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The latest from Slovenia



ON THE POLITICAL AGENDA: **Reforms to boost economic growth**

IN FOCUS INTERVIEW: **Dr Janez Potočnik** BUSINESS INTERVIEW: **Franjo Bobinac**

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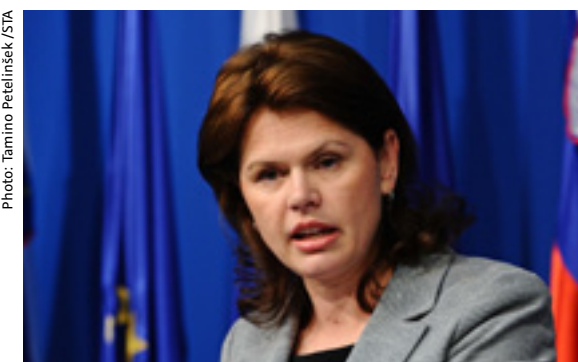


Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

IN FOCUS INTERVIEW 24

I do believe that generally our society is too much based on short term logic

Dr Janez Potočnik



Photo: Personal Archive

BUSINESS INTERVIEW 33

Our success is proven by many international professional awards such as the Red Dot

Franjo Bobinac



Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA

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Photo: Bruno Toič

Tanja Glogovčan, editor

Something in Common

“I respect and accept different cultures” is the title of a painting by a girl called Neža. We like it, so we chose it for the front page. It would be interesting to hear the story Neža could tell in addition to the painting’s message – what Slovenia, Europe and the world look like through her young eyes.

In the modern world, the processes of connecting, combining, mutual influence and co-dependence are termed globalisation, opening up to the world on the basis of technological and political changes, which is manifested in mobility and flow of people, goods, capital and information.

This year, especially in May, we are celebrating our wider homeland. The purpose of celebrating the European Year of Citizens and Europe Day is primarily to encourage intercultural understanding, tolerance and solidarity. In this spirit, various events have taken place in Slovenian towns, some of which are presented in Sinfo magazine.

Among the most important of these events was an interview on Europe Day with Janez Potočnik, European Commissioner for the Environment, who opened a discussion with citizens about the future of the European Union. The discussion unfolded against a background of calls for responsible environmental management and sustainable development as alternatives to existing economic models. You can find this exclusive interview with Dr Janez Potočnik in this issue.

May was also characterised by measures taken by the Slovenian Government: the National Reform Programme for 2013 and 2014, and the Stability Programme. They are important, as they send a message to financial markets and the international public. On the basis of an assessment of both documents, the European Commission will present its recommendations on 29 May.

The European Union is an important economic area, in which Slovenian companies have been creating success stories for some time. One of these is Gorenje d.d., a company with a long tradition. You are cordially invited to read an interview with Franjo Bobinac, the chairman of the management board.

Other cultures can teach us things that our own culture does not if our hearts are big enough to accept them. Is this what perhaps Neža wanted to express in her painting?



Photo: GCO

The problems can no longer be swept under the carpet

I will begin with a sentence you would probably not expect from the Government Office responsible for projecting a positive public image of the Government and the country: Slovenia is in serious trouble. We are facing perhaps the most important task since more than two decades ago, when Slovenia became an internationally recognised independent state. Due to the accumulation of economic and financial difficulties as a result of growing structural imbalances, which no Government has yet eliminated, Slovenia is in a situation in which it might be necessary to request international aid. A country that until recently was considered the most successful new member of the European Union is now mentioned with increasing frequency as one of the EU Member States which cannot survive without a bailout.

However, it is also necessary to take into account the functioning of international financial markets and their own speculative interests, which was clearly illustrated by the Moody's ranking agency regarding the successful auction of Slovenian bonds in the U.S. market in April, but still. It is necessary to get down to work and seriously start the reform process, which was postponed because we relied on the deceptive effects of the economic boom.

Of course, a great deal of political self-interest was also involved, but there is no room for this anymore. The Government and society as a whole will have to take all necessary measures to stabilise public finances and accordingly adjust systems in society, from social welfare, health and education to the banking, economic and ultimately the political system.

The Government of Alenka Bratušek is aware that the problems can no longer be swept under the carpet. Citizens who express their dissatisfaction with the current situation through various protests and alternative social movements are striking reminders of this fact.

On 9 May, the Government adopted the National Reform Programme and the Stability Programme, which contain concrete measures on both government revenue and spending. The total effect of the measures is estimated at over one billion euros; however, the Government's goal is to eliminate the structural deficit in

government finance by 2017. The Government proposes to increase both VAT rates, to introduce a property tax, and a so-called crisis tax is planned if social partners do not agree on additional reductions in government expenditure. Public sector wages and other spending will be limited, while additional incentives for the economy will be introduced, together with the rehabilitation of banks, the elimination of companies' debts, improving corporate management and privatisation. The Government has published a list of fifteen state-owned enterprises which are to be sold. The first transfers of non-performing assets to the so-called 'bad bank' will be conducted in June, while the bank will become fully operational by the end of September. It is planned to increase the banks' capital by EUR 900 million. The Government also announced that it would begin to verify personal income tax returns, compare them with taxpayers' actual assets, and tax any difference. In this context, measures against the grey economy are also planned, and closer monitoring of daily turnover reports in service industries, such as hospitality sector, which basically means the introduction of some kind of tax cash registers. More about the Government's stability programme and reforms can be found in this issue, while the full text of both documents is also available to the public.

The Government is confident that it will succeed in balancing and stabilising the situation with these and future actions, and thus enable a constructive agreement on the future development of Slovenia. Optimism is also apparent from the prevailing atmosphere in society, which is increasingly inclined to integration, cooperation and the search for agreement, which also applies to political parties and unions. The Slovenian understanding that someone always has to win in a compromise, and others lose, which is expressed all too often, is giving way to the realisation that insisting on an ultimatum will not take us far, while an agreement can lead to benefits for all. Well, a number of Slovenian successes is also grounds for optimism; however, in the flood of bad news, they are somehow overlooked. One of these is the latest amazing adventure of the Slovenian aviator Matevž Lenarčič, who flew over the North Pole in an ultralight aircraft manufactured by the Slovenian company Pipistrel. You will also find more information about this in Sinfo. Enjoy your reading!

Public Sector Wage Cuts Agreed

The government and trade unions agreed fresh cuts to the public sector wage bill. Savings of EUR 240m this year and EUR 260m next year (compared to last year's wage bill) are planned, though this is the combined effect of the 2012 fiscal consolidation act and the fresh measures.

In reality, this year's cut will be about EUR 50m smaller, as the government needs to compensate employees a portion of the unlawfully cut holiday allowance for 2012 in accordance with a recent court decision.

The government also pledged not to effect any further wage cuts until the end of 2014. As an extra safeguard, this will also be inserted into the collective bargaining agreement. The cuts will be achieved through a mix of cuts in base pay affecting higher brackets more than lower brackets, lower government contributions in the additional public sector pension scheme, halving of the bonus for academic title and reduction of sickness benefits.



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

Interior and Public Administration Minister Gregor Virant said this was "the maximum that we could agree in a manner that still preserves social peace." Branimir Strukelj, the chief negotiator for the Confederation of Public Sector Trade Unions, said the agreement was "reasonable".

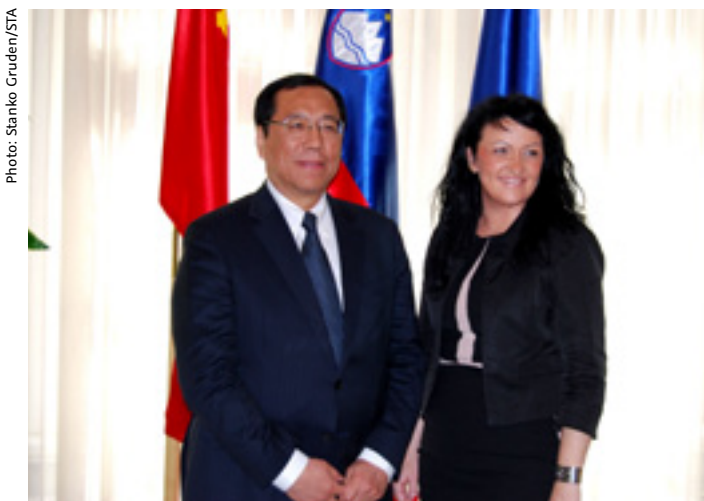


Photo: Slanko Gruden/STA

During his stay in Slovenia, the Chinese Deputy Minister of Justice visited the Faculty of Law of the University of Ljubljana.

Bilateral cooperation with China in the field of justice

The State Secretary at the Ministry of Justice, Tina Breclj, received the Deputy Minister of Justice of the People's Republic of China, Zhang Sujun, and his delegation.

The purpose of the meeting was bilateral cooperation, the presentation of the judicial system and changes planned in the field of justice. In the course of the visit, the Chinese delegation inspected Koper Prison.

South Stream is in Slovenia's interests

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, Alenka Bratušek, received the head of Russian Gazprom, Alexey Miller, with whom she discussed the implementation of the South Stream project.

The South Stream is of priority importance for Slovenia, and its completion is in the interests of both Slovenia and Russia, as well as the wider region. In addition to exchanging information on the progress of the South Stream's implementation, Ms Bratušek and Mr Miller discussed the course of this investment in other parts of Europe. The agreement between the Slovenian and Russian governments on cooperation on the construction and operation of the pipeline on Slovenian territory was signed in November 2009. The South Stream project was finally confirmed in November 2012, when Russia and Slovenia approved the investment in the Slovenian section of the pipeline.



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

According to plans, the construction of the South Stream gas pipeline in Slovenia is expected to commence in 2015, and to be operational in 2017.

Russia is a strategic partner of Slovenia

The Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov, was hosted by Karl Erjavec, the Slovenian Minister of Foreign Affairs. Both ministers expressed satisfaction with the excellent bilateral relations and also addressed economic issues. The Russian guest also met Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek.

Minister Lavrov wishes primarily to deepen investment cooperation. On this occasion, Minister Erjavec emphasised that Slovenia is aware that 'Russia is Slovenia's strategic partner in all respects, political, economic, cultural and others'. The Foreign Ministers discussed business cooperation, including the South Stream project. During her discussions with Minister Lavrov, Prime Minister Bratušek pointed out that this project is one of the most important for Slovenia. Mr Lavrov said that Russia appreciated that the Slovenian government is in favour of South Stream project and called on Slovenia to give the project national priority status.



Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

The Foreign Ministers signed an intergovernmental agreement on war grave sites, and a programme of cooperation between the Russian and Slovenian governments on culture, science, education and sports in the period 2013–2015.

Gornji Senik–Verica road scheduled for construction in November 2013

At the end of April, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, Alenka Bratušek, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Karl Erjavec, received the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Janos Martonyi.

The discussion partners agreed that relations between the two countries are very good and expressed their interest in even closer cooperation. The Prime Minister expressed her satisfaction that the construction of the Gornji Senik–Verica road, which will connect two groups of villages where Slovenians live in the Raba Valley, has almost been completed. Mr Erjavec emphasised the greatly improved situation of the Slovenian minority in Hungary.



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

The ministers announced that the Gornji Senik–Verica road will be completed in November, and that the opening will be attended by the presidents of both governments; Mr Martonyi also invited Mr Erjavec to be present.

Adriatic–Ionian Initiative Urges EU Strategy for the Region

Parliamentary speakers gathered at a meeting of the Adriatic–Ionian Initiative at Brdo pri Kranju. They urged the European Commission to pass in the shortest time possible a strategy for the macroregion of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas.

A document was adopted at the meeting, which is to be sent to the European Commission and which underlines the importance of bringing EU institutions closer to the people, also through different initiatives such as the Adriatic–Ionian Initiative. It brings together eight countries alongside the Ionian and Adriatic seas: Albania, Bosnia–Herzegovina, Montenegro, Greece, Croatia, Italy, Serbia and Slovenia.



Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

"The strategy, which is to be prepared by the end of the year, is crucial for the macroregion, as it will give the countries of the initiative access to EU funding to be used in the states for investment and development directly", said Slovenian parliamentary Speaker and the host of the meeting Janko Veber.

Reforms to boost economic growth



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

At the beginning of May, the Slovenian Government adopted the National Reform Programme (NRP) for 2013 and 2014, and the Stability Programme, and sent them to Brussels. Before the programmes were adopted, the European Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs, Olli Rehn, emphasised that he expected Slovenia to prepare two 'convincing' programmes. "The Commission's further steps will depend on how convincing, concrete and credible they are," he added. In addition, the Commissioner warned on several occasions before the programmes were adopted that the economic situation in Slovenia was manageable. Thus he confirmed the well-known position of Slovenian Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek, who stressed during her first visit to Brussels that Slovenia was not Cyprus, and that it could maintain sovereignty and overcome the crisis without financial aid from European institutions. A detailed assessment of both Slovenian plans and recommendations for action will be presented by the European Commission on 29 May, when it will also decide on whether to extend Slovenia's deadline to eliminate the large general government deficit, and whether to launch the macroeconomic imbalance procedure.

INCREASE IN VAT WITH THE LEAST INFLUENCE ON ECONOMIC GROWTH

The Stability Programme includes an increase in VAT on 1 July, but

the crisis income tax will not be introduced yet. In 2014, a property tax will be introduced and the reduction in corporate income tax suspended. The Government also proposes an increase in court fees, and the introduction of a tax on sweet beverages and lottery tickets.

The Government approved the proposal for the National Assembly's decision to dispose of state-owned assets in Kapitalska družba, Slovenska odškodninska družba, Modra zavarovalnica, Družba za svetovanje in upravljanje, and Posebna družba za podjetniško svetovanje. The proposal includes fifteen companies. Slovenian Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek expressed her firm belief that the measures would satisfy Brussels. However, she emphasised: "We are well aware of the fact that no tax rise has a positive influence on the economy. We have selected the tax with the least negative influence on economic growth." Therefore, on 1 July, the general VAT rate will be raised from 20 to 22 per cent, and the reduced VAT rate from 8.5 to 9.5 per cent. Slovenia expects to receive an additional EUR 250 million annually from the VAT rise.

Slovenian trade unions, which are among the harshest critics of the Government's plans, are relatively satisfied with the Government's measures, and more optimistic regarding negotiations between the Ministry of the In-



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

terior and Public Administration and trade unions. The fact that the Government has not introduced a progressive crisis tax was assessed as positive.

THE NATIONAL REFORM PROGRAMME IS A MEDIUM-TERM GOVERNMENT PLAN OF PRIORITY MEASURES AND PROJECTS

The objectives of the NRP are defined in three key pillars – institutional changes in decision-making processes, short-term measures to boost economic growth, and enhanced competitiveness for long-term sustainable growth. This document is the Government's medium-term plan of priority measures and projects focused on achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy. The NRP is Slovenia's response to country-specific recommendations made to Slovenia at the European Council in June 2012.

Slovenian's macroeconomic foundations are healthy, but it faces macroeconomic imbalances, such as the excessive indebtedness of companies and burdening of bank balance sheets with non-performing loans. The household sector is among the least indebted in the EU, and the general government debt is below EU average. However, Slovenia has certain institutional shortcomings in the decision-making process which hamper rapid, decisive and efficient responses to changes in the environment.

The Government intends to sell its shares in the following companies: NKBM, Telekom Slovenije, Aerodrom Ljubljana, Adria Airways Tehnika, Cinkarna Celje, Gospodarsko razstavišče, Paloma, Terme Olimia, Unior from Zreče, Žito from Ljubljana, Adria Airways, Aero Celje, Elan from Begunje, Fotona from Ljubljana and Helios from Domžale.

Slovenian Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek expressed her firm belief that the measures will satisfy Brussels.

In order to revive economic growth, Slovenia will give priority to measures to restore the banking system and to settle corporate debt.



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

“The majority of European countries increased VAT some time ago, while our rates are below the European average,” warned the Prime Minister.

THE GOVERNMENT’S PROGRAMME ENSURES ECONOMIC GROWTH AND THE RESTORATION OF THE BANKING SYSTEM

In order to restart economic growth, Slovenia will have to eliminate some shortcomings and imbalances in the economy, which the Government says are manageable and can be eliminated with a suitable combination and timetable of measures. It was with this view and objective in mind that measures were prepared.

The Slovenian Government is aware that the restoration of the banking system and corporate repayments are key measures to boost economic growth. During the process of devising the measures and after final approval, Uroš Čufer, the Minister of Finance, claimed that the Government would accelerate the operability of the bad bank and transfer the first invest-

ments by the end of June. Stress tests will be conducted by the Bank Assets Management Company (BAMC). The Government is also convinced that the anticipated four-billion euro guarantees are sufficient to transfer funds to the BAMC, and that the amount required for bank recapitalisation will not exceed EUR 900 million.

CHANGES IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

Within the first pillar, i.e. institutional changes in decision-making processes, Slovenia will fulfil its commitment to include the fiscal rule in Slovenian legislation and improve institutional regulation in relation to enhanced economic management at the EU level. Within this pillar, amendments to referendum legislation are also anticipated, and the Government intends to change the electoral system, which would achieve

greater unity and stability of governing coalitions. Slovenia will re-define the mechanisms for managing strategic investments and, at the same time, ensure that the state withdraws from the ownership of investments that are not of substantial significance.

MEASURES TO BOOST ECONOMIC GROWTH

The second pillar, i.e. short-term measures to boost economic growth, is based on reviving the economy on one hand, and balancing public finances on the other. To revive the economy, the Government anticipates bank restoration, corporate repayments and restructuring, improving corporate management and privatisation; to balance public finances, it anticipates a reduction in the general government deficit and long-term stabilisation of the general government debt.



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

The Government took until the end of the year to reach an agreement with all key stakeholders in the public sector on the structural reduction in public expenditure. The objective is to avoid imposing a crisis tax next year. This tax remains in reserve if an agreement with trade unions cannot be reached.

IMPROVING COMPETITIVENESS FOR LONG-TERM SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

The third pillar, which concerns improving competitiveness for long-term sustainable growth, includes a wide range of measures which will contribute to enhancing conditions for growth in the long term and attaining the objectives of the EU’s economic strategy (Europe 2020), and support short-term measures to revive growth. These measures are divided into six thematic sections: efficient rule of law, promotion of foreign investments, labour market flexibility, efficiency of the public sector,

encouraging entrepreneurship, and concern for health and the environment.

THE PRIORITIES OF BOTH DOCUMENTS ARE CLEAR AND MEASURES WILL BE IMPLEMENTED

The NRP and the Stability Programme both define the consolidation of public finances and revival of the economy as priority tasks, the realisation of which should be parallel. This is the only way for Slovenia to restore its credibility. “Regarding the privatisation of the proposed companies, our objective is to find strategic partners for a suitable price and not to

sell them off,” emphasised the Prime Minister, and added that the first non-performing assets of banks will be referred to the BAMC in just over a month. The Prime Minister explained the decision to increase VAT: “We thought and consulted long and hard about which package would be least painful for Slovenia at this moment. We knew very well and very precisely what we were doing when we made this decision.” Regarding a crisis tax, the Prime Minister said that it had been temporarily postponed, that she believed in compromises with all stakeholders, and thus its implementation, in her opinion, would not be necessary.

Dr Uroš Čufer, the Minister of Finance, believes it is important for measures to be permanent and for the distribution of the costs to be fair.

The Government is well aware that carrying out measures will not be easy, but is determined to see them through. This is the only way for Slovenia to restore its credibility.

Urgently needed changes to insolvency legislation enter lawmaking procedure

The Government of the RS has sent amendments to the Financial Operations, Insolvency Proceedings and Compulsory Dissolution Act (ZFPPIPP) for discussion in the National Assembly of the RS in a fast-track procedure. These are the fifth amendments to the Act, with which the Ministry of Justice has

attained one of the key objectives from last year i.e. keeping the promise to reform insolvency legislation. Considering the current economic situation, the proposed changes and modifications are extremely important and necessary to reverse the negative trends.



Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

A Chamber of Commerce and Industry head Hribar Milič urged a more aggressive strategy for preserving existing companies, noting that new companies are not being set up fast enough and that Slovenia is also relatively bad at attracting foreign investment.

The proposed changes and modifications will: increase efficiency; accelerate insolvency proceedings; make insolvency administrators truly responsible not only to the relevant court and the Chamber of Insolvency Administrators, but also to the creditors and the ministry; reduce the room for manoeuvre for inappropriate actions and procrastination by debtors.

THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE AMENDMENTS CAN BE DIVIDED INTO SEVERAL SETS.

1. Maintaining the healthy cores of the economy: this means greater opportunities to efficiently and realistically restructure insolvent businesses, from small sole proprietors to large companies. For small businesses, the amendments introduce an additional procedure to simplify compulsory settlement, which will mean a considerably cheaper and faster financial restructuring procedure for these companies. In financial restructuring and maintaining the operations of a debtor company, the main role in the compulsory settlement procedure will be played not only by former owners and management, but also by creditors or a creditors' committee on their behalf. If creditors want to maintain the operations of a company which is

organised as a joint stock company, they will be able to recapitalise it without the agreement of the former owners by converting their claims into equity stakes; creditors with the right to a separate settlement (for example, banks) will also be able to do this if general creditors are not interested.

2. Preventing the inappropriate influence of an insolvent debtor and entities associated with it: this means limiting the powers of bodies of the insolvent debtor or in compulsory settlement procedures and limiting the participation of entities associated with the insolvent debtor in creditors' committees, in order to prevent these bodies from influencing decisions contrary to the objectives of the compulsory settlement procedure. Creditors and new investors who recapitalise the insolvent debtor in a compulsory settlement will

be better protected, because as buyers of new shares, they will be able to acquire authorisation to manage the operations of the insolvent debtor until the first shareholders' meeting after compulsory settlement is confirmed. The amendments extend the period in which the disposal of assets of the insolvent debtor free of charge, or for an insignificant payment, can be challenged to three years, which will limit the possibility of wrongdoings before the commencement of insolvency proceedings.

3. Improving the position of creditors: to improve their position, the amendments make it easier to prove the conditions for initiating bankruptcy proceedings and, above all, considerably strengthen the position of creditors' committees in the process. Instead of decision-making taking place solely in courts, this introduces reasonable mecha-



Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA

Justice Minister Senko Pličanič listed some of the forthcoming measures, at the meeting with Chamber of Commerce and Industry, meant to simplify deleveraging, including changes to insolvency legislation, a bill on systemic deleveraging, out-of-court agreements on restructuring and equity to capital conversion.

nisms and balances, which are also used elsewhere in developed countries (creditors in Germany, for example, can vote to dismiss insolvency administrators). This is an extremely important modification which will considerably change the position of creditors and, therefore the actions of insolvency administrators. The simplification of the proposal to dismiss insolvency administrators by creditors' committee will improve managers' effectiveness.

4. Improving the position of workers as claimants: if an insolvent debtor is late with the payment of wages to the amount of the minimum wage, or with the payment of taxes and contributions from these wages for more than fifteen days, this constitutes grounds for an appeal against compulsory settlement. Workers will also be exempt from an advance payment of the initial costs of insolvency proceedings.

5. Efficient procedures: a series of improvements has been proposed. On the one hand, these concern ensuring effective supervision of the work of insolvency administrators by the ministry. On the other hand, they concern facilitating procedures. The amendments thus envisage that the way in which assets are sold at public auction under the system of accepting bids below the reserve will ac-

celerate insolvency proceedings. The enactment of the option to settle out of court or reach a settlement, brokered by the courts, between the administrator representing the bankrupt debtor and creditors in insolvency cases will also contribute to accelerating proceedings. Settlements will be concluded only with the consent of the competent court and under the supervision of the creditors' committee.

THESE ARE REALLY MAJOR CHANGES

The proposed changes and modifications will: increase efficiency; accelerate insolvency proceedings; make insolvency administrators truly responsible not only to the relevant court and the Chamber of Insolvency Administrators, but also to the creditors and the ministry; reduce the room for manoeuvre for inappropriate actions and procrastination by debtors.

At the first sight, the proposed amendments to ZFPPIPP may appear to change only certain Articles, but they are actually about considerable shifts in the mindset. What also proves that these are really major changes is the high number of comments which the ministry tried to take into account to the greatest possible extent in preparing the final proposal. All important

stakeholders participated in the public debate, which went on for several months. Many comments came from the business sector, banks and creditors' organisations. The judiciary presented their views in several different ways and thus made a significant contribution (comments from individual courts, from the Association of Judges and even from individual judges). Insolvency administrators, lawyers and legal experts also provided their input.

Along with the amendments to ZFPPIPP, the Ministry of Justice is preparing an act on systemic deleveraging. At the end of April 2013, the Government of the RS was acquainted with the starting points for drafting the act, and ordered the Ministry of Justice, in cooperation with the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology and the Ministry of Finance, and in cooperation with the interested expert public, to begin drafting the act in order to make it easier for creditors to become more involved, and be more effective, in the process of deleveraging insolvent debtors which are organised as joint stock companies. This will enable creditors who are interested and meet other conditions to continue the operations of the insolvent debtor by converting their claims into the equity of the insolvent debtor.

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Friendship and joint responsibility

In recent weeks, the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, paid official visits to Paris and Berlin in order to strengthen political dialogue at the highest level.



Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

President Borut Pahor and German President Joachim Gauck greeted by a crowd as Gauck receives Pahor at the presidential palace.

VISIT TO PARIS

On Wednesday and Thursday, 17 and 18 April, President Pahor was on a two-day official visit to Paris, accompanied by Karl Erjavec, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Uroš Grilc, the Minister of Culture, and a business delegation. The official purpose of the President's visit to Paris was to enhance the strategic partnership established between Slovenia and France in March 2011. The partnership was signed by former French President Nicolas Sarkozy, and Mr Pahor, who was then Prime Minister.

The central event of the visit was the meeting with the host, the President of France, Francois Hollande at the Elysee Palace. This was the first meeting between the Presidents since their election. In the press release following the meeting,

which was closed to the public, President Pahor stated that Slovenia can currently still solve its own problems. He explained that he had informed his French colleague about the actions and plans of the Slovenian Government to consolidate public finance and measures to rehabilitate the Slovenian economy. "Slovenia is not hiding the fact that it is dealing with problems, especially in the banking sector. But these issues are not comparable to the issues of other countries which, due to the same or similar problems, have been forced to seek financial aid," stressed President Pahor. President Hollande expressed his complete confidence that Slovenia would be able to resolve its problems i.e. to arrange the banking sector and public finances and improve competitiveness. "There is friendship between Slovenia and France, and also solidarity," empha-

sised Mr Hollande. Another important topic of the President's two-day visit to France was enhancing economic cooperation, which was the central theme at the working breakfast of Slovenian and French business representatives.

VISIT TO BERLIN

A week later, the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, visited Berlin, where he met Joachim Gauck, the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Norbert Lammert, President of the Bundestag, and Ruprecht Polenz, Chairman of the Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs. During the discussions with his German host, President Pahor again expressed his belief that Slovenia is capable of solving its own problems in



Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

"Slovenia is not hiding the fact that it is dealing with problems, especially in the banking sector. But these issues are not comparable to the issues of other countries which, due to the same or similar problems, have been forced to seek financial aid," stressed President Pahor. President Hollande expressed his complete confidence that Slovenia would be able to resolve its problems.

French President Francois Hollande said he fully trusts Slovenia will fix its banking sector and public finances and improve competitiveness.

During the discussions with his German host, President Pahor again expressed his belief that Slovenia is capable of solving its own problems in real time. He added that Slovenia requires understanding and not financial support and invited German partners to invest in Slovenia.

real time. He added that Slovenia requires understanding and not financial support and invited German partners to invest in Slovenia. The President said that the Slovenian Government with measures already being implemented or planned and by continuing to pursue existing policy, gives "a reliable hope that we will be able to find our own way out of these problems."

The President assessed that with regard to the conduct of the Government and decisions

planned by the Government and Parliament, his discussion partners in Paris and Berlin look reassuringly at Slovenia's efforts to resolve the crisis alone. President Pahor assured his discussion partners that Slovenia would continue to consolidate public finances, rehabilitate the banking system and take measures to generate economic growth and that it has also proven that it can finance its own needs. As stated in the press release, the President could not imagine the situation if Slovenia fails.

During discussions with German discussion partners, President Pahor stressed that further saving remains the basis for consolidating public finances and that Slovenia would continue its structural reforms, which will make the economy more competitive and improve the investment environment. The President thus invited German partners to invest in Slovenia also in the light of the anticipated privatisation process, said the statement from the President's Office.

President Pahor stressed that further saving remains the basis for consolidating public finances and that Slovenia would continue its structural reforms, which will make the economy more competitive and improve the investment environment.

President Borut Pahor attended a breakfast featuring representatives of French and Slovenian companies, taking the chance to present opportunities emerging as part of the pending privatisation in Slovenia. Present on the Slovenian side were representatives of the Automotive Cluster (ACS), sports goods maker Elan, civil engineering company Riko and pre-fabricated constructions panels maker Trimo, while Alstom, BNP Paribas, Lactalis, Lafarge, Societe Generale, and Totale are only a few names from the list of French participants, many of which were banks.



Photo: Daniel Novokov/SITA

Slovenian President Pahor and German Chancellor Angela Merkel moreover discussed the future of Europe, sharing the view that countries must fight together for the future of the EU and that a positive message must be created. Merkel also hailed Slovenia's leading role in the Western Balkans.



Photo: Daniel Novokov/SITA

Gertrud Rantzen, President of the German-Slovene Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said there are more than 570 companies in Slovenia which have some German capital. They employ more than 46,000 people and generate 20 per cent of the entire revenue of Slove-

nian industry. Germany is also the most important Slovenian export market, accounting for 20 per cent of total exports, and the most important trading partner, with trade in goods amounting to EUR 8.4 billion in 2012 (Slovenia exports EUR 400 million more than it imports

from Germany). According to the Chamber, German investments in Slovenia are worth some EUR 1.4 billion. The major German companies in Slovenia are: Hella Saturnus Slovenia, BSH Hišni aparati, Carthago, Knaf Insulation Slovenia, Novem Car, Starkom, Ydria Mo-

tors, Saxonia-Franke, Siemens, BASF, Bayer, Resistec, etc. German companies are very strong in manufacturing (above) and also in retailing (Lidl, Hofer, Müller, DM) and representations of vehicle trademarks: BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Volkswagen.

In 2011, the Republic of Slovenia and the French Republic established a strategic partnership on business cooperation between the countries. Some 63 French companies are currently operating in Slovenia; the strongest are Revoz, which is Slovenia's

biggest exporter (and also the largest direct foreign investment in Slovenia) and SKB banka. Slovenia is continuing and upgrading its successful business cooperation with France, which is its fifth largest trading partner. Trade in goods in 2012 was

worth EUR 2.1 billion. Pierre-François Mourier, the French Ambassador to the Republic of Slovenia, said in his interview for the Slovenian Press Agency that French companies in energy, trade, the automobile industry and insurance could be

interested in investing in Slovenia. "Business relations between the countries are close; the cooperation began already at the time of the former Yugoslavia and continued after Slovenian independence," added the Ambassador.

Happy Birthday!

The European Union celebrates Europe Day on 9 May, which commemorates the beginning of the European integration. On 9 May 1950, Robert Schuman, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, presented the so-called Schuman Declaration, which is the founding document of the Union.

Photo: Domen Grčič/SITA



Photo: Domen Grčič/SITA

Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet, the French political and economic adviser known today as the 'Father of Europe', realised that European integration could only be achieved gradually. They thus proposed that Germany and France coordinate control over their coal and steel production, which was then the principal bases for the armaments industries of both countries. The idea came to fruition a year later, when six European countries – France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg – appointed joint bodies and regulations for cooperation on coal and steel. Thus the European Coal and Steel Community was established.

The Schuman Plan, which was primarily intended to link the

long-term rivals France and Germany, and through economic cooperation ensure peace and stability in Europe after two world wars, is considered the first step in uniting European countries and is thus marked as the dawn of the EU.

At the EU Summit in Milan in 1985, 9 May was declared Europe Day, which thus became one of the symbols of the European Union.

HOW WAS THE EUROPEAN UNION CREATED?

On 18 April 1951, six European countries signed the European Coal and Steel Community Treaty on the basis of the Schuman Declaration. The joint coal and steel market worked very well,

so the founding countries decided to form two additional communities in 1957: the European Economic Community (EEC), which created a joint market with the free flow of goods, labour, services and capital, and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM). European economic cooperation was significantly enhanced in 1987 with the passing of the Single European Act, which represented a commitment to establishing a uniform and internal market.

After the signing of the Treaty on the European Union, also known as the Maastricht Treaty, on 7 February 1992, cooperation expanded to the field of Economic and Monetary Union, which later led to the introduc-

As always also this year runners ran along the longest route in the Trio Race, and on a 12,5 – kilometre route.

At the EU Summit in Milan in 1985, 9 May was declared Europe Day, which thus became one of the symbols of the European Union.



Photo: Sanja Gruden/STA

Kindergarten, primary and secondary school pupils, students and adults, mostly from Ljubljana, went on this year's Walk along the Wire.

tion of a common currency. The Treaty introduced three pillars under the joint name of the European Union and formed new institutional structures for common foreign and security policies (second pillar) and police and judicial co-operation on criminal matters (third pillar). The first pillar consists of three Communities (the former European Coal and Steel Community, the European Community and the European Atomic Energy Community).

With the Treaty of Amsterdam signed on 2 October 1997, the Member States determined customs transactions and measures to stimulate economic development and social protection in more detail. Due to the preparation for the largest enlargement in the history of the European Union, Member States signed the Treaty of Nice in December 2001, which introduced numerous institutional changes to facilitate operations in the

enlarged Union. In terms of enlargement, the text of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe signed on 29 October 2004 was also drafted at the time; its purpose was to simplify democratic decision-making processes and the management of the EU with 25-plus countries. The Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe was rejected and the Treaty of Lisbon was then signed in December 2007, coming into force two years later, when it was ratified by all EU Member States. So far, from the original six, the European Union has enlarged to 27 countries, one of which is Slovenia, a full member of the European Union since 2004.

THE CITY OF LJUBLJANA ALSO CELEBRATES ON 9 MAY

To commemorate the four-year occupation of the capital and its liberation 68 years ago, the Slovenian capital, Ljubljana, took 9 May as a holiday. The occu-

pation of Ljubljana has a special place in the history of the European capitals, because few towns during the Second World War were completely occupied and transformed into a virtual ghetto. The fence encircling the city was 29,663 metres long, five to eight metres wide and up to two metres high. On 9 May 1945, the Partisan Army defeated the enemy and penetrated the wire which surrounded Ljubljana and restricted the lives of its residents. The sirens from the Castle announced the long-awaited and decisively won freedom.

Ljubljana celebrates its holiday, the day of freedom and peace, on 9 May which, in addition to various other events is also marked by a walk along the 32.5-kilometre Path of Remembrance and Comradeship which follows the route of the barbed wire fence. A formal session of the City Council is held on the holiday, at which the highest awards of the City of Ljubljana are presented.

European Year of Citizens in Slovenia

In conditions of financial and economic crisis in the European Union countries, and also in times when people distrust institutions and, as a result, the participation of the general public is low – and Slovenia is not exempt from this phenomenon. It is somewhat unusual or contradictory if a Government or its services and agencies (in cooperation

with the European Commission and European Parliament) dedicate so much effort and resources to promoting the rights (mostly cross-border) of European citizens. However, it is also understandable that people must be encouraged to stand up for their rights and actively participate in their communities.



Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES

As the national coordinator of the European Year of Citizens 2013, the Government Communication Office of the Republic of Slovenia (GCO) prepared a programme of activities which includes several relevant ministries, national contact points and networks, non-governmental organisations and others.

In the past, the office had planned and conducted numerous campaigns at home and

abroad, and it drafted the national programme as a communication campaign with a special website (<http://www.evropa.gov.si/eld>) and numerous events throughout the country, with promotional, counselling and discussion activities intended for all age groups and for other target publics. The majority of events have been planned and implemented within special projects of the so-called management partnership, in cooperation with the Government, the European Commission and

the European Parliament. The funding is provided by the European Commission. The additional feature of this year's events is the preliminary online presentation of current topics to be discussed at the events.

EU CITIZENSHIP

The awareness of European citizenship is high in Slovenia; however, more than half of the respondents believe that they are not informed adequately on their rights, and even less on

If our common objective is citizen awareness, then we must provide information to citizens and discuss with them the realisation of rights and its obstacles. It was thus decided to first promote all websites where information relevant to Slovenian and other European citizens who reside and work in Slovenia may be obtained, and also the common European website, the Your Europe portal (http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/index_sl.htm), managed by the European Commission in all EU languages, where the information is provided by the relevant national agencies and contact points.

The awareness of European citizenship is high in Slovenia; however, more than half of the respondents believe that they are not informed adequately on their rights, and even less on what to do when their European citizenship rights are violated. Well, the results of this thematic European year are yet to be seen.

what to do when their European citizenship rights are violated. Well, the results of this thematic European year are yet to be seen. A special section of the programme is dedicated to activities of non-governmental organisations. To encourage their activities, a special tender was prepared (financed from budgetary funds) which motivates work with vulnerable social groups (young unemployed people, the disabled, national minorities, retired persons in nursing homes, etc.).

TO STRESS THE ROLE OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

In the programme, the non-governmental organisations wanted to stress the role of active citizenship, which means more than

political participation and participation in elections, and instead, emphasises an active attitude on the part of an individual and on civil society groups to any community in which they work and live, including ongoing monitoring and critical evaluation of current authorities and also voluntary and humanitarian activities. This is one of the topics at individual events and in web discussions.

As mentioned above, there is a communication campaign on the one hand, and on the other, concrete measures and activities of relevant ministries regarding the campaign. Each ministry selected one priority activity for this year which is supposed to contribute to informing citizens better, or which eliminates a barrier in

the realisation of their rights. For example, the Ministry of the Interior and Public Administration is informing European citizens who come from other EU member states to Slovenia on the administrative procedures related to their residence and the residence of their family members in Slovenia (following three months of residence). The Ministry of Health is informing Slovenian citizens on their right to healthcare services during a temporary residence abroad (e.g. how to avoid direct payment of the usually high costs for healthcare services in other EU member states).

THE MOST POPULAR

The 'most popular' right among citizens is the right to free movement, study and em-

ployment in other EU member states, which is particularly interesting to secondary and higher education students. Many events, fairs, international and national conferences and promotional and informative material will be organised and prepared for them.

MANY ARE INVOLVED IN THE ACTIVITIES

Individual research and teaching organisations are involved in most of the activities, and will present the results of their research on education for active

citizenship and life-long learning on this topic.

The President of the Republic of Slovenia has graciously agreed to be the honorary patron of the European Year of Citizens 2013, and there are also several ambassadors of the year, who will promote the main ideas and rights related to this topic.

An educational and informative project dealing with citizens' rights and solving their problems in the field of the single market and consumer rights is also being implemented within the manage-

ment partnership. Video clips and special broadcasts on one of the national television's stations are based on actual life situations.

A point of interest: international experts have discovered that continuous cultural and artistic creativity and education of young people contributes to the formation of personalities more inclined to participatory behaviour patterns. Slovenian teachers and other relevant bodies are also intensively deliberating on this issue and on the revision of certain study programmes, also within the framework of the European Year of Citizens.

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Young people are the future of the EU.



Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA



Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

The field of civil rights of EU citizens is decidedly inter-ministerial, so it was difficult to choose a national coordinator. The GCO presented itself as the perfect choice.

EU going local

Within the Management Partnership, the Government Communication Office has been cooperating since 2007 with the European Commission Representation and European Parliament Information Office on numerous projects designed to inform about, raise

awareness of, and communicate European affairs to the Slovenian public. Thus Slovenia was the second EU Member State to join organised and long-term cooperation on communicating European affairs.

Slovenia is reducing CO₂

“Best practices are very useful and also show that goals can be achieved not only in theory, but also in real life, even the most ambitious goals. Furthermore, measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions have very interesting synergy effects in terms of savings, reducing costs, the potential for creating new jobs, higher added value, enhanced competitiveness, etc.” said Vida Ogorelec, the director of Umanotera, which has been implementing the project.

An important feature of the European projects in Slovenia is that those launched within the Management Partnership come to life and continue to exist in various forms also without the financial support of partner institutions.

The projects being implemented in Slovenia and the results are considered examples of best practice in other EU Member States as well, due to their conceptual, organisational, content and multiplier value. When it comes to addressing target publics, we are always seeking new ways to communicate, thematic programmes and efficient ways to reach the greatest possible number of recipients by following the principle of ‘EU going local’. Four or five projects are implemented annually, and the partnership has contributed significantly to utilising synergies from jointly carrying out communication activities. It also enhanced coordination between Slovenia and EU institutions in the field of communicating EU affairs.

An important feature of the European projects in Slovenia is that those launched within the Management Partnership come to life and continue to exist in various forms also without the financial support of partner institutions.

SLOVENIA IS REDUCING CO₂

One of the most successful projects has been running for three years under the slogan ‘Slovenia is reducing CO₂’. At a time when climate change was high on the agenda of EU institutions, Slovenia was engaged in wide consultations which resulted in the recommendations of the expert and interested public to political decision-makers devising the national Slovenian strategy in this field. Following the preparation of recommendations, the project resumed in the form of presenting best practices. First, we identified and, in 2011, began to promote best practices, disseminate knowledge and encourage changes in Slovenia which perhaps would be followed by others. Success stories inspire and convince people that changes on the path to a low-carbon society are not only possible, but also universally useful.

In the past few years, many practical solutions have been

developed in Slovenia to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to climate change, introduce the principles of sustainable development, and also contribute to economic competitiveness and employment. These best practices are effective, and some have even been internationally recognised, but they are not well publicised and users are not very familiar with them.

Within the scope of the project, in 2011 and 2012, fifteen Slovenian and five foreign examples of best practice were presented to the public. The project continues in 2013 with information gathering about existing best practices in Slovenia and abroad; presentations and visits will be organised from April to September. The project’s target groups are companies, self-employed persons and municipalities. The closing phase will present recommendations for the most successful dissemination of best practices.



Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

The slogan EU Si Ti! (You Are the EU) consists of two key words: EU (European Union) and Si (Slovenia), and encourages people to jointly change beliefs about the abstractness of European citizenship.

EUROPE AT SCHOOL

The Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth (SAFY) is an independent non-governmental, humanitarian, voluntary and charity organisation, which operates in the public interest mainly in the field of social protection. Its fundamental mission is to raise the quality of life of children, adolescents and families, represent and exercise their interests and needs, and protect their rights. As the umbrella organisation for 91 societies and associations, it has been in operation since 1953, celebrating its 60th anniversary this year. SAFY’s work is based in volunteers, experts and lay people: people who have been putting their knowledge, energy and experience to a worthy purpose for numerous years (some for as long as 40 years).

Nationally, SAFY has been carrying out numerous programmes and projects: Child Week, Children’s Parliament,

Young History Researchers, Centre for Advocacy and Information on the Rights of Children and Youth, Telephone Helpline and Youth – TOM Telephone, Europe at School, Family Association, etc.

One of the projects of the Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth is Europe at School, which in the 2012/2013 academic year is running for the 14th consecutive year. The competition, which has been implemented in recent years with the European Commission, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and the European Parliament for Communicating European Affairs, includes over 10,000 Slovenian primary and secondary school pupils. It is a way of including European dimensions in schools, and attempts to spread European awareness in an interesting manner appropriate for the age of pupils and students. The competition encourages thinking and creating on European topics and issues of inter-

est to all of us. It offers opportunities for formal and informal intercultural education, understanding diversity, tolerance of dissenters, and solidarity among all people, nations, racial and religious groups. In addition, it encourages the acquisition of information for active citizenship, and contributes to establishing a culture of cooperation, and to developing pupils’ and students’ abilities to make decisions and take responsibility.

The theme of the competition is related each year to the theme of European Year. In 2012/2013, youth have been creating under the title ‘As a citizen of Europe, I have rights and opportunities – how well do I know them?’. The young can express their thoughts on the European Year of Citizens in eight creative fields: fine arts, literary, video, internet, and photographic fields, and with project and research assignments. A special novelty of this year’s competition is a multi-disciplinary competition offer-

One of the most successful projects has been running for three years under the slogan ‘Slovenia is reducing CO₂’. Success stories inspire and convince people that changes on the path to a low-carbon society are not only possible, but also universally useful.



Photo: Tamino Pelejšnik/STA

The main event of Europe Week was Europe Day, on 9 May. Dr Janez Potočnik, the European Commissioner for the Environment, was a guest at the EU Si ti event – DIALOGUE 9/5/13 at Cankarjev dom in Ljubljana. At a public discussion, Igor E. Bergant and the participants discussed European citizenship, the environment, economy and future of the European Union and Slovenia.

ing the opportunity to combine several fields of the competition into full-scale cooperation with other schools and joint presentations by schools with similar goals. The competition is organised at school, regional and national levels. Mentors in schools, coordinators in regions and the national committee, which is responsible for the content of the competition, all play an important role in it. The highlight is an award ceremony for the best creators in the national competition. The event takes place during Europe Week, on 10 May 2013, in Krško. Representatives of national and European institutions in Slovenia will present the prizes to the young authors.

The entire competition is a valuable project which activates many children, youth and adults to research themes, which connect and characterise life in Europe, so it is worth pursuing in the future.

THE EUROPEAN UNION PATH

Slovenia organised interesting events around the country during the campaign to join the EU

in order to raise awareness of the general public about the European Union, the organisation we wished to join. After joining the European Union on 1 May 2004, the events took place mainly in Ljubljana, as the capital of the new Member State. After more than twelve years, we decided to restore good practice and provide more information about the EU for Slovenian European citizens, and encourage them to consider and discuss the development of the EU.

Therefore, the project of organising events on EU topics was decentralised this year, and in terms of content was closely connected with the European Year of Citizens 2013. The project is being implemented by the Youth Network MaMa, and is entitled EU Si Ti! (You Are the EU).

The events will be held throughout Slovenia in order to present basic information on the European Union, the European Year of Citizens and other current issues and to make them more accessible to as many people as possible. The events will

take place in halls, outdoors, at schools, in nursing homes and shopping centres, where citizens as consumers may be informed about consumer rights ensured by the EU. The variety of locations is followed by a variety of events: thematic days, consultations, round table panels for the expert and interested public, cultural and social events, and interactive outdoor events will be organised.

The goal of the project is to connect local, regional and national actors already active in the field of communicating EU affairs, and encourage their cooperation.

We will attempt to achieve both aims by utilising web communication tools and social networks better, both being especially popular among the young.

By Europe Week, we had visited Slovenske Konjice, Maribor, Ljubljana and Velenje. The highlight was during Europe Week – 7 to 11 May – when outdoor events were organised in five larger Slovenian towns: Maribor, Celje, Ljubljana, Slovenj Gradec and

Photo: Archives of GCO



The film festival draw the European Union, its values and diversity closer to the Slovenian people through European films.

One of the projects of the Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth is Europe at School. The competition, which has been implemented in recent years includes over 10,000 Slovenian primary and secondary school pupils. It is a way of including European dimensions in schools.

Nova Gorica. The events were dedicated to issues regarding the EU and its citizens. Visitors had an opportunity to weave a European rope and test their knowledge on the EU in an EU prize quiz. European volunteers from various countries acquiring experience in Slovenia represented the European Union and its rich cultural heritage at these events. The opportunity arose precisely due to their European citizenship, which facilitates the free movement of persons within the EU. On this occasion, visitors could voice their opinions, suggestions and experience regarding opportunities in the EU. The number of visitors and interest

of Slovenian European citizens were enormous.

EUROPE FILM WEEK 2013

Thirteen Slovenian towns hosted Europe Film Week from 5 to 12 May, which brought eighteen European film hits to Slovenian towns. The excellently attended film festival, taking place under the slogan '13 Slovenian towns, 18 film stories, 1 Europe'. Film lovers were able to see the winners of the European Parliament LUX prize, winners of all the most prominent European festivals and Oscar winners. Among the films shown in Slovenia for the first time, Kinod-

vor cinema in Ljubljana showcased on its opening night the science fiction romantic drama Perfect Sense, which was a great hit at the Sundance Film Festival. Europe Film Week also featured numerous other events, meetings and debates with filmmakers, and creative workshops for children.

SLOVENIANS ARE AWARE THAT WE ARE EU CITIZENS

Events were attended by numerous Slovenians; therefore, we could say that Slovenians are aware of the meaning of European citizenship and the fact that we are members of the European family.

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Dr Janez Potočnik

I do believe that generally our society is too much based on short term logic

Dr Janez Potočnik became a Member of the European Commission on the May 1 2004. In his first mandate (2004 – 2009) he was responsible for the Science and Research. In February 2010 he started a second mandate as a Commissioner for Environment. He is dealing with things like waste, pollution and air and water quality, as well as really complex issues such as biodiversity or the ways in which we can make our European economy more environmentally friendly, or 'greener'. As a European Commissioner, he doesn't work for any national government. This means that although he is a Slovenian and he was nominated to this job by the Slovenian Government, he is independent: he works for the European Union and all its citizens, wherever they come from. In May 2008 he was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Science by London Imperial College. In March 2009 he received the honorary degree from Ghent University (Belgium).



Photo: Nebojša Tejić/SIPA

This year is a European year of citizens, so I suggest we start with question on this. Commission led a large-scale public consultation with citizens last year. Report about the dialogue should be presented in May. Would you already be able to tell us something more about the content of the report?

During the public consultation which was carried out last year we received over 12,000 responses, mostly from young people, showing that citizens want to have a say in their future – and rightly so. Respondents from all over the EU made clear that they are very attached to their EU rights – especially free movement and political rights. They would like to see a true European area in which they can live, work, move, study and shop without facing red tape or discrimination. But they also pointed out that there is still some way to go. They highlighted various problems, notably in having EU rights respected at local level – issues which the Commission will be taking up in the second EU Citizenship Report (first one was published in 2010), planned during the European Year of Citizenship. The majority of Slovenian respondents (85%) expressed support for the 'European idea', with some (20%) asking for a political union.

In the context of the European year of citizens we wish to promote, on the European and Slovenian level, institutions and organizations which can assist European citizens in eliminating obstacles that stand in the way of realization of their rights and solving disputes connected to them. Which of these obstacles do you see as most crucial and how do you think they should be eliminated even more efficiently? Incidentally, as a European citizen who trav-

els a lot, has it ever happened to you that one of your rights has been violated in a cross-border situation?

EU Citizenship gives all citizens the same rights regardless of their nationality, and citizens use these rights on a daily basis across the EU. Europeans for example benefit from increased protection for cross-border purchases, guaranteed healthcare in other EU Member States through the European Health Insurance Card and cheaper roaming charges all thanks to European legislation. But unfortunately people are not always aware of these rights. I hope that things will change with time and that people will be fully acquainted with their rights and that by then all obstacles to the free movement of people from one Member State to another will have been eliminated. As for my personal experience, when travelling, for business or pleasure, I have never had any problems.

This year there will be many round tables, expert consultations and public forums on the topic of European future and Slovenian position taking place in Slovenia – what are your views on both of these issues?

I see these events as an important contribution to the active participation of European citizens, as they give them the possibility to express their opinions on the future of their country and also of the EU. One of the activities of the European year of citizens is the Citizen's dialogues that are taking place in different cities around the EU. I participated in one in Pisa, where I was pleased to have the opportunity to exchange views with Italian citizens in particular on the sustainable use of resources, on the implementation of environmental legislation and also on more general

institutional issues. I participated in the Citizen's dialogue that took place in Ljubljana on 9 May, where we discussed in addition to the future of the EU, also about ways out of the economic and financial crisis which are consistent with environmental preservation. It was a great pleasure for me to participate in this discussion.

This is already your second function as the Member of European Commission. Could you compare the two portfolios and mandates? During your first mandate you said that the European Commission does not have a clear strategy and does not dedicate an equal attention to economic, social and environmental areas. Approaching the end of your mandate, can you already summarize your contribution to the Commission's strategy?

Let me start with the differences between the two portfolios. Science and research was more about managing the EU science and research budget, which is very large, and less about legislation and policy creation, while the environment is quite the opposite. Around 80% of all nationally applicable legislation has its origins at the EU level, while the LIFE+ programme which is directly managed by my services is relatively modest. As for the points they have in common, the fact that the public is positive and very interested in both, science and environment, is certainly helpful in policy delivery and implementation. Science and research covers different areas, from environment, to agriculture, to health, to transport, etc. What is important in the area of environment is to integrate environmental concerns in all the other policy areas, such as agriculture, fisheries, transport, industry etc. Many measures, which have an

EU Citizenship gives all citizens the same rights regardless of their nationality, and citizens use these rights on a daily basis across the EU. Europeans for example benefit from increased protection for cross-border purchases, guaranteed healthcare in other EU Member States through the European Health Insurance Card and cheaper roaming charges all thanks to European legislation. But unfortunately people are not always aware of these rights.

Dr Janez Potočnik, Member of the EC in charge of Environment, travelled to Pisa to participate in one of the meetings with the citizens from the whole European Union (the «Citizens' Dialogue»), to discuss with them the sustainable use of resources. The debate was moderated by Federico Taddia, Italian journalist and TV host.



Photo: Copyright EU

The benefits of the enlargement process are well known. Previous enlargements of the EU have brought political, social and economic benefits to many. And such benefits can be expected to happen also with the imminent accession of Croatia.

important impact on the environment, are in the hands of my colleagues, which means, that during this mandate I work even more closely with all of my colleagues to ensure that environmental concerns are integrated in all policy areas. I'm also doing my best to ensure that each year more and more measures supporting environmental protection are also integrated in the so-called "EU Semester", the process in the frame of which the economic policy of the EU is being coordinated. We still have a lot of work ahead of us before we will be able to say that environmental and economic policies would walk hand in hand. Slowly, but steadily we are moving in the right direction. Basically what I am trying to do during this mandate is to raise awareness on the importance of environmental issues for our future sustainable growth and prosperity, also as an important part of the solution to this economic and financial crisis.

Croatia will become the EU member in July. Could you describe the main benefits of Croatian membership for EU and Slovenia?

The benefits of the enlargement process are well known. Previous enlargements of the EU have brought political, social and economic benefits to many. And such benefits can be expected to happen also with the imminent accession of Croatia.

Enlargement has served as an anchor of stability and regional cooperation, which is in the case of Croatia particularly important. The country's role in the region is also extremely important as it will give a positive message to the rest of the Western Balkan. And again as it was with previous enlargements, the zone of peace, stability and prosperity in Europe will improve the life all of its peoples.

Regarding the benefits for Slovenia, the countries are already closely cooperating, but with Croatia joining the EU some of the still existing obstacles will be removed, especially in economic terms. It will also ease the life of people, especially people living on both sides of the borders and offer new opportunities for cooperation. We will finally be again the neighbours connected, not divided by the border.

Enlargement brings new challenges for the EU. Do you think that the EU managed to solve any of the problems which you were pointing to during your first mandate (lack of enforcement of institutional reforms, coping with globalization and aging population) and does the institutional arrangement ensure EU clear strategy of functioning? For example, does the EU have a body that takes care for policy coherence (economic, social and environmental)?

The issues that you are men-

tioning are not simple and cannot be solved during one or two mandates. Two of the issues – globalisation and the ageing of the population are also global problems and we need to find solutions not only at EU level but also globally. For me a global transition to a green economy is a very important part of the solution. Pressures on natural resources, such as water, land, oceans, biodiversity and ecosystems, will be the most significant limiting factor on our ability to grow and provide higher living standards, everywhere in the world. Using our resources in a more efficient way does not only protect the environment, but it also ensures competitiveness, long-term prosperity, economic growth and job creation. In the EU we are of course working on this. For example recently we adopted the single market for green products initiative – exploring methodology for environmental footprint for products and organisations and a Blueprint on water to safeguard European water resources. We are currently working on a comprehensive review of our air quality policies and initiatives for sustainable food and sustainable buildings. We were also actively engaged in the European Semester process through recommendations to Member States for shifting taxes from labour to environment and pollution (currently this involves 12 Member States) and



Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA

preparing the same approach to start phasing out Environmentally Harmful Substances this year. We have established the high level Resource Efficiency Platform to politically steer the entire process. Agreeing on resource efficiency indicators and potential targets remains a key priority. I'm also systematically engaging with all my colleagues in the Commission to contribute to all proposals that are important to improve resource efficiency. Working together is the best way to ensure policy coherence and in the Commission the process is organised in a way that a joint ownership is guaranteed. But I do believe that generally our society is too much based on short term logic, which is dominating all our systems, be it political or economic. It is of fundamental importance that our data collection, reporting systems, rewarding mechanisms, decision making processes... are organised in a way to address longer term challenges and ensure better policy coherence. I'm convinced that one cannot

manage the world of the 21st Century without taking into account the longer term picture and consequences.

We should soon see the end of negotiations on the new multi-annual financial framework. Will this be the document which will ensure coherence of EU policies?

Obviously this is not the budget we hoped for. But there are many reasons for this: many countries in the EU are going through a difficult economic situation. Slovenians can feel it at home too: unemployment is growing, economic growth is sluggish, and many companies are struggling. The European Commission originally proposed an ambitious budget, based on a freeze on 2013, which could help better address some of Europe's current economic problems. The deal proposed by Member States is less ambitious but it can still be an important catalyst to help deliver our major priorities. We will still have a decent amount of funding also for Slovenian regions and businesses.

The next 7 year financial framework reflects the EU priorities: in addition to the traditional policies such as agriculture and cohesion, the EU will also invest in supporting a more innovative, better connected Europe. I am also glad, that the next budget links for instance environmental and climate change issues with other policies. Once the budget is approved we will have better tools to make our policies more coherent and more effective for EU citizens. This is the key, as the EU budget, often remains the main source of public investment in many Member States, which in the current times of crisis is particularly important.

Ownership of water resources has recently been a subject of many warnings in Slovenia as well, especially from civil society and the NGOs. You have been also many times explaining – Facebook included – what are Commission's intentions concerning this topic. Is the public already convinced that private undertakers will not get

Cankarjev Dom, Ljubljana, Citizen's dialogue.

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Photo: Nebojša Tajčič/STA

Acknowledging the importance of water, the Commission made sure that its proposal for a Directive on the award of concession contracts fully recognises and supports the autonomy of local authorities regarding the provision and organisation of services of general economic interest, including water.

concessions for fresh water resources?

It is difficult to reply to this question. You would have to ask the public. What is important in this case is to understand the purpose of the Directive. The Commission has a neutral position on the public or private ownership of water resources. Article 345 of the Lisbon Treaty is clear: "The Treaties shall in no way prejudice the rules in Member States governing the system of property ownership." For cases where a public authority decides to provide services through a private economic operator, the Commission has proposed rules that will contribute to transparency and effectiveness in the spending of public money by enabling public authorities to make better choices.

Acknowledging the importance of water, the Commission made sure that its proposal for a Directive on the award of concession contracts fully recognises and supports the autonomy of local authorities regarding the provision and organisation of services of general economic interest, in-

cluding water. Public authorities will, at all times, remain free to choose whether they provide the services directly or via a third party, notably a private economic operator. The proposed Directive will therefore not lead, under any circumstances, to imposed privatisation of water services. Water is one of our most precious resources and a lot of already existing EU legislation and policies we design are there to protect it. The Commission fully recognises and supports the UN human right to water and sanitation and also acknowledges that clean drinking water and sanitation are essential to the realisation of all human rights. We were actively advocating that also a year ago during the last Rio+20 Summit. The EU provides almost EUR 400 million per year, targeting some 35 partner countries, helping to build infrastructure for drinking water and waste water systems worldwide.

Unfortunately your "provocation" of European citizens to stop using their private cars temporarily in exchange for your singing performance as a

reward did not succeed. What else do you plan to do in the Commission to get their attention?

I would not say that it did not succeed. It had huge media impact and responses from all over Europe. I even received messages from people outside the European Union. In my opinion it did obtain the results we hoped for. The initiative contributed to reopening the discussion about how we can best protect the environment by changing our everyday behaviour. The fact that only something over 500 people accepted the challenge shows that this is difficult but that there are people willing to do something about it, which for me is very positive. I will obviously not sing, but to contribute to the willingness expressed I will match to those that accepted the challenge, and not to use my car for a week. Maybe some people will say that this does not mean much, but every little action counts. Slowly but steadily we are changing our minds in the direction that helps to protect the environment and safeguard our own future.

The European Union is made of its citizens and for its citizens

On 18 January, in the European Year of Citizens, TV Slovenia began broadcasting a new show on the importance of the single EU market, SLOVENCI EVROPEJCI (Slovenians Europeans), and an informative documentary series about the sufficient

supply of safe food, SADOVI EVROPE (Fruits of Europe). My colleagues taking part in the preparations of the show are: Anja Šter, Andreja Gregorič, Tanja Rosandič, Igor Krmelj and Majda Juvan.

Photo: Štane Sreten



Mojca Mavec is a popular Slovenian journalist and TV host. After taking her degree in journalism and Hispanic studies, she joined the national television (RTV Slovenia), where she still works today.

ed a French confectioner who found a job in Ljubljana with the help of EURES.

The show is filmed in Slovenia and in other EU countries, because, after all, this is an opportunity to learn about various best practices abroad.

Through personal stories of the citizens, we provide answers to everyday questions on sufficient supply of safe food in the series FRUITS OF EUROPE. In recent years, the trust of consumers in food safety has been constantly undermined, also due to scandals such as the recent one over horse meat. If we consider the fact that Slovenia imports food as it cannot produce enough, the topics on supply and the awareness of where food comes from and how it is produced are even more important. In the first

show, we presented the story of a young mother who was concerned about whether the EU also monitors materials which come into contact with food. And so we visited a Slovenian laboratory to witness analyses of caps, spoons, kitchenware and other materials that come into contact with food. We are also trying to find best practices from the Slovenian environment. One of these was from the Sora Plain, where the municipalities and local communities gathered in their attempt to produce as much of their own good-quality food as possible. Local farmers are encouraged to grow organic food and expert lectures are also organised. Children maintain their own orchards and organic gardens, and their latest achievement is a community garden where local residents can learn about permaculture.

The broadcasts to communicate European content are made in a partnership comprising the European Commission, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and the European Parliament and with the help of other European institutions.

The show SLOVENIA and EUROPE deals with everyday issues of European citizens, with regard to the single EU market, which is one of the greatest achievements of the European Union. The Member States have gradually removed obstacles to trade and free competition, but what does that mean for our everyday lives? What are the employment opportunities in other states? Where can we go if we wish to go on a student exchange abroad? How can Slovenian citizens register their car if they move to another Member State, or likewise

if a foreigner comes to Slovenia? Each story is a point of reference for the studio section of the show, where we thoroughly explain all the options with the help of an expert and take calls from viewers.

Topics are chosen according to their current relevance and some are even suggested by viewers. We were surprised at the response to the first broadcast, in which we discussed the options for conducting business in another Member State. We received many calls and questions and we repeatedly discovered how little we are aware of the opportunities the European Union offers. Another topical issue was finding employment abroad, when we introduced EURES, the European Job Mobility Portal, which is underused in Slovenia, but functions well abroad. We present-



Photo: Archives of RTV Slovenia

Filming documentary series about the sufficient supply of safe food, SADOVI EVROPE (Fruits of Europe).

Corporate social responsibility

BTC and Informa Echo awarded for socially responsible entrepreneurial practices

Respected and successful companies in Slovenia are becoming increasingly interested in corporate social responsibility, as they follow global trends and make corporate social responsibility an important part of their operations. This term is understood not only

to mean altruism and sponsorship, but also good business relations between suppliers and customers, environmental protection, good relations with employees (which are the driving force and main capital of a company), relations with the community, etc.



Photo: Nebojša Težić/STA

Research has shown that foreign companies are much more engaged in corporate social responsibility than in Slovenia. They invest in education, hire advisors and create special jobs. Practice shows that investing in corporate social responsibility increases employees' motivation and loyalty to a company and improves business relations, while customers find the products of such companies more attractive.

The main question for company managers in implementing corporate social responsibility is what their long-term strategies are. Corporate social responsibility is a guarantee of success, competitiveness and existence in the market in the long run. The number of entries for the first European Corporate Social Responsibility Award in Slovenia, which included as many as eighteen companies, is evidence that Slovenian companies are

becoming more active in this field.

The winners of the first European Corporate Social Responsibility Award in Slovenia are the companies BTC and Informa Echo. The latter received the award in the SME category for its project Inicijativa Energija si, a campaign on the efficient use of energy and renewables. The winning project in the large company category is the proj-

ect "BTC City and women's ski jumping". The company BTC, as a long-time sponsor and supporter of a ski and ski jumping club, Ljubno BTC, has been supporting the organisation of the Women's Ski Jumping World Cup in Slovenia and has become the main sponsor of the two ski jumping events in Ljubno ob Savinji, the organisers said at the award ceremony.

Meanwhile, the project Inicia-

tiva Energija si is a result of a synergy model for promoting the efficient use of energy and renewable sources of energy, which coordinates and connects business, individual and social interests.

According to the organisers, both award winners are also re-

ipients of the European award, and their representatives will attend the award ceremony organised by the European Commission on 25 June 2013 in Brussels. The project is co-financed by the European Commission and aimed at expanding and increasing the recognisability of best practices in the area of

corporate social responsibility in Europe, the organisers explained.

Companies cooperating with at least one non-corporate stakeholder were able to apply for the competition. A total of eighteen Slovenian companies applied. Eleven of them competed in

the SME category, while seven competed in the large company category.

The awards were presented to the winners at an event at the Faculty of Economics in Ljubljana by the Network for Corporate Social Responsibility Slovenia and the Ekvilib Institute.



Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA

Jože Mermal, President of the Management Board of BTC d.d.:

Socially responsible conduct is part of a wider strategy of sustainable development which has been systematically implemented by BTC for a number of years and which is part of the company's annual business plans. One has to believe both in sustainable development and corporate social responsibility; empty words in this area mean nothing. If you believe in something, you also believe that you can change big things. One such project in which BTC believes is sponsoring and assisting in the organisation of the Women's

Ski Jumping World Cup event, which took place this year in Ljubno ob Savinji for the second time. The organisation of the competition is extremely important for the development of this sport both in the world and in Slovenia, and it is even more important that this enables women ski jumpers to participate for the first time at the 2014 Winter Olympic Games, which will take place in Sochi in Russia. This is why BTC is very happy that the entire project, as well as the work and energy invested both in organising and promoting ski jumping events to a wider Slovenian public, has also been recognised at the

European level. After all, our success was confirmed by the fact that more than 9,000 fans showed up in Ljubno at the two-day event for the best female ski jumpers in the world, which is a new milestone for Ljubno in the Women's Ski Jumping World Cup. And more than half a million viewers watched the competition on television.

I personally think that the Slovenian economy does a lot in the field of corporate social responsibility. Slovenian companies are important supporters of cultural, sporting, educational and humanitarian organisations. I think that the business

sector is well aware of the importance of such connections with the social environment in which we live and work and that depending on their capacities, companies pursue their mission in this respect to a large extent. It is probably true that there would be no top-level sport or, for example, none of the major cultural events we can see in Slovenia, without active assistance from companies. Such activities not only produce business results, but also add value to a company, while at the same time significantly contributing to raising our society as a whole to a higher level. And this is very important.

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



Rajko Dolinšek, Director of Informa Echo:

We treat the social and natural environment as an equal interest group in every project. This way of thinking and doing business is also being encouraged in our partners. This is the essence of the Synergistic Business Model, which we developed under the principle of harmonising motives, needs and interests.

In promoting the efficient use of energy and use of renewables, which is the main activity of the Informa Echo agency, we have developed three programmes to harmonise the key areas of interest in each project. The Sinergija network of business and social advantages connects business interests. The campaign "Energija si, bodi učinkovit" (You Are Energy, Be Efficient), which we developed for the HSE energy company, connects the interests of electricity consumers, while the 'Survey on the energy efficiency of Slovenia – REUS' shows trends in the market and readiness for change of electricity consumers.

The awareness in principle of the importance of socially responsible conduct is becoming increasingly noticeable both in Slovenia and in the world. In business practice, the narrow interests of profit usually prevail. Companies accept the corporate social responsibility model when they recognise that the market responds to such an approach. It is therefore important to raise the awareness of final

consumers and thereby shape the market.

The comprehensive approach to business that we have developed through the years and successfully applied in practice is innovative both in Slovenia and the world.

Energy companies and expert institutions, which are our important partners, are becoming more open to innovative approaches to communication due to increasing competitiveness. The programmes that we develop enable companies to shape and change the market. Good examples of support for socially responsible conduct, and at the same time of an innovative approach to marketing, are the partnership pages of the on-line energy consulting portal www.Porabimanj.si. Three partnership pages have already been opened (Petrol, HSE, Energija plus), while three more are being prepared.

Our business operations are based on promoting corporate social responsibility. The fact that we have been present in the market for almost a quarter of a century and carried out more than 30 different campaigns in the last seven years, which have followed, in addition to clearly emphasised social objectives, the commercial interests of our investors, proves that this is possible, and at the same time indicates a future trend in business development. Only in the last five years, we have cooperated with more than eighty companies.



Alen Najdenovski, President of the Network for Corporate Social Responsibility Slovenia and **Dr Adriana Rejc Buhovac**, President of the Commission which assessed the projects, also commented on the awards received by BTC and Informa Echo.

With a refined and carefully executed plan, sponsorship by the company BTC (also known in other sports) has grown into a socially responsible project with effects at the global level. BTC and their partners took on an extremely difficult task: to raise the recognisability of a sport as specific as women's ski jumping, which for years was a neglected Nordic discipline, to the level of men's ski jumping. This has been done in Slovenia. The ratings of this year's final event in Ljubno were the same as the ratings of the men's World Cup event at the Planica ski jumping hill. The employees attracted a lot of sponsors and helped to organise and realise the FIS World Cup competition in women's ski jumping in the small town of Ljubno ob Savinji in 2012 and 2013.

Meanwhile, the Iniciativa Energija si project of the company INFORMA ECHO d.o.o. is a result of a synergy model for promoting the efficient use of energy and renewable sources of energy, which coordinates and connects business, individual and social interests. "The project is unique in several ways. It is not



only the second success story of this year's competition, but also by far the most cohesive, and in terms of social effects, a strong call for socially responsible conduct in the fields of energy, efficient energy use and other environmental issues. The award jury was impressed by the circle of partners and the strength of their cooperation, which has already started to change the behaviour of Slovenians and stakeholders in energy and related industries with a series of organisational solutions (the Sinergija network, the 'Energija si, bodi učinkovit' campaign), including the REUS survey", added Dr Adriana Rejc Buhovac in her speech about the award-winning project in the SME category.

Both award-winning projects also had to produce positive effects on business operations, with this category contributing 30 per cent of the overall mark. Positive effects on business operations are, for example, effects on employment, the ability to retain and motivate employees and ensure their skills, an improved reputation among stakeholders and consumers, the development of new networks, business connections, processes, ideas or products, reduction of process costs, etc. Both award-winning projects thus presented proof of the positive effects of the project on the company's business operations in addition to the social effects.

Photo: Naboljisa Tejlic/STA

Photo: Naboljisa Tejlic/STA

Photo: Archives of Corenija d.d.

Franjo Bobinac

Our success is proven by many international professional awards such as the Red Dot



Franjo Bobinac, born 1958 in Celje. He graduated in 1982 from the Faculty of Economics at the University of Ljubljana, in international economic relations. In 1997, he concluded his MBA at the École Supérieure de Commerce in Paris.

He started his professional career at the Emo Celje company, and after three years of work, in 1986, he started working at Gorenje Commerce as an assistant to the exports director. After four years, he was appointed exports director at the Gorenje Gospodinski aparati (Gorenje Household Appliances) company, and in 1991 he was appointed marketing director. He worked as the general director of Gorenje's sales company in France from 1993 to 1998. On 1 March 1998 he was appointed member of the temporary management board and then member of the management board for the sales and marketing divisions. In 2003, he was appointed president of the management board of Gorenje for the first time. He will start his third term of office on 19 July 2013.

He occasionally lectures at IEDC - Bled School of Management and at the Faculty of Economics at the University of Ljubljana. He is also a visiting professor at the Jožef Stefan International Postgraduate School. He received the decoration of the French National Order of Merit and he the award granted by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia for exceptional achievements in 2007 as well as the Janez Vajkard Valvasor medal for economists, awarded by the Jožef Stefan International Postgraduate School.



Photo: Tamnino Petelinšek/SIPA

The Gorenje Group is one of the leading European home appliances producers with more than sixty years in business. With technologically advanced and energy-efficient household appliances and the best designs under the following brands: Gorenje, Gorenje+, Asko, Atag, Pelgrim, Mora, Etna, Körting and Upo, Gorenje is improving the quality of life of the people who buy its products in ninety countries worldwide. It generates 95 per cent of all revenue abroad and is therefore the largest Slovenian exporter.

The business environment is often unpredictable. Last year, the Gorenje Group started implementing its Strategic Plan 2012-2015. What are the key activities included in that plan?

We aim to start the year 2015 in the best possible condition in terms of sales, finance and organisation. For this purpose we are carrying out various activities: restructure the production, moving it to more cost-effective locations; reduce our debts, strengthen our presence in global markets and develop new products. In order to achieve our strategic goals, we are upgrading corporate governance and human resource development, so we introduced our own corporate university.

How is Gorenje realising the vision of becoming the most original and sustainable development and design-oriented producer of household appliances?

The household appliances branch is an extremely mature industrial branch. The supply has exceeded demand for sev-

eral years now, and competition is even stronger, so it is very important to remain different and recognisable among the multitude of brands. Differentiation is built on design and innovation. Our success is proven by many international professional awards such as the Red Dot.

Which brands does Gorenje sell in world markets?

Already 10 years ago almost all revenue was generated under the Gorenje trademark. We have managed to acquire several other companies, thus evolving a portfolio of brands which are categorised in various price classes and can be marketed in different markets. The Gorenje trademark, which is present in most countries, today represents 70 per cent of sales, and we also sell Asko, Mora, Atag and other brands. For the Asko brand, which we are developing as a premium global brand that competes with the best players in the market, we plan to account for 20 per cent of our entire sales in the next few years.

The fundamental goal of the Gorenje Group in its financial operations was to reduce debt and to restructure it in 2012. Did you achieve the desired results?

Yes. Last year, total debt was reduced by more than EUR 50 million, so we managed to end the year with the lowest level of debt since the outbreak of the world economic crisis. We are successfully continuing these debt-related activities.

The most recent move of Gorenje was the issue of commercial papers. What was your intention or goal?

We decided to issue commercial papers in order to disperse our financing sources and expand the circle of financiers, as well as to partially distance ourselves from excessive exposure to unstable banking sector in a large part of Europe. The issue of commercial papers also regulates fluctuations in the free flow of cash during the year, since historically most cash flow is generated in the second half of the year.

Who are the interested investors?

We mostly addressed Slovenian investors. Fifty-four investors paid a total nominal value of EUR 21 million for commercial papers.

You are planning to increase the capital of Gorenje. Is that a necessary measure?

A few months ago, we predicted the possibility of recapitalisation by approximately EUR 40 million. I am not claiming that the recapitalisation is necessary. Sometimes, a company increases its capital because it simply cannot handle the situation anymore. However, Gorenje is not in such a situation, but we are trying to be proactive, so that we do not find ourselves in a situation where we depend excessively on banks. We cooperate well with SID bank, which is one of the rare Slovenian banking institutions that is very productive in supporting investments in development, as well as exports and risk insurance. SID bank is therefore very important for conquering new markets. Fortunately, Gorenje does not have many loans from other Slovenian banks. The largest banking groups we cooperate with are foreign banking groups.

Last year Gorenje was Slovenia's largest and most successful exporter among the companies. What are the prospects for 2013?

We have been exporting products abroad since the early 1960s, and we have been building our sales network since the beginning of the 1970s. We generate 95 per cent of our revenue outside Slovenia. We are very proud of the title of the largest Slovenian exporter, which was first awarded to our company in 2011, and considering this year's plans, we are convinced we will retain that title.

You have reduced costs by moving your manufacturing plant from Sweden to Slovenia. Before that you also closed a plant in Finland. Has anything been preserved in Sweden?

We are closing the factory in Sweden, but we will preserve

the development division as well as our marketing and sales teams. We will continue to manufacture washing, drying and dishwashing machines, which have been manufactured in Sweden so far, in Slovenia.

Gorenje's motto is 'People Are the Key'. How does this combine with the economic crisis, reducing costs etc.?

We have not only been facing demanding business circumstances in markets for the past few years, but also internal strategic changes which enable the long-term development of Gorenje. We could not have implemented all changes without the cooperation and trust of all co-workers in Slovenia and abroad, as well as the management team in our company. Gorenje employees are the motor that drives Gorenje forward.

In which markets have you achieved most growth?

Our aim is to achieve growth mostly in markets which are very important for our operations. These are, for instance Russia and Germany, where we have significantly increased sales in the past few years, and where today we generate more than EUR 100 million in revenue. The Netherlands is also one of our key markets, where we have recorded more than EUR 100 million in revenue per year. And we also focus on Central and Southeast European markets, where consumers have known us for several years, and in some of these markets we hold the leading market share in household appliances. Outside Europe, we have also seen quite considerable potential for higher sales in Australia, and we want to double revenue in three years; thus Australia will join markets where we already generate more than EUR 100 million revenue.

Which other world markets are interesting for Gorenje? A general opinion is that Slovenian companies only weakly perceive and notice opportunities.

Our goal is to strengthen our presence in non-European markets by the end of the strategic period in 2015, and increase

revenue from the current EUR 100 million to EUR 150 million annually. The development of operations shows that we will be able to achieve this goal. We are counting on Near and Far East markets, where we have been expanding sales for several years, as well as on some former Soviet Union countries (e.g. Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan etc.), we have taken the first steps in Brazil by initiating cooperation with some kitchen studios. These are very large and remote markets, so we are entering them gradually, and our goal is oriented to selected metropolises and consumers with higher purchasing power. At the moment, Australia is undoubtedly the most promising non-European market.

How successful is Gorenje in EU Member States?

Europe is our local market and we are present in practically all EU Member States. We are strong in Germany, where we are the most popular foreign household appliance brand among the consumers. Therefore, we directly follow the strong German competition. It is interesting that we achieve very good results in Internet sales in Germany, which is the largest European household appliances market. Some 12 per cent of all refrigerators sold online in Germany are manufactured by Gorenje.

For which product groups do you expect the largest growth? Are you planning to launch new products this year?

We have a large portfolio of household products, including large and small domestic appliances as well as heating systems and kitchen furniture. This year, we are planning the highest sales growth in sales of cooking appliances; however, we would also like to achieve growth in other product groups, so we are introducing new products this year, such as a new generation of refrigerators IonGeneration, a series of functional appliances which promote healthy lifestyle etc.

Gorenje has received the Red Dot Design Award several times, including this year. How much do you invest in design and who do you work with?

We decided to issue commercial papers in order to disperse our financing sources and expand the circle of financiers, as well as to partially distance ourselves from excessive exposure to unstable banking sector in a large part of Europe.

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Photo: Archives of Gorenje d.d.



The fundamental activities of the Group are the development, design, production and sale of large and small household appliances, heating, ventilation and air-conditioning devices, as well as kitchen furniture. In 2015, the core activity of the company will account for approximately 90 per cent of the operations of the Gorenje Group.

Design presents an inseparable part of development activities. We have cooperated with some of world most renowned industrial designers: Paolo Pininfarina, Karim Rashid, Ora-Ito etc. This year, we are starting to work with another famous designer, but his name must remain secret for now. I would like to point out that most of Gorenje's appliances are the result of the knowledge and experience of our own designer team. We have been developing our design work at Gorenje for fifty years, and we truly have a lot of experience and knowledge in this area. We are the only Slovenian company marketing our products with own design in ninety markets.

Foreign investors hold quite a substantial stake in Gorenje and your supervisory board is also quite international. How does the presence of foreigners affect the company?

Gorenje is not only a large exporter but also an international group of companies, since 95 per cent of our consumers are foreign buyers, one third of employees work outside Slo-



Photo: Archives of Gorenje d.d.

venia and 30 per cent of shares are owned by foreigners. Three out of nine members of the supervisory board - which is also an important consultant to the management board - come from an international environment. The new ownership structure, mostly with the entry of International Finance Corporation (IFC), has brought some positive initiatives and even more awareness that we are working in a global environment and that we have to operate according to the highest international standards. We have well-established corporate governance, which in my opinion is the best in Slovenia. The governing is comprised of the management and supervisory boards as well as numerous committees and the entire network of more than seventy sales and manufacturing companies at home and abroad, which is systematically supervised and managed via management and supervisory boards as well as business councils.

You are also active as a member of the presidential board of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia. What is your

role and mission in the Chamber?

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia as a representative of business is an important discussion partner for the government, political parties and the union, which are all seeking quality solutions for Slovenia's long-term development. I am deeply honoured to be part of this process as a member of the presidential board of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia.

You have been the President of the Management Board since 2003 and your term of office for the period ending in 2018 was confirmed by the Supervisory Board of Gorenje at the end of last year. So, do you have many plans?

The term of office as the President of the Management Board, which I will start in July 2013, is already my third as the manager of Gorenje. Currently, we are in the middle of an extensive and extremely demanding strategic restructuring of the Gorenje Group. Therefore, we most certainly do not lack any challenges and plans.

It began with footage from the family garden...

Photo: Archives of Slovenska Kinoteka



Kekec (1951) was followed up with Srečno, Kekec! (Good Luck, Kekec!, 1963) and Kekčeve ukane (Kekec's Tricks, 1968). Kekec was the first Slovenian film to win an international award, a Golden Lion in the category of films for youth at the 16th Venice Film Festival. Srečno, Kekec! was the first Slovenian film in colour. Two negative characters, Pehta and Bedanec, feature in the Kekec films alongside the positive characters Kekec, Mojca, Kosobrin in Rožle.

The oldest preserved films made in Slovenia are In the Family Garden (1906), Dismissal from Mass in Ljutomer (1905) and Fair in Ljutomer (1905), which were made by a lawyer, Karol Grossman, at the beginning of the 20th century and which hold a mythical status as the start of Slovenian film. However, the anthology Zgodovina filma na Slovenskem 1896 - 2011 (History of Slovenian Cinema 1896 - 2011) by Zdenko Vrdlovec begins even earlier - at the end of the 19th century - when the Slovenian audience had their first contact with the world of motion pictures at a film screening in Maribor. The first three cinemas opened in Ljubljana in 1907, and cinema then spread throughout the country before

the First World War. The number of cinemas gradually grew after the First World War, and just before the Second World War, the first distribution companies were established and the first well-equipped film company, Emona Film, with sound recording, editing and subtitling equipment. It was only under the Kingdom of Yugoslavia that the first feature films were made in Slovenia: V kraljestvu Zlatoroga (In the Realm of Gold-horn, 1931) and Triglavske strmine (The Slopes of Triglav, 1932), which are fundamental works featuring Mt Triglav as the central symbol of Slovenia.

Cinematography began to develop in socialist Yugoslavia after 1945. The production com-



Photo: Archives of Slovenska Kinoteka

Sreča na vrvici (Happiness on a Leash) is a Slovenian film for youth made in 1977 and based on the eponymous novel by Vitan Mal. The main character is a boy called Matic, who lives in a residential area of Ljubljana. His father is currently working in Libya and his mother is very busy worrying and does not have a lot of time to spend with her son. A dog becomes Matic's best friend. And with the dog, come interesting mishaps and adventures.

pany Triglav Film established in 1946 produced the first Slovenian full-length feature, an epic on the national liberation struggle, Na svoji zemlji (On Our Own Land) by director France Štiglic, which reached an audience of almost 500,000 and became a hit. The National liberation struggle was the most frequent theme in the decades that followed.

In the 1950s, Slovenian film produced a hero called Kekec. The film was a huge success, and also sold around the world. It was directed by Jože Gale, one of the few young Partisans who became directors. The Czech director, František Čap, made some of the most popular Slovenian films: Vesna (1953) and Ne čakaj na

The oldest preserved films recorded in Slovenia are In the Family Garden, Dismissal from Mass in Ljutomer and Fair in Ljutomer, which were made by a lawyer, Karol Grossman, at the beginning of the 20th century and which hold a mythical status as the start of Slovenian film.

The period after Slovenian independence brought about numerous crises in Slovenian cinema. Slovenian film fell victim to recession; only two films a year were made in the 1990s, with no major successes.

maj (Don't Whisper, 1957), with which he introduced the genre of light urban comedy to Slovenian cinema. The film became a subject of critical and philosophical interest in the 1960s, but the reviews were often crushing. New names appeared in Slovenian cinema: in his first film, Ples v dežju (Dance in the Rain), Boštjan Hladnik introduced the rudiments of film modernism.

Samorastniki (Self-Sown, 1963) based on a short story by Prežihov Voranc, was the last film made by Triglav Film. Slovenian films were successful in Yugoslav cinemas in that period and also sold well abroad. Extremely successful with many viewers were films for youth,

through which Slovenian film discussed modern themes. The 1980s, especially the second half, are considered a less fortunate period for Slovenian film. Attendance fell drastically due to the introduction of video stores and, the general opinion that domestic films were not attractive.

The period after Slovenian independence brought about numerous crises in Slovenian cinema. The medium fell victim to recession; only two films a year were made in the 1990s, with no major successes. The new generation of directors (Damjan Kozole, Andrej Košak, Jan Cvitkovič, Miha Hočevar and others) broke another tradition. By 1990, half of the films were

based on literary works, after which literature only seldom served as the basis for a film. In recent years, the most successful films have been V lero (Idle Running) by Janez Burger, Zadnja večerja (The Last Supper) by Vojko Anzeljc, Jebiga (Fuck It) by Miha Hočevar, Kruh in mleko (Bread and Milk) by Jan Cvitkovič, Pod njenim oknom (Under Her Window) by Metod Pevec, Kajmak in marmelada (Kajmak and Marmalade) by Branko Djurič-Duro, Petelinji zajtrk (Rooster's Breakfast) by Marko Naberšnik, Pokrajina št. 2 (Landscape No. 2) by Vinko Möderndorfer, Gremo mi po svoje (Going Our Way) by Miha Hočevar and Šanghaj (Shanghai Gypsy) by Marko Naberšnik.

As a tribute to Slovenian film, an exhibition on Niko Matul, one of the most esteemed artists in Slovenian cinema, opened on 14 May in Jakopič Gallery. As a set designer, Matul worked on many Slovenian films which are imprinted in our collective memory as nostalgic, breakthrough and exceptional achievements in the field of motion pictures.

Niko Matul's films include Ne čakaj na maj (Don't Whisper),

Veselica (The Party), Ples v dežju (Dance in the Rain), Kekčeve ukane (Kekec's Tricks), Cvetje v jeseni (Flowers in the Fall), Pastirci (Little Shepherds), Strah (Fear), Vdovstvo Karoline Žašler (The Widowhood of Karolina Žašler), Sreča na vrvi (Happiness on a Leash), To so gadi (Real Pests!), Moj ata, socialistični kulak (My Dad, the Socialist Kulak) and many others. The exhibition in Jakopič Gallery is open until 1 September 2013.

Photo: Archives of Slovenska Kinoteka



Photo: Archives of Slovenska Kinoteka



With his first film in 1961, Dance in the Rain, Boštjan Hladnik undoubtedly paved the way for the new Slovenian and also Yugoslav cinema. The film features one of the best Slovenian actresses of all times, Duša Počkaj, as the ruined red-haired actress Maruša, who like Gloria Swanson in Sunset Boulevard, dreams that she is still beautiful and young. Dance in the Rain is still considered probably the only Slovenian film noir, an artistic masterpiece, which nevertheless does not neglect classic approaches to film.



Photo: Archives of Slovenska Kinoteka

VLADIMIR BARTOL

The writer who introduced the Orient to Europe

This year we celebrate the 110th anniversary of the birth of one of the most internationally acclaimed Slovenian authors, Vladimir Bartol. Due to his novel Alamut, some have called him 'the writer who introduced the Orient to Europe'.

Photo: Archives of theater Drama



Vladimir Bartol was born on 24 February 1903 into a middle-class family at Sveti Ivan in Trieste. His mother was Marica Nadlišek Bartol, a writer and the editor of the first Slovenian newspaper for women, Slovenka. His father Gregor was a post office worker. His parents had very liberal views, although Bartol's mother was also very religious. He was the third of seven children, all of whom received a very broad education. His mother introduced him to painting, and his father to science, which enabled him to expand his horizons in science and art. Bartol attended primary school and high school in Trieste. Later, the family moved to Ljubljana, where Bartol also graduated, studying geography and philosophy. He was strongly influenced by Sigmund Freud and his teachings. He began writing already as a student. In 1925, he graduated from the University of Ljubljana and later studied biol-

ogy, psychology and psychiatry at the Sorbonne, where he met Josip Vidmar, to whom Slovenian writers living in Paris gravitated. Numerous film studios have been interested in the famous Vladimir Bartol's novel for quite some time. The Sanje Publishing House, the holder of the international and film copyrights of Bartol's work, has finally reached an agreement with the accomplished French screenwriter and director Guillaume Martinez. Bartol based the plot of Alamut on historical events that took place in the 11th century in Persia. The main character is Hasan ibn Sabbah. This charismatic religious leader, whose name is still uttered with fear and respect in Iran, was a prophet of Allah; from behind the walls of his eagle's nest, Alamut Castle, he led a holy war against the Persian Empire. He opposed the powerful enemy with a small group of trained followers, Fedais, to whom he promised more for

their loyalty than ordinary mortals had ever been able to taste – with a key entrusted to him by Allah himself, he unlocked a door to another world for them – the paradise of the Koran. And once a person experiences real paradise, they will be willing to do anything to return. The thrilling events of the novel take place in the atmosphere of A Thousand and One Nights, where questions of human essence are strained to uncompromising and bewildering extremes. Alamut was first published in 1938; however, the world began to discover and appreciate its significance only fifty years later. A new edition is now published almost every year. So far, the novel has been published in 33 editions and eleven languages, and it still attracts attention: the most esteemed national and international media report about it, experts write about it and it is discussed on the Internet.



Vladimir Bartol

Photo: Personal Archives

Eurosong stage
HANNAH MANCINI
Straight into love



Photo: David Page

You've been living in Slovenia with your family for six years? And you are American? How would you describe yourself?

Yes, it is true. I moved to Slovenia with my family six years ago. I originally come from a town Durango in Colorado, but I moved to sunny Los Angeles, California when I was 19 years old. I wanted to follow my dream of becoming a singer. I was always determined to move from a small town and move to LA where I had more chances, paths to follow my dream. I worked as a waitress, nanny, but eventually I started singing and made a career that I am very proud of. I met my husband when I was 22 years old. My husband is Slovenian, but he and his family moved to the US when he was three years old. I have been in Slovenia prior to the move and I always enjoyed it here. When my husband got a business opportunity it was a logical step to pack and move here. The decision was easy, we had a young baby and the idea of raising her in Europe was one of the main reasons why this decision was not hard. Yes I think I am a typical American girl, but having lived here for six years I got the best of Slovenian character and I believe made a "great mix".

You are now focusing on creating music in Slovenia and you are known as singer in group Xequitiz. What kind of music do you make with them and who is in the band? (I would make a spin, say that you were in the band, but now you're focusing on Eurosong + Stella M).

I have been a part of Xequitiz for the last four years. I am very proud of this period of my career as I got a chance to work with amazing Slovenian artists, which also became my good and dear friends. But as always in life there comes time when we all feel we need to make a step forward and I therefore started a completely new project called Stella Mercury.

You also have experiences on the world stages right?

I do, yes. When I lived in the States I performed with numerous musicians and sang on world-renowned stages such as Radio City Music Hall in New York City, Universal Amphitheater and The To-

night Show with Jay Leno, which is one of the most famous and viewed TV shows in America. I also worked on Disney films and had a chance to work with amazingly talented and known artists and producers such as Todd Champan and Grammy winning producer, Larry Klein. I was a part of the group called Haute Chile, which was playing on huge stages opening for artists such as Sheryl Crow and Seal. I also toured with Latin superstar, Luis Miguel, five time Grammy winner. I am very happy and proud that I continued to work and collaborate with big, successful and talented artists in Slovenia, such as Umek, Mike Vale and Beltek. All of them are big around the world and are amazing artists on the electronic music scene.

So you were not afraid of the Eurosong stage?

No, I was not afraid. I have an enormous respect for Eurovision and everyone that ever stood on Eurovision stage. If you think of how many people watch the show on TV every year. It goes far beyond Europe. I am humble, I was extremely honored to be chosen to represent Slovenia and I did my best to show the world that Slovenia can do it. It's not just me, the team behind me that worked on the song is amazing and talented. My three producers Gregor Zemljic that I have been working with for years, Erik Margan and Matija Rodić have done an amazing job. Maestro joined me on stage as well, and it was a complete pleasure rehearsing with them.

The expectations from Slovenian public were big. How did this affect you and what kind of a goal did you set for yourself?

It is correct that the expectations were big. I'm disappointed, but we're moving on. It's cool. We've given it our best. I had big expectations for myself as well. As an artist (and I think also in other areas like sport, ... etc) you have to push yourself and go over the comfort zone, out of the box as we like to say. This is the way to grow, get better and go higher in any profession. Look at Tina Maze! She doesn't go for the second place; she always aims for the first one, right? And it is the

mindset that you have to have to go further and higher.

You presented the song Straight into Love on Eurosong. What is the message of the song?

Straight into Love is a modern electronic dance song with elements of dub step. It is a love song. It is about love prevailing over all materialistic goods, love being on top of it all. It is about being brave, believing in love and going straight into it without fear, without turns. Overall the song is very positive. I have been asked if this song represents me and how. When I look back on my life it actually really does. I moved half across the world for love! Love has a very important place in my life - I love my family, I love spending time with them, I love my friends and the time we spend together. As an artist you surround yourself with the things and people you love. And often you take the experiences, little unique moments and put it in a song. It is what makes our lives great. So yes, the song does represent me for sure.

What about the choreography?

We talked a lot about the choreography from the beginning of the Eurovision project. And because we had an electronic dance, dubstep song the choreography was even more important. I was very lucky that Slovenia has so many amazing, award winning dancers. It was actually hard for me to pick, because there are so many excellent dancers. We filmed a video and presented it and I am happy I worked with Maestro Dance Crew. I think they did an excellent job and they were a part of the show in Malmö.

Last year's representative Eva Boto was wearing a baroque style creation from David Matej Goljat, who dressed Maja Keuc a year before as well. Who you choose?

The fashion side is a big project within the Eurovision project indeed. I love fashion; it has always been one of my passions. As well as on the dance and choreography part of this project, I am very lucky to be living among creative people in fashion. I have been working with many Slovenian fashion designers and definitely have my favorites. It was really hard to choose one so I asked

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Slovenia is an amazing hidden place, a great place for my daughter to grow up into a young lady.

some of my favorite designers to send me their thoughts and ideas. In the end I have selected the dress of Jelena Proković, Serbian fashion designer.

Your style is in general a bit »American free« or extravagant?

Yes, I like to change my fashion, play with different eclectic styles. I have never been known for being extravagant in the way I dress. I usually match my clothes with special jewelry or one pieces that stands out. Again I am a huge fashion lover and I do follow fashion, but I tend not to become a fashion victim. Over the years I have adopted "my style" which makes me feel and look good. I like to dress up when I go out, I

put jeans on when I run around with my daughter, I wear sports gear when I go for a run to Rožnik. It all depends of the way I feel at a certain period. And as I said before I really enjoy Slovenian fashion scene. I think it is creative and getting very strong. I love working with established and young fashion designers.

Last question – how do you feel in Slovenia?

I am happy here. I really am. I do have moments when I miss my family back in America and I try to visit them as much as possible. Slovenia offers a great life. I find being small to be a great advantage. Everything is pristine, unique, ... I made some of

the best friendships here, met amazing people. I enjoy Ljubljana, the restaurants, bars, nightlife; I love weekend getaways to the coast, Kras, a quick jump to Trst for the best ice cream in the world. I do miss the opportunities that LA and America can offer to an artist, but of course I don't complain. I would never be able to go to Eurovision if I stayed there for instance. Slovenia is an amazing hidden place, a great place for my daughter to grow up into a young lady. And the fact that it is on the crossroad between east and west, north and south, it is pure joy to feel the mix of culture, culinary world, wine, ... It is an amazing place to live for sure.

Photo: David Page



Koper – a place of adventure

The pleasant Mediterranean town of Koper is hosting Group D in EuroBasket 2013, which includes the teams from Finland, Greece, Russia, Italy, Sweden and Turkey. The matches will be played in the 5,000-seater Bonifika Sports Hall. So let's see what the town hosting Group D has to offer.

Photo: Matej Vrančič/STO



Photo: Matej Vrančič/STO



Photo: Matej Vrančič/STO

Koper is a real Mediterranean gem surrounded by sea and hills which prides itself on its thousand-year history and modern image. Koper has developed from an ancient coastal Istrian settlement into a modern port and university town. Its picturesque old lanes, squares and palaces, testifying its remarkable past, still attract visitors, while the countryside enchants the most demanding gourmets with its excellent local wines, olive oil and superb cuisine. Today, Koper is a lively commercial and tourist town, developing holiday and sports tourism. It is the perfect destination for active holidays flavoured with culture, gastronomy, tradition and numerous events.

HISTORY WITHIN REACH

The history of this Mediterranean town close to the Italian border is colourful and rich. It is one of the oldest towns in Slovenia, which may be experienced when you walk across its magnificent main square – Tito Square. The square boasts the Praetorian Palace, renovated in 2001, which is also the town hall, and has preserved its original design. The Cathedral of the Assumption of Mary has one of the oldest working church bells in Slovenia, dating back to 1333. In Koper, you may also visit Koper Regional Museum or take a walk to Prešeren Square with the Muda Gate, the only remaining town gate, and the Baroque

Da Ponte Fountain dating to 1666. The street which takes you there is Čevljarska Street, which has for centuries been a centre for retailers and craftsmen. Also interesting to visitors is Taverna, a former salt warehouse, today a multi-purpose venue which hosts numerous events and which will be very lively during EuroBasket 2013.

A TOUCH OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

Koper enjoys a Mediterranean climate, and during the summer months, there is nothing more delightful than cooling off in the well-maintained bathing areas in the Adriatic Sea. One of the most popular bathing areas is located

Left: Venetian Lion on the Totto ex Gavardo Palace

Top right: Praetorian Palace displays the Venetian influence on Koper's history

Bottom right: Aerial view of Koper

only a few steps from the Bonifika Sports Hall, where the EuroBasket 2013 competition will unfold. The second is in Žusterna, where you can take advantage of the numerous water sports options, or spend leisurely days in Aquapark or the Wellness Centre. You can also spend your holiday in one of the hotels in nearby Ankaran, and enjoy pampering and spa treatments.

GASTRONOMY

You cannot leave the Slovenian region of Primorska without tast-

ing the vintage wines. A perfect experience should also include visiting one of the numerous wine cellars. The Vinakoper wine cellar, the largest wine cellar in Slovenian Istria, with the largest wooden wine barrel in Slovenia, is an excellent choice. Wine tasting may be accompanied by sampling olive oil produced in Slovenian Istria by an award-winning olive farmer. The offer of olive oil with Refosco and Malvasia, traditional Istrian wine varieties, is an excellent supplement to the Istrian cuisine offered by restaurants in the city centre and

the surroundings of Koper. If you go to Koper, do not forget to pay a visit to the countryside around the town. The tranquillity and fragrances of Slovenian Istria will not leave you indifferent.

Sport and free time encapsulate the true meaning of Koper: in addition to sports, you can enjoy various activities that the Mediterranean environment offers – from sailing to swimming, tasting the best in Mediterranean cuisine, being pampered at one of wellness centres, or simply cheering during EuroBasket 2013.



Photo: Archives of Vina Koper

Vinakoper won four medals at the most important American wine competition, the Finger Lakes International Wine Competition 2013 in Rochester, New York. Capo d' Istria Merlot 2009 and Sladki muškát 2012 won silver medals, while Capris refosk 2011 and Capris Cabernet Sauvignon 2009 won bronze.

Bonifika Sports Hall, the venue of EuroBasket 2013 in Koper



Photo: Vojko Božar

Slovenia in the centre of Zagreb

Photo: GCO



Photo: GCO

Slovenia and Croatia are neighbours which were once part of the same state. Even today, Slovenians love the Croatian coast, and almost half of them spend their holidays there. In order to present its beautiful spots to Croatians and attract more of them to Slovenia, Slovenia was presented in Ban Jelačić Square in the centre of Zagreb on 8 and 9 May during the Days of Slovenian Tourism. The organisation of the event was a joint effort of SPIRIT Slovenia, a public agency, the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in Zagreb, and the Government Communication Office of the Republic of Slovenia (GCO).

Days of Slovenian Tourism in the centre of Zagreb are usually organised by SPIRIT Slovenia, a public agency. This year, twenty Slovenian tourist service providers are presenting their summer programmes (spas, tourist farms, mountain centres, cities). In September, Slovenia will be hosting the greatest sporting event in its history, the European Basketball Championship – EuroBasket 2013, so a special street basketball

court in the colours of the 'I feel Slovenia' trademark is being used to present this event.

The street basketball court was the main feature of the event; it presented Slovenia as the host of EuroBasket 2013, and offered visitors an opportunity to test their skills at shooting three-point shots, free throws, dribbling and similar basketball skills. They could also have their photo taken with the mascot named Lipko (linden). The Croatian and Slovenian journalists competed against each other in street basketball. The Slovenian team included Roman Horvat, a former Slovenian basketball player who is now acting as an expert commentator. The Slovenian basketball trio had to acknowledge the superiority of the Croatian team, but in such cases, socialising matters the most. The first ball was thrown by the ambassador of the European Championship and basketball legend Ivo Daneu, who does not try to hide his satisfaction that Slovenia will be hosting this great sporting event this year.

The event was enriched by the extraordinary sportsmen of the Dunking Devils acrobatic group, one of the best of its kind in the world.

The GCO, which manages the 'I feel Slovenia' trademark on behalf of the state, actively participated in promoting EuroBasket 2013. The story behind the national 'I feel Slovenia' trademark is closely connected to Slovenians' relationship with sport and their attachment to it. With their outstanding results, Slovenian sportsmen and women have often shown that they are the country's best ambassadors and promoters.

That this is true is also the view of the Croatian President Ivo Josipović and his Slovenian counterpart Borut Pahor, who visited the Days of Slovenian Tourism venue. They competed in shooting hoops, which ended in a draw, and then enjoyed watching the Dunking Devils and listening to the Pustotnik Orchestra, who played the famous song Na Golici at their request.

Croatian President Ivo Josipović and his Slovenian counterpart Borut Pahor, visited Days of Tourism and EuroBasket event.

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Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA



Successfully over the North Pole

Slovenian pilot Matevž Lenarčič, who is flying over the North Pole in his Virus SW 914, made a successful crossing of the northernmost point of the Earth on 30. April 2013.

He has again proved that there are no obstacles for him. With a small Pipistrel Virus SW aircraft he took off from the Longyear airport on the Svalbard Island at 6:46 GMT. He flew directly towards the North Pole and reached it at 11:40 GMT. He also made a full circle over the North Pole and thus crossed all the time zones in just a few minutes! This is an achievement that very few Earthlings can brag with!

His aircraft is equipped with sensors to measure the concentrations of black carbon, a key driver of climate change in the Arctic. Pipistrel director Ivo Boscarol said he was happy Lenarčič's ventures were becoming more scientific, as the data he gathers will help understand climate change. Lenarčič's progress will be tracked also in Sinfo magazine.

Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA



Winners of the Plečnik Award selected

This year's Plečnik Award went to the authors of the project 'Cultural Centre of European Space Technologies Vitanje'. In addition to the award, medals were presented for a successful realisation of nominated projects and well-considered architectural concept. A student award was also presented.

In the citation for the award, the jury wrote that the building – the Cultural Centre of European Space Technologies (KSEVT) in Vitanje – with its functional and symbolic meaning, is perhaps one of the most complex buildings ever constructed in Slovenia, and its influence extends far beyond regional borders all the way to cosmic dimensions.

This year's Plečnik Award went to architects Matija Bevk, Vasa J. Perovič, Aljoša Dekleva, Tina Gregorič, Rok Oman, Špela Videčnik, Jurij Sadar and Boštjan Vuga.

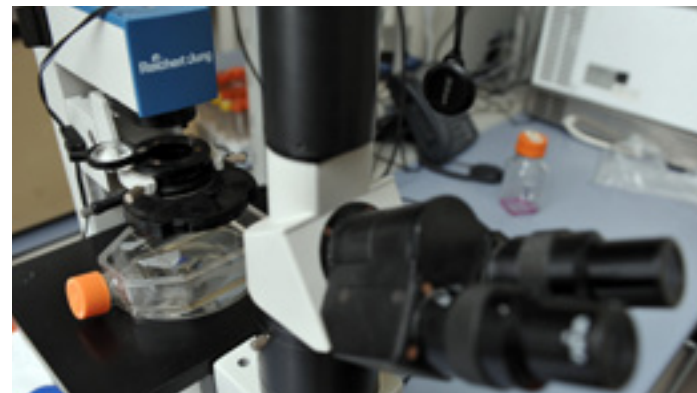


Photo: Tamimo Petelinšek/STA

Smart nanomaterials

A group of Slovenian scientists develop a new way of assembling 'smart nanomaterials' on the basis of natural components.

At the Laboratory of Biotechnology at the National Institute of Chemistry Slovenia and at the EN-FIST Centre of Excellence, scientists have designed a sequence of amino acids with a molecular chain that can automatically self-assemble into a planned structure. Researchers believe that the potential application of such nanostructures will be especially important in medicine, chemistry and biotechnology, and numerous other fields.

The new method of assembling nanostructures is an important scientific breakthrough, which anticipates the development of new materials for drug delivery, separation, catalysis and various other purposes.



Photo: Milija Volčenkovič/STA

Tantadruj Award

Journalist Zdenka Lovec wins this year's Tantadruj Award, a Primorska theatre award, for lifetime achievements.

Zdenka Lovec received the award because she has never limited herself to generally assessing plays in a reporting style. In her writing, she expresses an in-depth analysis of the dramatic text, its transfer to the stage, the action on stage, the actors' characterisations and director's work. The jury also wrote that, with her critical spirit and pen, and journalistic work on the theatre, she has contributed to the artistic development of all three theatres in Primorska.

The Tantadruj Award was named after the well-known short story by Ciril Kosmač. The statuette was designed by sculptor Jakov Brdar.

Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA



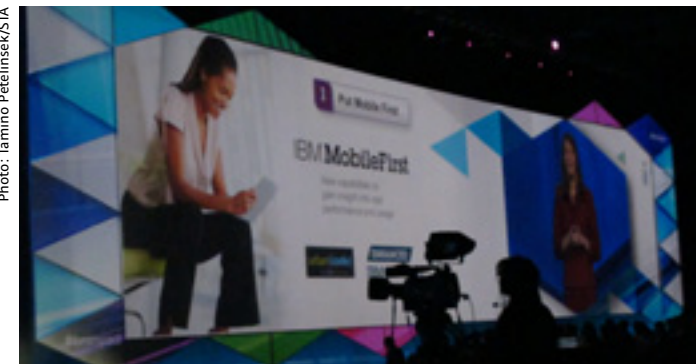
London award for a Slovenian kindergarten

The Slovenian architectural plan for the Chameleon Kindergarten wins the competition for best architectural projects of World Architecture News (WAN) in London.

The project was selected as the best of 150 projects in the education category. It is future-oriented and takes into account financial limitations. The project charmed the jury with its flexible design and interesting logic, as the design of the kindergarten is modular and may be constructed in any location.

The award is presented annually by World Architecture News, a leading organisation in architecture.

Photo: Tamimo Petelinšek/STA



IBM rewards Salviol

In the United States, IBM has presented the Beacon Awards for the 13th consecutive year, which are presented by this computer company in the field of information technology to its business partners.

The company provides solutions for fraud detection, ensuring regulatory compliance, managing and calculating risks, managing documents and similar, which facilitate efficient and transparent business operations.

Salviol received the award in the category of Smart Cloud Application Provider for its application solution for the advanced analytics of open code content, which is ensured through LiveMediaStat (LMS) cloud services, and with the Frops fraud detection and prevention system.

The LMS system is a global novelty, which, together with analytics, in the field of processing analogue and digital sources facilitates the forecasting of guidelines, comparisons of the effects of growth and decline, sales revenues, share values, popularity of, and visits to, websites and the like.



Photo: Lili Pušnik/STA

The Confluence of Good

Laško is this year's winner of the European Destinations of Excellence competition in Slovenia, with its project 'The Confluence of Good'. Following the destinations of the Soča Valley, Solčavsko Region, the Kolpa River and Idrija, Laško is the fifth Slovenian and European destination of excellence.

The theme of this year's competition opened by the European Commission was accessible tourism, which facilitates independent, fair and dignified use of tourist services for people with various physical and psychological limitations, and special needs. Together with the winning destinations from other countries, Laško will join the network of European destinations of excellence. By signing the Brussels Declaration, members commit themselves to cooperating and exchanging information and knowledge on tourist development.

Accessible tourism is a market with around 127,5 million people/service users.



Photo: Tamimo Petelinšek/STA

Eta's mustard among world's best

The American National Mustard Museum exhibits two types of Eta mustard from Kamnik – classic and whole grain.

Eta introduced whole grain mustard, or 'ženof' from Kamnik, to mustard lovers in 2013 upon the 90th anniversary of its founding. Eta has been producing mustards since 1923 according to an old original recipe of Stanko Žargi, who established the family company under the Kamnik Alps. Even today, Eta's mustard is ground with real millstones.

The American National Mustard Museum houses a unique collection of more than 5,500 mustards from every American state and more than 70 countries around the world.

Photo: Hina/STA



Musical Flight of the Summer

23 May - 24 August 2013, Gospodarsko razstavišče Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre, Ljubljana

The festival in a covered summer auditorium of the Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre will enliven summer events in Ljubljana with a diverse programme of events for different generations. In addition to concerts by popular artists, there will also be a variety of cultural and entertainment events. The festival will be opened by the legendary Spanish opera singer, José Carreras. He will be accompanied by the RTV Slovenia Symphony Orchestra.

Photo: B. Kladičnik/STO



Countryside in the City

Vodnik Square, Pogačar Square, Ljubljana
25 May 2013 8 a.m. - 2 p.m.
7 September 2013 8 a.m. - 2 p.m.

The purpose of the event is to present the culinary delights of Slovenia, rural life and crafts. On sales stalls, representatives of Slovenian farms will offer bread and meat products, home-made cheeses, wines and other local delicacies. The event will be enriched with a cultural programme of folk music at 10 a.m.



Photo: Marko Čerčič/STA

International competition in hand mowing

25 May - 26 May 2013

A scythe is a hand tool used to cut various crops and grass. A wide variety of forms developed in the course of time, and more than 300 different types of scythes have been known in Slovenia alone. The traditional event will also offer culinary enjoyment.



Photo: B. Kladičnik/STO

Original Vipava

The main square in Vipava
25 May - 26 May 2013, starting at 10 a.m.

You can buy cherries, wine, cheese and other local specialities at Vipava market; you can take a free guided tour of Vipava and Lanthieri Mansion, and a trip to the waterfalls - the village of golden drops, football tournament or climbing. You can also enjoy the culinary delights of Vipava inns and music and dancing with Vipava bands.

Photo: Darinka Mladenović



Artichoke Holiday

25 May 2013 - 26 May 2013, Strunjan

The autumn kaki holiday, which has more visitors every year, is now joined by the spring artichoke holiday, inspired by an Istrian artichoke which grows in plantations around Strunjan. It is indigenous, delicious, with medicinal properties, and not yet well known. Visitors will remember this year's Artichoke Holiday for the market of artichokes and other delicious goods, an exhibition of art and literary work, a detailed lecture on artichokes and their use in cooking, and a walk around the Strunjan plantations and picturesque regional park.

Photo: Dean Dubokovič/STO



Prekmurska gibanica and ham festival

14 June - 15 June 2013, Moravske toplice

We recommend this festival for those who always find Prekmurje inspiring and delightful. The Prekmurje Festival of folk dances, music, cuisine and crafts, presents the connections between the rich culinary and ethnological heritage and tourism in Prekmurje.

Photo: STO



June 2013 in Ljubljana

7 June - 21 June 2013, Congress Square in Ljubljana

This year's programme in June will be rich and varied in terms of genres. The festival will be opened by a top ballet performance entitled Tango, performed by dancers of the Slovene National Theatre Maribor and choreographed by Edward Clug. One of the festival's highlights will be a concert with washing machines, led by the internationally acclaimed Slovenian artist Vlado G. Repnik. The festival will conclude with concerts at various squares and streets on the summer solstice, when Ljubljana will once again join more than 340 cities around the world in celebrating the musical holiday.

Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik/STO



Honey days

14 June - 15 June 2013, Kočevje

In June, Kočevje flows with honey and mead. During the event, you can buy honey products and beekeeping equipment, and take part in the competition for the best honey dessert. In addition to honey products, stalls will offer a wide range of other products. The event will be accompanied by a rich entertainment programme, with guided tours around Kočevje.



Wine and Culinary Festival

22 June 2013, Filovci

A festival dedicated to the coexistence of food and wine in connection with the cultural heritage of pottery. Sites: Filovci, pottery village. The organiser is the local community of Filovci.



Salt Festival

6 July 2013, Tourist Association Taperin, Sečovlje

"Pass me the salt, please" besides "Enjoy your meal" is probably the most frequently uttered phrase during meals at any dining table where salt cellar is indispensable. Today, we live in a period of unlimited possibility, when all goods are easily available. Therefore, it is hard to imagine the importance of something as everyday and seemingly as minor as salt. However, salt is not only for flavouring. It is much more. We cannot live without it. Salt runs through our veins, history, culture and beliefs, enables our lives and reminds us of the birth of all life in the primordial ocean of our planet. The Salt Festival is therefore not merely a traditional local festival and a presentation of crafts.



2Cellos – concert of fusion, pop and classical music

June 28 2013, Kongresni trg, Ljubljana

The famous instrumental pop duo 2Cellos consists of two young cello virtuosos from Slovenia and Croatia respectively. Already before they embarked on a successful pop music career, Luka Šulić and Stjepan Hauser had made a name for themselves in classical music circles. 2Cellos' new album was created in collaboration with such renowned artists as Elton John, Zucchero, Steve Vai, Lang Lang, and Naya Rivera.



The wheel – 5,200 Years

May 23 2013 – April 20 2014
City Museum of Ljubljana

The invention of the wheel is one of the foundations of modern civilisation and culture. Thousands of years of inventiveness have not created anything to replace the wheel. The wheel encouraged progress and creativity. And the oldest wooden wheel, with an axle, 5,200 years old, was discovered in Slovenia in the Ljubljana Marshes. The exhibition is open at the City Museum of Ljubljana between 24 May 2013 and 20 April 2014; it will then be showcased in several European cities.

Sandra Letica

The works of Slovenian impressionists exhibited in Paris

The exhibition of 'Slovenian Impressionists and their Time 1890-1920', which will be open by 13 July 2013 at the renowned Petit Palais museum in Paris, is so far the largest presentation of Slovenian art abroad. Petit Palais is one of the leading museums in Paris and is visited by numerous people.

Two hundred artworks are being showcased: paintings, illustrations, photographs, sculptures and literary works. The concept of the exhibition in one of the world's capitals of art is similar to the layout of the exhibition in 2008 at the National Gallery in Ljubljana, as it presents this period of fine arts in a broader historical and artistic context. In addition to the works by the four most famous painters, Rihard Jakopič, Ivan Grohar, Matej Sternen and Matija Jama, there are also works by their predecessors Ivana Kobilca, Jurij Šubic and Anton Ažbe, and their contemporaries, sculptors Alojz Gangl, Fran Berneker, Ivan Zajec and Lojze Dolinar. Other contemporary painters include Ivan Vavpotič, Peter Žmitek, Henrika Šantel, Gvidon Birolla, Maksim Gaspari and caricaturist Hinko Smrekar. The exhibition also features literary works, as the fine artists at the end of the 19th and in the beginning of the 20th century created in close relationship with writers. The short films by Karol Grossman are considered the beginning of Slovenian cinematography, while video recordings of buildings designed by Ciril Metod Koch, Josip Vančaš, Maks Fabiani and Jože Plečnik display architectural design. The National Gallery's largest international project experienced one of its highlights on 17 April 2013 at Petit Palais museum, when the exhibition was opened by the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor. The President's official visit to France thus contributed to the recognisability and promotion of Slovenian culture in France, as this is the first time that the National Gallery has showcased an exhibition abroad on such a scale and in such an important museum. The opening of the exhibition 'Slovenian Impressionists and their Time 1890-1920' was also attended by Uroš Grilc, the Minister of Culture, who assessed that the exhibition promotes Slovenian creativity.

MAIRIE DE PARIS



PARIS
MUSÉES



les impressionistes
slovenes
et leur temps (1890-1920)

Petit Palais Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris

18 avril – 13 juillet 2013

petitpalais.paris.fr



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MINISTRSTVO ZA IZOBRAŽEVANJE,
ZNANOST, KULTURO IN ŠPORT

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