

# Sinfo

May-June

The Best from Slovenia

**IN FOCUS**

25 Years of  
Independent  
Slovenia

**I FEEL  
SLOVENIA**



**I FEEL  
SLOVENIA**

# Sinfo

SLOVENIAN INFORMATION

[www.slovenia.si](http://www.slovenia.si)  
[www.ukom.gov.si](http://www.ukom.gov.si)

**Published by**  
Government Communication Office

**Editor-in-Chief**  
Petra Ložar

**Executive Editor**  
Vesna Žarkovič

**Editorial Board**  
Danila Golob, Uroš Mahkovec, Danila Mašič,  
Polona Prešeren, Livija Kovač Kostantinovič

**Design**  
Irena Kogoj

**Photo Editor**  
Government Communication Office

**Photo on the front page**  
Mostphotos

**Translation**  
Secretariat-General of the Government of  
the Republic of Slovenia, Translation and  
Interpretation Division, DZTPS

**Language editing**  
Amidas

**Copy writer editing**  
Marcus Ferrar

**Print**  
Collegium Graphicum d.o.o., Slovenia

**Number of copies**  
3500

**ISSN**  
1854-0805



Photo: Mateja Jordovič Petročnik

## 25 YEARS OF INDEPENDENT SLOVENIA – A SUCCESS STORY

Twenty-five years in the life of a person mark a transition from passionate youth to maturity. During this time, our country has evolved into a mature democracy. But is Slovenia today truly a success story? The answer is yes. From 2004 to 2014, Slovenian gross domestic product (GDP) increased by 12.8% in real terms, and GDP per capita increased by 9.2%. In 2004, GDP per capita was just under €14,000, whereas in 2015, it had climbed to over €18,000. In numerous countries comparable to Slovenia, the fall of the Berlin Wall was followed by dismantling of the economic and social systems. Thankfully, this did not happen in Slovenia. We maintained our healthcare system, which is the envy of many, while our education system ranks among the best in Europe, and the economy experienced considerable growth. Slovenia has attracted foreign investors, and boasts excellent, internationally acclaimed and influential scientists. Due to numerous achievements by Slovenes, it ranks among top countries in the world in various fields, ranging from particle physics as part of major international collaborations to experiments revealing fundamental laws of nature and the quantum world.

Following the declaration of independence 25 years ago, Slovenia achieved financial independence by carrying out one of the fastest and most successful changes of currency. In foreign affairs, our country attained international recognition of Slovenian independence and statehood. Its modern motorway network comprises a total of 610 km of motorways and express roads. Slovenia has also established one of the strictest bio-security systems and a high level of protection of both human and animal health and the environment. Last but not least, Slovenia also boasts the highest number of Olympic medals per capita. Furthermore, it just might have the most poets per square metre as well. Slovenians publish 4,000 books each year. For comparison: Ukrainians publish 600 books per year and Catalonians 2,000. Plečnik and Žižek are two outstanding figures on the global scale. Around the world, state decorations are conferred, but it would be hard to find a country where the highest decorations are reserved for poets, writers, playwrights and painters. At the same time, today's Slovenia, which has transformed into a nation solidly established on the world map over the past 25 years, preserves beautiful old customs that reflect the belief that politics are transient, medals fade, but rich tradition, passed on and enriched through generations, remains.

Vesna Žarkovič, Executive Editor

*Vesna Žarkovič*

**8** TWENTY-FIVE YEARS  
Slovenia: mature, self-confident, lively, modern, brave,  
developing and optimistic

**16** NATIONAL SYMBOLS OF SLOVENIA  
Talking about ourselves

**24** POSTAGE STAMP MARKS 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF  
INDEPENDENCE  
Symbol of Slovenia – the Triglav mountain

**26** PRIME MINISTER MIRO CERAR  
“Government will do everything in its power to continue the  
positive trends, this year as well as in the future.”

**34** CAPTURING SLOVENIA’S WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE IN PHOTOS  
Veteran photographer Joco Žnidaršič was there

**50** CHILDREN’S PARLIAMENT  
Prime Minister Cerar: Never Give up, Always Persevere

**52** SLOVENIA BECOMES AN ASSOCIATE MEMBER OF CERN  
An opportunity in particle physics for Slovenian high-technology  
enterprises

**62** AFRICA DAY  
Exploring developmental challenges and opportunities on the  
African continent

**68** 25 YEARS OF BRINGING EUROPEAN CULTURAL HERITAGE  
CLOSE TO THE PEOPLE  
Slovenia embraces a European project

**72** PARK OF MILITARY HISTORY IN PIVKA  
Slovenia’s Path to Independence

**84** SLOVENIAN PHOTOJOURNALISTS  
Among the most renowned international contemporary creators





25 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE  
REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

**SLOVENIA - MATURE DEMOCRACY**

During 25 years of independence, our country has evolved into a mature democracy which reflects in the indicators of economic growth and GDP, decrease in unemployment, increase in the employment rate and the exchange of goods, and we are also slowly reducing the budget deficit.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

**Slovenia: mature, self-confident,  
lively, modern, brave, developing  
and optimistic**



If some things seemed beyond our reach 25 years ago, they are now a clear reality. On a global scale, we can pride ourselves on high-quality and accessible public health care, maternity care, early childhood education, the pre-school system, a healthy environment etc. Of course, there is also a negative side. The economic and financial crisis, poor management of banks and companies, and finally also of the state. Nevertheless, we are celebrating the anniversary with pride.



## TRAFFIC AND SAFETY

A great increase in the number of registered vehicles has been noted since independence. In 1992, 784,550 vehicles were registered (601,063 of which were private cars), while as many as 1,437,444 vehicles were registered in 2015 (1,087,685 of which were private cars).

There were 113 km of motorways and expressways in 1991 and 59.1 km of two-lane motorways.

**Today, DARS d.d. manages 610 km of motorways and expressways, 163 km of access roads and junctions, 27 km of rest stops and 7 km of other roads.**

The number of road accident fatalities has fallen from 462 to 120 and the number of severely injured people in road accidents fell from 2,660 to 932.

Between 1991 and 2015, we managed to maintain almost the same number of passengers transported by rail traffic every year, i.e. 14,558,000 passengers in 2015.

In 25 years, total cargo handling by Luka Koper d.d. increased by 16.4 million tonnes, i.e. from 4.3 to 20.7 million tonnes. The number of passengers at Ljubljana Jože Pučnik Airport increased from 34,583 to 1,464,579. The quantity of cargo handling increased from 4,662 tonnes to 18,852 tonnes, and the number of aircraft movements from 8,794 to 32,893.

The share of renewable energy sources (RES) increased by almost 10 per cent in gross electricity production.



## ECONOMY AND GDP GROWTH

With the accession of Slovenia to the EU, the European common market became accessible to us. It enables the free flow of goods, services, people and capital, i.e. customs- and duty-free trade between Member States.

Slovenia's independence resulted in its new positioning in global and European markets. Slovenia became interesting to foreign direct investors, who contributed significantly to the efficiency and growth of the economy through additional resources in the form of capital, technology, organisational, marketing and other knowledge and skills, and by providing access to new markets.

**Slovenia's GDP increased in real terms by 75.2 per cent between 1991 and 2015, and GDP per capita increased by 70.0 per cent (GDP per capita amounted to EUR 5,000 in 1991, exceeding EUR 18,000 at the end of 2015).**

Tourism has continued to be an important industry since independence. The number of overnight stays by foreign tourists has tripled in the last 25 years, while the number of overnight stays by domestic guests increased by 35 per cent. In 1991, hotels provided some 28,274 beds in all categories of hotels, or 38 per cent of all tourist accommodation facilities in Slovenia. By 2015, the number of beds available in hotels exceeded 41,208 (33-per cent share), which is an increase of 46 per cent.

Slovenia also promotes the sustainable development of tourism. For example, 29 hotels received the certificate of a hiker-friendly and a cyclist-friendly hotel in 2015.

## MODERN JUDICIAL SYSTEM

The rapid development in the field of information technologies in the past three decades brought about additional challenges for the Slovenian judicial system, which became advanced, of a good quality, simpler and more transparent. The developments made in the recent years show that the judiciary is on the right track, which is also reflected in the fact that more than 97 percent of all cases are monitored/controlled by information systems, whereas the courts increasingly rely upon electronic means of communication.



**52 percent of all cases are filed electronically and 53 percent of all cases at the courts of first instance are fully handled in electronic form.**

As many as 96 percent of all proposals for the entry into the Land Register are filed electronically, while all land registration proceedings and enforcements on the basis of an authentic document are conducted entirely in electronic form.

For over two decades, the computerisation of the judiciary has been carried out under the auspices of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Slovenia and its Centre for Information Technology, which is a special feature of the Slovenian judicial system in comparison to other EU Member States. This is another reason why the computerisation did not only follow the rapid development in the field of information technologies, but also introduced various solutions and technologies even before they developed into general trends in the information system development. Thus, the judiciary is one of the leading state authorities in the use of open source solutions, e-service, centralised printing and data warehouses, which enables the current optimization of the system performance and significant savings, which can be counted in millions of euros. One-year savings, achieved as a result of this, are comparable with the costs for the computerization of the entire judicial system. At the beginning of this year, the 2020 Slovenian Judiciary Project was launched within the framework of the Effective Judiciary operation, which is in a way an upgrade of the above-described processes. It is planned that after the project is completed, the users of judicial services will deal with courts only in electronic form in all legal proceedings.

## CONDUCTING BUSINESS WITH THE STATE: FROM ARRANGING MATTERS 'FROM DOOR TO DOOR' TO E-SERVICES CONDUCTED FROM ONE'S ARMCHAIR AT HOME

The complete computerisation of administrative units equipped with hardware and software has been implemented, or access to computerised databases and the Internet has been possible since the first organisation of administrative units in 1994 to the present. So a visit to an administrative unit is frequently unnecessary.



**Today, citizens may use services from their homes via the e-government portal.**

They can order documents from their armchair, pay and submit applications via the web and monitor the status of their applications.

The state has also made life easier for citizens when it comes to entrepreneurship, establishing VEM contact points and a state portal for entrepreneurs, e-VEM. Procedures for entrepreneurs who want to start or close their business operations were greatly simplified. Some 37 e-procedures are now available, including comprehensive information for entrepreneurs. In 1991, the procedure for establishing a company took between three and six months, while the procedure now takes only one day for a sole trader and several days for a simple private limited company.



### PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Great progress has been made in waste management in the last 25 years. Slovenia lowered the number of active waste landfills, and directed waste management towards processing and recycling, which have priority over the disposal of waste at landfills. Separately collected waste serves as the basis for recycling. Over half a million tonnes of municipal waste were collected separately in 2014, and the share of separately collected municipal waste grew in the last twelve years, from 8.6 per cent in 2002 to 64.7 per cent in 2014.

Somewhat less than 283,000 tonnes of all types of waste were disposed of at landfills, which is almost ten per cent less than in 2013 and almost three and a half times less compared to 2002. Some 23 per cent of generated municipal waste was disposed of, seven per cent less than in 2013.

#### Air quality has also improved significantly over the last 25 years.

Previously high levels of sulphur dioxide have been reduced, thanks to measures related to emission reduction and the introduction of fuels with low sulphur content in thermal power plants, industry and household heating, and frequently approximate thresholds denoted by air quality meters.

Slovenia also successfully decoupled greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) from economic growth. GDP increased by 70 per cent between 1991 and 2014, while GHG emissions dropped by four per cent. Changes in emissions from the use of fuels in industrial activities were even more striking, since they decreased by almost 50 per cent in the same period. Slovenia fully met its commitments relating to the reduction of GHG emissions determined in the Kyoto Protocol for the first commitment period (2008–2012).

### SLOVENIA REMAINS A SOCIAL STATE



Since gaining independence, Slovenia has maintained a well organised system of parental leave and childbirth allowances. Mothers are entitled to maternity leave, with a 100-per cent maternity allowance of 105 days. Parental leave with 100-per cent parental allowance may be divided between both parents (this amounted to 90 per cent at the time of austerity measures). Each parent is entitled to 130 days, thereby amounting to a total of 260 days of parental leave.

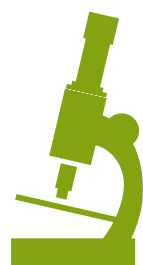
Furthermore, fathers are entitled to 20 days of paternity leave, with a 90-per cent paternity allowance and 50 days of paid social security contributions.

To reconcile work and family life, one of the parents is entitled to reduced working hours until the child's third year or until the completion of the first grade of primary school in the case of two or more children. In this case, the state settles the difference in social security contributions between the minimum wage and full-time employment.

#### Children and adolescents have free access to health-care services.

Free transport to school is also provided for all primary school pupils living at least 4 kilometres away from their central primary school.

A minimum income was introduced in the field of social care in 2001; this is the income which an individual with no other sources of sustenance may obtain. As of 1 January 2016, the minimum income is EUR 288.81. Minimum pension support for a single elderly person with no other sources of income is EUR 470.76 at most.



### EXCEPTIONAL SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENTS

In the last 25 years, Slovenian science has gone through an exceptionally important period, in which we witnessed some outstanding achievements and results.

#### Slovenian science is excellent: it has become established internationally, recognised globally in many fields and is also very influential.

Many high-profile achievements have placed Slovenian science at the very top of global research across a wide range of fields, including the physics of elementary particles in large international collaborations and experiments which revealed fundamental natural laws and the quantum world. The collaboration of Slovenian researchers in challenging experiments of the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) culminated in their participation in the discovery of the Higgs boson in the collision of elementary particles and in the breaking of symmetry between matter and anti-matter on the Belle detector at the KEK particle physics laboratory in Japan. These collaborations resulted in Nobel Prizes for their theoretical predictions.

Slovenian researchers contributed significantly to the development of processes and technologies based on the use of renewable energy sources and waste material which has a negligible carbon footprint. The greatest emphasis is on the exploitation of carbon dioxide emissions and the reduction of GHG emissions, with the simultaneous balancing of the electricity network by using power at peaks of excess generation and the production of useful chemicals for further processing. The development of new materials and processes optimises the use of conventional and renewable gaseous energy carriers in cooperation with the foreign and domestic public and industrial partners.

Important contributions of Slovenian science in the field of social sciences and humanities in the global context include the discovery of the first Neanderthal musical instrument and the increase in the social and cultural capital of Roma communities.

### TOP-QUALITY CULTURE



Culture continues to be the bearer and cornerstone of Slovenian national identity and integral to a sense of belonging, which combines creativity, self-awareness, self-expression, critical thinking and self-reflection. In particular, culture provides space for future visions. It cradles and nurtures individual creativity, along with the development of society and social cohesion.

The number of visitors to museums and exhibitions has been growing since independence, i.e. it grew by 82 per cent between 1997 and 2014 according to the data provided by the SORS (from 1,700,698 to 3,094,947 – which is more than the entire population of Slovenia). Children and youth make up one-fifth of visitors.

#### According to the number of books published per year per capita, Slovenia ranks at the top among European countries.

In 2014, 5,554 books and brochures were published, according to the SORS or nine per cent more than in the previous year, of which 1,599 were literary works (804 were original literary works in Slovenian and 795 translated works).

Since its independent, the state has registered six units of intangible cultural heritage as intangible heritage of national importance, i.e. Škofja Loka Passion Play, Shrovetide Carnival in Cerklje ob Krki, Shrovetide in Drežnica and Drežniške Ravne, the making of Palm Sunday bundles in Ljubno, the making of Kranjska sausage and bobbin lace making. The traditional sea-salt harvest is also to be declared intangible heritage.



### LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

After the declaration of independence, it was necessary to first lay healthy foundations and secure international recognition for the newly established country, which has been a full member of the EU and NATO since 2004.

**Slovenia became financially independent in October 1991 through one of the fastest and most successful currency conversions, with a 1:1 exchange rate that took a mere three days to establish, and Slovenian currency, the tolar was introduced.**

Within 25 years, Slovenia has established an independent public finance system, adopted the euro in 2007 and adjusted its development to the requirements of the common European currency.



### THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF OLYMPIC MEDALS PER CAPITA

Slovenia has always been considered a nation of sports enthusiasts. The Olympic Committee of Slovenia was established in 1991 and recognised by the International Olympic Committee a year later. Slovenian sportspeople competed under the Slovenian flag for the first time at the 1992 Winter Olympics in Albertville, France.

Today, Slovenian sportspeople compete at the biggest European and world sports competitions, where they are very successful. So far, they have won 34 Olympic medals, of which six were gold, ten silver and 18 bronze. At World and European championships, they have won over 680 medals.

**The best achievements were in rowing, athletics, judo, sailing, artistic gymnastics, parachuting, dancing, shooting, snowboarding and cross-country skiing. And also in team sports, such as handball, volleyball, football and basketball. Slovenian sportspeople have also enjoyed notable success in other sports.**

In the last 25 years, projects involving the co-financing of sports infrastructure included development-oriented investments in the construction, modernisation and equipping of sports facilities, which provide basic conditions for implementing and monitoring the training of talented children, young people and top sportspeople, and which also provide suitable conditions for general exercise and sports recreation.

While focusing on this objective, the state participated in over 860 investments. More than 130 new school gyms were built, of which 30 were the size of a handball hall. Over 90 football surfaces, sports fields, trim trails, athletics facilities, swimming pools and ski jumps were constructed or renovated. Large sports centres, such as the football stadiums in Celje, Maribor, Ljubljana and Domžale were arranged, including the following sports halls: Bonifika in Koper, Podmežakla in Jesenice, Golovec in Celje, the Ljubljana Gymnastics Centre, and the biathlon centre in Pokljuka, the cross-country centre in Rogla, and the rowing centre in Bled. Furthermore, one of the largest investments in sports infrastructure, the Planica Nordic Centre, was also realised.

### EFFICIENT COHESION POLICY SYSTEM

An efficient system for implementing cohesion policy enables the drawing of European funds earmarked for development. The progress achieved with these funds can be seen in every Slovenian municipality. In the field of economic and educational infrastructure, 71 projects were implemented between 2007 and 2013, which contributed to the creation of jobs in business zones across Slovenia.



The majority of environmental projects involved the construction and renovation of water supply and municipal networks. Over 400 projects were co-financed, and more than 122,000 citizens obtained connections to sewage systems in agglomerations with less than 2,000 p.e., and over 170,000 people were provided with access to better quality and safer water supply systems with these funds.

Some 78 kindergartens and retirement homes were built or renovated in the field of social infrastructure. As many as 171 urban development projects were co-financed.

Slovenia is proud to be one of the first states in the EU to have introduced fully electronic submissions of customs declarations. In 1996, a completely electronic customs service was introduced, initially intended only for large companies able to support this method of customs clearance. The service became available to all entities in 2008 or 2009.

### FROM KINDERGARTEN TO UNIVERSITY

Pre-school education activities in public kindergartens have seen exceptional development and progress. In 1991, less than half of children were enrolled in pre-school education. In the 2014–2015 academic year, 76.8 per cent of children were enrolled in kindergartens, a figure which places Slovenia at the very top in global terms.



Slovenia is also one of a number of countries which dedicates special care to school meals. Some eleven per cent of primary school pupils and 18 per cent of secondary school students received subsidised school meals in the 1992–1993 academic year. The state has gradually provided more funds, so the percentage of pupils and students entitled to subsidised meals has also increased. Currently, 98 per cent of pupils receive school meals and more than a half of all pupils receive school meals free of charge. Some 73 per cent of pupils receive school lunches and one-tenth of all pupils receives lunch free of charge. Furthermore, 66 per cent of secondary school students receive school meals and 43 per cent of students are entitled to subsidised meals.

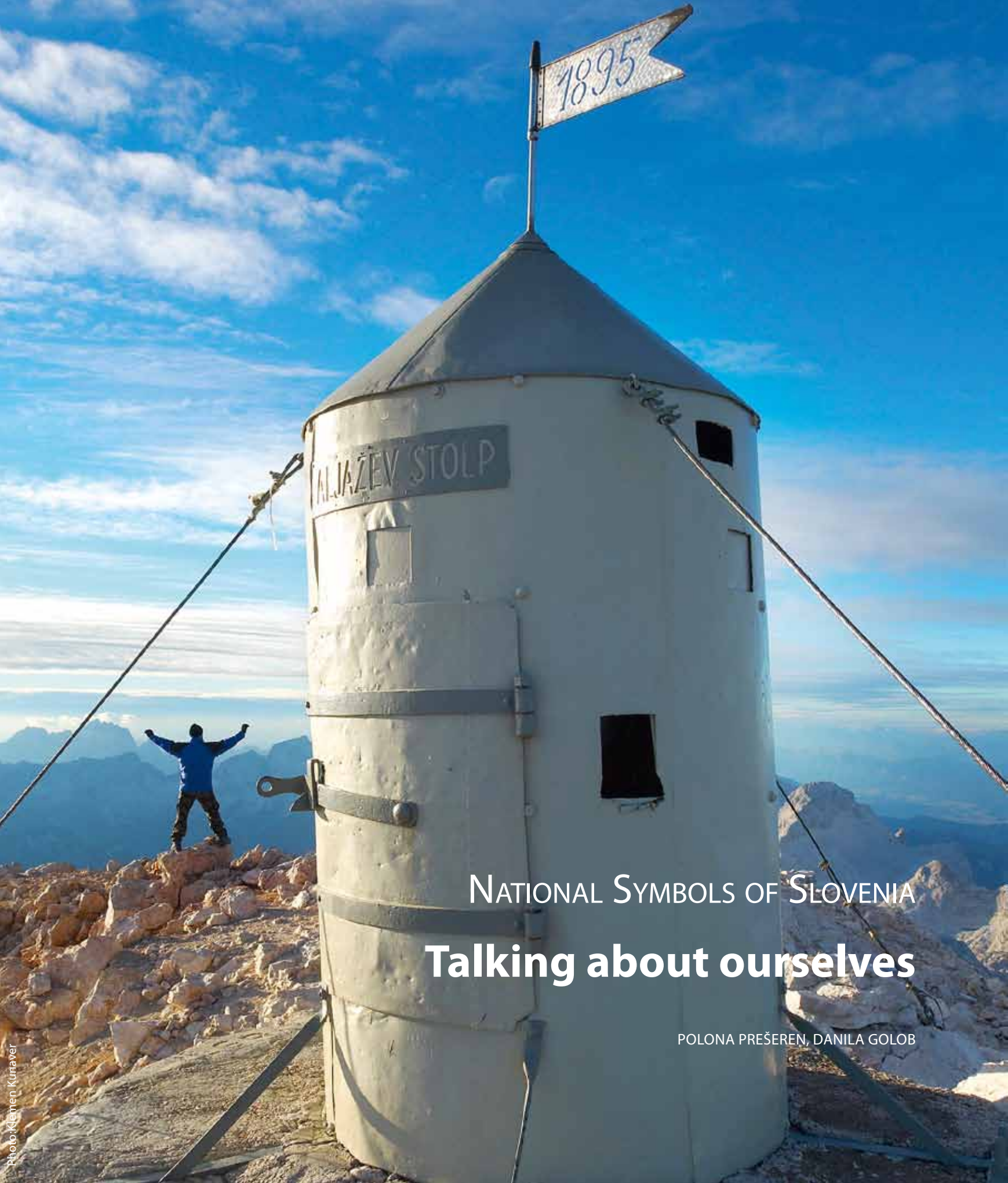
The scope of education has also increased significantly, including the number of graduates (some 16 per cent of all graduates in tertiary education in 2005 and 2006). From the initial 342 university students in the 1996–1997 academic year, the number reached its peak in 2007–2008, with 16,928 students enrolled, while 10,757 students were enrolled in 2015–2016.

**According to the number of young people enrolled in tertiary education, Slovenia is above the EU average.**

Over 90 per cent of students who completed secondary education and met the conditions for enrolment in study programmes have been entering tertiary education since the 2001–2002 academic year, and the trend was constantly growing over the course of the previous decade. Thus 96 per cent of students completing secondary education enrolled in tertiary education in 2008, of which almost 10 per cent enrolled in study programmes of the first and second stages of tertiary education and 86 per cent in study programmes of the third stage of tertiary education.

According to the SORS, 21.3 per cent of citizens held a degree from the third stage of tertiary education in 2015.





## NATIONAL SYMBOLS OF SLOVENIA

# Talking about ourselves

POLONA PREŠEREN, DANILA GOLOB

The Slovenian identity has been shaped by various symbolic icons representing our country's remarkable diversity, with pristine nature, a vibrant culture, a rich history and an enviable quality of life. It took a long time for the rich blend of old and new to come together in symbols of an independent Slovenian nation. When we are talking about Mount Triglav, the linden tree, beekeeping or Slovenian gastronomy, we are actually talking about ourselves.

The design of Slovenian national symbols was influenced by a series of historical struggles: for independence, to preserve the Slovenian language, for a unified and autonomous political-administrative entity – a united Slovenia – and for fundamental political and human rights. Slovenian national symbols emerged in the 19th century during the country's national awakening. They are enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, and their use is regulated by law.

### THE PRINCE'S STONE

Between 7th and 11th century has the state of Carantania united almost all Alpine and Pannonian Slavs. The principality of Carantania is particularly notable for the ancient ritual of installing Carantanian dukes. The ritual took place at the Prince's Stone in Zollfeld in the area of the present-day Austrian province of Carinthia.

The Prince's Stone was a symbol of political power and it can be seen today in Klagenfurt. Even though Carantania existed for only 300 years, it importantly marked the national identity.

### MT. TRIGLAV

The highest peak of the Julian Alps, Mt. Triglav, which rises to 2864 m, was respected by several peoples (Celts, Romans, Lombards and Slavs) crossing the territories of Slovenia. Mt. Triglav was just a border area until the Enlightenment period in Slovenia.

**Mt. Triglav became the inspiration to several poets, writers, travellers, painters, politicians and it became the symbol of Slovenians.**

Ever since the 19th century, when mountaineering in the Alps became popular, the Triglav Mountain Range has attracted numerous visitors. Through fables connected with it and the beautiful landscape surrounding it, Mount Triglav is one of the most prominent peaks in the eastern Alps. From spring to autumn it is visited by entire processions of mountain lovers. No wonder it is said that "you are not a true Slovenian until you have climbed Triglav".

### THE ALJAŽ TOWER

At the top of the highest Slovenian mountain Triglav the tower was built by priest Jakob Aljaž from the village of Dovje near Mojstrana. He was a great patriot who wanted to resist the Germanization of the Slovenian people in the 19th century at the time of the Austria-Hungary Empire. In this period, Slovenians fought as a nation to establish their own identity while facing the enormous pressure of the Germanization.

As Triglav even at that time represented a symbol of the Slovenian nation, the patriotic priest wanted to make sure it stayed a part of Slovenia. In fact, he noticed that many foreigners were interested in the Slovenian mountains. Jakob Aljaž bought the top of Triglav for one Austro-Hungarian gulden, with the purpose of erecting a tower.

**It has been standing there for 120 years.**

Although the Aljaž Tower is a symbol, its meaning is not the same as that of Triglav, the highest mountain that looks over Slovenia. The Aljaž Tower represents the person who stands on the top of Triglav and tells us that this is the Slovenian soul.

### SLOVENIAN LANGUAGE

The official language in Slovenia is Slovenian, as determined by the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, which also guarantees the Italian and Hungarian minorities the right to use their respective languages and develop their cultures in the areas in which they live.

Although Slovenian is part of the South Slavic language group, it also shares many features with the West Slavic branch. Slovenian has been also influenced by the Roman, Germanic and Finno-Ugric worlds.

About 2.4 million people around the world speak Slovenian as their mother tongue. It is a special language: the most notable is the use of dual form, the grammatical number used for two people or things in all the inflected parts of speech, which is nowadays a very rare phenomenon in linguistics.

**Despite the relatively small area in which Slovenian is spoken and the small number of speakers, linguists have identified forty-six clearly established dialects.**

### NATURE AND BIODIVERSITY

Slovenia's biodiversity has been exceptionally well preserved (through the Natura 2000 Network and other protected areas, such as national, regional and landscape parks). Of all the European Union Member States, Slovenia boasts the biggest share of Natura 2000 sites, as 37% of its territory is covered by Natura 2000.

Slovenia is the habitat of 140 animal and plant species out of 900 protected species which are rare or threatened in the European Union. In other words: as many as 15% of these plant and animal species are present on 0,5% of the European Union's territory. Among them is the brown bear – the largest animal (it weighs more than 300 kilograms) protected in the European Union within the Natura 2000 Network. The banks of Slovenian streams are home to the smallest animal on this list – the minute land snail of the *Vertigo* genus.

### PROTECTED AREAS

**One tenth of Slovenia's territory is protected under nature conservation laws.**

The first natural park in Slovenia was established in 1888 – the forests of Kočevje are the only preserved primeval woodland in Europe. The Triglav National Park, at 83,807 hectares, is the biggest Slovenian park. It was named after Slovenia's highest summit, Triglav (2,864 m). Three regional parks (Kozjansko, Notranjska and Škocjan Caves) and 44 landscape parks are intended for the



protection of heritage and diversified landscape, forests and native plant and animal species.

Valuable natural features also include one of the deepest caves in the world (Čehi II), the stunning intermittent lake (Lake Cerknica) and a UNESCO World Heritage site (Škocjan Caves).

#### WATER

Water is an important natural asset – Slovenia is among the richest in Europe in terms of abundance of water sources. Around 34 billion cubic metres of water flow through Slovenian rivers and streams every year, four times the European average of water quantity per person. As the majority of rivers rise in the Alps, most of the drinking water can be found upstream. The wealth of water in Slovenia is augmented by springs, natural and artificial lakes and part of the northern Adriatic. Water supply in Slovenia is provided to 99% of inhabitants in their households.

All across Slovenia the water is of high quality and safe to drink.

#### THERMAL AND MINERAL SPRINGS

Fifteen health and tourist resorts (Čatež, Rogaška Slatina, Radenci and Podčetrtek are the most widely known) are accredited as natural spas. Some springs have already developed into thermal and medical centres which in addition to the classic treatments and physiotherapy, now offer sophisticated wellness programmes and therapies.

Central and north-east Slovenia (Zasavje, Štajerska and Prekmurje) have the biggest number of health resorts, with slightly less in the south-east (Dolenjska).

#### FOREST

Slovenia is a heavily forested land (58% of its territory is covered by forests), ranking 3rd in Europe.

**In terms of biodiversity, the European Commission has ranked Slovenia's forests 1st among the European Union Member States.**

As 70% of the forests are part of Natura 2000 sites, they represent

the backbone of the European environment protection network in Slovenia.

#### SLOVENIAN GASTRONOMY AND WINES

In the gastronomic field, Slovenia offers a colourful image of diversity. What makes it special is its location at the meeting point of the Alps, the Mediterranean and the Pannonian Plain. After the Second World War, it was greatly influenced by Balkan cuisine. The tastes of Slovenia speak of the delicious creativity of new dishes and eating habits, which today have become 24 gastronomic regions.

Slovenian cuisine is traditionally based on grains, dairy products, meat (especially pork), sea and freshwater fish, vegetables, legumes and tubers, olives and grapes. Slovenia's cuisine combines the influences of the rural population, medieval lords, the bourgeoisie and monastic orders.

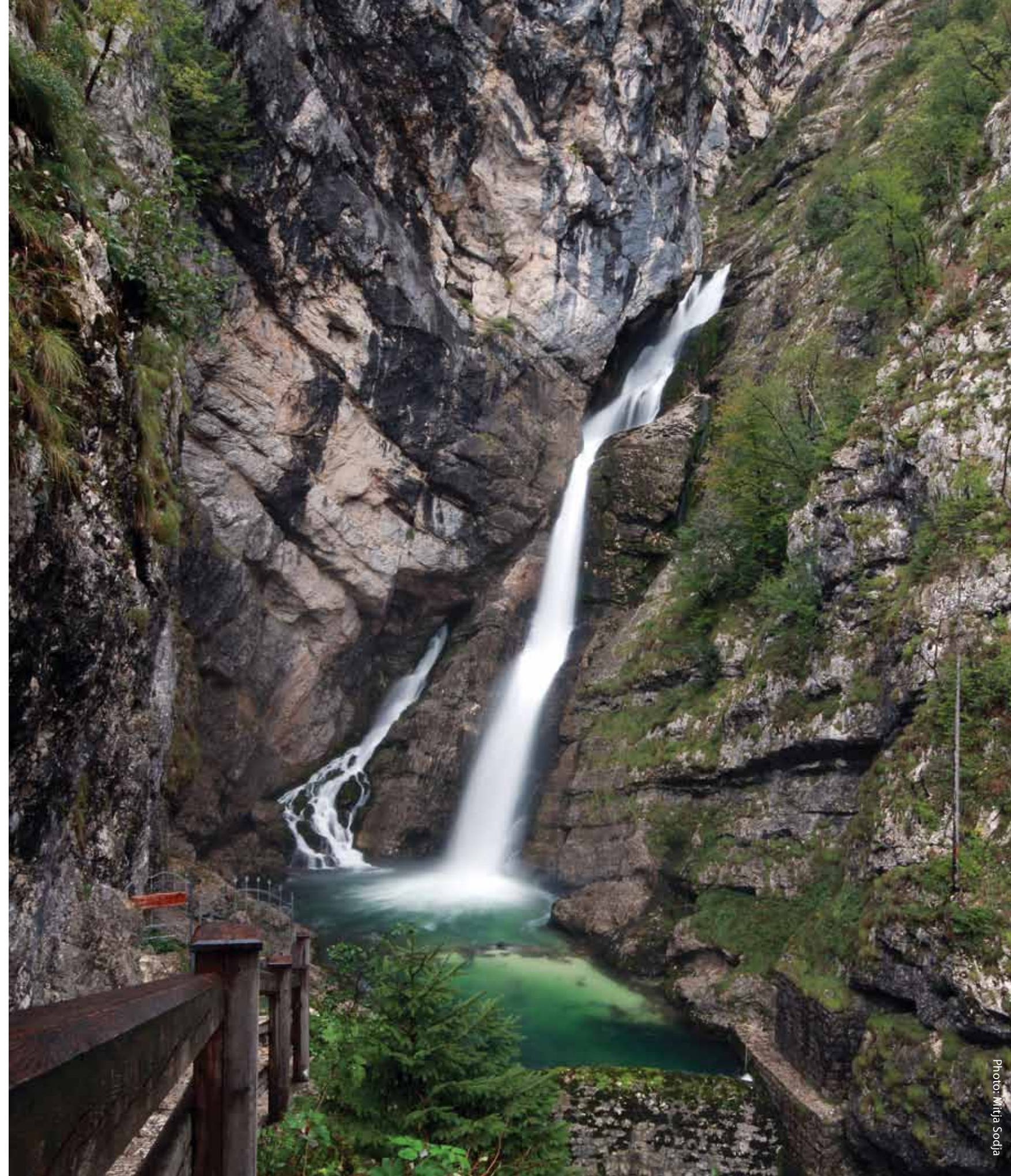
Slovenian gastronomy is enriched with high-quality wines and other alcoholic beverages. Primorska, Posavje and Podravje are the three wine-producing regions of Slovenia, each offering a wide range of outstanding wines. Typical, native wines deserve special mention: *šipon, ranina, cviček, teran, grganja, klarnica, rebula and zelen*.

#### SLOVENIAN PHILHARMONIC

In a beautiful building in the centre of Ljubljana, in Congress Square and with the Ljubljana castle in the background, the foundations of what the Slovenian Philharmonic is today were forged over many years. The main musical institution with the sign of the year 1701 on the building's façade has witnessed its long tradition. The institution has created beautiful and magnificent musical moments for generations of Slovenian music lovers.

**The Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra is, with its predecessors, placed alongside the oldest orchestras in the world.**

Among the many distinguished artists who became honorary members of the Slovenian Philharmonic and its predecessor, the Philharmonic Society, were Joseph Haydn, Ludwig van Beethoven, Niccolò Paganini, Johannes Brahms, Carlos Kleiber, Uroš Krek, Primož Ramovš and many others. The Slovenian Philharmonic has always worked with illustrious names in music.



**BEEKEEPING**

Beekeeping occupies a special place in Slovenia's economy as one of its oldest traditional crafts. According to the statistics, Slovenians are a genuine beekeeping nation, as a relatively significant four out of every thousand of its residents are engaged in this activity. Beekeeping is a traditional agricultural activity in Slovenia and enjoys a status equal to that of other types of agricultural activity.

The Carniolan honeybee (*Apis mellifera carnica*) or the Carniolan grey bee, is an autochthonous species in Slovenia, which means that no other bee species are allowed to be kept. It is the only honeybee species protected by EU law and widely known among beekeepers as an industrious, modest, and tame honeybee species. It has an excellent sense of direction. It has adapted to our grazing and climatic conditions over thousands of years. It is also a very tame insect, which is the reason for its popularity.

**THE OLM**

The olm (scientific name *Proteus anguinus*) is endemic to the Dinaric Karst and the only vertebrate in Europe that lives solely in the subterranean world. Its size of 25 to 30 centimetres makes it the largest such animal in the world. The tailed amphibian belongs to the ancient family of Proteidae and is a truly precious living gem and the symbol of Slovenian natural heritage. In Slovenia, the olm is a species which is protected by law and is included in the list of rare and endangered species since 1982.

An olm can live for up to 120 years. So what is the secret to its eternal youth? First, it has great regenerative capacity, being able to replace a lost limb with a new one. And an olm can survive for up to 10 years without food. The enthusiasm of scientists and the general public over this inhabitant of the Slovenian underground has continued since the discovery. But scientists are still looking for an-

swers to many questions relating to the mysterious animal, which you can see in the Vivarium of Postojna Cave.

Due to the olm and other rare inhabitants of the caves, Postojna Cave is one of the cradles of speleobiology as a scientific discipline.

**THE LIPIZZANERS**

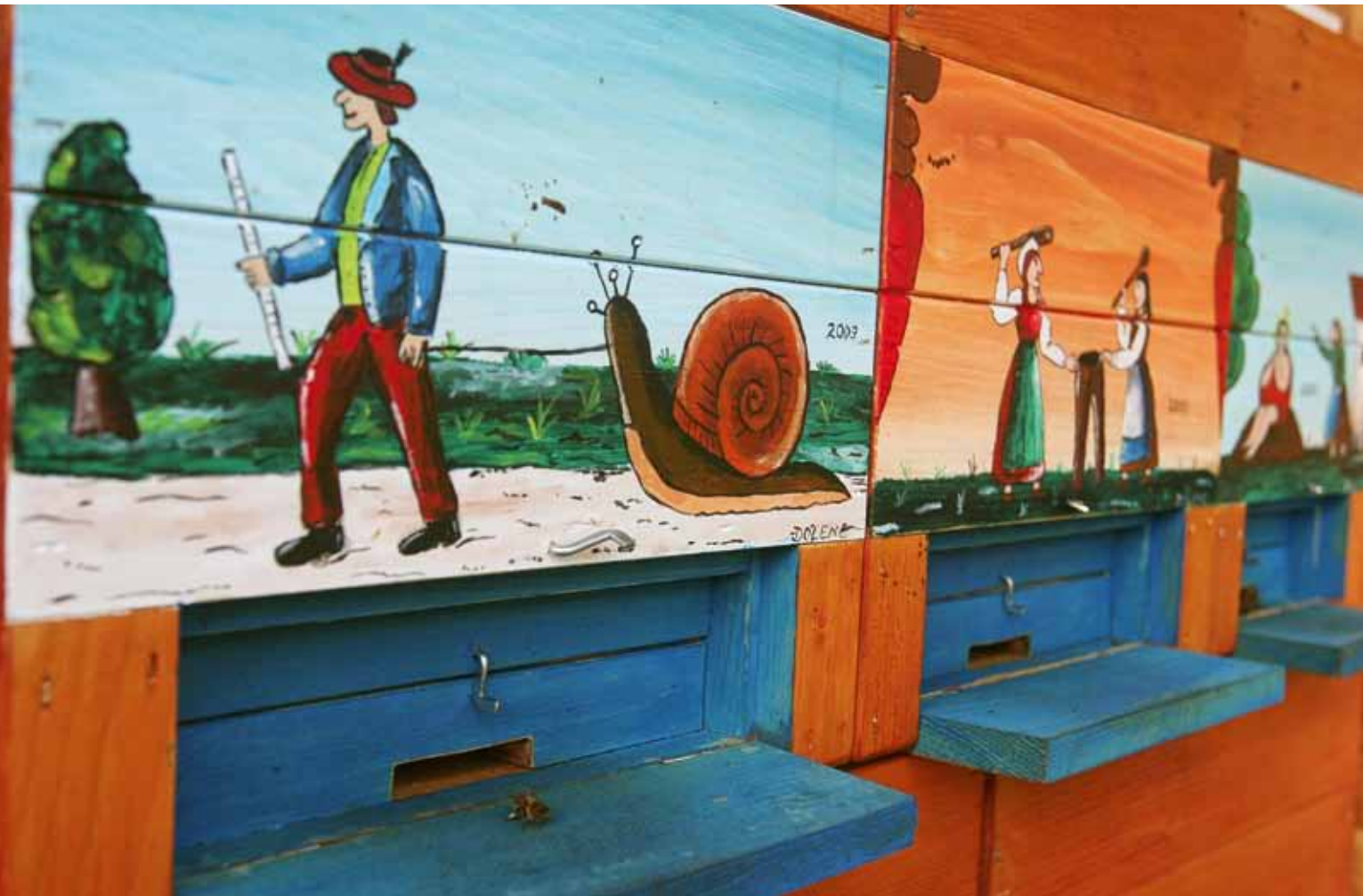
The Lipizzaner is one of the oldest cultural horse breeds in the world. The name of the breed is derived from Lipica, its point of origin in the Slovenian Karst. The cradle of the Lipizzaner is the Lipica Stud Farm, established by the Habsburg Archduke Charles II in 1580.

**The Lipizzaner is one of the foundations of Slovenian pride and a symbol of which**

**we Slovenians boast.**

The Lipizzaner is a harmoniously built, elegant and noble horse of medium frame suitable for performing classic dressage elements, riding and coach-drawing. It has a benevolent nature and a vivacious temperament.

Lipica trains first-class horses for the Spanish Riding School, where they demonstrate the haute école or "high school" movements of classical dressage. This is the highest degree of training that a horse can achieve. It is an extremely demanding equestrian art whose movements are based on those naturally performed by the horse when at liberty. Lipizzaners are made to measure for this and are certainly the best at it of all breeds of horse.



## POSTAGE STAMP MARKS 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE

# Symbol of Slovenia – the Triglav mountain

DANILO GOLOB  
PHOTO: POST OF SLOVENIA



Since 1991, Pošta Slovenije (Slovenian Postal Service) has issued more than 900 postage stamps. They depict Slovenia's natural and cultural heritage, technical achievements, art, famous Slovenians, sports and other major events. It has now honoured the 25 years of Slovenian independence by issuing a special stamp depicting Mount Triglav, which is both the country's highest peak and symbol of its national identity.

**Back on the 10th and 20th anniversaries of Slovenian independence, the Post of Slovenia issued special commemorative stamps, and last summer it held a competition for a commemorative stamp with which it intended to mark the 25th anniversary of this country.**

Regarding the basic concepts and selection it consulted with the Protocol Service of the Republic of Slovenia and the Government Communication Office, which is also marking the 25th anniversary of Slovenian independence by setting up a thematic website [www.slovenija25.si](http://www.slovenija25.si). This is a contact point for chronological and historical data, current overviews from the areas of culture, home affairs, foreign affairs, tourism, sports and more, as well as a source of rich images and video material. Two decades and a half of the independent country are also shown through numbers and statistics.

The Commission for Issuing Postage Stamps and Indicia selected from among the entries received the creative offering from the design company Villa Creativa, featuring a photograph of Triglav, the highest mountain in Slovenia. The photograph is the work of professional photographer Joco Žnidaršič, who is featured in this edition of Sinfo.

The special commemorative stamp was issued on 27 May 2016, and on the same day was presented to the Slovenian National Assembly. Immediately upon the minting of commemorative coins by the Bank of Slovenia, the Post of Slovenia will also issue a philately/numismatic set. The precise date for the issuing of the coins is not yet set, all we know is the fact that it will be in the second quarter of this year.

### SYMBOL OF SLOVENIA

In a plebiscite held 25 years ago, Slovenian citizens voted in a democratic process in favour of independence, and achieved an independent state through peaceful means.

**In this way we fulfilled the centuries-old dream of generations of Slovenian women and men.**

Those generations had built their identity and national consciousness through culture, language and symbols, prominent among them Mount Triglav.

The highest peak of the Julian Alps, Triglav was revered by the various peoples (Celts, Romans, Lombards and Slavs) who crossed the territory of present-day Slovenia at one time or another. For a time the mountain represented little more than a border region, but it was invested with greater significance during the Age of Enlightenment in Slovenia. Triglav became the inspiration for numerous poets, authors, travel writers, painters and politicians.

Atop the summit of Triglav stands the Aljažev Stolp turret – a mountaineer's refuge and the bastion of Slovenian identity, erected in 1895 by Jakob Aljaž, then parish priest in Dovje. Since 1999 Aljažev Stolp has been protected as a cultural monument of national importance, and as such it is highly important in maintaining Slovenia's cultural heritage. The symbolic significance of Aljažev Stolp differs from the symbolic significance of Triglav itself, which as the highest mountain watches over Slovenia. Aljažev Stolp represents what stands on top of Mount Triglav and tells us that this is our Slovenian soul.

A magnificent view opens up from the summit of Triglav, stretching all the way from the Adriatic Sea, via the Dolomites and High Tauern to the Karavanke, the Kamnik-Savinja Alps, the Pohorje, right across Slovenia to the highest peaks of the Julian Alps. Each year Triglav is visited by huge numbers of people, and climbing to the summit holds special importance for mountain hikers.

**Courage, resolve and unity, all these are represented in Triglav, whose symbolic message is also included in the emblems of statehood, and Slovenia is the only country whose national symbols – the coat of arms and flag – feature a specifically identified mountain.**

The message inherent in Triglav also convinced the Commission for Issuing Postage Stamps and Indicia, which selected the special stamp to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the independent Republic of Slovenia.



PRIME MINISTER MIRO CERAR

**“Government will do everything in its power to continue the positive trends, this year as well as in the future.”**

MATEJA MALNAR ŠTEMBAL  
VESNA ŽARKOVIČ  
PHOTO: STA

It took a lot of courage, enthusiasm and determination to democratically and peacefully achieve our autonomy and independence 25 years ago. This was a realisation of a 150-year dream of many generations of Slovenians. After several years of economical and financial crisis, the mismanagement of banks and companies as well as the state itself, it is time to look into the future with optimism. With a dash of reality, of course, he stresses. This is also reflected in the indicators of economic growth and GDP, a decrease in unemployment, increase in the employment rate and the exchange of goods, and we are also slowly reducing the budget deficit.

**Prime Minister, this year Slovenia marks the 25th anniversary of its independence. How do you see Slovenia today?**

We are constantly making progress. Obstacles should be seen as challenges. We must all be aware that the crisis we have been facing will not disappear on its own. It would be unfair to my fellow citizens if I said that all our troubles are over, but I can promise that the government will do everything in its power to continue the positive trends, this year as well as in the future. We will continue to preserve and improve the good things from the previous periods, while at the same time continuing to overcome numerous bad practices which have accumulated in the past. This is not always an easy process, but although an upturn cannot be achieved overnight, we will persevere.

The welfare of the people is of key importance. The state exists because of them, and especially for them. We are all the state. It is therefore important to bear in mind that each individual can contribute to Slovenia's growth and further development.

I believe that, in the following years, Slovenia will become a confident, modern, brave, developed and optimistic country. The same goes for our people. I am confident that, with positive common energy, we will contribute to a significant improvement of our economic, social and living conditions.

Our people are our greatest treasure. However, we must not forget about our outstanding natural treasures. Both at home and abroad, Slovenia is associated with the green colour. Likewise, we use the "I Feel Slovenia" slogan to describe our country as a place of peace and excitement, which stimulates an active life and the feel of joy when one connects with nature. Slovenia offers many opportunities to always remain in contact with something primal, be it water,

the smell of the forest, or the taste of authentic food. This is why the sustainable or green tourism as well as eco-tourism were set as the foundation for future development in tourism.

**The historic events which occurred 25 years ago were unprecedented in the sense of unity. How can we show the young generations that the values from that period are still important today?**

Twenty-five years ago, we proved that everything is possible if we step together. Later, however, we were lulled by what was called a success story and we forgot that, in order to have a good life, we must make efforts for it every day. I am confident that the economic crisis made us more mature and that we are slowly beginning to understand how important it is to responsibly manage the state finances, prevent corruption, respect the law and, of course, take care of our fellow citizens in every way.

However, values have little meaning if only written on paper. We must live them. Both at home and in the society. If they want to, Slovenians can be hard-working, persistent, brave and inventive. As a nation, we were not spared anything, which means we possess all necessary attributes to remain successful in the future, but I would like to repeat that this applies only if we really focus on these characteristics. If we continue to waste our time arguing and sometimes even belittling each other, we will never become a successful, developing and sustainable society.

The right thing to do would be to pass on our positive characteristics to young generations as they bring new knowledge and new findings to the older generations. We should listen to them because the older have much to learn from the young. The young

have a fresh and unburdened perspective and new ideas they are not afraid to put in practice, i.e. from the intriguing design and technical products which facilitate or perhaps even save lives to different gaming platforms.

**For instance, in 2016, the Slovenian Enterprise Fund will award €131 million of financial incentives, which will be sufficient to support around 1234 companies. As many as €38 million of this sum will be allocated to young companies, covering the needs of 443 such businesses, while approximately €10 million will be earmarked for start-ups.**

In order to secure a bright future for everyone, we have to hold an open intergenerational dialogue. It is important that those generations who contributed to the independence and those born in the new state understand and work with each other.

At the end of the day, we all learn from each other. The older people should give the young generations the roots and then allow them to develop and become responsible. The future of the state and its citizens can only be achieved through respectful and constructive interpersonal relationships as well as shared knowledge and experience.

During a recent session of the Children's Parliament, I called upon the young generations not to forget how important they are and that no one can make decisions for them. I encouraged them to never give up and to always try to achieve good and beneficial goals.

**Which are the main achievements of our independent country that you would highlight?**

It is a fact that we yearned for independence for hundreds of years. Such an achievement is perceived remarkable also on a global scale. The main benefits reached during and after obtaining independence were also the democratization of the society, the raised awareness about the respect for human rights and a country governed by the rule of law, and a successful integration of Slovenia into important international institutions ranging from the United

Nations to the European Union and NATO. In the initial period, after Slovenia achieved its independence, we were called the "success story" although we later proved insufficiently mature to continue on the path of success. We managed to destroy our achievements due to our own greed and quarrels further fuelled by the international financial crisis that finally forced us to reflect on ourselves. Now we have to take the maturity exam all over again – if we manage to give up bad practices from the past and take advantage of our potential, we will succeed. This is something the government and I are working tirelessly to achieve. Over the following years, Slovenia has the potential to become a successful state in which young people will continue to have full opportunities for good-quality education and where one will be able to provide a decent life for themselves and their family, and a country whose citizens will continue to have an adequate health care and will be well taken care of once they grow old.

Twenty-five years is a long time in the life of an individual, but it is merely a drop in the ocean for a state. I believe, however, that we have reached a lot. Both as a state and as individuals. After becoming a separate entity, we were facing difficult tasks that had to be carried out at that precise moment – we had to introduce the institutes in all three branches of government, establish the system of public finance and key institutions, achieve the international recognition as a state, find new economic markets, establish ourselves anew etc.

Some things that we could only dream of 25 years ago are now taken for granted. We also tend to forget about certain differences.

**In 1991, for example, starting a business took 3–6 months, while it now takes one day to set up a sole proprietorship or several days for a simple L.L.C. Using an on-line system called e-uprava, public administration services can be utilised from home; people can acquire documents, file applications thorough the internet and do much more literally from their living rooms.**

I believe that Slovenia realised a lot by entering the European

Union – a big, joint and unified economic market, a free movement of labour and capital, a common currency, and other things. By joining NATO, Slovenia acquired a level of security which we could never have reached on our own despite a much larger investment.

In today's world, security is of key importance. We are fast to forget this. Of course, one should also not neglect freedom, human rights and tolerance. We must maintain an appropriate balance between these values, which is a key goal for the government and its institutions every day.

**According to some people, Slovenians do not emphasize the numerous positive sides of our reality enough. Most foreign visitors are pleasantly surprised by the beautiful nature, high quality of life, healthy way of living, good cars, healthy food etc. We take certain things for granted, such as, for example, drinking tap water. Are we Slovenians truly too critical, negative and pessimistic?**

I believe it is in our collective nature to expect something bad to happen after enjoying too much good things. But while it is okay to be realistic, it is also wrong to be pessimistic without a reason. The right measure of optimism and confidence can never hurt. Perhaps we emphasize too much that we are a small nation and a small state. Subconsciously, this sends a message that we will never be heard. But that perception is wrong. Slovenia's voice is heard, and we never have to be ashamed of it. I always tell foreign politicians and statesmen that, in the sense of its spirit and achievement, Slovenia is a large country.

Of course, we have to work on strengthening our collective self-awareness as citizens. We must be aware that our independence was achieved by the entire population as we all are the state. We must encourage displays of flags during national commemorations and other important events. We have to respect the positive sides of our distant and half-forgotten past. In 25 years, Slovenia has reached the point when it has to assert itself as a green, active and healthy state aiming towards a sustainable development and green technologies. We are a state of innovative and creative people. It is all right to perceive our country as such. All of this is incorporated in our promotional "I Feel Slovenia" slogan.

However, it is also good to remember that not everything we have should be taken for granted. In the future, we will have to make continuous efforts to preserve Slovenia and its wealth and successfully develop it for our common good.

**Compared to other European countries, Slovenia is still a very social state, especially in education and health care, although we cannot overlook the fact that some people live in poverty. Does Slovenia plan to maintain the high level of social rights in the future as well?**

In the first nine months of last year, the average registered unemployment rate already decreased to 12,4%, and the government worked for greater accessibility and social inclusion of the most vulnerable groups of population by implementing the law on exercising the rights from public funds. We also prepared some aid packages for those citizens who are the weakest in social sense, with the aim to ease the position of individuals who are in debt and rely on social transfers; the package includes three important steps: debt relief, help in cases of evictions, and the introduction of prepaid cards. In the beginning of the year, we also raised the minimal income to the level which was predicted by the Social Assistance Benefits Act. In its fight against poverty, the Government is also paying attention to the institute of social activity.

**We do not want to reduce the poverty level by handing out more and more social support, but rather by increasing the employment rate and implementing changes in the labour market regulation.**

We are adapting the active employment policy, which had 48% of all unemployed included as at 2015, especially for the long-term unemployed, the elderly, people with low education, and the young generations. At the end of the year, we also implemented several measures which specify temporary support for employers in the employment of older individuals, while also encouraging all insured persons to stick with full employment so that they continue to be active.

Some measures from the health reform are about to be launched with the same basic principles as the poverty reduction measures: we do not want to increase the number of visits to health institutions but rather improve the health of our citizens. By implementing preventative measures, we would like to reduce doctor appointments as a healthy population is also a happy one, healthy people are less likely to miss work, and there are fewer work-related accidents and forms of modern disease such as stress, burnt-out



and similar. We will take special care that the new steps in health care will ensure cost-effectiveness and a fair use of available assets.

**One of today's greatest diseases is certainly the youth unemployment, not only in Slovenia but also in other EU member states. How is the Government dealing with the problem?**

In the last two years, the Government and the state economy have managed to reduce youth unemployment.

**The unemployment rate among people under 25 dropped from 20.5% in the third quarter of 2014 to 14.5% in the third quarter of 2015. Four thousand young people got jobs. At the same time, the youth unemployment rate in the euro area was 22.4%, whereas the unemployment rate in the entire EU was 20.2%.**

The overall unemployment rate is being constantly reduced and more and more unemployed people are getting jobs. I estimate that, besides youth programmes and an active employment policy, we have to think of future careers of the young generations already at the time of their education. We have introduced a system of recording and recognising informal competences, there are more practical trainings during the education, and more and more methods for encouraging creativity, ambition and innovative ideas are adopted in high schools and universities.

I am glad to see that young people have taken destiny into their own hands by actively thinking of their professional path and they are unafraid of the employment or self-employment challenges. Take a look at how many innovative start-up companies have been set up recently, most of them led by young people.

**What other programmes did the government prepare for developing youth entrepreneurship?**

**This year and the next, the government will allocate more than €182 million both from the domestic budget and the European Social Fund for the active employment policy. This is 35% more than last year.**

The programme, which will include almost 49,000 people, will aim at increasing the youth employment rate.



In the last few years, the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs has been carrying out several projects which help the young in their professional efforts. Besides numerous financial aids, there are also programmes to start innovative companies, there are university incubators, young people who register as self-employed for the first time can be partially excused from the payment of compulsory social insurance contributions, we encourage social entrepreneurship, green jobs, youth employment at a regional and local level (taking over farms), and more.

Young generations represent an exceptional potential for the society, so it would be a pity not to do everything that is in our power to utilise this. I believe we should place great emphasis on the inter-generational and inter-ministerial cooperation, which both lead to a better future. For both, the young and the old.

On the other hand, Slovenia has much to offer to foreign students. In the current academic year, the 90,000 Slovenian students were joined in their education programmes by 2300 foreign students. They have the same rights as Slovenian students – the right to acquire a student ID, subsidized meals, monthly transport tickets and lodgings in dorms. This kind of free exchange is enabled by the Erasmus+, Erasmus Mundus and Ceepus programmes, bilateral scholarships and other forms of cooperation. The university, tutors and student organisations help foreign students to adapt to their surroundings, and get involved in the student life.

#### **How will the government confront the issue of the increasingly ageing population?**

Multiple projections anticipate that by 2060, Slovenia will be home to more than two million people about one third of which will be the older population. When speaking of the elderly, we should not perceive them as a burden to public finances in terms of social security, health and long-term care. Nevertheless, a high number of elderly people means that our citizens live long. We are aware that, as a state, we need to ensure the correct transfer of funds from the state budget to pension funds. Long-term projections of the European Commission show that, by 2060, steady policies in Slovenia will enable public expenditures for financing social security systems to reach a quarter of the GDP, and, by 2020, there will be approximately 8000 less economically active individuals per year. The Government is already tackling the challenges arising from the White Paper for the Development of the Pension System. We

are aware that long-term care will have to be connected into a unified system, thus ensuring a better overview and efficient use of funds, while the demographic changes will also increase the need to build infrastructure and adjust traffic policies to the needs of the older generations.

#### **Despite the geographic size, we are a diverse and successful state in many areas, such as sports, science, education and numerous innovations. As the saying goes, we Slovenians are stubborn and persistent and sometimes even difficult to understand. Do foreigners perceive us as such?**

I often get the feeling that foreigners see us better than we see ourselves. This stands for both the general and professional public. Foreign perceptions of our progress do not always coincide with the local ones. This probably cannot be completely avoided. We will always be perceived differently by foreigners. Perhaps even we present ourselves differently to them. Confidently and openly. When we speak about foreigners in Slovenia, the direct contact and their experience with us are very important. However, the media play an important role as well; if our positive achievements are not reported on or not presented objectively, people will be convinced that everything is wrong even if that is not the case.

Besides a healthy, green environment, Slovenia offers further structural reforms, the start-up of investment projects and a better professional environment. And we should also not forget about the ever more developing industry – tourism. After a record year of 2015, we expect the positive trend of growth in the number of local and foreign tourists and their overnight stays to continue in 2016 as well.

We should also add that Slovenia could, in certain fields, be a role model for the other developed countries. We often overlook such advantages or take them for granted, whereas foreigners living in Slovenia often emphasize them, including the high-quality public health service, maternity care leave, early children's education, the kindergarten system, a healthy environment and similar.

**Recently, the University of Yale ranked Slovenia the fifth most environmentally conscious country among the 180 countries around the world.**

According to the Euro Health Consumer Index, we jumped from the 19th to 15th out of 35 countries in terms of user-friendly health care. Even the latest assessments in competitiveness (International Monetary Fund, the World Bank in the Doing Business report, the World Economic Forum) place Slovenia higher than in previous years.

#### **What kind of Slovenia would you like to see in the future? Where do you see it in 25 years? In which areas of life will we see most of the changes and what will these changes be like?**

I am both a realist and an optimist when it comes to further development. I believe we need to draw a moral lesson from the crisis of the past several years, which will help us develop our future. A future we dreamed of 25 years ago. We started with a lot of optimism and great potential, which was lost somewhere along the way due to wrong decisions and actions, and now is the time to look at the crisis as a development phase every country has to go through, and learn from it. Difficult times are an opportunity for a

joint search for solutions and visions. Each person has a role they are meant to play. Most of all, we have a special responsibility towards young people. We have to show them that progress does not come from bemoaning the past, that the present is full of beautiful and good things, and that a better future can be achieved and is already at our doorstep.

We have to shape the future ourselves. I am confident to say that Slovenia will develop into a more ecologically conscious country, where the forest, water and other natural treasures will be understood as key resources for us all. I am also convinced that we will continue to encourage and develop a successful and sustainable economy. The Government's goal is that 25 years from now our society will still be democratic and tolerant and that people of all ages will benefit from suitable health and social care. Of course, changes in the following years will occur in all areas, which is why we have to encourage skills that will enable a positive development for us and our descendants alike.



## CAPTURING SLOVENIA'S WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE IN PHOTOS

# Veteran photographer Joco Žnidaršič was there

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ,  
PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVES



Photo journalists of the newspaper Delo spread around the country to take scores of fascinating photographs depicting Slovenia's Ten-Day War for independence and subsequent events. It was Joco Žnidaršič's iconic photograph that showed a line of Slovenian Alpine climbers and mountain rescuers proudly displaying the Slovenian flag for the first time without the five-pointed star of Yugoslavia. The photo shows them standing on top of Mount Triglav capped with a thick layer of snow to honour Slovenia's independence. Žnidaršič, who was on the editorial board of the central Slovenian publishing house Delo since 1975, has witnessed many events which changed people's lives – and he himself has also been a part of them.

### It was his idea to display the flag on Mount Triglav to commemorate independence.

"As the editor at Delo, I had the responsibility of selecting photographs for a special edition on independence. I remembered a photograph where a flag was at half-mast at the time when Tito died. The photo was taken by a policeman named Kofler. I was exceptionally fond of that photo, so much that I also used it in the book, *Titova poslednja bitka* (Tito's Last Battle). And then I said to myself: Let's show a flag on Mount Triglav. Before that, I went to Ludvik Toplak who was my friend in the Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia, and asked him what could be done if we didn't even have our own Slovenian flag or coat-of-arms. His response was simple: display the tricolour without the five-pointed star then. We waited for suitable weather and when the skies cleared, we were on our way. A helicopter took us to the top of the holy mountain on 12 June, where I was taking photos for some 3 to 4 hours. As the sun was setting, the light became more and more beautiful. I took a great number of photos and was pleased with them. But the best time was just before nightfall. The view towards Ljubljana was the prettiest due to the exceptional shadow Mount Triglav cast over half of the country. There was so much snow that Aljaž Tower was buried under it. The group had to descend 10 metres from the top of the mountain and they lit up torches in the gloomy light of dusk.

### The atmosphere was truly exceptional. That photo became iconic because of its popularity.

The newspaper *Kmečki glas* even issued postcards with that image."

How was it during the Ten-Day War? "I captured the celebrations upon the declaration of independence in Republic Square. I took the photographs to Delo, and then went to Cankarjev Dom Cultural and Congress Centre to party until the next morning. And then early in the morning soon after arriving home, I got a call that there were tanks and barricades set up in the town. I went to Trzin where I found overturned tanks and buses, blockades and ambushes. I recorded everything with my camera and published those photos in a book on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of independence.

What do you think about present-day photographers? "There are many excellent photographers at Delo and in other media outlets. Those involved in sports are really good since the subject is particularly rewarding in terms of successes of our sportspeople. They always do something different and are looking for original approaches."

After 25 years of independence, you perceive Slovenia with some disappointment. "It's not how we imagined it to be. We could have been on top of the world, particularly with the wonders and natural beauty of our landscape and the diligence of the Slovenian people. Unfortunately, there's too much discord and division between people. However, I am exceptionally proud of our successful sportspeople who unite us all. I love this Slovenia of ours."



## EDUCATION SINCE INDEPENDENCE

# High-quality, all-inclusive and accessible

NATAŠA GERKEŠ  
PHOTO: MINISTRY ARCHIVES



In the 25 years of Slovenia's independence, the country's education system has moved dynamically up a steep path. Today we can assert that the system is high-quality and compares well on a European scale, and as a result young Slovenians are well educated. This is demonstrated by international education research and, just as importantly, by the successes of Slovenian pupils and students in international knowledge competitions.

## SLOVENIA AMONG THE TOP COUNTRIES IN NURSERY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Since the beginning of the Republic of Slovenia until the present day, preschool education in public nursery schools has recorded high-quality development and progress. In international terms they rank at the very top, in part because alongside their primary service of nurturing, they add elements of pure education for young children. In 1991 less than half of all children attended preschool, while in the 2014/15 school year attendance stood at 76.8 percent, which ranks Slovenia among the top in the world.

In order to make information about nursery schools accessible to all, the ministry set up on its official website a special Info Point, enabling parents and other interested parties to obtain in one place all the necessary information about preschool (prices, types of programmes, locations, available places, expected waiting periods). This helps them select a nursery school that meets their desires and needs.

The Government's attention was not just focused on establishing the conditions for high-quality preschool services in nursery schools, but also on improving the financial accessibility of the schools. In particular the Government improved the financial accessibility of nursery schools for those families with two or more children at nursery school at the same time.

**For a second child the Government covers 70% of the family's cost of nursery school, while third or more children can attend for free.**

## EIGHT TO NINE-YEAR PROGRAMME

Up until 1999, primary education in Slovenia lasted eight years. Then in 1999 the project of a nine-year primary programme was initiated at 17 primary schools, and all primary schools switched to the new programme in the 2003/2004 school year. Children then started attending primary school when they were six.

In substantive terms the nine-year programme brought changes to the curriculum, especially in the form of new syllabuses which are target-oriented, meaning that they define what pupils should achieve in an individual class or grade. Equally we defined the standards of knowledge that are the basis for verifying and assessing knowledge.

The introduction of the nine-year programme involved the teaching of the first foreign language being shifted to the 4th grade of primary school, while the second foreign language gained a place among the required elective subjects in the third educational period. While the first two foreign languages remain English or German, the range of other foreign languages is wider, growing over the years to number 12 different languages. Most recently a syllabus for learning and teaching Chinese was adopted.

The biggest shift in the area of teaching foreign languages came with the revised Elementary School Act of 2011, which envisaged the gradual introduction of the first foreign language in the 2nd grade of primary school starting in the 2013/14 school year. This means that starting in 2016/17 every second-year pupil in Slovenia will already be learning a foreign language, and whoever wants to, can already learn a foreign language as an elective in the first year. The same applies to children in the ethnically mixed areas.

#### SPECIAL ATTENTION FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

**In the period since independence, the Slovenian education system has given particular attention to children with special needs.**

Such children can enrol in various programmes, and for each child a guidance committee determines their individual educational needs, while an expert group prepares an individualised programme for them. In 25 years we have established a system in Slovenia that recognises children with learning difficulties in specific areas, and all children that need it receive special educational assistance.

#### 14 PERCENT OF PRIMARY PUPILS ATTEND MUSIC SCHOOL

In 1991 there were 53 public music schools operating in Slovenia, attended by a total of 18,867 pupils, representing 6.86% of the entire population of primary school children. Today there are 54 public and 13 private music schools. In the 2015/16 school year a total of 25,448 pupils are attending music schools, representing 14 percent of the entire primary school population. We are one of the rare European countries that finances and directly supports the development of public music education.

#### SCHOOL FOOD

Slovenia devotes special attention to children's nutrition at school. Back in 1992 the Slovenian Government ensured funds for subsidised school meals for socially at-risk children in primary and secondary schools, so that schools would provide one meal daily to all pupils whose parents could not provide it.

**Every year since 1992, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports has subsidised morning snacks at school for pupils, and since 2010 lunch, too.**

Furthermore in July of last year the Slovenian National Assembly adopted a law under which in this calendar year a change to the subsidising of lunch took effect. It expands the circle of those eligible for subsidised school lunches. The amended law still grants free

lunches to pupils for whom the net average wage in Slovenia does not exceed 18 percent per family member. Since January 2016 this eligibility is also granted to pupils for whom the average monthly income per person determined in a decision on child supplement amounts to 36% of the average net wage in Slovenia.

In the 2015/2016 school year 98 percent of pupils are registered for school morning snack, and more than half of them receive it for free. A total of 73 percent of pupils are registered for school lunch, with a tenth of them receiving it for free. In secondary schools 66 percent of pupils are registered for morning snack, of which 43 percent receive subsidies.

#### IT AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION

Slovenian education is keeping pace with global and European trends in introducing and applying information and communication technology in educational institutions (e.g. including use in all subjects and in related work with teachers and school managers, introducing the use of internet services, which is closely connected with the functioning of the Academic and Research Network of Slovenia (Arnes), development of e-materials and e-textbooks that are free for users, all supported by ensuring infrastructure provision for institutions). With additional funding, including European funds, the ministry is promoting the creation of e-textbooks. Currently there is a total of 42, of which 25 have already been confirmed. All e-textbooks are interactive and as such promote self-learning.

**A total of 710 institutions (nursery schools, primary, secondary and post-secondary schools, institutions for children and youths with special needs, music schools, school halls of residence, folk high schools) have been supplied with 2,265 PCs, 1,303 laptops and 113 projectors.**

Using optic connections with speeds of 1GB/s we linked up 755 education and research institutions to the Arnes network, covering 70% of all people attending educational establishments in Slovenia.

Slovenian education is currently around the EU average in terms of use of ICT in teaching and learning. As for areas in which we

have systematically invested, we are actually among the best in Europe (e.g. teacher training, teacher support, virtual communities of teachers, online classrooms, use of computers in various school spaces).

#### 98 PERCENT OF CHILDREN GO ON TO SECONDARY SCHOOL

The proportion of children who enrol in secondary school after completing their primary education has been constant in recent years at 98 percent. The share of young people aged between 15 and 19 enrolled in secondary schools stands at 77 percent. In 1991 this share stood at 63.5 percent. We are also one of the European countries to achieve a less than 5% drop out rate of those attending primary and secondary education.

In the 25-year period the secondary school sector has been strongly impacted by demographic shifts in the population, where the number of school pupils first increased, then over the past 15 years

fell markedly. This has also been reflected in the number of secondary education institutions.

The overhaul of vocational and professional education saw the introduction of the vocational matura (school leaving) exam, where candidates demonstrate standards of knowledge set out in the education targets of secondary technical and other professional education programmes, vocational/technical education, vocational courses and qualifications for pursuing higher education. In 2007 the first generation of secondary school pupils took the vocational matura exam.

Passing the vocational matura exam in secondary vocational education and vocational/technical education programmes signals the attainment of vocational qualifications and the possibility of enrolling in post-secondary and higher-education-level professional programmes. While completing the vocational matura it is possible to take an additional (general) matura subject, which enables ac-





cess to university programmes and a high level of progression to tertiary education.

In the current period we are striving to link vocational education increasingly to the labour market, so we are also drawing up proposals to enhance a dual system such as traineeship, individual learning contracts, open learning environments and so forth.

#### **SLOVENIA FULFILLING THE PRINCIPLE OF LIFELONG LEARNING**

Slovenia has encountered challenges that touch closely upon the development and implementation of adult education. Demographic changes, structural changes in the economy, social and technological development, and globalisation that leave a mark on all segments of society, are the circumstances demanding that the principle of lifelong learning be implemented in adult education.

**The overarching indicator, which is also monitored on the EU level, is the enrolment of adults aged 25 to 64 in lifelong learning. This rose in Slovenia up until 2010, when it stood at 16.2%, placing the country in a very high position among EU countries.**

After that year lower enrolment was recorded both in Slovenia and the majority of comparable countries.

Adults wishing to obtain a primary education can enrol in the primary education for adults programme. The share of adults aged 15 and over who have not completed primary education fell between 1991 and 2015 from 17.4% to 3.6%.

Adults seeking secondary education can enrol in secondary programmes that are practically adapted for adult needs and factors. The share of adults aged 15 and over who have completed secondary education rose between 1991 and 2015 from 43.1% to 52.7%. The share of all people with secondary education and higher increased in that period from 52% to as much as 74%.

Adults can also acquire knowledge and skills under special adult programmes. This area includes publicly recognised programmes adopted by the competent minister of education, study circles and other programmes designed by organisations in line with the current needs of individuals, the business sector and companies.

The important publicly recognised programmes include those intended for vulnerable target groups of adults, such as training programmes for life success, foreign language courses, Slovenian as a second and foreign language, initial integration of immigrants, computer literacy for adults and project learning for young adults (a programme for drop-outs). Since 1991 to the present day, eight special publicly recognised programmes have been developed for various vulnerable adult groups, with roughly at least 10,000 adults enrolling annually.

In 1991 the Slovenian Government established the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, which serves as the main public institution supporting development and guidance in the area of adult education in Slovenia. In its time of operation it has developed and implemented activities in support of adult education and learning: information and guidance for adults provided on a regional level, independent learning centres and a knowledge exchange. In addition, a Slovenian model for self-evaluation in adult education has been developed, Offering Quality Education to Adults, which has been applied by 69 educational organisations.

#### **POST-SECONDARY PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION COMPLETES TERTIARY EDUCATION SYSTEM**

Post-secondary professional education supplements the range of courses offered in Slovenia's tertiary education. Post-secondary higher education was fundamentally overhauled in the nineties. In the 1995 White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia, post-secondary professional education was defined as a component of vocational and professional education. This means that the two-year post-secondary courses have a practical orientation. Students are enabled to acquire vocational competences in line with professional standards, and graduates are also qualified to lead, plan and supervise working processes. Practical courses are pursued at the workplace in companies and are tied in content both to specific modules in the programme and to the actual business activity of the company.

The first new two-year post-secondary programmes comparable on a European scale were adopted in 1996, and they were designed on the basis of actual HR needs in the economy.

The signing of the Bologna Declaration on a European Higher Education Area in 1999 signalled for Slovenia the need for the more recognisable place of post-secondary vocational education in tertiary learning and the status arrangement of post-secondary colleges, along with the implementation of instruments such as a credit system for studies, annexes to diploma certificates, and ensuring and monitoring quality.

Between 2004 and 2008, with the support of the European Social Fund, new principles were formulated for the design of post-secondary programmes, placing post-secondary vocational courses within the Bologna Process. These principles served as the basis for the overhaul of post-secondary programmes and their introduction into vocational colleges. All programmes were overhauled, and several new ones were created, while the process also implemented the principle of the open curriculum, which enables individual vocational colleges to decide for themselves about at least one module making up a constituent part of the study programme.

**The advantage of such post-secondary education lies in the fact that it is very appealing to the business sector.**

The education process is adapted to the student, programmes are flexible and assembled in modules, studies are IT supported, practical classes are provided in new and technologically advanced inter-company education centres, and graduation assignments involve solving specific business problems, rationalisation of production processes, or applied research. Lecturers at post-secondary vocational schools are also experts selected from the field, who bring to the study process rich and practical experience and applied knowledge from the business sector.

The scope of education courses at post-secondary vocational schools increased steeply from 1996/1997, when 342 students were enrolled, to 2010/2011, when a total of 15,707 students were enrolled. After that year the number of enrolments fell, and in

2015/2016 a total of 10,757 students are enrolled in post-secondary courses.

Full-time post-secondary studies are financed from the national budget, so are free, while part time students must finance themselves.

**MAJOR CHANGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION SINCE SLOVENIAN INDEPENDENCE**

The internationalisation of higher education is one of the principal objectives and main policy areas of the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). According to OECD data (2014), education systems in Europe are becoming increasingly open, and growing numbers of students are opting to study abroad.

In recent years there has also been an increase in the mobility of students and higher education teachers and associate staff. Between 2008 and 2015, as part of the Erasmus+ programme, a total of 12,820 Slovenian students and 3,715 higher education teachers went on exchanges, while 12,293 foreign students and 3,933 foreign higher education teachers came to Slovenia.

The development and functioning of the system of ensuring quality in Slovenian higher education is the responsibility of the SQAA – Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. It operates with substantive and formal responsibility and provides guidance for all stakeholders and participants in tertiary education, in accordance with the European and world development orientations.

The Agency is a full member of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). With the decision of the EQAR on its membership based on an evaluation report by an international group of assessors on 19 October 2013, it fulfilled an important strategic goal, becoming a member of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA), the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA) and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). In 2014 the Agency also became a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).



**Minister of Education, Science and Sport Dr Maja Makovec Brenčič:** We have achieved a high-quality, all-inclusive and accessible education at all levels. Faced with the current challenges of social change, we must focus all our efforts on continuing to ensure quality and excellence in educational, research, development and innovation processes together with all stakeholders in the education sphere. Only in a dialogue with everyone can we take well-considered steps towards further development and maintain the stability and quality of the system. We must once again – and with more vigour – place children and young people at the centre of the transfer of knowledge and our common concern for development, while empowering teachers with the skills required by social change in the domestic and international environment. Promoting curiosity, openness and innovation at all levels of education must be our common social objective and part of our everyday mission for the development of Slovenia. This is the responsibility of all of us who work in any way and participate in education and scientific development processes and activities. Today it is children and young people who will steer and fulfil our future.

## The integration of immigrant children into the Slovenian education system

DR STANKA LUNDER VERLIČ



While we cannot speak of the education system in Slovenia as multicultural, in the last few years in our country some foundations have been laid for its development, particularly from 2007 on, with the adoption of the Strategy for the Integration of Children, Schoolchildren and Secondary School Children of Migrants into the Education System. Even before these measures, the Slovenian education system showed itself to be welcoming, inclusive and successful at accepting those who came to Slovenia because of the wars in the Balkans.

In September and October of 1992 there were 17,000 refugee children from Bosnia and Herzegovina in Slovenia, for whom classes were organised in primary schools with a Bosnian-Herzegovinian curriculum. In the following years the number of refugee children decreased, and in the 1995/96 school year these children gradually started to be included in Slovenian primary schools. Even at that time, Slovenian teachers were familiar with the basic guidelines that formed the first step towards the better and easier integration of refugees into the Slovenian school environment.

### EQUAL CONDITIONS FOR ALL

**According to the provisions of Slovenian education legislation, children of foreign nationals who live in Slovenia have the right to enrol in primary and secondary school under the same conditions as the children of Slovenian citizens.**

Citizens of other EU member states, Slovenes without Slovenian citizenship and refugees can obtain education under the same conditions as Slovenian citizens, and other foreign nationals can do so under the principle of reciprocity (the minister of education determines the number of enrolment spaces for these secondary-school students on the basis of international agreements). The Pre-School Institutions Act does not specifically mention foreign nationals, but does state that preschool education is conducted according to the principles of equal opportunity for children and parents, taking account of differences among children and the right to choose and the right to be different

The 2008–2011 project of including migrant children in the education and schooling process was upgraded. From 2013 to 2015, as many as 65 Slovenian schools participated in the project intended for developing interculturality as a new form of co-existence.

In order to ensure the continued acquisition and development of teaching materials and other tools for teaching and learning Slovene as a second/foreign language, and the development of specialised teaching and learning of Slovene as a second/foreign language, which should include all difficulty levels and modules by target group, in November 2014 the ministry issued a call for applications, co-financed by the European Social Fund, titled Development of Teaching Materials for Slovene as a Second/ Foreign Language through the holding of Classes for Various Target Groups and Seminars for Teachers.

**The objective of this call for applications was the priority provision of the necessary teaching materials and other tools for teaching and learning Slovene as a second/foreign language.**

These grants represent the realisation of various measures in the Strategy, and at the same time they have developed mechanisms that are contributing to the more efficient integration of children of immigrants into the education system, with the goal of improving their integration into society and improving their position on the labour market. These are projects that address and analyse the existing situation in this area and at the same time indicate solutions for raising the level of quality in the integration of children of

immigrants into the Slovenian school environment, and are committed to achieving a higher dimension of multiculturalism in Slovenian education.

Slovenia's commitment to multicultural education is also set out in the White Paper (2011, p. 13), which states that human rights "oblige us to respect the dignity of every individual and to respect the plurality of cultures, and thus to promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, races, creeds and other groups. Respect for the right to non-discrimination imposes the duty not to discriminate in our actions, and particularly not to discriminate against people and/or children from culturally and socially less supportive environments and immigrants, not to engage in sexual discrimination and not to discriminate against people with special needs."

#### PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

**The Guidelines for Integration of Children of Immigrants into Preschools and Schools also charge preschools to implement the principle of "an inclusive approach to the exercising of the rights of children of immigrants to education for their efficient integration into and formation of a multicultural society".**

One of the planned proposals and ideas for preschools is the teaching of Slovene, but it has not received more detailed elaboration than is prescribed for primary and secondary schools and secondary student dormitories. Consequently, additional professional assistance for teaching Slovene is planned only for children already enrolled in schools.

#### PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport offers additional hours of professional assistance for teaching Slovene to schools at which immigrant students are enrolled in the first and second years. The current legislation lays down a normative basis for the provision of funds from the state budget for both teaching Slo-

vene and teaching the mother tongue to immigrant primary and secondary school students, as part of the regular primary and secondary school curricula.

The Ministry arrives at the framework number of these students attending the first and second year of school in Slovenia indirectly, on the basis of applications received from schools for financing hours of additional professional assistance for teaching Slovene. Additional professional assistance for learning Slovene has been provided to immigrant students in the first year of school in Slovenia since the end of the nineties, and since the 2011/12 school year has also been provided to immigrant students in the second year.

**On the basis of applications received for approval of APA hours we can see that around one thousand children enrol in the first year of primary school annually, and from 500 to 800 immigrant children remain in the second year, with a rising trend.**

Alongside the provision of funds for teaching Slovene, the Ministry provides for and supports the teaching of classes on the mother tongues and cultures of immigrant students. Classes have been held for several years at various primary schools for immigrant students in Albanian, Bosnian, Croatian, Dutch, Finnish, German, Macedonian, Russian, Serbian, and Ukrainian.

In 2008, a provision was added to the Rules on testing and assessing the knowledge and progress of pupils in elementary schools which provides for the possibility of adjusting the assessment of immigrant students. In accordance with the Rules on testing and assessing the knowledge and progress of pupils in elementary schools, the methods and deadlines for assessment of knowledge, the number of assessments etc. of students who are foreign nationals or are without statehood and reside in Slovenia can be adjusted in agreement with the parents. The knowledge of immigrant students can also be assessed with regard to their progress in achieving goals or meeting standards of knowledge defined in the curricula. The Teachers' Council decides on the adjustments. Adjustments to knowledge assessment are made for a maximum

of two school years. It is possible that, at the end of their first year of primary school in Slovenia, children of immigrants do not receive marks in individual subjects and they nevertheless progress to the next year. Progress to the next year is decided upon by the Teachers' Council on the basis of a proposal by the class teacher.

Children of immigrants whose mother tongue is not Slovene and are enrolled in their first year of primary school in Slovenia in the 6th and the 9th year sit the national test of knowledge at the end of the year on a voluntary basis.

#### SECONDARY SCHOOL

Article 16 of the Rules on Norms and Standards for Implementation of Educational Programmes and a Schooling Programme in Secondary Education lays down the obligation to offer classes in Slovene for secondary-school students who need and desire assistance owing to their lack or insufficient knowledge of Slovene, where the teacher's professional assessment of their level of knowledge and comprehension of Slovene is taken into account.

Schools offer these classes for secondary-school students only for the first two years they attend school in Slovenia.

#### FRIENDLY RECEPTION EASES SOCIAL INCLUSION

In view of a special aspect present in including the children of international protection seekers and children placed under international protection, the ministry recommends a two-tier inclusion model. In this respect, we took into consideration the results of a project from the field of including migrant children in the education and schooling process as well as a project from the field of interculturality as a new form of co-existence, both financed by the European Social Fund.

The inclusion of children is divided into an introductory and advanced course. Before they are included in regular classes, there is an introductory course organised for migrant children, which lasts for 20 hours. After this, the children are enrolled in regular classes, whereby they are entitled to receive additional support for lessons from the Slovenian language.





## REFUGEES

## Friendly reception eases social inclusion

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ



**Goran Popović, Headteacher of Livada Primary School:** “Refugees, particularly children, wish to integrate into society and adapt to it, but to do that they must first encounter a friendly welcome. Migrants’ general overriding impression of Slovenia is not one of pleasant surprise, since they expected a different response from Europe. For them it was some kind of promised land, but now they frequently feel unwelcome and unaccepted.

**I believe that we are making a strategic mistake because given an unfriendly welcome, refugees will also respond with unfriendliness.**

But if we greet them with open arms, offer a warm welcome and try to help them, they will also be more willing to cooperate and adjust. We are missing a chance to get to know them in a friendly manner. They are a little bit different, specific to their place of origin and have different requirements but if we gain their trust with benevolent procedures, they will live with us in harmony. Among these newcomers, there may be a few with ill intentions, but these are in a minority.

Four years ago Livada Primary School became the only school to start a project for a so-called Preparatory School, which among other things provides additional Slovenian language lessons to all newly enrolled pupils. We thus help the newcomers in the initial phase and enable them to feel safe faster. Pupils are happy to accept their new classmates and help them in their successful integration in their classes.”

**Anton Baloh, Headteacher of Koper Primary School:** “The integration of migrant children in our school is an annual process, one which we have implemented in a systemic and planned manner for the seventh year. Between ten and twenty children or adolescents entering the Slovenian school system for the first time are enrolled every academic year at our school.

This year, we also enrolled two unaccompanied migrant children who are asylum seekers in Slovenia. We approached the inclusion of these two adolescents with particular thought. We organised individually set programmes, which in a structured manner followed and supplemented their schooling in Afghanistan and Iraq. Migrant children and their parents tell us that they are happy with the enrolment procedures, specific programmes and planned processes of integrating in our school. This is reflected in the desire for the enrolment of migrant children who do not belong directly in our school district.

We published all materials, our project achievements and opinions on the website, [www.medkulturnost.si](http://www.medkulturnost.si), where all interested parties in Slovenia may find help with integration procedures, integration of migrant children in education and assistance in everyday school planning of lives of these children in our institutions.

**No xenophobic, exclusive, racist or any other inappropriate situations for teachers or other staff members have arisen over the years.**

The fact that we are living in multilingual and multinational Istria, at the crossroads of Slovenians, Italians and Croatians, has made an impact on us over the centuries and puts us in a special, open, multilingual and accepting position.”

## CHILDREN'S PARLIAMENT

## Prime Minister Cerar: Never give up, always persevere

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ

At a Children's Parliament's session held about the traps awaiting youth, children discussed the dangers of the internet and social networks as well as their own hardships, violence and self-image. "Don't forget that you are extremely important and that nobody can make decisions instead of you. Never give up, always persevere," was Prime Minister Miro Cerar's advice to the children. More than 100 members of the 26th national Children's Parliament, organized by the Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth (Zveza prijateljev mladine Slovenije ZPMS), discussed the topic in working groups and then at a plenary session.



Cerar told the children how he appreciates that the young people had decided to participate in a parliamentary discussion about a topic as important as the traps awaiting youth. "We, the older generation, sometimes inadvertently underestimate the young people, believing we have to guide you, and we often worry about you too much. And while dispensing advice and spending our time with you is the right thing to do, you are, to a large extent, the creators of your own lives and responsible for your own actions," said Cerar. He appealed to the children to continue doing what brought them to the parliament. According to Cerar, even the best advice of the elders will never replace the children's own decisions.

**"Young people of your generation primarily have the responsibility for themselves, and you are the ones who will determine our common fate in the future. Always keep in mind that it is up to you how you decide to live your lives," said Cerar and emphasised the importance of cross-generational collaboration.**

In their discussion about the traps of the internet and social networks, the children determined that the internet also has its upsides, e.g. provides data resources and helps people connect. Young people want more awareness and educational campaigns about the use of the internet, particularly social networks. They agreed that the internet and social networks are not dangerous in themselves, but can become dangerous when children do not know how to use them. The children also talked about who to turn to when in trouble. They pointed out that school is not always the right place to seek help. They spoke of the evident mistrust in teachers, social workers and school psychologists. They also presented some other ways of getting help, focusing on the TOM helpline and the To sem jaz (This Is Me) website.

In their discussion of violence, especially the peer-related, the children focused particularly on verbal abuse. In respect of physical violence, they mostly dealt with the subject of peer violence. They also explored how school employees should react to violence and what they can do if confided in by a child who falls victim to domestic violence. The last working group of young MPs discussed self-image. They determined that one's self-image changes throughout a person's lifetime. It is shaped mainly by peers, the media, and parents. Some MPs proposed the introduction of school uniforms that would make everyone equal, but not everyone agreed with the proposal.

Out of the seven proposed topics for the next Children's Parliament, the young participants chose the title Children and Planning for the Future.

**Borut Pahor, President of the Republic:** *"If you would like to experience the traps of youth, you sometimes have to disregard the boundaries and be bold. My experience when growing up was that I had to tame my boldness by drawing my own boundaries in accordance with my abilities. This is probably a challenge faced by all of you in some way. I wish you all the luck in facing the challenge that cannot be faced by anyone else instead of you. The ability to face your problems is what makes you mature."*

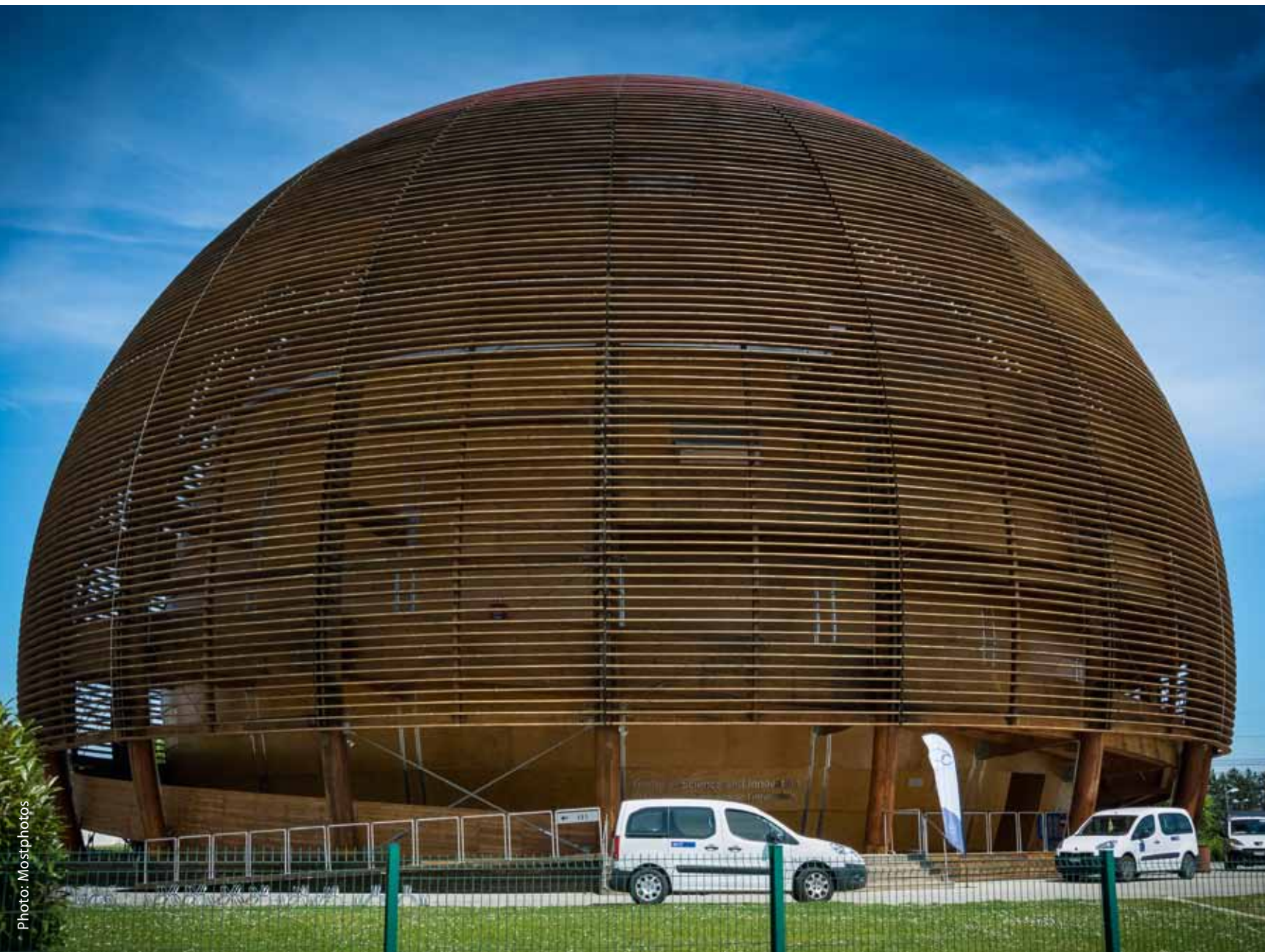
**Milan Brglez, President of the National Assembly:** *"During my years as a university teacher, I encountered many a heated debate in my lecture hall. Because of that experience, I am now well aware of the importance of critical thinking and forming one's own opinion, which I work to convey to the younger generations whom I teach. It is important for young people not to think about the world from a black and white perspective, but rather see it as a spectrum of countless colours. The Children's Parliament is an invaluable contribution to the development of a culture of dialogue which is crucial for the resolution of conflicts and misunderstandings."*

**Darja Groznik, President of the Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth:** *"The Children's Parliament is one of the key programmes of the ZPMS, providing an education for active citizenship and democratic conduct. You, the young people, are the ones who constantly feed new energy, new ideas and new proposals to the Children's Parliament. Every year, the Children's Parliament is a celebration of democracy."*

## SLOVENIA BECOMES AN ASSOCIATE MEMBER OF CERN

# An opportunity in particle physics for Slovenian high-technology enterprises

DR. MARK PLEŠKO



We are all sometimes struck by questions that have been with us since early childhood. How did the world begin? What are the things around us made of? What “holds” the world together? Seeking the answers generally morphs into daydreaming and wondering about the unknown and incomprehensible. There are few fortunate people whose curiosity has driven them far enough to be able to deal with these and similar questions professionally. In seeking answers it is not enough simply to have a penetrating and sharp mind and investigative persistence – you need tools. Infrastructure. For more than 60 years CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research) has been just that. For any scientist drawn to the mysteries of how the universe began, it is a dream come true. And now Slovenia will be joining the body as an Associate Member.

CERN was established in 1954 and serves as the main laboratory in the world for particle physics. Its primary purpose is to provide research infrastructure in the form of accelerators for protons, antiprotons, heavy ions, electrons and positrons.

**CERN ranks among the elite scientific institutions in the world, so it is no wonder that its staff includes several Nobel Prize winners.**

Former and, we are sure, future ones. Use of its capacities very frequently gives rise to new technologies, most famous of which is without doubt the internet, which scientist Tim Berners-Lee set up as an internal communication tool.

### SLOVENIANS AND CERN

The collaboration of Slovenian scientists at CERN already has a long history, in fact from its very inception. Yugoslavia was one of the 12 founding states, but left the organisation in 1961. In 1989 CERN signed a scientific cooperation agreement with the Jožef Stefan Institute and the Physics Department at the University of Ljubljana. Calls for membership from researchers as well as companies became increasingly vocal soon after Slovenia’s independence. In 1990 the first democratically elected Slovenian Government established contact with CERN, and at the beginning of 1991 it signed an Agreement on Scientific Cooperation between CERN and the Republic of Slovenia, which remains today the formal basis for the cooperation of Slovenian scientists.

So the first initiatives for Slovenian membership of CERN date back to 1992, and formal activity towards membership to 2009.

In September 2009 the Slovenian Government deliberated over Slovenia’s candidacy for membership, and took the decision to authorise the ministry in charge of research to take all the necessary steps for Slovenia to obtain the status of candidate for membership of CERN. Yet owing to the unstable political situation and the sudden deterioration of the country’s economic circumstances, the decision was not implemented. In August 2015 the Minister of Education, Science and Sports, Dr Maja Makovec Brenčič, met with then Director General of CERN Prof. Rolf-Dieter Heuer, during his visit to Ljubljana for the 27th international particle physics symposium, Lepton Photon, and talks resumed on the possibility of Slovenian membership of CERN. On 12 November 2015 a Slovenian delegation visited CERN. The visit was intended to resume talks on the short-term and long-term benefits and positive effects of the country’s membership in the scientific, economic and educational fields, and this served as the basis for furthering the process and for all the necessary steps towards Slovenia obtaining the status of candidate for membership of CERN.

**On 14 April 2016 the Government adopted the initiative for concluding an agreement between Slovenia and CERN on granting the status of Associate Member.**

Slovenia will first become an Associate Member, which signals the first step towards full membership, and then in five years will become a full member of the organisation. Yet even during the period of associate membership, researchers as well as companies and other target groups will have full access to all the programmes conducted by CERN.

A ground-breaking group of top scientists is currently working in

Slovenia on experimental physics of basic particles. In organisational terms they are working as part of a group at the Jožef Stefan Institute, which includes associates from the University of Ljubljana, the University of Maribor and the University of Nova Gorica.

Thus far Slovenian scientists in this field have been able to work at CERN as part of the ATLAS collaboration, in three R&D projects aimed at developing radiation-resistant semiconductor detectors (RD-39, RD-42 and RD-50), collaboration projects to develop medical imaging detectors (CIMA - Cameras for Imaging in Medical Applications) and on the project Enabling Grids for E-sciencE. With the signing of the Memorandum of agreement with the ATLAS collaboration by the then minister of science and technology in December 1999, Slovenia undertook to build a spectrometer as part of the collaboration.

Work at CERN also gave rise to several dozen diplomas, master's and doctoral theses. A device for positron tomography with a detector was created on the basis of multi-wire proportional chambers. Work also involved the creation of two prototypes for a portable environmental radiation detector based on proportional chambers and an environmental strontium detector based on a Cherenkov detector. A new type of detector is currently being developed for medical imaging based on silicon position sensitive detectors, and development work is being pursued on a PET device, functioning in a strong magnetic field (compatible with magnetic resonance imaging).

**Alongside research activities, CERN offers broad scope for programmes of education and training at all levels, second-cycle study programmes for students and teachers, doctoral programmes in which students spend a substantial period of time researching at CERN, and programmes for guest researchers.**

The education programmes and services are fully accessible only to CERN members. However, in the period of associate membership CERN offers to various member groups:

- grants to junior researchers,

- employment for researchers at CERN,
- teacher training schools,
- summer schools for (undergraduate) students,
- schools or promotional activities for secondary-school students,
- exhibitions on the work of CERN,
- information days on the possibilities of work at CERN and the possibilities of participating in training programmes and so forth.

#### **CERN AND THE BUSINESS SECTOR**

To date the ATLAS experiment has only provided a rare few Slovenian companies with the possibility of developing and supplying high-technology products under the same conditions as companies from CERN member countries, specifically those that have supplied materials for the detectors developed by Slovenian scientists. For this reason Slovenia has been able to meet the major portion of its contribution to the collaboration in the form of material input, through the supply of large dimension flexible power connectors made of aluminium-Kapton and copper-Kapton laminates. The technology for producing large dimension flexible connectors was developed through cooperation between IJS and Slovenian manufacturing companies (Apel, Balder, FDS-Research), while actual production took place at Elgoline in Cerknica. Based on this technology, for the ATLAS experiment Elgoline also made large dimension surface heaters, while a large number of conventional printed circuit connectors were also planned, made and supplied for the collaboration.

**On the one hand therefore, membership will facilitate, strengthen and expand the cooperation and activities of Slovenian scientists (especially in the field of experimental physics).**

At the same time there is an important technological and economic motivation for membership, since it will bring full access for Slovenian manufacturers to CERN orders and the associated breakthrough to demanding markets for products with high knowledge input.

In contacts to date with CERN representatives, expectations have been voiced that given the existing capacity, Slovenian companies can compete strongly for the supply of products and services ordered by CERN. The organisation covers its need for equipment by placing orders in member countries, while there are considerable obstacles for non-members to compete for this. Apart from the direct financial effect, an important factor for the manufacturer in this is being able to demonstrate the ability to supply high-technology products.

#### **AND WHAT FOLLOWS...**

Associate membership of CERN will offer Slovenia principally full access for scientists and engineers to the research infrastructure and technological projects being conducted at CERN. Moreover it will offer the use and creation of high-technology products in

the company of top experts from the entire world, which will aid the transfer of these advances to the Slovenian environment. We should also emphasise the promotion of a non-conventional approach to problem-solving, which produces outstandingly trained experts capable of working outside the narrow scientific field, and the transfer and use of detection methods of high-energy physics to other fields, especially medicine and environmental monitoring.

Above all, membership of CERN represents a clear orientation for Slovenia, whereby it seeks to become a high-tech society contributing its own share in the group of most advanced countries to the further development of the world – and in line with this it sees prospects for taking an appropriate share of economic benefit from the results and in this way contributing to the further development of Slovenia in the company of the best.

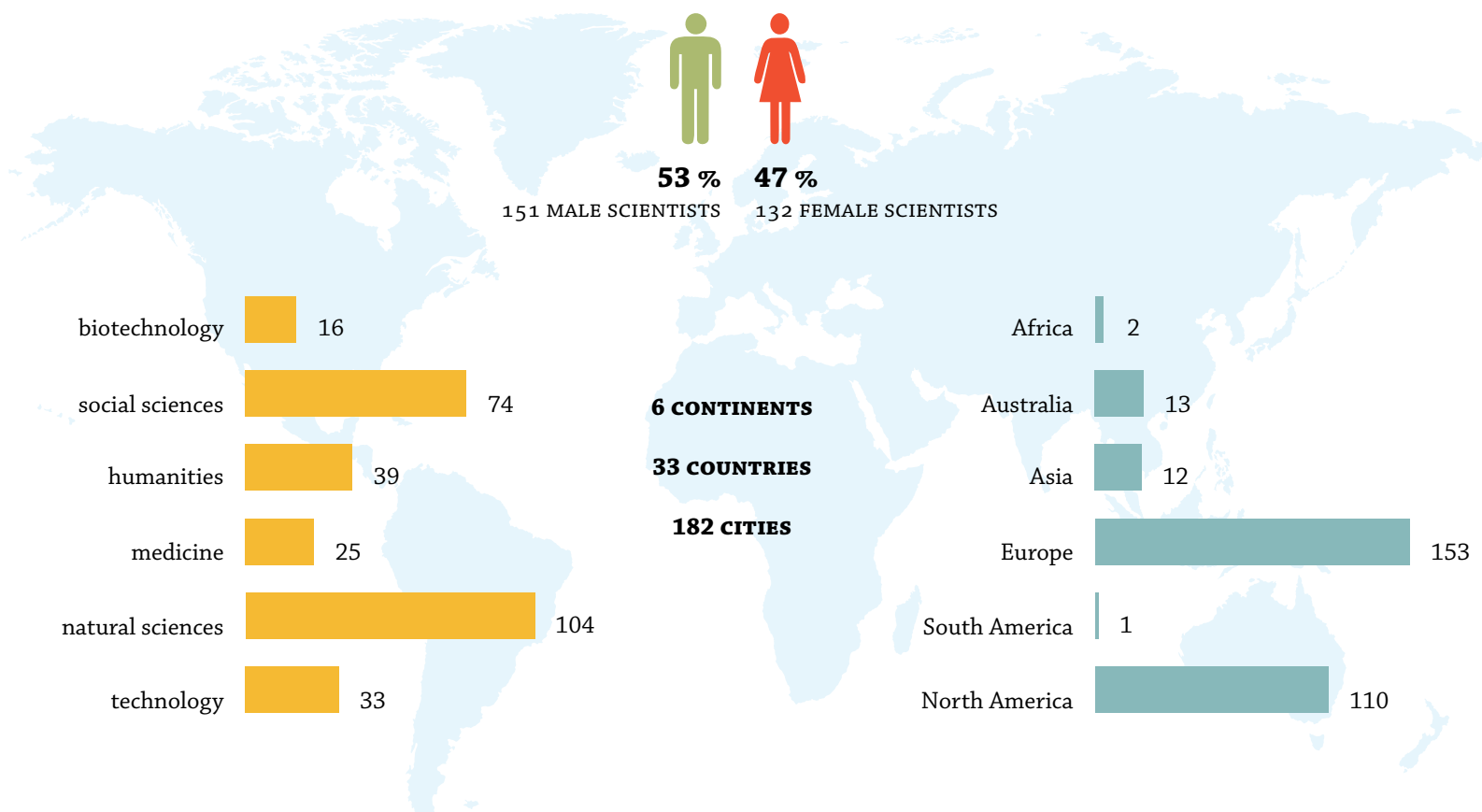
CERN serves as an inspiration not just for scientists in the natural science and technical fields, but also for those working in the social science and humanities. The group of 10,000 scientists that built the Large Hadron Collider, along with the tests it undertook, have been and still are a subject of serious sociological, economic and also anthropological study. It is of interest to everyone how it was possible for such a multitude of individualist intellectuals, without any strict hierarchical leadership, could all pull together for a common objective.

Several Slovenian companies (e.g. CAEN els of Sežana, Cosylab of Ljubljana and Instrumentation Technologies of Solkan) are leading global suppliers in their fields, but to date they have not received any major orders from CERN. CAEN els even had to sell via its parent company in Italy, and the others, despite a positive evaluation of their products by CERN scientists and engineers, were continually discounted in tenders and orders. With full membership of CERN, Slovenian companies will be able to contend as equals alongside companies from the most advanced countries. It is not just technology and IT companies that have possibilities here, but all Slovenian companies, since CERN needs a wide range of goods and services for its operations. Of course we will have to get organised. The above-mentioned companies are already contemplating setting up a special interest association that could represent our interests at CERN.

## “METINA LISTA” WEBSITE

# Spreading news about Slovenian scientists around the world

DANILO GOLOB



Many Slovenian scientists teach at universities around the world, conduct research in prominent scientific institutions, and are successful in their respective fields. Some are even amongst the best in the world. People back at home are proud when they hear news about the achievements of Slovenian scientists abroad, yet they find it difficult to remember their names or where they conduct research. The team of the *Metina lista* (English: Meta's List) website was surprised by findings of "Science and Slovenes" research published in 2011, which showed that 90% of respondents could not even name one Slovenian female scientist and 75% were unable to provide the name of a single male Slovenian scientist.

*Metina lista* decided to change that by launching the *Meta Znanost* (English: Meta Science) project at the end of 2014. On the website, they regularly publish a variety of popular science stories, columns, analyses, comments and photo-reportages. They also interview researchers who are just about to finish a doctorate, record two podcasts, recommend good-quality popular science literature, and connect with similar organizations and individuals.

### INTERACTIVE MAP

At the very beginning, they already started to think about the *Metina lista* project to provide an image representation of the locations of Slovenian scientists who teach and do research abroad in the form of a global map.

In summer 2015, their proposal succeeded at the tender published by the Slovenian Research Agency and, later on, they created an interactive world map of Slovenian scientists who regularly operate in foreign scientific research institutions and institutes.

The Scientific categories in which the scientists conduct their research were marked with location pins in different colours. By clicking each one of them, the user is shown information and a link to the website of the chosen scientist and the institute where they conduct research. Like they say at *Metina lista*, which is led by the *Meta Znanost* editor and project leader Nataša Briški, the list is nowhere near complete, therefore they will regularly supplement and update the map. Currently, the list contains the names of female and male scientists they have so far been able to identify and contact.

The *Slovenski znanstveniki in znanstvenice po svetu* (English: Slovenian Scientists Around the World) map contains information about scientists, who have already received their doctorates and are active in scientific research, i.e. those, who work as post-doctoral or regular researchers at foreign scientific research institutions and institutes.

Currently, there is information about 132 female scientists (47%) and 151 male scientists (53%) shown on the map.

They are located on 6 continents, in 33 countries and 182 cities. Out of those scientists, 153 are active in Europe, 110 in North America, 13 in Australia, 12 in Asia, 2 in Africa and 1 in South America. Most of them are active in natural sciences (104) and social sciences (74), which are followed by the humanities (39), technology (33), medicine (25) and biotechnology (16).

### ADDED VALUE OF THE MAP

With the collected information and visualisation, the website team wants to ease the process of contacting scientific institutions about collaboration at international conferences, assist in exchanging and hosting Slovenian scientists, provide access to information about employment opportunities, cooperation and potential partners in international projects and about the organisation of work in foreign institutions, and help form a stronger and more organised Slovenian scientific network around the world.

In the future, they would like to boost the *Meta znanost* (English: Meta Science) website with further content and regularly update the world map with new data. They will be more than happy about your suggestions.

To be able to reasonably expand the base and include other Slovenian scientists who work abroad, the *Metina lista* team invites all scientists who are not yet recorded on the world map and would like to become a part of this network to contact them (via e-mail: [info@metinalista.si](mailto:info@metinalista.si), Facebook or Twitter).

## SLOVENIAN RED CROSS

## For everyone, everywhere. For 150 years.

IRENA NEČEMER, AUTHORISED REPRESENTATIVE AND DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF SRC



In the last few years the humanitarian environment has changed dramatically. In its 150-year history in Slovenia, the Red Cross has operated in varying circumstances, in wars, clashes, changes to the social order, the collapse of states and political systems, shifting borders, the migration of Slovenians and the creation of new state formations. Since 1991, the Slovenian Red Cross has functioned as an independent national society.

The beginnings of the Red Cross in Slovenia date back to 1866, when the Women's Society for Aiding Injured and Sick Soldiers and Widows and Orphans of Fallen Soldiers was founded, followed by the Men's Society for Supporting and Serving Injured and Sick Soldiers in 1879. The two societies merged in 1902, and acted as part of the Austro-Hungarian Red Cross. Volunteers collected money and other contributions, and were active in the areas of health, law and accounting. Above all they worked on humanitarian causes (free kitchens, hospitals, clothes collections, etc.) during wartime and peacetime alike. The Slovenian Red Cross was founded on 18 June 1944, in the liberated territory of Gradac in Bela Krajina. On 8 October 1991, for the first time in its 130-year history, it joined the International Red Cross movement as a national society.

Volunteers and employees of the Red Cross and Red Crescent are present everywhere, and ease the hardship of the most vulnerable people in all circumstances – in major disasters, challenging conflict situations, in remote and inaccessible areas that no other organisation can reach, and at conferences and meetings on the highest level with world leaders, where we act as an advocate for people suffering hardship.

**The Red Cross performed its duties in Slovenia successfully during the First and Second World Wars, and also during the recent conflict for Slovenian independence, acting in accordance with the Geneva Conventions and very quickly mobilising all its structures.**

It linked up with the Slovenian operational leadership and the services of the Ministry of Defence, Civil Protection Headquarters, Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Health. It supplied to all state institutions the necessary number of copies of Geneva Conventions, with an explanation of their obligation to cooperate with

the Red Cross, to provide all necessary data and information and to prevent abuse of the Red Cross symbol. It also sent similar notices to the commanders of the Yugoslav Army's Ljubljana Corps. It also immediately notified the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, along with the national Red Cross societies of European countries, with a request for moral and material support for Slovenia and its national Red Cross society. Immediately upon the start of the conflict, the Slovenian side consistently adhered to the Geneva Conventions, under the aegis of the Slovenian Red Cross and in line with the Brioni meeting, captured Yugoslav Army officers were released, in areas where clashes were ongoing the Red Cross successfully provided clothing, food, medications, first aid to wounded, captured and fleeing soldiers and civilians, and it organised a census of all categories of people affected by the conflict – prisoners of war, wounded, dead and etc. – and managed the return of 3,157 captured enemy soldiers to other republics of the former Yugoslavia. It therefore came as no surprise that as early as December 1991, long before any official recognition, the Slovenian Red Cross gained a place as an observer at the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. The status, rights and duties of the Slovenian Red Cross were enshrined by the state in the Slovenian Red Cross Act, which was adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia on 26 January 1993. Among other things this act sets out the tasks that the Slovenian Red Cross carries out under public authorisation and the established facts for which it issues documents and certificates.

**This involves principally searching for missing persons, blood donation and preparation for disasters, organising courses and exams in first aid, and organising and training first aid teams.**

These are the main tasks of the Slovenian Red Cross, in addition to the many new challenges that constantly arise, since the world in which we live is not a friendly place for everyone, so the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement is present everywhere across the world and for everyone. The organisation brings its seven fundamental principles to communities when they most need it, and it works as a force for positive change.



The promotion of a healthy lifestyle and concern for health have been important areas of operation for the Red Cross in Slovenia since the very beginning, so it is no wonder that 60 years ago the Slovenian Red Cross established the only youth health spa and holiday resort in the country, MZL RKS Debeli Rtič, which is today a modern health centre for children, youths, families and senior citizens, and where at the same time as many as 800 children can spend the summer holiday. It was donors and volunteers that established the foundations for the health resort 60 years ago.

**Some milestones in the development of the Red Cross in Slovenia**

- 1863** Austria-Hungary joins the 16 founders of the Red Cross
- 1866** The Women's Society for Aiding Injured and Sick Soldiers is established in Ljubljana in the then province of Carniola.
- 1879** The men's Patriotic Provincial Assistance Society is founded in the Carniolan city of Ljubljana.
- 1900** Activities: preparation for possible war and activities in peacetime, free kitchens, hospitals, collecting clothing and footwear, training the population to provide first aid in war.
- 1902** Merging of the women's and men's societies.
- 1918** The provincial and women's auxiliary society the Red Cross for Carniola breaks ties with the Austrian Red Cross and establishes the Slovenian Red Cross.
- 1921** The royal government in Belgrade adopts a decision on the work of the Red Cross in the entire territory of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The Banovina Committee of the Red Cross, along with sub-committees (today the area Red Cross associations), are established in Slovenia.
- 1941** The collapse of the old Yugoslavia; Red Cross societies are abandoned. The occupying forces establish new Red Cross societies under their own control. The Italians set up the Red Cross for the Ljubljana Province. After the capitulation of Italy, the Slovenian Red Cross falls under the German occupation.
- 1944** The modern Slovenian Red Cross is founded on 18 June 1944, in the liberated territory of Gradac in Bela Krajina.
- 1991** The Slovenian Red Cross formally withdraws from the Yugoslav Red Cross.
- 1993** The International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva recognises the Slovenian Red Cross as an independent national society. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies confirms the Slovenian Red Cross as a new member at its general assembly.



## AFRICA DAY

# Exploring developmental challenges and opportunities on the African continent

UROŠ MAHKOVEC



On 25 and 26 May 2016, Ljubljana was the venue of the Fifth Africa Day International Conference, co-organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia, the International Centre for the Promotion of Enterprises (ICPE), the Club of Former Slovenian Ambassadors, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia and the International African Forum. The Conference was held under the aegis of Dr Milan Brglez, President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia.

The annual conference was dedicated to exploring developmental challenges and opportunities on the African continent and enhancing bilateral ties between African countries and Slovenia.

Participants at the conference included people from the Slovenian political, business, academic and cultural spheres, European and African countries and members of the diplomatic corps.

The first day of the conference, hosted by the International Centre for the Promotion of Enterprises, began with opening addresses by Mr Karl Erjavec, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, and other high-level keynote speakers, followed by three panels. The panels focused on urban and rural development in Africa and its demographics, on regional integration in Africa and economic cooperation, and on the prospects and challenges relating to Slovenia's engagement with Africa. On the second day, the conference focused on opportunities for enhanced economic cooperation between African countries and Slovenia.

Panels on urban and rural development in Africa and its demographics focused on several topics:

- *Is current Joint Africa-EU Strategy still the right answer to the developments and challenges faced by both continents? At what point of intersection between opportunity and responsibility does the EU currently see the African continent?*
- *How can African countries cope with such rapid population growth in terms of providing efficient and adequate social services, schooling and jobs...?*
- *The fifth Africa-EU Summit on Migration took place in November 2015. In accordance with the pledge of the African and European leaders to 'work on building trust and achieving a shared sense of commitment', what is the most appropriate way to address the role and implications of migration?*
- *'Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want' proposed by the AU aspires that by 2063, Africa "[...] has empowered women to play their rightful role in all spheres of life and has full gender equality in all spheres of life [...]". Firstly, it is crucial to fully eliminate all kinds of discrimination and violence based on gender. What are the next important steps in women's empowerment on the continent?*

Second panel was entitled Regional integration in Africa and economic cooperation.

It is in Africa where today the largest number of regional groupings can be found. 31 out of 54 African countries are members of two regional groupings, 19 of them of three groupings and one holds membership in as many as four groupings.

- *Given such multiple and overlapping memberships, countries have assumed numerous and varied political and institutional commitments. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the above-mentioned overlapping memberships of most African countries? Do you see only constraints in these overlaps, or are there also some benefits?*
- *What are the new trends and developments in trading and business relations with the EU and other international partners? How to enhance economic and development agenda to the benefit of both continents?*
- *The EU has long been seen as the most developed example of regional integration, but the economic and political crisis on the European continent has shaken its role model status. What particular lessons learned from European integration could be applicable to the African continent?*

Last panel explored prospects and challenges relating to Slovenia's engagement with Africa:

- *Slovenia's bilateral trade with Africa remains low, accounting for only 1.1 per cent of its global trade and 1.4 per cent of total exports. The majority of Slovenia's exports go only to a handful of countries, mainly Algeria, Egypt, South Africa, and Tunisia.*
- *Slovenia's foreign investment in Africa exceeds its bilateral trade, accounting for 4.1 per cent of all its total foreign investment abroad at the end of 2014.*
- *What are Slovenia's main advantages, especially in terms of know-how and technology, which could be most productively used on the African continent?*

The entire second day of this year's Africa Day conference was dedicated to economic cooperation between Africa and Slovenia. Two panels focused on selected countries and the entire afternoon was dedicated to B2B and B2G meetings and networking.

A novelty in this year's Africa Day programme was the accompanying public programme with numerous cultural events, lectures and discussions.



## CONFERENCE ON THE SLOVENIAN COAST

# “Translation for Intercultural Dialogue”

VERONIKA STABEJ



Between 23 and 24 June 2016, Portorož (Bernardin) and Piran will host a regional Euro-Mediterranean Conference “Translation for Intercultural Dialogue”. The purpose is to highlight the importance of translation as a key factor in developing intercultural dialogue and enriching cultural diversity in the region.

The “Translation for Intercultural Dialogue” Conference is organised by the Anna Lindh Foundation in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI), the Slovenian Book Agency and the Government Communication Office (UKOM). Some 100 participants from all Member States of the Union for the Mediterranean, esteemed guests, publishers, authors and other important figures from the world of literature and translation are expected to attend the conference.

The Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF) cooperates closely with all EU institutions, regional initiatives and civil society. Following the Arab Spring, it became the central and for some time also the only operating linking institution in the region. The Foundation is one of few forums which combines all countries and players in the Euro-Mediterranean area and where discussions and cross-border projects are conducted actively.

One of the strategic objectives of the ALF is to establish an ambitious regional translation programme, which will emphasise the central role of translation as an instrument in the promotion of intercultural dialogue across the Euro-Mediterranean area, and contribute to the enhancement of a joint identity on the basis of cultural diversity.

**The main objective of the conference is the adoption of a declaration and a translation programme in the Euro-Mediterranean area as the tool of intercultural dialogue.**

The programme of the conference will be divided into two plenary sessions open to the public and three parallel working groups on the following topics: formation of an interactive translation platform, a translation initiative and the tool for promotion of intercultural dialogue, a communication strategy for enhancement of awareness and understanding, including the role of young people in intercultural dialogue and translation in the role of mediation.



**Karl Erjavec, Minister of Foreign Affairs:** Choosing Slovenia as the host of this important conference represents great recognition of our international work and activities in the Euro-Mediterranean area where Slovenia actively strives for in-depth cooperation with all countries in the region. At a time when the Euro-Mediterranean area faces numerous challenges, the conference carries a particularly connecting message.

Language and linguistic understanding are key factors in promoting dialogue between cultures, in promoting languages as the foundation of human interaction, and particularly in promoting enhanced recognisability of the lesser known languages. Translation enables broad access to works of art together with ideas and the circulation of knowledge. It thus contributes significantly to the improved visibility of Slovenian culture, language and general artistic creation in Slovenia. All this, combined with efforts for enhanced cooperation and understanding of countries in this region and beyond, are encompassed in the basic tasks of the current Slovenian foreign policy.

Mutual linguistic comprehension serves as the basis for understanding of different cultures, while learning about artistic and literary creativity of individual nations contributes to their better mutual communication and thus also militates against potential conflicts.

Active cooperation of the European Commission and all partner countries is expected at the conference. France, which is our esteemed partner also within the EU, is one of the key supporters of this project, and it is my honour to host this important event together with Mrs. Élisabeth Guigou, former French Minister of Justice and now the President of the Anna Lindh Foundation.

Established in 2004 the Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF) is the central institution for the promotion of intercultural dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean area. It is co-financed by 42 Member States of the Union for the Mediterranean, which was established during the Slovenian EU Presidency in 2008, and by the European Commission. The ALF is governed by the Board of Governors, and is currently presided by Mrs. Élisabeth Guigou, former French Minister of Justice and the current Chair of the French National Assembly Foreign Affairs Committee. The Executive Director is Mr. Hatem Atallah from Tunisia who manages the ALF from its headquarters in Alexandria, Egypt. The EMUNI University is an international association of universities with headquarters in Slovenia. It represents one of the six projects of the Union of the Mediterranean, approved in the frame of a common declaration, adopted in Paris on 13 July 2009.

**Statement by Élisabeth Guigou, President of the Anna Lindh Foundation:** I am very proud and pleased to co-organize and co-host, as president of the Anna Lindh foundation, and with the Slovenian government and its Minister of Foreign affairs, the first ever high level conference on translation to take place in the EuroMed context. Portoroz and its University, EMUNI, welcome us on its wondrous shores. It adds a scintillating Mediterranean scented softness to a very serious political and cultural endeavor. Of symbolic value is the fact that this prestigious gathering will be hosted on the eve of the 25th anniversary of the Slovenian independence.

Translation matters. We are facing huge challenges on both sides of the Mediterranean, North and South. I do not need to make a long list of the woes that are assailing our common space: the terrorist rampage, youth unemployment, the civil war tearing up Syria, the unprecedented waves of migration.

Those are global, all-encompassing and common economical, security, social challenges. But they are giving way to a more potent, grave, long lasting threat: the cultural divide. Erecting barriers, nurturing chauvinistic reflexes, grudging and fearing others, rallying for simplistic and appealing quick-fix political solutions has always been the easiest and the most illusionary way to deal with and escape from reality.

We have a shared interest in translating fear into hope, conundrums into solutions, estrangement into cooperation, idiosyncrasies into common values. We have to translate our differences into unifying endeavours.

Umberto Eco had a marvellous catch phrase: translation is the language of Europe. He got the essence of what we are. I will go one step further: translation is the language of the Mediterranean. We are made of linguae, if I may use Latin: from Greek to Latin, from Hebrew to Arabic, the Mediterranean space has been enmeshed in its extraordinarily rich variety of languages.

But this rich cultural tradition is receding: there is a dearth of translations. We do not translate as we should. And the yawning gap between languages continues to expand along the North/South South/South dividing line. We need to support an ambitious EUROMED translation policy. That is the key to cultural diversity. I do not want to prejudge the outcomes of the conference. But we must aim at concrete goals and policies and we must involve all the stakeholders in the "translation chain": publishers, authors, academics, libraries, translators, foundations, public and private institutions.

If I had to choose one out of many crucial issues that must be addressed during the conference I would select: mobility. Mobility is of paramount importance for translators. They need to hop from one country to another, besides mastering multiple languages. They need to train, to learn, to exchange. They need financial support to do this. They need places to welcome them so as to be able to hone their skills. We need to devise a large-scale translator in residence programme. We need these passports for talents, these new shibboleth.

Translation covers a huge domain: not only literary translation but social sciences, theatre, comic books, film, music. It opens up to new way of thinking, feeling, dreaming. It is also the key to trading, to diplomacy, to innovation. Automatic translation is a fertile economic and scientific breeding ground for innovation.

This conference is not meant to solve the current deficit of translation as if by way of a magic wand. But it is a first ambitious step, a launching pad to initiatives and policies. Translation is part of a broader political and cultural agenda for the Mediterranean. Let's start talking and translating for good.





## 25 YEARS OF BRINGING EUROPEAN CULTURAL HERITAGE CLOSE TO THE PEOPLE

# Slovenia embraces a European project

NATAŠA GORENC, INSTITUTE FOR THE PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE OF SLOVENIA  
PHOTO: INSTITUTE ARCHIVES

This year, Slovenia will stage its 26<sup>th</sup> *European Heritage Days* under a motto "The Heritage Around Us", which will focus in particular on heritage in danger of disappearance. European Heritage Days have been held across Europe for a quarter of a century, and after a hesitant start have flourished also in Slovenia.

This all-European project involving 50 countries, 6,000 cities and 30,000 monuments attracts over 20,000,000 visitors across Europe each September and has its roots in France. At the 1985 summit in the Spanish city of Grenada, Jack Lang, French Minister of Culture in the early 1980s, told his colleagues about the great success France had experienced with its Open Days in 1984. Under the auspices of the Council of Europe and the European Union, the simple idea of discovering cultural heritage and giving everybody the opportunity to experience it soon spread throughout Europe as *European Heritage Days*.

**Slovenia is also among the countries where cultural heritage comes to life every late September through numerous events – last year as many as 400 were held in different cities.**

Every year, the topical concept of the *Days* sheds light on an aspect of Europe's rich cultural and natural heritage, trying to present it to the largest possible number of people.

### BOOK GUIDE TO CULTURAL MONUMENTS

The countries that joined the project three decades ago with the same objective, i.e. to bring heritage closer to the people, had to tackle conditions. In some countries, the *Days* were an immediate success, while in Slovenia, the public and the media did not respond to them as well as we had expected. Since 2001, the project has been headed and coordinated by the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia, and the Cultural Heritage Administration of



the Republic of Slovenia, as the same Institute was called at the time, decided it would primarily communicate through books, guides to cultural monuments that also presented that every time topic of the *Days*. Up to the year 2014, 18 books were published in the series. Over half of these have been translated into English and some of them also in other languages. Most articles were contributed by conservators and restorers as well as other cultural heritage experts: over 650 descriptions of different types of heritage, locations, sites, buildings and objects, as well as 40 chapters on Baroque monuments, vernacular architecture, Art Nouveau, medieval, industrial and 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture, on Jože Plečnik, Primož Trubar, restoration, conservation, archaeology, intangible heritage etc.

### IMAGE OF AN IMAGE

In a few years, the Cultural Heritage Administration of the Republic of Slovenia managed to secure the cooperation of the then regional Institutes for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, and eventually also a number of museums. One could say that, in 1998, the *Days* crossed the threshold of anonymity: that year, the events illustrating life in medieval cities attracted 10,000 visitors. It was then that the general public was first alerted to the events as they were covered by the national and local press and radio stations. After initially poor cooperation with the national TV, an idea was born to follow and honour the *Days* through a special show; last year thus marked the 18<sup>th</sup> *Podoba podobe (Image of an Image)* show.

**The archive fond of the show is a truly interesting, valuable, thoroughly professional and compelling TV record of the *Days* in Slovenia.**

### INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Initially, the *Days* concept was shaped by institutions who were active mostly in the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage. However, convinced that heritage is best protected by the people, we started to expand our network of participants to include NGOs and associations. We were particularly successful in 2005, when we tried to use the topic of the Days to familiarize the general public with the concept of intangible cultural heritage. This was a good year after the adoption of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and two years before Slovenia ratified the Convention. In addition to various events, which were largely shaped by different associations, we published *Nesnovna kulturna dediščina (Intangible Cultural Heritage)* – these were the first steps towards the protection and popularization of such heritage in Slovenia.

### RECOGNIZED AND ACCLAIMED AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL

Two further pivotal moments marked the development of the *Days*. This year, we implemented, in collaboration with our partners, the fourth instalment of Cultural Heritage Week, a national project that has been attracting a large number of educational institutions – last year, the number of participants was as high as 170.

**It was a win-win situation, with children benefiting from learning about the heritage that surrounds them in a manner adapted to their age, and us benefiting from familiarizing the youngest generation with cultural heritage.**

The other important novelty was the initiation of regional panel discussions, which greatly contributed to the promoting the importance of cultural heritage.

To mention a few more of our achievements: last year, the programme involved six Slovenian schools in Italy, and we are expecting more to join this year. As a special phenomenon of the *Days*, we also need to mention the organization and execution of opening events that usually mark the places where they're held with extremely positive experiences of community and pride regarding our common past and with the realization that our individual efforts become much more meaningful when they're tied together in common activities (Idrija, Laško, Piran, Škofja Loka, etc.).

Numbers show the growth of the *Days* as well: the total number of events in all 25 years exceeds 2,300, over half of which occurred in the last three years. A harder task would be to count all the event organizers – in 2015 alone, there were over five hundred. Our activities are recognized and acclaimed at the European level as well; among other things, we hosted and organized the Second Forum of the European Council on Cultural Heritage in 2009.

### AND WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT FROM OTHER PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES?

In Slovenia, the spirit of European Heritage Days is alive throughout the year, as we've made the project the centre of a number of promotional as well as educational activities. These educational programmes are organized each winter and early spring: this year, we executed 11 regional panel discussions in Slovenia and a special one for Slovenians living in Trieste. The panel discussions, a type of informal adult education, were attended by over 500 participants from very different organizations, ranging from museums and associations to schools, indicating that panel discussions offer an excellent opportunity for local-level networking. The discussion featured over 50 lecturers.

**The aim of our panel discussions is to develop and engage audiences and potential participants, to provide information about the current EHD topic and to share good practices.**

In this regard, we encourage the participation of lay and expert public in the identification, promotion and sometimes restoration of cultural heritage; we use a comprehensive approach, both from the perspective of heritage as an indivisible idea as well as the perspective of human activity, as people develop various aspects of their creativity in order to approach cultural heritage; we strive towards a unified Slovenian cultural sphere that would reach beyond Slovenian borders; we include ethnic communities living on Slovenian territory and use inter-institutional and inter-departmental integration to close the gaps opened between us by the limitations of acting within institutions. The innovative approach that we've been using for the past three years provides great encouragement to those who already traditionally participate in the EHD.

### THE VANISHING HERITAGE

This year's topic, Heritage around Us (*Dediščina OKoli nas*), addresses heritage communities: just like when heritage is created at home, when we decide to preserve a certain precious object, story or piece of wisdom for our children, the community of a given local environment needs to agree on what should be preserved for our descendants. And it is the duty of all of us who deal with heritage to inform the young and the old that heritage is not limited to great and important buildings, but can also be found in small things, in things overlooked or seemingly unimportant. This year's topic gives us the opportunity to call attention to endangered heritage, to heritage that's disappearing – rural and industrial heritage as well as heritage that is not yet perceived as such by the general public, i.e. 20th century architecture. The visual identity of this year's *Days* speaks for itself as well: we decided to use the square, because unlike the circle,

which symbolizes nature and infinity, the square is interfered with by man with his shapes and designs. We'd also played around with words within words: *Dediščina OKoli nas* means *Heritage around Us*. In Slovene, *ded-iŠČI-na* means *heritage*, while *išči* means *search*. In the word *OKO-li*, meaning *around*, we found *oko*, which means *eye*. This is our way of telling the public that not only are we going to keep an eye out for heritage, we're going to try and raise awareness of heritage – i.e. heritage has to be perceived by all our senses.

One could certainly say that in Slovenia, *European Heritage Days* have become a movement. And this wouldn't have been possible without the countless people involved in all these years. Exceptional dedication and ownership of the project and the positive attitude of the majority of participants from various institutions are a guarantee that the *Days* will keep on growing and developing.



## PARK OF MILITARY HISTORY IN PIVKA

# Slovenia's path to independence

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ  
PHOTO: MUSEUM ARCHIVES



### Demos – Demo Slovenije

4. decembra 1988 so Slovenska demokracija, Socialdemokratska zveza (SDZ) kot predvotilno koalicijo ustanovili Komitet decembra so k Demosu pristopili marca 1990 pa tudi Slovenska obrtno upokojenih občanov. Predsednik je Dimitrij Rupel in Lojze Peterle. Demosni prehod v demokratično družbo in slovenski nacionalni program in Ma

### Demos – the De of Slovenia

On 4 December 1988, the Slovenian Democrats, the Social Democratic Union (later the Slovenian People's Opposition of Slovenia) as a pre-elect Green's of Slovenia also joined Demos. Craftsmen's Party and the Grey Point as well. Dr Jolte Pučnik was elected Pi Lojze Peterle became Vice President. programme demands – a peaceful state of Slovenia – on the basis of the Programme and the May Declaration

#### Plebiscit državi

1990. leta so Slovenci izvolili novo državo. Vendar je bilo potrebno še eno plebiscitno referendumsko vprašanje, ki je bilo postavljeno na dan 23. junija 1991.

#### Plebiscit suverenosti

Na 23. juniju 1991 so Slovenci izvolili novo državo. Vendar je bilo potrebno še eno plebiscitno referendumsko vprašanje, ki je bilo postavljeno na dan 23. junija 1991.

Six months ago, the Park of Military History in Pivka, the largest museum complex in Slovenia, finalized a sizeable investment for a new pavilion dedicated to the state's Path to Independence. With this pavilion, ten years after the decaying old barracks started to be transformed, the park features the biggest military history exhibition in this part of Europe.

The main exhibition housed by the new pavilion is named the Path to Independence, illustrating the process of Slovenia's push for its independence with special focus on the war of 1991. The first part of the exhibition is about Yugoslavia and the military barracks, while the second part addresses the declaration of independence, which is followed by a symbolic turning point – the fall of the Berlin Wall – and the beginning of the aggression against Slovenia.

**Another deeply symbolic aspect of the exhibition is that the military museum focused on Slovenia's independence has been established in the very barracks of the former Yugoslav army from which the first tanks embarked on the roads on 26th June 1991, marking the beginning of the aggression of the Yugoslav army against the newly independent Republic of Slovenia.**

Visitors to the museum will also come across a symbolic crumbling wall separating the old from the new like some kind of a funnel. The crumbling wall symbolizes the historical moments of the 1980s that led to the process of Slovenia's democratization and independence. Visitors get quite nostalgic at the sight of a Slovenian family living room as at 27th June 1991, where the historical *Drugi dnevnik* (Evening News) with Tomaž Terček can be seen on the TV. War has happened. The television channel is showing the news of the day. From the balcony of the apartment, a view opens over the Slovenian Independence War. Faced with the large exhibits, visitors cannot help but become interested in the historic events, but, on the other hand, they also realize that the entire matter was not at all that innocent.

As much as 4.3 million euros was used to renovate and upgrade the former barracks and create the exhibition, most of which was provided by the European Union, while the Ministry of Culture contributed 15%.

The extensive exhibition space showcases the complete military technology associated with Slovenia's Independence War: aircraft, tanks, a helicopter and other military vehicles. The Path to Independence exhibition will encourage many visitors to remember the recent history of the nation, their military service in the Yugoslav army, the proud day when Slovenia finally achieved independence, and the time of uncertainty on the one hand and the resolute will to independence on the other.

**In Pivka, young people who did not live in those days will also be able to learn about the important part of the national history.**

#### **FROM DEFENCE AGAINST THE EXTERNAL ENEMY TO DEFENCE AGAINST THE INTERNAL ENEMY**

The exhibition provides basic information on what was called "the second Yugoslavia", or also the socialist or Tito's Yugoslavia, a federal country that covered most of the Slovenian national territory in the form of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia. Besides Tito, the Yugoslav People's Army was the main factor in holding together the federation and had an extensive impact on the country's development and governance. In the 1980s, its fundamental aim shifted from protection against the external enemy to defence against the internal enemy.

**Due to the obstruction of national development and severe violations of the human rights, most Slovenes increasingly perceived Yugoslavia as an unbearable burden.**

As the Berlin Wall fell and the democratic changes unfolded in Eastern Europe, Slovenia was flooded by an unstoppable desire for democracy and greater independence, which, after the victory of the democratic opposition at the first free election held in April 1990, finally led to the Slovenian Independence Referendum on 23rd December 1990. At the referendum, as many as 88.5% of eligible voters decided for an independent and autonomous Republic of Slovenia. Six months later, the Slovenian parliament followed the will of the

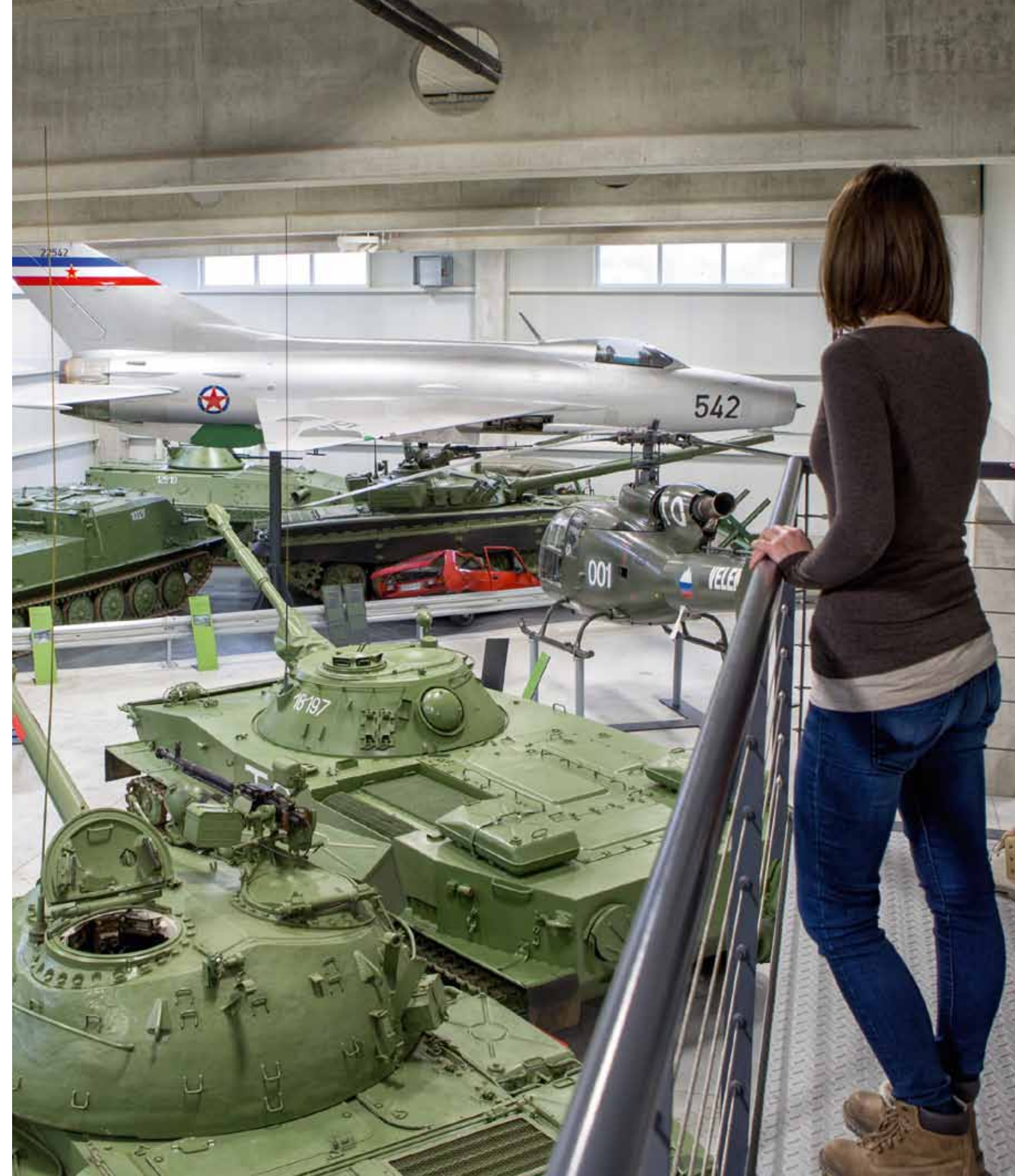
people expressed at the referendum and declared independence, which was followed by a brutal military intervention by the Yugoslav army that was, however, broken by resolute resistance from the Slovenian armed forces, which were comprised of the Slovenian Territorial Defence and the Slovenian Police. Defeated, the Yugoslav army retreated to its barracks and eventually, in late October 1991, four months after the war had broken out, left the Republic of Slovenia, finally allowing the country to set on its path of a sovereign state.

**The exhibition allows a visitor to experience the wartime events in direct contact with a number of important exhibits from the time.**

The diorama of advances made by a Yugoslav Army unit includes the MiG-21 aircraft, the M-84 tank and the BVP and BTR armoured vehicles. Two other important "relics" of the 1991 war are the Gazela helicopter marked Velenje TO-001, i.e. the first aircraft whose pilot managed to escape from the Yugoslav air force in it, and the T-55 tank, which was part of the tank unit that first started the Yugoslav army's aggression from the very barracks in Pivka. Among the interesting armoured vehicles, one should mention the BOV series, which was manufactured at the Maribor TAM factory and involved in various combats, as well as the PT-76 tank and the MT-LBu command vehicle. The BOV M-86 vehicle from the Special Police Unit symbolises the important role played by the Police, while the importance of Slovenian firemen is marked by the exhibited operations vehicle of the Mokronog fire squad.

#### **THE ARMOUR OF FREEDOM**

The Armour of Freedom exhibit shows various armoured vehicles as well as weaponry and other pieces of equipment that arrived to Yugoslavia in the 1950s as military aid following the Tito-Stalin split, which resulted in the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the bloc of communist states tied to the Soviet Union. The exhibit brings together some of the most valuable WWII armoured vehicles owned by the Park of Military History, such as the M4A3 Sherman tank, the M36 Jackson gun motor carriage, the Scout Car and M8 Greyhound armoured cars as well as the post-war American M47 Patton tank, the heaviest tank in the Park of Military History collection.



ZIGGIE BAG

## Don't just cycle... REcycle

DANILO GOLOB  
PHOTO: ZIGGIE BAG ARCHIVES



A team of young Slovene entrepreneurs has created a bike bag which is made almost entirely out of used bicycle tyre inner tubes. The Ziggie Bag is not just a bike bag. It also has space for a phone, a mobile charger and an LED light.

The origins of this environmentally-friendly bike bag go back to 2014, when bike enthusiast Žiga Bauer of Domžale had the idea of turning used tubes into bike equipment. With the goal of using recycled materials as efficiently as possible, he formed a small team of like-minded people, who believe that trash that would otherwise be wasted and costly to process and destroy can be used to create interesting and useful products.

### BIRTH OF THE ZIGGIE BAG

The team wanted to use as many tubes as possible to make the bags, but they also focused on a multifunctional design, simplicity of use and an attractive appearance. The used tubes got a new lease on life and a truly special ecologically conscious bike bag was born – the Ziggie Bag, which was named after the person who conceived it (Žiga).

The creators of the Ziggie Bag took into account the needs of bikers and added various functions to the bag. They mounted an LED light in the front, which can increase the biker's visibility in traffic and can be used to replace or supplement the bike's headlamp. The light is powered by a power bank inside the bag. The power bank is charged before riding using a USB port, and it can also be used to charge mobile phones and other small electronic devices while riding.

**The Ziggie Bag is manufactured entirely by hand in Domžale, as the bag's creators believe it is important to support the Slovenian economy.**

They are working to ensure that the bags will continue to be produced in Slovenia, and are also working on expanding their product range, which will of course be based on the reuse of used bicycle tubes. They currently offer saddle bags, frame bags and handlebar bags. "Just this week (15 April 2016) we finished three new prototypes. We have a lot of ideas, and if we succeed we will make a lot more than just bags," said Ajda Vodlan, a member of the enthusiastic team.



#### FOR URBAN CYCLISTS WHO CARE

So who uses a Ziggie Bag? "We are mainly targeting urban cyclists – people who use their bikes for transportation around town and for light recreation. They take their phones with them, which they can charge and listen to music. These are people for whom the eco aspect of our bags – that they are recycled – is important, and also people who care about their image, since the bags are also designer," explains Vodlan. They are therefore trying to combine ecology, sport and fashion into a single product.

The Ziggie Bag is easy to mount on your handlebars, and straps on the adjustable back of the bag are designed to hold a mobile telephone or similar devices, which are thus visible to the rider at all times. There is enough room in the bag for everything an urban cyclist would otherwise carry in their pockets, and they can also carry small tools and spare tubes. It also comes with a shoulder strap which allows you to use it even after your ride is over. The bags are unaffected by rain, and those made entirely out of tubes are also waterproof.

Ziggie Bags are available at all major shops in Slovenia and online. The "green" bags are also available in Austria and Croatia. They are initially focusing on online sales, and later they are planning to expand into brick and mortar shops in Europe and around the world.

So what is the creative team planning for the future? A Ziggie Bag on every bike? "Our main wish is to maintain the quality of the bags, to keep production as manual as possible and above all to keep the company headquarters in Domžale, and therefore in Slovenia.

**We want to make Ziggie Bag a strong brand based on an eco-designer style.**

Of course a Ziggie Bag on every bike is a dream outcome (she says with a laugh). But more realistically we just want satisfied customers who will use our products with pleasure," says Vodlan.





## SLOVENIA'S SPORTING HEROES HALL OF FAME

# Highest number of Olympic medals per inhabitant

POLONA PREŠEREN

It seems impossible that a nation of just two million could achieve such success in sport, but Slovenia did it. No other country this small has qualified for highest-level competitions in so many team sports – football, hockey, basketball, handball, volleyball. And an exceptional number of Slovenian individual athletes have achieved top-level results in skiing, cross-country skiing and ski jumping. Furthermore, we Slovenes are the proud holders of the highest number of Olympic medals per inhabitant.

**Numerous heroes have graced Slovenian sports, and their successes, thanks to the Slovenian Sports Journalists' Association, will not be forgotten.**

They are an inexhaustible source of inspiration, pride and determination, which calls out to the nation and holds a permanent place in the national memory," says Jože Zidar, president of the Slovenian Sports Journalists' Association.

**"Our goal, in addition to the Hall, is to establish a working museum of sport, which will house equipment and other sports memorabilia associated with Slovenian athletes.**

The Association is in charge of the Sporting Heroes Hall of Fame, to which athletes who in their time made their mark not just on Slovenian sport, but on world sport, are elected. Currently there are 59 sporting heroes in the Hall, who are selected by the members of the Association – sports journalists. The Hall is unique in world terms, as it is the only one to feature athletes from all sporting disciplines.

The Sporting Heroes Hall of Fame is located at the Stožice Sports Centre in Ljubljana, and the first athletes to be elected to it were gymnasts Leon Štukelj and Miroslav Cerar, Slovenia's finest athletes of the twentieth century. They were followed by legendary Slovenian names from all sporting disciplines. "These are exceptional people, who paved the way for the sporting generations to come.

Our initiative is just a small contribution to preserving history of Slovenian sport. We can be proud of Slovenian sport and its importance in bringing people together," adds Zidar. They also want to put historical events in sports journalism on public display, in the form of articles and reports by current and former sports journalists and others.

### Current members of the Sporting Heroes Hall of Fame:

2011: Leon Štukelj (gymnastics), Miroslav Cerar (gymnastics)

2012: Rudolf Cvetko (fencing), Josip Primožič Tošo (gymnastics), Stane Derganc (gymnastics), Stanko Loriger (athletics), Ivo Daneu (basketball), Jože Šlibar (ski jumping), Janez Polda (ski jumping), Draga Stamejčič Pokovec (athletics), Janez Žirovnik (cycling), Nataša Urbančič Bezjak (athletics), Branko Oblak (football), Aljoša Žorga (basketball), Vinko Jelovac (basketball), Mima Jaušovec (tennis), the rowing eight (4th at the Tokyo Olympics in 1964), Rudi Hiti (hockey), Peter Šumi (gymnastics), Miro Steržaj (bowling), Albin Felc (hockey).

2013: Franc Smolej (cross-country skiing), Ciril Praček (alpine skiing), Branko Zihel (diving), Tone Cerer (swimming), Tine Mulej (alpine skiing), Janko Štefe (alpine skiing), Ivan Toplak (football), Janko Kosmina-Mario Fafangel (sailing), Tine Šrot (gymnastics), Jurij Uršič (cycling), Edvard Vecko (table tennis), Ištvan Korpa (table tennis), Tone Gale (hockey), Milan Zadel (kayaking), Stanko Topolčnik (judo), Bojan Križaj (alpine skiing), Peter Vilfan (basketball), Bojan Ropret (cycling), Boris Strel (alpine skiing), Alenka Cuderman (handball), Borut Petrič (swimming), Miran Tepeš (ski jumping), Jure Franko (alpine skiing), Primož Ulaga (ski jumping), Andrej Jelenc (whitewater kayaking), Darjan Petrič (swimming), Matjaž Debelak (ski jumping), Mateja Svet (alpine skiing).

2015: Srečko Katanec (football), Jure Zdovc (basketball), Rok Petrovič (alpine skiing).

## SLOVENIA'S SALSA RUEDA FLASH MOB CONNECTS THE WORLD

### Dance, socialising, joy

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ  
PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVES



In early April, a “flash mob” took place for the third consecutive year in the Ljubljana city centre, near the Prešeren Monument. A flash mob is an intriguing, fun event where a group of people mix with passers-by to engage in a coordinated activity. This year, the activity involved a Cuban version of the Salsa dance.

50 pairs danced at the Prešeren Square, but Ljubljana was not the only city where the dance was performed. Starting precisely at 4.00 pm, people were dancing all over the world for about ten minutes at 207 locations in 187 cities and 60 countries.

In front of the unsuspecting passers-by, the performers danced a Cuban version of Salsa Rueda de Casino. This form of Salsa involves a group of pairs standing in a circle, while the group leader calls out the names of dance moves, creating an improvised choreography which is followed by all pairs in the circle. Many moves involve the swapping of partners and are marked by lots of humour, making Rueda de Casino extremely entertaining both for the participants and the audience alike. The idea for a Slovenian Rueda-dancing flash mob came in 2014 from Erik Zamida, a Rueda dancer from Ljubljana. He wrote about it on Facebook, the largest social network, and in a few weeks the idea spread all over the world.

**Last year, the Ljubljana group was joined by over 6,000 dancers from over 219 groups from 66 different countries.**

Salsa Rueda de Casino is a temperamental, Cuban-style salsa, a sub-type of the Cuban salsa that is suitable for all ages. But first and foremost, Salsa Rueda de Casino is a party, an opportunity to socialise and spend some active leisure time. It is suitable for all generations. Dancing is life, as the dancers say. They also say that positive energy and a big heart helped each of them bring together many dance en-

thusiasts and people in good spirits. As a rule, the FM is limited to about 10 minutes, providing the surprise factor of an unannounced event. People come to the location, leave a mark of joy, dance and positive energy, and then leave as if nothing had happened.

Groups from anywhere in the world were welcome to join the flash mob under the only condition that they danced Rueda de Casino. In this sense, as few as two pairs is already considered a group as they are enough to dance the Rueda. However, the larger the Rueda, the more dynamic its energy. Fifty pairs, i.e. 100 dancers, guided by members of the following dance schools, performed at the Prešeren Square in Ljubljana: Rueda.si (Ida and Boštjan Bibič – the first Rueda dance school in Slovenia!), Cubana Ljubljana (Katarina Gregorič, Jan Bervar), Alma Eslovena (Ana Urbas, Tadej Zupančič) and Plesni klub Karmen (Karmen Intihar).

There is another respect in which this year's Rueda de Casino FM in Ljubljana was unique. The dancers danced to a song which is exclusive in the Slovenian musical landscape, in the true rhythm of the Cuban Salsa. The song was written as a result of collaboration between the Vivaracha ensemble and Slovenian music veteran Vlado Kreslin. It is a cover of Kreslin's hit from 1987, Tista črna kitara (That Black Guitar). The new version of the song was created by the Slovenian-Cuban-Italian band called Vivaracha and given the Spanish title of Esa Negra Guitarra, which carries the same meaning as the Slovenian title. The song has not yet been officially released, but we expect it to become available to Slovenian fans shortly.

SLOVENIAN PHOTOJOURNALISTS

**Among the most renowned international  
contemporary creators**

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ





Photo: Matic Zorman

The two awards of the World Press Photo Foundation to Matic Zorman and Matjaž Krivic, the LensCulture Exposure Award to Matej Povše for a photograph of a refugee family crossing the Croatian-Hungarian border and the Pulitzer Prize for Srdjan Živulović have placed Slovenian photojournalists among the most renowned international contemporary creators. The year of the great migrant crisis was certainly a milestone for Slovenian photojournalists. These awards are an important recognition of Slovenian photographers.

This year's Pulitzer Prize in photography was shared by photographers of the New York Times and the Reuters news agency for images depicting the European refugee crisis. The recipients include Slovenian photographer Srdjan Živulović, who works with Reuters. His photo, taken on 20th October last year, shows refugees on the move at the outskirts of the town of Brežice in southeast Slovenia.

Živulović is extremely happy and proud of the award.

**He said the award-winning photo shows the hypocrisy of the world and the meagre possibilities open to the refugees as they enter a narrow space and a dark future.**

These people were forced to leave their civilised countries.

The photo shows a morning crowd of refugees, dubbed the "Calvary Procession", crossing the fields from Rigonce to Brežice. According to the photographer, the column of people initially seemed ordered, but then some started to lag behind due to hunger, thirst and high temperatures. As they crossed the bridge to Brežice, they ascended an embankment, and one could see that only a handful of them were still able to walk. "They were terribly decimated and exhausted," said Živulović about the circumstances in which the photo was taken, adding that he would rather never have to photograph anything similar again.

Živulović used to work for the Delo news publisher, but has been operating the Bobo independent photo agency since 1992. He's been a Reuters reporter ever since Slovenia became independent.

A series of 17 photos by the Reuters press agency, which includes Živulović's photo, shows scenes from the Balkan migrant trail, ranging from worried expressions on people's faces and hardships encountered on their way from the Aegean Sea, the coasts of Turkey and the Greek islands, to scenes from the Greek-Macedonian, Serbian-Macedonian and Austrian-German borders. The Columbia University from New York awards the Pulitzer Prize in 14 journalism categories, five literary categories as well as one music and one drama category.

PHOTOGRAPHER ANDREJ TARFILA

## A Winner in the Sony World Photography contest

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ  
PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVES



Slovenian photographer Andrej Tarfila won the Open Travel sub-category at the Sony World Photography competition, which is globally one of the most important photography contests. Tarfila was ranked first with his photo named *A Church on the Sorško Polje Fields (Cerkev na poljih Sorškega Polja)*, a landscape shot showing sunrise above the town of Škofja Loka and the surrounding hills.

The contest featured about 230,000 photos from 186 countries, which is the largest number of submissions in its nine-year history. More than 95,000 of these photos competed in the Open category, which is one of the five total categories of the Sony contest. The total number of photos received at the international competition since it has first been organised in 2007 now exceeds one million. In April and May, Andrej Tarfila's photo will be exhibited at the Sony World Photography Awards exhibition in London and will also be published in the Sony World Photography Awards 2016 book.

Furthermore, Tarfila's photo won the Slovenian national competition held in Ljubljana in the framework of the Sony World Photography Awards. Also, Slovenians Anja Matko and Edvard Badri Storman were ranked second and third respectively. This year, the national contest included 876 photos taken by casual and amateur photographers in 2015.

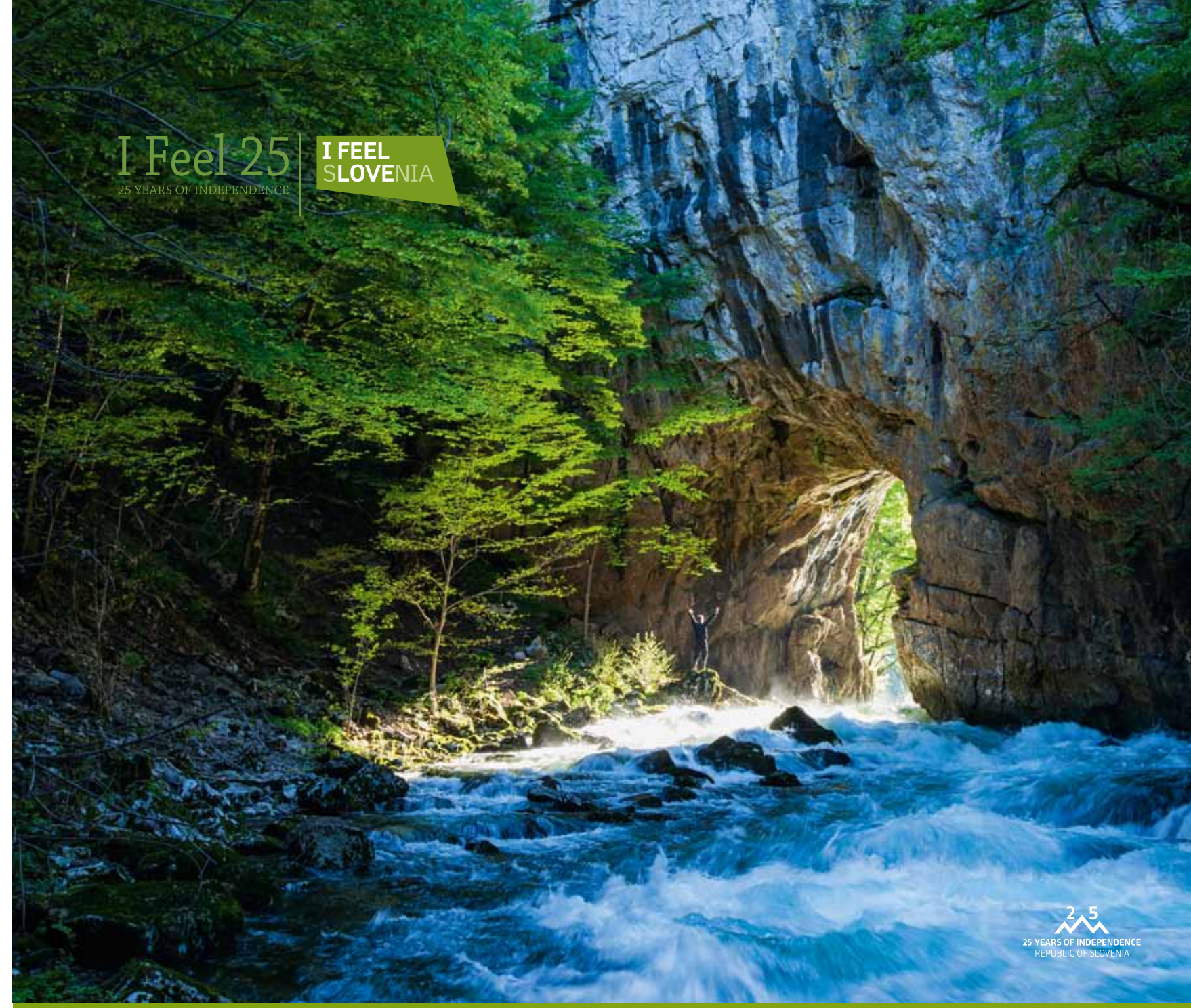
In this respect, Andrej Tarfila said that his submissions to contests always feature images from the local environment.

**"Many Slovenian photographers travel the world, seeking photogenic locations in order to find a good subject. I prefer to work in my own environment and show the Slovenian and foreign public that our country is just as beautiful and that we do not need to travel to the other side of the world to seek attractive motifs."**

Tarfila was ranked first with his photo named *A Church on the Sorško Polje Fields (Cerkev na poljih Sorškega Polja)*, a landscape shot showing sunrise above the town of Škofja Loka and the surrounding hills.

According to Tarfila, the competition is fierce and subjects and styles so diverse it is hard to predict what will happen at the future stages of the contest. However, he is hopeful that his victory in the Open Travel sub-category will bring him recognition and open some doors on his path to professional photography.





**Photographic exhibition marking the 25th anniversary of Slovenia's independence  
»I Feel Slovenia. I Feel 25.«**

**16 June–23 June 2016, Berlin (Breitscheidplatz)**

**24 June–8 July 2016, Vienna (Am Hof)**

**27 June–15 July 2016, Geneva (internal exhibition in the Palace of Nations)**

Exhibition is organised by the Government Communication Office of the Republic of Slovenia in cooperation with the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in Berlin, Slovenian Culture and Information Centre in Austria (SKICA), Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in Vienna, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Slovenia to the United Nations and other non-governmental organisations in Geneva and Slovenia Press Photo.

