

# Sinfo 10

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The latest from Slovenia



# Slovenia's first early elections

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- SPORTS: **Back on top again after 15 years?** • ART & CULTURE: **The convincing Ex Ponto**
- SLOVENIAN DELIGHTS: **Indigenous grape varieties** • NATURAL TRAILS: **The Ljubljana Marshes**

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Vesna Žarkovič, Editor

### In anticipation of a new government

The government led by Prime Minister Borut Pahor has been the first since Slovenia's independence to exit by calling early elections; President Danilo Türk called for early parliamentary elections to be held in Slovenia on 4 December. After the elections, what form will the new Slovenian government – which we all want to be stable, strong and ready to make decisions on a number of challenges – take? Judging by the results of current public opinion polls, the left- and the right-wing parties each stand a precisely 50 per cent chance of winning, which implies that the formation of the government will be significantly much more difficult than it appears at the moment, and the period of uncertainty between two successive governments will be longer.

For this reason, the news about Pipistrel, the company from Ajdovščina, winning the NASA Green Flight Challenge prize for the third time in a row, is even more encouraging. The Pipistrel team earned the prize for the world's first ever electric-powered four-seat, energy efficient aircraft, the Taurus G4, by flying and proving that electric aircraft can now be on par with aircraft powered by fossil fuels. Also noteworthy is the news that Jernej Barbič, Slovenian mathematician, physicist and computer scientist, has been the first Slovenian recognised as one of the 35 most outstanding young innovators in the annual list published by the US magazine MIT Technology Review, as well as the news about the achievement of Slovenian scientists from the Jožef Štefan Institute, who developed a new, highly efficient drug-delivery system based on magnetic iron oxide nanoparticle clusters encapsulated in a liposome, which may pave the way for a new efficient tool in the fight against cancer.

Despite the recent collapse of the government and changes that will follow, health care reform, in addition to pension reform, is a key reform that the next government will have to address. The adoption of both reforms is crucial for Slovenia to stay within the Pact for the Euro. The announced changes, essential to health policy, have been discussed with the Minister of Health, Dorjan Marušič. Slovenia is also known in the world because of sports. Twenty years of independent participation by Slovenian athletes at major sports competitions have considerably contributed to the reputation of our country. Over the years, they have won 151 gold medals at championships in various sports. It is also encouraging to note that as many as one third of Slovenian citizens engage in sports, placing Slovenia among the world's top sporting nations.

The International Biennale of Graphic Arts held in Ljubljana is the most celebrated event in the field of visual arts in Slovenia, with a long tradition dating from the mid-1950s. This year's biennale (the 29th) is taking place at various venues across Ljubljana, bringing together a large number of acclaimed and reputable artists from all over the world, who are participating with their projects in various exhibitions organised in Ljubljana.

A man without a culture is not a unified whole, says Robert Waltl, an actor, director, puppeteer and artistic director, who has set up a new cultural quarter in the old town of Ljubljana, and is also our current guest in the 'People' section. The inspiration for this came from the streets of New York communities. The project has produced a list of important people, who once created there; there are small installations of paintings, signposts and notices, greenery and flowers, and benches for reading and socialising.

We present the Barje, a charming, beautiful area south of the capital; it is a lovely, quite misty landscape. Half a century ago, trenches divided it into a large chessboard of squares, hiding in its heart flora and fauna, found only at this particular place. And we wonder whether this season brings new opportunities for the revival of the Olimpija Ljubljana basketball club, and whether the team be competitive enough against the excellent Spaniards and Italians, and whether Olimpija's Stožice Stadium will again become an unconquerable fortress. These are the questions that arise before the beginning of the new European season, and all basketball fans in Slovenia wish for one answer to each of the: YES!



Darijan Košir

# Result of the political crisis: Slovenia's first early elections

The political crisis in Slovenia, the origin and climax of which was described in detail in the editorial of the previous issue, has in the meantime disentangled with a vote of no confidence for the government of Borut Pahor. As neither the President of the State nor the Parliament could find another Prime Minister, the President of the Republic, Danilo Türk, announced that the first early elections in Slovenian history are to be held on 4 December. Although all parties involved have their own reasons and explanations for such an outcome, the fact remains that during the second wave of the great economic and financial crisis, Slovenia will be without a government for at least four months, and even after the elections it remains to be seen how a new executive branch of power will be formed. Slovenia may even expect a longer period of political imbalance at the least convenient moment of recent times.

The vote of no confidence to the government of Borut Pahor was seemingly conclusive, with 51 votes against 36, which also means that as many as 87 out of total 90 deputies were present at this historical voting. They committed themselves to their votes a few days earlier, allowing the outcome to be announced in advance and very accurately predicted by the media. This also means that when voting, deputies did not change their minds in light of their public statements. Therefore, they renounced their mandates, as well as their salaries, one year earlier, which positively surprised the public, as many expected that members of Parliament would pass the vote of confidence for the sole reason of keeping their privileges for another year. Only two remaining coalition parties voted for the government of Prime Minister Pahor, namely SD

and LDS, and three unaffiliated members, while all other parties (SDS, SLS, Zares, Desus, SNS and deputies of minorities) were unanimously against, among them also both former members of Pahor's government coalition (Desus and Zares). On the other hand, this means that the government would have stayed in power had at least eight deputies voted differently, a number which the former members of government coalition could easily account for. However, this did not happen, meaning that the government was brought down by the same persons who participated in it for at least two of the last three years.

Prime Minister Pahor surprised by immediately responding that he would not try to motion another vote of confidence, as provided

by legislation, and he automatically renounced his position as Prime Minister. Despite some very desperate attempts, members of Parliament did not succeed in finding a politician whom they could propose as a replacement of the former Prime Minister to stand for another year until elections, and the President of the State was equally unsuccessful. Thus he was left with no option other than deciding, after consulting party leaders, to dissolve the Parliament on 21 October and call for the first early parliamentary elections in Slovenia for 4 December. If the former government of Prime Minister Janez Janša was the first in Slovenia's twenty-year history to end its mandate in the same coalition structure as it began, the government of Borut Pahor is the first to leave early due to early elections.

As already said, this state of anarchy has occurred at the least convenient time for Slovenia. After June's failed referendum on pension reform, two credit rating agencies lowered Slovenia's sovereign credit rating, as well as the credit ratings of most of its banks. The reasons for lowering the creditworthiness rating of the state lie not only in the failed pension reform – the latter exerts the most influence on the assessment of the (in)capability of the state to implement long-term reforms, and unfortunately it is exactly the long-term perspectives that are worst of all – but also in a weak banking system which needs a more decisive capital increase, and (which is a novelty) also in the state's political imbalance, lingering ever since the June government referenda fiasco, which brought about the state's reduced capability to sustain financial stability. Pahor's government otherwise succeeded, on the eve of the no confidence vote, to pass the revised national budget for 2011 in the Parliament, which indicated the government's readiness for making more severe savings and controlling general government expenditure with a view of decreasing the growing deficit. However, immediately after the fall of the government, the question of the 2012 budget appeared, despite it having been passed a year ago. That said, in its present form it is unsustainable considering the current financial situation in the country and the world.

The government, which may only deal with current issues after the vote of no confidence, while all its larger projects are limited as the Parliament independently decides whether to accept such proposals for discussion, for a while seriously deliberated whether to address MPs with a draft revised national budget for 2012, but it viewed such efforts as already hopeless. However, not wishing to act carelessly and irresponsibly towards the state and public finance, it submitted to the Parliament an Act on intervention measures, which at least limits expenditure for 2012 in three of

the most sensitive and important (or financially "the gravest") areas: public sector salaries, pensions and social transfers. This already exposed the Parliament's lack of readiness to decide on the most important state matters: fearing it would trigger the pre-election anger of public employees, trade unions and pensioners, it refused to even consider the intervention act, thus causing further harm to public finances. This tactlessness may have an additional negative effect on the short term ratings of the state.

The resigning government thus did what it could. Its powers have been limited, until further notice, by the Parliament, which was also dissolved on 21 October. With this, the legal and political void is absolute. It is noteworthy that at this moment, the state faces the decision about another two most difficult budgetary issues of the present time, namely whether to grant a government guarantee for construction of the Unit 6 in Šoštanj (Teš 6) worth 440 million euro, and whether to participate in the capital increase of Nova Ljubljanska banka (NLB) worth 400 million euro. At the first attempt to decide on the guarantee for Teš 6 (at the time the vote of no confidence to the government was passed), the absurdity of the emerging situation was revealed: the decision, which should be adopted by November and which was initially supported by almost all political parties, was postponed, after most politicians changed their minds, to the time after establishment of a new government, therefore most likely into March of next year. It remains to be seen how, in this precarious interim time, the saga about the all too necessary capital increase of the central Slovenian bank NLB will conclude.

Equally interesting is the question, after the early elections, of the form taken by the new Slovenian government, which we all hope will be solid, strong and prepared to decide on all the challenges mentioned above. Judging from the results of current public opinion polls, the favourite is obvious: the Slovenian Democratic party of Janez Janša. But this party is not likely to win an absolute majority, and partners to siege the government summit are (almost) nonexistent. The left faces the opposite problem: there is probably no chance of any of the left parties independently winning, although several favour their chances of entering the parliament, which may result in programme alliances that may in turn ensure enough votes to form a new coalition government. Nevertheless, it seems – and calculations confirm – that the chances of the left and the right are almost exactly tied, which may signify that forming government will be essentially more difficult than it seems now. At the same time, the interim period of uncertainty between two governments will be proportionally longer.

# After Three Years in Power

In 2010, a major Slovenian newspaper accompanied the second anniversary of the government of Prime Minister Borut Pahor with the title: Second Anniversary of Pahor's Government: from Stars to Thorns. Indeed, Pahor's government, the ninth after 1990 to be sworn in by the Slovenian parliament on 21 November 2008, has had anything but an easy mandate. Its path ended after three years in power with a vote of confidence on 20 September 2011, which Prime Minister Borut Pahor tied to the appointment of five new ministers, which were not supported by the majority of MPs. Borut Pahor is actually the third prime minister in the history of independent Slovenia to receive a vote of no confidence from the Slovenian parliament – both the governments of Lojze Peterle and Janez Drnovšek fell before him, although early elections are something Slovenia has not yet seen.



**“It is extremely hard being a politician in crisis times as you cannot promise people a better life... The legacy of my government is that Slovenia does not figure at the financial outskirts of the Euro group. But it may find itself in it if the political crisis deepens and elections are won by those making false promises about what can be done.”**  
(Prime Minister Borut Pahor in an interview for Slovenian TV, 2 October 2011)



The beginning of the mandate of the centre-left government consisting of the SD, Zares, LDS and DeSUS political parties coincided with the onset of the most severe global financial and economic crisis after the Second World War. It is worth noting that the crisis most certainly touched Slovenia, and to a great extent marked the whole mandate of Pahor's government, which had to constantly deal with the question of preserving jobs and at the same time mitigating the social impacts of numerous bankrupt companies. Soon after starting its work, the government actually announced and later prepared some structural reforms aimed at triggering new economical impetus and increasing competitiveness, with only partial success. One of the most important, the pension system reform, was rejected by voters at a referendum, which means that this pressing question will have to be dealt with by the next government. When proposing the reform to the Slovenian parliament, the government emphasized that the pension act was one of the most long-term measures in Slovenia, aimed at ensuring higher sustainability of public finance in the state and providing a safer old age to all generations.

In this mandate, Slovenian voters voted on adopted acts at subsequent referendums as many as six times – of this four times in 2011 (in addition to the

pension act, also on the arbitration agreement with Croatia in 2010, and this year about the Radiotelevizija Slovenija Act, the Small Work Act, the Act on Preventing Undeclared Work and the Archives Act). Only the arbitration agreement with Croatia was supported at the referendum, paving the way for an arbitration tribunal to pass judgement on the border between the two states. Future governments will have to oversee the conclusion of other reforms started by Pahor's government, which have been halted due to the vote of no confidence: the labour market reform aimed at increasing its flexibility, the public sector reform and regulation of ratios between salary groups, improvements to the health care system, energy market reform and reform on the managing of the state's investments in companies. The latter was one of conditions of Slovenia's membership in the OECD.

#### STRUCTURAL REFORMS AND MAINTAINING SOCIAL SECURITY

In its mandate, Borut Pahor's government mainly dealt with alleviating and eliminating the consequences of the severe economic crisis. Despite adopting numerous solutions and measures, the Office of the Prime Minister constantly faced criticism that its responses to challenges of the economic crisis came too slowly and were inappropriate.

During the crisis, the government provided enough funds to maintain social rights and levels of these rights from the period of economic growth and even adopted additional measures in the field of social assistance aimed at improving the social circumstances of the most endangered. In the government's mandate, the social rights of the population remained untouched, while some even increased (for example in the area of employment and grants). The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs saw the economic and financial crisis as an opportunity to implement key changes and measures within

systems of social assistance and labour market, allowing the Slovenian economy and employees to enter a new cycle of economic growth under conditions comparable to the most developed economies in the world. If 2009 was thus mainly dedicated to strengthening the welfare state and its subsystems and to ensuring appropriate social assistance to those with the lowest income, changes in 2010, which continue also in 2011, are oriented towards strengthening flexibility of the labour market and actively adjusting it to new economic circumstances. The Act Regulating the Labour Market and Small Work Act were conceived with this in mind, although the latter did not enter into force due to the referendum.

Between 2009 and the end of September 2011, the government of the RS provided 393.7 million Euros worth of transfers for socially endangered, and a total of 661.5 million Euros for unemployment payments. Among other measures, SID bank carried out four auctions where it granted state guarantees for credit repayments of individuals totalling 17 million Euros.

Between 2009 and 2011, the government provided 60.3 mil-



“I am proud to say that not many states are able to achieve the same success as we have with the same financial input in the healthcare service, although in some areas I have very high standards in mind. The basis for my hope lies in combining changes. I have extended the period of the health care system reform to 2020 precisely with the purpose of avoiding excessive financial limitations.” (Dorjan Marušič, Minister of Health)

lion Euros for partial salary compensation for workers temporarily awaiting employment.

The two intervention acts preserved more than 25,000 jobs on the labour market, while the Minimum Wage Act saw the minimum salary rise by 22%, ensuring appropriate protection of the position of the most vulnerable workers.

Despite an increased number of unemployed, the government kept the unemployment level at a manageable level. Thus Slovenia remains in the top third of EU states with the lowest unemployment rate, while in terms of youth unemployment, Slovenia is among the five states with the lowest unemployment rate.

In addition to helping threatened inhabitants, the government also helped the economy. For example, it paid 33 million Euros of grants to companies that reduced the number of working hours in a week during the crisis, while the Act on the Guarantee Scheme of the Republic of Slovenia introduced a possibility of mitigating the consequences of the global economic and financial crisis together with improving liquidity of the economy by improving access to funds in the Slovenian financial market (resulting in state guarantees in a total value of 1.2 billion Euros). During the first half of its mandate, the government supported over 3,500 commercial projects through public tenders: in 2009, more than 275 million Euros were tendered, and in 2010 more than 290 million Euros, which exceeds the funds intended for promoting entrepreneurship and competitiveness in 2008 by more than half.

Despite raising funds necessary for ensuring Slovenia overcomes the economical crisis relatively peacefully, all debt parameters of Slovenia remained better than in most comparable states. By introducing a fiscal rule, the government set the ceiling of the budget expenditure with respect to the levels of economic growth. Until the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2009, the consolidated gross debt of the state was relatively stable, gradually growing to 27% GDP in 2004, when Slovenia entered the EU. In 2009, it increased to 35.2% GDP as a direct result of the financial crisis. In 2010, the consolidated gross debt of the state sector increased by 1,254 million Euros to 13,704 million Euros or 38.0% GDP.

Borut Pahor's government was aware that additional measures would be needed to lower the public debt after 2012. The gradual decreasing of the state's active role in the economy was envisaged as one of the measures. This was expected to take place within the frame of the Capital Assets Management Agency of the Republic of Slovenia. The Agency's main purpose is to separate the implementation of the government's ownership function from other functions (regulatory function, role as protector of competition, guarantor of public services, promoter of development, environmental protector, grantor of concessions), and to divide the state's investments into strategic investments and those available for sale.

The government adopted certain measures as part of the initiated public sector reform. As



“The government was aware that it would not be able to maintain the current level of welfare state without resolving structural issues, which have been building up for a longer period and are not a consequence of financial crisis: an ageing population, student labour, grey economy, and labour market rigidity. For this reason, we prepared and the national assembly adopted the following system-wide acts: Financial Social Assistance Act and Exercise of Rights to Public Funds Act, Pensions Act, Small Work Act, and the Prevention of Undeclared Work Act. These acts attempted to limit pension budget expenditure, increase the number of jobs, as well as the scope of payments into the state and other public budgets. Unfortunately, three of the acts were rejected at referendums. In addition to the financial crisis, this has seriously endangered the existing system of social security and social rights. Thus it is no longer a question of either implementing reforms or reducing the scope of the welfare state, but whether this government or the next will have to do both in a few years time.”

(Ivan Svetlik, Minister of Labour, Family and Social Affairs)

an integral part of the stimulus package against the crisis, the government adopted economy measures for the public sector, including costs of salaries, organizational and staff measures, measures to decrease costs of material and technical conditions for functioning of state and public administration bodies and economy measures proposed to other stakeholders. In the beginning of 2009, basic salaries of officials were reduced by 4%, and in 2009 and 2010, three agreements were negotiated and signed, halting the realization of the salary reform and full effect of elements of the salary policy from 2009 to and including 2012. In the four-year period, this measure is expected to result in a decrease of expenditure from the public finance budgets in the amount of 967 million Euros, otherwise earmarked for salaries or other costs of labour in the public sector.

#### “THE ERASED”

After 18 years of serious complications concerning issuing decisions to “the erased”, the government successfully resolved the problem, which had exposed Slovenia to harsh international criticism for many years. In March 2010, the National Assembly adopted an amended Act Regulating the Legal Status of Citizens of Former Yugoslavia Living in the Republic of Slovenia, aiming to comprehensively remedy the injustice towards the erased citizens stemming from their removal from state registers 18 years ago in accordance with a series of Constitutional Court decisions and in the spirit of the Slovenian Constitution. The adopted act represented the last phase of regulating the issue of “the erased”, as in 1992 the state wiped 25,671 inhabitants of Slovenia, citizens of the former SFRY republics, out of the Permanent Population Register or

transferred them into a “passive” register. As a consequence, these individuals, referred to as “the erased”, lost some social rights, many had to leave Slovenia, and some were even removed by force.

According to the Ministry of the Interior, out of 25,671 erased people, 7,313 had obtained Slovene citizenship, and 3,630 a permanent residence permit up to January 2009. In July 2010, after the previously initiated decision before the Constitutional Court, the amended Act Regulating the Legal Status of Citizens of Former Yugoslavia finally entered into force, regulating the status of those erased who were not entitled to subsidiary decisions and most often had no regulated status.

#### ORIENTATIONS OF SLOVENIAN FOREIGN POLICY

In the field of foreign policy during the 20 years of its independence, after walking the path from efforts for international recognition, joining international organizations to consolidation of its role in the international arena (non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council, presidencies of the OSCE, Council of the EU, the Council of Europe, leading the Human Security Network, presidency of the IAEA Board of

Governors, etc.), in the 2008–2011 mandate, the Government of the RS put most emphasis on solving open questions with its neighbours, adjusting the economic and developmental interests of Slovenia, and adjusting to new conditions in the international community and consequently forming strategic partnerships for facing global challenges. In this regard, the newly conceived frame, within which the mentioned foreign policy orientations were defined and implemented, should be pointed out. As part of this, Slovenian diplomacy endorsed principle-based foreign policy and active definition as well as acting on the grounds of own consideration and basic premises regarding particular international questions, which are then coordinated within regional organizations and the UN.

In this mandate, Slovenian foreign policy made marked progress in regulating relationships with Croatia, Austria and Italy, which climbed to the highest, most exemplary and intensive level of foreign policy of independent Slovenia so far. Concluding the arbitration agreement with Croatia represents a big step towards resolving the border question and easing tensions between both states. The agreement on bilingual signs in



“Our candidacy for the Security Council is very ambitious, as we present our candidacy in a relatively short period after our first membership and we compete against three states for one seat. I would like to quote President Peres from Israel, who said that small states are not necessarily minor states. Slovenia is not a small state, although its physical size is small. Many acknowledge this.”

(Samuel Žbogar, Minister for Foreign Affairs in an interview for the Delo newspaper, 20 November 2010, on Slovenia's candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council in 2012 and 2013)

Carinthia also presents an important achievement for the Slovenian minority and positively contributes to building good neighbouring relations. The meeting of three presidents in Trieste, followed by a state visit by the President of the Republic of Slovenia in Rome and the agreement on minority questions represent turning points in relations with Italy.

Regional ties strengthened and Slovenia's role in the neighbourhood became more apparent. Regional cooperation became stronger with initiating the Brdo process for all-round Europeization of the region and cooperation among states in the specific areas of transport, infrastructure, jurisdiction, etc. Slovenian foreign policy was particularly active in its efforts for visa liberalization in the region, promoting one of the fundamental EU freedoms, namely freedom of movement, both from the perspective of political support and through expert engagement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the mandate in question, economic diplomacy focused mainly on MFA activities. Economists looked favourably upon the ap-

propriate adjustment of the network of diplomatic and consular missions, which began offering services to Slovenian economic entities. In recent years, Slovenia has also dedicated more funds to international technical and developmental cooperation and distributed them more effectively.

In addition to its traditional allies (the EU and the USA), Slovenia began expanding the circle of its partners during this mandate. Two strategic documents were signed with the Russian federation and Turkey, while ties to BRICS states were strengthened (top-level visits were made to India and China, and the newly opened embassy in Brazil). Along with its campaign for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council in 2012 and 2013, Slovenia established numerous new bilateral relations with states. Thus Slovenian diplomacy strengthened the potential for new economic cooperation and cooperation in other projects, allowing Slovenia to assume its share of global responsibility and build wider partnerships for solving global challenges.



“With today's act, the fate of the Act on the Erased is sealed and not only dignity, but also human rights have been reinstated to persons without the most fundamental of human rights.”

(Katarina Kresal, Minister of the Interior, in her statement for Slovenian TV, June 2010)





# Prevention – One of the Most Important Pillars of Healthcare

## Dorjan Marušič

Despite the recent fall of the Government and the changes which will follow at the Ministry of Health, healthcare reform, alongside pension reform, remains a key reform to be dealt with by the next government. Adoption of both reforms is crucial for Slovenia to remain a part of the Pact for the Euro.

**Mr. Marušič, as Minister you have been responsible for healthcare policy for a year and a half. You have mainly dealt with healthcare reform. How would you summarise your work?**

I use the word “reform” with reluctance. It suggests revolution, a completely new form and approach, which is not applicable in this case. I prefer the term “upgrade”, which emphasises all the advantages the healthcare system had adopted. I am proud to say that very few countries with the same health budget achieve such results, in particular such high standards with regard to certain parameters. This gives me hope when formulating changes. To answer your question, the main achievement in my time has been that we have dealt with problems analytically and as a priority. We have been attempting to identify our deficiencies and weaknesses using a more thorough approach.

**Have you come to any conclusions?**

That we are chronically in need of healthcare professionals. Of the EU Member States, Slovenia has the third lowest number of doctors. To improve the situation, we opened up the labour market, which has resulted in a greater inflow of doctors. Another area that required changes was illness prevention. We have adopted several laws with a greater emphasis on self health care and aimed them at the young population, as well as at the oldest. The prevention of illness is one of the most important pillars of the healthcare system. In relation to this, we have increased the price of cigarettes and excise duties on alcoholic beverages and discussed taxing unhealthy food and subsidising healthy food. In nursery and elementary schools we have been introducing the mentality and

practice of healthy nutrition, which in the long term will alleviate the burden imposed by unhealthy food.

**According to your research, do the Slovenian people live a healthy life?**

International comparison studies would have to be carried out to be able to give you an exact answer. Since I am optimistic by nature, I claim the situation is improving. Slovenians exercise a lot more and eat healthier food. The share of smokers is the lowest in Europe. However, we still have to deal with the serious problem of alcoholism, which will be one of the most demanding challenges of the healthcare upgrade in the coming years.

**You have not completed your response with regard to the results of your term in office.**

The third area of the upgrade is the introduction of teaching and reference outpatient clinics, with which we laid down guidelines for development on the primary healthcare level. General practitioners in these outpatient clinics can better satisfy patients' needs, chronically ill patients receive more attention, healthcare professionals are more dedicated to the prevention of illness, which also increases the efficiency of family doctors. The majority of patients could be treated this way. Patients have greater access to specialist outpatient clinics. Consequently, patient waiting lists have shortened. In recent years waiting lists were never as short as they are today. One of our newly introduced measures has also been the assessment of medical technologies. In relation to this, we should thoroughly ask ourselves whether a particular new technology would actually improve the patient's health condition. Within this context, a nursing hospital for primary healthcare

has been opened. Managed by a registered nurse, the hospital offers services to chronically ill patients. Within the framework of the changes in the healthcare policy, we have found several solutions to many pressing questions; some of these have advanced to the point that they can not be held back, while others need further development. We have also formulated strategic documents, plans, and legal bases for most of these steps.

**These changes are fundamental, but they do not answer the question whether reform is necessary for the maintenance of the healthcare budget or anything else.**

Every system needs to be upgraded. Another problem of the healthcare system is that we have failed to achieve legal changes in the past. Problems can only be addressed after the law has been drafted. If there is no discussion, we miss an opportunity to make changes. My predecessors took on big reforms as well, but were unsuccessful also because they set financial frameworks as a precondition, which is not good. I have extended the period of introducing changes in the healthcare system until 2020 specifically in order to avoid excessive financial limitations. I would like to stress one more time that, in the long term, the healthcare system has been oriented towards the prevention of illness, medical treatment, and the rapid return of patients to their home environment. Funds should serve as a framework, not as an aim. Excessive adjustment of finances could lead to the absurd when funds are directed into areas that do not cover actual needs.

**You have repeatedly stated that if the Government fails to adopt the healthcare reform, the end result could be even worse than**

**in the case of the pension reform. What would be the consequences of a failed reform implemented by the next government?**

There would be no immediate disastrous consequences. However, the effect would become apparent soon after. Many people would choose to seek healthcare services in the broader European area, since the borders of services will soon be lifted in healthcare as well. This would cause a capital outflow and weakening of the healthcare system. This is precisely why changes need to be implemented.

**What is the state of our healthcare system in comparison to other European countries?**

In order to compare ourselves to anyone, we need to know the criteria and analyses. Assessment is individual, but most of our patients become aware of the quality of the Slovenian healthcare system when they seek healthcare services abroad. Foreigners praise our organisation and the non-stop accessibility of healthcare services and wonder how we manage it. Some indicators rank Slovenia extremely high on the scale, e.g. in relation to infant mortality, while others place us lower, especially in relation to alcoholism.

**An important part of the reform is also an altered manner of financing healthcare services. Aside from the compulsory health insurance, a general healthcare co-payment would be introduced. What advantages would this bring?**

The purpose of the changes in relation to insurance is to define the basket of rights. This is a weakness of the financial part of the system, since the universal basket of rights within the compulsory health insurance is too big. Due to the aging of the population, waiting periods have appeared. The main weakness is that some services are freely accessible, while for some important procedures, on the other hand, we have waiting periods. Concerning specialists, the whole treatment chain has been prolonged, which has



led us to the conclusion that it is necessary to define the basket of rights. We must ascertain what we can actually afford and which priorities we wish to change. Analyses show that funds available today can in no manner cover the existing scope of rights and that additional resources must be found. I have proposed several approaches to this. Since raising the contribution rate is not possible, we have proposed a new levy which would enable us to round up the basic basket of rights. Everything else would be covered by voluntary insurance, but not supplementary insurance. This is an important direction, because a common healthcare budget, such as that of the Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia, may jeopardise the whole system. We wish to diversify the financing resources. The reform is oriented towards the introduction of a new levy, in addition to compulsory health insurance, which would round up the public resources

contributed under the solidarity principle. These resources would primarily be intended for healthcare services, the second pillar would be intended for the development of new technologies and a prevention programme within the framework of the state budget, while the third pillar would comprise private insurance companies covering non-priority services with the selection of doctors and higher-standard care. The three-pillar system would ensure the flexibility of the healthcare budget.

**Do these proposals also entail changes to patients' rights?**

Naturally every change affects rights. But what is the point of having inaccessible rights? What is the priority? Is it right that everyone who contributes under the solidarity principle has free access to services, while on the other hand long waiting periods are emerging? The priority is to achieve the fastest access to services, and the

recovery and return of patients to their home environment. Some transport will have to be covered by the individual or we will have to reorganise, but at the same time more funds will be available for more important matters. Low priority healthcare services would therefore be eliminated from the basket but would be provided by voluntary health insurance companies against payment.

**How could long waiting periods be eliminated?**

Not all waiting patients are equal. Experts defined the criteria and waiting periods and we have adopted a number of measures to reduce the waiting periods. All patients will be treated according to these time guidelines. I am convinced that not every service must be sought at the University Medical Centre. Services on the primary, local level are just as good.

**You speak on behalf of doctors stepping out of the government**

**employee system as increasing their performance. You are also in favour of some sort of 'enterprisation' of management.**

In Slovenia, everyone jumps at the mention of privatisation. I am not in favour of privatising healthcare, but we must be aware that health is of great value, although the financial numbers do not reflect it. In the past, our country chose not to introduce private healthcare. In the following years, due to less funding, it will no longer be possible to afford today's healthcare network. Time will show that the public financing system will not be able to maintain such a rich network of healthcare providers. I believe that we should remunerate healthcare professionals on the basis of the quality of their work, not their working hours. Implementation of this policy is undoubtedly a difficult task. Discussions are already being held. The collective agreement and legislation must be changed. I have also suggested that in specialist areas

that struggle with bottlenecks, greater accessibility of services be provided and, above all, the need for doctors reduced. I believe in the competition, competitiveness, and diligence of Slovenians, but I am also aware that pure privatisation would have long-term negative effects.

**What is your relationship to concessionaires? According to some, you obstruct them.**

I am a minister in a time of financial crisis, which has affected my relationship to private practices with concessionaires who work within the public network. I support this form of work because it introduces healthy competition and greater accessibility of services. Although the network cannot be extended due to limited resources, we examine every application. Approximately 20–25 healthcare providers who applied for a concession were given a negative response due to the lack of funds, as I have already mentioned.

**During your term of office, you have attempted to establish a uniform healthcare information system, eZdravje [eHealth], but it failed.**

The desire to establish a healthcare information system was present before I became minister. But changes take time. It was supposed to be finished last year, but unfortunately was not. We wished to establish a healthcare information network with paperless prescriptions and e-appointments. Some clinics, such as the Paediatric Clinic, have been quickly computerised and will become paperless hospitals as soon as possible. Doctors at this clinic are in favour of the system and cooperate in the procedure, which shows that it is important to increasingly include the staff in the procedure in order to help them recognise the system's advantages. I greatly influenced the project, but it is not progressing as fast as we had hoped. I wonder why the progress of computerisation is so

slow in healthcare, while other fields of our lives are so much more digitised. Perhaps this is due to the belief that a piece of paper provides a firmer guarantee of data protection than a paperless form. Personally, I disagree. This issue needs to be resolved in order to provide more rapid digitisation. Good dialogue has been achieved and I am convinced that some prescriptions will already be issued in electronic form by the end of next year. Thus far, no country has implemented such a system on a national level. If Slovenia achieves this, it would become a role model for other countries.

**How is our healthcare system adjusting to the rapid aging of the population?**

The paradigm that it is the aging of the population that increases expenditure in healthcare must be disproved, because the real reason for this is the new medical technologies. We must maintain the same approach

to the prevention of illness, the promotion of health, the safety of the environment, healthy food, avoiding risk factors, etc. We are successful in this area. It is a fact that we are aging. Our life span has been prolonged by 5–6 years. The retirement age can no longer be 65 years. The active life span must be prolonged to achieve important shifts.

**Where do you see yourself in the future, if you have to leave this position?**

I am a mathematician and a doctor, so I can always put on my white coat, which also brings me the most joy. In this line of work you get immediate feedback and gratitude for a correct diagnosis and help. We will have to wait and see how the elections and the new composition of the government turn out. With my knowledge, I am always willing to help. I can only hope that in the future there will be enough challenges.



## Slovenian managers advocate increased economic efficiency

Currently, Slovenia has a government with limited powers. Due to this situation and the failure to adopt the pension reform and some other reforms, these having been rejected at the referendum, some international credit rating agencies have reduced Slovenia's credit rating. This has raised particular concern among executives and entrepreneurs, who are afraid that loans will become much more expensive, which is a rather worrying omen at a time when a new crisis is being announced. Banks, too, are raising concerns over the credit rating reduction, as new loans are supposed to become even more expensive for the already heavily indebted Slovenian banking system. Therefore enterprises are intensively looking for financing opportunities abroad. Domestic banks not capable of providing money to these enterprises are faced with the fact that they are losing their clients. According to estimates by the Institute of International Finance, the entire Eurozone will require EUR 1 300

billion in additional capital in the financial sector over the next five-year period.

### The balance of payments is favourable

It is, however, encouraging that the balance of payments in the Republic of Slovenia is favourable and that its deficit will also be low in 2011. The National Statistical Office emphasises that this is largely the result of the success of major exporters, including the tourism sector, with the number of foreign tourists and their overnight stays increasing by 9% in the first nine months of this year, the period which includes the main tourist season. Inflation in Slovenia has slightly increased and amounted to 0.6 per cent in September, while the annual inflation rate amounted to 2.1 per cent. The National Statistical Office agrees that the fiscal situation in Slovenia is not good; however, it emphasises that the overall situation in our country is much more favourable than that, for example, in Greece, to which

Slovenia is often unjustifiably compared by those who are not familiar with the real situation and numbers. For some time, the Slovenian economist Dr Jože Mencinger has been drawing attention to the fact that Slovenian public debt is at the European Union average level and is significantly lower than in some developed European countries. On the other hand, Caroline Varley from the OECD, who conducted the review of the public sector in Slovenia, considers that changes are not only necessary for reasons of the fiscal consolidation that Slovenia is about to face. In her opinion, the system is still not flexible enough, despite the changes that have already been made, and it does not assure autonomy or enable an appropriate distribution of tasks. The OECD also recommends that Slovenia does not change the public sector salary system currently in force but upgrades and improves it to provide for salary regulation with regard to the fiscal capacity and the national economic indicators.

### Tax reform and the tax rate reduction significantly contributed to fiscal problems

At a conference organised by the Fiscal Council and the Union of Economists of Slovenia, the participants identified signs of a new crisis that could reach a new nadir; however, the Minister of Finance, Franc Križanič, hopes that such a crisis can be avoided. In his opinion, the tax reform and the tax rate reduction significantly contributed to fiscal problems. 'If Slovenia preserved the tax rates that existed during Dušan Mramor's term of office as Minister of Finance, we would



Caroline Varley, OECD

be Austria today,' said Križanič. Marjan Senjur, the Fiscal Council Chairman, emphasised that we should pursue an anti-cyclical fiscal policy, because high fluctuations in growth lead to collapses of companies and, as a result, the country faces a fall in potential growth. According to Senjur, economic cyclicality should be reduced. One of the possibilities leading to this reduction is to establish a stabilisation fund to collect budget surplus generated in boom times, which could then be used in times of crisis. Helena Kamnar, Secretary-General of the Government, who is well acquainted with national finances, is of the opinion that fiscal problems are caused by too extensive a scope of rights and believes that the expenditure side of the budget should be reduced by 3% of GDP. Slaven Mičkovič from the Ministry of Finance noted that the expenditure on social transfers is growing at such a rate that the state can no longer finance these transfers, but that it is impossible to change this situation by law very quickly. Slovenian managers advocate



Andreja Cirman, Faculty of Economics

more effective action. At their congress, they took the initiative in raising a wider social debate on the following issues: 'What kind of country do we want to live in? What are we willing to do to improve the situation? What kind of leadership does Slovenia need to achieve the set goals?' The managers consider that Slovenia should reach at least a 5% annual growth in its research and development expenditure and a 2% annual growth in expenditure on education. They also advocated an increase in the number of women in leading positions in companies to at least 30 per cent.

### Real-estate market in Slovenia is not as bad as it seems

At a real-estate conference organised by Planet GV, it was highlighted that the situation in the real-estate market in Slovenia is not as bad as it seems. The number of unsuccessful development projects is relatively high; however, this is claimed to be the result of the fact that in the period before the crisis, real-estate businesses were mostly operated by people lacking appropriate knowledge and experience. As emphasised by Andreja Cirman from the Faculty of Economics in Ljubljana, the large reduction in the construction sector resulted from its excessive growth in the period before 2008. In Slovenia, this growth was not as high as, for example, in Ireland, but it was among the highest in the European Union. However, this is only one side of the story, while the other refers

to the banks, which are trying to resolve old projects and are afraid of financing new ones. According to the data available to Ms Cirman, there are not as many unsold flats in the market as some might believe. To the best of her knowledge, approximately 1 300 flats are unsold, which could not cause real estate prices to go down, as widely discussed and expected in the public. In the following years, the prices per square metre of flats could even further increase if the slowdown in construction activity continues. The economic activity in the construction sector has already fallen to its lowest level in 15 years. According to some estimates, it is expected to rise again in the coming year. Romana Logar, Director of the Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Public Legal Records and Related Services (AJPES), believes that the compulsory offset, which has already produced some positive results, was introduced one year too late in the construction sector and that as a result many construction companies became subject to insolvency procedures. In 2010, 6 352 flats were completed and almost 16 000 flats were under construction in Slovenia. Statistical data show that the average size of flats constructed last year was 129 square metres. By the end of last year, the number of flats in the Housing Fund had increased to 844 349, with an average size of 78 square metres. The large size can

mainly be attributed to larger housing units in the countryside, while the flats in towns tend to be smaller.

### Mostly small and micro enterprises have difficulties in paying their bills

According to the data received from AJPES, among legal persons, mostly small and micro enterprises have difficulties in paying their bills. The number of those unable to pay their bills within a period of more than one year has also significantly increased. In August of this year, this was the case with 2 049 legal persons and 3 472 sole traders. In both cases, companies and sole traders from the construction sector prevailed. Slovenia has long been criticised by foreign countries for not opening up its economy to foreign investors, even though it desires and requires additional capital. Nevertheless, there are still examples of successful integrations between Slovenian and foreign companies which prove the opposite. When, for example, Christopher Droste, Director of Hella Saturnus, was asked why he had not moved his company to a cheaper country, he responded that the experience and knowledge of employees manufacturing high-quality products meant much more to him. In his opinion the same quality level could not be assured in any other country. Hella

Saturnus Slovenia, a company manufacturing lighting equipment for the automotive industry, is the successor of the former Slovenian company Saturnus. Recently, it has marked its 90th anniversary. Iskra Avtoelektrika from Šempeter pri Gorici, too, has signed a contract with the German company Nexteer Automotive for its greatest and most demanding deal to date. With the development and supply of engines for electric power-steering systems to be installed in the automobiles of this distinguished German car producer, Iskra Avtoelektrika should earn EUR 240 million within a 14-year contract period. The company from Šempeter has thus become the developing supplier of this German automobile giant. Production is due to start in mid 2013. Livarna Maribor also achieved a great success in the automotive industry as the sole supplier of aluminium gearbox casings for Volkswagen's newest small car, the VW Up!. Another example is the Slovenian online store Mimovrste, which received a capital injection of EUR 3 million from the Dutch Holding company NetRail. As explained by Director Darko Butina, the purpose of the financial injection was not only to bring in fresh capital but also to set up synergy and cooperation with NetRail's online stores in Central and Eastern Europe.



Helena Kamnar, Secretary-General of the Government.



Marjan Senjur, Fiscal Council Chairman



Compiled by Brane Dmitrovič, photo: Aleš Fevžer and archive OKS

# 20 Years of the Olympic Committee of Slovenia – Association of Sports Federations

Today, also owing to sports, Slovenia is a recognisable independent country of the world. Twenty years of participation by Slovenian sportsmen and sportswomen at major sports events have considerably contributed to the country's reputation. Over these years, Slovenian athletes have won 151 gold medals at championships in various sports disciplines.



The President of the Republic of Slovenia, Danilo Türk, has conferred the Golden Order for Services on the Olympic Committee of Slovenia, which has been led by the same president, Janez Kocijančič, from its very beginning.



The Steering Committee for the Establishment of the Olympic Committee of Slovenia with President Kučan.



Members of the Steering Committee on a visit to the President of the International Olympic Committee, Juan Antonio Samaranch.

Today, the Olympic Committee of Slovenia – Association of Sports Federations (OCS-ASF) is the umbrella sports organisation of the civil society sphere, joining as its members sports societies and clubs in Slovenia and neighbouring countries through national federations for individual sporting disciplines (Olympic, recognised by IOC and non-Olympic) and municipal sports federations (more than 24 regional representatives). In the current year, the OCS-ASF has 113 members, of which 85 are municipal sports federations, 68 national sports federations and 14 other sports associations. There are three independent committees operating as the pillars of work programmes in the OCS-ASF, based on the structure and organisation of sports in Slovenia: the Sport for All Committee, the Top Sports Committee and the Commune-Level Sport Committee. They are led by vice-presidents of the OCS-ASF. In addition, the OCS-ASF has many commissions for particular fields of work: the Athletes Commission, Marketing Council, Slovenian Olympic Academy, Commission for Sport and

the Environment, Organisation Commission, Medical Commission, Women in Sport Commission, Commission for Slovenian Trans-Border Sport and Commission for the Financing of Sport. The OCS-ASF is oriented primarily towards promoting the development of basic sports organisations in cooperation with national and municipal sports federations, balancing the conditions and possibilities for the development of sport at local and national levels, ensuring the health protection of athletes, categorising top athletes, developing competition systems, ensuring the respect of tolerance and fair play in all forms of sport in Slovenia, promoting Olympic values, promoting voluntarism, maintaining relations with sports organisations in neighbouring countries, and participating in umbrella international organisations.

The Olympic Committee of Slovenia – Association of Sports Federations is celebrating its 20th anniversary in the working spirit. The main celebration ceremony was held on 12 October 2012 in the Union Hall of the Grand Hotel Union in Ljubljana.



Alenka Dovžan and Katja Koren, bronze medallists in Alpine skiing 1994 Lillehammer.



Vasilij Žbogar – bronze medal sailing Beijing 2008.



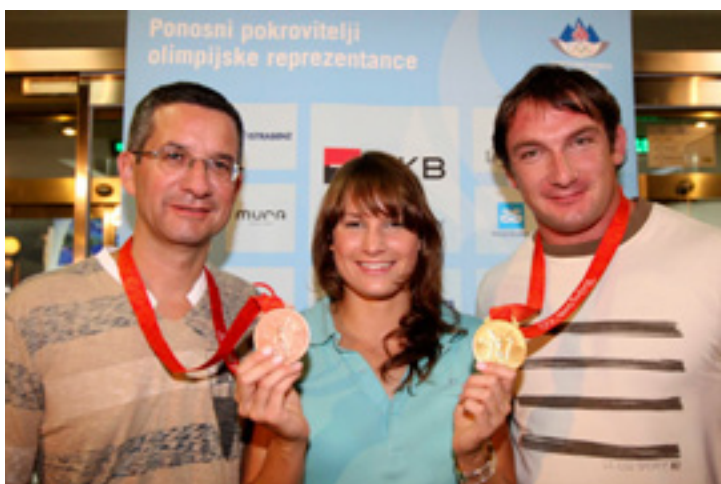
Vasilij Žbogar – bronze medal Athens 2004.



Luka Špiš, Iztok Čop – gold medal Sydney 2000 rowing.



Franci Petek, ski jumping, the first national flag bearer Winter olympics - Albertville 1992.



Rajmond Debevec – bronze medal shooting, Sara Isaković – silver medal swimming, Primož Kozmus – gold medal athletics Beijing 2008.



Medal winners at Paraolympics.

### SPORT GAVE WAY TO THE DEFENCE

On 25 June 1991 the Slovenian Parliament adopted the Basic Constitutional Charter on the Sovereignty and Independence of the Republic of Slovenia and the Declaration of Independence. The announcement ceremony was held the next evening, with the President of the Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia, Milan Kučan, saying in his speech that on that day dreams were allowed and that nothing would be as it had been before. In the morning of the 'day after', Slovenia woke up to the sound of clanking tanks and the aggression of the Yugoslav Army. War! Sport gave way to the defence of the barely declared state. Already on 27 June the Sports Federation of Slovenia issued a 'recommendation' on postponing all sports competitions in the territory of the Republic of Slovenia and advised Slovenian athletes not to participate in competitions outside Slovenia for safety reasons. On 28 June a 'call' to Slovenian athletes followed, urging them, in view of the 'brutal aggression of the Yugoslav Army', to 'leave Yugoslav national teams and return home as soon as possible, as it would be offensive to the Slovenian people if Slovenian athletes were to defend the colours of Yugoslavia at international competitions in such circumstances'. And return they did. Simultaneously Slovenian sports professionals resigned their positions in Yugoslav sporting bodies and Slovenian federations for different sporting disciplines terminated their relations with their Yugoslav counterparts. But even before that time, discussions had been underway about a new organisation of sport in Slovenia, weighing between two ideas – whether to have one main organisation or the national Olympic committee and separate sports association. Following the discussions, at the beginning of April 1991, the Sports Association of Slovenia informed the Association for Physical Culture of Yugoslavia of a reorganisation, in other

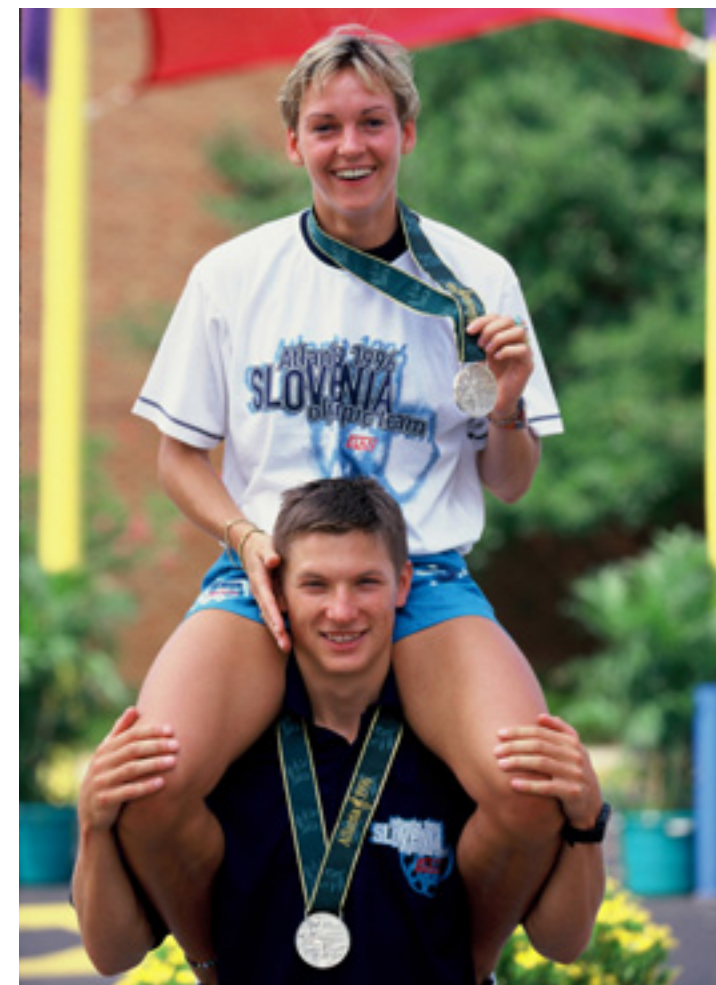
words that sports organisations in Slovenia had decided 'to establish the Olympic Committee of Slovenia and will shortly appoint a steering committee for its establishment, which will be chaired by Miroslav Cerar, the greatest Yugoslav athlete of all time'. In the middle of April 1991, the Steering Committee for the Establishment of the Olympic Committee of Slovenia was appointed and a letter of intent sent to the President of the IOC, Juan Antonio Samaranch. And in June, the Steering Committee (President Miro Cerar, Secretary Ivo Daneu, members Evgen Bergant, Janez Kocjančič, Milan Jerman, Janez Sterle and Rajko Šugman) prepared working draft rules for the Olympic Committee and sent them to sports federations, at the same time asking them to nominate candidates for the various bodies. After independence, the Steering Committee paved the way for international recognition and participation of Slovenian athletes in the 1992 Winter Olympic Games in Albertville. At the 89th session of the IOC, on 5 February 1992 in Courchevel, the Olympic Committee of Slovenia (OCS) became a recognised member of the Olympic family.

### THE ANCIENT GREEKS

The Olympic games were inscribed in culture and history by the Ancient Greeks, who held athletic contests in honour of Zeus at the Olympia Temple in the Peloponnese in the 8th century BC. Athletes had pitted their strength against each other in Olympia for more than a thousand years. The games had survived the Greek wars, the Hellenistic Period and the Roman conquest. In Ancient Greek society the games were considered sacred and encompassed all of Greece. They were the most prestigious sports event, which compelled Pindar to express himself so ardently in one of the stanzas of the first Olympian Ode: 'and from afar off he beholdeth the glory of the Olympian games in the courses called of Pelops, where is striving of swift feet and of strong

bodies brave to labour; but he that overcometh hath for the sake of those games a sweet tranquillity throughout his life for evermore'. But their existence was cut short by Roman Emperor Theodosius at the end of the 4th century, when he declared Christianity as the main Imperial religion. Thus pagan religions and pagan rituals, of which the Olympic Games were really a part, were prohibited. The Games were then forgotten for more than a thousand years, while mother nature swept Olympia under the carpet with earthquakes and floods. The initiator of the modern, cosmopolitan Olympic Games was a Frenchman, Pierre de Coubertin. It is true that he was not the first to have thought of a modern Olympic Games (he had the opportunity to see one of the early versions while visiting W. P. Brookes in Much Wenlock in 1890), but he was the first to succeed in persuading athletes of different sporting disciplines and from different countries to meet at sports

competitions following the ancient four-year example. The first time Pierre Coubertin proposed that the Olympic Games be revived was in November 1892, at the fifth anniversary of the Union des Sociétés Françaises de Sports Athlétiques (Union of French Athletic Societies); there he stressed at the end of his speech that sport should be expanded, both in France and at international level, since its free exchange would influence the morale of the old Europe and strengthen the role of peace. There was not much understanding for the idea at first, but Coubertin persisted and promoted the organisation of an international sports congress in June 1894 at the Sorbonne University in Paris. Again, he proposed the revival of the Olympics following the ancient four-year model but with modern sporting disciplines and on an international and amateur basis. The congress supported the proposal and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) was established.



Brigita Bukovec – silver medal athletics, Andraž Vehovar, kayak canoe – silver medal - Atlanta 1996.



Petra Majdič – bronze medal cross-country skiing - Vancouver 2010.



Coxless four - rowing – bronze medal - Barcelona 1992.



Kranjec, Peterka, Fras, Žonta – ski jumping team bronze medal - Salt Lake city 2002.



Tina Maze – Alpine skiing – two silver medals - Vancouver 2010.



Christof Droste, Managing Director of Hella Saturnus Slovenija

## Why have Hella and other foreign investors chosen Slovenia?



Photo: STA

This is the question raised when considering why to invest in Slovenia. In my experience, one of the main advantages in favour of foreign investment is the know-how of the country with which a company or individual would like to do business. What matters here is a long-standing partnership with West European buyers, close cooperation between industry and the Slovenian academic environment, universities and other institutions, and, in our case, long-term experience in the development of lighting techniques. The decision in favour of the investment is also made on account of a suitable environment, which must be stable, especially as regards the working environment. A stable working environment requires knowledge, experience, the loyalty of one's colleagues, well-educated people and experts, and a good network of local suppliers and service providers.

These are only theoretical frameworks within which investments are made. In know-how, it is essential that existing knowledge be used for new techniques; in our case, this knowledge concerns lighting and the distribution of lighting or the acceleration of the judicious replacement of existing road and street lighting. I am referring here to the development of the country's vision and the decisions as to which industries and services to focus on, and the strategic plan for the education and know-how development required.

In order to enhance or gain a competitive advantage over other countries, Slovenia needs, in my opinion, to make changes to its tax system, harmonise its legislation with the EU legislation governing value added tax and transfer prices, make comparative analyses of the systems concerning personal taxes and social contributions with other countries, and to make changes to taxes for inventions resulting from the employment relationship. A comparison of subventions for profitable foreign and local investments should be made with other South-East European countries, and greater flexibility should also be achieved by simplifying employment law. The weaknesses that have manifested themselves in Slovenia in the field of know-how are also the reasons why, over the last 20 years, other South-Eastern European countries have left Slovenia

trailing and, if it continues to fail to concentrate on its advantages, Slovenia may become uncompetitive.

Also, the politically unstable situation and negligible likelihood of being able to anticipate the outcome of legal proceedings may keep foreign investments from coming to Slovenia. The economic situation throughout Europe – not only in Slovenia – is far from easy, and it is of the utmost importance for Slovenia that political stability be achieved as soon as possible. It's no use whining and complaining about the current economic situation. We all have to take a look at ourselves in the mirror and, while being aware of our present situation, prepare for the future – this is my recipe for overcoming the crisis.

The rapid development of our business over the last two and a half years and the large number of jobs created and investments made in innovative know-how, such as the setting up of our competence centre for LED technology, are the kind of opportunities that Hella Saturnus Slovenija identifies and seizes upon in Slovenia.

For the next five years, Hella Saturnus Slovenia has identified realistic investment opportunities in the amount of EUR 61 million, which would employ 970 people. Most of the investments concern new automobile lighting equipment development projects, then the updating of production technologies and the introduction into high technology innovations, while drawing attention to the establishment of the LED group.

The award of Manager of the Year 2011 is a great honour for me and my company, but also a great responsibility because I am the first foreigner to receive this award. As a lighting equipment manufacturer for motor and other vehicles, Hella Saturnus Slovenija generated revenue of EUR 250 million in the fiscal year that ended last May, creating just over EUR 21 million in profit. Over the last two and a half years, Hella Saturnus Slovenija has substantially increased sales and created 1,000 jobs. In the fiscal year of 2007, turnover stood at EUR 80 million; at present, however, it is two and a half times higher. Among its advantages, Hella Saturnus mainly draws attention to its employees, their commitment and dedication to pursuing the same goal.



Katja Zajc Kejžar, Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana

## Low inflow of FDI but superior performance of foreign firms



Photo: personal archive

At the end of the last year Slovenia recorded only around half of the average level of FDI inward stock per capita in the EU (UNCTAD, World Investment Report 2011). Foreign firms represented less than 5% of firms registered in Slovenian business register (Table 1). Among the main barriers for inflow of FDI foreign firms expose high taxes and labour costs, payment indiscipline, inefficient legal system, difficulties with dismissal of employees, small local market and unavailability of adequate qualified workers<sup>1</sup>. Are relatively modest FDI inflows one of the reasons for slow recovery of Slovenia from economic crisis?

The answer is not that straightforward for at least two reasons. First, the importance of foreign firms is considerably greater when we consider the share of foreign firms in economic activity. According to table 1 we can see that foreign firms accounted for approximately 15% of total private sector employment, generated around 20% of value added and more than 1/3 of total exports in 2009.

Table 1: Importance of firms with foreign direct investment in Slovenia, end of 2009

	Share of firms with foreign DI (%)
No. of enterprises	4.7
Employment	15.2
Assets	17.7
Value added	19.5
Sales	23.3
Export	36.5

Note: Foreign firms are defined as firms in which foreign owners have at least a 10% equity share. Source: Bank of Slovenia, Direct investment 2009.

Secondly, the usual phrase "it is quality not quantity that matters" applies. Inward FDI impacts host country's economy through different channels. The literature usually discuss three main channels of influence of inward FDI on host country: technology transfer, competition effect and productivity spillovers. The most commonly recognised channel of influence is technology transfer. Multinational enterprises (MNEs) usually possess some kind of technological advantage that is transferred to their local affiliates and which allows them to compete successfully with other MNEs and local firms. The second channel of influence is a result of an increase in competition pressure upon foreign firm entry which triggers firm selection process. Aggregate productivity rises as employment shifts from low productivity firms driven out by foreign firm entry to high productivity firms turning toward export markets. The third channel of influence are so-called productivity spillovers for local firms which take place when presence of MNEs lead to productivity or efficiency benefits in the host country's local firms, and the MNEs are not able to internalize the full value of these benefits. These effects may take place either in the foreign affiliate's own industry as a result of demonstration effect or employment of workers previously trained and employed in MNE affiliates, in other industries through backward and forward (intermediate buyer-seller) linkages between foreign affiliates and domestic

firms or as a result of geographical proximity to MNEs' affiliates. As far as technology transfer is concerned, empirical studies mainly focus on the question of whether foreign-owned firms are more efficient than local firms. Let's compare foreign and domestic firms with respect to selected financial ratios and performance indicators in Slovenian manufacturing sector in 2009 (Table 2). Foreign firms demonstrated higher productivity measured as income on sales per employee and higher value added per employee compared to domestic firms. Foreign firms also paid higher average wages and realised above-average rate of return on equity and net profit per employee. Superior performance of foreign firms compared to domestic firms supports the expectation on technology transfer via FDI, although part of this higher productivity can be likely attributed to the higher capital intensity or larger scale of production in the foreign-owned firms.

Table 2: Financial ratios and performance indicators for Slovenian manufacturing firms in 2009

	All firms	Firms with foreign ownership above 10%
Average pay per employee (1000 EUR)	14.884	16.381
Net profit/loss per employee (1000 EUR)	1.213	5.362
Value added per employee (1000 EUR)	30.818	38.115
Productivity (income on sales per employee in 1000 EUR)	112.3	163.9
Rate of return on equity (%)	2.2	7.4

Source: Bank of Slovenia, Direct investment 2009.

Although these observations suggest that there might be a scope for productivity spillovers to domestic firms, there is no convincing evidence for Slovenia that such productivity spillover effects do exist. Therefore productivity spillovers – although usually posed as one of the strongest arguments by the advocates of inward FDI incentives – can not be taken for granted. There are two criteria that are theoretically and empirically argued to be of particular importance: first, the "absorptive" capacity of domestic firms since it is widely accepted that not all firms are equally able to benefit from the foreign firms' operations, and secondly, foreign firms' propensity to acquire inputs from local firms and their export orientation. Hence, not only policy measures targeted towards increasing the attractiveness of Slovenia as a location for incoming FDI but at the same time measures aimed at securing flexibility of labour market in order to minimize restructuring costs, enhancing absorptive capacity of local firms and stimulating inclusion of domestic firms in MNEs' production networks are needed in order to maximise welfare effects of incoming FDI.

<sup>1</sup> Burger A, Jaklič A. and Rojec M., Poslovno okolje za delovanje podjetij s tujim kapitalom v Sloveniji. Analize CMO 7, 2011.



Jože Osterman, photo: STA

## EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE IS SHOWING ITS OUTLINES

According to the news that are coming more and more frequently to the addresses of cultural editorials of Slovenian and other public media, we can certainly conclude that the organization team has now finally stricken the balance and is confidently preparing the program adopted in the beginning of September. Perhaps some people were disappointed with the relatively modest budget of Euro 17 million for the Capital's program which is said to be the second smaller in the history of these projects, but this is far from being incomprehensible since in times of economic and financial crisis the issue of funds is always a knife on the throats of organizers of each such event.

The team is now shaping the details of the adopted programs and works in line with the basic guideline that elements have to be drawn from each of them which are innovative and can maximally contribute to the efforts to enable that something new and permanent remains in Maribor. In this sense, the program strand Urban Furrows is definitely extremely important, dealing precisely with the issue of how the culture should change and improve the city. In this sense, an international congress titled Rethinking Potentials was organized in Maribor in the beginning of October where the participants based their thinking on their own experiences and proposed what to do in Maribor and even wider in order for its residents to feel the culture as an indispensable unifying condition of their lives in the city. Representatives of various organizations dealing with such issues participated at the congress, among them e.g. Futherfield and City Mine(d) from London, Access Space from Sheffield, Binaria Etica from Rome, Minorities Center from Belgrade as well as some associations from Subotica, Vienna, Graz, Berlin, Zagreb and Budapest that are engaged in cultural projects in urban environments.

This was the third congress within the Urban Furrows project string. Its hard-working president Marta Gregorčič, Ph. D., succeeded in organizing the first one on the theme Stimulating Imagination and Innovativeness where virtually everyone with certain experience in this area in Slovenia participated. Among the participants there were some people who today actively participate in the organization of the entire project. The second congress titled Mutuality and Connection tried to – taking into account the regional concept of the Capital of Culture – establish firm connections with partner cities in the area of the intended cultural urbanization since it would be wrong to remain limited only to Maribor in these innovative experimenting in “culturalization of the cities.” In view of all this we can rightfully expect that among all themes we will see in Maribor next year, the program string Urban Furrows may give Slovenia perhaps the most interesting results from the perspective of sustainability.

Government Communications Office

## SILENT REVOLUTIONS: Contemporary Design in Slovenia

On Sunday, 25 September 2011, the exhibition Silent Revolutions: Contemporary Design in Slovenia was closed. The exhibition was held at the Dray Walk Gallery, Tent London, within the framework of London Design Festival.

The opening was attended by more than 250 foreign and Slovenian guests, including representatives of governmental institutions and foreign diplomatic missions in London, designers and architects, company representatives, media representatives, design lovers and also representatives of foreign design institutions such as the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Design Museum, The Lighthouse, Paris Design Week, Belgrade Design Week etc.. The exhibition was well received and reached a large audience, as almost 8,000 people visited it in a period of only four days. We received extremely positive responses from visitors and experts, as well as numerous invitations to hold exhibitions and to participate in projects, abroad. The exhibition was accompanied by a range of associated events: a special preliminary viewing for invited guests from some participating companies; guided viewings led by Slovenian designers; a textile workshop, Silent Connection; and a presentation of Slovenian wine, The Power of Creativity and the Joy of Taste. Wine and Design in Slovenia. The London exhibition is only the first in a series of international events designed to showcase Slovenian design and Slovenian companies, as Slovenia hopes to increase its visibility and competitiveness through its industrial design. After the exhibition in London, a new exhibition will follow within the framework of Dutch Design Week in Eindhoven in the Netherlands, which will be open from 22 to 30 October 2011, and later on exhibitions in Ljubljana at the Slovenian Innovation Forum as well as in Milano and Helsinki.



Jože Osterman, photo: arhiv B51- Ex Ponto

## THE CONVINCING EX PONTO

The 18th International Performing Arts Festival Ex Ponto, organized by the B 51 Society, brought splendid theatre messages to the cultural life of the Slovenian capital. In a little over a week, 16 performances from 11 countries were staged, among them also three premieres of Slovenian or Slovenia-based artists of a predominantly dance and movement character. These are Sabina Schwenner's The Butcher's Shop (Mesnica) produced by the Glej Theatre, the dancing solo by Mialan Tomášik and the show Un.Con. scious (Ne.Za.vedno) performed by the duo Ruzya Dukuhara and Samo Potokar. Another proof of the productivity of contemporary Slovenian dancing scene which attracts many artists of non-Slovenian origin. A proof that in some areas openness of the society is definitely possible (and necessary).

From its very beginning, Ex Ponto is a festival or actually rather an intensive gathering of productions that are politically or socially fiercely engaged. The reproach still heard from time to time that the Festival features mostly theatre folks from the so-called Southeast Europe, or even the former common state of Yugoslavia, is inappropriate and misses the point of the Festival. The fact is that the issue of how to continue is nowadays the most intensely manifested in the countries of Southeast Europe, split between former common values and aggressive individualization of society which produces radical feelings of being lost and of justification of appropriate social action. It is especially surprising that these issues are being contemplated most deeply in the societies that perhaps seem to be on the margin of the modern Europe, e.g. in Macedo-

nia, Kosovo and Bosnia which in the past didn't exactly count as great forces in the once exceptionally competitive sphere of Yugoslav theatre. Of course Romanians must also not be neglected. Thus, in the end, we can say that this year's Ex Ponto (again) revealed the enormous force of theatre communities which proudly and surprisingly creatively promote environments they emanate from. The recognition that no empty space without a spirit exists in Europe is certainly encouraging nowadays.

This thread was followed by the awards for the best achievements. The first prize was awarded to the Macedonian director Martin Kočovski – otherwise a regular guest of this Festival – who was this time presented by the Brecht's Caucasian Chalk Circle staged by the Prilep Theatre. The performance forcefully brought forward especially the Brecht's thesis that everything in this world belongs to those who need it which is particularly topical in today's times of wild neo-capitalism. The second place was won by the Zagreb Youth Theatre with the performance Generation 91–95 or an Hour of Croatian History directed by Borut Šeparović. The show talks about generational disparities in comprehending the presence and the past and was created on the basis of a satiric novel by Boris Dežulović placed in the time of war between Croats and Bosnian Muslims. The third place was shared by the co-production show Lexicon of Yu Mythology of the NETA network directed by Oliver Frlić and a Peace of Mother and the Fatherland directed by Jan Klata and performed by the Polish Theatre of Wrocław.

Hana Souček Morača

# SLOVENIAN CARTOON PRESENTS ITSELF THROUGH ITS DRAWINGS

It is generally acknowledged that a cartoon is a product of the twentieth century, taking its power of expression from a combination of the visual and verbal. In Slovenia, the cartoons that have developed and caught on are those in which the cartoonist can be easily identified, since they personalise individual authors and are a shrewd visual artistic reflection of the times of their origin, society and culture. In the contemporary social and cultural space, the cartoon is a visual art activity, commenting on society with a critical eye and opening up new opinions, understanding and ways of thinking.

Until 16 October, Ljubljana's City Art Gallery (Mestna Galerija Ljubljana) is hosting a comprehensive exhibition on the history of our national cartoons under the title Drawing in Slovenian cartoons. The exhibition, which features 84 cartoonists and 122 of their works, charts the progress of the cartoon from its beginnings to the present day. In 1917, Hinko Smrekar was among the first cartoonists, followed by a wide range of different works classified by generation. The contemporary times, however, are distinguished by a variety of authors' cartoon creations covering various themes. The exhibition is divided into sections according to the chronological order of the authors' birth dates: the pioneers of cartoons from 1883 to 1918; the First Generation, from 1922 to 1925; the period between the First and Second Generation, from 1928 to 1939; the Second Generation, from 1944 to 1950; the period between the Second and Third Generation, from 1953 to 1958; the Third Generation, from 1961 to 1966; the period between the Third and Fourth Generation, from 1967 to 1979; and the Fourth Generation, which includes cartoonists born between 1980 and 1990.

A variety of experts in this field participated in setting up the exhibition and in selecting the authors and their works: the art historian and fine arts critic, Dr Damir Globočnik; the art historian and cartoonist Jakob Klemenčič, MA; the curator, editor and co-founder of Stripburger magazine, Katerina Mirovič; the cartoonist Gašper Rus; the cartoonist and cartoon scholar Iztok Sitar; and Delo newspaper reporter Vojko Urbančič. They also prepared brief textual presentations of each author, with an emphasis on the role played by drawing in their cartoons, and a comprehensive reference catalogue.

Through this exhibition and its comprehensive expert insight into the cartoon event, the City Art Gallery aspired to change stereotypical thinking on this less prominent and less appreciated creative medium, which is perpetually moving on the fringes of society and culture. They are convinced that a cartoon's shrewdness, apparently simple narrative and clear drawing enhances visual art through its poetic nature, with its visual and aesthetic imagery, putting the form on an equal footing with other exhibitions in the gallery, and that this calls for further in-depth research and analysis.

The broad appeal of the cartoon and its accessibility are targeted at the broadest possible range of people, particularly those who are especially receptive to small images filled with brief but condensed narrative that links into a continued story.



Polona Prešeren, photo: CD

# NEW SEASON AT THE CANKARJEV DOM CULTURAL AND CONGRESS CENTRE

Before entering its new season, Cankarjev Dom held a social get-together with journalists in its renovated Foyer I, the first entrance hall of this the largest Slovenian cultural institution. When the renovation in Cankarjev dom started, some distinguished architects gave rise to concerns as to whether an intervention into the heritage of architect Edvard Ravnikar, the author of Cankarjev Dom's original design, was justified.

As stressed by Director General of Cankarjev Dom Mitja Rotovnik, two of the comments were taken into account but not the one concerning the carpet floor covering. "The renovation of Foyer I provided ventilation improvements: the quantity of air circulating is three times larger, which ensures sufficient oxygen supply and adequate humidity, and air-conditioning will be optimised in proportion to the number of guests in the hall. Also the lighting will be four times better than it is now. The illumination of fine arts and other exhibits will deliver technical perfection but will vary according to the individual needs of exhibitions, fairs or social events," said Rotovnik. Mitja Rotovnik also presented the programme for the next season, which follows a plan that has been developed by Cankarjev Dom over the last thirty years. The programme intertwines the regular series of the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra, the RTV Slovenia Symphony Orchestra, the Slovene National Theatre Opera and Ballet Ljubljana with the MGLC (International Centre of Graphic Arts), non-governmental cultural organisations and a number of societies and institutions, which now all join in Cankarjev dom cultural programme. An integral part of Cankarjev Dom's own programme is diverse congress and commercial activity, filling up to 30 per cent of available scheduled capacities. "We cover all cultural and art genres, with the only exception of shooting feature films. We have been en-

gaged in production, co-production and presentations of domestic and foreign cultural and artistic achievements and we also work as partners with a number of cultural organisations and institutions in the projects that we agree to jointly perform in our six halls and five exhibition areas," says Rotovnik.

Among the largest projects drawn attention to by Mr Rotovnik is the drama entitled Vampires, a co-production with the Slovene National Theatre, directed by Diego de Brea, and a partnership co-operation in the staging one of the leading projects of the European Capital of Culture, the opera entitled Black Masks, a joint production of both Ljubljana and Maribor Opera and Ballet National Theatres, directed by Janez Burger.

This year's Golden and Silver Seasons will host leading musical ensembles and artists, among them the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, the French National Orchestra conducted by Daniele Gatti, and pianists including Ingolf Wunder, Pierre-Laurent Aimard and Slovenian rising star Ivan Skrt. In the Music of the World Series, we will welcome Estrella Morente, while the Tuesday Clubbing Music Series will welcome, among others, Henry Threadgill. The 20th anniversary of Gallus Hall concerts will be celebrated by legendary Vlado Kreslin. The music and stage-craft programme will also be very interesting: we will again host Shen Wei Dance Arts, the Peeping Tom Theatre and Alain Platel's dance theatre performing Gardenia. Also not to be overlooked are the traditional festivals, the jazz, film (documentary and mountaineering films) and Transgenerations festivals, and the partnership cooperation between Cankarjev Dom and the Ex Ponto, City of Women and Fabula 2012 festivals. For the entire programme and tickets, visit the CD website at [www.cd-cc.si](http://www.cd-cc.si).



IEDC, photo: archive IEDC

## A QUARTER OF A CENTURY OF IEDC-BLED SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

**It has been 25 years since the establishment of IEDC-Bled School of Management (the then Center Brdo), the first management development institution in Central and Eastern Europe that gained international reputation and recognition and is one of the most innovative business schools in the world. To mark the special anniversary, IEDC has been organizing various events in countries from which their participants come. The climax of the celebration took place on October 14 at Brdo pri Kranju where the conference titled »Creating the Future« was held, while also several jubilee publications were issued.**

Prof. Danica Purg, the Dean and President of IEDC-Bled School of Management emphasizes that »IEDC has been acting as a role model in the area of business education in Central and Eastern Europe with its efforts to develop competent and ethical leaders«, adding that »IEDC has been an influential agent of change and one of the world's leading innovators in the area of business education«. For its significant leadership in integrating social, environmental and ethical issues in the curricula, IEDC was, as the only school from Central and Eastern Europe, ranked as one of the top 100 most innovative business schools in the world by the Aspen Institute, USA.

Since 1986 more than 53,000 participants from 70 countries have participated at various IEDC's educational programs for experienced executives and talented young managers. Since many of them were the business and political leaders from Central and Eastern Europe, the school indirectly contributed to the economic and political transformation in the region. More than 3,500 managers and leaders visit the School annually out of which 80% come from abroad thus making IEDC an important international business meeting place. The school is successfully cooperating with more than 250 companies from various parts of the world, while it has also been the headquarters of the

Coca-Cola Chair in Sustainable Development since last year.

The peak of the silver jubilee celebration presents the great international event »Creating the Future« with speakers such as: Prof. Ichak Adizes, USA, one of the leading management experts in the world, Prof. Nancy Adler, Canada, a foremost authority on cross-cultural management and women's global leadership, Prof. Manfred Kets de Vries, France, a world-class authority on global leadership and a clinical professor of leadership development, Prof. Aleksandra Kornhauser Frazer, an internationally respected authority in chemistry and the only woman scientist to be awarded the Honda Prize (Tokyo), Prof. Jean-Pierre Lehmann, a world famous thinker in management, whose areas of special interest include globalization and the role of business in reduction of poverty and inequality, Prof. Edgar Schein, USA, considered one of the original 'founders' of organisational psychology, Prof. Hermann Simon, Germany, one of the most prominent management thinkers in Europe, quite often compared to the late Peter Drucker in the German speaking areas, and Dr. Horst Weitzmann, Germany, long-serving President of the Badische Stahlwerke corporation. More than 500 professors, current and past participants, business leaders, politicians and media representatives from all over the world will attend the conference. After the conclusions of the celebration at Brdo pri Kranju, the global IEDC alumni meeting will take place in Bled, in the frame of which the IEDC Alumni Achievement Award will be presented for the first time.

In October two publications marked the school's anniversary; a book on IEDC as an agent of change in Slovenia, Central and Eastern Europe and in the field of management education by Dr. Phil Mirvis, renowned expert of organizational psychology, and a case study on the IEDC Leadership by Prof. Derek Abell, international expert on strategic marketing, management and leadership.



Jože Osterman, photo: STA

## DONALD TRUMP INCREASES SALES OF ROGAŠKA CRYSTAL

For years, crystal made by the Slovenian glassworks Steklarna Rogaška has been one of the country's top quality products. The company has been present on the US market for over 50 years, and according to Boštjan Leskovar, President of Rogaska Crystal, the US branch of Steklarna Rogaška, every fifth product in the high quality range of crystal products sold in the US is theirs. The company has now found an even better way to increase sales and strengthen the visibility of the brand, a good path towards achieving high prices for its products. Steklarna Rogaška has partnered with one of the best known American businessmen, Donald Trump, which was without doubt helped by the fact that Trump's wife Melania is Slovenian. The cooperation began a year ago, when Donald Trump ran for the Republican nomination for US President in the 2012 race. He withdrew from the race in May 2011, so for the time being, it seems unlikely that Rogaška crystal products will decorate the White House in the near future, except as protocol gifts. However, Rogaška crystal already decorates Trump's home and his business plane, and the businessman, who was personally engaged in the launch of sales at the American department store Macy's, stressed that he was extremely pleased with the quality of Rogaška's products.

It is understandable that Boštjan Leskovar beamed with pleasure too, as the Trump name (Rogaška's crystal collection is marketed under the brand of Trump Home) has opened doors to Rogaška's products, which can now be sold in many department stores across the US and elsewhere, even faster than expected. »We were pleasantly surprised by the launch at Macy's, especially the online sales, which accounted for 40 percent of our turnover,« Leskovar said. He added that Rogaška was developing ten new handier and less expensive products which, for example, would be easier to take on a plane.

The Director of Steklarna Rogaška, Davor Šenija, was also pleased, saying that a similar event was held on Saturday in Philadelphia, at which the collection of crystal products was presented under the brand of actress Kathy Ireland. »This collection is designed mainly for brides and newlyweds, as wedding gifts.«

The opening at Macy's was the first promotional event of this kind since Rogaška announced its cooperation with Donald Trump in October. Steklarna Rogaska currently does 44% of its business in the US, totalling 37 million euros annually.



Jože Osterman, photo: archive ZKD Ljubljana

## RECONFIRMED AS THE BEST

When it comes to choral singing, Slovenia is undoubtedly among the best in the world. Choral singing in Slovenia is relatively well organized which enables good selection of the best singers from a wide pool while at the same time the system enables work of singing pedagogues. Both of these facts are remarkable. Since these are mostly amateur singers, the acknowledgment of Slovenian choral singing is even more justified.

In September, the male choir Vocal Academy of Ljubljana under the leadership of the conductor Stojan Kurent celebrated even twice, at the largest European choir festivals. First it was presented the honorable award as the best choir at the competition in Arezzo, Italy, and only a week later it won the absolute first place and the Grand Prix award at the first international choir competition Grand Prix Valle D'Aosta, held near Aosta. The thing is not as simple as it looks because the boys won in the competition of ten selected world choirs that have previously won the largest European choir competitions, so that the Aosta competition was a kind of the European »Champion League« finals. At the competition they performed the compositions of Lojze Lebič, Frederich Chopin, Franz Schubert, Giovanni Bonato, Hrabroslav Volarič, Ambrož Čopi and Gašper Jereb – therefore, with a considerable share of songs written by Slovenian composers which adds an important mark to the victory.

In this way, the Vocal Academy of Ljubljana became a real collector of the most prestigious choir awards in a few short days, following the footsteps of the successful mixed choir APZ Tone Tomšič from Ljubljana. Both choirs are connected by many links, among other the singers and especially the conductor. Stojan Kurent, this splendid conductor from Trieste, led the APZ in 2002 when the highest prize was awarded to Slovenians for the first time. Last year in Varna when he was successful with the Academy, this happened for the second time with the distinction that his choir was the first male choir ever to win the great European Grand Prix competition.



Source: STA

## Pipistrel wins NASA prize for third time in a row



**The Pipistrel team from Ajdovščina, Slovenia, was awarded NASA prize for the most energy efficient aircraft. The world's first ever electric-powered four-seat aircraft, the Taurus G4, won Pipistrel this third consecutive victory.**

'I am happy that we have proven that flying electric aircraft can now be on a par with flying aircraft powered by fossil fuels. I hope that, also owing to this victory, we will in our field of expertise contribute to preserving the atmosphere over the coming years. We will earmark part of our prize-money for a fund dedicated to the development of a supersonic electric aircraft,' announced Ivo Boscarol at the award ceremony.

Thirteen teams registered for the CAFE Green Flight Challenge competition in Santa Rosa, California, but only four of them met the demanding requirements. According to one of the qualifying conditions set by the organizers, each

team had to include a US partner. Pipistrel therefore teamed up with the developers and testers of the Penn State University and established Pipistrel-USA.com.

The Slovenian members of this joint team included the aerodynamics designer, Gregor Veble, the project leader, Tine Tomažič, the electric systems expert, Jure Tomažič, and the structure co-designers, Vid Plevnik and Franci Popit. The US part of the team was comprised of the team leader, Jack Lagelaan, test pilots Dave Morss and Robin Reid, Pipistrel's US agent Michael Coates and Pipistrel's local agent in California Vance Turner.

E-Genius, phoEnix and EcoEagle made up the competition for Ivo Boscarol and his Taurus G4 during the seven-day race in the US. Mr Boscarol, however, believes that there were only two real rivals for first place; his team and E-Genius from the University of Stuttgart, which ended up second. Since Pipistrel was the

development partner of E-Genius, this is actually a double victory for the Slovenian company.

Pipistrel and its Virus SW aircraft have already won two NASA competitions in 2007 and 2008. The co-owner and CEO of Pipistrel, Mr Boscarol, was thrilled to hear of this third consecutive victory and dedicated the awarded funds for development. At the award ceremony in Santa Rosa, Pipistrel received a cheque for US\$ 1.3 million. Mr Boscarol was pleased to be able to dedicate US\$ 100 000 for a new competition fund.

The Slovenian Prime Minister, Borut Pahor, wrote a letter to Mr Boscarol congratulating him on yet another NASA Green Flight Challenge victory when the Pipistrel team had again demonstrated its flagship development work and technology. The Prime Minister also wished him and the Pipistrel team many new ideas, just the right challenges and every success.

Vesna Žarkovič, photo: IJS archives

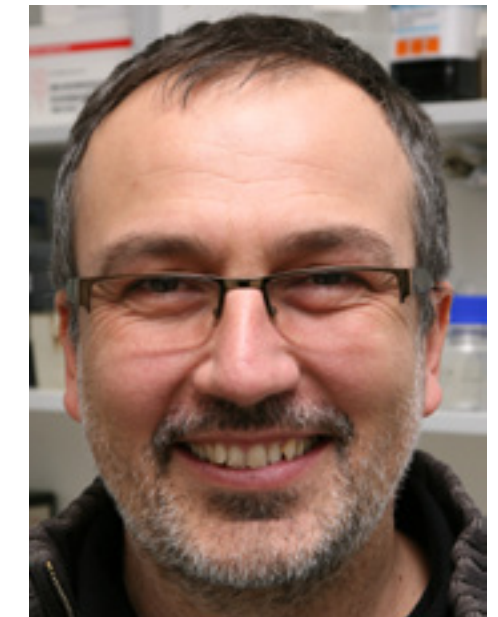
## A new tool in the fight against cancer? A considerable achievement by Slovenian scientists

**A research team has developed a new, highly efficient drug-delivery system based on magnetic iron oxide nanoparticle clusters encapsulated inside a liposome.**

The team, led by Dr Olga Vasiljeva and Dr Boris Turk from the Jožef Štefan Institute and including researchers from the Centre of Excellence for Integrated Approaches in Chemistry and Biology of Proteins, the Centre of Excellence in Nanoscience and Nanotechnology, the Centre of Excellence in the fields of Chemistry, Biochemistry, Physics and Pharmacy, and the Faculty of Chemistry and Chemical Technology of the University of Ljubljana, has developed a new, highly efficient drug-delivery system based on magnetic iron oxide nanoparticle clusters encapsulated inside a liposome.

Using an animal model of human breast cancer, the researchers demonstrated considerably improved effects of the standard cancer chemotherapy drug doxorubicin. At the same time, they also demonstrated the efficient delivery of a protease inhibitor, which inhibited tumour growth considerably. The work of the Slovenian scientists has been published in the renowned science magazine Nature Nanotechnology. The achievement is especially important because it may pave the way for a new efficient tool in the fight against cancer.

This is a new, efficient drug-delivery system, which, according to experiments performed on animals to date, effectively limits the growth of mammary tumours and has a similar effect on other types of cancerous tumour. The system is based on magnetic iron oxide nanoparticle clusters encapsulated in a liposome. Slovenian scientists have succeeded in loading nanoparticles with an active substance or encapsulating the drug independently from nanoparticles. They encapsulated them into liposomes or ferri-liposomes, which are sensitive to a magnetic field. With the help of an external magnet, they directed drug-loaded ferri-liposomes to the tumour and its microenvironment in transgenic mice. Because the new nanoparticles have outstanding contrast properties, they can be detected and visualised by MRI scanning and used for



non-invasive monitoring of drug delivery to cancerous tumour cells in vivo. The tests conducted on mice showed that, compared to the control group, tumours reduced substantially in animals injected with ferri-liposomes carrying nanoparticles, even after a single-dose treatment. The preliminary toxicity tests showed that the nano-carriers of drugs do not accumulate in the body but are excreted through the kidneys, which means that the Slovenian scientists have succeeded in overcoming all three major problems compromising existing chemotherapy cancer treatment; with successful targeted drug-delivery, they have prevented the drug from having toxic effects in healthy parts of the body and increased its bioaccessibility and treatment efficiency.

**Prof. Boris Turk:** The tests showed that we can improve not only the effectiveness of the existing anticancer drugs but also the bioaccessibility of potential substances. Our system, based on magnetic nanoparticles, which can be led anywhere by means of a magnet, and a shell in which anything can be put, is aimed not only at improving the effects of one particular drug but at improving the properties of a number of existing drugs. The system is therefore generally applicable and is not limited only to cancer treatment. A number of researchers have worked on

these kinds of system. Magnetic liposomes in themselves are not a new discovery, but the nanoparticles and the fact that we have succeeded in using them effectively in the drug-delivery system are.

Nanoparticles were previously used either in diagnostics or in delivery, both not in both. So nobody before has developed such a complex system. We do not know yet whether it will prove to be entirely useful, but if it proves to be non-toxic, the chances are good.

The scientists will continue their work on the project in Slovenia, but clinical work will most likely be done abroad. They are thinking of setting up a company and are looking for partners that would be willing to invest 20 to 30 million dollars in the next stage. Here they are thinking in terms of a country, private capital or the EU. Their input would be knowledge protected by intellectual property rights; new knowledge can always be re-tested, but of course this is a slow process. The project is not yet completed, but it has reached a turning point and is now entering its second stage. It will now be tested in practice – the challenge is to apply it to medicine. But the newly developed drug-delivery system has also opened up many other possibilities as it facilitates the study of the role of different proteins in cancer development.



Marko Šiška, photo: personal archive

## Jernej Barbič Internationally recognised innovator

‘Work hard, do things you enjoy doing,  
have a positive attitude and an open mind.’



Dr Jernej Barbič, Slovenian mathematician, physicist, computer scientist and scientist, has become the first Slovenian to be recognised as one of the 35 most outstanding young innovators in the annual list published by the US magazine MIT Technology Review. This distinguished list includes, among others, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg.

### A fascinating range of innovations

Jernej Barbič has been selected for the prestigious award listing him among the world's 35 top young innovators for the development of a method that enables real-time simulation of deformations of complex objects, such as large buildings, trees, internal organs of the human body

and mechanical systems, for example aircraft and automotive engines. The method can be used in the film industry for special effects, in medicine in simulators for training surgical skills, in mechanical engineering for expeditious design of components used in the aviation and automotive industries and for computer games.

### Generous help to Slovenians to succeed abroad

Barbič has also written an online guide which describes his experience and findings from his preparation for post-graduate studies in the US. The online guide was developed to help all Slovenians

hoping to enter post-graduate studies abroad who do not know where they can obtain the necessary information. The guide has already helped many of them enter the best universities in the US and Canada. If he were to decide again, Barbič says, he would without doubt take the same path. Many undergraduate study programmes in Slovenia, for example those in mathematics and physics, are in his opinion comparable to the top programmes at the world's best universities. As regards post-graduate study programmes, however, he says that American universities have the edge because of their direct contacts with American industry, with the US still the world leader in the computer science industry.

### A path from Slovenia to the US

Jernej Barbič comes from Kozmerice, a small village a short distance from Most na Soči. He first showed signs of his special talent as a small boy, when he taught himself to read. Later the Dušan Munih Primary School in Most na Soči and the Tolmin Grammar School provided him with an excellent basis for upgrading his knowledge. At the latter he excelled

and was champion in both mathematics and French. His idea at first was to move to France and become a writer. But later he decided to study mathematics. He finished school as a 'golden graduate' in the first generation of graduates of the new secondary school examination programme. At the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics his grade point average was a staggering 9.96. His ambitions then made him decide to study abroad, because 10

years ago it was difficult to make a career in computer science after graduation in mathematics in Slovenia. He therefore continued his studies as a postgraduate student of computer science at the Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, where he obtained his PhD. At that time, the US was facing a recession and employment opportunities at universities were severely limited. However, owing to his excellent research results, Barbič succeeded, and from 400 candidates he was given the position of lecturer at a distinguished private university, the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. He is the author of nine research articles published in the world's leading science magazines in the fields of interactive simulations, numerical mathematics, computer graphics, optimisation and physical modelling. He has also written reviews for more than 20 international computer science magazines.

### Drive safer, fly faster, cheaper and more economically

Currently, Jernej Barbič is negotiating with the French company Haption, one of the leading developers of haptic interfaces, which enable movements in virtual environments while at the same time giving the user a sense of touch. This is particularly important in surgery, where a surgeon must sense the force between the scalpel and the tissue into which he is cutting. For the foreseeable, Barbič wants to keep lecturing while continuing his research work in his laboratory. His aim is for his methods to be used in industry. What will make him happiest is when one day his high-quality research work and innovative mind enable us to drive around in safer cars and fly at higher speeds, cheaper and more economically!

### An open mind

Life is full of opportunities; we only need to find the right one. Exclusively for Sinfo Magazine, Jernej Barbič reveals his key to success: work hard, do things you enjoy doing, have a positive attitude and an open mind!





Nataša Bušljeta, photo: Center Evropa

## Europe-wide campaign for sustainable mobility effectively helps Slovenes change their habits



Slovenian towns and municipalities have taken an active part in European Mobility Week from the very outset. Interest in the campaign is growing year by year, and this year, with the European Mobility Week taking place for the tenth time in a row, as many as 30 Slovenian municipalities took part in the initiative 'Travel differently', organising over two hundred events and activities, ranging from free bicycle servicing and public transport to various events for children and the professional public. The campaign, which ran from 16 to 22 September 2011, was aimed at introducing environment-friendly forms of transport across Slovenia and raising public awareness about the urgent need for transition to a resource-efficient transport system. The objective is to improve the quality of urban life by encouraging citizens to try out alternatives to car use, including public transport, cycling and walking, as well as spatial planning that takes into account sustainable mobility.

### EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES ...

The participation of towns and municipalities in the European Mobility Week is coordinated by the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning. In the past ten years, over 60 Slovenian towns have participated in the campaign, with Celje, Gornja Radgona, Koper, Ljubljana, Maribor, Murska Sobota, Nova Gorica and Vrhnika participating every year. These towns were particularly highlighted by Minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning Roko Žarnič at the opening ceremony of this year's mobility week, at which all participants were presented with awards for introducing measures to encourage the use of alternative forms of transport which improve the quality of urban life and mitigate climate change.

An increasing number of other partners, including public institutes, non-governmental organisations and European institutions, are joining municipalities in the awareness-raising campaign every year. The successful cooperation of the Government Communication Office of the Republic of Slovenia, the Representation of the European Commission and the Information Office of the European Parliament in Slovenia on the programme of events at the information centre Center Evropa should be highlighted in this regard. The head office of Center Evropa may be in Ljubljana, but all the interesting events are broadcast live on their website.

This working together resulted in a number of events held during the mobility week. The first was a workshop entitled 'More forms of mobility, more forms of danger – Let's be careful together', focusing on how to reach a particular destination as economically and safely as possible, while taking into account the principle of sustainability. The workshop, which refreshed visitors' knowledge and drew attention to certain mistakes that people make when using transport, received a favourable response from visitors. Many of them got an idea of how to combine different more cost-effective and less time-consuming means of transport on a day-to-day basis (for example bicycle + train or car + bicycle + bus).

One of the events organised was an interesting interactive open-air event entitled 'Mobility is a skill'. Within this event, a well-visited bicycle service was available to users, with experts checking and repairing visitors' bicycles free

of charge after the rigours of the cycling season. There were also rollerblading lessons organised for visitors with the aim of presenting a different manner of mobility across the city to passers-by. A competition in slow cycling on the popular Bicikelj bike, which is won by the contestant who arrives at the finishing line last without getting off the bike, offered visitors a different experience.

The last workshop, entitled 'Electric mobility in practice', was conducted by Andrej Pečjak, an ecologist and producer of electric cars. He outlined the existing possibilities of sustainable propulsion systems and their efficiency, explained how useful and technologically viable electric propulsion vehicles are, and gave an indication of trends for the future. The workshop was well supported by the public, who asked many questions afterwards and were also able to examine the electric car in which Mr Pečjak arrived and which he charged using an electric car charger, and received a very positive response.

### MEASURES BEARING FRUIT

Municipalities have already introduced many permanent measures to improve the traffic situation in cities and towns, focusing on infrastructure for cycling and walking, traffic calming, improving transport accessibility and raising awareness about sustainable travel behaviour.

Some of the most important measures include subsidies for public transport, architectural solutions for cyclists and pedestrians, measures to increase the traffic safety of children, and measures to improve transport accessibility for the disabled. Each year, the mobility week provides the opportunity to reflect on the use of space in towns and cities and encourages them to cooperate and forge ties on mobility. Tangible changes are accompanied by various activities aimed at raising awareness about sustainable mobility; these go as far back as 1999, when a European 'day without the car' took place for the first time in France. Having received a very favourable response, the European day without the car turned by 2002 into the European Mobility Week, which runs every year from 16 to 22 September.

### CHALLENGES AHEAD

Unfortunately, we are still some way from the final objective, as too many Europeans still use cars powered by petroleum-based fuels. The objective of the European Mobility Week therefore remains unchanged, and the campaign will continue to encourage towns, cities and people to improve transport at the local level, thus improving the energy balance and environmental performance of the transport system and at the same time making urban life healthier, safer and more enjoyable. In Europe, about one-third of energy consumption is used on transport; this number is even higher in Slovenia, where transport accounts for 40% of energy consumption. But what is even more disturbing is that the transport sector is the fastest growing consumer of energy, while being almost entirely dependent on imported oil, which is expensive and supply of which is uncertain. At the EU level, Slovenia and other Member States are striving to best meet the mobility needs of everyone with reduced costs, side-effects, risks and use of natural resources.



Hana Souček Morača, photo: archive Robert Waltl

# ROBERT WALTL

“A human being without culture is not an integral whole”

We changed our interview to a breakfast since he would not be able to have his lunch until late due to his crammed schedule. While his phone is ringing, despite the excuse of forgetting about the upcoming meeting, it crosses my mind: I have finally caught him. After performing in the Czech Republic he already schedules traditional Medieval Days in the historic center of Ljubljana after which he will carry on to a festival in Bosnia and then to a week-long performing in New York. Yes, this is Robert Waltl, a man from Slovenj Gradec who established himself in the Slovenian puppetry sphere as an actor, director, puppeteer and art director. And besides all this he is also the managing director and the founder of the Mini Theatre.

## HIS LOVE DEVELOPED GRADUALLY

Obviously, theatre is in Robert's genes – his grandfather has also been involved in directing in an amateur theatre. Nevertheless, his enthusiasm for acting developed only under the influence of his professor of the Slovenian language who led a drama club at the Ravne na Koroškem High School. He joined an amateur theatre group and performing attracted him so much that he planned to enroll in the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television. At his parents' request he first tried studying at the Faculty of Law but soon discovered that it was not what he wanted. When he enrolled in acting academy he was led by the desire to become a great stage actor, however, after seeing a performance with miniature marionette puppets Doctor Faust directed by Milan Klemenčič his enthusiasm for puppetry prevailed. He was invited to participate in more and more performances as an actor but over time he gradually started using puppets. After numerous theatre creations in Slovenian and Croatian theatres and films since 1987, he has also established himself as a director after 1999. He directed in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Belarus. The shows he directed were staged at numerous international festivals and received a series of awards. Waltl also created many radio roles. Already at the Academy he carried out many theatre and television projects, in the Slovenian National Theatre SNG Drama, the Mladinsko Theatre, the Puppet Theatre and with experimental groups.

In the creative process of developing performances, Robert Waltl also frequently participated as a co-director and a dramaturge. These creations conquered many stages in Slovenia and participated at renowned international festivals from Iran, Venezuela, Poland, Spain, Italy, Belgium, Austria, Belarus, Russia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro to Hungary. As a director and an animator, Waltl also created the first virtual puppet show in the world, the Thumbelina which was performed by him in 22 languages, and set out on the path of investigating entirely undefined and undiscovered fields of theatre, visual and inter-media art. He was a guest performer at numerous international festivals in Austria, Italy, Hungary, Ger-

many, France, Denmark, Poland, Slovakia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Croatia, Greece, Bulgaria, Russia, Belarus, Romania, Turkey, Portugal, Spain, Venezuela, the Netherlands, Cuba, Iran, Pakistan, Egypt, Korea and China. For his work he has received several prizes and awards, including the prize of the Slovenian Drama Artists Association, the prize of Croatian Drama Artists Association, the Šugman prize, the Župančič prize and the

prize of the capital of Ljubljana as well as several prizes awarded at the festivals in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Iran, Poland, Belarus, Slovenia, Serbia and elsewhere.

## HE WAS SEARCHING FOR A PLACE AND FOUND THE LJUBLJANA CASTLE

“I was always interested in working with puppets and visual theatre in general.” During his engagement in the Puppet The-





atre, Waltl proposed opening of a school according to the schools in Tel Aviv, Prague, or Charleville-Mezieres which are the world centers of puppet theatre. Faced by the resistance to this proposal and motivated by his desire for something more, he and the director Ivica Buljan decided to found their own theatre. "My passion for puppetry was finally determined by old-fashioned puppets purchased in Prague in 1989 and used by my friends and myself in the performance *Sleeping Beauty* in a small hall at the Novi trg square which became our little haven of creativity." In 1998 he left institutional safety and founded the new Slovenian theatre, the Mini Theatre, with his own funds. "Together with Ivica we prepared a puppet show titled *The Great Adventures of Hireling the Apprentice*, the first puppet festival in the Ljubljana Castle, while we also started the festival *Mini Summer (Mini poletje)* which was organized for the thirteenth time this year." At that time, more than a hundred free performances for children were held in Ljubljana. With their own funds they constructed and equipped a small hall in the Ljubljana Castle where they have been continuously performing since 1999. The foundation of the Mini Theatre and the wide scope of the idea are also reflected in the open program which, unlike commercial programs prepared by pri-

ivate theatres, addresses the youngest audience with top-quality puppet shows, while on the other hand it fosters artistic theatre at the topmost level. The Mini Theatre prepares numerous Slovenian premieres of the 20th century's cult texts. "Every theatre that is alive, dynamic, brave and critical has its own public that follows and supports its development and artistic efforts," says Robert and adds it is a question whether theatre is carrying out its mission or merely limping behind its time.

#### ON THEIR OWN TURF AT LAST

Even a greater achievement than founding a theatre is, however, that after over a decade of its existence, the Mini Theatre has got its own premises. "At the private initiative, with our own funds, the funds from the City of Ljubljana, donors, sponsors and the Norwegian Fund, we built a functional theatre house." New ambitions also grew along with the new premises. Two years ago the theatre acquired new home in a narrow street connecting the Križanke Summer Theatre and the Ljubljanica river. Since the old town building is not really spacious, it is a peculiar achievement that it offers enough space for a hall that can accommodate 80-100 visitors, offices and also a residence center where guest artists are accommodated. "I love antiques," tells Rob-

ert and adds that this is also reflected in the Mini Theatre. "We have a hall with the most advanced technology while on the other hand we have an archaic vestibule in combination with antique furniture." For some time, there will be sufficient space for all projects, he adds, grinning. In the Mini Theatre, performances are staged for children and the youth along with the post-drama program. They wish to expand the existing program, so once a month integral reading of novels is organized and occasionally they also prepare poetry evenings, performances, seminars, concerts, exhibitions and festivals. "Our theatre also includes a mini gallery where works of contemporary visual artists from Slovenia, Croatia, Russia, France, Great Britain, Serbia and Belarus are on display. Every year they give on the average four premieres for children and four within the post-drama program. Robert points out that the habit of visiting a theatre can only be imparted by a family but he thinks it is right they educate their own public for evening performances. With regard to the structure of shows, the Mini Theatre is a house promoting shows at the top artistic level. Personal artistic initiative is harmonized with public interest. In this sense, the Mini Theatre operates like British or American independent theatres that receive minimal subsidies and have to pro-



vide the majority of funds required for their operation. Such a model is feasible there, as Robert points out, thanks to sponsor and donor stimulations that are non-existent in Slovenia or are received exclusively by large theatres. In European bourgeois tradition, patronship and donorship are oriented towards public values i.e. towards educational, cultural and artistic values and not to commercial contents.

Mini Theatre cooperates with numerous artists from around the world and is especially oriented towards regular exchange with Croatian creators. Regardless the new situation, its creators will also continue to perform in the Ljubljana Castle.

#### CULTURAL DISTRICT

Under the artistic leadership of Robert Waltl and the student of architecture Denis Petrovčič, new cultural neighborhood was created in the Križevniška street between the City Museum and the new Breg street. The project of ambiental-urban intervention was designed in cooperation with other creators and residents of the Križevniška street and was supported by the City Municipality of Ljubljana. Robert says that as soon as they moved to Križevniška street they wished to connect with people living and creating in this area. "We got the inspiration for the Križevniška cultural district from similar districts in New York." The project included creating a list of important people who have been creating in this street in the past, they set up smaller art installa-

tions in the street, sign boards and inscriptions, greenery and flowers and benches for reading and socializing. The cultural district was open on 30 August by the performance "Me, After Whom Ljubljana Can Be Named," directed by Ivica Buljan, honoring the poet Tomaž Šalamun, and taking place in various locations around the Križevniška street. So far, cultural district creative workshops have also been organized and performances *Mini Summer* and the *Festival of Letters* have been held, while readings of poetry and prose and smaller concerts are planned to follow. According to Waltl, in the future they intend to integrate into the wider cultural surroundings that would include all cultural and scientific institutions located in the area up to the Dvorni trg square, including the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the City Museum. They have also established connections with the local High School of Design that can, he is convinced, contribute additional fresh ideas.

#### WHAT FOLLOWS NEXT ...

As he says, he has had many visits from Hungary, the Czech Republic, Serbia, Croatia and Italy in the last couple of months. "People I have never met are coming to see me. For example students from Belgrade who have heard about our theatre and our program and are enthusiastic about us and are looking for the ways to carry this out in their own environments." He has also been addressed by embassies needing his advice on foundations and modes of implementa-

tion, building and operating of non-governmental organizations that want to carry out similar projects in their countries. Individuals and organizations ask him for help in the preparation of projects they wish to apply for European funding. "Unfortunately, it is the case that abroad good work is noticed sooner than at home," he laughs and tells that instead of the collective idea, new ethics favors individual pursue of happiness and prosperity of individuals, which is being achieved in a hasty (and unfortunately, as can be seen many times, dishonest) way. "At home, potential donors unfortunately do not think much about general value of a project in which they plan to invest and about its importance for the society." He says there is a lack of altruism among our business people and rich individuals. "Unselfishness, replacing short-term blindness caused by some pulp fiction or a reality show by investing in cultural projects of non-government groups and individuals, in the city and state infrastructure that would leave imprints in the society in a longer run."

But Robert is not giving up. With his exceptional willpower and a connecting smile he rushes from one project to the next. He would like to create a private international academy where lecturers and students would come from all over the world. "I would devote attention especially to working with mentors following the example of Michelle Kokosowski and her school in Paris." As so many times in the past, he is grabbing dreams by the horns and is already searching for residential facilities for this educational activity and for the accommodation of professors. He is also tempted to create a smaller permanent group of actors in the Mini Theatre: "Currently we are definitely the largest acting ensemble in Slovenia. In this year's program more than a hundred actors are performing" which of course causes problems because these actors are also engaged in other theatres. He would like to have a "troop" of ten actors with whom he could develop the idea of Mini Theatre in new directions and new dimensions.

What he does, he says, is a way of life. "Many times people ask me whether I have been on vacation. And I am unable to answer them properly. Everything is intertwined. I travel a lot and these guest performances are like holidays to me because they bring me a lot of joy. Namely, meeting people and discovering other cultures makes me the happiest. Wherever I go, I feel at home and enjoy diversity. He points out that's perhaps the reason why people think he is a little bit crazy. But I am adding: no, he is not crazy. He is ingenious.

Andrej Stare, photo: STA

# BACK ON TOP AGAIN AFTER 15 YEARS?

This season presents a great new opportunity for the Ljubljana team. Is there a new club basketball revival in the air for Olimpija? Will the Ljubljana team be able to compete with the excellent Spanish and Italian teams? Will Olimpija's hall in Stožice prove once again to be an unconquerable fortress?

These are the questions on everyone's lips before the beginning of the new European season and every basketball fan in Slovenia wants the answer to the above question to be a resounding YES.

The first part of the European league, hosted at the beautiful sports hall in Stožice, will feature the following teams: Barcelona (Spain), Montepaschi Siena (Italy), Unics Kazan (Russia), Prokom Gdynia (Poland) and a further team from the qualification rounds. For the second time in a row, Olimpija will try to get to the playoffs where single-elimination system is played. Olimpija's opponents are all outstanding basketball teams; the first game will be played against the two-time European champions, Barcelona. This year's European league will be also characterised by a lockout in the NBA. This prestigious competition will not take place since the players' trade union has failed to negotiate a deal with the league's owners on revenues and rights. Several European teams took advantage of this by luring many of the best basketball players in the world into their ranks. Apart from our centre, Erazem Lorbek, Barcelona's colours will be sported by Chuck Edison, Pete Mickael, C. J. Wallace and, of course, the best player from the latest European championship in Lithuania, Juan Carlos Navarro. Siena's team includes Bo McCalebb, an American with a Macedonian passport, a Greek player, Zisis, and the American players, Hairstone, Stonerook and Moss. The Russian champions from Kazan welcomed, in addition to the players from the national set up, the Americans, McCarthy (he has since been granted Russian citizenship), Lyday, Williams and Dumercant. The Polish champions, Prokom from Gdynia, have the Americans, Ewing, Adams and



Words, in their ranks to supplement their Polish contingent.

The Olimpija team, who failed to win the national championship last year, has not been idle either. Therefore, the excellent Danny Green from the famous San Antonio Spurs and Dean Thompson from Minnesota came to join Olimpija; other new players in the green strip will include Aleksandar Čapin, Robert Rothbart (Israel), Ratko Varda (Bosnia) and Den Woodside (USA). The new coach of the Olimpija team, who has won the national championship 21 times (6 times in the former Yugoslavia and 15 times in Slovenia) is Sašo Filipovski, who trained the Ljubljana players some years ago and gained his basketball experience as an assistant to Zmago Sagadin on the Olimpija bench.

Almost 46 years have passed since the first time Olimpija's basketball players made the so-called Final Four of

European club basketball. Way back in 1967, the national team Real, with three outstanding American players, played in Madrid against Simenthal from Italy, Slavija from Prague and Olimpija. Older fans still remember the 'referee theft' that prevented Olimpija from getting to the very pinnacle of European basketball. In the most famous of all the games in the history of Slovenian club basketball, Olimpija finally succumbed to the home team in front of 20,000 spectators with the final score at 88:86. The American trio, Brabender, Aiken and Luyk eventually outshone the long-haired Ljubljana player, Borut Bassin, who put in one of the best performances in history. The spectators in the hall of Real honoured the basketball players with lengthy ovations, thanking Olimpija for an outstanding performance. A day later, the Real Madrid Club easily won the final against the Italian club, Simenthal, with Olimpija finishing fourth.

Andrej Stare, photo: STA

# A FUTURE OLYMPIC CHAMPION?

Peter Kauzer won a gold medal at this year's World Championships in Bratislava – a great success for one of the world's best canoeists of the last ten years.



After his victory at the ICF Canoe Slalom World Championships in Bratislava, Kauzer said: 'The London Olympic Games are a major goal in my sporting career and I will devote the next year of my life to competing at the Olympics. It is great to win a gold medal at a world championships, it is also great to be the best in a World Cup event, but the Olympic title is the most important achievement. I am preparing

Penrith his team finished third in the 3xK1 category, while at the European Championships in Tacen his team won second place in the same event. Two years later, Kauzer repeated his success with his team in Liptovský Mikuláš in Slovakia. Unfortunately, the Olympic Games in Beijing were a great disappointment for Kauzer. Although he arrived in the Chinese capital as one of the favourites to win a medal, he failed to get through the qualifying rounds into the final.

However, the following year he twice took his place among the world's elite. He became slalom world champion on the Olympic course in La Seu D'Urgell in Spain and he also won the World Cup at the end of the season. Kauzer had more or less completed his path to the top, but he continued progressing in real champion's style. In 2010, he won the Canoe Slalom European Championships in Cunovo, and this year, at the World Championships in Bratislava, he won his third 'great' gold medal in major competition.

In the sporting world, Kauzer is known as an exceptional fighter who spends up to eight hours a day battling the water. Sport dominates his life and he subordinates everything to kayaking between the white water slalom gates. He is also a student at the Faculty of Sport and employed by the Slovenian Armed Forces. His hobbies are all connected with speed and physical skills. He enjoys snowboarding, surfing and playing badminton.

The longest river in Slovenia, the Sava, which divides Slovenia into two geographical units, rises in Zelenci near Kranjska Gora. It flows through Slovenia and Croatia and enters Serbia, where it joins the Danube in Belgrade. Its total length is 947 km. In Slovenia, there are many natural points of interest in the Sava River Basin; among the most famous of which are the rapids in Tacen near Ljubljana. Tacen has also organised three white water kayak and canoe world championships (in 1955, 1990 and 2010). In Podkraj near Hrastnik, some 55 km south of Tacen, the Sava has created further rapids. And that is where Peter Kauzer, our world champion, started his exceptional sporting career.



Dušan Brejc, photo: personal archive

# A story revived: Indigenous grape varieties

Every traditional wine-growing region in the EU that values its reputation has its indigenous grape varieties – plants to which we ascribe indigenoussness. And when a variety is indigenous, the wine made from it is indigenous too. These grape varieties and wines have qualities we would like to have ourselves: they are original, unrepeatable, exceptional, and sometimes even unique.



In this connection, two terms are widely used in both French and English: autochtone/autochthon and indigène/indigenous. Both terms are well-known in expert and amateur circles and, in the wine-growing and wine industry, are most often used when referring to varieties of the noble European vine *Vitis sativa* or to fermentation yeast that is not selected, meaning that it is not selected especially for that purpose but appears in vineyards and wine cellars around two weeks before the grapes are ripe, a process that has been occurring for thousands of years. The mystery of this truly indigenous yeast remains unsolved to this day. And although we have believed for years that determining origin with the help of grape varieties is an easy task, modern DNA analyses tell us that the matter is more complex than one might think. Indeed recent research in the area has overturned nearly everything we believed until recently. It is true that varieties have parents, although the flower of the majority of the European vine varieties is hermaphroditic, with both female and male reproductive structures, which results in self-fertilisation. This knowledge, what we know and what we don't know, has upgraded over thousands of years. Naturally, all these grape varieties have come from somewhere, although the term 'ampelography' – the descriptive study of grape varieties – was first used only in 1661.

#### INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF SELECTION OF VARIETIES

The term 'indigenous varieties' usually refers to those varieties that have arisen only in a particular area and have existed there

from time immemorial; their genome originates from the local environment, where grapes and wine are produced and vines are cultivated. Most often, these varieties cannot be found on the international market. Who on Earth has ever heard of zelèn (Slovenia), bonardo (Italy), mondeus (France) or feteasco (Romania), for example? Well actually, the aforementioned grape varieties are not as obscure as it might appear at first sight: connoisseurs have indeed heard about them. But there are also varieties that are unknown even to connoisseurs: even the ancient Romans knew that there are more wine varieties than grains of sand in the world.

But if you look through the wine section in the supermarket, you will be surprised to note that finding more than say two dozen different varieties is no easy task. 'International' varieties dominate the shelves, with Chardonnay, Cabernet and Merlot the most frequent. Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Grigio are next in popularity, while a bottle of Grüner Veltliner, the most widely grown variety in Austria, will not be found in any of the major supermarkets.

The paradigm of international varieties, such as Merlot or Semillon, has brought a shift in the market. In the 1970s, the new world countries (California, Chile, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Argentina) successfully penetrated the European market with varieties that were not as new as was implied at the time. In fact, since Bordeaux enjoyed an excellent reputation, old and well-known grape varieties of Bordeaux were grown in the southern hemisphere. And what could be sold better than wine made from varieties that had won France its reputation? This is why Cabernet



Sauvignon and Merlot, the main varieties of Bordeaux, and Chardonnay, the main white grape variety of Burgundy, were the most promising in terms of sales. Since then, however, a certain specialisation in varieties according to countries has occurred: Australia has become well-known for its Syrah (or Shiraz), an old French grape variety from the Rhone Valley; Uruguay is identified with Tannat and Argentina with Malbec, both varieties of Bordeaux; New Zealand has surprised the whole world with its Sauvignon Blanc, another French grape variety; South Africa has devoted itself to Chenin, a well-known variety from the Loire Valley; Chardonnay and Cabernet put California on the wine map; while the DNA fingerprinting of Zinfandel, which was considered an indigenous American variety for years, revealed that it originated from Italy and that it has ancestors in Dalmatia, on the Island of Šolta. All these well-known varieties finally gained international reputation in the 1980s, while varieties to which we ascribe indigenously still remained in the shadow of the most widely planted ones. A few wine drinkers tried persistently to give the less widely known varieties the opportunity to become popular, but these attempts failed to produce significant results as only few restaurants were willing to give them a try. This problem has remained the same until the present day. How can an ordinary wine drinker orientate himself among hundreds of varieties, brands and origins? Well, since this is clearly not realistic, quite the opposite occurred:



the wine drinkers just never got tired of the thousands of Chardonnays and Cabernets. Several decades have passed since then, and in recent years we have perhaps finally found the key that will unlock the door to less known, not-yet-prestigious and oddly named varieties due to the effects of rampant globalisation. Would you like Assyrtiko or Primitivo? The former is a white wine grape from Greece while the latter is a red grape from Italy. Who knows if you would pluck up the courage to buy one or the other: while the name of the first one tells us almost nothing, the second one seems to be pulling our leg a bit.

#### HOW IT USED TO BE

It's interesting to note that, in the past, varieties in themselves were not as important as they are today, at least until the appearance of phylloxera (in Slovenia in 1880), which almost destroyed the entire European wine-growing industry. Wine was named after the regions in which it was grown, a tradition surviving since ancient Greece. In his famous book *Slava vojvodine Kranjske* (The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola), which was published in 1689, the polyhistor Janez Vajkard Valvasor (a member of the London Royal Society) referred to several wine grape varieties grown in Slovenian lands and a special wine from Vipava, "Kindermacher, because it really warms you up". Later, Matija Vrtovec was one of the first to write about many grape varieties which would also be recognised in the present day, describing them in his famous wine book *Vinoreja*, published in 1844.

There are around 6000 recorded grape varieties in the world, but at least as many remain unrecorded. That is why a vine to which we could ascribe indigenously is likely to be found in every tra-

ditional wine-growing region. This is especially true for regions where old varieties were planted in good time in collection plantations, which are a kind of gene bank. A plantation of this kind is to be found in Slovenia in Kromberk near Nova Gorica; it is managed by the Biotechnical Faculty of the University of Ljubljana. How else could we make original, almost indigenous wine if not from an indigenous vine which is completely adapted to the local environment?

#### THE SLOVENIAN CASE

The Slovenian list of varieties includes over 50 permitted and recommended varieties, the majority of which are well known and 'international', such as modri pinot (Pinot Noir) or renski rizling (Riesling). Laški rizling (Welschriesling) is the most widespread grape in Slovenia, followed by refošk (Refosco), Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Merlot. The sixth most common vine is žametovka (Blauer Kölnler), an example of which is the oldest vine in the world, which grows in Lent in Maribor and is listed in the Guinness Book of Records.

In this regard, Dr Stanko Vršič mentions the measurement made in 1972 by dendrologist Prof. Rihard Erker, who counted 375 years of growth and posited that the vine could be over 400 years old. Using genetic technology, Dr Vršič and his colleagues have established that žametovka substantially differs from other grape varieties and that it is similar only to one less-known variety, Chaselas Red. Zealous nurserymen from Vrhpolje near Vipava every year prepare an exhibition of grapes, which is well visited by people of all ages. The exhibition also showcases grape varieties that

are less known among local people and have unusual names, such as poljšakica, pokalca, pergulin, planinka, maločrn and cipro. Quite a few domesticated or even indigenous varieties have gained visibility in the domestic market (zelen, pinela, klarnica, vitovska and ranfol), while rebula (Ribolla Gialla) and šipon (Furmint), which were embraced by local wine-growers for historical reasons, have successfully entered the international market.

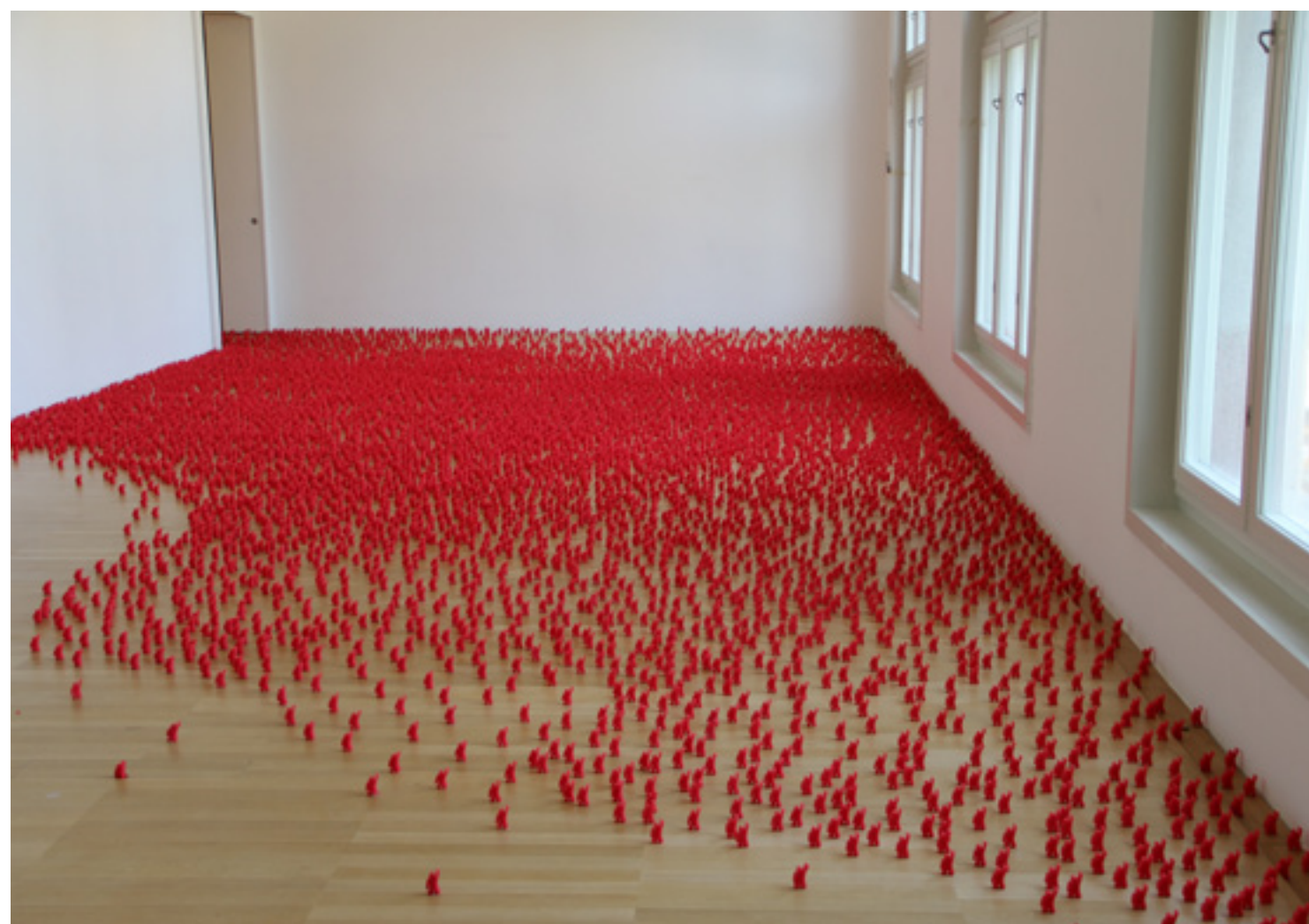
In the area of present-day Slovenia, a vine was cultivated by the Celts even before the Romans arrived. Hence Slovenia as a wine-growing region has considerable diversity and is pleased to be able to make a valuable contribution to the world's treasure trove of indigenous, historical vine varieties.



Albert Kos, photo: archive Ljubljana Biennial

# 29<sup>th</sup> international Biennial of graphic arts

The Ljubljana Biennial of graphic arts is the most prominent event in the area of visual arts in Slovenia with a respectable tradition reaching into mid-1950's.



Serkan Özkaya, Proletarier Aller Länder (Proletarci vseh dežel / Proletarians of All Countries), 1999–2011. Instalacija, Moderna Galerija./Installation, Museum of Modern Art. Photo: Serkan Özkaya



International Centre of Graphic Arts. Photo: Jaka Babnik

This year's Biennial, taking place in six locations in Ljubljana, is already the 29<sup>th</sup> in a row and is attended by numerous distinguished and recognized artists from around the world who participate at the event in Ljubljana with their projects upon the invitation of this year's curator Beti Žerovec. She selected an artistic event as a central theme and a conceptual starting point of this year's Biennial. Thus, The Event is a common name of various events prepared for the audience, performed by artists in institutions of contemporary art, sometimes also outside galleries and even without the audience but as a rule always with the intent to be later incorporated into the identical artistic sphere. These events have various forms of manifestation, from actions, performances, gestures, happenings, to interactive projects and other forms.

#### BIENNIAL MARKED BY THE EVENT

Therefore, the conceptual axis of the 29<sup>th</sup> Biennial of Graphic Arts titled Dogodek/ The Event is a presentation of selected artistic events in four various themes, each linked to one of the four central exhibition grounds or stages. In the International Center of Graphic Arts in the Tivoli castle, a set of projects titled Generosity is exhibited, the theme Violence is placed in the Modern Gallery, creations under the common title Ritual are presented in the Cankarjev dom Gallery, while in the Jakopič Gallery the project series with the common denominator Emptiness is taking place. The mentioned approach of the curator Beti Žerovec to the concept and the implementation of this year's Biennial is distinctly author-based and explicitly research-oriented since it wants to define modern trends in art and compare them with artis-

tic streams from a little more distant past. Therefore, the event is divided in two parts, live artistic events and a gallery exhibition with the presented material. The wider reflection of the exhibition is planned to be stimulated by the debate program intended to develop complex theoretical and interpretative apparatus for studying open issues related to the phenomenon of the event that remain theoretically mostly unstudied. For this purpose, a 15-hour marathon of debates and lectures is included in the Biennial program which are planned to expand the covered theme also beyond the narrow circles of art. Professionally more focused on the world of art, however, is the international symposium to which numerous experts were invited in order to further illuminate specific issues related to mass events in the institutions of contemporary art.

#### AWARDEES OF THIS YEAR'S BIENNIAL

Every time two awards are granted within the Biennial. The four-member international jury awarded this year's Grand Prix to visual artist Regina Jose Galindo from Guatemala, born in 1974, who works in the field of performance and body art and frequently reacts with her work to daily socio-political issues, e.g. by thematizing violence against women which is also a theme her three author works presented in Ljubljana. The Life Achievement Award was granted posthumously to Miklos Erdely (1928–1986), a versatile Hungarian artist who was an architect, a writer, a poet and a film creator and who importantly contributed to Hungarian neo-avant-garde and conceptual art. At this year's Biennial in Ljubljana his solidarity action Unguarded Money is presented which was carried out in cooperation with friends and some members of the Hungarian Writers Association in Budapest during the Hungarian Revolution in 1956.

Within this year's Biennial, the Alkatraz Gallery displays an exhibition of the awardee of the 28<sup>th</sup> Biennial of Graphic Arts from two years ago, the artistic cooperative Justseeds, established in 1998 in Chicago that operated initially as a project for distribution of graphic art and developed in 2007 into an artistic cooperative based in Portland, Oregon, at that time and currently in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, including members from USA, Mexico and Canada. The work titled Haven presented at this exhibition deals with the issues of migration and displacement and uses graphic and multi-color printing techniques and repetitive color application for the creation of its story.



Exhibition site on Vošnjakova ulica 4 in Ljubljana. Photo: Jaka Babnik

## \* cultural trails \*



Liz Magic Laser, *Flight*, 2011. Photo: Mia Tranz. Courtesy of Derek Eller Gallery, New York, ZDA / USA.

### BIENNIAL'S ACCOMPANYING PROGRAM

Two accompanying exhibitions are also on display within the Biennial. In the Lek Gallery of the Lek pharmaceutical company, 17 graphic sheets from the collection of International Graphic Arts Center are displayed that are a legacy from the initial period of the Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts. They are part of 140 exhibition pieces lent for the third Biennial

in 1959 by the renowned Swiss publisher Ernesto Jacometti, while the mentioned 17 graphics were a gift to Biennial organizers as acknowledgment of their efforts for the development of the graphic art. These are graphic works of art in the techniques of lithography and etching created by then renowned and established authors among whom Ossip Zadkine is probably the most famous and well-known. Already for the

first graphic exhibition in 1955, Zoran Kržišnik (1920–2008) who was deputy director of the National and Modern Gallery at that time and who later founded the International Center of Graphic Arts and led the Biennial until the turn of the millennium, brought from Paris the collection of Paris School graphics that inspired the International Biennial of Graphic Arts long after.

The other accompanying event is the presentation of 25 concepts of the corporate identity of the 29<sup>th</sup> Biennial of Graphic Arts prepared by the students of the Academy of Fine Arts and Design of the University of Ljubljana under the auspices of their mentors at visual communication seminars. These materials which are displayed in the International Center of Graphic Arts reveal various perspectives of students on this year's event.

### BIENNIAL'S DEVIATION FROM TRADITION

In relation to this year's Biennial which is conceptualized very ambitiously and innovatively, some polemic reactions to changed orientation of this event should be mentioned which now almost entirely deviates from its traditional concept that was strictly linked to graphic for several decades but since 2001 it has been expanded to all reproducible media. This



Karmelo Bermejo, *Booked. On a Working Day, All the Tickets for the 7:00 am Bus from Bilbao to Madrid Were Purchased with Public Money so that the Bus Would Complete its Route Empty*, 2007. Photo: Karmelo Bermejo



Kim Paton, *The Free Store Project*, 2010–2011. Photo: Erica Sinclair

meant a break with the tradition already a decade ago and was countered and opposed by many. This year's break, however, is even more radical since the area of graphic was almost completely marginalized by the authors of the exhibition which is no longer based on reproductive media but opens in the direction of considerably expanded definition of artistic expression. Namely, the authors of the exhibition are convinced that graphic became marginal in the area of contemporary artistic creativity not only in Slovenia but also throughout the world and that its importance is no longer as great as it used to be in the past. It is said to be overridden by new media, among them the Internet and video, and their forms of artistic expression such as installation and performance. Last but not least, these new forms frequently no longer create a final product in the form of an artistic work but instead the event itself or a happening became an artistic work. In the contemporary art institutions we are increasingly witnessing the transition from static visual art presentations to the 'performing' of events.

Arguing in favor of such a shift, the curator Beti Žerovc refers to testimonies of the

founder of the Biennial Zoran Kržišnik who said that in mid-50's when the International Biennial of Graphic Arts was established, the decision for graphic was above all pragmatic since graphic was more affordable to organizers as well as to the wider public and the collectors. According to her, attachment of the Biennial to graphic was never absolute and exclusive since their goal has been a great international art exhibition which was at that time feasible by exhibiting graphic art works.

Of course, those opposing the new direction of the Biennial disagree with such arguments by claiming that by deviating from graphic, the Ljubljana Biennial which remains graphic only in the title but no longer in its content, has wasted a valuable primacy in the area where it was really globally recognizable and leading and is moving to an area where its quality and identity would no longer be prominent but would be watered down in the multitude of events and exhibitions around the world. From the perspective of 'historic memory' that sees unforgettable reputation and importance of the range of the Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts in the decades preceding the turn of

the millennium, this is supposed to mean irreparable damage and impoverishment of the event.

Of course there is no final judge to be able to determine who is right, but nevertheless, the clash of the opposing opinions and positions regarding new directions taken by the Biennial is a proof that this is still a very vital event which is by no means spared by the dialectics of change leading to inevitable clashes between innovators and traditionalists. If it was otherwise, it would be possible to doubt whether the central international art event in Slovenia that has been organized every second year for almost half a century, really is a living organism that can relevantly mediate and reflect today's creativity in the area of visual arts in the increasingly globalized world.

The 29<sup>th</sup> International Biennial of Graphic Arts was open on 23 September and will be on display until 20 November. Therefore, interested visitors, domestic as well as foreign, have two months to visit and see it directly by themselves and make their own judgment about the ways or, as some are convinced, sideways, of the contemporary art.



# THE LJUBLJANA MARSHES

THE ROMANTIC ENTRANCE HALL OF THE SLOVENIAN CAPITAL

Among other stereotypes attached to it by the Slovenians, Ljubljana has an unpleasant reputation of a foggy city where the sun can barely be seen from the beginning of autumn until late spring due to the fog. Which is certainly an exaggeration.



Well, in popular view the real cause of the development of dense Ljubljana fog that inspired true legends was the Ljubljana Marshes, a vast marshy plain extending over approximately 150 square kilometers from the southern suburbs of Ljubljana to the first foothills of the mountains in the south: the Krim, the mountains around Vrhnika and the Polhov Gradec Mountains. If in the past, these marshes were regarded as an almost degraded, desolate area that should be drained as soon as possible because of the fog if not for other reasons, cultivated with more useful plants that bring direct benefit to humans and possibly also built-up since it neighbors the city, today the prevailing attitude is luckily rather different. In past decades, the Ljubljana Marshes have come to be regarded as an exceptional natural treasure, one of the last remaining great wetlands or marshes (it is estimated that in Europe between 70 and 90 percent of wetlands have been lost for ever, including their animal and plant species) and a habitat oasis of some birds

and other animals that can be found nowhere else. Three years ago it was declared natural landscape park while this year it was recognized as one of the locations in six European countries where Neolithic or Copper Age pile dwellings existed. It was also designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We have written about this before in Sinfo.

#### **METAMORPHOSES OF THE MARSHES**

This shift in the attitude towards or perception of the Marshes reveals all the problems faced by this interesting landscape throughout centuries. It is a tectonic depression filled with thick deposits of loam and sand throughout millennia while in the more recent period at the end of the Ice Age a large shallow lake rich with fish and other aquatic animals extended here that also enabled the survival of the aforementioned pile dwellings. The lake with insufficient tributaries was later transformed into the marshes where special role was played by riparian vegetation which, due

to the lack of oxygen in water, started to form peat, a layer of dead plant material which does not decompose but every year accumulates in new layers which can become several meters thick. Such an environment does not provide much food for quick growth and is therefore inhabited by special plant species, among them even carnivorous plants such as sundews of the Ljubljana Marshes.

The possessive mentality that certain benefit for humans has to be derived from everything caused many changes in the Ljubljana Marshes in the years of the developing capitalism. Poor and acidic soil was inadequate for agriculture but the thick layer of peat proved to be excellent fuel for all kinds of heating. Exploitation of peat which seemed inexhaustible in 19th and the first half of 20th century became a rather profitable business which largely destroyed deposits of this natural resource. When the peat became scarce, however, human imagination turned to the projects of draining the Marshes and the attempts



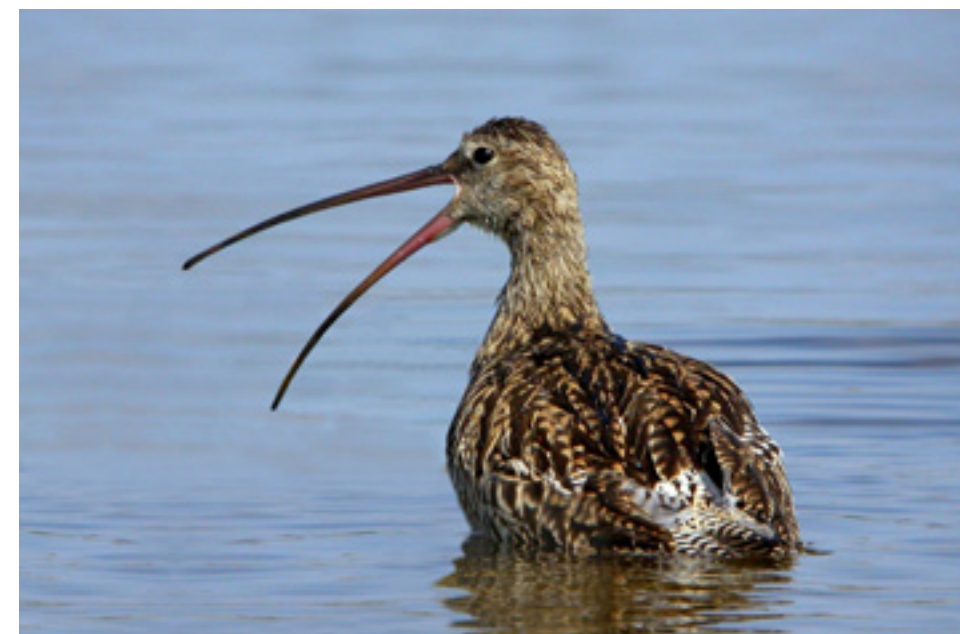
to turn the land into arable fields or at least pastures. Numerous drainage trenches required regular maintenance which attracted a considerable number of people to the area who maintained them and also engaged in farming. Later on, unrestrained appetites in acquiring building land despite soft terrain were becoming increasingly aggressive. The constructors succeeded in finding ways of building lower structures in the Marshes and thanks to building on stilts, although it is more expensive than

usual building, they have built relatively large residential and industrial areas as well as a shopping center on the marshy plain in the second half of the previous century. Such violence against nature went on uninterrupted until the adoption of the European Natura 2000 Directive which designated some built-up and the majority of already drained areas as a natural value. The new spatial plans of Ljubljana which were adopted in 2010 had to face this fact so that the Ljubljana Marshes are today

probably formally well protected from many ambitions to materially exploit this area. Besides, new facts that are in favor of nature protection will have to be taken into account also by the managers and owners of some already built structures that are not exactly in favor of nature: the otherwise well designed and managed central municipal waste landfill which will not be able to expand into the previously planned areas, as well as the industrial buildings along the eastern bank of the Ljubljanica river will be permitted to operate only within the carrying capacity of the marsh environment, while their expansion will not be possible.

**DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

But the Marshes really deserve all these release of burden. In its core, the splendid, somehow different landscape divided like a checkerboard into large squares by drainage trenches half a century ago hides plant and animal species that can be found nowhere else. The Ljubljana Marshes are a nesting area of as much as one half of all birds known in Slovenia or 250 in total! Among them are the most famous and unique corn crake (*Crex crex*), the Eurasian curlew (*Numenius arquanta*), the whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*), the grasshopper warbler (*Lacustella naevia*) and the northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*). With



white sand paths leading through meadows and fields, trees of various species planted along the edges of former trenches, especially during autumn and winter this is a nostalgic landscape gradually fading in the misty distance. It is as if watching an impressionist painting by some Claude Monet or our Rihard Jakopič... the plain is covered by woods interspersed with clearings where animals, among which deer is clearly the most common, have sufficient food for comfortable survival. The Marshes are a real treat for the eyes also when viewed from the air, so one of the attractions of the Ljubljana tourism was also flying over the area in hot air balloons. However, these flights have been substantially limited since it was discovered that hissing caused by the balloons terrifies animals even more than airplane overflights. This is why the ambitious plan to build the Ljubljana sport airport has luckily met its demise in the drawers of conservation institutions.

Today the area is managed by the public institute Ljubljana Marshes Landscape Park. Its director Barbara Zupanc has been involved in this project for a decade and in cooperation with relevant authorities as well as with the interested people and municipalities (The Marshes include territories of as much as seven municipalities), the Republic of Slovenia finally declared the park and established the public institute two years ago. Today three people are employed in the park but practically everything has changed. Appropriate legal basis is provided so that the public institute can carry out its mission of protecting and developing the area. On their web site one can learn about everything that happens there – and truly a great deal of things is going on. Daily visits, helping people to perform certain tasks, solving current issues and problems which are quite numerous since the institute has been operating for only two years while many adverse habits are older and more persistent, testifying how much work has already been done by the small team. When asked about development, the director points out that placement on the UNESCO Cultural World Heritage list is definitely what will have to be given meaning and promoted. She sees the Park development in close connection with tourism which is the only source – of course it has to be well conceptualized and managed – that can draw appropriate public attention to the Marshes, develop the consciousness about its great value and also provide the required human stewardship in order to remain largely in its natural state.



**I FEEL  
SLOVENIA**



The Ljubljana Marshes  
Photo: archive Landscape park