

# Sinfo 02

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The latest from Slovenia



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IN FOCUS: **Sochi 2014 - The most important Winter Event**  
CULTURE INTERVIEW: **Katarina Čas**

I FEEL  
SLOVENIA

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SLOVENIA

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Photo: Rosana Rijavec/STA



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In the photo: Damaged electricity distribution system in Notranjska

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Photo: Bruno Tolč

Tanja Glogovčan, editor

**A land of many brave images**

Slovenia this month was really like a block of ice. It seemed like some kind of innovative artistic installation. Everything was trapped in ice – cars, road signs, leaves- damaged trees and broken electric installations lay shattered all around. The tourists that visited Slovenia in those days came to know a side which even the people living there had never seen before. People's distress could be felt everywhere, but fortunately, there was not a single Slovenian who was not ready to help. Once again, it turned out that the Slovenia public services such as the civil protection service, fire-fighters and armed forces are well organised. Therefore, we have prepared for you a collage of these images: fieldwork, damaged countryside, visits by politicians to the affected areas, mutual assistance between citizens.

Of course, we were also happy about the success of our athletes at the Olympic Games. As Petra Majdič said before leaving for Sochi, "I am convinced that the expectations of our athletes and their fans will come true." And indeed, we Slovenians have once again demonstrated that we are a nation of brave and sports-loving individuals. In Sinfo, we present the giants of Slovenian sport, summarising their greatest achievements, and presenting the historic Sarajevo Olympics, along with other Olympic games related interesting stories.

This year, the month of February was really in the spirit of France Prešeren's 'Zdravljica'. 'Zdravljica' is a toast to goodness, understanding, companionship and courage.



Photo: GCO

## Go, Slovenia, go!

In the first days of February, Slovenia was hit by the worst natural disaster in living memory. Over a period of several days, rain with temperatures oscillating around freezing caused the formation of a thick glaze of ice on trees, power lines and other energy infrastructure. The consequences are catastrophic, with many places facing power outages, some cut off from the world with disrupted communication channels, and forests suffering devastation.

As I write this, around 200 thousand people are still off-grid; the relief teams in the storm-hit areas consist of a large number of fire-fighters, members of the civil protection service, Slovenian Armed Forces and police, and employees of electricity companies, providing unselfish help in restoring more or less normal conditions. People in the affected areas are most in need of power generators, which have also been brought to Slovenia from neighbouring countries and other European countries as a gesture of solidarity in the face of the natural disaster. We take this opportunity to thank them all for their assistance.

Nature unleashed its power and reminded us of our vulnerability, while again putting some fundamental human values, especially solidarity, to the test. And in particular, the fire-fighters and members of the civil protection service passed it with flying colours. If asked which group of workers they appreciate most, fire-fighters would undoubtedly be the reply of the people of Slovenia. I am not referring only to professional fire-fighters, but rather to members of the voluntary fire-fighting brigades, who number over 130 thousand in Slovenia. In Slovenia, fire-fighting is not only a voluntary activity, but plays a very important social role, sometimes being almost a way of life, which is especially true in small places.

The current situation has rather eclipsed the still lively political developments in Slovenia. The parties in the ruling coalition are discussing a new coalition agreement which will set the priorities of the government programme until the end of the term of office, i.e. until the end of 2015. There are no major disagreements over fundamental priorities; all parties agree that it is of primary importance to kick-start economic growth while creating new jobs and focusing attention on youth unemployment and consolidating public finances. It is worth noting the pledge of the coalition partners that the population and economy would not be encumbered with a heavier tax burden. The economic situation is improving slightly; interest rates on Slovenian government bonds are decreasing, and Slovenia's credit rating has not been further downgraded. However, this is far from enough. The biggest mistake would be if the momentum for reform and readiness to change were brought to a halt. The Government is aware of this and, therefore, will continue to pursue its objectives: the privatisation of state-run enterprises is underway; Telekom Slovenia will be getting a

new owner; the sales of other companies under the first privatisation package are proceeding according to plan and the second package is being prepared.

A particularly burning issue is youth unemployment, which currently stands at 23.3 per cent, affecting slightly less than 34,000 young people. The Government has devised the Youth Guarantee, a special youth employment programme, which will ensure that young people up to 29 years of age will be offered a job, job-related training or further education opportunities within four months of registering as unemployed.

This involves the commitment of the European Union to allocate Slovenia some 157 million euros to implement the Youth Guarantee in 2014 and 2015; in this context, Slovenia has taken a step further compared to other EU Member States by expanding the group of young people included in the programme. Other Member States have set an age limit of 25 years, while Slovenia is also including people who are up to four years older. Youth organisations in Slovenia have welcomed the programme, with all agreeing that a real breakthrough will occur when the economy shows real organic growth and creates jobs itself.

The attention of the Slovenian public has this month shifted to the Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia. Expectations are high, since the success achieved by our athletes this winter has spoiled us. This is especially true for the ski jumpers who have been winning competitions one after another. Just ahead of the Olympic Games in Sochi, the Slovenian jumpers won the podium at the World Cup event in Japan, celebrating a triple victory; some joked that this was an open national competition between Slovenians in Japan. In addition, we still have some aces up the sleeve to win a medal: the world's best Alpine skier last year, Tina Maze, is reaching her best skiing form; biathlete Jakov Fak, snowboarder Žan Košir and jumper Maja Vtič, with some others that might just surprise us.

Special attention should also be devoted to the Slovenian ice-hockey players who come from the smallest country ever to qualify for the Olympic tournament in this sport: almost a thousand people in Slovenia are registered to play ice hockey, of whom 155 are club members and 700 hundred are younger players. The population of two million has only seven indoor hockey rinks. And this little 'dwarf' will be playing its opening match with Russia.

We are justly proud of our athletes, and my prediction is that a Slovenian athlete will be in the spotlight on the front page of the next issue of this magazine, with an Olympic medal around his or her neck. Go, Slovenia, go!

## New Coalition Agreement Signed

The leaders of Positive Slovenia (PS), Social Democrats (SD), Citizens' List (DL) and Pensioners' Party (DeSUS) signed a coalition agreement for 2014–2015, pledging to raise the quality of life for everyone and pave the way for a sustainable economic recovery by the next regular election.

Aside from kick-starting economic growth, the coalition partners committed to step up the use of EU funds, reform public healthcare on the principle of solidarity and accessibility to all, boost Slovenia's economic independence through sustainable use of natural resources and create better prospects for youth. To promote the effort, the coalition is creating an independent government office in charge of EU fund phasing, which will answer directly to the prime minister, as will the Youth Office, whose head will be proposed by young people through organisations involved in the Youth Council.

The four coalition partners also pledged for the government not to interfere in the minimum wage and not to raise or introduce new taxes or other levies, except if it agreed otherwise with the social partners. Pensions and pension allowances are to be kept at the present level.



Photo: Tamirno Petelinšek/STA

A top priority is a development-oriented economy, which is to be achieved based on a strategy of industrial development and creation of new jobs with the mid-term goal being 60,000 new jobs and 3% annual economic growth.

Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA



Borut Pahor, a MEP from 2004 to 2008, said the idea of a joint Europe represents a great opportunity for Slovenians and warned that its decline would be a major problem for the 2-million nation.

## European Parliament elections

President Borut Pahor has called European Parliament elections for 25 May. This will be the third EU elections for Slovenian voters since the country joined the EU in May 2004.

“The European parliament is the only institution that reflects a direct political will of Europeans,” President Borut Pahor said on the occasion. He is certain that many candidates will vie for the eight MEP spots held by Slovenia. President Pahor announced that, as president, he would remain neutral in relation to the candidates in time of the election campaign. He will, however, continue to express his support to the EU and its institutions. Even though every citizen has the right not to vote, the president stressed that every vote contributes to being part of decisions about a joint European future, which he believes carries great importance for Slovenia.

## Major steps forward has been taken

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, Alenka Bratušek, hosted the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, who was on an official visit to Slovenia.

Their talks focused on current reforms in Slovenia, the upcoming European Council meeting, measures to enhance economic growth and increase employment, and youth policy. The Prime Minister also acquainted the European Council President with the latest reform developments in Slovenia. They agreed that major steps forward had been taken on this front and that Slovenia should continue the work at the same pace.



Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

The Prime Minister informed Mr Van Rompuy of the bad weather conditions in Slovenia and that Slovenia would ask the European Union for solidarity assistance.



## Captured in ice and snow

# Many Slovenians lent a helping hand in these hard times

Slovenia was having an incredibly warm winter until the end of January. After that, however, it struck all the harder. Glaze ice, freezing rain and snow caused massive economic damage to forests, as well as to commercial and residential buildings and roads. Therefore Slovenia requested international aid.



Many places in Slovenia were cut off from the world - captured in ice and snow.

The conditions were worst in Notranjska. All of the electricity distributors, fire-fighters and members of civil protection service and the Slovenian Armed Forces worked day and night. In greatest demand were electricity generators. It was another opportunity - for some even the first - to realise how much we depend on electricity. Families who spent some days in the blackout were without heating, water, food and means of communication; some were even unable to reach their cars because their garage doors have automatic locks. Many people

had cause to regret not using any alternative sources of energy.

Some companies and factories closed down for several days. Thus, most production stopped in Notranjska and in the area of Postojna. The damage will be considerable. Most companies plan to offset their losses with overtime and weekend work. The companies that came to a halt include Kovinoplastika Lož, Pivka Javor, Eurobox, Dynacast Lož, Brest, Ydria Motors and Liv Kolektor.

Also schools and kindergartens

were closed for several days. Falling trees and branches also wrought major damage at Ljubljana ZOO.

### THE GREEN CATASTROPHE

The biggest loss to Slovenia is undoubtedly the natural disaster suffered by the forests. According to preliminary estimates half a million hectares of forest, or over 40 per cent of all Slovenian forests, have been destroyed. This is the amount of wood normally felled in a year. The broken trees will then have to be cut down or trimmed as soon as possible. In





**Damage in numbers according to first estimates**

- 37 million euros in damage to the electricity distribution system,
- 20 million euros to railway infrastructure,
- 9 million euros to state roads,
- 10 million euros to the Eles transmission system,
- 480 000 hectares of forest or 5.155 million m<sup>3</sup> of wood have been damaged,
- 93% of forest roads are closed.





addition, foresters will have to cut down every spruce injured in any way, although it may only be missing a branch. Spruce is highly susceptible to bark beetle, so strict hygiene must be maintained in such forests but this will be difficult after the glaze. If owners fail to clear a sufficient quantity of broken branches and trunks before the first swarming of the bark beetle in May or June, this will lead to another nation-wide catastrophe. And if the spring is warm, this means even less time is available, as the bark beetle begins to swarm when the temperature is at about 20 degrees for a few days, which can happen already in April. Deciduous trees, too, will have to be removed as soon as possible, or they will fall prey to fungi and other diseases. Beech is especially highly prone to internal lesions. The elimination of damage alone will be very costly. This will be followed by the costs of planting and other means of rehabilitation necessary to restore all the functions of the forest. How the changed forest structure will affect the environment is a ques-

tion to which the answer will be found only after a certain time.

**THROUGH SOLIDARITY AGAINST ICE**

Slovenia received international assistance in the first most critical days, primarily in the form of electricity generators. Slovenian citizens also showed mutual solidarity by continuously bringing electricity generators, food, clothes and money to Red Cross and Caritas centres and, while it was still safe, helping with physical work. Once again, it has turned out that Slovenia has excellent and effective armed forces and outstanding fire-fighters and members of the civil protection service.

The Slovenian President, Borut Pahor, the Slovenian Prime Minister, Alenka Bratušek, the Minister of Defence, Roman Jakič, and the Minister of Agriculture and the Environment, Dejan Židan, paid several visits to the affected areas during this period. This was the first priority of the Government in the critical days,

overshadowing all other responsibilities.

**GOVERNMENT STRATEGY TO ELIMINATE THE CONSEQUENCES**

The Government has provided almost 318 000 euros from budgetary reserves to eliminate the consequences of the natural disaster. The funds have been used to purchase electricity generators and flood defence bags and to repair some telecommunications installations.

Slovenia has already applied for as much EU assistance as it is entitled to, and the Minister of Finance, Uroš Čufer, has initiated negotiations for loans from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the European Investment Bank (EIB). With these loans, Slovenia intends to remedy the damage to energy infrastructure, railway network and state roads. A large part of the energy infrastructure and railway network has been damaged.

Politicians paid several visits to the affected areas.





# Stress test results favourable for Slovenia

December 2013 brought the results of stress tests which showed that Slovenia could solve its problems itself and that no international support will be needed to rescue the banks. The capital deficit at the banks covered by the review amounts to EUR 4.8 billion.

The so-called stress tests carried out by independent international experts comprehensively examined the Slovenian banking system. The experts reviewed the Slovenian banking system in an unlikely adverse macroeconomic scenario and determined any capital shortfall that could arise at an individual bank or, consequently, across the entire banking system in the event of such a scenario occurring.

The comprehensive review initially included the following ten banks: NLB, NKBM, Abanka, Gorenjska banka, Banka Celje, UniCredit Banka, Hypo Alpe-Adria-Bank, Raiffeisen banka, Probanka and Factor banka (the orderly wind-down process later saw the latter two excluded from the review). The banks under review constitute a representative sample of 70% of the Slovenian banking system. The review was carried out by Oliver Wyman (bottom-up stress tests), Roland Berger (top-down stress tests), Deloitte and EY (asset quality review), CBRE, Jones Lang LaSalle, Cushman & Wakefield, Colliers (real estate valuation).

The review began in August 2013, and included the verification of data completeness and integrity, a review of individual loans and collateral valuations, and identification of the adequacy of impairments. An assessment was conducted on the basis of this data, or in other words, stress testing of whether the banks could maintain an adequate level of capital at the end of 2015, assuming a further sharp deterioration in the macroeconomic situation. The comprehensive review was supervised by a steering committee comprising representatives of the Bank of Slovenia and the Ministry of Finance, and observers from the European

Commission (DG EcFin and DG Comp), the European Central Bank and the European Banking Authority.

## TRANSFER OF ASSETS TO THE BAMC

The test results show that a total of EUR 3.012 billion is required for capital increases at the three largest banks – NLB, NKBM and Abanka. Thus the first assets – those of NLB and NKBM – were transferred to the Bank Asset Management Company (BAMC) immediately after the stress tests. The gross value of risk assets transferred amounted to 3.21 billion euro. In return for these assets, the BAMC paid NLB the sum of 622 million euro and NKBM the sum of 390 million euro in bonds with a state guarantee. The actual transfer of assets will be carried out in five stages. So far, all activities have been completed as expected.

The physical transfer of the first set of assets from NLB and NKBM has been carried out in three fields: the first field is interviews by BAMC representatives with bank trustees, in order for the BAMC representatives to acquire the maximum amount of information about the cases. The technical acquisition of documentation ran parallel to the first field. The third field refers to the IT support currently provided by the two banks and used to manage transferred assets; NLB and NKBM granted the BAMC representatives access to all data. When the activities in all three fields are completed, the documents of the first package of assets will be considered physically transferred to the BAMC, which will manage these assets thereafter.

In the opinion of Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek, the people responsible for the bad situation in Slovenia's banking system should be identified immediately after the publication of the stress tests.

The next step is to find strategic partners or owners for the banks. The priorities of the Government include corporate repayments, removing red tape and health-care reform. One of the main objectives of the overhaul of the banking system is to stop the shrinkage in lending activities. What the Slovenian economy expects from the overhaul is responsible loans, made under normal conditions comparable to those granted to foreign competitive companies by their banks. The return of banks to international financial markets would also lead to cheaper loans, which is one of the objectives of the overhaul.

## PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF DATA

The Act amending the Access to Public Information Act, which is currently under consideration, will make information about loans transferred from state banks to the BAMC publicly accessible. This implies the public availability of information about clients, loan amounts, the entity approving the loan, security and the gross amount of debt. The proposers of the amendments to the Act made the proposals in the public interest, which the legislator recognises as stronger than the need to protect bank secrecy.

Slovenia has also been a focus of foreign media, which devoted a fair share of attention to the results of the stress tests of Slovenia's banks. They mostly pointed out that the banking hole is not too deep to prevent Slovenia from rehabilitating the system, which was allegedly confirmed by Brussels, and quoted European Commissioner Olli Rehn, who said that "today, it is clear that Slovenia can rehabilitate its financial system on its own, without financial aid from its European partners." Bloomberg stressed that "Slovenia's chances of avoiding an international bailout" increased with the publication of the stress tests. The state managed to set aside about five billion euros to rescue the banks, which "is more than sufficient to cover the bank rescue plan and spark investors' interest." AFP pointed out the statement of Dijsselbloem that Slovenia has sufficient reserves and access to financial markets, although at a relatively high price. They will tackle these problems on their own, and they have my trust in this, added the Eurogroup president. dpa wrote that the stress test results should dissipate fears that Slovenia could become the sixth Eurozone country to need a financial bailout. It added that although Slovenia's transition was hailed as a role model of post-Communist transition, the economic crisis showed that Slovenia did not carry out the necessary reforms and reduce its spending early enough to avoid the prospect of financial collapse. Reuters wrote that the publication of the stress test results for Slovenian banks drew "a sigh of relief from the European Union", as another package of assistance, no matter how small, would have sown doubts about the EU's insistence that it can put the debt crisis behind it.

## Sochi 2014

**The Most important winter event**

The Olympic Games in Sochi and the 2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil are undoubtedly the most important sporting events of this year. The Slovenian team at the Sochi Winter Olympics, which was from 7 to 23

February, had 66 members. The national team was selected by the Executive Committee of the Olympic Committee of Slovenia; the captain of the team was Petra Majdič.

Slovenian athletes have already put on their Olympic Colours. For the first time before leaving for Russia, the Slovenian sports expedition gathered on Wednesday, 22 January, for an official presentation to the Slovenian public.

At the opening ceremony, the Slovenian flag was carried by Tomaž Razingar, the captain of Slovenia's hockey team. The Slovenian delegation comprised athletes competing in eight sports. The biggest was the hockey team, which consisted of 25 players. The ski-jumping and snow-boarding teams each had nine members; the Alpine skiing team consisted of eight members, the biathlon team of six, and the cross-country team of five; three athletes competed in Nordic Combined and one in freestyle.

**GET READY, HERE WE GO, SLOVENIA.**

It was with these words that Slovenian Alpine skier Tina

Maze addressed the Slovenian public via video link from the Downhill in Cortina d'Ampezzo. A similar video message was sent by Slovenian ski jumper Peter Prevc: "Be the champions of the first league."

Slovenian athletes have already put on their Olympic Colours. For the first time before leaving for Russia, the Slovenian sports expedition gathered on Wednesday, 22 January, for an official presentation to the Slovenian public. Numbering 66 members at the moment, the Slovenian team for Sochi may be even bigger if other national teams cancel. However, all will be clear on 26 January, the closing date for the registration.

Winning an Olympic medal is certainly an ideal gift for any athlete participating in the Sochi Games. However, only a handful of athletes have real chances of winning a medal, while the rest will return only with new experience, memories and good results.

The Wednesday official unveiling was in the absence of Slovenia's team top high-scoring athletes: Tina Maze (twice a winner of silver at the Olympic Winter Games four years ago in Vancouver), the ski-jumping team and the men's ice-hockey team, with Anže Kopitar in the line-up, also absent due to their sporting commitments. The absence of biathlete Jakov Fak was due to recent health problems.

The President of the Slovenian Olympic Committee, Janez Kocijančič: "The biggest and strongest Slovenian team ever in the history of independent Slovenia is bound for the Sochi Winter Olympics."



Photo: Stanke Gruden/STA



The send-off ceremony was attended by the Slovenian highest political representatives.

### THE BIGGEST AND STRONGEST SLOVENIAN TEAM EVER

The President of the Slovenian Olympic Committee, Janez Kocijančič said: "The biggest and strongest Slovenian team ever in the history of independent Slovenia is bound for the Sochi Winter Olympics. Seven medal winners at world championships in Olympic sports in the past season are among you. Our task is to provide support for you, so that in the biggest competition over a four-year period you show what you know and what you can do to the best of your ability."

Among those who were undoubtedly awaiting the 22nd Olympic Games eagerly was Petra Majdič, Slovenian Vancouver bronze-medal heroine and currently the captain of the Slovenian Olympic team in Sochi. "In the last few weeks, I have really devoted a great deal of time to preparing for the Olympics. The role of team captain is

not an easy one, which is why I am trying to pay most of my attention to it and to be closely involved in the entire development of events. The selection criteria in Slovenia and in the world are changing and are more stringent every year; we would all like to achieve good results and high competitiveness for our athletes. Slovenia is a small country of very diverse sports; we have high-scoring competitors, so it is important to present them to the global elite in the right light. Life has taught me that whatever happens to you is what is meant to be, and we should take on only the burdens that we are able to handle. For all athletes, the Olympic Games are a good learning experience. I hope that in a positive way, and that as few competitors as possible are disappointed."

The only thing that seriously worried her was the weather. The Vancouver Winter Olympics hinged on the weather and she expects Sochi to be the same. "No matter how well the athletes are prepared, they cannot fight the weather."

In the preliminary round in Sochi, Slovenia was represented in team sports grouped with superpowers Russia, the USA, and Slovakia for the first time in history.

Among the Slovenian Olympic national teams, the hockey team was definitely the one to see to an exceptional and biggest event in the Games. The national hockey team coach, Matjaž Kopitar said before leaving to Sochi: "I don't think that our players have Olympic jitters. We have done a lot by making it to the Olympics and, we are relaxed in our expectations of this event. Players from different clubs are constantly in contact through social media; the chemistry is excellent. We all want to give a great performance and to be competitive with our rivals. I hope we will give it 110% of our abilities, and then success will come. We hope that the injuries will be at a minimum and that all the players who are on the list will actually perform. Our expectations are high, because we will be playing against great teams. I hope we will put aside the fact

The basic colour combination includes green, blue and white. In the Olympic outfit collection, which was selected by sportswear manufacturer Peak and designed by Slovenian architect Sandi Murovec, the prevailing graphic image is the symbol of Triglav.

Slovenian athletes in the Olympic outfit collection.

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA





When designing the outfit, the Olympic Committee of Slovenia adopted a policy of making the collection simple, energetic, young and visible.

that we were eliminated from the world elite hockey league in the World Championship and that in Sochi we will be able to play our best. I also wish that our Olympic appearance will have a positive effect on the development of hockey in our country, but, to be honest, I do not see anything major on the horizon.”

**OUTFITS AT THE OLYMPICS**

The Slovenian national team players have shown in person what clothes they will be wearing at the Games. The basic colour combination includes green, blue and white.

In the Olympic outfit collection, which was selected by sportswear manufacturer Peak and designed by Slovenian architect Sandi Murovec, the prevailing graphic image is the symbol of Triglav.

When designing the outfit, the

Olympic Committee of Slovenia adopted a policy of making the collection simple, energetic, and young on the one hand, and visible on the other hand. We have continued this trend as a follow-up from the London Summer Olympic Games in 2012, with fresh and vivid colours – green, blue and white – to which we added different combinations of the Triglav symbol. Much emphasis was placed on design, as well as on high-quality fabric and comfort, which will contribute to the well-being of the members of the Slovenian Olympic team at the Olympics.

Designer Sandi Murovec: “ It is essential that London already proved the correctness of our decision to determine the spectrum of colours precisely. We have created a new colour map, which in the future is to be the strongest segment of visual identification of Slovenian national teams. With this

decision, we hit the nail on the head, and in less than a year, almost the entire Slovenian sports world was dressed in these colours. This is why the Sochi 2014 Olympic collection is continuing this direction; however, we are trying to add some new graphic elements, with the image of Triglav standing out the most. It is difficult for me to assess the collection, in fact, it would not be appropriate. However, I do believe that our athletes will be among the most recognisable and totally trendy. The official attire that members of the Slovenian Olympic team were wearing at the opening and closing ceremonies and at the medal-awarding events is this time in a sports style; it is also possible to buy the sports fan collection featuring clothes from the official Sochi 2014 Olympic collection, caps, headbands, scarf and gloves, from Mercator supermarkets and at selected HIP HOP Petrol stations.”

Fans can show their support for the athletes by buying Olympic bracelets.



# Winter Olympics

## Biggest Slovenian team so far

At the 22nd Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia, Slovenia was represented by the biggest team so far. There were as many as 66 of our athletes among the competitors, since it was the first time in the history of the Winter Olympics that Slovenia had representatives in team sports.

Photo: Archives of OKS



Slovenian athletes were housed at three different locations in four houses marked with the logo “I Feel Slovenia”.

The eleven sports venues that were built in Sochi are divided into two clusters: one set of buildings is located along the coast in Sochi, and the other in the hills above the city. They are 48 km apart, but the train and bus connections between them are quite efficient.

### COASTAL OLYMPIC VILLAGE

For the first time in the history of the Olympics, Slovenia's 25-member hockey team were among the participants at the Winter Games. After two consecutive victories under

the leadership of coach Matjaž Kopitar at the qualifying tournament in Vojens, Denmark, they ranked among the top twelve teams competing in Sochi. In Group A they competed with the national teams of the USA, Russia and Slovakia. The Slovenian “Risi/Bobcats” were housed in the main Olympic village on the Black Sea coast. At the opening ceremony, the Slovenian flag was carried by Tomaž Razingar, captain of Slovenia's hockey team.

The Slovenian hockey team (also known as “Risi”) has participated in eighteen World Hockey Championships (the first time was in 1993): five times in a third-class championship Group C (D2), eight

times in a second-class championship Group B (D1) where it scored four victories, and six times in the elite Group A championship.

The team participated in the qualifying tournaments for the Olympic Games three times, i.e. in 2002, 2006 and 2010, each time unsuccessfully. In 2013, the Slovenian team again ranked among the elite, in the group that played in Sweden, but despite their excellent performance they landed in Division I/A.

### MOUNTAIN OLYMPIC VILLAGE

Krasnaya Polyana in the Caucasus mountains hosted competitions in alpine and Nordic

Biathletes and cross-country skiers were housed in the Endurance Olympic Village. All four houses accommodating Slovenian athletes were marked with the logo “I Feel Slovenia”.

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Due to its simple and youthful design and outstanding colour combinations and patterns, this year's Olympic collection contributed to the promotion of Slovenia.



Alpine skiers, ski-jumpers, freestyle skier and snowboarders were accommodated in two houses in the Mountain Olympic Village.

It was the first time in Slovenian Olympic history that the team was led by a woman, Petra Majdič, winner of the bronze medal in cross-country skiing at the Winter Olympics in Vancouver in 2010.

skiing, bobsleigh, luge and skeleton, snowboarding, biathlon and ski jumping. In the Mountain Olympic Village, Slovenian alpine skiers, ski-jumpers, boarders and those competing in Nordic skiing were accommodated in two houses marked with the logo “I Feel Slovenia”.

Slovenia was represented by current World Cup champions Peter Prevc, Robert Kranjec, Jurij Tepeš, Jaka Hvala and Jernej Damjan.

Peter Prevc started competing in the World Cup in the season 2009–2010, and soon became one of the strongest pillars of the Slovenian team. He won the first team medal in 2011 in Planica, and later on won six

more group medals. He won his first individual medal in 2013 in Planica. In 2014, he won the first World Cup in Kulm. This was followed by Prevc’s victory in Sapporo, Japan, where he took the leading position in the competition. In Vancouver, in 2010, he ranked seventh. In 2013, Prevc was awarded the title of Sportsman of the Year.

22 Winter Olympics in Sochi were the first Olympic Games in history to admit female ski-jumpers. Slovenia was represented by ski-jumpers Maja Vtič, Katja Požun, Eva Logar and Špela Rogelj.

The competitors in the Nordic combination were Marjan

Jelenko, Gašper Berlot and Mitja Oranič.

In alpine skiing, Slovenia was represented by Mitja Valenčič, Žan Kranjec, Rok Perko and Kl-emen Kosi.

Among Slovenia’s female representatives was Tina Maze (who, by winning 2414 points, set a record for the number of points won in the World Cup), Maruša Ferk, Ilka Štuhec and Katarina Lavzar.

Tina Maze is currently the best Slovenian skier. She is one of six women who have won medals in all five skiing disciplines in the World Cup in one season. Maze has won twenty-three medals in World Cup





championships. In 2013, she won the big crystal globe with an outstanding total of 2412 points, thus beating Hermann Maier, who made 2000 points in the season 2000. In the season 2013, she won two small crystal globes in super G and giant slalom and was ranked second in slalom and downhill. Maze also broke Maier's record for the number of medals won in a single season - she stood on the winners' podium twenty-four times (Maier twenty-two times). In 2005, 2010, 2011 and 2013, she was awarded the title of Sportswoman of the Year. At the Olympic Games in Vancouver in 2010, she won two silver medals in giant slalom and super-G.

In freestyle skiing, Slovenia was represented by Filip Flisar. Flisar started his career as alpine skier, later switching to freestyle. In 2012, he ranked second at the Winter X Games in Aspen. In January 2012, he won his first World Cup medal in Alpe d'Huez. In the 2012 season, he won two more medals,

and ranked fifth in the total score in 2011-2012. In December 2012, he also won in the competition in Telluride, thus having altogether four medals in the World Cup. At the Olympic Games in Vancouver in 2010, he ranked eight in ski cross.

In Sochi Slovenia's representatives in snowboarding were Rok Marguč, Žan Košir, Rok Flander, Izidor Šuštaršič, Tim Kevin Ravnjak, Jan Kralj, Matija Mihič, Gloria Kotnik and Cilka Sadar.

Rok Marguč achieved a number of outstanding results in various competitions in parallel disciplines. He gave excellent performances in the World Cup, where he also won a medal in the parallel giant slalom in Swiss Arosa; but the greatest achievement is the title of world champion in the parallel slalom that he won in Stoneham in Canada. He was awarded the Bloudek prize for this top international achievement.

#### ENDURANCE OLYMPIC VILLAGE

Slovenian biathletes and cross-country skiers were accommodated in the Endurance Olympic Village. Slovenia's biathlon representatives were Jakov Fak, Klemen Bauer, Janez Marič, Peter Dokl, Simon Kočevar and Teja Gregorin.

Biathlete Jakov Fak, although born in Croatia, enters competitions as a Slovenian representative. As a member of the Croatian biathlon team, he won a bronze medal at the world championship in 2009 and another at the Winter Olympics in Vancouver in 2010. He has been representing Slovenia since the 2010/2011 season. At the World Championship in 2012, he won a gold medal in the 20 km competition and a silver medal in the group competition together with Andreja Mali, Teja Gregorin and Klemen Bauer.

Slovenia's representatives in cross-country skiing were Katja Višnar, Alenka Čebašek, Vesna Fabjan, Nika Razinger and Barbara Jezeršek.

Slovenian athletes were housed in three Olympic villages. The ice-hockey team was accommodated in a house in the Coastal Olympic Village.

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For the first time in the history of the Olympics, Slovenia's 25-member hockey team were among the participants at the Winter Games.

## Ice Dragons

# Accessories for Olympic fans

Ice Dragons are an ice-hockey fan group from Ljubljana which was founded on 7 December 2010. The vision of the group is to actively support the team and the parent club during and after competitions.



Photo: GCO

I feel Slovenia! I feel Slovenia!

The first group of fans to announce its departure for Sochi and request a donation of fan accessories was the ice-hockey fan group Ice Dragons.

On the day before the departure for Sochi, on Slovenian Hockey Day, organised on 3 February in Tivoli Hall in Ljubljana, our ice-hockey players were presented to the Slovenian fans. At the presentation, the players who have acquired most national championship titles in independent Slovenia and the most efficient ice-hockey players of the International League INL participated. The presentation was followed by a match between the former national team, which under the former state had taken part in the Olympic Games in Sarajevo, and the current Slovenian national team. In addition to the Olympic Committee of Slovenia, other important sportsmen and coaches as well as other

participants in the Olympic Games in Sochi attended the event. The new team outfit was presented, and all funds raised from ticket sales were donated to the Olympians Club.

#### ENCOURAGEMENT IS WELCOME

Encouragement is a valuable boost to anyone trying to achieve good results. It motivates coaches, who share their experience and knowledge with athletes, organisers and everyone who is, each in their own way, part of this sports story. Everyone needs encouragement, which can also be very welcome to our sportsmen and women, whose achievements will be what count in the end. The Government Communica-

tion Office (GCO) attempted to adequately equip the fans who attended the Olympics. The GCO and fans are aware that the synergy of all stakeholders is what helps produce the best sport results.

Adequate sports fan accessories were provided for different groups of fans. Some fan accessories: caps, gloves, face stickers and lip balm sticks for those fans who support our athletes at skiing sites; some partly different sports fan accessories such as pullovers, foam hands, clap banners to suit a different type of venue and support such as cheering in the stands. All the fans were given fan scarves, universal protection cream, baggage tags, Slovenian flags





on sticks and national brand slogan flags. Most of the accessories were produced by Slovenian companies.

### ICE DRAGONS

The first group of fans to announce its departure for Sochi and request a donation of fan accessories was the ice-hockey fan group Ice Dragons.

Ice Dragons are an ice-hockey fan group from Ljubljana which was founded on 7 December 2010. The reason for their formation was to raise the atmosphere in the hockey stands and support their favourite athletes. According to their Facebook profile, they are an ice-hockey fan group whose aim is to appropriately support their team without inciting riots. Immediately after the first meeting, the founding members of the group, David Murn and Alen Anzelc, used their FB profile to invite a wider public to join them; however, the proposal

for the name of the group was submitted later. The group has thirty-eight members, and intends to invite new active fans to join them to make the group more successful.

The Ice Dragons's aims is to establish good relations with fans of competing clubs and to promote a culture of cheering in the sport. Some members of the club are fan veterans who attended the Olympic Games in Vancouver, while others were attending the Games for the first time.

### LOVE OF COUNTRY

To fan groups, the popularity of athletes and coaches, the love of sport and desire to socialise, and most important, love of country, present challenging factors which they can experience through cheering.

Other fan groups were at the Olympic Games, and individuals, too, who were provided

with fan accessories by the Government Communication Office on the basis of information provided by the Kompas tourist agency.

Slovenia is a unique country and we Slovenians are a unique, very competitive and tolerant nation, with a strong will, which is reflected in the fact that, in terms of sport achievements per capita, Slovenia ranks among the best in the world.

We Slovenians are a nation which believes. We also believed that our athletes would achieve excellent results at the Olympic Games in Sochi. And so they did. Athletes live for their sports. Their goal is to be good at what they do. In their excellent performance, they serve as an example to each of us that successful results can be achieved with appropriate training, adaptation, self-sacrifice and focused work.

Ice Dragons in Sochi

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The Government Communication Office (GCO) attempted to adequately equip the fans who attended the Olympics. The GCO and fans are aware that the synergy of all stakeholders is what helps produce the best sport results.

## Esad Babačić

# The Gang

Esad Babačić is a man of stories; he sings about them, he writes them and he explores them. He is a poet, singer, writer and journalist. Esad Babačić is an artistic soul who adores sport. In the book 'Banda' presented below, Babačić remembers the golden age of highly competitive matches between Jesenice and Olimpija.

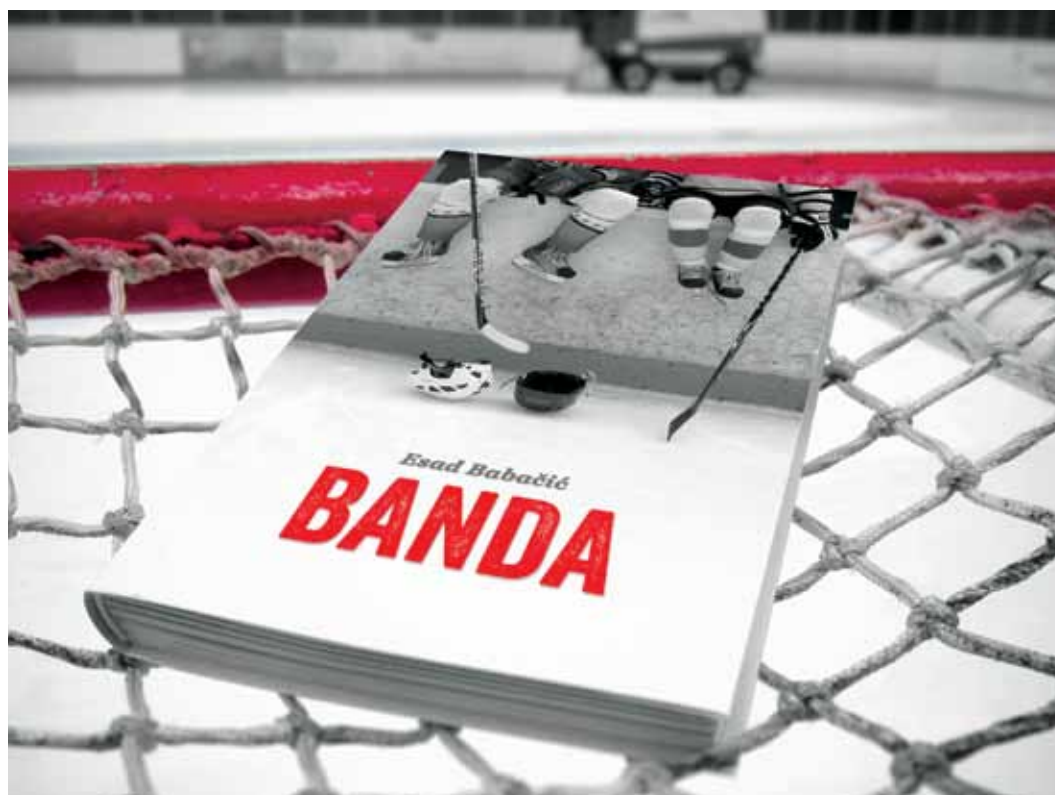


Photo: Gregor Rožič / Grafino

The story in 'Banda' (The Gang) is not standard reportage, but a personal, attractive and witty sports account presenting the phenomenon of sports and ice hockey in a sociological and historical perspective.

The idea to write a book came to him when the Lynxes (Slovenia's national ice-hockey team) qualified for the Olympics in Sochi. As for the title, the author explains that 'banda' in the Slovenian language is a homonym for ice hockey boards and a metaphor for friendship among hockey players, which lasts from childhood until the end of life. Babačić points out: "Gangs have changed and will change, but hockey players will remain loyal to the one and only Gang".

### NATIONAL PROUD AND THE ICE

In February, Slovenian people celebrate Culture Day to honour the memory of France Prešeren, the greatest Slovenian poet, who died on 8 February 1849. A stanza of his poem 'The Toast' is the Slovenian national anthem. At the beginning of his book, Babačić associates the Slovenian ice-hockey team's victory against Denmark with

Prešeren's poem. It is a metaphor for a cheerful day and Slovenian pride, it is a story about great heroes, tears of joy and an atmosphere of celebration. As the book puts it, "They've made it! The time is up on the scoreboard...the eeeend! Gloves, helmets and other bits of their hockey outfits flew into the air. All the players rushed to their goalie, who really deserved it."

This is followed by a description of the Danish defeat and the Slovenian triumph: "They (the Danes) had to stay there on ice to salute the winners, and then listen to the anthem by our poet. Everyone sang, including my neighbour, where he thought he could manage... When o'er earth's habitations, no war, no strife shall hold its sway, who long to see that all men free no more shall foes but neighbours be..."

### TITOVA STREET

The Jesenice boys are also associated with the Jesenice blocks of flats. In particular, 41, Titova Street. According to the book, "It is a special one, not only due to the nearby railway line which spreads through the town like some octopus. It offers the best panoramic view of Jesenice, if you are high enough, of course. But all of this is nothing compared to what went on in it in the last few decades, when it became the most hockey-friendly residential building in the world. Probably, it is possible to come across some similar building somewhere in Russia, but it would certainly not house such a number of hockey families who settled there voluntarily. 41, Titova Street was home to the Ščap, Pretnar, Karahodžič, Drobňjak, Brun, Kranjc, Bešlagić, Rebolj, Kelih families."

I am confident that the spirit of the old fighters has been passed on to the younger generation, so I have no doubt about their openness.



The author wishes to highlight the fact that Jesenice is a hockey town with no equal in Slovenia, including the Slovenian capital. However, the Olimpija Ljubljana team is very important to Jesenice. The best always play best against hard rivals.

### HOCKEY JEWELS

He also mentions Anže Kopitar, saying, “Anže embodies the story of Jesenice’s hockey school jewels.” He stresses his friendly attitude to the gang. “This is what drives you on. The worst thing is when a teammate gives you a sideways look and asks you what you were doing over there. If you tried hard, everything would be

forgotten, even if it was a bad game,” is Babačić’s quote from Anže Kopitar. In the chapter on Kopitar, he writes, “Due to this, we in Slovenia who stay awake late at night to watch their games, feel that our Anže across the Atlantic (at Los Angeles Kings) is the leader of this gang which is more and more becoming our gang.”

It can not be overlooked that Slovenia, which covers such a small territory, has such a large number of excellent athletes. This is the point of the metaphor of the block of flats in Jesenice. This is something we should not forget; including when celebrating their wins, we sing our national anthem

along with them, God’s blessing on all nations,...

### INSPIRATION FOR THE BOOK

Babačić interviewed twenty hockey players and each of them told him his own story. Mustafa Bešič, Peter Rožič, Miha Rebolj, David and Marcel Rodman, Tomaž Razinger, Robert Kristan, Nestl, Rudi Hiti and many others tell us many interesting things. However, Babačić could not capture the thoughts and experiences of all of them, simply because their hockey hearts are too generous. The book is to be continued... Therefore, I found it logical to ask the author for his views on the book and ice hockey.

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Slovenian ice hockey is hard on its best sons, and perhaps it is the very intransigence on both sides that produces the miraculous elixir which flows in the veins of Slovenia’s Lynxes.

Photo: Katarina Rožanc



Esad Babačić

### Did you write this book because you think that Slovenian ice hockey is in crisis?

This was not the main reason, although it became clear at the end that this book had a therapeutic effect. Nonetheless, the Slovenian public became acquainted in more detail with the problems which plague our ice hockey. Through the confessions of our most prominent hockey players, we got at least some idea of how this collective sport, which has brought us so much joy and filled us with such pride – a rare thing today – has been looked upon over the decades.

### In your opinion, who is the greatest figure in Slovenian ice hockey?

There is simply no answer to that

question. In alpine skiing, for example, the choice of our greatest skier ever would be very tempting, let alone that of the greatest ice-hockey player. It is precisely because there are so many candidates to choose from that I decided to write a book. From today’s perspective, the choice may seem to be easier, since Anže Kopitar is a jewel beyond comparison. But looking back, a true hall of fame of ice-hockey giants opens before us, all of them heroes, each unique in his own special way, in their character traits and way of playing; each of them supported by his own admirers and followers. This has always been about the mutual attachment of fans and hockey players. And even more so in this sport which

is full of bravery and pure rivalry. The team always came first, but the gang was kept together by individual heroes.

### Do Slovenian hockey players have the same resilience as those described in the book?

I am confident that the spirit of the old fighters has been passed on to the younger generation, so I have no doubt about their openness. My initial feelings after seeing a single training session at Olimpija are very good. Moreover, hockey players are not introverted, self-centred people who do not care about life around them. Even though nowadays there may be less of that original socialising among the gang than before.

Ice hockey is an expression of pride which must not vanish. As long as there is ice, our hearts will be burning.

**You dedicate a special chapter to Viktor 'Viki' Tišler. Does this involve a personal relationship between yourself and Viki?**

I knew Viki, who unfortunately passed away, from shooting the documentary film Jesenice : Detroit; then, I realised how charismatic this man was. When the film was finished, I regretted not having done it differently. Viki was a unique character, his charm radiated all around him. Everyone loved him, but he never received the acknowledgment that he deserved. He was the best example of how our clubs (mis)treated their greatest sons. Even today, I am convinced that a true and serious film should have been made about him. However, in our country, where films are decided and made on the basis of various affiliations, this is hardly possible. Viki's story reminded me of the stories of all those people who firmly stick to their principles and who never yield to anyone, regardless of the consequences. Perhaps one day we can see his jersey fixed to the ceiling of Jesenice hockey arena.

**You describe many people's experiences. What are the similarities and the differences?**

I talked to more than twenty former and active hockey players, and I have to admit that their experiences coincided in many cases. Almost all of them encountered similar problems, which have plagued Slovenian hockey since

its beginnings. Almost every one of them has gone through bitter experiences that he had to overcome in one way or another. Some were luckier than others but this does not change my general impression. Slovenian ice hockey is hard on its best sons, and perhaps it is the very intransigence on both sides that produces the miraculous elixir which flows in the veins of Slovenia's Lynxes. It is interesting to note that both the Olimpija and Jesenice hockey players spoke highly and with great respect of their greatest rivals and praised them, in particular, their personal qualities. Under the ice hockey armour, you will find sensitive people, with clearly defined views on sport and life, respectively.

**You talk of the good and the bad gang. What do you have in mind? Perhaps a win by the good gang?**

In our country, unfortunately, it is increasingly evident that the bad gang has prevailed over the good one. Actually, this book is a sort of reminder that, in spite of everything, the good gang is still here. It is a fact that Slovenians, since gaining independence, happened to have supported the wrong gang, which was adroit in changing the colour of its jerseys in such a manner that the audience was unable to tell the good from the bad. In the end, we were cheated, but we are still watching one and the same game.

**Can Slovenia also be an ice hockey nation and not just a skiing nation?**

Yes, absolutely, indeed. We are the proudest nation when it comes to supporting ice hockey, at least in terms of how few we are and how hard we can strike when we are keen to do so. Although basically individualists, our presence in this collective sports game has been very consistent. Ice hockey is an expression of pride which must not vanish. As long as there is ice, our hearts will be burning.

**Can we expect to see another chapter in your story about ice-hockey players?**

Of course. In fact, 'Banda' is only the beginning. Too many heroes were left out of the first part of the book, or did not express everything they would like to; 'Banda' will have at least one sequel. We are currently seeking a publisher across the Atlantic. Eventually, the English version will be slightly revised, with an emphasis on comparisons between Slovenia and other world hockey powers, such as Russia and the United States, who we played at the Olympics in Sochi. Given the situation in our country, it is a minor miracle that the publication of the first book was supported by an eminent Slovenian-Austrian company; luckily, Inkla recognised the potential of the story and supported it accordingly.



Photo: Mospinos

Through various emotional aspects of pride, sadness, joy and melancholy, the book relates the stories of Slovenian ice-hockey legends. Above all, he highlights the friendship between the boys from Jesenice and Ljubljana.



## Sarajevo '84

# Nostalgic memories of the first Yugoslavian and Slovenian medal, *čevapčići* and *burek*

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the 1984 Winter Olympics that took place in Sarajevo, in what was then Yugoslavia. In the host city selection, Sarajevo beat Sapporo, Japan, and Gothenburg, Sweden. As Slovenia was part of Yugoslavia in 1984, we may say that the XIV Winter Olympics took place on our home ground.

Photo: Knače Bizjič National Museum of Contemporary History



1272 athletes from 49 nations participated at the Olympic games in Sarajevo; there were 39 events contested in 6 sports (10 disciplines). The games brought some outstanding stories. The 20-kilometre race was added to women's Nordic skiing. A special chapter was written by the figure skaters. The audience was enchanted by Katarina Witt, while one of the peaks of the was the performance of the United Kingdom ice-dancing couple Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean, who made scores as yet unbeaten in the history of figure skating. Another fascinating story took place in the slalom, where the first and second places were won by the American twins Phil and Steve Mahre. Ski jumping was marked by the classic duel between Matti Nykänen and Jens

Weissflog; the ice-hockey rink was ruled by the Soviet Union's team, while the bobsleigh races were dominated by the East Germans.

The host of the games, Yugoslavia, naturally wanted its first winter Olympic medal, too. Slovenian skiers were the only athletes who could realistically aim for it.

### **WE LOVE JUREK BETTER THAN BUREK**

The expectations were enormous. The giant slalom took place on 14 February, and Jure Franko came fourth after the first run. The tension was mounting. On Bjelašnica, where the race was held, Jure was supported by his fans, who had

arrived on the Olympic train. The group from Škofja Loka chanted: "From the southern to the northern border, nobody is better than our Franko." The race was watched by all and sundry; most people still remember how school classes and work were interrupted so that everybody could follow the live coverage.

"While being excellent on all parts of the course, Franko was inimitable on the steepest part, among the last ten gates," were the words that described the progress of our best athlete to the silver medal in Sarajevo 1984.

The best time of the second run earned him second place overall and thus the silver Olympic

Sarajevo open-handedly welcomed athletes from as many as forty-nine nations, who included some representatives of very exotic countries: Egypt, Puerto Rico, Senegal, and the Virgin Islands.

The joy was indescribable. Sarajevo exploded with enthusiasm and the broadly smiling Jure remained a lasting memory of virtually all citizens of the former Yugoslavia.



Jure Franko received a Hitachi video recorder as a present for the Sarajevo medal. He said this meant a lot to him, as he had been thinking about the same video recorder already between the two giant slalom runs.

medal. The joy was indescribable. Sarajevo exploded with enthusiasm and the broadly smiling Jure remained a lasting memory of virtually all citizens of the former Yugoslavia. Jure Franko had won the first winter Olympic medal for the then Yugoslavia and the first for Slovenian sport. The people of Sarajevo immediately launched the catchphrase *Volimo Jureka više od bureka* – We love Jurek better than burek. The triumph of Jure Franko, who was beaten by Max Julen from Switzerland, resounded in all Yugoslav republics. The special Olympic issue of the *Delo* newspaper reported “an historical event”,

“the long-desired peak”, which was also ascribed to the “inner strength and team spirit”.

**VUČKO, INTERESTING AND RECOGNISABLE EVEN AFTER 30 YEARS**

The winter Olympics in Sarajevo were represented by the still popular mascot named Vučko (Wolfie). More than a thousand designers took part in the contest. The other proposals were very diverse: there were many snowmen, rabbits and hedgehogs, but only one wolf. The creator of Vučko the friendly wolf is painter Jože Trobec, who made a last-minute submission

after being persuaded by his family. The winner was selected by the readers of Yugoslavian daily papers, and Vučko won by a landslide over his competitors on the shortlist, which were a squirrel, a lamb, a chamois, a porcupine, a fox and a snowflake. This placed the legendary Vučko among the best Olympic mascots of all time. Vučko had many roles: he was a skier, skater, ice-hockey player, and ski jumper. The mascot has enjoyed immense popularity up to the present day; his creator says that it must have been the spirit of Sarajevo that contributed to Vučko’s success. Vučko also helped overcome the stereotype of the wolf as a bloodthirsty animal, especially among children.

The winter Olympics in Sarajevo were represented by the still popular mascot named Vučko (Wolfie).

Photo: STA



Sarajevo mascot Vučko

**REVIVAL OF AN OLYMPIC VENUE IN SARAJEVO**

The Olympic venues in Sarajevo have suffered the ravages of time. Some have been damaged by vandalism, others by the war. The signs of neglect are visible on the bobsleigh track on Mt Trebević and the ski-jumping hill on Mt Igman. The ski-jumping hills were never used again after the war. The Jahorina area, where the women’s alpine skiing took place, was the only venue unaffected



Photo: Sarajevo '84 restaurant



by the war and is now a popular spot among recreational skiers from Bosnia and Herzegovina and abroad.

On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Sarajevo Olympics, the city revived the Zetra hall and organised the Sarajevo IceFest. Two matches of the EBEL league were organised; Telemach Olimpija from Ljubljana first played VSV Villach, and two days later Austrian record champions KAC Klagenfurt. The hall was packed; the matches were attended by 15,000 spectators. The Sarajevo

organising team prepared a rich accompanying programme that included a tournament for veterans as well as for the youngest players.

#### THE SPIRIT OF SARAJEVO '84 IN LJUBLJANA

You do not have to visit the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina to catch the spirit of the Olympic Sarajevo. You can feel it in Ljubljana, Piran and Koper. When you enter the Sarajevo '84 restaurant, you go back 30 years, to the Olympic year of 1984. You are greeted by sign-

posts, 'Bjelašnica 25km' and 'Igman 17km', a pair of Elan skis from the period, articles from Delo, Sportske novosti and Oslobodenje papers, the legendary Vučko, cups bearing the 'Sarajevo - the Olympic city' motto, flags, bib numbers and many slogans with witty, typically Balkanian colouring. The restaurant, or čevabdžinica (restaurant serving čevapčići and other Bosnian grill specialties) Sarajevo '84 offers not only genuine čevapčići, good kajmak and Sarajevo beer, but also a fair share of nostalgia.

The idea of the Sarajevo '84 restaurant is to make you feel like you are in Sarajevo without having to travel for long hours.

On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Sarajevo Olympics, the city revived the Zetra hall and organised the Sarajevo IceFest.

Photo: Sarajevo '84 restaurant



Čevapčići

# Pupils support Slovenian athletes in the 2014 Sochi games

A series of activities has been organised for children and youth to coincide with the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. Pupils and teachers from Celje Primary School II, which was chosen to participate in the 'One School – One Country' project and which cooperates with a Russian school, prepared a special event.

'Pupils from Celje Primary School II



Photo: Archive of Elementary school Celje

Miroslav Cerar and Aleš Šolar have given lectures on Olympism, Olympic symbols, fair play and the Olympic Games, while the Olympic Committee of Slovenia staged an exhibition of Olympic medals and Olympic stamps issued by Slovenia.

Celje Primary School II has been participating in international activities for over a decade; it has implemented two Comenius projects and has been cooperating with schools in Sweden, Serbia, BiH, Montenegro, and Macedonia. Their decision to participate in the One School – One Country project at the invitation

of Miroslav Cerar, the President of the Slovenian Olympic Academy, is simply an upgrading of their international activities.

## OLYMPISM

Olympism is the common thread running through school-based activities, which take place throughout the year. Activities relating to the project have been taking place since the beginning of the school year and will be completed by the spring. Miroslav Cerar and Aleš Šolar have given lectures on Olympism, Olympic symbols, fair play and the Olympic Games, while the Olympic Committee of Slovenia staged an exhibition of Olympic medals and Olympic stamps issued by Slovenia. In this context, a philately club has prepared an exhibition of stamps relating to

the Olympic Games and skiing in Slovenia. As part of the project, the school organised 'Olympic Games' for pupils from year 1 to 5 in the following disciplines: biathlon (sliding on rags and throwing balls into plastic cups), cross-country skiing and ski jumping (on a gymnastic bench with rags), hockey (on rags), double bobsleigh (by sitting on rags) and speed skating (on rags) in the gym and in hallways. All the pupils enjoyed the competition very much; all of them were winners and received medals. During these 'Olympic Games', school journalists prepared a list of results and interesting facts about Slovenian athletes competing at the Sochi Olympic Games and posted them on the school notice board. In the spring, the school will also hold 'Olympic Games' for pupils from year 6 to 9.

'Olympic Games' for pupils



Photo: Archive of Elementary school Celje





Petra Majdič

### COOPERATION WITH RUSSIA

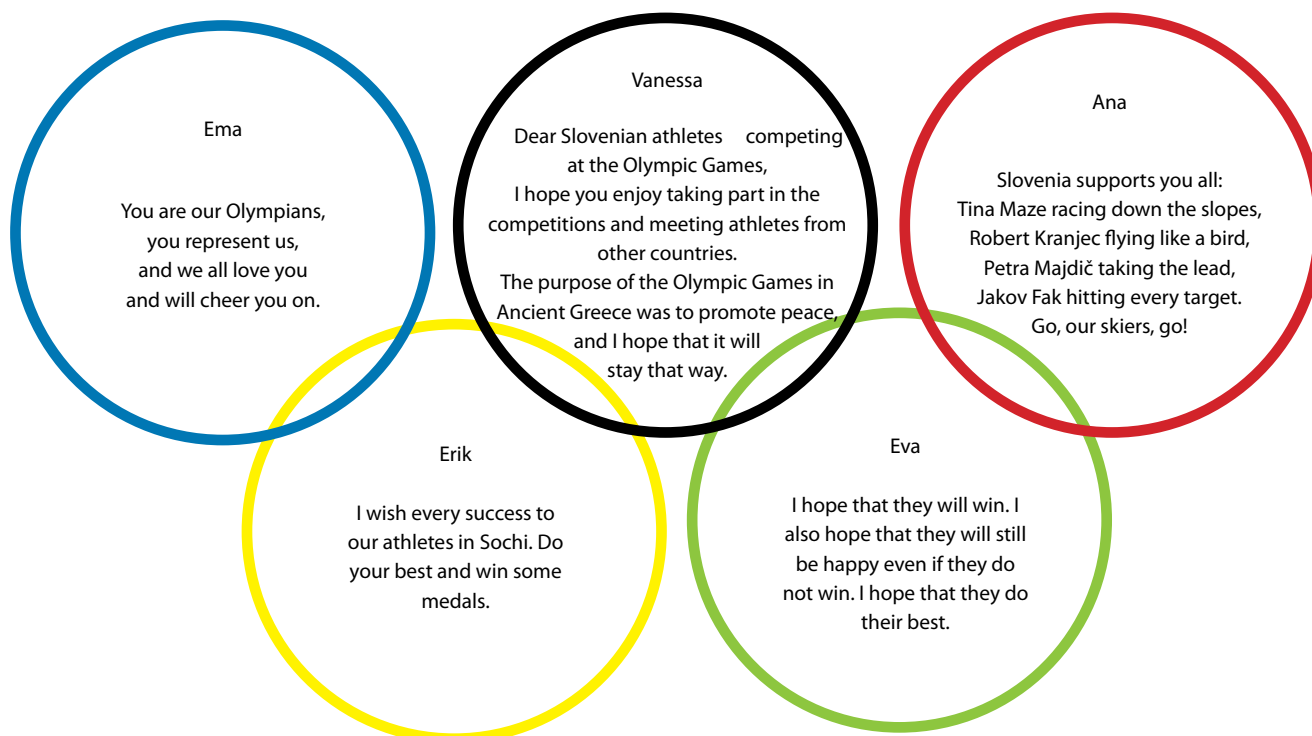
As part of the project, the school cooperated with the Municipal Budget Educational Institution – Gymnasium N<sup>o</sup> 1, Tuymazy, Bashkortostan, Russia, with which they participated in a fine arts competition and exchanged information on Slovenian and Russian athletes.

### VISIT BY PETRA MAJDIČ

Pupils and teachers prepared a special sports and cultural event to provide an overview of the Olympic Games as seen through the eyes of children. Pupils compiled a book of wishes for the Slovenian athletes competing at the Winter Olympics. Judging from the notes pupils gave to Petra Majdič before she headed to the 2014 Sochi Olympic Games, their most popular athlete was Tina Maze, while they were also cheering on ski jumpers, boarders, biathletes, cross-country skiers, and hockey players.

Pupils and teachers prepared a special sports and cultural event to provide an overview of the Olympic Games as seen through the eyes of children.

### Some of the wishes extended to Slovenian athletes competing at the Olympic Games



# Slovenian Fashion Runway

1  
BEST





# Sparkling all around!



## Uroš Slak

# Slovenian Business Club to bring together honest entrepreneurs

Written on the website of the Slovenian Business Club: “It’s time to join forces and cease to act only as individuals, but to combine the best of each of us. Individual activities do have a certain power, but never as much as we can have when we join forces”. This is the concept supported by the elite of the Slovenian economy.



Photo: Archive of RTV Slovenia

Uroš Slak and his adherents are sure that The Business Club will provide a good support atmosphere for business networking , helping go-ahead business people build lasting relationships.



Towards the end of last year, a new association based on economic interest – Slovenian Business Club – was established, bringing together “garage entrepreneurs”, as they call themselves. The former television journalist Uroš Slak, a lawyer by training, is the founding father of the club.

Uroš Slak speaks about the Club with enthusiasm. The interview with him reveals his great personal involvement and commitment. Also, it cannot be said that the idea was born overnight; in fact, he was contemplating such a project at least in the last few years of his journalist career.

**How did you get from the idea to the actual project?**

By the end of my professional journalist career, I had to decide what my career would be in the future. My thoughts were centred mainly around practicing law. However, late last August, I was called by Joc Pečecnik, the director of Elektronček (slot machines) company, who suggested that I'd realise some of my ideas, which we often talked about at our informal meetings following my formal TV programmes, where they participated as guests. Pečecnik's first idea was to establish an export agency, but I believed that the idea required further upgrading. I was thinking primarily in terms of how to bring together companies that represented the healthy core of the Slovenian economy. I had in mind particularly those entrepreneurs who had established companies on their own, often in home garages, and as they voice their views individually, they are often ignored. Therefore, it seemed only appropriate for these people to join their forces in some kind of a club and present to the Slovenian public their positive experience along with their ambitions. All these entrepreneurs are aware of the fact that development, exports and a fair attitude to employees guarantee a company's success. We must all understand that the more successful entrepreneurs there are in Slovenia, the bet-

ter public education and healthcare we'll have. A successful society goes hand in hand with successful individuals. Among the objectives (of the Club) is that our members support each other in entering foreign markets.

**Who joined you right from the beginning?**

After Pečecnik and myself, we developed the idea and put it on paper; we first invited those whom we knew from past experience shared similar ideas. Among the first were Igor Akrapovič, Marjan Batagelj and Robert Grah, i.e. the best.

**How many entrepreneurs are in the Business Club?**

At the moment, we have thirty-six founding members, while seventy applications of companies wishing to join the Club are pending (these will be associate members). Which is to say that the Club's enlargement is not self-evident. The Club will accept only members who comply with our values, which are as follows: the person has established the company on their own or inherited it as a family business, has not been involved in tycoon scandals, is not a member of any political party, pays taxes and does not have a criminal record. There is also a rule in the statute according to which a new member can join only with the unanimous consent of all founding members. If any founding member expresses an objection or doubt, despite the candidate's eligibility, such a company will not become a member of the Club.

**Was the response as expected or above expectations?**

We did not expect such interest. Therefore, we are still discussing the extent to which the Club will grow, considering our objective is that communication between members should still be possible. We'll see about it when we reach an agreement.

**What is your attitude to the Government, trade unions, other in-**

**terest groups and political parties?**

The main purpose of the Club is to integrate a healthy entrepreneurship core and thus enable economic growth, more jobs, etc. Of course, we will definitely make ourselves heard and present our views to those who will want to hear us, when we recognise that the time has come. However, cooperation with the interested stakeholders you mentioned is not our primary objective. We are not burdened with politics; we are interested solely in the economy. In wishing to play a positive role, we set ourselves high standards. Companies in the association neither claim nor use taxpayer's money or subsidies. Also, we are not competitors to any of the interest groups, such as The Managers' Association, the Chamber of Craft and Small Business of the Slovenia, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, and similar.

**But you are establishing links with similar foreign associations.**

We have already started talks with some foreign associations, and we also intend to present our Club to foreign diplomats in Slovenia. We also received an ample response from Slovenians living abroad and working for multinationals. They have offered to help us with their business connections, knowledge and experience. So, this initiative and the Club in a way aspire to a higher idea of integration for the common good. This is not solely about business.

**What are your plans for the near future?**

At this moment, we want to establish a sound foundation; we will also set up a section for young (entrepreneurs). We really do have a lot of energy and we share the unanimous belief that where there's a will, there's a way. We will discuss the items on our 'wish-list' once again, and try to make them come true as far as possible. For myself, I am very happy that I am part of this story, certainly a Slovenian success story. Our Club will not accept anything less than that.

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The main purpose of the Club is to integrate a healthy entrepreneurship core and thus enable economic growth, more jobs, etc.

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All these entrepreneurs are aware of the fact that development, exports and a fair attitude to employees guarantee a company's success.

# ELAN and I FEEL SLOVENIA together at the ISPO Fair in Munich

From 26 to 29 January, Elan had a traditional presentation at ISPO, the biggest international trade fair for sports equipment and fashion. The fair was held in Munich. This year, the Elan stall also hosted the I FEEL SLOVENIA brand.



This year's ISPO in Munich was visited by over 80,000 people from more than 110 countries involved in the sports industry in different ways.



Elan is among the most innovative trademarks in its field, while Slovenia's national brand I FEEL SLOVENIA is focused on innovation and sustainable development. The brand summarises the energy, movement and activity that can be felt in Slovenia, which makes it a perfect companion of Elan sports equipment to which Slovenians are traditionally attached.

On an area of almost 370 square metres, Elan exhibited more than 60 new models of skis and more than 10 new models of snowboards for the 2014/2015 season. Besides the models on skis with the Amphibio Profile key technology and the lightest women's skis in the world, this year's focus was on the U-Flex technology – the children's line of skis for which Elan received the prestigious 'Ispo Award Gold Winner'. The Elan team is convinced that the idea of flexible skis for children, which make taking bends easier and learning to ski faster, is correct.

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Elan is among the most innovative trademarks in its field, while Slovenia's national brand I FEEL SLOVENIA is focused on innovation and sustainable development.





# Slovenian Advertising Festival

## Portorož to host stars of the global advertising and marketing industry

During this period of volatile economic conditions, the situation in the Slovenian market of advertising and marketing has changed. With this in mind, new relations and new relationships in this area will be the underlying theme of the 23rd Slovenian Advertising Festival (SOF), which will take place between 26 and 28 March in Portorož. Advertisers are aware that changes are a driving force behind their business. The top world-class domestic and foreign speakers addressing the participants will make the event in Portorož even more interesting.

The slogan 'New relations, new relationships' is the underlying theme of the 23rd SOF. "The slogan, as the fil rouge of the festival, invites us all to establish whether the key entities of our industry are in the right relations with each other to allow growth, development and advancement. Business and communication successes are the result of real relationships: that is the true relationship between brands and consumers, between risk and caution, between reason and emotion, between the use of technology and original creativity. The 23rd SOF will raise questions about the relationship between brands and consumers, the relationship between creativity and efficiency, about how we set up efficient communication teams, and whether the use of technology is crucial for success, or if a good story still creates a more powerful effect," announced Barbara Modic, the President of the 23rd SOF and the Managing Director of Pristop Media.

### TOP-RANKING SPEAKERS

The congress part of the 23rd SOF will feature a number of leading domestic and foreign lecturers, who will definitely attract the attention of the wider expert public. Kentaro Kimura, Co-CEO and Executive Creative Director at Hakuhodo Kettle, Tokyo, which won thirteen Cannes Lions at last year's Cannes Festival, will be making his first appearance at the SOF and in Slovenia in general. His work crosses boundaries by introducing new methods, media and technologies, which

in new circumstances provide the most optimal solutions. He has won a number of international awards, including ten Cannes Lions.

Indisputably an interesting speaker, Geoffrey Hantson has since 2006 been the Executive Creative Director of Duval Guillaume Modem with headquarters in Antwerp. Festival participants will also hear from Robert Lešnik, a Chief Exterior Designer for Mercedes-Benz; Claudia Navarro, the Marketing Communication Manager for Central and Southern Europe at the Coca-Cola Company, responsible for the development of marketing communication platforms for all key brands activated across twenty-three countries; Ian Sutherland, Deputy Dean of Research and Director of the PhD programme at IEDC – Bled School of Management, whose work focuses on management, creative and strategic processes, facilitating diversity and arts-based leadership development. Dr Christoph Engl, Managing Director of Brand:Trust, and an expert on branding and destination marketing, will present the development of the Südtirol umbrella brand. The case has been recognised as a good practice example for a successful branding project. The participants will also be addressed by Lazar Džamić, Strategic Planning Director at Kitcatt Nohr Digitas, and Jugoslav Petković, an entrepreneur and co-founder of the region's largest online shop, mimovrste=), and the D.Labs Internet development company, which helps its clients to set up online business.



The Slovenian Advertising Chamber, as the organiser of the festival, has made specific efforts when selecting foreign lecturers this year; what is more, by eliminating the language barrier, it has made the festival more attractive to foreign guests. Due to the presence of such renowned speakers, the organisers have prepared a special offer for participants who want to attend only lectures given in English. The programme is available at [www.sof.si](http://www.sof.si).

The image of the 23rd SOF was designed by the PRISTOP agency, the central motif being a tornado, an image encouraging playfulness, freshness and creativity. The slogan 'New relations, new relationships' carries the message that the paths leading to victory might also be the most risky, while those that are safe will probably not make it to the top.

The congress part of the 23rd SOF will feature a number of leading domestic and foreign lecturers, who will definitely attract the attention of the wider expert public.

## Entrepreneurs are in business to change the world

Looking for comfort? If you are, then you are not the type for business and it is better not to engage in a start-up company. Because being a start-up entrepreneur is a tough job, said Jerry Colonna, an American investor and business coach of young entrepreneurs during his recent visit to Slovenia.



Photo: STA

The key question is how to enable start up entrepreneurs to grow.

Mr Colonna emphasises the human side of entrepreneurship and says that an entrepreneur should not be afraid of failure, and anyone who has dealt with failure should speak openly about it. According to Mr Colonna, the vast knowledge of the university should be transferred to life in Slovenia. He is convinced that entrepreneurs are not in business for the sake of money, but to change the world. Therefore, a start-up company is not only associated with audacity, but also with mistakes and fear of failure. To know the meaning of fearlessness, you have to know what fear is, said the successful investor.

### **HOW DO WE BREAK FREE FROM THE CRUNCH CAUSED BY THE ADVERSE ECONOMIC TRENDS OF RECENT YEARS?**

Where does Slovenia stand on start-ups in comparison with

abroad? Entrepreneurs believe that the majority of European start-ups lack experience in the creation of major global companies, since there is almost no tradition. Primarily, knowledge is lacking of how to increase the number of clients and how to plan the user experience and product development. Slovenian entrepreneurs and innovators apparently pay too much attention to technological potential and too little to market potential or to bringing technological developments in line with the development of business models. The focus should be more on including future buyers into product development – buyers should test new products in their very early development stages and enterprises should adjust their development to the feedback received from the market. In well-organised foreign start-ups, the changes and adjustment of solutions

are much faster, both in terms of products and business models, in a way that customers want. In Slovenia, a technological solution is very often developed entirely separately – without contact with customers – to the point of perfection. Of course, it is then very often disappointing when such solutions cannot be sold, since,

### **WHAT DO START-UPS EXPECT FROM THE STATE?**

In particular, the state should ask how to help them grow. The taxation of wages is painful; the state should help universities to open up to foreign students and professors, simplify the recruitment procedure for highly-skilled foreign personnel in enterprises, and empower civil servants to assist actively in procedures and to feel responsible and accountable for success in the economy. A start-up

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A start-up should be the best at meeting the needs of potential customers in the market, rather than at writing tender applications.



Photo: STA



The organiser of the Slovenian Innovation Forum is SPIRIT Slovenia, the public agency for the promotion of entrepreneurship, innovation, development, investment and tourism, with financial support from the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology.

should be the best at meeting the needs of potential customers in the market, rather than at writing tender applications; hence, start-ups that opt for subsidies spend a lot of time obtaining them and miss opportunities that exist in the market and would lead to long-term success. Consequently, they expect the Government to involve them in drawing up plan for the development of the start-up environment.

#### **THE SLOVENIAN START-UP ROADSHOW IS COMING**

The organisers of the Start:up of the Year Competition 2014 will hold a series of events entitled 'Start:up Roadshow' in several towns. Together with local entrepreneurs and experts, the events will promote entrepreneurship, and provide adequate information and entrepreneurial experience. The events will serve as the preparation for the Start:up of the Year Competition.

The participants will acquire corporate knowledge about establishing a start-up company, applying to enter the competition and about obtaining a start-up subsidy

offered by the Slovene Enterprise Fund under P2 tender.

Innovative enterprises, younger than three years, may compete and submit their business plans to the website [www.startup.si](http://www.startup.si) by 10 March. In the evaluation of the business plans, the focus will be on the entrepreneurial team, their knowledge and the size of the market, and on the clarity of their business model. The organisers expect brief and concise business plans, with clearly defined and even confirmed hypotheses of the business model.

#### **LJUBLJANA UNIVERSITY INCUBATOR OFFERS SUPPORT FOR BUSINESS START-UPS**

The Ljubljana University Incubator (LUI) issued a tender for support for establishing and starting up businesses, within which twenty business ideas will receive support.

The selected business ideas will receive incubator services equivalent to EUR 3,500 for 100 per cent coverage of the costs of setting up and starting up a business. The support will be provided in the

form of mentorship, counselling, education and the use of working premises with pertaining common infrastructure.

The selected ideas will be included in an intensive programme which will run from 3 March to 30 May 2014. After this date, the start-ups can integrate into all activities within the programme of networking and mentoring by the end of the year, the LUI has announced.

Applications are invited from eligible candidates below the age of 35 who set up a sole trader enterprise (s.p.) or a private limited company (d.o.o.) and become its employees by 30 May 2014. The tender details are available on the webpage <http://www.lui.si/blog/2014012112253073>.

According to the LUI, support for start-ups has yielded excellent results in the last five years. Their programmes have included eighty start-ups, 95 per cent of which have survived. A quarter of these start-ups have already received investments and 41 per cent are operating in foreign markets.

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# Abigenol®

## Extraordinary healing power of the Kočevje silver fir

Slovenian pharmacists have discovered an extraordinary pharmacological property in the bark of the Kočevje silver fir (*Abies alba* Mill.) which could mean a breakthrough in foreign markets for Slovenian pharmacy. It is an extract from silver fir bark called Abigenol®, one of the first Slovenian patented natural active ingredients.



Photo: Bojan Kocjan

Fir shoots

### FIRST AND ONLY EXCLUSIVELY SLOVENIAN NATURAL INGREDIENT

The concentration of polyphenols in the extremely strong antioxidant Abigenol® is among the highest in the world. It is the result of many years of research and good cooperation between Slovenian scientists and the Ars Pharmae company. Abigenol® is extracted from the bark of the silver fir (*Abies alba*) growing in the old-growth forests of Kočevje.

The results of the research carried out by researchers at the Faculty of Pharmacy of the University of Ljubljana, the Jožef Štefan Institute and the Institute for Transfusion Medicine were published in November 2013 in one of the most highly regarded international journals on food industry and biotechnology, *Industrial Crops and Products*. In the article, the authors (Dr. Eva Tavčar Benkovič, Dr. Tina Grohar, Dr. Dušan Žigon, Dr. Urban Švajger, Dr. Damjan Janeš,

Dr. Samo Kreft and Dr. Borut Štrukelj) present the composition of Abigenol® which is extracted from the bark of the Slovenian silver fir. The research on the composition and the positive properties of the extract has proved that its antioxidant effects greatly exceed those of Pycnogenol®, an extract from the bark of the French maritime pine which has so far been considered one of the strongest antioxidants. The antioxidant power of Abigenol® is double that yielded by the French pine bark extract.

To date, scientists have identified as many as thirteen compounds in Abigenol®, which comprise phenolic acids, flavonoids and lignans. All three groups have proved to have strong antioxidant and natural anti-inflammatory activities.

The Ars Pharmae company, established by Ante Zaloker, has patented a specific method of extracting Abigenol®.

### CONNECTED TO NATURE

“The vision of our company is to use the wisdom of nature and find the best natural healing ingredients, the effect of which has been scientifically proved, to offer these ingredients to people, to maintain their health and improve the quality of life of people with or without health problems,” says director Marko Domazet.

The company team consists of top experts and advisors on pharmacy, microbiology, oncology, urology, immunology, diabetology, genetics, physiotherapy, rheumatology and dermatology. Ars Pharmae has been developing health maintenance products combining the best elements of traditional and integrative medicine, but only in areas where tests and scientific research can confirm their highly positive effects and safety.

Since its establishment, the company has offered a range

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The team of Ars Pharmae is aware of the importance of ecology. Their concept of work is to use products from the least affected natural environments.



Photo: Stanko Pelec



Fir tree

of natural products, from the medical mushroom *Ganoderma lucidum* or Reishi, Canadian Bee Propolis against herpes, yeast-derived Beta-glucan and other products. As they put it, their products for integrative medicine are the result of their awareness that a human being is a complex of body, mind and spirit. They are aware that all the secrets of human health are hidden in nature. Ars Pharmae began to cooperate with the Faculty of Pharmacy in 2008,

soon after the company was established, in order to work with domestic experts in this field. The aim of the company was to combine its vision of integrative medicine with the knowledge and experience its experts have obtained in connection with natural substances found in Slovenia that could be used to improve people's lives and in particular the quality of life of patients with chronic diseases. In 2009, they decided to create a concept for a project to obtain

aqueous extracts of polyphenols derived from silver fir bark, and invited Tanin from Sevnica, a company with a decade of experience in aqueous extractions, to take part. After almost four years of joint intensive research and development, they developed an extract which they called Abigenol®. "We believed that we could obtain a better ingredient than the ones already known in the world market and we succeeded," adds director Marko Domazet.

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The results of the excellent cooperation between Slovenian scientists and the team of experts at Ars Pharmae are extremely promising and prove that anything is possible with some help from nature.

Photo: Ars Pharmae, d.o.o., archives



Left: Food supplement Enduranza®  
Right: Abigenol® ingredient obtained from silver fir bark



Photo: Ars Pharmae, d.o.o., archives

For the time being, Abigenol® is registered as food supplement in two products: Enduranza® and Atlastrong®.

**WHY THE KOČEVJE SILVER FIR?**

Trees produce various polyphenols with different properties and healing effects. Deciduous trees (oak trees, chestnut trees) develop large polyphenol molecules which are not fit for consumption and are used mainly in ointments. Conifers, however, contain high quantities of polyphenols with lower molecular weights. These polyphenols have healing effects on the body. The silver fir from the Kočevje forests also contains a larger quantity and stronger polyphenols with healing effects than other conifers. This is why Ars Pharmae chose the silver fir.

Animals have always used silver fir bark to heal themselves, and even ancient peoples knew its health effects. Like every tree, the white fir cannot move and protect itself against environmental effects; therefore, it develops unique protection in the form of defensive substances, including polyphenols, resins and essential oils. Due to their specific characteristics, polyphenols protect the tree against microorganisms and insects, and as antioxidants they also protect the tissue against numerous diseases caused by free radicals.

**ECOLOGICAL ASPECT**

The team of Ars Pharmae is aware of the importance of ecology. Their concept of work is to use products from the least affected natural environments. Slovenia is among the rare countries in Europe that still have old-growth forest or virgin forest. Also, no pesticides and herbicides are used in the Kočevje forests. These were the reasons Ars Pharmae focused on this particular area.

For the extraction of Abigenol®, they use only waste bark of silver fir-trees from trees felled regularly to preserve forest health. Therefore, no additional trees are felled to obtain these healing ingredients.

**PROJECT FOR THE FUTURE**

For the time being, Abigenol® is registered as food supplement in two products: Enduranza®, which protects the body against excessive burden, stress and burnout, and Atlastrong® which contributes to faster body regeneration, stamina and resistance in sports.

Ars Pharmae, d.o.o. wants to break through internationally with this healing ingredient, but it is aware that the registration of the product is the precondition

for entering foreign markets, and the registration procedure itself may take up to twelve months. The company has focused mainly on the clinical verification of the wide range of effects of Abigenol®. The path from the first extractions to developing the first recipes, the testing and research, production optimisation and, in particular, to international marketing is decidedly long, complex and requires considerable investments. “We will continue testing Abigenol® and its effects on patients with chronic diseases and at the same time look for partners to enter foreign markets, in particular with our ingredient Abigenol®,” director Marko Domazet explains the company’s plans.

“The tests conducted so far on Abigenol® have shown really good results, so our final objective is to develop a non-prescription medicine, for which we will need a partner,” stresses director Domazet, adding that “Abigenol® is our project for the future.”

The results of the excellent cooperation between Slovenian scientists and the team of experts at Ars Pharmae are extremely promising and prove that anything is possible with some help from nature.



## Igor Mekjavić

# Space Station Planica

The research strategy of the US space agency NASA and the European Space Agency (ESA) is intensively focused on biomedical aspects of living on nearby planets. Slovenian scientists are cooperating on this research.



The altitude rooms at the Olympic Sports Centre Planica have been transformed into simulations of human habitats on the Moon and Mars, in which they are carrying out experimental trials with the hypoxic bed-rest. In the new millennium, NASA

and ESA are planning to build a permanent colony on the Moon to serve as a platform for future manned missions to the Mars. Although at first glance such research seems useless for 'life on solid ground', this is not the case. In an interview with Igor

Mekjavić, the University Professor and a Scientific Counsellor, we discussed the development of this type of science and its practical use, also for the Slovenian economy, sport and medicine.

Prof. Dr. Igor B. Mekjavić, an expert on hypoxia and hyperoxia from the Department of Automation, Biocybernetics and Robotics at the Jožef Stefan Institute, a few years ago arranged ten hypoxic rooms and a physiology laboratory at the Olympic Sports Centre Planica.

**What is your primary field?**

In fact, my primary area is environmental physiology – ergonomics. We explore how the human body responds to a different environment, how a specific environment harms the body and how to prevent the resulting harm. Of course, this does not necessarily apply only to extreme environments. For example, we also study the influence of a warm or cold environment on humans. The damage or consequences can be prevented with proper equipment, work strategies and safe existence in a particular environment.

**And the research centre is located in the Olympic Sports Centre Planica?**

For mountain climbers, athletes and soldiers, ‘hypoxic rooms’ and simulators (dummies, which undergo extreme conditions and on which we research adequate protection, such as clothes, footwear, etc.) have been installed there. One of such simulators is ‘a fire mannequin’ for simulating ‘explosive fire’. For firefighters, the unexpected is their greatest danger. Dummies are used to determine the degree of burn injuries and other reactions. They have 120 – 130 sensors covering the body, about the same as human skin. Furthermore, we also want to consider pressure and gravity. These two variables are of great significance for mountain climbers, soldiers, divers and astronomers.

**So, in Planica, you are exploring how someone would survive longer on the Moon, or if it is possible for someone to live a ‘normal’ life there for an extended period?**

This issue originates in diving and is being resolved through high-altitude medicine. Slovenian scientists, as well as our foreign colleagues, are determining what would happen to inhabitants of the Moon in hypoxic conditions and low gravity. We have learnt from previous spaceflights that prolonged exposure to a microgravity environment during space missions triggers adaptive processes that, after returning to Earth’s gravity, are usually reflected in the astronauts experiencing the re-

duced size and capacity of their muscular-skeletal and cardiovascular systems. Preparing to leave the space station takes the astronauts approximately six hours. In terms of logistics, for a larger number of people landing on the Moon with their camper for the holidays, this would be a mission impossible (Prof. Mekjavić joked). One way of adapting to a zero-gravity environment is to put a person in a bed-rest position. If I want to find out how a person will react in space, I can study someone who is lying in bed for ten days. In space, we experience muscle and bone loss. It’s a natural process of adaptation. It is for this reason that you see astronauts who have just returned from space posing for media photographers in a sitting position.

**And how are the studies conducted?**

The studies are conducted by using a repeated-measures crossover design, while the prolonged hypoxic bed-rest includes measurements before and after the bed-rest. The Planica study has been designed as a set of three-year study programme in which we intend to carry out studies using different population samples.

**Who are the people in your experiments and how do you select them?**

Most of our subjects are students. Also with other people; however, students are not employed and have more time on their hands. The only criteria is that the person is healthy and does not suffer from a chronic disease. All our research is approved by the Ministry of Health and is in accordance with medical ethics. We also follow NASA’s rules. The best solution would be to have the research subjects as similar as possible to the astronauts, which means older than students and, of course, of both sexes. Each research subject must first attend some lectures and presentations of the project. These are organised in different Slovenian towns. Generally, a lot of candidates apply, but only 20 to 30 serious candidates make it to the shortlist. As a rule, 10 candidates are called for the final selection. After that, the food and environment in

the room are adjusted to each of them. They become part of the research team and we want them to feel comfortable. Our experience has been good. Before starting to work together in Planica, the scientists as well as separate tests are presented to the research subjects. We start with basic tests, and later we introduce the protocol of bed-rest. After a certain period, the therapy is concluded with a few days of adjustments. We are most interested in the changes before and after the test is taken. The ‘healing time’ is at least 2.5 times the bed-rest time. In principle, we can again work with the same subjects, but this is not a rule. The body usually recovers quickly. In Planica, we are currently focusing on simulated zero-gravity with our research participants in a bed-rest position.

**Your research is applicable not only to life on the Moon, but also has useful implications for life on Earth.**

In any case, the aim of our research is to obtain the answer to what can be used to make life in the Earth’s environment easier. Our results will be applicable to patients with chronic diseases, such as pulmonary patients. When such patients go to the doctor, they are already ill. So the physician does not see the process of adaptation to the disease in the patient’s body. Furthermore, the physician usually focuses only on the lungs rather than on other systems. Our research is broader when exposing a healthy body to hypoxia. In addition to pulmonary patients, also cardiac patients, patients with vascular problems and overweight patients are hypoxic. Hypoxia in these patients causes inactivity. And we stimulate this inactivity with the bed-rest of a healthy patient. In Planica, we have also studied high-altitude anorexia, which occurs on various mountaineering expeditions.

**Do you also cooperate with athletes?**

Of course. The results of our research are available to them to adjust their training. Sometimes they have to prepare for special, extraordinary and unexpected burdening conditions (e.g. due

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The altitude rooms at the Olympic Sports Centre Planica have been transformed into simulations of human habitats on the Moon and Mars, in which they are carrying out experimental trials with the hypoxic bed-rest.

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Slovenian scientists, as well as our foreign colleagues, are determining what would happen to inhabitants of the Moon in hypoxic conditions and low gravity.



to differences in altitude). The first altitude room for athletes was installed in Rateče, and in Novo mesto we equipped a similar room for cyclists. This was all funded by athletes, and even nowadays the Faculty of Sport often turns to us. During the preparations for the Olympic Games in Sochi, the athletes applied our research results – but their training varies so much that we are not familiar with them. Above all, our research is useful for athletes competing in the biathlon, cross-country skiing, cycling, etc.

**Do you also cooperate with the economic sector?**

Representatives of the corporate sector, in my opinion, often assume that cooperation with us is expensive, and that we are inaccessible, but this is not true. We have developed very successful cooperation with Alpina regarding the suitability of footwear for a particular environment. We have also cooperated with Droga, Gorenje, and are planning to establish cooperation with some other enterprises. In any case, our goal is not only to cooperate with large enterprises, but we are looking forward to developing business ties with smaller undertakings. Currently, our activities are focused on robotics, its practical use in industry, the military, hospital care and nursing homes. We were among the first to start scanning legs, the length and circumference, and which shoe is appropriate for each foot. This is of particular importance for people in jobs who need to stand a lot, such as shop assistants, flight attendants, waiters, etc.

**Will Planica become more valuable as a scientific campus?**

I would like us to become one of the official laboratories for carrying out experiments focused on research on the prospects of living on other planets or on the Moon. I would like to stress again that our work in Planica is of considerable importance also for life on Earth and, consequently, I would like to see more support from the state and the business sector. Our plans include enhanced cooperation with universities at home and abroad.



Left: Experimental trials in the hypoxic laboratory of the PlanHab project. Such trials range from tests of aerobic capacity and monitoring the metabolism of experimental space rabbits to determining muscle and bone loss, as well as monitoring sleep disorders.

Below: The research subjects during their 21-day bed-rest in altitude rooms in Planica. Hypoxia is used to study physiological responses to reduced gravity on other planets: the horizontal position simulates zero gravity, while conditions in the altitude rooms create hypoxia, to which permanent residents of the Moon will be exposed.



# Magnetic liquid crystal

Slovenian scientists were the first to create a magnetic liquid crystal, something that researchers around the world have been trying to accomplish for the past 40 years.

Photo: Personal archives



Above: Dr Alenka Mertelj

Right: A schematic presentation of the distortion of the director (blue) and magnetic field (orange) around disk-like platelets (short, thick horizontal lines) represented side-on. Red arrows indicate the directions of magnetic moments.

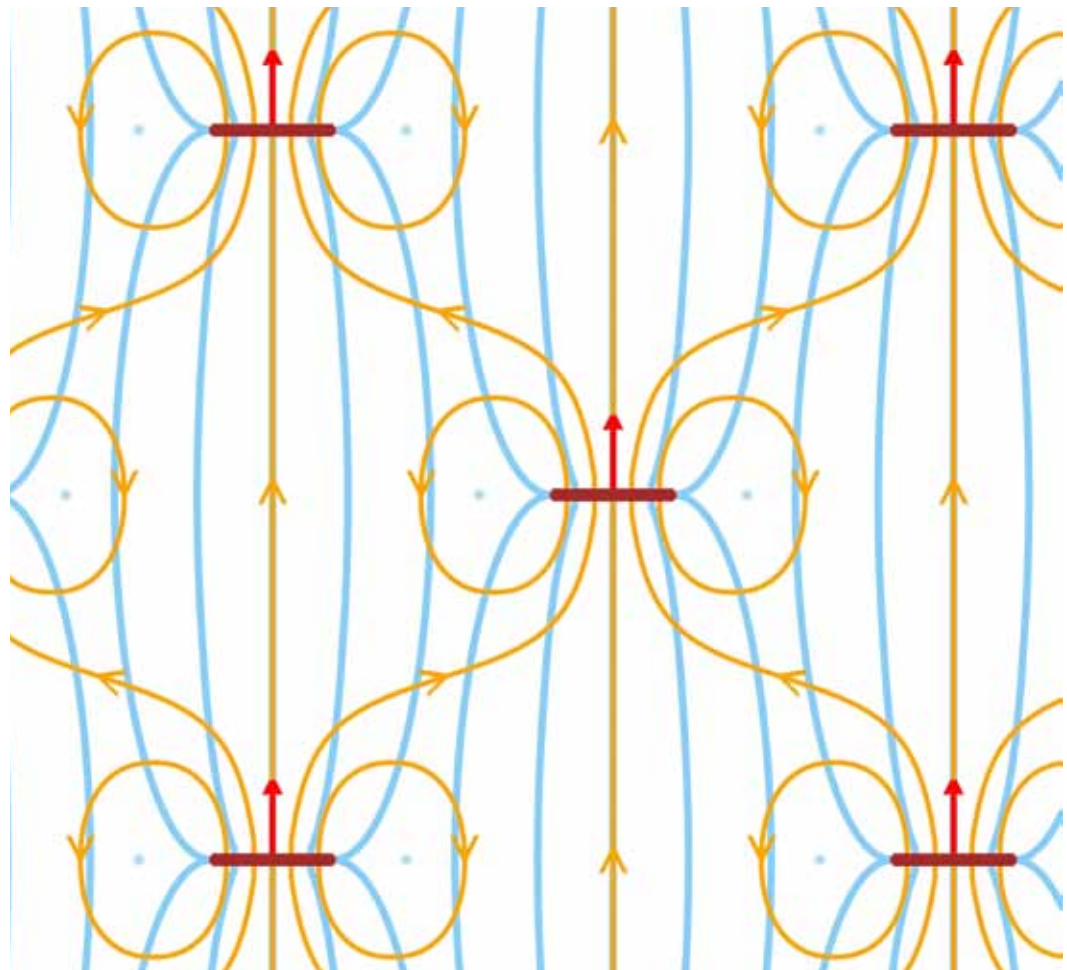


Photo: Dr Alenka Mertelj/JS

On 12 December 2013, the British journal of science Nature published a paper entitled 'Ferromagnetism in suspensions of magnetic platelets in liquid crystal'. The authors are Slovenian scientists Alenka Mertelj and Darja Lisjak at the Jožef Stefan Institute, and the Institute's collaborators, Miha Drofenik at the Faculty of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering, University of Maribor, and Martin Čopič at the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, University of Ljubljana.

## SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGH

In the paper, Slovenian researchers noted the ferromagnetic state of a mixture of nanoparticles in a nematic liquid crystal. More

than four decades ago, Nobel Prize winner Pierre de Gennes predicted the existence of such a liquid magnet, but its experimental realisation has hitherto proved elusive. This achievement is the result of cooperation between chemists, who synthesised magnetic nanoparticles of a particular shape, and physicists, who developed the technology to prepare a stable mixture of these particles with liquid crystal and proved its magnetic properties. The Jožef Stefan Institute highlighted the fact that credit for this success went entirely to Slovenian researchers.

A magnetic liquid crystal is liquid crystal showing a strong response to small magnetic fields. It is a

This achievement is the result of cooperation between chemists, who synthesised magnetic nanoparticles of a particular shape, and physicists, who developed the technology to prepare a stable mixture of these particles with liquid crystal and proved its magnetic properties.





suspension of magnetic nano platelets in an ordinary liquid crystal. Similar to the influence of external voltage on light passing through an ordinary liquid crystal, a magnetic field can be used to influence light passing through a magnetic liquid crystal. Furthermore, a magnetic liquid crystal is also a weak magnet. A magnetic liquid crystal may be used to influence the spreading of light with a magnetic field, or when the use of electrical voltage is not possible or desirable. It may also be used in the optical detection of the direction of weak magnetic fields. In this case, the spatial distribution of a magnetic field can be shown on a display. It is vital that the matter is a magnet.

#### EXCELLENT RESPONSE ABROAD

As successful Slovenian researchers, they have already presented the discovery of a magnetic liquid crystal at several international scientific meetings and received a very positive response. Following the publication of their paper in *Nature*, articles about the discovery appeared in newspapers in Germany, Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Assistant Professor Alenka Mertelj gave an interview on a German radio station. Reports of this outstanding achievement of Slovenian scientists can be found on the internet and in foreign scientific journals. Ms Mertelj shared her feelings about this breakthrough with us: "You first experience

the joy of an important discovery, which is the dream of every scientist. It is, of course, also a milestone in my career, which at the moment for me translates into the possibility of obtaining new projects or funding for further scientific work." She went on to say: "A magnetic liquid crystal is a new and very interesting matter in physics. New research will enable us to examine its properties and continue looking for new liquid crystal systems."

It is too early to predict all things that magnetic liquid crystals might be used for, but this discovery is definitely a huge success of exceptional significance, ranking the team among the world's leading scientists in the field.

Slovenian President Borut Pahor hosting a reception for the Slovenian researchers. At the reception was present also Minister for education, science and sport Jernej Pikalo (right).

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# Prešeren Awards Ceremony

## Transcending time with art

The idea of art as a tool to fight transitoriness and banality was the underlying idea of the Prešeren Awards Ceremony, at which top national awards for achievements in arts and culture are presented.



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

President Borut Pahor and Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek hosted receivers of Prešeren Awards.

In his address the Minister of Culture, Uroš Grilc, said that despite the fact that 8 February marked the anniversary of the death of Prešeren, Prešeren Day was not a celebration of an ending, but a celebration of human creativity, of the creative power of expression, of life itself.

In his thank-you speech, the recipient of the Prešeren Prize for lifetime achievements, writer Vladimir Kavčič, focused on the here and now. When Slovenia joined the EU and became part of a wider economic area, many companies went bankrupt, which resulted in high unemployment. The state is saving banks, so that they can continue to do what they have been doing so far, while young people are forced to go abroad to make a living, said Kavčič, illustrating the point with the example of one of the Slovenian political parties. The party has listed 42 members for well-paid MEP jobs, while it does not have a candidate for a new health and economy minister. His statement

was greeted with loud applause in the Gallus Hall of Cankarjev dom.

The other Prešeren Prize laureate, composer Pavle Merku, was more personal in his thank-you speech. He wrote his last piece of music in 2004 and over the last few years has been struggling with an illness, describing it as ten years of suffering. For the past month, he has been answering questions from journalists, which has left him very tired, but happy. "I'm happy again. I'll die happier," he said half jokingly.

The other Prešeren Fund Prizes went to painter and illustrator Alenka Sottler, theatre director Jernej Lorenci, poet Vladimir Kos, actress Vesna Pernarčič, Slo-

venian Percussion Project StOp and documentary director Jože Možina. The decision to award the prize to Jože Možina for his documentary about Slovenian missionary Pedro Opeka raised some controversy, but as Možina said before the awards ceremony, he made a good film, turning the spotlight on an important topic.

In his address on the occasion of Slovenian Culture Day, the Minister of Culture, Uroš Grilc, said that despite the fact that 8 February marked the anniversary of the death of Prešeren, Prešeren Day was not a celebration of an ending, but a celebration of human creativity, of the creative power of expression, of life itself.



## Composer Pavle Merku: Our European culture and society will disappear

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



The 86-year-old Trieste-based composer and scholar Pavle Merku is a pessimist:

“There is less and less respect for the language and nation, politicians have no clear ideas, parents don’t know how to raise their children, and the art world is run by money. Our European culture and society are decaying and will soon disappear. Knowledge of the truth and the benefit of the doubt have always driven me to make my own way. This is also reflected in the way I have lived my life. I was lucky to be able to do what I loved. And that my wife was very understanding and helped me, as I helped her. I had a wonderful life until the age of 78, when I fell ill: I’m not allowed to read or write, and I will soon be blind. But I would prefer to be blind than deaf. We used to go to elections with clear ideas. Now there are none. Trieste, where I was born and have lived, is now falling apart, run by incompetent people. It is not a city any more; it is a corpse of the city it used to be. And this ‘disease’ is slowly spreading to the whole of Europe. I mean this in terms of life, social life. I believe that my generation has witnessed the biggest number of surprises in their life, more than any other before and probably even after. That is why it is now probably not going through as many changes and having as many disappointments. “

## Writer Vladimir Kavčič: We should ask ourselves how much culture we need

Writer Vladimir Kavčič, one of the two Prešeren Prize laureates this year, can pride himself on the most impressive body of work in modern Slovenian literature. He has written mainly about the Second World War and post-war topics. A number of moral issues intrigue him: Where does one get the right to hurt a fellow human being? What mechanisms enable this, what triggers it, and what are the consequences for both the aggressor and victim?

“One of the reasons I started writing was definitely anxiety, which was always present. Those of us who lived through the war were affected by it. Now we know this is a post-traumatic syndrome. By writing, you rid yourself of internal tensions and help create a world you can control while resolving your internal dilemmas. Of course, there is no absolute freedom. We are faced with limitations at every step of the way. We search for the boundaries of freedom and constantly redefine them. The panel judging the Prešeren Prize wrote in its citation for the award that ‘The Future that Wasn’t’ (Prihodnost, ki je ni bilo) reveals the deepest layers of the tragedy of war: while the war is over on the outside, an even more cruel war is unfolding on the inside, reopening old wounds over and over again, raging on in the traumatised individual and collective (sub-)consciousness with no end in sight. This is a walk through memories, through time, and is influenced by personal traits, which at that time predicted a grim future for me. I allowed myself to write in this way because it is easier to play back memories than to try to resolve ethical issues, which have always been a decisive motive for me. Although my inclination to write was driven by my experiences, the motive for writing a particular book was always a moral or ethical issue. It is well-known that in old age we retain memories of childhood.”



Photo: Anže Malovrh/STA

## Katarina Čas

# She – Wolf of Wall Street

Katarina Čas is currently the hottest actor in Slovenia. Although she appears for only a few minutes in the Scorsese film, she is the first Slovenian to achieve anything like this. She is an extremely nice woman, holds a bachelor's degree in economics, but has never worked as an economist.



Photo: Primož Lukežič



After playing her first role in the TV film *Peklenški načrt* (Inferno Plan) at her tender age of 13, she continued her television career as a programme presenter and appeared in several Slovenian television serials and advertisements. Her international career started to blossom when she was offered a role in *The Guard*, an Irish black comedy that received several international awards. This was followed by the part in the Scorsese film, *The Wolf of Wall Street*, the main role in a Scottish short film, *Liam and Lenka*, a role in an English TV comedy series *A Touch of Cloth*, and a role in a popular BBC series, *New Tricks*. While filming the series *Življenje Tomaža Kajzerja* (The Lives of Tomaž Kajzer), she also stars in a movie *Imagine* with Al Pacino. The movie is not yet released.

The warm, friendly and open-minded Ljubljana-based actress has now an open door to the world of the entertainment industry. It is worth pointing out that Katarina's last name means "time" in English. This is clearly an exciting time for her. We caught her just before departure for USA.

**Katarina, you have recently been receiving a lot of attention from journalists in Slovenia, in particular because of the film roles you played abroad. What was the road to the Scorsese's film really like?**

After the Irish black comedy, *The Guard*, I got an agent in London, with whom I have been working successfully ever since. The agent sent me the screenplay for the Scorsese film, *The Wolf of Wall Street*, and advised me to audition for the role of Chantalle. I remember the call: "There's an audition for a minor role, but hey, it's Scorsese." Of course, I prepared myself, recorded an audition and then forgot about it, because it seemed to me that the chances of being chosen were really small. However, after a month, I received a call saying that I'd been chosen to portray Chantalle.

**How was it working with or acting in a film directed by a well-known director?**

Wonderful. I never dreamed that I would work with Scorsese. I admire his films, such as *Goodfellas*, *The King of Comedy*, *Taxi Driver*, *Raging Bull* etc. It was quite unbelievable when I was suddenly in New York and had a chat with him about Slovenia and, of course, about the role of Chantalle. He radiates positive energy; he really is a kind of rocker (laughs). You can see that he enjoys what he does. On the one hand, you see that every shot is perfectly constructed and that he knows exactly what he is doing; on the other hand, he allows improvisation, as if he likes to develop the chaos of a scene into something a little more organic. He was incredibly open to improvisation and allowed the actors to come up with their own ideas.

**According to the original screenplay, you were going to play a Swiss woman, but at the end it turned out that she had Slovenian roots. Additionally, a Slovenian flag appears in the film. This was supposedly thanks to you.**

It is true that Slovenia was mentioned several times, also because of the improvised dialogue in the scene with Jean Dujardin. However, I don't appear in this scene with the flag, so this was thanks to Scorsese alone. I think he did it to stop me annoying

everyone with that stuff about Slovenia and Slovakia being two different countries (laughs).

**There is another Hollywood film to be released in which you play Al Pacino's fiancée. Again, a new page, a new story. What is this one like?**

This is a comedy/drama, with film stars such as Al Pacino, Christopher Plummer, Annette Bening and Jennifer Garner etc. Al Pacino plays an elderly rocker who receives a letter from John Lennon, intended for him, but unfortunately 40 years too late. The basic plot is based on true story. I can't say anything more at this stage.

**However, you also perform in Slovenian films. Are there big differences in the approach and production?**

The most important thing for me is the people I work with. I was lucky in both Hollywood productions, as the people were incredibly friendly, respectful and focused on their work. I also enjoyed, for example, filming the Slovenian series *The Lives of Tomaž Kajzer* (a TV series being shown on Slovenian TV) which had a minimal budget or nearly 'no budget' compared to the American films. But this does not mean that filming was any less pleasant. However, the fact is that everything is far more organised abroad, there is less waiting and everything runs much more smoothly etc.

Her international career started to blossom when she was offered a role in *The Guard*, an Irish black comedy that received several international awards.



Photo: Paramount Pictures

Katarina Čas in the movie (*Wolf of Wall Street*) scene with the playfellow Leonardo Di Caprio.

# EXPO 2015 in Milan

## Slovenia. Green. Active. Healthy.

The World Expo 2015 will be held in Milan in neighbouring Italy. The Italian organisers of the upcoming world exhibition have high ambitions. As many as 139 countries have already confirmed their participation, which accounts for 86% of the world's population; the organisers expect around 20 million visitors. EXPO Milano 2015 will be held for six months, from 1 May to 31 October 2015, its global theme being 'Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life'.



At an opening ceremony

Following the main theme of EXPO Milano 2015, the common thread throughout Slovenia's appearance will be the slogan 'Slovenia. Green. Active. Healthy.', which derives from the trademark **I FEEL SLOVENIA**.

Slovenia has many reasons for its participation and presentation at such an important event: Italy is Slovenia's second most important trading partner, the first in terms of the number of tourist visitors and the third-biggest foreign investor in Slovenia. Cooperation with Lombardy in various fields has been, and will remain, at the highest level, with Milan in particular as an important international economic, scientific, cultural, design and fashion centre.

### THE OBJECTIVE IS TO PRESENT THE WHOLE OF SLOVENIA

Following the main theme of EXPO Milano 2015, the com-

The selection and organisation of World and International Expos fall under the responsibility of the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE). The BIE was created by an international convention signed in 1928 and is based in Paris. Today, 168 countries are members of the BIE; Slovenia became a full member on 2 November 2004.

The most famous cornerstone of the Universal Exhibition is undoubtedly the Eiffel Tower in Paris, built in 1889 as a symbol of the Industrial Age.

mon thread throughout Slovenia's appearance will be the slogan 'Slovenia. Green. Active. Healthy.', which derives from the national trademark **I FEEL SLOVENIA**. The objective is to present the whole of Slovenia, which is geographically and climatically diverse, and offers opportunities for a variety of experiences and feelings within a short time. The emphasis will be on our major advantage, i.e. the green natural environment, in which we can be active and enjoy a varied cuisine and excellent water – drinking, mineral and thermal.

With such a philosophy, the presentation of Slovenia will follow the basic objective of world exhibitions, especially public education, pursued since the beginning of the 19th century. We know that food is healthy only if it comes from a healthy and protected environment. Slovenia follows a policy of sustainable development, strives to safeguard natural resources and use them

efficiently, and endeavours to keep the ecosystem in balance, maintaining biodiversity, which results in a healthy and well-preserved environment.

### NEXT TO THE CENTRAL DISPLAY AREAS

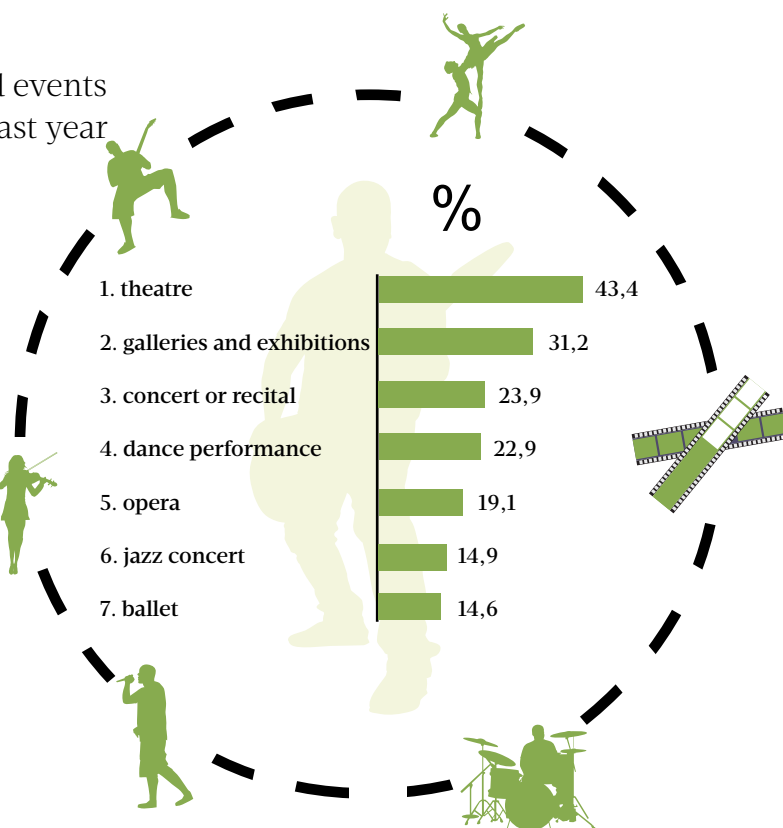
In December 2013, when the first set of plots for the construction of national pavilions was handed over, Slovenia also received a lump of soil as a symbolic gift representing the organisational development. It is not insignificant that the location of Slovenia's lot is in the best location for our presentation, next to the central display areas of Italy as the host country, and between the Austrian and German pavilions.

The official opening of EXPO Milano 2015 is a good year ahead, ahead of us are also a great challenge and a lot of work. We will keep you updated on the progress regarding this event, also through Sinfo.

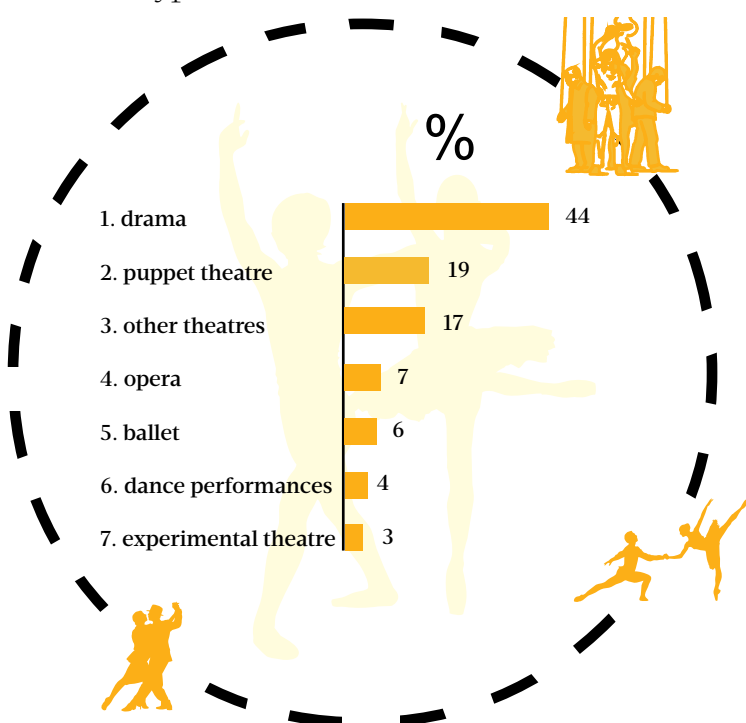


# Slovenians and the culture

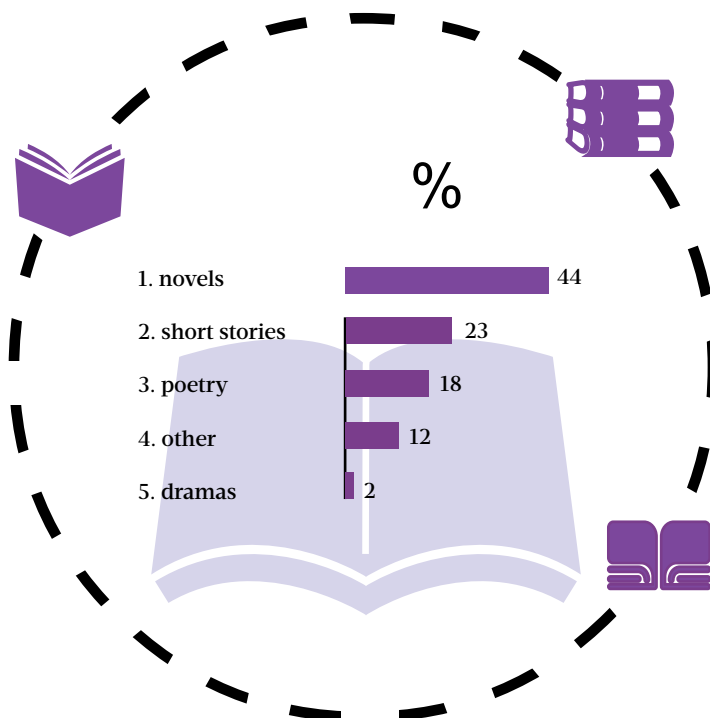
Cultural institutions and events that Slovenians visited last year



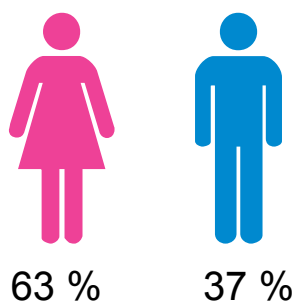
Visitors to performances by type of theatre



Slovenians prefer to read literary works. Of which...



Percentage of people that read a book in the last month by gender



Source: Mediana, SORS

Photo: Archives of Zlatarna Celje



### Diamond Edition Tina Maze

In the days before the Olympics in Sochi, Slovenian skiing star Tina Maze also appeared on a commemorative silver coin. The Central Bank of the Cook Islands has already issued its second series of Tina Maze silver coins. Dubbed the Diamond Edition, the coin was issued in a limited series of 999 specimens.

According to information from Zlatarna Celje, for the first time last year they presented a global novelty in numismatics and sports: a presentation of Tina Maze's success story on a silver coin. Given the excellent response, they decided to issue the second series of the silver coin already this year, in cooperation with the Central Bank of the Cook Islands.

For more information see: <http://www.zlatarnacelje.si/>

Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA



### Princess devotes a poem to Idrija lace

As part of their official visit to Slovenia last year, Prince and Princess Akishino of Japan visited the Lace School in Idrija. Princess Akishino was deeply impressed by lacemaking and decided to write a poem about the bobbin lace made in Idrija.

The poem was read at the Ceremony of the Utakai Hajime or the New Year's Poetry Reading traditionally held at the Imperial Palace on 15 January. This year's theme for waka poems was quiet or sei. The Princess dedicated her poem to the quiet talk of children's hands creating Idrija lace.

In the photo: Princess Akishino with the Slovenian first lady, Tanja Pečar.

Photo: Stanko Guden/STA



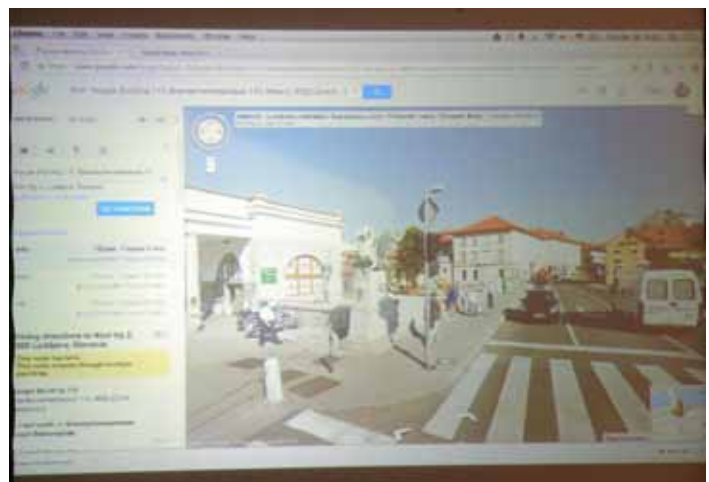
### Five decades in the sky

For fifty years now, Ljubljana Airport has been a wide-open Slovenian gateway to the world. The first aircraft landed in Jože Pučnik Airport Ljubljana on 24 December 1963, and regular air traffic was established on 9 January 1964.

As an introduction to the jubilee year, on 24 December 2013, Aerodrom Ljubljana surprised the passengers of two morning flights at Ljubljana Airport with an energetic performance by the outstanding Perpetuum Jazzile vocal group and an attractive dance performance. Throughout the day, passengers and airport visitors received small sweet surprise presents with hidden interesting facts about the airport.

For more information see: <http://www.lju-airport.si/sl/mediji/5075>

Photo: Anže Malovrh/STA



### Street View

By the end of January, the U.S. web giant Google had officially included Slovenia in their Street View service; thus 360-degree photos of Slovenian streets and tourist attractions are available on Google's online maps.

Google started photographing Slovenia in last July. Their camera-equipped cars started their mission in Ljubljana, and later proceeded to other Slovenian towns and tourist attractions. The service also provides thematic content about interesting places, which now include places in Slovenia.



Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA



## Reasons to pay more attention to Slovenia

The Travel web portal has published nineteen reasons why Slovenia is worth visiting. Some of them are also witty.

Some of interesting reasons include the following: In Slovenia, you can get married in a fairytale; there's a castle in a cave (Predjama Castle); Slovenian cows are very friendly; the country boasts beautiful mountain trails; it offers ample opportunities for fishing; Slovenians grow their own food; Christmas is simply magical in the old town centre of Ljubljana; people in Slovenia walk around vaguely disguised as llamas (Kurent mask); Slovenian water is crystal clear and really blue, .... Slovenia has been voted one of the most attractive destinations also by Rough Guide readers and was recommended as a must-see destination to be visited by all who have not been here yet. In terms of diversity, Slovenia has been ranked right after Chile and Malaysia.

Photo: Stanko Grudenc/STA



## Tina Maze among the top-scoring athletes in Sochi

Before the start of the Olympic Games, CNN published on its website a list of top-scoring athletes to look out for in Sochi.

According to the CNN, Tina Maze, our unbeatable champion, will be in the spotlight of the front pages and headlines of Russian and other foreign media, together with Alex Ovechkin, Kim Yu-na, Shaun White, Mikaela Shiffrin, Marit Bjoergen, Sara Takanashi, Felix Loch, Ole Einar Bjoerndalen, Aksel Lund Svindal. And their predictions, at least as far as our skiing champion from Koroška is concerned, turned out to be true.

Photo: Archives of Invida



## Bobri festival

The sixth festival of cultural and art education took place between 25 January and 8 February 2014. The Bobri Festival offered young visitors and their companions 157 cultural events and 16 458 free tickets, which had almost gone by the end of the first day.

The festival programme included all the forms of art covered in previous years: theatre, music, film, fine arts and literature. This year, the Bobri Festival was dedicated primarily to film. Also at the heart of the festival was Roman Aemona, celebrating 2000 years. The festival opened with the theatre performance Škrat kuzma dobi nagrado, adapted for theatre by Matjaž Farič from Svetlana Makarovič's children's story, at Mladinsko Theatre.

The festival concluded with the now traditional concert at the Kino Šiška Centre for Urban Culture. Neca Falk performed in the music project Maček Muri in Muca Maca, which is one of the pearls of Slovenian music production for both children and adults. The event was accompanied by the showing of the animated film Maček Muri.

Photo: Nebojša rejlić/STA



## Bloudek Award

The most honoured state awards for achievements in sports, the Bloudek Awards for 2013, went to former hockey player Rudi Hiti, for his outstanding contribution to the development of sport, to snowboarder Rok Marguč and former basketball player Peter Vilfan, for their top international sporting achievements, and to Srečko Remih for his lifetime achievement in sport.

In addition to the most honoured state awards, the committee also awarded ten plaques: three were for relevant contributions to the development of Slovenian sport, six for major international sporting achievements and one for lifetime achievement in sport.

Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA



## The Welcoming of Spring

11 March 2014 at 5 p.m., Ljubljana along the Gradaščica River

You are invited to attend “The Welcoming of Spring – Releasing Gregorčki” – a traditional event for children. The event will take place on the banks of the Gradaščica River at Eipprova Street in Ljubljana.

“The Welcoming of Spring” is an event through which we in Ljubljana remember the old custom of craftsmen placing little boats made from wooden clogs with lighted candles on the river to celebrate the arrival of spring and the fact they would no longer need to work with the lights on. According to the old Julian calendar, spring starts on St Gregory’s Day. On the eve of St Gregory’s Day, people, mostly children, gather along the Gradaščica stream in Trnovo to launch various kinds of boats made of paper or wood in which candles are placed. These floating lights are called ‘little arks of St Gregory’ or ‘Gregorčki’. To enhance the fairytale atmosphere still further, numerous torches and bonfires are lit along the banks of the Gradaščica.

Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA



## 53rd Vitranc Cup 2014

8 - 9 March 2014, Podkoren, Kranjska gora

The Vitranc Cup will see the competition of the best skiers in the world, who will be racing between the giant slalom gates of the Mount Vitranc slope. See you on Vitranc!

More information at [www.pokal-vitranc.com](http://www.pokal-vitranc.com)

Photo: Vesna Pušnik Brezovnik/STA



## Carnival Festivities in Videm

3 March 2014 at 3 p.m., Videm near Ptuj

Carnival Festivities, or fašenk in Videm tradition, feature a parade of ethnic groups from the municipality of Videm and some neighbouring municipalities. They are joined by carnival groups from Slovenia and abroad.

The parade displays the rich carnival tradition of Slovenia, featuring 1,000 participants from ethnic characters to carnival groups from Slovenia and abroad.

More information at Folklorno društvo Lancova vas, sekcija Koranti

Photo: Nabojša Tejič/STA



## 16th Ljubljana International Documentary Film Festival

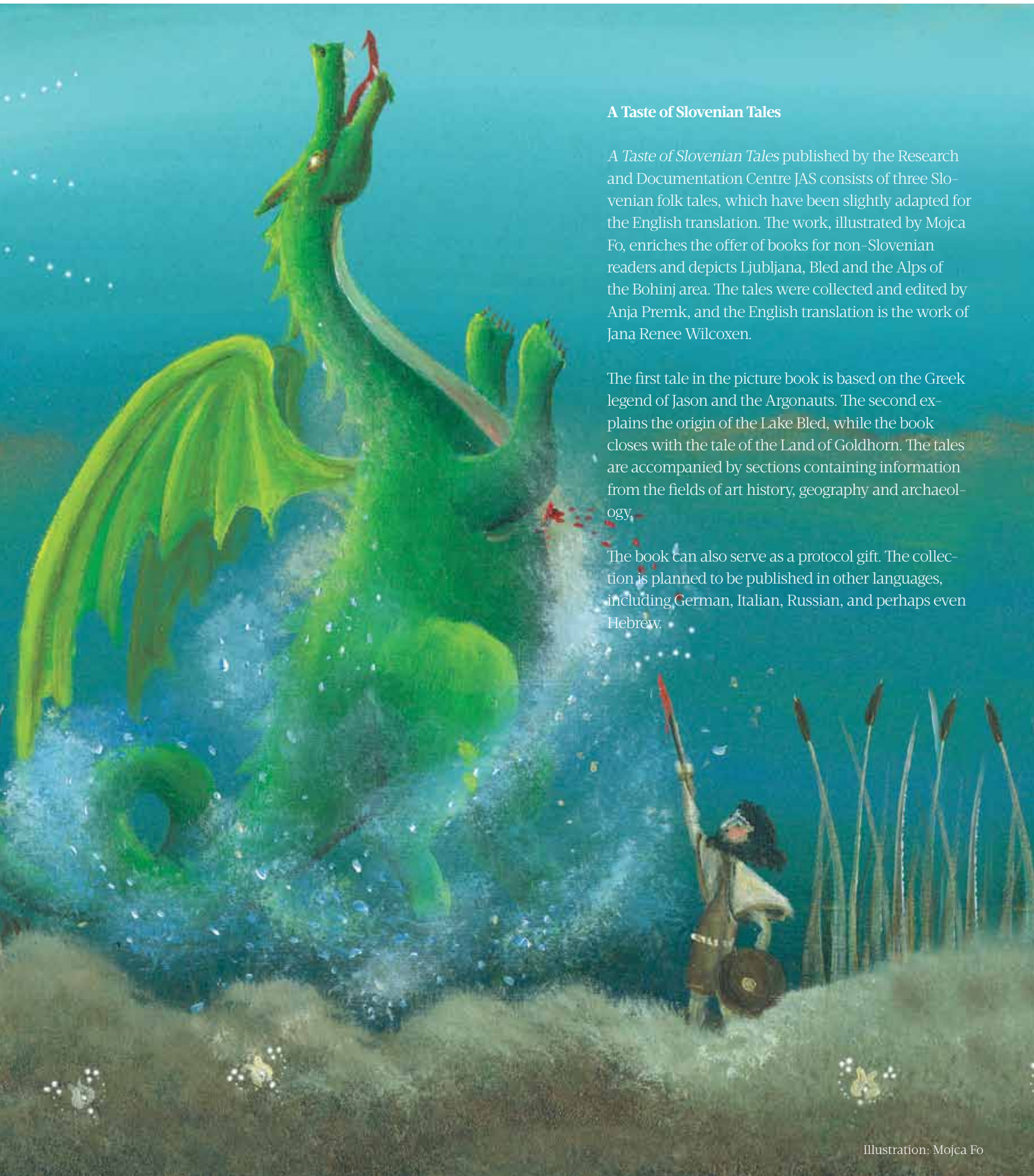
13-14 March 2014, Ljubljana

Each year, International Documentary Film Festival offers an insight into contemporary documentary film production, while valiantly reaching into the core of the greatest social and political issues.

The festival features political and portrait documentaries and films on myths, icons, the media and other themes. The festival has a competitive character. In collaboration with Amnesty International Slovenia, a prize will be awarded to the best film on the theme of human rights.

Source: [Napovednik.com](http://Napovednik.com)





### A Taste of Slovenian Tales

*A Taste of Slovenian Tales* published by the Research and Documentation Centre JAS consists of three Slovenian folk tales, which have been slightly adapted for the English translation. The work, illustrated by Mojca Fo, enriches the offer of books for non-Slovenian readers and depicts Ljubljana, Bled and the Alps of the Bohinj area. The tales were collected and edited by Anja Premk, and the English translation is the work of Jana Renee Wilcoxon.

The first tale in the picture book is based on the Greek legend of Jason and the Argonauts. The second explains the origin of the Lake Bled, while the book closes with the tale of the Land of Goldhorn. The tales are accompanied by sections containing information from the fields of art history, geography and archaeology.

The book can also serve as a protocol gift. The collection is planned to be published in other languages, including German, Italian, Russian, and perhaps even Hebrew.

Illustration: Mojca Fo



