Žan Kranjec in the giant slalom.

ICE HOCKEY

The Slovenian hockey team has qualified for the Olympics twice so far, creating a fantastic story. Unfortunately, they failed to qualify for the third time in a row and make it to the Winter Olympics in Beijing, but the team did play at the World Championship Division I





Urša Bogataj
Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

Group A tournament in Ljubljana, where it secured first place and thus earned a place in the elite division in Finland and Latvia next year.

This time around, the Slovenian team played without the hockey star Anže Kopitar, who right at that time was playing in the NHL playoffs with the LA Kings, the team he captains. Kopitar is a two-time winner of the Stanley Cup.

Slovenian hockey players first qualified for the elite division in 2001, which was one of the biggest achievements in this sport after the country's independence.

After 1991, when Slovenia became a newly independent state, the team had to start from the lowest group, and it took them several years to break through to the top level.

BASKETBALL

Slovenian basketball players thrilled all of Slovenia back in 2017, when they won the EuroBasket title, with the NBA players Goran Dragić and Luka Dončić putting on outstanding performances in the national team's jerseys.

Placing fourth at the Olympics in Tokyo was also an exceptional achievement.

Slovenia's men's national basketball team has had an exciting summer, starting the world championship qualifiers. After a short break the team began its preparations on 25 July, and it has already played six warm-up matches over the summer.

The highlight for the national team is coming up in September at EuroBasket in Germany, where it will be defending the title it won in Istanbul. This will come only a few days after playing in the qualifiers for the world championship. It is still unclear whether the captain of the winning side in 2017 will also be joining the Slovenian team this time around.

ATHLETICS

After thirteen years, Slovenia won another gold medal at the World Athletics Championships in July.

The outstanding Kristjan Čeh was crowned the new world champion in men's discus in Eugene, Oregon, with a new championship record throw of 71.13 m.



Kristjan Čeh
Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

The Slovenian ace beat the entire competition by nearly two metres. He started the finals with a throw of 65.27 m, then shook his head in some frustration, but continued with an excellent performance, already securing the gold with his third throw.

Kristjan Čeh is a Slovenian athlete with exceptional talent, who made his Olympic debut last year. He was among the main contenders for the medals in Tokyo, but ended up without one. The 206 cm athlete nonetheless attracted the world's attention, and made up for this earlier disappointment at the world championship.

VINO EURO 2022

Slovenian wine producers are also excellent footballers

POLONA PREŠEREN

PHOTO: THE SLOVENIAN WINE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



Slovenian wine producers have proven several times that they not only produce high-quality wines but are also good sportspeople. Several years ago, Slovenian wine producers who are also active on football pitches formed a wine football team. They attended this year's European Championship of Winemakers in Football, VINO EURO 2022, in the Czech Republic.

In addition to their sporting value, such events also bring together wine producers and those involved in wine-related industries. In 2018, the championship took place in Slovenia, when the Slovenians defended their title of European champions. So far, they have won the title four times.

They were unable to retain the title this year in the Czech Republic, losing against the hosts in the finals. This was the sixth European championship for Slovenian wine producers and employees working in the wine industry. Germany won the bronze medal.

In group competition, Slovenia beat Switzerland (3:0) and Italy (2:1). They won first place in Group A after a tie with Germany (1:1) in the last minutes of the match with a player short. The Slovenians showed a fighting spirit in the semi-finals and won against Portugal 2:1.

"We are very pleased with the result and the outcome of the entire week. Second place is a great success. We've won the title of European champions four times before and it wasn't easy to get to the finals again. We're particularly proud to have a team with a great heart," said winemaker Danilo Steyer, President of the Slovenian Wine Football Team, at the end of the championship, and

highlighted that football was not the only focus of the tournament of eight European teams from wine producing countries.

"Football unites us, but we are primarily winemakers. We are here to socialise, make friends and forge ties, exchange experience and learn, and then transfer that knowledge home and implement it," explains Steyer.

Robi Fišer, Coach of the Slovenian Wine Football Team, who selected his team from among the wine producers and people linked to the wine industry, was very proud of his team. In four days, they played five matches; prior to the finals, the teams played 60-minute matches and 80 minutes in the finals.

"We reached our goal of playing in the finals. We worked hard and fought well. Perhaps we needed a touch of luck. In the finals, it was also evident that we socialised a lot, which Slovenians are good at. There were a few injuries and certain people had to return home early due to their work obligations as caterers and winemakers. The entire week was a success," was how coach Fišer summarised the championship. The wine producers are already thinking about the next European championship, which will take place in 2024.

SALTPANS CUISINE

A life seasoned with salt

TANJA GLOGOVČAN BELANČIĆ



This year's European Heritage Days are dedicated to sustainable heritage under the theme "A Heritage of Resilience". Special attention is being paid to saltpans cuisine.

The project involves the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, the Self-Governing Community of Italian Nationality of Piran, the Community of Italians "Giuseppe Tartini" of Piran, the Maritime Museum "Sergej Mašera" of Piran, the Sečovlje Salt-pans Landscape Park, the company Soline d.o.o. and the Parish of Sečovlje. Through culinary and cultural events, they want to highlight the importance of preserving local organic crafts. The events include education (e.g. a visit to the Museum of Saltworks), learning about edible plants in the saltpans, children's workshops, bread baking, seafood dishes, polenta and traditional festive desserts prepared for the feast of St. Bartholomew. The final event will take place in October, when Slovenian cuisine and recipes related to work and life in the saltpans will be presented.

A culinary story is not just a recipe for preparing a dish, but above all a story about people, their work, their thinking and customs, but also their fears and joy and love.

It is the story of the rich Venetian Republic, the smell of the sea and salt, the strong sun, a bygone era to which only the crumbling saltpans houses still testify. Quiet, but sometimes full of children's laughter, a man's raspy voice and the aroma from the kitchen. The smell of salt, of the sea that has not returned to the sky.

I HAVE TO GO TO THE SALTPANS

"Goodbye Piran, I have to leave you, I have to go to the saltpans", this is how the people of Piran greeted their city before leaving for the saltpans. They left for the saltpans after the feast of St. George (24 April) and stayed there until the end of September. Families carried dishes, devotional pictures, straws, chairs, chickens, a cat and some basic foodstuffs in boats. All family members were involved in the work.

Men and boys worked in the salt field, while women and girls were in charge of household chores.

Each saltpans family had its own house, which was built in a very practical way. The ground floor was used as a salt storage and a tool store. A wooden ladder led to the first floor, where there was a kitchen with a fireplace where the women prepared delicious meals using ingredients they could obtain from the saltpans (some families also had a garden next to the house). In the canals and ditches, it was possible to catch crabs, mullets, cuttlefish, squid and other sea life, which were then prepared according to traditional recipes – strictly always with polenta.

A real saltpans family atmosphere pervaded the kitchen. It was the brightest, warmest place, where people gathered and talked.

WATER AND BREAD

Drinking water was a big problem in the saltpans, there was no water pipeline and only some families had a well. Water was therefore drawn from the few wells in the place called Fontanele (the source). They walked a long way, several kilometres on foot. Mostly women walked to fetch water, carrying a container on their head. Sometimes they also carried water in a bucket. Water was brought two or three times a day. Fontanele was famous because it never ran out of water.

A special attraction in the saltpans was the wood-fired oven for baking bread. It was baked at home or in the local bakeries.

A medium-sized family made bread with about 10 kg of flour. This quantity yielded 20 to 25 loaves of bread. Larger families baked twice as much bread each week.



They had no yeast. Therefore, the salt-makers' housewives made it at home. They usually kneaded the bread with their hands. They formed bread "in four prongs".

The salt-makers' wives always did the washing at home. Water was brought from Fontanele or transported by men in boats. They used soap and ash to keep clean. The best was olive ash, which made the laundry the whitest. In Fontanele, the salt-makers provided the women with a basin for rinsing, made of beautiful limestone slabs, which they leaned on while rinsing. They hung their laundry around the house and ironed it later. They used irons made of cast-iron or brass. The laundry was usually put away in a chest.

VARIED AND SIMPLE MEALS

The salt-makers were not rich, so their diet was modest. They made the most of the natural environment in which they lived.

The men went to work on the saltpans early in the morning. Usually without breakfast. The women, who took care of the domestic animals (chickens, goats and even a pig), started preparing the meals. The morning snack, which the salt-makers ate after their early work, consisted of bread, fish and vegetables (e.g. tomatoes, cucumber or lettuce). Lunch was ready around midday and the afternoon snack was between 3 and 4 pm. They ate quickly and whatever was on hand, as the daily salt harvest followed immediately after the snack. Dinner was also served very early in the evening. Before eight o'clock in the evening, the kitchen was already cleaned. They went to bed before nine o'clock in the evening.

GROWING SPICES AND VEGETABLES

Around each saltpans house there was a small garden. Saffron, lettuce and radicchio were obligatory in almost every garden, and cucumbers and, in later times, tomatoes were also grown. A special part of the garden was reserved for animals.

They picked herbs and radicchio from their garden and, together with fresh eggs, they prepared a delicious "Fritaja with radicchio". They ate it with bread, for a snack.



In the evaporation ponds, the housewives always found saltpans plants: sea-buckthorn, salicornia and chard, which they used to make delicious salads. In addition to salt, they added olive oil and wine vinegar to make them taste better.

The housewife also made a side dish or soup with wild fennel and chard cooked in salted water. The same method was used in the kitchen to prepare green beans. A typical saltpans (fish) soup was "savor" (roasted and coated surmullet).

Mashed potatoes in a pan with fried onions were often on the menu. The housewives also often prepared a barley minestrone. They soaked the beans in the evening and in the morning added a cup of washed barley, peeled and chopped potatoes and boiled potatoes, which they mashed whole to make the minestrone thicker. They also added a carrot, an onion, two cloves of garlic, a bay leaf and a ham bone. They covered everything with water and left it to boil for an hour and a half. When it was cooked, they added the pasta. They also cooked "soups made from the leftovers of various dishes", patties, "paperonato" (made from peppers, aubergines and tomatoes with celery, salt and pepper). When they did not have much time, they made a "baked soup" ("prežganka") with burnt flour, olive oil and an egg.

An indispensable dish in the saltpans was Grancevola - sea spider. The housewife boiled it in boiling water for 10 minutes and then left it to cool. Once cooled, she slowly opened and cleaned it. It was then eaten seasoned with olive oil, pepper, salt and parsley.

When the husband caught an eel, his wife peeled it, cut it into pieces and left it in milk all afternoon to clean it. In the evening, she also rolled the pieces in white flour and fried them. Housewives also knew how to prepare dondolas, large crabs (Grancipori). A speciality was a fish brodet made of blotched picarels, cuttlefish, mullets, eels, scorpionfish, bearded fish and mantis shrimp, with plenty of spices added. Marinated sardines were also often served as a snack in the saltpans. On Sundays, especially, when the men from Piran brought meat, there was soup on the table – brodo. Homemade noodles were usually stirred into it. They usually bought enough meat to last until Monday. They did not eat meat for lunch. They left it for dinner.



SWEET END OF THE YEAR

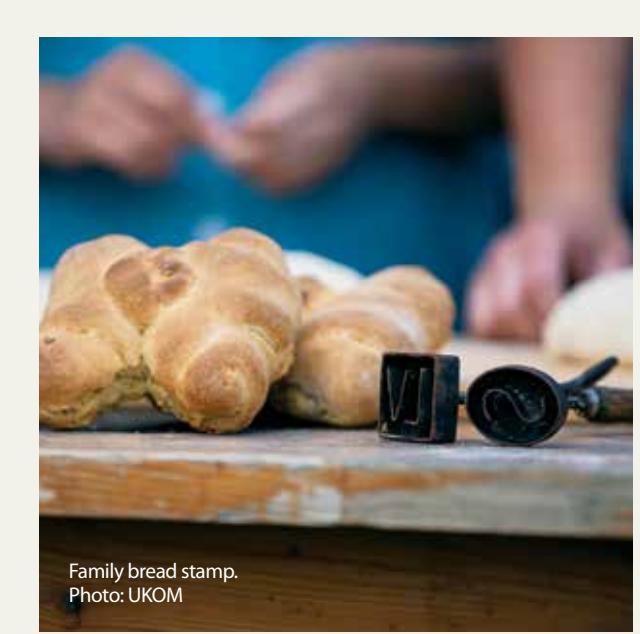
So, the salt-makers ate frugally in the summer. The food was simple but plentiful. But when they received some money towards the end of the year, their lives changed a lot. Especially at the festive times, Christmas, Carnival and Easter, they indulged in sumptuous fritulas, pinsas, pignas and bussolaie.

And children were thrilled to indulge themselves on special occasions with plum dumplings, fig bread, baked corn cobs and ricotta.



In winter, they indulged in more meat, especially mutton and beef. The salt-makers are very proud of both their summer and their winter food. It is commonly said that the people of Piran learned to eat from the salt-makers.

The strength and existence of the Venetian Republic was due to the salt industry. The oldest contract concerning sales, taxes, etc. is between the Piran Commune and Venice, dated 1375. Salt used to be a raw material of strategic importance in Slovenian Istria.

**RECIPE FOR SALTPANS BREAD**

The women made the bread in four prongs in the following way: they took two equal pieces of dough, weighing about 250 grams each. The two pieces were rolled separately. They placed the rolls together and pinched them twice with their fingers near the middle so that they did not stick together. The four resulting prongs were lifted vertically, squeezed slightly and then spread again. In the centre of the resulting mass, they pressed the family bread stamp – bolo, timbro or timbolo del pan (usually engraved with initials, a symbol, a coat of arms or some floral or animal motif). They then turned the bread upside down and placed it in one of the round cups – concola. Here the bread continued to rise for a while. Finally, the woman put the bread and the concolo on her head and took it to the oven. When the bread was baked, they put it in a wicker basket (jerbas) and took it home. It was necessary to pay the owner of the oven for the baking. Few houses had their own oven.

FRUIT FRITULAS

When the fritulas are being prepared, the yellow pumpkin (sucne melonare) or winter pumpkin is peeled. The seeds are removed, and the pumpkin is cut into pieces. It is then salted and cooked in water. It is cooked for about 20 minutes. It is drained and pressed. It is then mashed to form a pulp. Finally, almonds, walnuts, lemon peel, apples, pears, and orange peel are chopped, to which whole grapes (or raisins), vanilla, cocoa or chocolate (or both), oil, half a kilo of sugar, two kilos of white flour, two to four eggs, a little grape skin brandy and rum are added. All this was mixed together to make a liquid dough as is done for fried-dough fritters. They were then placed with a wire into hot oil and fried. The fritters were placed in a bowl and sprinkled with sugar and vanilla. They were eaten on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. Some housewives made so many that there were enough for the whole week.



BLED

Exceptional natural and cultural heritage

VESNA ŽARKOVIĆ

PHOTO: ZGPHOTOGRAPHY/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



Bled is certainly the most recognisable place in Slovenia. People from all over the world have been visiting it for a very long time, so the history of Bled tourism is quite remarkable. We want Bled to be visited by those who really respect this exceptional natural and cultural heritage, its residents say.

This lake is one of a kind, they stress, and so they protect the quality of the water, which has improved so significantly in the last two years that the lake is again crystal clear. The town has invested greatly in the environment in recent years. They are trying to reduce the quantity of waste, encourage people to drink tap water and behave responsibly when visiting public park areas.

The Municipality of Bled is a zero waste municipality and the Castle bathing area was the first bathing site in Slovenia to be awarded the Slovenia Green Beach ecolabel.

The zero waste concept also applies to all events organised by the municipality and its public institutions.

Luckily, events are returning this summer in full swing, with more than one hundred to be held over a period of three months. Bled Festival starts on 1 July, followed at the end of July by the traditional Bled Days, which are an introduction to a three-week happening at the Lake Promenade where 60 years of the Slovenian Song Festival were commemorated this year. Matjaž Zavrnik, Director of the Bled Culture Institute, said that after realising that not much funding will be available for investment after two difficult years, they decided to focus most of their efforts on a more varied cultural programme. In the absence of the Okarina Ethno Festival, the Bled Festival was intensified. Puppet shows and exhibitions dedicated to the painter Ejti Štih were prepared this summer. Various sports events are taking place in Bled, including the 24th Rikli's Walk at the beginning of July. This year's new attractions include five new thematic trails that were arranged within the DigiRikli project in which the heritage of the pioneer of spa tourism in Bled, Arnold Rikli, was digitalised.

NEW MUSEUMS AND A RICH CULTURAL OFFER IN BLED IN THE COMING YEARS

A museum of modern art is being built below Bled Castle and an archaeological museum will also be arranged in its vicinity in the next few years. Also moving forward are plans for a museum of tourism that will be set up in the premises of the former library. A project to convert Mrak Homestead into an ethnological museum has also been drafted. In the past 15 years, Bled Castle has undergone a thorough renovation, so the Bled Culture Institute is now focusing on the enhancement of the wider castle area. Three facilities will be established there which, together with the castle, will form a cultural and adventure park.

At the former manor house, the Artarhiv company is building a museum of modern art in which works from the extensive private collection of Igor and Mojca Lah will be displayed, including the creations of world-renowned modern artists, particularly Slovenian painter Zoran Mušič and German sculptor and painter Anselm Kiefer. The building, designed by English architect David Chipperfield, is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2023 and opened to the public in spring 2024. At the location where service workshops used to stand in front of the manor house, an archaeological museum is to be built simultaneously, as both facilities will be linked by a common square.

The surrounding area of Bled Castle is one of the most researched and richest archaeological sites.

Important artefacts and discoveries will find a home in the museum. Discussions are underway with the National Museum of Slovenia, which is responsible for the museum collection at Bled Castle, to divide the history of Bled between museums in accordance with historic periods.

The archaeological museum would thus feature the period before the first mention of Bled in 1004. The period from 1004 until the arrival of Arnold Rikli and the development of tourism would be presented at the castle. The museum of tourism is to be sited in the premises where Bled Library was situated until this year's relocation to the new intergenerational centre. A section of the premises will be dedicated to the gallery of works by Bled honorary citizen and academic painter Melita Vovk, who passed away two years ago.

In the wider castle area, the abandoned Mrak Homestead is also awaiting renovation. According to the Institute's plans, the old house will be revived as an ethnological museum. In the adjacent outbuilding, accompanying premises and a museum room dedicated to Slovenian sculptor Slavko Oblak, who lives in Germany and whose family is connected with Mrak Homestead, will be established.

FIRST SUMMER EDITION OF THE BLED LEGEND OF THE SUNKEN BELL

A summer performance of the legend of the sunken bell, which traditionally takes place on Lake Bled in December, was organised. The performance was cancelled for the last two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the creators and visitors missed it very much, so they decided to also perform it for the first time in summer. Since it was not possible to organise the performance for quite some time, it was decided to carry out its spring or summer edition, as the story is not linked to the season. The legend goes that a young widow once lived in Bled Castle whose husband was killed by bandits. To honour his memory, she collected all her gold and silver so that a bell for the chapel on the island could be cast from it. When the bell was being transported to the island, a storm came over the lake and capsized the boat. The boatmen drowned and the bell sank. The young widow went to Rome and entered a convent. After her death, the pope sent a new bell to the church on Lake Bled and it is believed to this day that whoever makes a wish and rings the bell will have their wish come true. But the sunken bell still sounds from the lake's depths on peaceful and clear nights, concludes the legend.

THEY ENJOY LIVING IN BLED AND ARE PROUD OF THEIR HOMETOWN

The residents of Bled consider Lake Bled, with its island and monadnocks, which are of glacial origin and serve as excellent vantage points, as some of the nation's most beautiful natural assets.

They also enjoy hikes or bike rides through neighbouring villages, trips to the Sava Bohinjka or Sava Dolinka rivers and in the area of the Julian Alps or Triglav National Park, i.e. Vintgar Gorge.

The best restaurants include Julijana Restaurant in the Grand Hotel Toplice, which boasts a Michelin Plate, the 1906 Restaurant in the Hotel Triglav and other great restaurants and inns with local cuisine.

Famous personalities who lived in Bled include the pioneer in natural healing and modern tourism in Bled, Arnold Rikli; world-renowned mathematician and first rector of the University of Ljubljana, Josip Plemelj; educator and linguist, Blaž Kumerdej; internationally established painter, Melita Vovk; globally recognised inventor, Peter Florjančič; rower, Jani Klemenčič; hockey players, Anže Kopitar and Tomaž Razingar; cross-country skier, Katja Višnar, and many other sportspeople, successful businesspeople and other prominent citizens.

And how do locals feel in Bled with such a crowd of visitors? We enjoy living in Bled and are proud of our hometown, they say. What about Bled peculiarities? Some women still speak in the masculine gender, and some locals swim in the lake every month of the year.

And what is a typical resident of Bled like? He or she engages in outdoor activities, has a garden and produces vegetables and fruit, organises picnics, occasionally orders food from local restaurants, complains about the traffic and crowds of tourists. But is truly happy to live in this town.



Perched atop a cliff towering 130 metres above Lake Bled, the castle rewards visitors observing the countryside from its lower courtyard with stunning views of Bled, its lake and the island.



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