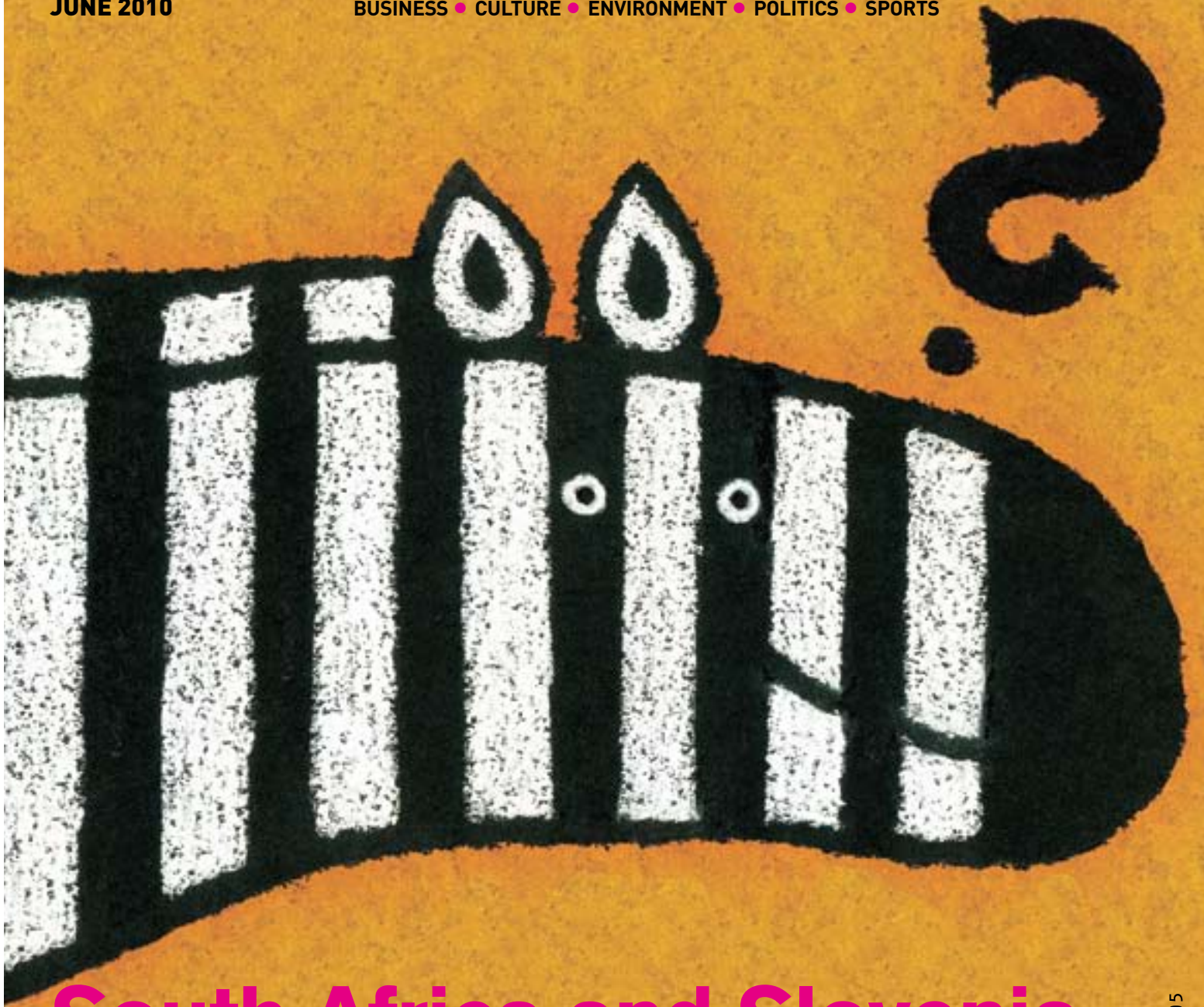


# Sinfo

JUNE 2010

BUSINESS • CULTURE • ENVIRONMENT • POLITICS • SPORTS



**South Africa and Slovenia  
building a promising future**





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Veronika Stabej

## A LITTLE FANTASY MAKES EVERYTHING EASIER

**T**HE WORLD CAN SOMETIMES BE VERY UNFAIR. And it is the most vulnerable groups of the population – the poor, the socially excluded and children – who feel this most. Others live lives marked by disease, wars, refugee situations, and so on.

Those most in need of aid and assistance – children – receive help from two organisations based in Slovenia that were founded in the 1990s with the help of the government or, rather, the foreign ministry. These are the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance (ITF) and the Together Foundation. The work of both these organisations is presented in this month's In Focus section. Their programmes are becoming an increasingly visible and sought-after form of help.

This section also contains a report on the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. Although Slovenia's risk-of-poverty rate of approximately 12% places it among the countries with the lowest risk of poverty in the EU, this of course does not mean that active measures are not required. These measures are implemented both by the government and by individual humanitarian and other organisations.

At least the minds of the youngest members of our society are still free to wander in the fantasy world of children's literature. The world of the delightful picture books by Slovenian author/illustrator Lila Prap, for example, which have been translated into 30 different languages and in some countries even form part of the school syllabus. A glance at the cover of this month's Sinfo, created especially for us by Lila, will be enough to transport you into this magical world.

Part of this issue is, of course, devoted to the forthcoming football World Cup in South Africa, where Slovenia is among the teams competing for glory – an event eagerly awaited by young and old alike. In an exclusive interview for Sinfo, Slovenia manager Matjaž Kek predicts that his team's opponents will have their work cut out.

I am taking my leave with positive thoughts and best wishes for a creative, peaceful and friendly world. I wish you all a great deal of personal satisfaction and new discoveries - in and about Slovenia as well.

“ A GLANCE AT THE COVER OF THIS MONTH'S SINFO, CREATED ESPECIALLY FOR US BY LILA, WILL BE ENOUGH TO TRANSPORT YOU INTO THIS MAGICAL WORLD. ”



06



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Cover photo Lila Prap

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# A REFERENDUM ON ARBITRATION AGREEMENT

Mateja Malnar Štembal  
Photo STA

**'The OECD Council accepted the decision regarding the conditions for the invitation to join the OECD convention on the basis of reports from 18 commissions that over the last three years judged the preparedness of Slovenia to comply with the OECD principles and direction.'**

**W**ITH THE DEMAND FOR SCHEDULING A LEGISLATIVE REFERENDUM REGARDING the ratification of the arbitration agreement with Croatia, 86 representatives signed and thus confirmed at the end of April the opinion of the Prime Minister that only one referendum should be scheduled, after the coalition decided, following the publication of the opinion of the Constitutional Court, that the preliminary consultative referendum which is requested last November is no longer necessary and for this reason was removed.

The representatives, with 78 votes for and none against, accepted a decision regarding the scheduling of the referendum on the arbitration agreement with Croatia, which is to take place on Sunday, 6 June 2010. As the parliamentary debate has already shown, the coalition will be persuading voters to support the agreement, while the opposition will be calling on citizens to vote against it.

The agreement will be ratified in the referendum if the majority of voters vote for it and their votes are legally valid. In this case, a law regarding ratification will be immediately published.

However, should the voters deny the law, Slovenia and Croatia could end up facing the same open question regarding the border again, one which they have not been able to resolve since independence in 1991.

A year after the decision in the referendum, the National Assembly will not be able to pass any law which would be at odds with this decision.

## Embassy opening in Tripoli and Ljubljana

AT THE BEGINNING OF MAY, BORUT Pahor and Baghdadi al-Mahmudi, the Slovenian and Libyan prime ministers, met and agreed that Slovenia and Libya would open embassies in Tripoli and Ljubljana. The Libyan Prime Minister took the opportunity to emphasise that the opening of the embassies in Tripoli and Ljubljana will help to

further solidify cooperation, as it will enable faster and easier trade flows. In the words of the Slovenian Prime Minister, the progress made was not only in the political arena, but also in the economic sphere.

In Pahor's words, Libya is interested in cooperation with Slovenia in the areas of the banking system, tourism

and glassmaking, and in the area of infrastructure, especially rail, with which the desire for cooperation with the Port of Koper is connected.

Slovenia, on the other hand, has sound opportunities to solidify its cooperation with Libya, first and foremost in the areas of infrastructure and construction.

## Dejan Židan named new Minister of Agriculture



WITH THE RESIGNATION OF THE former minister, Slovenia acquired a new Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food at the beginning of the month.

The National Assembly named Dejan Židan, former President of the Board of the agricultural group Panvita, to this position at the suggestion of Prime Minister Borut Pahor.

Židan is an expert in the area of agriculture, who at the same time possesses considerable business experience, which is a very welcome combination for the leadership of the Ministry of Agriculture.

In the presentation of his programme, the Minister emphasised the completion of a new strategy of development in Slovenian agriculture, while he will also strive to see that the agricultural sector overcomes the recession in such a way that, in time, it will play an even more significant role than it does at present.

## Honorary Consuls of France in Slovenia

ON 14 MAY A DELEGATION OF THE Association of Honorary Consuls of France, headed by Roland Roux de Chavanes, visited the National Assembly. The visit should contribute to the greater recognisability of Slovenia, not just in France, but also in other countries. History has woven numerous ties between Slovenia and France, ranging from the Illyrian Provinces, contacts between the two wars, the support of France during Slovenia's process of independence and up to the assistance of France on Slovenia's path into the EU and NATO. Mutual relations enjoyed an especially fruitful year in 2008, when the two countries successively held the EU Presidency. There are also preparations under way to conclude a political declaration on the strategic partnership between the two countries, while there is excellent cooperation on the parliamentary level, since with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty the role of national parliaments is increasing, and cooperation among them is becoming increasingly important. France is Slovenia's primary partner in the area of project collaboration in science and technology, the fourth biggest trade partner and the fourth biggest investor in Slovenia. The company Revoz is the biggest Slovenian exporter, and since 2004 it has been 100% owned by Renault. In addition to the existing models, Twingo and Clio, production started in March this year on the new model, Renault Wind, which is made exclusively in Slovenia for the entire European market, and the project is also financially supported by the Slovenian Government.

## Invitation to the OECD

SLOVENIA, TOGETHER WITH ESTONIA and Israel, received an invitation to join the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). As the Secretary-General of the OECD, Angel Gurría, stated on this occasion, Slovenia, Estonia and Israel, along with Chile, which has become a full-fledged member, will help to increase the plurality and openness of the OECD, which is playing an ever larger role in the global economy.

The OECD Council accepted the decision regarding the conditions for the invitation to join the OECD convention on the basis of reports from 18 commissions that over the last three years judged the preparedness of Slovenia to comply with the OECD principles and direction.

The OECD will accept the three new members at an event planned to take place at the Ministerial Council of the organisation on 27 May in Paris. The agreement will then have to be ratified by the National Assembly, with the process ending with an OECD resolution of acceptance.



Both economists and politicians greeted the invitation with the words that it is good news for Slovenia and that membership in the OECD, as well as the changes which it has brought, is a sound investment in the continued development of the country.



**STOP  
POVERTY  
NOW**



[www.2010againstopoverty.eu](http://www.2010againstopoverty.eu)

**2010**  
European Year  
for Combating  
Poverty and  
Social Exclusion





**Ivan Svetlik**  
**Minister of Labour, Family and Social Affairs:**

“There is a danger that poverty will increase as a result of the crisis and it is very likely that the poverty rate for 2009 and 2010 will be higher. The poverty rate in Slovenia is not high, but the number of poor is absolutely too high, and all the measures of the ministry are aimed at reducing it.

Those most at risk of poverty are elderly women living alone, the unemployed and single-parent families. These groups are currently in the most difficult position, and it is possible that poverty in these groups will increase further. For this reason we intend to prepare a range of social legislation, one of the fundamental aims of which will be to reduce poverty in those segments of the population where it is still strongly present today. Emphasis will also be placed on raising awareness of the phenomenon of poverty, which is something that a social state cannot tolerate, in individual institutions and among the public.”



**Davor Dominkuš**  
**The Director of the Social Affairs Directorate at the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs:**

“The Year will take place in specific

# STOP POVERTY NOW!

The European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. Almost 80 million people in the EU live below the poverty line.

Vesna Žarkovič Photo European Commission TA

**T**HE SLOGAN OF THE EUROPEAN YEAR FOR COMBATING POVERTY and Social Exclusion is ‘Stop poverty now!’ The official launch of the 2010 European Year took place in Madrid on 21 January.

Figures show that the highest risk-of-poverty rate, 41.9%, is in families with no family members in employment. Individuals most at risk include the over-65s, people living alone and people living in rented accommodation.

In 2008 the risk-of-poverty rate was 12.3%, making Slovenia one of the countries with the lowest risk-of-poverty rate in the EU, where the average was 16%. The increase in the risk-of-poverty rate as a result of the increased unemployment rate is, according to Svetlik, difficult to estimate.

The risk-of-poverty rate in Slovenia in 2008 was 12%, which means that the annual income of 12% of the population after social transfers was insufficient to lift them above the poverty threshold. Slovenia is one of the eight EU countries with the lowest risk of poverty. In the EU as a whole, the risk-of-poverty rate was 17%. This means that almost 80 million EU citizens live below the poverty line.

## The active role of the individual in the European Year for Combating Poverty

Before the start of the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, Davor Dominkuš, the Director of the Social Affairs Directorate at the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, drew attention to the activities that will take place during the course of the year. Particular emphasis will be placed on the role of the individual in improving his or her own financial situation. Humanitarian organisations, for their part, draw attention to the tasks of the state.

## Media campaigns

Media campaigns will try to draw the attention of as many people as possible to the issues involved and to methods of action. A series of campaigns will also be focused on individual target groups. These should not only take place at the national level but should include people in the local community and in smaller environments in the process of reflection and debate and the active addressing of the problem, so that people at all levels begin to deal actively with their attitude towards poverty and ask themselves what they can do to improve the quality of life and social inclusion of all citizens.

The programme of the 2010 European Year, which is being coordinated by the ministry, is partly financed from European funds and partly from >>>





the national budget. As well as preparing numerous activities, the ministry has already published a call for applications for programme providers. The ministry is currently preparing a legislative basis that will have the effect of reducing the risk of poverty and social exclusion. A social assistance bill and a bill on claiming rights from public funds are being drafted, while negotiations are under way in connection with the minimum wage, which will be defined in the Minimum Wage Act. Changes to legislation covering employment and unemployment are also being prepared.

According to Dominkuš, suitable employment is a key condition for addressing material hardship and therefore legislation should stimulate and facilitate conditions under which as many people as possible are able to provide themselves with social security through their own activity.

With this in mind, a social enterprise bill is currently being drafted. This will open up employment opportunities to groups that have difficulty finding employment. These include young people with unsuitable qualifications, the elderly, the disabled, former convicts, and people with chronic mental health problems. 'Experiences from other countries show that through the appropriate implementation of well-prepared legislation it is possible to return a large number of people from vulnerable groups to employment,' said Dominkuš.

The bill on claiming rights from public funds envisages a uniform process of deciding on rights, where decisions will be taken in one place on the basis of comparable criteria, with passive forms and measures followed by active measures including employment advice and incentives. The bill also aims to connect the receipts provided by different ministries, harmonise criteria and simplify decision-making. The future Act should thus ensure greater justice while at the same time being more economical and transparent and helping to prevent abuses. ●

circumstances, in conditions of a serious economic crisis where a large number of people have found themselves in financial difficulty. The work of the ministry is therefore directed towards reaching the widest possible circle of potential users, people who are socially at risk, by means of appropriate measures.

We must not forget about several specific groups which have already been exposed to a greater risk of poverty for a longer period. These include above all elderly people living on their own, the disabled, the homeless and also certain other groups such as people with mental health problems, and all those with reduced capacity for employment who are therefore unable to provide themselves with adequate social security."



**Teresa Novak**  
**The president of the National Forum of Humanitarian Organisations of Slovenia:**

"Poverty is unacceptable in Slovenia because we are a rich country. 'We need to take every possible step to eliminate poverty in Slovenia. Conditions should be established for the development of social enterprise, since this can contribute to improving the financial and social position of, above all, more vulnerable groups. Humanitarian organisations are observing an increasing number of people in difficulty, and this number will continue to increase. The situation into which we have been pushed is still partly hidden. But job losses and the fact that you can still be poor despite being in regular employment will continue to be causes of hardship."





# EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES: THE ROLE OF TEACHERS

Ministry of education and sport

Photo Primož Lavre

**O**N 4-5 JUNE THIS YEAR SLOVENIA IS HOSTING AN important international event, namely the 23rd session of the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education under the heading “Education for Sustainable Democratic Societies: the Role of Teachers”.

At a time when the challenges facing European societies such as poverty and social exclusion are being exacerbated by the global economic crisis, it is clearly important for Council of Europe member states to seize the opportunities for new approaches presented by problems of this kind and take advantage of the benefits of 60 years of intergovernmental co-operation to tackle the various challenges in a sustainable manner.

In the field of education, the crisis raises questions about the types of societies which Europe wishes to develop and pass on to future generations. In this respect, the member states have already advocated a more humane and inclusive Europe, which was the main theme of the previous session held in Istanbul

in 2007. But how can these aims of inclusion and humanity be achieved in practice? How can we build a socially sustainable society, based on the fundamental principles of respect for human rights, living together, equal opportunities for all and citizen participation?

## What part should education play in this debate?

The ministerial conference will be an opportunity to discuss these issues and consider the role of education and, more specifically, teachers, in finding common, viable and effective solutions to the challenges facing European societies at present, such as the increasing diversity of our societies.

Initial and in-service training of teachers will be the main focus of the conference and will be treated from a lifelong learning perspective. Particular emphasis will be placed on the competencies education professionals need in order to help >>>

Minister of Education  
and Sport, Igor Lukšič



**'At their meeting the Ministers of Education of the 50 states parties to the European Cultural Convention will therefore be able to draw on the discussions to devise strategies for education and teacher training policies and thereby give direction to future Council of Europe action.'**



build a sustainable democratic society where human rights play an integral part for peace and stability, on their professional development and on their responsibilities as members of co-operation networks and as agents of social change. Discussions will also address strategies to enhance the role and influence of the teaching profession within European societies.

At their meeting the Ministers of Education of the 50 states parties to the European Cultural Convention will therefore be able to draw on the discussions to devise strategies for education and teacher training policies and thereby give direction to future Council of Europe action.

### **Slovenia places great value on the work of the Council of Europe in the area of education**

We are thinking here of specific work both on the political and professional level. This includes the fact that through programmes of educating and training teachers and practitioners and through expert work on study content, it is attempting through all its activities to teach young people to fulfil and live human rights and freedoms both in the school context and in everyday life, that it is emphasising values that should bring European nations closer together and create greater mutual understanding and trust, the fact that it is spreading values that also take account of wider dimensions and not just those of Europe, which is deeply aware of the inter-dependance of today's world, of cultures and civilisations.

We value most of all the fact that in the area of education the Council of Europe is pursuing specific projects that are supported professionally and pedagogically, and it is attempting to avoid the instrumentalisation of the sensitive areas it deals with, and

here we are thinking especially of learning for democratic, active citizenship and human rights, history, intercultural education and issues of multilingualism and education for interfaith dialogue.

### **To prevent violence in schools**

What seems especially important to us are the activities to prevent violence in schools, the role of the school premises as a democratic space of learning and life and linking to the wider environment, as well as the emphasis on concern for special social groups, Roma, migrants and so forth.

From the very beginning of cooperation with the Council of Europe, as an independent country at the beginning of the 1990s, Slovenia has taken good advantage of project results in formulating the basic principles of education policy and practices, and today, when we have become a full Member State of the European Union, we still appreciate the work of the Council of Europe as essential and beneficial.

It should be especially highlighted that the Council of Europe is active in the area of education in as many as 50 European countries, stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Urals, and bringing together almost 900 million people.

If the other big European "association of states", the European Union, has set itself the task of becoming by 2010 and thereafter the "most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world", it should be pointed out that today, perhaps more than ever before, we also need a "conscience of Europe", which operates more broadly and whose basic visions and values, that is, human rights, awareness of the importance of European identity and of seeking common answers to the key challenges which Europe and the world are facing, and which is embodied by the Council of Europe.





# INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Polona Prešeren Photo Arne Hodalič

**I**NTERNATIONAL TRUST FUND FOR DEMINING AND MINE Victims Assistance (ITF), a donation-funded international humanitarian organisation, and the Together Foundation are headquartered in Slovenia. The ITF and its projects help to eliminate the dangers of mines, rehabilitate victims, keep populations informed about the dangers which abound in post-conflict periods, and most importantly, both organisations help the most helpless and needy of all – the children.

## International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance

### **A.M., male, age 14**

#### **Right hand amputated above wrist**

A functional right-forearm mechanical prosthesis was made for him. He learned to use it through a work therapy programme. At the end he was able to use his arm and prosthesis to perform everyday two-handed activities, and he is able to use the prosthesis to grasp objects and hold them in order to perform other activities.

### **A.T., female, age 6**

#### **Right leg amputated at shin**

This girl came to our institute with no prosthesis, walking short distances on crutches. We made her a below-the-knee skeletal prosthesis; she has learned to walk with the prosthesis and crutches on level ground and on stairs, and learned how to attach the prosthesis herself.

### **A. N. M., male, age 13**

#### **Left arm amputated at upper arm**

This boy lost his left arm in an explosion, and required amputation above the elbow. We made him a functional upper-arm mechanical prosthesis. He has learned to use the prosthesis to perform everyday activities through a work therapy programme.

These are stories of children from Gaza, who instead of a carefree childhood of play experienced tragic accidents resulting from conflict. They receive assistance for their rehabilitation from the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance (ITF). The organisation was founded by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia in 1998, initially in order to provide humanitarian assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina in its efforts to demine the country and provide assistance to mine victims. The ITF now helps to rehabilitate children with similar unfortunate stories and by demining areas, and also helps prevent similar tragedies.

One of the most important areas of their recent operations is helping to rehabilitate children from Gaza who are victim of the conflict there. Sponsorship and a special initiative for the project were also received from Slovenian President Dr. Danilo Türk, who on a state visit to Ramallah in January of last year held talks with President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad about opportunities for Slovenia to provide humanitarian assistance.

This led to 32 children coming to Slovenia for rehabilitation last year, whose stories are similar to the three presented >>>



above. Their carefree childhoods were tragically cut short by the conflict, which has marked them for life. They were assisted by professionals at the Soča University Rehabilitation Institute (URI Soča) in Ljubljana, who helped improve the quality of their lives despite their serious injuries. They were supplied with high-quality prosthetic devices and rehabilitation. Several groups and individuals were involved in the evacuation of the children from Gaza and their rehabilitation – from institutions in Slovenia to international participants. All of the operations were performed using funds donated by countries and individuals. The successes of last year's campaign are already having an influence, and the ITF reports that interest among donors for supporting the project remains high.

### What is the ITF?

The ITF is a non-profit organisation founded by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia in March 1998 in order to provide humanitarian assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Through the establishing of the ITF, the Republic of Slovenia began actively collaborating in eliminating the consequences of conflict in the region of South Eastern Europe, and it has proved to be one of the Slovenian Governments top foreign policy projects. The ITF has become a reference institution in the field of demining operations and has developed exceptionally good operating practices.

In accordance with the desires of its donors, it has expanded its operations from South Eastern Europe to the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia), Central Asia and other mine-affected countries such as Columbia and Lebanon. At the initiative of the President of the Republic of Slovenia, the ITF is currently carrying out a project of rehabilitation of children in Gaza.

Their work to date has been exceptionally successful and the fund has already helped to clear more than 102 million square metres of mine-affected terrain in South East Europe and 2.1 million in the South Caucasus. At the end of last year they had successfully completed demining projects in Albania, Montenegro, Serbia (where the problem of cassette bombs remains a threat) and the Republic of Macedonia. Albania and Macedonia have also been proclaimed "mine free". In addition to demining, the ITF also carries out programmes and projects for raising awareness of the dangers of mines and small arms / light weapons, thus helping reduce the number of new victims. Their holistic approach also involves the



organisation and carrying out of training programmes which help develop local and national capacities. These programmes include educating children and adults, training deminers and other people involved in demining operations, and experts in the field of providing assistance to mine victims.

#### **From the Joint Statement of Mr William Jefferson Clinton, President of the United States of America and Dr Janez Drnovšek, Prime Minister of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, 21 June 1999:**

"The United States government and the government of Slovenia share the goal of removing the menace of landmines from the region of South East Europe, and reconfirm their strong support for the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance (ITF). This fund is concrete evidence of the Slovenian government's determination to make a significant contribution to strengthen peace and security in South Eastern Europe through mine action programs, particularly in Bosnia-Herzegovina...

...Through these efforts, and in collaboration with other regional and international institutions, the ITF contributes to building peace and national reconciliation, and demonstrates that all parties can work together in assisting the process of post-conflict rehabilitation."

### Financing through donations

The ITF is financed through donations. Their chief sponsor is the USA, which has to date allocated more than 138 million dollars for demining programmes. At the beginning of this month the ITF received a donation from the USA of \$12,079,208, which will be earmarked in 2010 for continued support for demining operations in South Eastern Europe, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, which remain the most mine-affected countries in the region. The ITF must obtain the same amount of funds from the rest of its sponsors, according to the "matching funds" system. Through this type of support from the inception of the ITF onwards, the USA has been the pillar of the ITF's donation sources. The system of matching the funds donated by the USA is also unique in the international arena.

"The USA has been the ITF's most important partner since



the institution was founded, not least because of its principle of matching funds. We believe that our collaboration will continue and allow the ITF to fulfil its vision – a world without the threats faced by countries after conflicts and other destructive events, including landmines, explosive military ordinance, including unexploded antipersonnel devices and abandoned explosive devices, as well as unlawful possession and use of small arms / light weapons”, said ITF Director Dorijan Maršič.

Their operations are characterised by a high degree of transparency, and they have exceptionally low administrative costs, as they use only 3 per cent of their funds for their own operation. To date they have collected more than \$302 million for their projects. They also play an important role in coordinating both the donor countries and private or individual donors. The economic crisis has also been reflected in the level of donations, but every single donation is priceless, says Iztok Hočevar, Advisor to the Director for International Relations, who heads up the ITF project in Gaza. The role of the donors has always been the most significant factor in the ITF’s success. “We can have great ideas and run great projects, as we are definitely trying to do in the field, but without the support and interest of our donors we would not succeed”, adds Hočevar.

Their work in a given mine-affected area usually begins (at the initiative of the country) with a site assessment, in which they determine what kind of assistance is needed where. They identify the parties in the country who could carry out demining activities. This is followed by project planning and the collection of funds for particular projects. What they do is in fact project and financial management, in which they have developed know-how which is sometimes entirely based on technical assistance.

## Vision

To date, the ITF has carried out projects in 14 mine-affected countries. However, their main objective of a clear and mine-free region of South Eastern Europe has not yet been achieved. The ITF strongly believes that regional cooperation fosters cooperative behaviour between neighbouring countries and/or belligerent parties, helps build bridges between former adversaries and eradicates long present animosities as a consequence of this. ITF shall continue to implement its strategic goal of sharing its own experience and know-how with other mine-affected countries and regions thus contributing to the overall well-being of those suffering from the hidden consequences of past conflicts. With over 150 million mines laid in the ground and over 450,000 landmine survivors in the world, landmines and unexploded ordnance still cause human agony and hinder socio-economic development.

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## THE TOGETHER FOUNDATION

Not all of the world’s children are happy and content. For many their childhood ends too soon with the loss of their parents, and many have no childhood to speak of owing to various military conflicts, while others’ lives are affected by disease, psychosocial difficulties and disturbances, or disabilities, or are forced to live as refugees. These children receive assistance from the Together Foundation Regional Center for the Psychosocial

Well-Being of Children. The foundation was established with the idea of protecting and improving the psychosocial well-being of children in areas affected by war, armed conflict, terrorist attacks, natural and technical disasters and their unfavourable social circumstances.

The founding and operation of the Together Foundation depend greatly on the desire of the Slovenian government to contribute to the psychosocial well-being of children, families and communities in areas of former Yugoslavia, and thus also to coexistence and stability. It was established in February 2002 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia, the City Municipality of Ljubljana and Slovene Philanthropy.

## Mission

The fundamental mission of the Together Foundation is to create a better future for children and to contribute to peace and stability through activating Slovenian and international professional and material resources. They activate Slovenian and international resources for assistance for countries in the region and abroad in order to provide a better future for the children. They also try to contribute to peace and stability in the region and abroad through activities designed for children’s well-being. The programmes they carry out thus become recognised and sought after forms of development assistance.

The basic principle of the activities of the Together Foundation is to build up local structures such as institutional organisations for children and non-governmental organisations, and development of models that will remain in place when the foreign assistance is withdrawn. The programmes are based on the principles of: mental health for all children, a child-centred approach, community models, models included in the operations of schools, approaches connected to and built into existing structures (primary health care services, schools, day care centres, volunteers who hold daily leisure time activities for children).

## Where they operate

The programmes are carried out mainly in the region of South East Europe (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia), as well as in Iraq and in the Northern Caucasus. As part of their operations they host numerous international conferences, consultations and international camps for volunteers. They contribute professional papers and articles to numerous international conferences and consultations. They also publish articles in professional journals and publish professional compilations which have been translated into foreign languages.

## Vision

The Together Foundation Regional Center for the Psychosocial Well-Being of Children is becoming an important element and facilitator of development assistance of the Republic of Slovenia, which carries out its programmes in areas affected by armed conflict, war, terrorist attacks, natural and technical disasters and unfavourable social circumstances. The Together Foundation is endeavouring to become a recognised source of development assistance in Europe and abroad. ●

Our opponents won't have an easy job with Slovenia

# MATJAŽ KEK

Coach of the Slovenian national football team

Andrej Stare Photo Damijan Gradečak

**M**ATJAŽ KEK – THE 48-YEAR-OLD coach of Slovenia's football team – has brought order, friendship, patriotism and discipline into the dressingroom. His highly professional yet human approach to football, the players, colleagues, referees and opponents serves as a guarantee that there is still more success awaiting Slovenia's national team. The World Cup in South Africa will be a global mega-event, at which Slovenia will no doubt play an important part, and not just in competitive terms, but also in terms of support. On the southern tip of the African continent, the Slovenian team will enjoy the support of a mass of Slovenian supporters several thousand strong. Matjaž Kek salutes everyone who will be coming to see the World Cup, and wishes them fair and sporting attendance at the games, while promising that his players will not disappoint.

**The biggest world competition in football is around the corner.**

**You and your players are about to embark on a completely new story. What are your expectations?**

The thing is, we're heading into a competition that's unfamiliar. Of course we know it from our TV screens, and some of us have watched the World Cup live at the grounds, but playing at this biggest sporting spectacle in the world is something special. Before the game with Qatar, I told the players that the games against Algeria and the USA involve the

same kind of turnover as the two World Cup qualifying games (Saturday to Wednesday interval), while the match at the end against the former world champions, England, will be like the icing on the cake, or a gift for everyone, a kind of gift for this great success. I'm certain that we can play competitively, and I can assure you we'll all be well prepared physically and tactically, and our opponents won't have an easy job with Slovenia. Perhaps in the USA and England they regard us as outsiders, but before the match begins the score is still 0:0!

“THE LADS HAVE ALL SHAKEN HANDS, THEY ARE BREATHING AS ONE, AND IN THEIR WILL, DISCIPLINE, COMRADESHIP AND SKILL THEY ARE UP AMONG THE BEST IN THE WORLD. RIGHT WHEN I TOOK OVER THE NATIONAL SIDE IN 2007, I BELIEVED IN THIS TEAM. MANY PEOPLE WERE SCEPTICAL, BUT I STILL MANAGED TO SQUEEZE THE VERY BEST OUT OF “MY BOYS”. IN OUR DRESSING ROOM THERE IS NO ROOM FOR QUARRELS, BACKBITING, DISLOYALTY, SWEARING AND ILL-DISCIPLINE.”

**In which specific areas of play do you hold the greatest reserves?**

We have of course made great progress in communication and interdependence among the players. Their philosophy of playing for the national side has reached

the desired level. In their clubs they each have their own methods, but in the national side they have achieved a new level in the way they act and operate on the pitch.

**How are you following your opponents England, Algeria and the USA?**

Nowadays there are no big secrets in world of football. Everyone knows the English, and their football is the story of this sport. If you recall, for many years the English didn't want to play against teams outside the United Kingdom, because they thought that it was immoral to play this noble game against football “savages”. Over the years the English completely changed, adopting the European-South American ways, and their football is no longer something completely different from the football outside the British Isles. For that reason, the Americans are acting with a little more self-confidence. Each year they play more than 30 matches, and their best team is not just able to compete with the best, it ranks among the top teams in the world. Their performance at the Confederations Cup last year in South Africa was quite awesome. They cruised past the Spanish, and in the final against Brazil,

they led right up to the end. American soccer is top-notch, despite the fact that in the USA this sport is down at the bottom of the popularity scale for guys. It's different for women, for whom soccer is team sport number one. >>>





**What about Algeria? Many European football fans reckon they are the “exotic” dimension.**

No way! The Algerians are an outstanding team, their players are extremely fit and they play for prominent European clubs. I watched the play-off match for a place at the World Cup between Algeria and Egypt (the 2010 African champions). The Algerians won 1:0 through routine play, they know how to compete, they don't let up, they overcome their opponents physically, they play brilliantly and they're able to defend a lead. The opening game against them will be anything but easy.

**Leading up to the World Cup in South Africa, you have plans to train in Italy and then before departure there will be a friendly warm-up against New Zealand in Maribor. How are you keeping tabs on the form of your players, who are spread all over Europe?**

I have my way of doing things, and I use state-of-the-art TV reception to watch the games that Slovenian national players are in. It's true that they're not all playing all the time, but when they get into the national side, things are different. The lads have all shaken hands, they are breathing as one, and in their will, discipline, comradeship and skill they are up among the best in the world. Right when I took over the national side in 2007, I believed in this team. Many people were sceptical, but I still managed to squeeze the very best out of “my boys”. In our dressing room there is no room for quarrels, backbiting, disloyalty, swearing and ill-discipline. Everyone is committed to this, and it's one of the keys to our success together.

**Before you became coach of the national team, you managed the under 15 and under 16 sides. Were you surprised when the then president of**



“ I DESPISE ALL SPORTS PEOPLE WHO HAVE ACHIEVED RESULTS BY MEANS OF ILLICIT STIMULANTS AND PROCEDURES. EVERY FOOTBALLER WHO IS GOING TO PLAY AT THE WORLD CUP IN SOUTH AFRICA WILL HAVE TO UNDERGO PRECISE MEDICAL CHECKS (CARDIO ULTRASOUND, CYCLOERGOMETRY, RTG, INTERNAL ORGAN ULTRASOUND, LAB TESTS, PSYCHO-TESTS AND SIMILAR). ”

**the Slovenian Football Association, Rudolf Zavrl, offered you the job?**

It was a shock, but after serious consideration I accepted. And I did the right thing. After I was appointed manager, I had talks with all the former managers, Prašnikar, Verdenik, Katanec and Oblak. They all gave me exceptionally useful advice and guidelines. I have applied many of the details I heard from the former managers in my work now. And this reinforces how managing the national football side is a team effort. Without a good team of experts, it just wouldn't work. Nowadays football trends are an expert field, and we need to meet the challenges of science and tradition, experience and courage.

**Unfortunately sports people, and to large extent footballers, are subject to injury. How did you experience what is for a sportsman the biggest tragedy?**

I was unlucky – twice I ruptured my cruciate ligaments, and I was operated on three times for injuries to my Achilles tendon. But the character of the sportsman comes out in serious injuries like that. All I wanted was to get better as soon as possible and start playing again. Throughout my career I was prepared to do anything to get back; I would have gone to therapy 24 hours a day if necessary. And those sportsmen who come back after such serious injuries are heroes for me.

**How do you view performance-enhancing drugs in sport?**

I show no mercy here. I'm a determined advocate for sport without doping. I believe that in football, too, we need to increase the number of tests, including unannounced testing. I despise all sports people who have achieved results by means of illicit stimulants and procedures.

Every footballer who is going to play at the World Cup in South Africa will have to undergo precise medical checks (cardio ultrasound, cycloergometry, RTG, internal organ ultrasound, lab tests, psycho-tests and similar). I think this is right, and I hope that frequent doping checks will rid the sport of this pest. I wish all those who have spoiled things by introducing doping would leave sports.

**What did you make of the tragedy for the England star David Beckham?**

It really is a tragedy to rupture your Achilles tendon just before a competition you want so much. Beckham is a world football icon, and his will to play his fourth World Cup and achieve an English record in the number of caps he wins for his



country is truly incredible. But in sports, injury is always present. Footballers give everything they have every single game, and the many injuries to the best players (Rooney, Fabregas, Beckham...) testify to their highly professional approach to this sport.

**How does the work of a national team coach differ from that of a club coach?**

In truth I do sometimes miss the daily training and getting together with the squad. Sometimes I wish that I could perhaps coach some club team again. But as the manager and coach of the national team I have specific work to do for national team activities, and I have daily preparations for appearances. These involve direct communication with the players, watching their games, monitoring potential opponents and so on. There's never any shortage of work.

**The then manager Bojan Prašnikar called up all the best players who were playing at home and abroad to be in the national side. This included you, when you were one of the best defenders in the Austrian national league in the Graz GAK team strip. After eight years of playing in Austria, we met at the second official encounter for the newly born Slovenian team at Larnaca in Cyprus in 1993. You were celebrating the 1:1 draw, which was a kind of cornerstone for all the future successes of the Slovenian national team. What are your memories of Cyprus in 1993?**

I was surprised when the manager Prašnikar called me at home and invited me to be in the national team. We players were gathered together from far and wide, and many of us only met for the first time at Ljubljana airport as we were leaving for Cyprus. I felt a great sense of honour and responsibility towards playing in the Slovenian team. Even though I was then 32 years old, after the game I wanted to put in many more appearances in the Slovenian strip. But ... my injuries put a stop to that, and my game in Cyprus remained sadly my only cap for the national team. I often recall those

games and I like to think back to those pioneering days of our national side.

**At the end of your playing career you returned to your home side of Maribor, and with them you also won the national league title. Then your career took you on the long, arduous but exceptionally successful path of manager.**

I completed the football manager course at the Faculty of Sports in Ljubljana, and obtained a Pro Licence, the highest UEFA coaching licence. I started out as assistant to Bojan Prašnikar, who was then the exceptionally successful manager of Maribor. Every beginning is difficult, but soon I got to grips with the nitty-gritty of football and managing a top team.

**This was followed by a period when Maribor played in the Champions League, where they qualified after a sensational victory over the French champions Lyon.**

Playing in the Champions League opened my eyes to a new view of top-flight football. I gained information about managing a top team, and about all the logistical and organisational demands in the competition on the highest world level. Today I'm using that extraordinary experience in my everyday job as manager of the national team.

**Every person has role models in their work. Did you have some kind of "guru" among football managers?**

Bojan Prašnikar gave me my basic football orientation, and I also learned a lot from my colleague Milan Miklavič, and I was very happy to hear anything from Bosnian manager Ivica Osim. Otherwise I have high regard for Srečko Katanec, the Spanish manager Del Bosque, the Portuguese Mourinho and Frenchman Wenger.

**In the world of football there are countless different approaches and schools of thought. What kind of football suits you best, seen through your own footballing prism?**

In recent years I've been most impressed by the football of the Spanish national

team under the management of Del Bosque. This is football that consumes me, it always thrills me, and somehow I would like the team I manage to play with as much creativity, discipline and quality as the Spanish. Of course they're not invincible, but defeats are a component part of sport, and they come sooner or later.

**Nowadays the footballing world is dominated by a euphoria called Barcelona and Lionel Messi.**

Barcelona is an institution without equal in club football. As a football manager I enjoy watching Iniesta and Xavi weave together a game of football. I watch them playing without the ball, where they run, what kind of pace, how they turn towards their own goal and so on. Football coaches don't just watch the goals, we watch a whole lot more.

**As coach you're very busy with your job, and you probably don't have much free time. What about time for yourself and particularly for your family?**

My family means a huge amount to me. My wife has been with me since the time when I was playing, and my son is 19 now and playing for Maribor. But I do take time every day to exercise, and I run, cycle and ski. I believe you need to keep up your physical fitness, since this brings mental resilience.

**Will there be any time for a holiday this year?**

Perhaps after the finals in South Africa. I would like to go sailing with my friends again in the sea. I really relax and cheer up there.

**What is Matjaž Kek like in the home environment?**

I'm relaxed, I help out with housework, sometimes I cook ... Yes, mainly I do good spaghetti, or maybe a hot dandelion salad ... yu-ummm! I love good music, and I like Slovenian music most.

**Thank you for talking to us, we hope and trust you will write a new chapter of your football success story.** ●

# FEAR OF NEW PENSION REFORM COULD EXACERBATE RATIO OF EMPLOYEES TO PENSIONERS

Economic expectations are improving both around the world and in Slovenia, and increasing numbers of companies in the first quarter of this year report a rise in orders and much better performance than in the first quarter of 2009.

Vesna Bertoneclj Popit, Delo Photo STA



**T**HE DELO STIK SURVEY AMONG INHABITANTS OF SLOVENIA showed that more than half of respondents are living just as they did before the crisis and that they will be allocating the same amount of money for personal consumption as last year. On the other hand, almost 45 percent of respondents take the view that the economic situation in Slovenia has deteriorated.

Business sectors that are worse for them this year include construction, which in all economies is regarded as the engine of more rapid economic development. The value of construction works in Slovenia should decline this year by 15 percent, while at the same time construction companies also have the largest amount of due and unsettled liabilities, mostly to suppliers and smaller subcontractors.

Borut Gržinič, director of the Chamber of Construction and Construction Materials, states that Slovenian construction experienced a record year in 2008, when the total value of construction exceeded EUR 3.5 billion. Last year was much smaller at EUR 2.8 billion, while the forecast for this year is that construction works will attain a value of just EUR 2.4 billion. This decline may only partly be compensated by construction work abroad, where SCT, Primorje, Vegrad and Energoplan are

the main Slovenian operators. According to Aleš Cantarutti, who heads the Centre for Competitiveness, International Cooperation and Entrepreneurship, the most important factors in breaking into foreign markets are good appearances at fairs and effective economic diplomacy, something reflected best in last year's visit by Slovenian Prime Minister Borut Pahor to Libya. Indeed several Slovenian construction companies won a number of major jobs there. The visit by the Libyan government to Slovenia should contribute to even greater economic cooperation between Slovenia and Libya, and could increase tenfold in the next two years.

According to Bank of Slovenia data, last year Slovenian construction companies earned around EUR 140 million abroad, compared to EUR 240 million in 2008. The biggest decline in jobs last year was in Russia, where signs of recovery are slowly emerging, and with them the chance of new work for Slovenian construction companies and other companies.

According to data from foreign researchers, the "grey" or unregistered economy supposedly amounts to 27 percent of gross domestic product, meaning that each year there is some 10 billion euros' worth of unregistered trade. This proportion is high relative to both the European Union and OECD. Of Slovenia's neighbours, only Croatia has a bigger grey economy, at 34 percent of GDP, while Italy's is supposedly 23 percent of GDP, Hungary's 24 percent of GDP and that in Austria only 9 percent of GDP.

As pointed out at this year's Days of Craft and Entrepreneurship, owing to the economic crisis the extent of the grey economy is expected to grow, and in the words of Pavel Sedovnik from the Slovenian Chamber of Crafts and Entrepreneurship, it is being spurred by tax policy, payment indiscipline and the inflexible labour market. This situation should deteriorate as a result of the great many exemptions or special conditions to which the tax system does not apply. Yet as was pointed out at the Days of Craft and Entrepreneurship by Labour Minister Ivan Svetlik, the grey economy can be regarded as an issue of culture. If there is not sufficient consciousness among the population, no amount of legislation or inspections

**'According to data from foreign researchers, the "grey" or unregistered economy supposedly amounts to 27 percent of gross domestic product, meaning that each year there is some 10 billion euros' worth of unregistered trade.'**





can entirely eradicate it.

The unions are strongly opposing an extension of the retirement age to 63 years for women and 65 years for men, one of the things envisaged by the new pension reform. The unions are insisting that the criterion for retirement must be 40 years of work. Here they are making special reference to those who took jobs at a very young age. The ratio of the number of employees to the number of pensioners has been deteriorating for some time now, and is approaching a gradual equalisation in the numbers of employees and retired workers, which is already, and particularly in the long term, unsustainable for the pension fund. On the one hand it is threatened by the ageing population, with the number of pensioners rising as a result of the retirement of relatively young people who were retired for political reasons, and owing to the so-called “soft” reduction in the number of employees in companies. Given the predicted exacerbation of conditions for pensioners, nearly one hundred thousand workers – almost half of all the workers employed in manufacturing – are enquiring about the possibility of retirement before the implementation of new pension reform at the Institute for Retirement Insurance.

It is therefore clear that caution and sensitivity will be needed in any such changes. If no acceptable compromise can be reached with the government regarding pension reform and the Employment Act, which should reduce the notice period for dismissal and reduce severance pay in laying off workers, the unions have announced that there will be demonstrations. Meanwhile, if there is no agreement, the Government will still send the unharmonised laws to parliament.

Students are also unhappy about the meddling in student labour legislation, which according to some interpretations should only affect a small proportion of employed students, who should primarily be studying more rapidly. On the other

hand, faster studying, while increasing the retirement age, may increase the number of first time job seekers.

The economic crisis has brought problems for a number of Slovenian managers who have carried out management takeovers of the companies they head. Declining revenues mean they are having trouble balancing annuities for loans they have taken out for that purpose at banks. Owing to difficulties of this nature, the biggest Slovenian retail group Mercator will – provided the competition ombudsman allows it – take over the retail centres of what was in 2008 the fifth biggest Slovenian company, Merkur of Naklo near Kranj. The majority of management takeover groups, who were not beginners but managed their companies for many years, indeed expected the booming market to last for ever, and now their plans to repay bank loans from future corporate revenue have in effect fallen apart overnight.

The campaign I’m Buying Slovenian has been supported by 64 Slovenian agricultural and foodstuff companies. The S mark is now carried by 500 Slovenian products, and the foodstuffs sector, which feels that in Slovenia it is often pushed to the margins and produces low profits, seeks to bring other market operators into the I’m Buying Slovenian campaign. The Chamber of Agricultural and Food Companies has found that the food processing industry is insufficiently involved in the country’s economic strategy. This sector, comprising 123 agricultural and 523 foodstuff companies with a total of 20,000 employees, generates as much as 80 percent of its revenue in the Slovenian market, so Slovenian consumers are its most important customers. The importance of healthy and

local food was emphasised by Dejan Židan of the Panvita Group of Pomurje, who has recently become the new Slovenian Minister of Agriculture.

By the end of 2015 Slovenia should complete the project of five hydroelectric power stations on the River Sava. Two power stations, at Boštanj and Blanca are already operating, while construction work has been underway for two years on the power plant of the Krško hydroelectric station, and designs are being finalised for the last two power stations, Brežice and Mokrice. While the justification for investing in the new Šoštanj

thermal power station unit is being checked by foreign experts in view of the environmental threat, the Government has supported the construction of a second unit at the Krško nuclear power station. Those advocating the new unit at the Šoštanj thermal power station point out that it will replace another, more ecologically contentious one, and they also point to the importance of raw materials, specifically coal from the Velenje mine.

If talks succeed, the rehabilitation of Slovenian Railways should involve the participation of Hartmund Mehdorn, former CEO of Deutsche Bahn. This would be the first such case of a foreign expert being involved in the rehabilitation of a national enterprise such as Slovenian Railways where the expert is not the owner of a foreign company or a strategic partner. If Mehdorn’s collaboration is successful, some other Slovenia companies would probably opt in a similar way for cooperation with foreign experts. ●



**Ivan Svetlik**  
Minister of Labour, Family  
and Social Affairs



# PRIEUR DU PLESSIS

## Slovenia and South Africa – Stepping up the Relationship

**D**URING 2009 THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA DECIDED TO ENHANCE its diplomatic relations with South Africa by establishing a Consulate in Cape Town. A two-way diplomatic channel has now been created to fully capitalise on what the two countries can offer each other.

Although South Africa has been represented diplomatically in Slovenia for a number of years by Mr Janez Pergar, South Africa's Honorary Consul based in Ljubljana, this is the first time a Slovenian diplomatic mission has been established in South Africa. In other words, there is now a representative of Slovenia on the ground to "show the flag", so to speak. My appointment as Honorary Consul of Slovenia in South Africa fills me with a great sense of pride. Since travelling to Slovenia for the first time three years ago, the country has grown very close to my heart and I cannot imagine a more special nation to represent diplomatically.

Slovenia and South Africa have much in common. Allow me to mention a few examples:

- Firstly, both nations are out to prove themselves to the outside world, as both countries have previously been somewhat isolated – South Africa as a result of sanctions during the apartheid era, and Slovenia because of the communist regime in the former Yugoslavia. Both countries are now stepping up to take their rightful place on the world stage and I believe Slovenia and South Africa can help each other in this regard.
- Secondly, Slovenia serves as a gateway to Central and Eastern Europe in much the same way that South Africa serves as a hub for accessing Africa. Location obviously plays a big role, but other important features in both cases include a proficiency in the English language and a very high level of professional services – banking, legal and accounting.
- Thirdly, both countries are characterised by open economies, making them dependent on others for trade. While this is not pleasant during an economic downswing, both countries are blessed with fast-growing groups of emerging consumers, which holds excellent longer-term potential for consumer growth.
- Fourthly, and quite important, both Slovenia and South Africa are culturally rich and have a great love of music. Both countries are also passionate about sport and it is therefore fitting that the Slovenian national team will come to South Africa to participate in the 2010 FIFA World Cup in June/July this year.

Having said this, South Africans know very little about Slovenia, and the country has also not yet been actively promoted in South Africa as a business or tourist destination. However, through the newly opened Slovenian Consulate in South Africa, a number of initiatives are afoot to create more awareness, increase the number of tourists and stimulate trade and investment flows. The 2010 FIFA World Cup should also result in a better knowledge of Slovenia among South Africans.

My duties as Honorary Consul include the normal consular functions, but a strong emphasis is placed on promoting all-round co-operation between Slovenia and South Africa. This, in short, means expanding links between the two countries in the fields of commerce, tourism, culture, science, education and sport. I see it as an important part of my function to initiate projects – funded privately and by government – to assist with building links between South Africa and Slovenia.

The following are a few examples of completed / planned projects:

- The first official South African business delegation visited Slovenia in September 2009 to study first-hand the investment climate and trade potential. The visit was a great success and a number of potential deals are being investigated. A Slovenian delegation will reciprocate in October 2010.
- Another important step to furthering business relations will be to finalise the bilateral agreement on economic cooperation between Slovenia and South Africa. Government funding for business promotion would also be welcomed.
- A large-scale tourism initiative is being planned with the aim of greatly increasing the number of tourists in both directions.
- In addition to business and tourism activities, a number of other projects have been identified for the next 12 months. These include the Ljubljana "World Book Capital" project for 2010/11, where South Africa will be a special guest.
- An international photographic competition for children, organised by National Geographic Kids, saw the Slovenian winner visiting South Africa earlier this year and the South African winner, in turn, travelling to Slovenia. What a wonderful exchange!
- Talking of cultural exchange, we are also discussing the exchange of musicians, who will provide tuition in the visiting cities.
- Also regarding skills transfer, EUR 30 000 for postgraduate study was made available to a South African student by the IEDC-Bled School of Management in Slovenia. This student has already commenced his studies in Slovenia.
- Lastly, a very interesting project has been launched by the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Ljubljana for a number of Slovenian students to come to build additional school facilities at the Ithuba Skills College near Johannesburg.

A few comments regarding football: Slovenia can be proud of its efforts in qualifying for the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Although the team have a tough draw, I am of the opinion that their spirit will spur them on to rise to the occasion and present us with a memorable performance. They could easily be one of the surprises of the tournament!

**Prieur du Plessis - Honorary Consul of Slovenia in South Africa**





# JANEZ PERGAR

## South Africa and Slovenia building a promising future

**T**EN YEARS AGO, WHEN I RECEIVED THE INVITATION TO BECOME South Africa's Honorary Consul to Slovenia, I honestly had no idea what kinds of challenges lay ahead of me. I was honoured from the very beginning, as my appointment as Honorary Consul was signed by the legendary Nelson Mandela himself, on the very last day of his presidency of South Africa in Pretoria.

The appointment was followed by a study of the relations between the two countries to date, and I was surprised to find out that there were quite a few agreements between South Africa and Slovenia which, for reasons which are unclear to me, had ended up half-completed on the shelves of offices in Ljubljana or Pretoria. The economic relations between the two countries were weak, and the situation in the majority of other fields was similar. The countries and citizens of South Africa and Slovenia didn't know each other very well and as a result did very little work together.

I saw my role as Honorary Consul primarily in raising awareness about South Africa among Slovenian citizens, companies and institutions, and vice versa of course, as high-quality cooperation is not possible if only one of the sides is active.

After that came years of gradual, I could even say slow building of trust and interest in collaboration. Although the trends were positive, the results were not spectacular. Besides the lack of awareness of the opportunities afforded by both countries, any faster development of mutual relations was sidelined by a complicated visa regime and a lack of efficient airline connections.

A great deal of energy has been put into eliminating the visas, unfortunately for the time being still without any concrete results. Since South Africa and Slovenia cannot offer reciprocity because of the Schengen obligations, South Africa began thinking about unilateral abolition of visas, which was undoubtedly a nice gesture, but the procedure, which was begun at the beginning of 2009, has unfortunately not yet been completed.

When the Slovenian national football team unexpectedly qualified for the World Cup in South Africa, the issue of visas and transportation became even more consequential. In order to make South Africa more accessible to the largest possible number of visitors, the South African government has decided to issue special "football visas", which unlike tourist visas are free of charge. We have begun issuing these visas at the South African Consulate in Ljubljana, which has made it much easier for a lot of people to obtain visas.

However, the Football World Cup has suddenly increased Slovenians' interest in South Africa to a level that couldn't otherwise have been reached even by investing major amounts of money, which the Consulate unfortunately does not have, as the position of honorary consul is not a paid one.

There is not enough space in this article to list all of the activities which have been set in motion in both Slovenia and South Africa

because of football and the resulting increased interest. My colleague the Honorary Consul of Slovenia to South Africa Mr Prieur du Plessis, with whom I enjoy excellent collaboration, mentions something about this in his article. As businessmen, we are interested primarily in concrete activities and concrete results.

The activities cover areas such as education, culture, health care, science and technology, ecology, energy, trade, transportation and investments. South African investors and investors from around the world associated with them are seriously interested in investing in Slovenian tourism, casinos, construction and power plants. They are also highly interested in the Port of Koper, which they see as a friendly gateway to Europe.

Slovenian businessmen are interested in South Africa as a global treasure trove of valuable minerals, as a large market of nearly 50 million people, and as an opportunity to implement joint projects in the fields of energy, ecology, and health care, and the metals, processing and pharmaceutical industries.

And of course there is tourism. Both countries are endowed with exceptional natural beauty. The current level of tourism exchange is still relatively low (300 to 500 visitors a year in either direction), but owing to the football this year these numbers will jump, at least by several times in terms of traffic from Slovenia to South Africa. We estimate that around 1500 Slovenes will visit South Africa during the time of the World Cup alone, of whom the majority will also visit other South African attractions such as the fantastic national parks, the beautiful coast between Cape Town and Port Elizabeth, the wine-growing regions of Stellenbosch, Paarl and Franschhoek, and many will test their mettle on the golf courses, which are among the best in the world. While doing so they will enjoy excellent food and excellent wine. They will also discover that the South Africans are very friendly people who are proud of their country, which has managed to overcome its turbulent past and which is building a future based on respect for human diversity.

As Africa's strongest economy, South Africa has long held the role of the driving force of progress in Africa, particularly in the sub-Saharan region. It is therefore no surprise that a number of progress-oriented pan-African organisations are headquartered in Pretoria or Johannesburg.

As a large country, South Africa has also given the world many exceptional people, of whom with your permission I will list at least a few: renowned heart surgeon Dr Christian Barnard, Nobel laureates in literature Nadine Gordimer (1991) and J.M. Coetzee (2002), and four Nobel Peace Prize laureates (Luthuli, Tutu, De Klerk), with South African legend and global political luminary Nelson Mandela at the forefront.

I wish all who visit South Africa in the coming weeks and later as well a great deal of pleasure. ●

**Janez Pergar - Honorary Consul of South Africa in Slovenia**

# SLOVENIA PRESS PHOTO 2010 COMPETITION

Andrej Savelli Photo Tina Deu

**A**T THE PRESTIGIOUS NEW YORK Photo Festival, held from 13 to 16 May 2010, the Institute for Promotion of Photography presented the award winners of the Slovenia Press Photo 2010 competition. The exhibition within the Photo Festival, which in February and March was also staged in Ljubljana, was held this time in the VII Photo Agency. The exhibition was staged as part of the New York Photo Festival on the initiative of Christopher Morris, a founding member of the VII Photo Agency and this year's chairman of the SPP jury, which selected the winning photographs and photo-stories from 3,300 submitted photos. This year's selection ranged from pure reportage photography to series of photos that were not purely journalistic

but nevertheless conveyed a powerful message or reflected a different approach to traditional photo reporting. The photographers Jure Eržen, Jošt Franko, Aleš Gregorič, Domen Grögl, Luka Cjuha, Ciril Jazbec, Tomaž Črnež, Matjaž Krivic, Tadej Žnidarič, Aleš Bravničar, Anže Petkovšek, Matjaž Rušt, Boris Farič, Jure Kravanja, Simon Plestenjak and Tomaž Bevk were thus given an opportunity to display their works in New York. The winner in the best reportage category, Jošt Franko, and the winner in the Nature and Environment category, Anže Petkovšek, attended the opening in person, and the event was honoured by the presence of the Slovenian Consul in New York, Melita Gabrič.



## THE INTARSIA OF FRANCI RATEJ

Arts and Crafts in Slovenia

Vesna Žarkovič Photo Franci Ratej

**I**NTARSIA (WOOD INLAY) IS A specific form of artistic expression which is practiced by very few people nowadays. One such artist is Franci Ratej of Slovenske Konjice. His works depict the bases of 20 trades from all over Slovenia. His intarsia brings to life salt pan workers, potters, joiners, tailors, blacksmiths and cartwrights. He makes at most four pieces

a year, since they require a great deal of precision. "The work of an intarsia maker is extremely precise, you have to be an aesthete, have good drawing skills, and be an accurate veneer cutter and assembler." He mounts the glued compositions on bases made of wood, panelling, particle board, composition board or similar wood materials, and then sands the dried surface

of the intarsia until smooth. He then treats the surface with wax, polish or lacquer, which protects the intarsia against physical damage and exposure. "I love nature, and veneer is a natural material from which you can get a different structure, colour and surface just by working it a little. When I work with wood, I am working with nature," says Franci.





# NEW YORK IS RIGHT FOR ME: THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT!

His instrument is the saxophone. Last year he obtained his master's degree in improvised music from NYU in New York. He's played in many of the major New York jazz clubs, including *Blue note*, *Iridium* and *Jazz gallery*, with some of the best jazz musicians of our time. His first record, an eight-part suite entitled "Chain of sounds", will be released on 1st May. He has lived and worked in New York, the famous world metropolis, for seven years. He says that the Big Apple gives him a "feeling of freedom". Lenart Krečič, a very talented and successful Slovenian musician, is only twenty-eight years old.

Manca Juvan Photo Manca Juvan

**I**N THE COLD INTERIOR OF THE Slovenian church in Manhattan, which is now considered a cultural – and for some religious – centre of Slovenians in New York, we talk about music, emigration, living in a new social and cultural environment and a look back on his native Slovenia "from the outside".

ally active at all the anti-Italian and anti-German demonstrations, he was saved from the infamous Regina Coeli they probably quarrelled... In 1916 the parish was finally established here in Manhattan."

## What brought you to New York?

In 2002, when I was finishing the secondary music school in Ljubljana in the class for jazz and popular music, I took part in the Jazzinity seminar in Novo Mesto. One of the teachers there was Professor Reggie Workman (bass player with the legendary John Coltrane, A/N), who heard me play. He said to me: We'll admit you to the New York school immediately, you just sort out the money. I had a year to find the funds and get my papers in order. I obtained a grant from the Ministry of Culture and from the New York School for Jazz and Contemporary Music. It was enough to get me to New York in 2003 but I didn't have enough money to cover the entire fee.

**So the beginning was uncertain. How is life in New York now?**



**'Since I've lived in New York Slovenia has become very European, similar to a Switzerland. I fear that it might lose a bit of its Balkan soul, its warmth.'**

Uncertainty is a constant theme. At the moment the state of my finances is such that I never know whether I'll have enough money to pay the rent or not. I live in a transitional period, everything seems to be God's will ... He blows, and I set my sails. At home I was used to

things just happening; only when I came here did I realise that everything was in fact up to me. Here I gained more faith in myself. Suddenly you see how life opens up, and at the same time you realise that you shouldn't take things too seriously.

## How hard was it to fit in the new social and cultural environment?

As I said, New York taught me not to take life too seriously, although I did take things seriously back in Slovenia. At the beginning I had some health problems, because I worried over every little thing. For instance – if I missed something. But here there are so many things, so many events and time flies so fast it can drive you nuts. One needs to establish a system and stay calm. This is a huge city, and a big system has its positive and negative sides. One of the down sides is that you're just a number. To have money is everybody's primary motivation, so many newly formed friendships are insincere and false; they are based on the principle: I might need you later on. My true friends are still in Slovenia. But nevertheless I live a full life here, I play volleyball in the league, and it often happens that I feel a bit alienated when I come back to Slovenia in summer. I've gotten used to the fact that I live in two completely different worlds.

**What does Slovenia look like from the outside, when you look at it from New** >>>



**York? What changes do you notice?**

Since I've lived in New York Slovenia has become very European, similar to a Switzerland. I fear that it might lose a bit of its Balkan soul, its warmth. Perhaps I feel this way because when I come to Ljubljana, it seems to me that people now frantically strive for status – money and prestige are becoming more and more important. And this drives people apart.

**What and where is home for you?**

Now my home is here, in New York. Home

is where my work is, where I can live fully. In a few years I might be somewhere else, home is not a fixed point. I wasn't forced to leave Slovenia; I left to seek my personal legend.

**Are you proud of yourself?**

Proud? I'm most proud of my first record which is due to be released any time now. And I'm proud of my cooperation with Reggie Workman and his band Statements. Together we made a record and last year we played at the 50th

anniversary of the Ljubljana Jazz Festival. And this is not something that happens to everybody, or every year.

**How hard is it to make a living playing music in New York?**

One can survive. New York's advantage and disadvantage is that many good musicians here perform practically for nothing. Now, you're forced to be a multi-tasker, you have to be skilled in many things – play, write and arrange music, advertise ... If you want security in life, you have to start teaching music or play it only as a hobby. Luckily, I like physics as well; I studied physics in Ljubljana and I occasionally give private lessons.

**Is there a connection between physics and music?**

Sound, acoustics – they belong to the sphere of physics. There is a direct connection between them. Professor John Purcell, with whom I studied for six years, is a genius. He has an outstanding eye for the saxophone, for the shape of the mouthpiece, for him every screw has to be exactly right ... all this affects the quality of sound. I, too, find this important; I'm a bit of a perfectionist by nature. And physics was great help in understanding all this.

**How do you understand music?**

In music I primarily seek emotions. Music can be a lot of things, but this topic is perhaps too vast for a few minutes. I've been discovering music for many years, I'll go on discovering it and my views change from year to year. I try to experience music intuitively, and in the end it all boils down to whether I like a piece or not.

**What does New York offer you that Slovenia couldn't?**

New York is unique. The city is so big that neighbours don't gossip about me! And there's no envy. I like the feeling of freedom. Plus – New York is the world jazz centre, there are so many clubs and the greatest jazz musicians live and perform here. New York is right for me: That's all there is to it!





# PHOTO EXHIBITION ON 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF FIRST MULTI-PARTY PARLIAMENT OPENS IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Vesna Žarkovič Photo STA

**F**OLLOWING A BRIEF CEREMONY, a photographic exhibition marking the 20th anniversary of the constitutive session of the first multi-party Slovenian assembly, entitled *Prelomnica trenutka* (Turning Point of a Moment), opened in the National Assembly. In his address, National Assembly President Pavel Gantar pointed out that the day of the constitutive assembly session was “a turning point for the further development of parliamentary democracy”.

The ceremony in the lobby of the main chamber of the National Assembly was attended by numerous current and former deputies, including the then member of the Slovenian Presidency, Ivan Oman. Gantar explained the choice of title for the photographic exhibition of unpublished photos taken by Tone Stojko, Srdjan Živulović and Joco Žnidaršič – borrowing the words from the celebratory speech by the then elected president of the tricameral assembly, France Bučar – through the momentous nature of the event for the development of parliamentary democracy and for the future of the later independent Slovenia, while at the same time they sought to emphasise that the day was also a turning point from the present-day perspective.

“In the first multi-party elections, on 8 April 1990, Slovenian voters showed the unequivocal determination to set out together on the path of multi-party democracy, which remains today a reality, although still a challenge,” said the National Assembly president.

In his words the exhibition will shed light on the “colourfulness of the cooperation and coming together of individuals, although from different political groups, the liveliness of political debate, which often took place outside the main debating chambers, the stresses of the working day, the emotional charge and the solemnity of the moment.”

Gantar also highlighted the diversity of world-view among the then democratically elected presidency, which in his view “reflected the various political views of voters, but was at the same time a guarantee of considered and balanced taking of decisions that were extremely challenging in the period that followed.”

Gantar went on to caution that parliamentary democracy was a never-finished story, and involved “ever new challenges, difficulties, dilemmas and considerations.” The role of political parties in this time had changed significantly, as



From left to right: Tone Stojko, Srdjan Živulović and Joco Žnidaršič

had the understanding of politics, believes Gantar, who added that “in the desire to seek the best solutions, we must be as united as possible, but not in the solutions themselves! Indeed pluralism of opinions and views guided the players of that time and thus it should remain.”

As an example of current challenges, Gantar pointed out implementation of the “extensive and challenging, as well as complex, Lisbon Treaty”. “The time has come for us to accept the idea of European citizenship and to regard the European Union as our own expanded homeland,” he added.

Equally, in his view we must remain true to the memory of “hope, expectation and deliberations that guided us in the final decade of the last century,” while at the same time Gantar took the view that photojournalism represented “without doubt an important pillar of historical memory”. •



# BOOKS AS A WAY OF RETURNING TO THE REALITY OF THE WORLD

Jože Osterman Photo STA

**I**N THE FIRST FEW DAYS SINCE becoming the World Book Capital, Ljubljana has confirmed that its cultural life this year will be marked distinctly by that status. And so it should, for the first events have shown that a number of developments and people have started coming together in a city that in previous years witnessed no such thing. Ljubljana is becoming cosmopolitan, something it has always lacked.

The very first events served as a reminder to visitors that the UNESCO title should not be underestimated. Although the official handover of the title on 19 April in the building of this international organisation was somewhat hampered, since the ash from the Icelandic volcano closed the airport in Paris and prevented the attendance of the Culture Minister and the Mayor of Ljubljana, plus Brane Završan and Slavoj Žižek were unable to make their planned appearances, the Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, together with the Slovenian Ambassador, Janez Šumrada, pointed out that while the number of inhabitants made Ljubljana the smallest book capital to date, the programmes of events in honour of books are highly complex and address all possible audiences. The ceremonial raising of the flag of the Capital, performed by Slovenian

President Dr. Danilo Türk and Ljubljana's Mayor Zoran Jankovič three days later in front of the City Hall was attended by several hundred nook enthusiasts, while the anthem spectacle by Matjaž Berger, *Timpanum* in Diachronic, clearly indicated that the events honouring and considering books in general would not be – as we are somehow accustomed – virtually intimately oriented programmes with small audiences, but far-reaching and even attractive programmes that will promote books and reading in an entirely new, but certainly not devalued way. A forum with writer Boris Pahor, which was hosted on the same day by Ljubljana's Kinodvor cinema, then merely confirmed the reawakened interest among the general public in the fate of books.

The beginning of May saw the start of the first of three of the most eagerly awaited programmes, the Literature of the World festival Fabula 2010. It was introduced by the Nobel Prize winner Herta Müller, the first Nobel winner to visit independent Slovenia, who was received by a packed auditorium at the Drama Slovenian national theatre. The festival is organised by the publishing house Študentska založba, possibly the most prominent publisher of pure literature



President Danilo Türk

in Slovenia in recent years, and the appearance of the distinguished guest was hosted by her editor, the writer Aleš Šteger. The audience listened with baited breath to the tales of Ms. Müller, who is from the German ethnic minority in Romania, but now lives in Germany, and about the eternal theme of human existence and freedom.

The talk was linked to her latest novel *Cradled Breath* (*Atemschaukel*), which came out just recently in Slovenian translation, and deals with the topic of labour camps, into which numerous members of the German minority were crammed after the Second World War.

Ms. Müller was a hit with the Slovenian audience, especially in her personal humility and sober rejection of "stardom", into which even here the curious media have tried to thrust her. First she stated that it was her books that had been awarded, so therefore the object of fascination could and should not be her alone, and then she gave one single joint interview for all the Slovenian media. In the present-day context this was an interesting and imitation-worthy gesture of a person who cares nothing for empty glamour, but is closely involved in everyday reality! ●





# GESAMTKUNST LAIBACH

Albert Kos Photo STA

**C**URRENTLY WINDING UP AT THE International Graphic Art Centre in Ljubljana is the exhibition *Gesamtkunst Laibach, Foundations 1980 – 1990*. This is an overview exhibition of work by the Laibach group from its first decade, when it played a central part in the art of the subculture movement in the 1980s.

At the exhibition the Laibach group, which later gained perhaps more fame around the world than in Slovenia, was presented as a multimedia group whose work links fine art and music as well as theoretical writing. At the same time the exhibition is also historical, since after thirty years it brings together and presents for the first time paintings, graphics, posters, newspaper pages, invitations, album covers, photographs, stage designs for Laibach concerts and video promotion products, and even en route to the exhibition centre there is also an installation created especially for this exhibition.

Thirty years after their founding, the music and performance art by Laibach

are already part of cultural history, but what is less known is that Laibach also started off as a fine art group. The images of the cross, cups of coffee, deer or thrower, which are more widely known from the Irwin group paintings, are in fact originally Laibach motifs. They were part of the capital that Laibach invested in 1984 in the then-founded *Neue*

**‘Back in the 1980s the Laibach group was already bringing to Slovenian fine art alternative post-modern work, which, first in the fine art scene and then musically, they have been developing and extrapolating for three decades.’**

*Slowenische Kunst*, and after its founding the artistic opus created by Laibach was then taken over by the Irwin group. Back then Laibach brought into Slovenian artistic production alternative post-modern work, linking together painting of the new age, do-it-yourself art of punk groups and post-conceptual practices, which were promoted especially by the then Belgrade and Zagreb art scenes. In this it ‘welded’ together various media, from music, video, film and performance to high and ‘low’ popular culture and politics and art, and even at the very beginning of the 80s the group clearly defined the foundations of retro-avant-garde.

The phenomenon of Laibach in the last decade of the former Yugoslavia, where the social and political disintegration had already begun, was a provocative act with a powerful subversive charge, although the group resolutely denied any kind of political or ideological motivation in their work. Particularly questionable for the then political establishment was its German name (Laibach was the former >>>



German name for Ljubljana), while there was also a politically dubious element to the message in their performances, which often alluded to art of the recent totalitarian regimes, from which they

took quotations. Today, after thirty years, there are no longer any such reservations, and Laibach, which is continuing to develop and build on its creative opus, based on the Wagnerian concept of

Gesamtkunstwerk, has in the meantime become pretty much an established concept, which is also recognised and accepted by the elite cultural community. Indeed in recent years, Laibach has even given several concerts with the orchestra of the Slovenian Philharmonic, thereby affirming that it is a constituent part of the modern Slovenian arts scene.

In addition to the central exhibition at the International Graphic Art Centre, there were two concurrent exhibitions, an exhibition of Laibach posters in the Ljubljana gallery Luwigana and the exhibition 2010 Laibach at Gallery 14 in Bled.

Back in the 1980s the Laibach group was already bringing to Slovenian fine art alternative post-modern work, which, first in the fine art scene and then musically, they have been developing and extrapolating for three decades. •

## THE TRUBAR CODE

Ivan Martelanc Photo Archive

ON 8 FEBRUARY, SLOVENIA'S CULTURAL holiday (Slovenia is one of the few countries in the world to grant its cultural holiday the status of a national holiday), the Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia to Austria, Mr Aleksander Geržina, presented the Austrian National library in Vienna with a computer-generated print bearing the motif 'Trubar and the First Slovenian Book', the work of designers Miljenko and Maja Licul. This presentation is a symbolic acknowledgement of the library's role as custodian of the *Catechismus*, the first book written in the Slovenian language. Its author was the Protestant clergyman Primož Trubar (1508–1586), the father of Slovenian literature. Printed in Tübingen in 1550, in other words 460 years ago, the book is not simply a catechism, it is also a manual for Protestant preachers, containing essential forms and models for sermons and a selection of hymns. Only one copy of the book survives: the one kept by the Austrian National Library. Kept alongside it is the *Abecedarium*, also written by Trubar in 1550, just a few

months after the *Catechismus*. This was an extremely shrewd move, for if he wished to encourage his countrymen, particularly the younger ones, to read his *Catechismus*, he first had to teach them to read. He made his intention clear by means of an explanation of the book's purpose – in Slovenian – on the title page.

Trubar did not make up his mind to embark on the pioneering work of shaping the Slovenian language until he was living in exile in Germany. He was extremely successful in his chosen task or mission, writing 22 books in Slovenian and two in German. He strove constantly to unite all Slovenians via their language, to give them literacy, education and spiritual rebirth. He wanted to bring his nation into Europe and the world, above all in the cultural and spiritual sense. As the first Slovenian intellectual, he discovered the importance and value of knowledge as the only power capable of preserving the Slovenian nation in history.

We should end by revealing the mystery of the code mentioned in the title, Sig 18.Z.44., which appears in the



bottom corner of the print. There is actually nothing mysterious about it. It is simply the catalogue number of the *Catechismus*, unchanged since the book was placed in the Court Library, today the National Library, by the librarian Jernej Kopitar, who was himself a renowned linguist and grammarian.

This copy of the *Catechismus* was in fact presented to Emperor Maximilian I by Trubar himself. It is a curious fact that the two were able to converse easily in Slovenian, as well as in certain other languages of the Austrian Empire. •





# START UP SLOVENIA 2010

Environmental company  
Envit is the winner

Ana Mrzlikar Photo Envit

“  
**THEY WERE THE FIRST TO  
TRANSFER THE TECHNOLOGY  
USED PREVIOUSLY FOR TREATING  
POLLUTED WATER TO TREATING  
SOIL. THEY HAVE TRIED OUT  
VARIOUS COMBINATIONS OF  
SIX TECHNOLOGIES TO FIND  
THE MOST SUITABLE ONE.**  
”

**T**HE START UP COMPANY COMPETITION START:UP Slovenia has been organised for the third year running by the Tovarna podjetij [Enterprise Factory] together with Ljubljana Technology Park and Business Angels of Slovenia, plus the main public partners, the Slovenian Agency for Entrepreneurship and Foreign Investment and the Ministry of the Economy. The aim of the competition is to find the best young Slovenian innovative companies, support them with expertise, link them to potential investors, promote them in the general public and also reward them.

In three years the competition has involved 75 young Slovenian innovative companies, with more than 2,000 individuals attending workshops and events. This year, 30 innovative start up companies registered for the competition. By business sector companies are predominantly involved in ICT products, biotechnology, tourism, the arts and mechanical engineering. The competition was held from October 2009 to March 2010, with the award ceremony taking place on 15 April, as part of the two-day international conference on entrepreneurship and innovation, PODIM, in Maribor.

The 22-member expert committee, comprising distinguished entrepreneurs, investors, representatives of the support environment and professors, had six finalists to choose from (Envit d.o.o., DigiEd d.o.o., BioSistemika d.o.o., DOPINUS razvojna hiša d.o.o., Molekula d.o.o. and Red Orbit, Andraž Štalec s.p.), ultimately selecting Envit d.o.o. as the winning start up company of this year's competition. The committee was convinced by the seriously planned out work of the company, the potentials reflected in the promising market and the highly qualified team of founders and associates. »





## Who are Envit?

The three founders of Envit come from a world-acclaimed research group in the field of polluted soil remediation. They are scientists who are always discovering something new, while at the same time keeping abreast of what others are researching. They were the first to transfer the technology used previously for treating polluted water to treating soil. They have tried out various combinations of six technologies to find the most suitable one.

Envit is an environmental technology and engineering company, and is a University of Ljubljana spin-off and a member of the Ljubljana University Incubator. It is involved in the rehabilitation of polluted areas, and especially in treating soil. Their market research has shown that in Europe there are at least 90,000 areas contaminated with heavy metals that will require immediate action. The value of remediation works is estimated at EUR 7,500 billion.

## An integrated approach to rehabilitating polluted areas

The greatest difficulty in rehabilitating heavily polluted areas is a lack of appropriate technology. It is precisely here that Envit saw its opportunity. "Given the high efficiency and low costs, our innovative and patented technology outweighs the existing remediation solutions," claims Neža Finžgar, managing director and one of three company co-founders. The company will thus use original technology for remediation of soil contaminated by heavy metals. They have an integrated approach to rehabilitating polluted areas, ranging from risk assessment to feasibility tests and the selection and implementation of the most appropriate technology. In addition to the aforementioned new technology, the company also implements other proven and effective remediation measures. It should be pointed out that the company is the first provider of such services in Slovenia.

## Why soil remediation, and what the process involves

Given the risks posed to people and the environment in general by metals and other soil contaminants, soil identified as contaminated must be improved in quality and treated, in other words the metals in the soil must be converted into harmless forms or removed. Treatment, rehabilitation and remediation of the soil are terms denoting processes leading to reduced concentrations or bioaccessibility of contaminants in the soil to a level where the risk of environmental pollution becomes acceptable. "Roughly speaking the methods of soil remediation can be divided into two: methods that remove metals from the environment, and methods that irreversibly alter metals into non-mobile forms, in other words immobilising them. Our technology involves soil washing with ligands. Ligands are compounds that are also used in washing powders. They are able to make strong chemical bonds with metals and thereby make them soluble and mobile. For the most part we use ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid (EDTA), which in small quantities is a common ingredient of washing powders, food, drink, cosmetics and more. In order to completely remove complexes of metals and ligands from the soil, it needs to be rinsed with great quantities of water. In our technology, using electrochemical methods we remove complexes of metals and ligands from solutions after washing the soil, which enables us to re-use the solution for rinsing, and this greatly reduces the need for water. The method is suitable for soil rich in organic matter that is highly contaminated with metals, especially lead. The technology is used in soil treatment facilities, into which, depending on the remediation plan, soil is loaded, treated and returned to its location of excavation," explains Neža Finžgar.



A functioning facility will represent an example of good practice with which we can convince clients. In the period of final development of the technology, the company has already offered other proven and effective remediation methods.” At the present time the company will be taking delivery of a portable device in the form of a gun that uses X-rays to enable simultaneous measurement of the concentrations of up to 26 metals in the field. In this way they will avoid the laboratory procedure whereby previously a lot of time was lost and large amounts of chemicals used.

**Plans for the future**

In Slovenia the soil is relatively uncontaminated, but there are still some focal points of metal contamination, most prominently with cadmium, zinc and lead in the area of Celje, nickel and chromium in the area of Jesenice, mercury

**Soil-friendly innovative technology**

Envit will use an innovative technology for treating soil contaminated with metals that removes the metals from the soil and enables recycling of the treatment solution. The new ex situ technology generates no environmental emissions and takes place within a closed process cycle. The technology is soil-friendly and enables revitalisation and re-use as a medium for plant growth. It is the best technology for removing high organic matter soil heavily contaminated with lead.

In addition to this technology, depending on the use and characteristics of the area, the company will also use other established and effective rehabilitation technology. “For other remediation companies we offer pilot feasibility tests with a selection of the most appropriate technology for a given contaminated area. Familiarisation with the wide array of tests allows us to formulate in-depth assessments of the risk and attainability of the contaminants. In terms of quality of products, Envit is the best solution for contaminated soil,” says Neža Finžgar with certainty. “The soil treatment technology we have developed is highly efficient compared to some existing methods. Currently it is still in the verification process, in other words in the process of transition from laboratory criteria to broader criteria, which is the first stage of transition to “the field”. Plans envisage the completion of the transition in the coming year, when we will set up the first soil treatment facility.

The company Envit provides risk assessment for polluted areas and feasibility tests for remediation technologies, with the selection and implementation of the most appropriate rehabilitation method. This company is the first provider of such services in Slovenia.

contamination at Idrija and lead, zinc and cadmium burdening of the Mežica Valley. “Given that we are the first company providing such services in Slovenia, we anticipate the possibility of cooperation in rehabilitating polluted areas when that work is implemented.

Remediation work is currently underway in the Mežica Valley. There are estimates of more than 3.5 million potential polluted areas in the European Union, of which at least 90,000 sites contaminated with metals require immediate treatment. The innovative technology that we will use at Envit is most effective for soil with high concentrations of organic matter that is heavily contaminated with lead. In addition to the European market, we have a great business opportunity in North America, since lead is one of the major environmental contaminants there. For us the award means confirmation of the path we have taken, and by opening up many doors for us it straightens out the tortuous

“ **IN ADDITION TO THE EUROPEAN MARKET, WE HAVE A GREAT BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY IN NORTH AMERICA, SINCE LEAD IS ONE OF THE MAJOR ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINANTS THERE.** ”

path of establishing a technology and company in the market. Following the decision to build commercially on the research results, we have received support at the university incubator and are also trying to exploit the other support mechanisms available to us,” are the final satisfied words from Envit.

Polluted soil threatens human health, reduces the area available for growing food, contaminates groundwater and reduces the biodiversity of ecosystems. These more than anything are the reasons for us to wish the company every commercial success in the future.









# SEE YOU AT THE MARKET

Polona Prešeren Photo Irena Herak Usenik

**I**T'S SATURDAY MORNING AND MY CELL PHONE IS ALREADY BLINKING A NEW message. "Market?", my friend asks me. Sure! A morning coffee and shopping for fresh fruits and vegetables, perhaps some local cheese and goat cottage cheese, and getting together with friends makes the weekend complete.

Going to the marketplace on Saturday is a ritual. The market is a meeting point where Ljubljana residents get together and exchange the latest news, chat, drink coffee, and buy all the fresh things we need for our culinary masterpieces. The market is a special place for the people of Ljubljana. It is more than just a place to buy things – it is a rite, a pilgrimage, the crowning point of life in the city. And when my friend just says "market", I know that it will be followed by a pleasant get-together and a delicious lunch. Where can you find more life in our capital than at the marketplace? That's just it – the Ljubljana market is the place where city life and the bounty of the countryside meet. There's always a lot of people there – those who are selling and those who are buying. >>





This mother and daughter brought fresh asparagus to the market that morning all the way from the other side of Slovenia, from Prekmurje.

### A walk around the market

The Ljubljana market sits on the bank of the Ljubljanica River between two of Ljubljana's best-known bridges – the Three Bridges and the Dragon Bridge. In between them, the Butcher's Bridge is currently being built, which will connect the marketplace with the other bank of the Ljubljanica.

Let's begin our stroll just a stone's throw from the Three Bridges and Prešeren Square, at Pogačar Square, where the first stalls are located. This is where the (organic) farms usually sell their products. By the massive walls of Ljubljana's St. Nicholas' Cathedral are stands with cut flowers, where the legendary and always smiling Marina spreads good cheer with her vivid selection of flowers of all colours. Everyone knows Marina – including the husbands who bring home a bouquet for their wives.

A doorway leads from Pogačar Square into the covered part of the marketplace below the Seminary, where you are greeted by a dizzying array of various

kinds of bread from local bakeries. Here you can buy various kinds of grains, dried fruits and other products by weight. There are also local products from farms nearby and far away, such as cottage cheese, local cheeses, butter and eggs. And there are meats and meat products, including some organic meat products.

The other side of the covered market opens onto a whole new world. In the main part of the market, on Vodnik Square, the stands are filled with fresh fruits and vegetables. This was once the site of the diocesan lycée. After the 1895 earthquake, which did a lot of damage in Ljubljana, they had to tear it down and it became a large open area which was allocated for the market. Since Slovenia's leading poet Valentin Vodnik was a professor and a principal at the lycée, the square was named in his honour. A monument to Vodnik also stands in the square. The entire area is filled with stands, which in these spring days offer a colourful assortment of fruits and vegetables.

During the spring there is an endless

variety of different kinds of lettuce, radishes and asparagus, and the largest parts of the marketplace are meant for local growers. The sellers can also give you some excellent local recipes to use with your fresh produce. They come from nearby and far away. I stop in front of a stand where a mother and daughter are selling fresh local asparagus. They are definitely heroes who have travelled the farthest – from Prekmurje, where they cultivate asparagus using integrated farming techniques. To set up our garden and beautify our home and surroundings, at the edge of the marketplace we can buy all kinds of seedlings of flowers, herbs, vegetables etc.

Otherwise, the market lives and breathes in its own rhythm, in cycles that reflect the seasons. The most important is of course the daily rhythm, as sellers fill the marketplace every morning with all kinds of goods which they display at their stands, tables, carts, shop windows, kiosks... Every season at the market offers something special. This time we are



Marina's flower stand is one of the market's most legendary stands.



indulging in spoiling ourselves with the spring flavours with the first vegetables and fruits and have chosen some lovely seedlings to plant around the house. In a month or two, during the summer, the market will be burgeoning with fresh fruit and vegetables, and because of the heat we will need some lemonade or other refreshment in the pleasant shade. The autumn is the time to buy winter stores, and during the winter some ham, sausages or sauerkraut and turnips.

In addition, the entire experience of the main part of the marketplace is given a special éclat by Plečnik's Market along the bank of the Ljubljanica. The architect Jože Plečnik designed it as a tribute to the former Roman town of Emona, stretching from the Dragon Bridge to the Three Bridges. Beneath Plečnik's arcades are fish shops selling fresh fish from the Adriatic Sea and farther away.

There is almost no produce or product that you can't find at the central market. In addition to all kinds of fruits and vegetables, mushrooms and wild berries,



You can also find medicinal herbs under the arcades of Plečnik's Market.



Boštjan is a master at selling spring lettuce.



Local apples from the Ljubljana area.

**'There is almost no produce or product that you can't find at the central market.'**

meat and meat products, dairy products, flowers and seedlings, and fish, you can also find medicinal herbs, wooden utensils, pottery, souvenirs, textiles and shoes and various other products.

But the market is not just a place to buy things; it's also a social event. You can easily meet the Slovenian President at one of the stalls, or a Slovenian star, politician, philosopher, famous people, housewives, normal people and their stories. You can hear the latest news and meet new people. And what gives the market its most special feature – meet with your friends. ●





# BLED BACK ON THE ROWING MAP

Bled, which two years ago was selected to organise the world rowing championship of 2011, is right now in full swing preparing for the world rowing cup competition.

Jože Osterman Photo STA

**T**HE COMPETITION HAS BEEN A KIND OF DRESS rehearsal for the world championship, meaning that the majority of things done for it have already ended.

The Bled organisers have really rolled up their sleeves. They spent last year mainly preparing appropriate projects through which they have now overhauled and expanded the rowing facilities on the lake. Since Lake Bled is subject to the most stringent environmental protection regime, project design has been no laughing matter. Understandably, for this reason there is no room for any approach that might newly burden the shores of the lake with new structures, and only for the concept of arranging or improving what exists, opening up new natural areas on the shore and establishing good architecture that entirely accords with the environment. Right from the outset, work has therefore been performed in close cooperation with experts in protecting nature and cultural assets. The results have been fascinating: At Mala Zaka a gleaming, renovated rowing centre somehow emerged, and now it has the appearance of some new Bled park, with renovated and colour-coordinated structures and new paths, with absolute priority given to pedestrians, while vehicle traffic has been directed way behind this area. The lightness and airiness of the space created is stunning.

Currently there are less visible changes in the bay of Velika Zaka, location of the rowing finish line, stands and tower. This section is even more sensitive

environmentally, and the now fifty-year-old concrete stands are not exactly awe-inspiring structures. Now they are going to get a makeover. The architects have also decided that the finish-line arena will be mainly in prefabricated modules assembled only for the world cup and world championship, and then the location will be left to the green natural state surrounding the lake. The former judges' tower has been pulled down, and in its place is a bigger glass one, which is effectively invisible in the natural surroundings, a praiseworthy feature.

So these renovated rowing facilities were what was laid on for the world cup. Interest in the competition was extraordinary, with around 700 rowers from 45 countries competing, which meant that the competition easily compares to the world championships at Bled in 1966, 1979 and 1989, when alongside Lucerne in Switzerland, Bled was the Mecca of world rowing. This interest also confirmed the correctness of the decision for Bled, after more than 20 years, to appear once again on the map of top rowing events, since it truly is an exceptional setting that is simply loved by rowers. The relatively small town, where rowing acquaintances meet around every corner, a natural course with

wonderful surroundings that ensure equal conditions for all competitors, and the lake, which despite its relatively small size is still significantly bigger than artificial canals, are of course the exceptional trump cards of this Slovenian tourism icon, which with the restoration of its rowing glory can only gain in prominence. ●





# AFTER TWO YEARS, SLOVENIA RETURNS TO THE TOP FLIGHT

From 17 to 23 April Ljubljana hosted the world ice hockey championship Division I, the second tier on the quality ladder. This is now the sixth member championship organised by Slovenia.

Zoran Radisavljević Photo STA

**I**N THIS WAY, IN FRONT OF 4,000 VOCAL SUPPORTERS IN Tivoli Hall, the Slovenian national hockey team was able to celebrate a gold medal and first place. This victory means that next year the Slovenian team will play at the World Championship in Slovakia, in Bratislava and Košice. After 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006 and 2008, the team will be part of the world elite for the sixth time. The tournament was a more than successful public showcasing of the young strength with which Slovenia is entering the new decade. The changing of generations has indeed worked, for Žiga Jeglič was the best striker and forward of the championship, and Rok Tičar scored the most goals, a full seven. This performance by the national team is worth even more, since given his commitments in the strongest league in the world, the NHL, Slovenia's best hockey player Anže Kopitar was unable to participate. A country with a mere 100 or so registered club ice hockey players and seven arenas, has once again shown how well it has worked with the younger generation and what talent is developing in Slovenian clubs. Given the team that won in Ljubljana and some other young players who have not even had a chance to play yet, there are no fears for the future of Slovenian ice hockey.

To date Slovenia has hosted the Group C championships in 1993 (Ljubljana and Bled) and 1996 (Jesenice and Bled), and Group B in 1998 (Ljubljana). In 2000 the former Group B was renamed Division I, and there were two championships in Ljubljana for that level in 2001 and 2007. Major credit for organising those championships goes to Ernest Aljančič, president of the Hockey Federation of Slovenia (HZS) and member of the committee of the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF). At both recent championships the Slovenian team won first place and progressed to the elite group of world hockey, which was of course the objective this year, too. For the second year running the team has been managed by the 52-year-old American John Harrington, a gold medallist from Lake Placid in 1980, who this time selected a very fresh young squad. This meant the first appearances at world championships of 22-year-old Žiga Jeglič (Podbrezje, HK Acroni Jesenice), 21-year-old Jan Urbas (Dolenja vas ob Cerkniskem jezeru, Malmö-Sweden) and 22-year-old Jan Muršak (Pesnica pri Mariboru, Grand Rapids-USA), the greatest young hopes of Slovenian hockey. A major role in the team has also been planned for 20-year-old Rok Tičar (Jesenice, HK Acroni Jesenice) and 21-year-old Žiga Pance (Ljubljana, HDD Olimpija), who were appearing in the world championship for the second time.



For the first time the Slovenian team included the Canadian Slovenian Gregory Kuznik (Vancouver, HC Pontebba-Italy), at 32 the oldest player in the team, while the side was captained by the experienced Tomaž Razingar (Bled, HC Brunico-Italy), who was playing in his tenth world championship. The fact that Slovenian ice hockey is not just about Jesenice and Ljubljana, is demonstrated by the presence of a player from Štajerska and one from Notranjska, and of the 23 players, a full 14 play for foreign clubs. Slovenia's opponents, in order of games, were Poland, Croatia, Great Britain, South Korea and Hungary. Slovenia had a tough time with the motivated Poles, and won 3 : 2. But the lynxes, as the national side are known, had much less work with the southern neighbours Croatia, managed by the Slovenian expert Pavle Kavčič. The final score was 10 : 1. The next opponent, the tenacious and unyielding Great Britain team, only succumbed after extra time with a score of 4 : 3. The deciding goal came courtesy of Žiga Jeglič, with Tičar scoring a brace and Urbas one in normal play. Once again, Andrej Hočevar excelled in goal. The Asian team, South Korea, posed few problems, and the 8 : 3 victory came through goals from Muršak with two, plus Kranjc, Tičar, Pretnar, Šivic, David Rodman and Razingar. It was clear, then, that the final match of the championship would be the decider, against the Hungarians, themselves unbeaten. They were managed by Ted Sator, an American who took Slovenia to the elite group three years ago at Tivoli. Tivoli Hall was sold out, with 3,000 Slovenians and 1,000 Hungarians in the stands, while the 20 hockey players on the two sides were sweating it out on the ice. For the first 40 minutes the match was a stalemate, but towards the end, despite the fact that the injured Luka Vidmar and Jan Urbas were not playing, Slovenia scored two goals and celebrated a victory of 4 : 1. The goal-scorers were Tičar with two, Kranjc and Muršak.

# EN MASSE ALONG THE ROUTE OF OCCUPIED LJUBLJANA

**Marking the Ljubljana and Day of Peace holiday, celebrated by the capital city on 9 May, a sports and recreational event entitled Path Along the Wire was held**

Vesna Žarkovič Photo STA

**T**HIS TRADITIONAL EVENT REPRESENTS A HEALTHY, sporting lifestyle and respect for history, and takes place along the 35-kilometre route along which the occupying forces ran a barbed wire fence around Ljubljana during the Second World War. This year a total of 2,765 people set off on the path, while 3,232 people walked shorter sections of the route on recreational hikes, and 1,345 teams ran the threesome course. There were also 4,800 kindergarten children on the walk and more than 9,100 primary and secondary school children.

**“The Path Along the Wire has two messages: These 30,000 people are today living a healthy life, but mostly this shows respect for the happiest day of Ljubljana’s history. That was 9 May 1945, the liberation of Ljubljana from Nazism and Fascism, proud, free Ljubljana. And this is respect for all those who endured that, so today is an exceptional day for Ljubljana.”**

Zoran Janković



Like the previous year, the day was therefore divided into recreational and competitive events. Alongside the Ljubljana Marathon, the Path Along the Wire is one of the biggest-attended and most important events in Ljubljana.

The Path Along the Wire around Ljubljana also led walkers through the Ljubljana barracks, where there was an open day prior to the Slovenian Armed Forces Day on 15 May

As the Minister for Defence, Ljubica Jelušič, told the Slovenian Press Agency, the open day at the Franc Rozman Stane Barracks in Ljubljana was linked in a special way to the city of Ljubljana, and the Slovenian Armed Forces is also participating in the main ceremony on the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Ljubljana.

The barracks prepared for visitors a display of the most important elements of the techniques used by Slovenian soldiers, and some of the key skills they need in their work and life. There is also one of the Svarun command vehicles on display in Ljubljana.

The open day brought together all generations, with many young people among the visitors, while there were also veterans and members of the Association of Officers of Slovenia in the barracks. In the Minister’s words, the members’ presence shows the firm link between different generations who were part of the forerunners of the Slovenian Armed Forces.

Before the Slovenian Armed Forces Day, there were also open days at barracks in Postojna, Vipava, Slovenska Bistrica, Novo mesto, Murska Sobota, Kranj and Pivka.

Ljubljana also held the main celebration of the 65th anniversary of liberation, which together with the City of Ljubljana and the Ministry of Defence was prepared by the Federation of Associations of Veterans for the Values of the Liberation Struggle of Slovenia. The event, entitled Nation you will win freedom on your own! was also supported by the Slovenian Armed Forces with an overflight, while there was also participation from police cadets, soldiers’ and veterans’ organisations.



# LILA PRAP

## The phenomenon called Lila Prap

Polona Prešeren Photo Iztok Dimc

“WHY DO ZEBRAS HAVE STRIPES?” “Because they can’t decide whether they want to be black or white,” writes Lila Prap in her delightful picture book *Why?* Whether it’s a salamander, a panda or a penguin, an elephant or a chicken – the cute animal figures of Slovenian author and illustrator Lila Prap have found their way into many people’s hearts. Especially among the youngest readers, who are helped by her picture books to learn the alphabet and discover interesting responses to the endless question *Why?* In a particularly incisive way, she has found a path to children’s hearts. So it is no surprise that her books have been translated into more than thirty languages around the world. Her books also feature in the school curricula of some countries. >>

**‘And why is it such a success? Perhaps because it responds to the endless questions why.’**



So how does she explain this success? "Perhaps because they are so clear and simple. They have vivid colours and naïve eyes that look at you, so you can make friends more easily with the character."



more opportunities for additional artistic impressions. I don't draw a lot of lines and they would all then have the same lines. With animals there are always new challenges here, depicting animals is always something new, although the motif is the same." And why is she drawn to children's picture books? "I started out doing jokes for adults, then I started doing jokes for children," she says. "Later I started adding alongside slightly longer texts, and the picture books were born. After all, we always do something to suit people."

And how does she choose the animal characters? She always chooses the most typical characters. Now, when she is working on a book about dogs, she has chosen the most typical breeds, which people easily recognise. She also selects wild animals in such a way that everyone recognises them. Of the Slovenian animals she has depicted the proteus salamander and chickens, which, as she says, are important, since they are direct descendants of dinosaurs. This is scientifically proven.

### Creative momentum

Lila says about herself that her curriculum vitae reads like some novel. By profession she is an architect, but she has already done a wide variety of things – teaching at a secondary school, working at the Urban Planning Institute, designing for Gorenje, working as a freelance artist, and working in Germany in an architecture studio where she was involved in building a children's hospital. Over the last ten years she has devoted herself exclusively to her own art and picture books. And these are a total hit with the youngest readers. So how does she explain this success? "Perhaps because they are so clear and simple. They have vivid colours and naïve eyes that look at you, so you can make friends more easily with the character."

She is always interested in the responses to her work, since she can then adapt to the expectations of her readers. She always works for whole days at a time. Her artistic output varies from day to day, she says.

"You do a lot of work all year, then

### Why?

What is undoubtedly Lila Prap's currently most popular picture book bears the simple title "Why?", and has been reprinted six times in Germany, while Japan has sold out all of its 70,000 copies. And why is it such a success? Perhaps because it responds to the endless questions why. For instance: why does a zebra have stripes? Why does a crocodile have a serrated tail? Why doesn't a snake have legs? Why does a lion have a mane? Curious youngsters get fun and colourful answers to endless questions about animals.

Everything surrounding this question intrigued me when I went off to visit Lila Prap, who lives near Celje. In a house

that has such a special and dream-like quality that it could easily be home to the famous heroine Pippi Longstocking. My first impression on meeting her was special, which did not surprise me. Her picture books are special, too. Ms. Prap is a real artist, a Bohemian, incisive, perhaps more reticent than I expected. She hospitably showed me her creative nook where her (mainly animal) heroes are created. And of course I wanted to know: Why animals?

As Lila Prap responds, you can only make one type of person, then you get into repetition. With animals, you can keep rediscovering forms and dimensions. "You sketch out a person, and you have one face and there are no



you reach a block and you're missing just one sentence." Right now she is working on a new book and here and there running into some minor block. Creating one little book takes a long time. "When you're working, you're always on edge, like a sprinter at the start. When you create art, you devote your whole life to it. You're always racking your brains. And in doing so you forget about entirely everyday things," explains Lila. "You know I don't have that much confidence. I'm always a little uncertain when I tackle new projects, and I ask myself whether some thing will work and whether it will work well for me," she adds with sincerity. "Even though you have a lot of books behind you, each new one brings a certain amount of nerves. Just like opera singers who get a bit of stage fright before new performances."

She produces picture books with crayons, and more rarely acrylic and water colour. When she draws them, they are extremely sensitive, since they can smudge. So she puts them through a special process. She is not producing anything else, since at the moment she is too taken up with picture books. Sometimes she has produced some picture just for the sake of it – partly in jest and partly just for fun. It seems much more important to her to be home and working than getting around. She prefers to see that her books are entertaining both children and with them adults, rather than visiting them in person. I prefer giving people material for fun!

### Japanese fame

Lila Prap is a big hit in Japan. Such a hit in fact, that the Japanese national television station NHK has decided to make a series of 26 short animated films based on her picture books. Plus you can find Lila Prap figures in Japan in a special Lila Prap department, where alongside the world-famous Disney characters and Hello Kitty, there are products from underwear to cutlery, towels, pendants and anything that reminds you of the fascinating figures. "I leave things like that to the entrepreneurs, I don't actually have time to deal with that, I have to keep working



on books," says Lila, half-joking.

She has also collaborated with the Japanese in the Save Our Planet project, as part of which five illustrators from different parts of the world were invited to participate. On that occasion she drew the attention of the Japanese to the Škocjan Caves, which are under Unesco protection, and she drew a proteus cave salamander.

She is exceptionally incisive and witty. And I headed back from Celje full of new energy and ideas. In that way, Ms. Lila Prap showed me why her books are so successful. They are not pretentious, they carry no complicated message, they are extremely clear and there really are naïve eyes gazing at you from them, leading you off on a journey of joy and pleasure.

## 'When you create art, you devote your whole life to it.'

Without any baggage.

Her first book, which she wrote and illustrated entirely, was Animal Lullabies. This was followed by the book Why?, which has even been incorporated into the school curriculum in Germany, France and Australia. Lila Prap's work has earned her the international recognition of the IBBY honour list, and she has been nominated several times for the Andersen Prize and the Astrid Lindgren

### So who is Lila Prap?

This is the pen name of Lilijana Praprotnik Zupančič, a freelance artist working in the areas of fine art and literature. After graduating from the Ljubljana Academy of Architecture and Civil Engineering, she worked on the graphic design for a variety of printed material for various Slovenian and international organisations, also providing illustrations for them. She collaborated on a number of different projects, including designs for a children's hospital in Wiesbaden. She has continuously published illustrations and literary work, as well as a variety of brain-teasers for children.

Prize, while in Slovenia she has been rewarded with the Levstik Prize, the Most Beautiful Book Prize and the Original Slovenian Picture Book Prize.

Although in recent years she has focused mainly on producing original children's picture books, she has also written several children's plays for theatre, dance performance and radio. The translations of her work are ranked among the most popular children's reading material. And her illustrations have been exhibited at prestigious galleries in Slovenia and around the world. ●



# LJUBLJANSKO BARJE WETLAND

A less known and visited area just outside Ljubljana

Albert Kos Photo Darinka Mladenovič

**T**HE LJUBLJANSKO BARJE WETLAND area occupies the southern part of the Ljubljana basin, and stretches across 163 square kilometres. This is a marshy flatland and flood plain, fed with water by the karstic source of the River Ljubljanica and several smaller tributaries, which in periods of high precipitation break their banks and flood extensive sections of the plain. In the past, the flooding of the Ljubljansko barje was more frequent and extensive, sometimes even flooding the lower sections of the earlier city of Ljubljana along the Ljubljanica, until the times of Austrian Empress Maria Theresa, when the Gruber canal was built. This redirected a portion of the water in the area of the city into an artificial channel, and later its original stream, which runs

through the centre of the old town, was dredged deeper and channelled through a deep cemented bed. The period of Maria Theresa also saw the start of systematic drainage of the Ljubljansko barje, and this has continued right up to the present day, with the digging of outflow ditches and other drainage systems.

Given these interventions, the characteristics of the Ljubljansko barje have changed considerably over the past two centuries, and today part of the land is devoted to grazing, and to a slightly lesser extent to crop production, for which the soil is not that well suited. On the other hand, a sizeable portion of the Ljubljansko barje is still wilderness, and represents a unique plant and animal habitat, with numerous plant and animal species that

have not been found elsewhere. Among the plants that are a special feature of the Ljubljansko barje, the marsh fritillary is the best known. It does grow in small areas elsewhere, but right here it is abundant, although of course protected by law. Of the fauna, mention should be made of the European pond turtle, which has survived in a very limited area, where there are still predominant characteristics of the high wetland, which used to cover the Ljubljansko barje in its entirety. Yet the Ljubljansko barje is especially important as a nesting ground for numerous species of wetland fowl, so in terms of preserving biodiversity the protection of suitable ecological conditions is extremely important, at least in specific large sections of this once complete and very



extensive ecosystem.

The conditions for human settlement throughout the Ljubljansko barje have been relatively unfavourable right up to the present day, so there are effectively no settlements in its central areas, but there are numerous settlements among which some in more recent times have expanded considerably around the wetland margins and some also on the low solitary hills that rise gently from the plain as you head west towards Vrhnika. The southern suburbs of Ljubljana are also expanding relentlessly into the wetland area. In economic terms, as has already been mentioned, the possibilities offered by the Ljubljansko barje are very limited. Still the most important commercial activity in the not too distant past was digging and cutting up peat, but compared to wood and coal this was a very poor quality source of energy. In more recent times, owing to the acid soils a few patches of American blueberries have appeared, this being one of the few cultures suited to such soil.

In transport terms, too, the wetland terrain is problematic for road and railway construction because of subsidence. For this reason major transport routes tend to avoid it or skirt around its margin, and this applies to the initial 20-kilometre section of railway line from Ljubljana towards Trieste, built around 150 years ago, and also to the much more recent motorway section running in the same direction, the two running almost parallel. When both routes were constructed, owing to the unstable terrain numerous technical problems had to be overcome in consolidating the beds of the rail and road routes. There used to be lively river transport along the Ljubljanica from Ljubljana to Vrhnika, but that ended a long time ago, with the exception now of recreational and tourist boating trips.

### **Ljubljana's stilt-dwelling culture**

Somehow after the year 6500 BCE, in other words in the middle Palaeolithic, the margins of the Ljubljansko barje were



In the distant past, life in this area was quite different, testament to which can be seen in numerous archaeological finds over the past 200 years or so.

in fact settled by agriculturalists, while there was even more intensive settlement in the Mesolithic, which was followed by Copper and Bronze Age settlements, while in the Iron Age the settlements were already retreating to the nearby slightly higher and dryer positions. So the area has in fact experienced more or less continuous settlement for several thousand years, and the local inhabitants lived off hunting and fishing, as well as farming in adjoining land. The successive phases of this prehistoric settlement can be traced in the characteristics of excavated items, ranging from flint and bone tools

**'In spite of human encroachment, a major portion of the Ljubljansko barje wetland is still wilderness, and represents a unique plant and animal habitat, with numerous plant and animal species that have not been found elsewhere.'**

to remnants of pottery and numerous metal objects, which testify to the fact that in later periods the inhabitants were also involved in smelting and working metal. The first archaeological discoveries in the Ljubljansko barje were quite by chance, during peat excavation, the digging of drainage channels and especially in the construction of the aforementioned Ljubljana-Trieste railway. Yet the archaeological profession of that time was still unable to put a proper value on these discoveries, right up until the second half of the 19th century, when the remnants of similar settlements were discovered in

Switzerland, southern Germany and also in Austrian Carinthia. These were what are termed crannog, or stilt-dwelling, settlements, with huts built on platforms above marshland or lake surfaces perched on piles driven into the mud. Such dwellings afforded their inhabitants protection from possible intruders or attackers. The first three such settlements were discovered in the Ljubljansko barje by the keeper of the provincial museum in Ljubljana, Dragotin Dežman, and his highly significant discoveries inspired a host of other researchers, who spent the ensuing years and decades finding even more crannog settlements at various locations in the wetland. A major portion of the found objects ended up at that time in the Vienna museum and museum repositories, while some of them were kept in the then provincial, now the National Museum in Ljubljana, which in recent decades, together with the City Museum of Ljubljana, has been expanding its collections with excavated objects found more recently.

In the first few decades of the 20th century, the archaeological zeal for further discovery of stilt dwellings waned somewhat, but was re-ignited by new discoveries after 1930, and even more intensely after the end of the Second World War in 1945, then right up to the present day. In addition to stilt dwellings and objects that the then inhabitants used in their everyday life, various tools, hunting equipment and earthenware, there were a great many wooden dugouts hewn from a single tree trunk, and were



the means of transport from dry land to the stilt dwellings or around the lake areas of the wetland.

With all these discoveries, the stilt-dwelling culture took root in the wider consciousness of contemporaries, and this was probably further enhanced by the writer Janez Jalen, who in 1942 wrote and published the three-part novel *Bobri* (Beavers), in which in a romanticised form he described and portrayed the tribal life of the ancient inhabitants, and in the final part they are even visited by the Argonauts, who according to mythical tradition were led by Jason on a return voyage from the Black Sea to Greece via a detour, navigating up the Danube, Sava and Ljubljanica rivers to Vrhnika, from where their vessel the *Argo* was transported on rollers to the northern Adriatic. Their route supposedly took them through the stilt dwellers of the Ljubljansko barje, since the period in which the Argonauts myth was established roughly dovetails with that of the stilt dwellers.

### **Ljubljansko barje wheel**

One of the latest finds in the Ljubljansko barje area is that of one more stilt dwelling quite close to the centre of Ljubljana, close

**‘The find of a Ljubljansko barje wheel, which has been dated to between 3350 and 3100 BCE, confirmed that in hauling loads on dry land the stilt dwellers even then used two-wheel carts.’**

to the point where the Ljubljanica splits into two streams, one running along the original riverbed and the other along the Gruber canal. The remains of this stilt dwelling of Na Špici were also on public display for some time.

Even more significant was the find of a wheel in an entirely different part of the Ljubljansko barje, and this confirmed that the stilt dwellers used two-wheel carts to haul loads on dry land. The found wheel, around two thirds of which remain, is from ash wood, and measures 72 centimetres in diameter. It was discovered in 1992 by Janez Dirjec of the Institute for Archaeology at the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Even more surprising was the fact that beside the wheel was an entirely preserved 124 centimetre long axle of oak. In the centre, the wheel has a rectangular opening into which the axle fits, meaning the axle turned together with the wheel. The find is dated to the period between

3350 and 3100 BCE. This is therefore one of the oldest such found wheels, which were also a feature of the Swiss and southern German crannog settlements, if not the oldest of all the wheels.

This precious find was on public display for just one day after its discovery in 1992, and then it was preserved once more in Ljubljansko barje clay, right up until January 2008, when it was sent to Mainz in Germany for restoration, since the process of restoring waterlogged wood is highly complex and demanding. The restored wheel should be returned to the City Museum of Ljubljana at the end of 2011, and in 2012 it should be displayed for the public along with other material remains of the stilt-dwelling culture.

A replica of the wheel in its original size and a smaller scale model of the whole cart were also exhibited in 2007 in the Slovenian House in Brussels as an archaeological find that is of exceptional value and importance for Europe. ●



# 430 YEARS OF LIPICA STUD FARM

Symbol of freedom and beauty in unspoilt nature

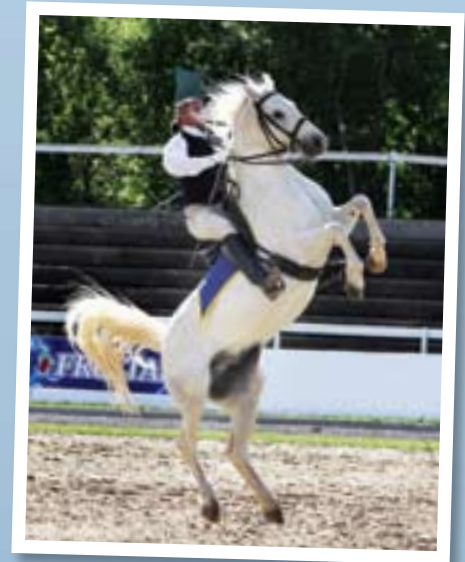
Jože Prešeren Photo Darinka Mladenovič

**I**N 2010 THE LIPICA STUD FARM IS celebrating an exceptional milestone, its 430th anniversary. The world-famous stud farm is one of the most outstanding as well as beautiful cultural and historical monuments in Slovenia. Owing precisely to its natural beauty and resilience, Lipica today is a Slovenian national symbol that frequently aids in the international identification of this country. Every year its attractions are enjoyed by around 100,000 domestic and foreign visitors, who marvel at the centuries-old buildings, the beautifully kept estate, which ranks as the sole preserved and complete farm holding dating from the Middle Ages, the unspoilt natural environment, and especially the wonderful Lipizzaner horses, which are showcased to visitors in a dressage programme. In its history, Lipica has experienced numerous rises and falls, and its very existence has frequently been threatened, although today we can be proud that the Lipica Stud and its noble horses have survived – often enough in extraordinary ways – the

centuries of turmoil. Today Lipica Stud is entirely state-owned, and is also a kind of official protocol facility of the Republic of Slovenia, having been toured with special interest during her official visit last year by Queen Elizabeth II of Britain, who received on that occasion the gift of a Lipizzaner stallion; and during his official visit to Libya, Slovenian Prime Minister Borut Pahor presented a fine Lipizzaner to Libyan President Muammar al-Gaddafi.

Of course Slovenian state representatives proudly display Lipica to numerous other high-ranking visitors to this country.

From the first spring months of 2010, Lipica will see a range of jubilee events involving the participation of a great many people in Slovenia, especially animal and of course horse lovers. May has already seen the completion of an exceptionally successful volunteer action to paint the Lipica fence, which is several kilometres long, so the restored whiteness of the fence is contributing to the festive atmosphere; and in May, by



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the entrance to the stud farm a 32-metre pole was set up, after being hauled there by an old horse-drawn wagon by local people from nearby Karst villages, and more than 600 equestrians from all over Slovenia gathered for a friendly meeting; to mark the major anniversary, the first festival of Slovenian equestrians was organised, and this included numerous competitive and entertaining appearances by a wide variety of horse teams; and many other events will take place right through to autumn.

### **One of the oldest horse breeds in the world**

Today there are few stud farms in the world that can boast a tradition to compare with the 430 years of Lipica. Here we should not forget that this is the thoroughbred Lipizzaner, which was specially bred for the requirements of the Austrian imperial court in Vienna, the Austrian army and the Spanish Riding School in Vienna. Back in 1580, when the

Austrian Archduke Karl purchased this estate from the Bishop of Trieste, in order to enoble the horses the first stallions from Spain were brought in, these being the famous Andalusian breed, and later stallions were also bought from other European countries. This gave rise to what are today the famed original lines of Lipizzaner stallions, among which the best-known include Favory, Maestoso, Pluto and Siglavy, and today their progeny still make up a constituent part of the Lipica herd. Today there are also 16 lines of Lipica mares. The special climate of the Karst, the stony landscape and burja north wind provide ideal conditions for raising this resilient and tractable horse that is well-suited to dressage. It is well-known that the adult Lipizzaner is characteristically white, but the foals are brown, reddish or grey; they turn white only after six to ten years.

Today Lipica is just the original stud farm where the famous Lipizzaner breed was created, for now Lipizzaners are also

raised at six other national stud farms: Piber in Austria, Djakovo in Croatia, Fara Sabina in Italy, Szilvasvarad in Hungary, Simbata de Jos in Romania, Topolcianky in Slovakia and Karadjordjevo in Serbia. Establishing the Lipizzaner in breeding and equestrian terms has also involved important work by numerous breeding organisations throughout the world; these are located in all the above countries, in the majority of Western European countries and also in the USA, Australia and even in South Africa.

### **Points of special interest**

For many years Lipica and its stud farm have been a special feature in this Karst environment. Centuries ago, when the Karst was regarded for some time as a fairly desolate landscape, this was a veritable green oasis, and today it is still a kind of "island" in the otherwise beautifully overgrown surrounding land. The nucleus of the Lipica Stud was formed around the remnants of the former estate of the Bishop





of Trieste. The main structure was the “manor” and its pertaining space, around which developed what was called the “hof”. The historical core of Lipica acquired the appearance of a complete entity in the early decades of the 18th century, the stables were expanded in the 19th century and in the 1970s a new covered riding arena was built plus a small arena and stables. In 1977 a hippodrome was arranged.

Today visitors to Lipica can tour the oldest building, the “manor”, which was erected on the foundations of the Renaissance Bishop’s residence; throughout the existence of the stud farm, this was an administrative building with apartments for the head of the stud farm and some senior officials. Behind the “manor” is the second-oldest building in the old core, the “velbanc”, which is the best-preserved building of the historical nucleus. The building has continuously retained its function as a stable for thoroughbred stallions, and has also taken on the symbolic importance of the fundamental activity of the Lipica complex.

The stable for dressage horses, called in the old style by the German word *Abrichtung*, was completed in 1899. It was intended for horses aged three and a half years and older that started training. Later the stable was renovated several times. Stables 9 and 10,

built in 1819, house young colts. Stables 3, 4 and 5 and the old riding arena were built in 1815 after the departure of the French, when Lipica entered into its heyday. Here are still the main stables for mares and foals; between the stables is the large “borjača” Karst-style courtyard, where young foals are let out in bad weather.

The stud farm also has a chapel dedicated to St. Anthony of Padua, who is regarded as the protector of animals from disease. The original chapel dates from the 17th century, and today it also features designs from the 19th century, when it was renovated. In the Lipica Valley there is also a shrine to Our Lady of Lourdes carved into the living rock behind a metal gate. In the previous century, right up until the Second World War, people from surrounding villages, and especially from around Trieste, came

**‘Lipica also symbolises a living tradition, perseverance in hard living conditions, freedom and peace as well as the beauty of untouched nature.’**

in droves on pilgrimages to this shrine in the Lipica Valley, because it was famed for miraculous cures.

Among the features that draw visitors to Lipica, mention should of course be made of the gallery of the painter Avgust

Černigoj, who spent the last years of his life in the Hotel Maestoso in Lipica, and then there are the numerous wells and fountains, testifying to how precious water was in times when there were not yet any water mains, plus the museum collections, including a museum of old coaches, and numerous monuments and documents relating the history of this famous stud farm, the people that managed it and of course its famous mares and stallions.

We should mention especially that the entire area of Lipica Stud Farm is under special protection, and this covers the designed grazing and grassland areas and protective fences, oak groves and avenues. The Lipica cultural landscape is a self-contained natural environment whose development is based on centuries of breeding thoroughbred horses. Centuries

ago the entire estate was surrounded by a characteristic Karst dry stone wall, more than 8 kilometres long, and this gives the estate a special symbolic integrity. So the estate is worth touring in its own right, and of course no visitor can miss the extraordinary

experience of a classic dressage show to the rhythm of the elegant Lipizzaners.

Lipica also symbolises a living tradition, perseverance in hard living conditions, freedom and peace as well as the beauty of untouched nature.



**I FEEL  
SLOVENIA**

Picture Lila Prap

