An aerial photograph of a lush forest. A winding stream flows through the upper left portion of the image. In the center, a small, dark, circular pond is surrounded by a dense stand of trees. The trees in the foreground and middle ground are a mix of vibrant yellow and deep green, suggesting an autumn setting. The background shows a more uniform green forest.

# Sinfo

The Best from Slovenia

I FEEL  
SLOVENIA

NR. 1 / 2020



**I FEEL SLOVENIA**

# Sinfo

SLOVENIAN INFORMATION  
NR. 1 / 2020

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

**Published by**  
Government Communication Office

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**Print**  
Schwarz Print d.o.o.

**Number of copies**  
3500

**ISSN**  
1854-0805



Photo: Bruno Toič

EDITORIAL

Excellence can be achieved by risking more than is safe to risk, dreaming more than is possible and expecting more than is expected. This goes for all areas and all relations, personal and professional. Excellence is a special characteristic. Even wanting and striving for it requires a great deal of effort, which many people find to be too much. Mature, stable, responsible and motivated individuals are the foundation of personal excellence. Achieving work excellence requires loving your job, discipline, goals and consistency. Excellence is more than success. It means reaching the peak of potential, turning what is ordinary into extraordinary.

Excellence itself is the central theme of the new Sinfo that you are holding in your hands. Slovenians go beyond mere success in many areas – art, cuisine, business opportunities and sport. In Slovenia, there are individuals who are capable of being tough competitors to their currently more visible opponents at any time. Impossible only means that it will take a little more time than planned. So consider reading our stories, which are spiced up with the excellence of various achievements, to be time well spent.

**Tanja Glogovčan Belančič**, Executive Editor



Photo: Uroš Stepišnik

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Just the right size for Slovenia

An aerial photograph showing a large, irregularly shaped clearing in the center of a dense, dark green coniferous forest. The clearing is covered in light green grass and some small rocks. The surrounding forest is thick and uniform in color, creating a strong contrast with the open space in the middle.

Life is won by those who take their dreams seriously,  
no matter how wild they might be.

ANON

Photo: Uroš Stepišnik

## EXCELLENCE



Prof. Dr. Igor Papič

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ  
Photo: Dušan Arzenšek

## KNOWLEDGE - SLOVENIA'S GREATEST POTENTIAL

### PROF. DR IGOR PAPIČ – RECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA

THE UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA CELEBRATED THE CENTENARY OF ITS FOUNDATION DURING THE THIRD YEAR OF PROF. DR PAPIČ'S TERM OF OFFICE AS RECTOR. HOWEVER, SAYS DR PAPIČ, THE TRADITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION GOES AS FAR BACK AS 1619 WHEN THE JESUITS ESTABLISHED A COLLEGE, AND SO WE ARE IN FACT CELEBRATING 400 YEARS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SLOVENIA.

The path to the establishment of the University was neither self-evident nor simple, and its founding was the final act of many decades of the nation's endeavours to access education and use the Slovenian language in public life.

#### EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE WITH SCIENCE

With its 23 faculties and three art academies, the University of Ljubljana (UL) is the largest scientific and educational establishment in the country and, as Dr Papič

points out, satisfies local and, above all, global needs. Are we sufficiently aware of the important role it plays? "Not enough," he replies, "considering that the University has a strong impact on the overall development of the country and its society, as both may only advance on the basis of knowledge. It would be wrong to believe that investing in science is unwise. A strong country is based on a strong economy, which in turn is based on high added value, which is the result of a sound technological development and knowledge. Everything we do is possible with good science. In our country there has never been a crisis of knowledge, any crisis is the result of poor organisation, of how to transfer knowledge to other spheres, of how to apply it and thereby bring added value to the society."

#### SLOVENIA HAS A GOOD QUALITY OF SCIENTISTS

Of all registered researchers in Slovenia, 30% work at the University of Ljubljana, the central and largest research institution in Slovenia. Brain drain is another challenge we are faced with. The question is whether our country provides a sufficiently competitive environment to keep researchers at home or even attract foreign researchers?

"I am convinced that our students receive an excellent education in Slovenia. Anyone studying in Slovenia has sufficient knowledge to create a new Nokia."

If we want our scientists to remain at home, we need to ensure better working conditions. This does not only mean better payment but also a better infrastructure and better research equipment. "Within the EU, Slovenia is somewhat particular, as we have a high quality of life and security that is unmatched by other countries, but, alas, worse working conditions." Furthermore, he understands that young people should realise part of their potential abroad, that knowledge should circulate. Emigration of young people is nothing new, he himself has worked in Germany and Canada, where he received good job offers but decided to return to Slovenia. In his view, going abroad is nothing to be afraid of. We are becoming a more mature society, so there should be fewer concerns about someone remaining abroad. He points out, however, that better research conditions would attract talented researchers from abroad.

In terms of the number of research projects, the UL ranks among the top of universities and research institutions from the new EU Member States. Last year, the University of Ljubljana received 41 research proposals from its members.

The knowledge accumulated at the University should be better exploited, said Papič in response to the question whether the economy and society in general benefit sufficiently from this knowledge.

"We are among the best educated nations in the world, but we are not the most technologically advanced. Considering the level of knowledge, our industry should be more developed. Technological strength means a higher added value and a richer country as a whole. Here we are, make a better use of us, we have a lot of knowledge that we can transfer to society."

What made him decide to return home? "The quality of life, which is extremely high in Slovenia. If I could choose, I would work in Germany, because it is so well organised, I would buy a house in Canada, but I would live in Slovenia because of the high level of social life and the overall quality of life. Some of our young people seem to have found better working conditions abroad and can fulfil their ambitions more easily there."

#### GOOD OPPORTUNITIES

In recent years, opportunities for students to study abroad have increased significantly. A large number of them go to foreign universities for a short period of time on the basis of the Erasmus+ exchange programme, while some go abroad individually to study or to complete a significant part of their studies. For young people it is a very valuable experience to be able to exchange one cultural environment for another. This aspect of living abroad is at the forefront, since you can learn how other people live, which consequently makes you more open-minded. Dr Papič is absolutely in favour of such exchanges that, fortunately, are increasingly common.

**Today the University of Ljubljana is ranked among the top 3% of the world's best universities. In one of the most important academic rankings – the ARWU (Academia Ranking of World Universities) – it is among the top 500 best universities, in the CWUR (Center for World University Rankings) it ranks 370th, and in the Times Higher Education ranking it is in the 601-800 group.**



“We are competing against the best universities in the world. Yet it is easier for them to deliver excellent results, as their budgets are up to ten times higher than ours. This makes us probably all the more successful.”

The University as a vessel of critical new thinking, and of scientific, social and political progress, needs freedom to carry out its mission. The concept of autonomy of the University and academic freedom is in the heart of the Rector's agenda. He stresses that this is a continuous theme. He firmly defends the autonomy of the University, stressing that the only legislative framework necessary for a public University is the instrument ensuring its financing, while all other matters should be regulated by the institution itself. In his eyes, the University is a cluster of extraordinary individuals, outstanding in every respect. Competition in terms of achievements and hard work is fierce, but always in equilibrium.

The University of Ljubljana is a member of EUTOPIA, a core group of European universities geared towards the challenges of the future, established following a proposal by the French President, Emmanuel Macron. The group, coordinated by the University of Ljubljana, brings together the following universities: University of Warwick, University Pompeu Fabra, CY Cergy Paris Université, Gothenburg University and Vrije Universiteit Brussels.

**“We are the only University from the new EU Member States to be the coordinator of such an alliance. Integration in this group is an important step forward in understanding the university of the future, comparable to the Bologna system revolution.”**

Dr Papič's objectives, as stated at the start of his four-year term of office, are to enhance the quality of the University of Ljubljana and provide better financial and spatial conditions for creative working and personal relations within the academic community.

Is he seeing success in realising these aims? “The results will be judged by others; however, I would like to see more creativity and real substance. I want things to move forward, with as little as possible empty debates that do nothing for development.”

What, in his opinion, is the difference between being a professor or Dean of a faculty, the post he held earlier, and being a Rector? “When I was Dean of the Faculty of Electrical Engineering the reply of the then Rector to my complaints about the situation at my faculty was to



“University is the cluster of extraordinary individuals, outstanding in every respect.”

multiply my issues by 26, which is the number of University of Ljubljana members. Well, this is the difference between the positions.”

He would also like to see more collaboration between scientists in the natural sciences and technical fields, and those working in the social sciences and humani-

ties, as he is firmly convinced that good technology is impossible without a genuine human approach. Artificial intelligence will only be as good as we are, and to the extent that it can remain humane. He concludes with a broad smile on his face that he believes people from the social sciences and humanities are certainly more amiable than those, like himself, from a technical field.



## EXCELLENCE

Prof. Dr. Matevž Dular

IRENA KOGOJ  
Photo: Personal archives

## FROM VIRUSES TO SPACECRAFT

## POSITIVE USE OF CAVITATION

DOLPHINS CAN SWIM AT A SPEED OF UP TO 60 KILOMETRES PER HOUR. WHAT PREVENTS THEM FROM SWIMMING FASTER IS A PHENOMENON CALLED CAVITATION. AS THEY SWIM, THE FLOW OF WATER ALONG THEIR TAIL ACCELERATES BECAUSE OF THE TAIL'S SHAPE, AND RESULTS IN LOWER PRESSURE.

This causes water to evaporate along the tail, generating bubbles. Later on these collapse in on themselves causing a release of high pressure and temperature. This phenomenon also occurs on ship propellers and on turbine blades. In this way, the bubbles cause damage to the materials and pain to dolphins.

### ENTHUSIASM OVER CAVITATION

Prof. Dr. Matevž Dular from the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Ljubljana first heard about cavitation in high school. He was so impressed by it that he first looked for the term in the Slovenian Large General Lexicon, where he saw images of bubbles. Since then, he has been overwhelmed with cavitation.

**He likes nice images of fluid and bubble flows and enjoys dealing with the engineering problems it causes, as well as the wide range of possibilities for using it.**

Working with the European Space Agency, he studied how cavitation destroys turbopumps pumping liquid hydrogen into spacecraft engines at high speed. In his home bathroom, he conducted preliminary experiments on how to measure the temperature inside a hydrogen bubble. He examined the physical background of the occurrence of damage caused by cavitation and developed a methodology for predicting it. He also researched the use of cavitation for the more effective dissolving of washing powder in washing machines, and even artificial aging of wine.

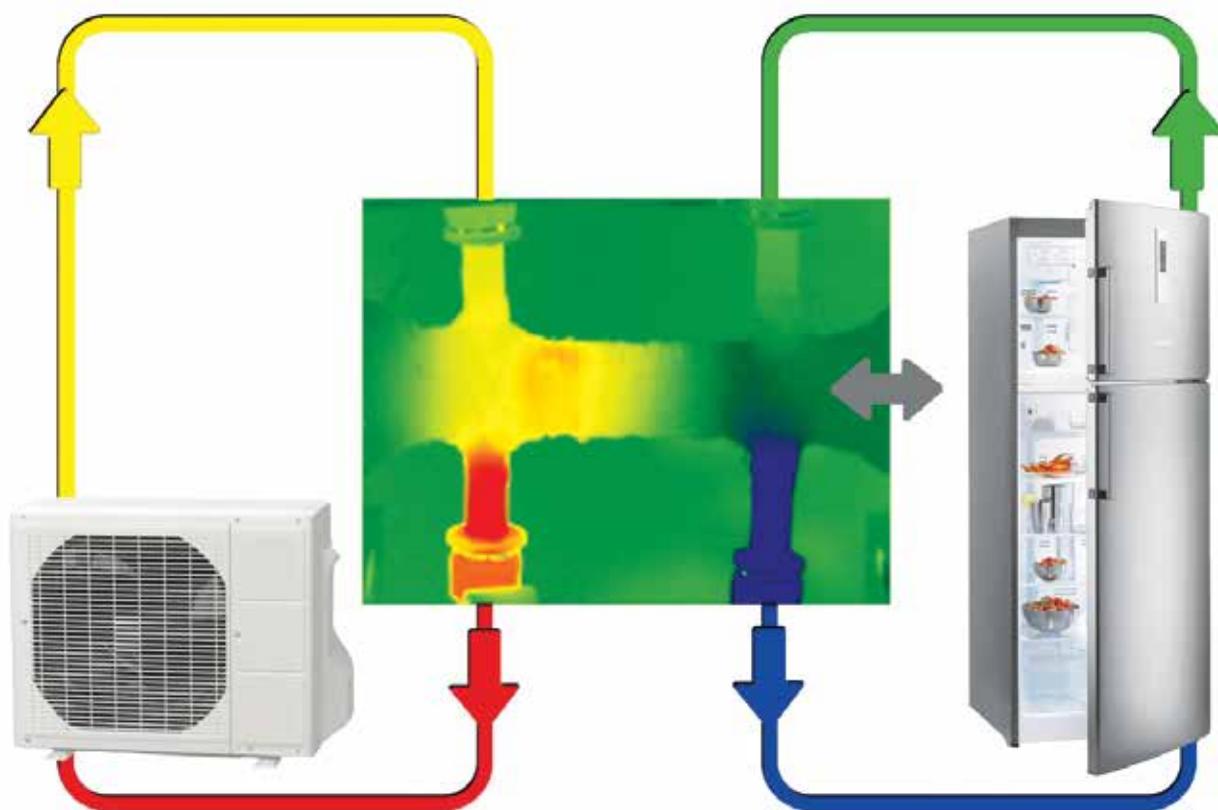
Cavitation has been known for over 100 years and considered as something harmful. Prof. Dular, however, had different thoughts. He wondered whether cavitation could be used for anything useful. And he found the answer!

**Experimentally, it has been shown that cavitation can successfully purify water or destroy viruses and bacteria in it.**

Cavitation is already destroying legionella bacteria and keeping them at low levels in plumbing systems at low cost. Instead of chlorination, water in bathing pools could be kept clean through cavitation. To achieve this, one of the pumps for pumping water should have a form that would make it generate cavitation. This would be save energy and, above all, be environmentally friendly. The problem, however, is that it is still not entirely understood how this process works and what exactly happens between the bubbles and the bacteria. Meanwhile, prior to its large-scale use, it will still be necessary to examine potentially undesirable effects. In 2017, Professor Dular received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) for basic research concerning the use of cavitation for water purification.



Prof. Dular examined the physical background of the occurrence of damage caused by cavitation and developed a methodology for predicting it.



IRENA KOGOJ  
Photo: Personal archives

## EXCELLENCE

### COOLING

## FINDING NEW WAYS OF IT

STRETCH A BALLOON AND PRESS IT AGAINST YOUR UPPER LIP. YOU CAN FEEL THAT IT IS WARM. HOWEVER, WHEN YOU RELEASE THE BALLOON, IT COOLS DOWN BELOW THE INITIAL TEMPERATURE. THIS IS KNOWN AS THE ELASTOCALORIC EFFECT. IN THIS SIMPLE WAY, ASSIST. PROF. JAKA TUŠEK PHD, AGED 36, WHO IS NEVER WITHOUT A SMILE ON HIS FACE, EXPLAINS HIS RESEARCH WORK.

At the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Ljubljana, more precisely at the Laboratory for Refrigeration and District Energy, he has been re-

searching the possibility of using this phenomenon in cooling devices, and in 2016 the research team achieved remarkable success.

**They were the first in the world to demonstrate that the elastocaloric effect can be used in cooling devices.**

Why is this important? Dr Tušek explains that the quantity of electricity used for cooling has been increasing around the world. In the USA, as many as 90% of households have air conditioning. The more we cool, the more greenhouse gases we create and thus heat the atmosphere, which in turn again increases the need for cooling. Dr Tušek says that we are in a vicious cycle. Moreover, our cooling devices still operate on the basis of more than 100-year-old vapour-compression cooling technology, which is not very energy efficient. However, making more efficient cooling devices that consume less energy and are thus less burdening for the environment is a great challenge for scientists. Many laboratories around the world are exploring new methods of cooling, including magnetocaloric, electrocaloric and elastocaloric technologies, the latter being Dr Tušek's favourite.



Assist. Prof. Jaka Tušek

**Again and again he explains with the same enthusiasm how refrigerators will work in the future. The cooling medium will be a caloric material, metal, ceramic or polymer.**

The magnetocaloric material will be magnetised, the electrocaloric material charged and the elastocaloric material will be loaded by an external force. In this process, the material undergoes solid-state transformation, causing it to heat up. The heat will be removed and the material will cool to the initial temperature. When it is demagnetised, discharged or unloaded, it will cool down below the initial temperature.

Dr Tušek is convinced that in the future this is what our refrigerators will be like. He says that he is unlikely to cool beer for himself and his friends in such a refrigerator, but that initially at least large-scale cooling systems such as air conditioners and industrial refrigerators will operate in this manner.

**In 2018, he convinced the European Research Council (ERC) to award a grant of EUR 1,4 million for further research into elastocaloric cooling technology.**

And what is the best thing for a scientist? In his opinion, to be engaged in a completely new research area where there is an enormous potential for progress that is still unexplored, and, of course, good results! That is also why the use of functional materials in energy engineering has completely won him over. However, he envisions their use not only in refrigerators, but also in heat-pumping devices generating electricity, thermal energy storage and more.

## GREEN CORNER



## FOOD AS WASTE

POLONA PREŠEREN, SOURCE: SURS  
INFOGRAPHICS: IRENA KOGOJ

Slovenia is increasing its level of municipal waste recycling despite the fact that more waste is generated each year. In 2018, almost 59 percent of waste was recycled; since 2010, the recycling rate has increased by as much as 35 percent.

**We are clearly very good at recycling, however, we still produce too much waste that will provide a challenge for our country and its population.**

### IN 2018, SLOVENIA PRODUCED:

- A total of 1,563 kg of all types of waste, except mineral (construction waste, soil and stones, dredging spoils, etc.), per capita. This is 10 kg per capita more compared to 2017 but 456 kg less than in 2010.
- A total of 495 kg of municipal waste per capita. This is 17 kg more than in 2017 and 26 kg less than in 2010.

### FOOD OFTEN WINDS UP IN THE WASTE

Under the system of public collection of municipal waste, Slovenia separately collects bio-waste, which, in addition to kitchen food waste, also contains waste from gardens and parks. Between 2013 and 2015, the ratio of food in these bins averaged 39 percent per year.

In 2018, almost 139,900 tonnes of food waste was generated in Slovenia, which is an average of 68 kilograms per capita. This is slightly less than the average of 143,000 tonnes in recent years.

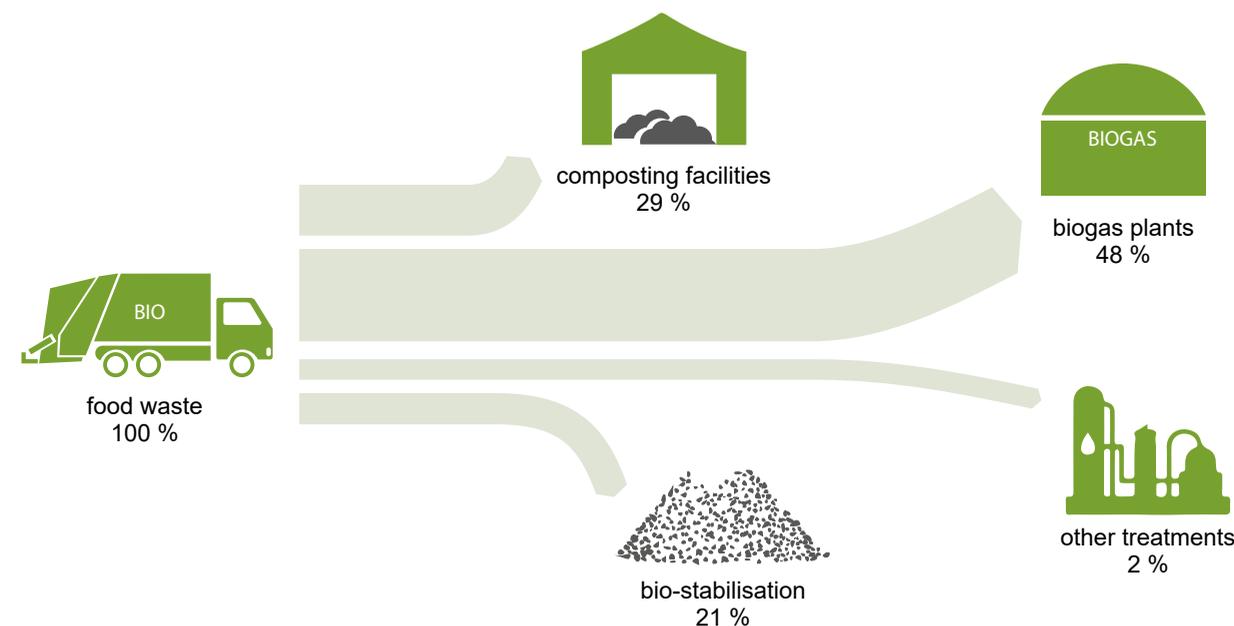
Almost half of all food waste is generated by households, although this proportion has been decreasing in recent years. In this respect, it should be noted that numerous households do not dispose of food waste through the waste management system, but compost it at home and then use the compost in their gardens.

**Nearly 20 percent of food waste in Slovenia is generated by caterers and other businesses where food is served (such as kindergartens, schools, nursing homes and hospitals).**

It is encouraging, however, that the amount of food waste in restaurants has begun to decline over the past three years. A tenth of food waste is generated due to improper storage, damage during transport or the expiry date.

### WHERE DOES FOOD WASTE END UP?

The majority – almost half – of food waste is processed in biogas plants, i.e. anaerobically. Nearly a third goes to aerobic processing in composting facilities where Slovenia has sufficient capacities. The proportion of composted food is increasing year after year.



## HOW DO WE WORK TOWARDS REDUCING FOOD WASTE?

Each individual can contribute to reducing the amount of food waste as there are numerous opportunities at home for using food without discarding it. Overripe fruit can be used for different compotes, jams or in pastries, while stale bread can be used to make breadcrumbs, bread dumplings or a dessert called *trijet*.

### Ingredients:

4 slices of stale bread  
200ml of red or white wine, mixed with 50ml of water  
a pinch of cinnamon  
2 tablespoons of sugar

### Preparation:

1. Briefly bake the thinly sliced stale bread in the oven.
2. Heat the wine and water mixture together with cinnamon and sugar, making sure it completely dissolves.
3. Arrange the baked bread slices on a plate and pour the lukewarm wine over them.
4. Enjoy!



## GENERAL WASTE MANAGEMENT INDICATORS IN SLOVENIA IN 2018

**In 2018, the recycling rate of all non-mineral waste in Slovenia's waste management system was almost 88 percent.**

This is a 4 percent increase on 2017 and at the same time a 25 percent increase on 2010.

**The municipal waste recycling rate amounted to almost 59 percent.**

That is 1 percentage point more than in 2017 and 35 more than in 2010.

**The rate of disposal of all waste included in waste management, excluding mineral waste, amounted to around 5 percent.**

This is half a percentage point less than in 2017 and 20 less than in 2010.





## THE INTERNATIONAL GREEN WEEK BERLIN REPRESENTATION OF SLOVENIA AS THE PERFECT TOURIST DESTINATION

EACH YEAR, THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FOOD PARTICIPATES IN THE INTERNATIONAL GREEN WEEK BERLIN, THE EXHIBITION FOR FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND HORTICULTURE. THE EVENT, HELD TRADITIONALLY IN THE SECOND HALF OF JANUARY, IS ONE ONE OF THE LEADING TRADE FAIRS IN EUROPE.

PATRIZIA DE FRANCESCHI - KORENT  
Photo: MKGP archives

This status is clear from their numbers: more than 1,600 exhibitors from 72 countries, 115,200 m2 of exhibition area and almost half a million visitors. The Green Week also plays a major economic and political role, with senior German government representatives being joined by over 200 business and ministerial delegations from around the world. Over 300 different forums, seminars and conferences take place at the exhibition centre during the fair.

### UNIQUE EXPERIENCE OF THE SLOVENIA

The Slovenian stand offers a unique culinary experience. Slovenia traditionally links its presentation to its food and beverages, the consistent theme that runs prominently through all 27 exhibitions halls. At the Slovenian stand the visitors, most of whom are from Germany, can enjoy the experience of tasting some of the treasures of Slovenian gastronomy, both on plates and in glasses. They can discover our country through delicious Slovenian specialties, which along with our excellent wine and beer offer a unique experience of actually being in the country for a moment. Another prominent feature of the Slovenian stand is the golden honey, the result of our long-standing tradition of apiculture and a perfect reflection of our unspoilt nature and pristine landscape. Each year, people who look for quality are attracted by our stand. But this is not the only thing they get with our food and beverages – the stand also provides tourist information.

**Slovenia's extraordinary natural features and monuments make it the perfect tourist destination.**

The catalogues, maps and fliers offered at the stand entice German visitors to consider our country as the top destination for their next holiday trip.

## GREEN CORNER

### KARSTOLOGY

## A NATIVE SLOVENIAN SCIENCE

THE KARST IS AN EXCEPTIONAL LANDSCAPE THAT COVERS ALMOST HALF OF SLOVENIA'S TERRITORY. THIS IS A WORLD OF MAGIC AND PICTURESQUE NATURAL PHENOMENA. A WORLD THAT SINCE TIME IMMEMORIAL HAS EXCITED EXPLORERS, SCIENTISTS AND RESEARCHERS. THE FACT THAT KARSTOLOGY AS A SCIENCE WAS BORN IN SLOVENIA THUS COMES AS NO SURPRISE.

POLONA PREŠEREN  
Photo: Uroš Stepišnik

Typical dolines (sinkholes) close to  
Knežja Lipa in southern Slovenia.

## A fact perhaps less known is that karstology was named after the Slovenian region of Kras, called Carso by Italians and Karst by Germans.

Karstology occupies a special place among scientific disciplines in the country, as documents show that in the territory of present-day Slovenia karst phenomena have been researched since Antiquity.

This is also the reason why this discipline adopted its name, which in Slovenian has three meanings: it is the name of the region, a generic term which in the local dialect means rock land, and it is also the scientific term. As noted above, the scientific term is related to the name of the karst region, and there are several reasons why the name of this area has been adopted and not that of other European karst regions, for instance of the Dinaric Mountains, where karstic phenomena are also common. Dr Uroš Stepišnik of the Department of Geography at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana

considers that this is due to the Karst's geographic as well as geopolitical position in the period between the 16th and the 19th centuries, when karst regions in Europe began to be intensively researched.

### KARST PHENOMENA

In Slovenia, Janez Vajkard Valvasor, a Carniola nobleman, is regarded as the first scholar to have studied karst phenomena in a scientific way. His treatise on the hydrology of the intermittent Lake Cerknica won him an honorary fellowship of the Royal Society. In his most important work, *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola* (1689), he wrote extensively on the karst, describing sinkholes and water sources, and of his visits to caves, and he explained karst phenomena. He also published descriptions of thirteen karstic caves that were previously unknown.

“The 19th century witnessed the extremely rapid development of karstology. Vienna (Slovenia was then part of the Habsburg Monarchy) was at the time an important scientific hub. Due to its vicinity to extensive karst regions in Europe, mostly the Dinaric Karst, in the 19th century Vienna became the most important centre of karst studies, where the majority of research was carried out and most new ideas were born” adds Dr Stepišnik, himself a researcher of, in particular, the Dinaric Karst.



Hum Gorica on Cerknica Polje.



Sinking river in Tkalca Cave at Rakov Škocjan.

As karstology is the only discipline that was born in our territory, studies of Slovenian geographers are often, directly or indirectly, linked to the Karst. Geography is also the only discipline concerned with the physical environment that is capable of covering all the aspects involved in the study of karst phenomena. Dr Stepišnik also points out that new research methods now allow for new interpretations of karst development and processes. We must never forget that the Karst, with all its characteristics, is a typical Slovenian region and an important part of the Slovenian identity.



Predjama Castle



Suhadolca Spring at Cerknica Polje.

#### **Interesting facts**

Since prehistory caves and caverns have been of great importance for people, who used them as storage and hiding places, shelters, dwelling places and sanctuaries, as indicated by extensive archeological evidence. Equally important to people have been the springs appearing in the otherwise normally dry karst environment.

## GREEN CORNER



Tian, Tia, Zoja, Nina Katarina, Lara, Eva, Julija, Zara, Gal and Alex took part in the campaign.

TANJA GLOGOVČAN BELANČIĆ  
Photo: Vera Granfol

# BE GENTLE, THE PLANET WILL THANK YOU SLOVENIAN PUPILS ARE CHANGING THEIR DRESSING HABITS

IN SLOVENIA, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IS INCREASINGLY BECOMING A PRIORITY. THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IN THIS SENSE IS PRIMARILY THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS, BUT ALSO OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS. LAST YEAR, THE STUDENTS OF THE GORNJA RADGONA PRIMARY SCHOOL ORGANISED A SPECIAL CAMPAIGN ENTITLED "A HUNDRED DAYS IN THE SAME T-SHIRTS AND TROUSERS".

The campaign launched on 2 September of last year and ended on a symbolic note on 10 December, which marks Human Rights Day. The aim was to wear the same T-shirts and jeans for a hundred days in order to help raise awareness about environmental protection and draw attention to the environmental impact of the textile industry.

### WITHOUT POMP, BUT WITH DETERMINATION

It began quietly. Only a handful of people knew that they were part of a special team. On the first day of school the students came dressed in donated blue T-shirts with the school logo and the slogan Be gentle, the planet will thank you printed on them, and in the same jeans.

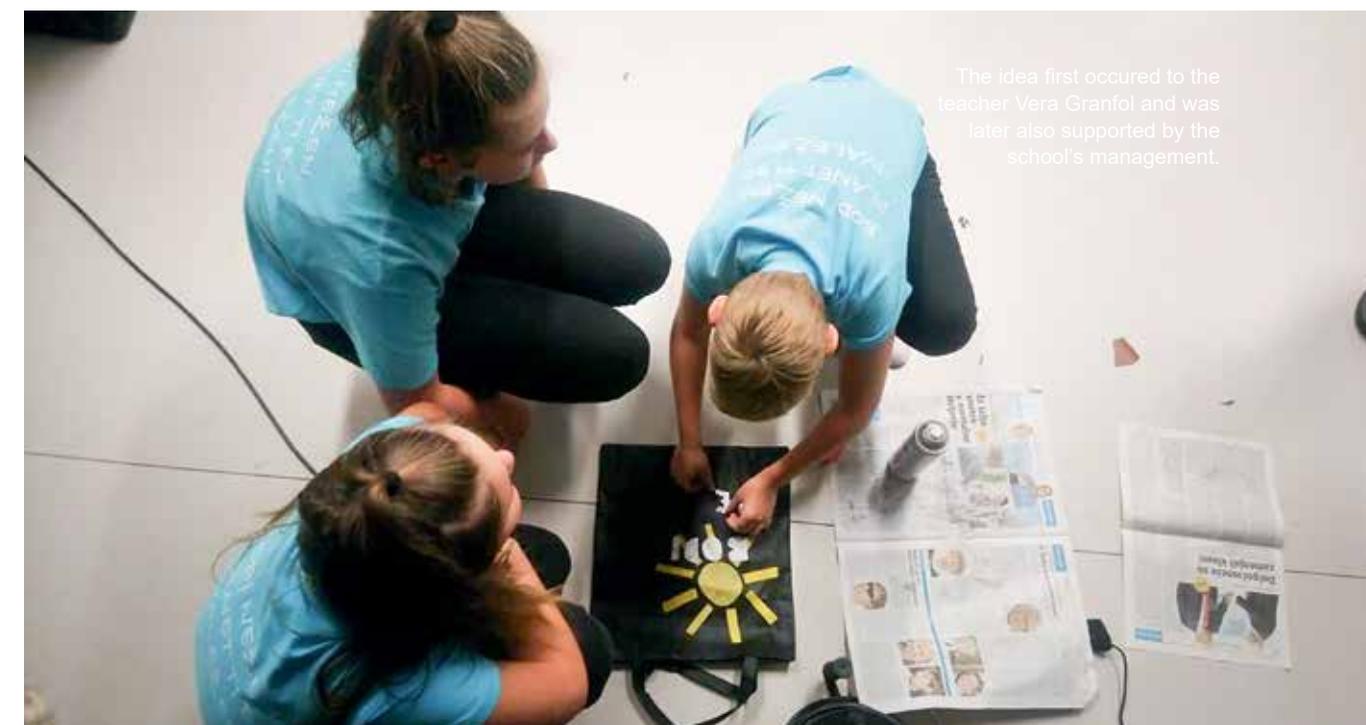
The students Tian, Zoja, Tia, Julija, Lara, Eva, Nina Katarina, Gal, Alex and Zara who participated in the campaign all expressed their opinion that a change in the attitude towards clothing also contributes to a cleaner planet.

During the campaign, they also reflected on values and right and wrong decisions. One of their findings was that clothes do not make the man. A part of the campaign was therefore also dedicated to reflection on consumer behaviour. Is shopping really necessary or is it only a way to fill a void within us? Furthermore, they

discussed fashion and found that it is too aggressive, and that our response to it is too impulsive and lacks consideration.

In addition to the school's management, which was proud of the participating students, the parents were also excited to join the project.

**They established a green system of washing or cleaning clothes, meaning that after coming home from school, the children took off their T-shirts and trousers to air them out, while only doing the laundry on the weekend using less water and no detergent.**



The idea first occurred to the teacher Vera Granfol and was later also supported by the school's management.

"We did not use parameters to calculate how much water, energy, detergent and fabric softener we saved by wearing the same clothes to school every day and washing them only once a week. A hundred days' worth of savings was definitely not negligible. We are happy to have been able to demonstrate that it is possible to wear the same item of clothing for several days and resist the consumer mentality," said the teacher Vera Granfol.

### LITTLE HEROES

During the campaign, the participants had to be very brave and persistent. They missed their favourite clothes and at times certainly wished for new clothes they saw in shop windows. However, they ignored this urge and learnt that affordable clothing often entails exploitation of their peers in underdeveloped countries, environmental pollution and false values.

**Despite all the obstacles, they demonstrated that more prudence and green awareness are essential and that everyone can do something to help the planet.**

They intend to continue this campaign while also regularly joining other environmental projects. This year, they will present their school project to other pupils in Germany, with certainly many more to follow. Although the stores offer us tempting discounts, we do not need more things. What we need, however, is a green planet, and if we do not follow in these students' footsteps we will be confronted with the consequences of our wrong decisions in the future.

"I am happy that the students welcomed my idea with excitement. I know it is not easy wearing the same clothes to school every day, particularly for teenagers in a sensitive period of their lives when clothes also play an important role in their growing up," said Vera Granfol, teacher, Gornja Radgona Primary School.



One of the messages: Stop - Fishes don't like garbage.



INNOVATION

## THE INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE FOR ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

### IT FOUND ITS HOME IN LJUBLJANA

SLOVENIA SEEMS TO BE GLOBALLY KNOWN ONLY THANKS TO ITS EXTRAORDINARY ATHLETES AND MAGNIFICENT LANDSCAPES. ARE WE REALLY SIMPLY THE COUNTRY OF BOJAN KRIŽAJ, PETER PREVC, EUROPEAN BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP WINNERS, THE PLANICA GIANT SKI JUMPING HILL, BLEED ISLAND AND WONDERFUL PIRAN?

KATJA KRIŽNAR

Photo: Paper Boat Creative-GettyImages/GulliverFilm&Foto

With this centre, Slovenia is gaining a new ambassador of science in a field that is destined to leave its mark on the future of our society. Many are still uncomfortable at the thought of artificial intelligence, but we must accept the fact that it is increasingly becoming our fellow traveller, and not only in movies with characters such as Lara Croft and the Terminator.

Certainly not. Slovenia is a country of many talents. Whatever we undertake, we make a difference. We triumph, we are the first to ascend peaks, we make scientific breakthroughs. Thanks to our top scientists, both men and women, that push the boundaries both at home and abroad, Slovenians are more and more present on the global map of science. And increasingly recognisable. For example, Paris has recently announced the good news that the first UNESCO-sponsored international research centre for artificial intelligence (AI) will be set up in Ljubljana.

#### A VALUABLE ADDITION TO SLOVENIA

The centre will be, in many ways, a valuable asset for Slovenia. It will provide the opportunity to put Slovenia firmly on the international science map, and will be for many a stepping-stone to the wider world.

**It will certainly enhance the reputation and the role of Slovenia's scientists who, together with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, embraced UNESCO's idea to set up this centre in Slovenia.**

"In a moment of intensive competition to gain primacy in the area of artificial intelligence, Slovenia is setting up a unique institution that will address the people-friendly side of artificial intelligence and technology in general," explained officials from the Ministry about the importance of the centre for Slovenia.

#### A LONG TRADITION OF RESEARCH AND DEDICATION TO THE FIELD OF AI

The selection of Slovenia to house the new centre is not an accident. "Slovenia has a long tradition of research in the field of AI that goes back to the early 1970s. There are currently about 200 researchers and 10 companies that develop AI technology. The reason for this centre to be set up in Slovenia is also our long partnership and cooperation with UNESCO, that recognised us as a possible credible partner for the home of such a centre. We have been cooperating with UNESCO in particular in the field of open education; this eventually led to talks about the setting up the International Research Centre for Artificial Intelligence (IRCAI)," added Gašper Hrastelj from the UNESCO Office of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, and founder of the centre.

#### THE CENTRE WILL OPEN THIS YEAR

It will be hosted at the Jožef Stefan Institute (JSI), one of Slovenia's leading research institutions which operates with almost one thousand researchers. The aim of the centre is to reach beyond the borders of Slovenia and Europe, both in terms of content and the participants creating this content. The centre will address global issues, support UNESCO in its studies and participate in major international projects in the field of artificial intelligence. It will provide counsel to governments, international organisations and the general public on systemic and strategic solutions concerning the introduction of artificial intelligence in different areas.



IRCAI will be hosted at the Jožef Stefan Institute (JSI) - one of Slovenia's leading research institutions.  
Photo: JSI archives



Mitja Jermol, M. Sc.: "The centre is, if I may use this metaphor, a highway to the global world. It is a huge achievement for Slovenia. It will first operate at JSI, but will include players from all over Slovenia and, more important still, from all over the world."

Photo: Anže Malovrh/STA

**Mr Mitja Jermol**, head of the Centre for Knowledge Transfer in Information Technologies at the JSI, who was one of the key players in the process of the development and setting up of the centre, sees it as a hub of cooperation and integration. Within Slovenia and with the rest of the world. "The idea of such an international space where researchers, instead of leaving, would come to Slovenia, was born already in 2000. First, we were four enthusiasts who believed in this idea, as this is a field that is well rooted in Slovenia and has good potential. In Slovenia in the past 20 years, this field has successfully evolved, and researchers from our institutes, universities and companies have become increasingly recognised as excellent researchers with first-class results. Due to the successful cooperation with UNESCO on open educational resources, as well as other achievements in 2016, UNESCO proposed the establishment of the centre in Slovenia."

And he added: "The centre is, if I may use this metaphor, a highway to the global world. It is a huge achievement for Slovenia. It will first operate at JSI, but will include players from all over Slovenia and, more important still, from all over the world. This is our wish and this how we imagined the centre to be. As a conglomerate of knowledge from Slovenia that will be complemented with foreign knowledge with the aim of solving global issues and challenges linked to AI. Slovenia as a whole is finally getting a different image, our science and research in the field of AI are entering new dimensions. The centre will expand its reach beyond the limits of technology to, in particular, the social sciences. I firmly believe that Slovenia will be able to do a lot with this opportunity. On many occasions we have shown that we have been able get together and move mountains, and I look forward to tackling new challenges."

INNOVATION



GREGOR LEBAN  
Photo: ardaguldogan-GettyImages/GulliverFilm&Photo

## EVENT REGISTRY

EVENT REGISTRY IS A GLOBAL MEDIA MONITORING SYSTEM THAT COLLECTS NEWS ARTICLES IN 40 DIFFERENT LANGUAGES FROM OVER 30,000 NEWS SOURCES WORLDWIDE. IT ALLOWS USERS TO FIND RELEVANT NEWS USING DIFFERENT CRITERIA, SUCH AS KEYWORDS/PHRASES, CONCEPTS, CATEGORIES, NEWS SOURCES, LOCATIONS OF NEWS SOURCES, AND SO ON.

The results can be listed for inspection or visualised in various ways. The system offers a number of unique features in how it processes the collected news content, as well as the ways in which it can visualise the data.

### DATA PROCESSING

All news content that is collected by Event Registry is processed by a number of machine learning algorithms in order to extract as much structured information as possible from the text. An example of such processing is semantic annotation, which in simple terms means identifying who and what is being mentioned in the articles. Event Reg-

istry keeps a database of known people, organisations, locations and things, and automatically annotates the articles with these concepts. When a user uses a concept in a search, they will only get the results that match the correct meaning of the concept. An additional advantage of using concepts is that you can also find results in any of the 40 languages, since we know how different concepts can be mentioned in different languages.

In addition, we can also determine the topic of the article. There are over 5,000 different topics, ranging from broad topics like business or politics to very specific topics one like natural disasters and individual sports.

### USER INTERFACE

## A unique feature of Event Registry is the ability to detect world events.

An event for us is simply a collection of news articles that discuss the same thing that happened in the world. For each event, we try to extract when it occurred, who was involved in it, etc.

A user can use the web interface to find articles and events of interest. If the user is interested in the recent news on a particular topic, they can use the Media Monitoring product, where they can define topic pages and also set up automated email alerts. If they are also interested in historical content, they can use the Media Intelligence product that offers access to news since 2014 and allows also a number of visualisations of search results, such as who are sources that write about a particular topic, what are the top things mentioned in articles matching a search, and so on.

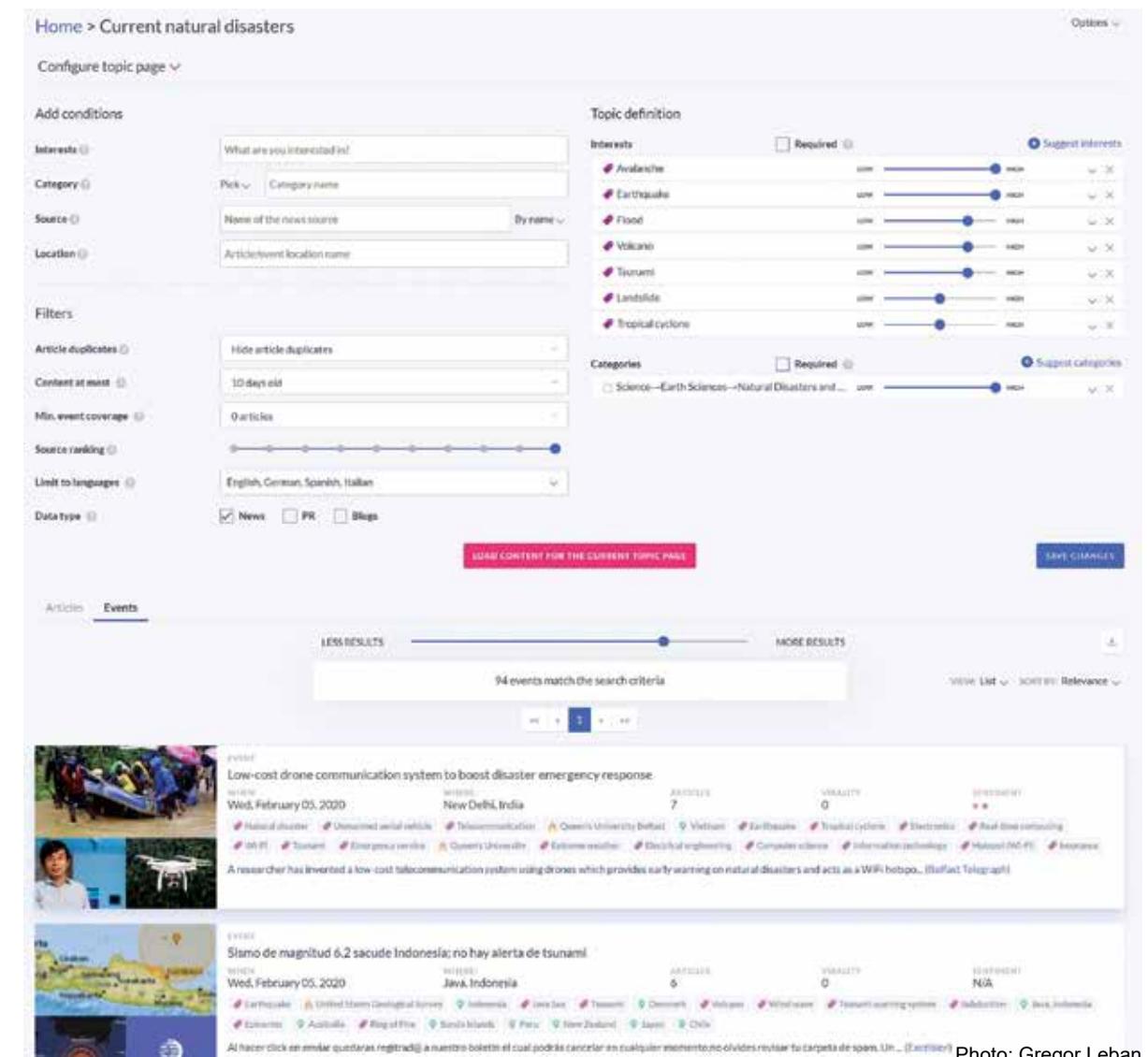


Photo: Gregor Leban

## INNOVATION



DANILA GOLOB  
Photo: Hooray Studios archives

## HOORAY HEROES PERSONALISED CHILDREN'S BOOKS CONQUERING THE WORLD

THE SLOVENIAN COMPANY HOORAY STUDIOS CREATES BOOKS THAT PUT A SMILE ON CHILDREN'S FACES AND BRING TEARS OF JOY TO PARENTS' EYES. HOORAY HEROES ARE VERY SPECIAL BOOKS BECAUSE EACH ONE IS UNIQUE AND TAILORED EXACTLY TO THE CUSTOMER'S WISHES. THE MAIN HEROES OF THE BOOKS ARE THE GIFT RECIPIENTS THEMSELVES.

Currently, their books are successfully sold in Slovenia, Italy, Austria, France, Germany, Great Britain and especially the USA, their most promising market.

### IT ALL STARTED WITH A COOL UNCLE

The co-founders of this successful company are Rado Daradan, General Director, and Mic Melanšek, Marketing & Creative Director. The two met as colleagues in a Slovenian firm. They soon became friends and spent time together even outside of work. "We knew that we wanted to do something different from what we did in our job at the time, and when we both became uncles, our nieces inspired us to develop the business idea of Hooray Heroes," Rado Daradan says, while Mic Melanšek adds, "We simply wanted to be cool uncles. And cool uncles are expected to give cool gifts. For this reason, the idea of giving them books in which they appear as the main characters seemed great to us. Not just as a gift, but also in terms of business."

In spite of this great idea, the beginnings of the company were not all easy sailing, since they lacked sufficient capital and also, as they themselves said, the business world did not take them seriously. Nevertheless, they felt so confident about their idea that they succeeded in attracting the first business partners to the project: printers, writers and illustrators.

Hooray Heroes was given the necessary impetus, the co-founders faced ups and downs, but today, after six years, they can be proud of Hooray Studios having generated €27 million last year through the sales of the Hooray Heroes book.



The co-founders of the company are Mic Melanšek and Rado Daradan.



Currently, their books are successfully sold in Slovenia, Italy, France, Germany, Austria, Great Britain and specially the USA, their most promising market.

Besides the Slovenian language, the Hooray Heroes books are also available in English, German, French, Italian and Spanish. There are over a hundred versions of the books and, of course, each book is unique, tailored precisely to an individual customer through personalisation in the purchase process.

#### WHEN EVEN DADDY IS BROUGHT TO TEARS

Currently, the most successful version of the book globally is "When Tonya Grows Up" – the Daddy Edition. A special feature of the book is that it represents the various career paths of a toddler as the main character, and is narrated by the dad who is also portrayed in the book. The book has a very strong emotional note, too. "Usually, mums buy this book as a gift for their partner, and it is not uncommon for dads to be

moved to tears while reading it," Melanšek says.

Hooray Heroes books are a hit even with celebrities. American stars Khloe and Kim Kardashian have shown enthusiasm for the Hooray Heroes book on social networks, while British soccer player David Beckham was moved to tears by the father's edition in which his daughter Harper is one of the characters.

Melanšek believes that such promotion helps them gain visibility and credibility, as it increases interest in engaging with influencers and makes it easier to enter into business partnerships, because companies are even more trusting. He is convinced, however, that the book sales have increased due to excellent marketing, and they attribute most of their sales success to this.

**Rado Daradan believes that another secret to their success lies in listening to and engaging with customers throughout the purchase process, from the first contact with their products to their return to buy additional books as satisfied customers.**

"Customer care is the most staffed department in our company, precisely in order to be able to respond to every customer's question, whether it be help with an order or simply comment on social networks. This way we know what they want and we can deliver at the highest possible level. We are not the only creator of personalised books, but we strive to become the first choice of customers," Daradan says.

Their future aim is to enter new markets, and new books are to be published as well. Right now, they are launching plush toys to complement certain books. "These are all our business goals, even though the ones that made Mic and I start up this business are perhaps even more important to us: to enjoy work, be surrounded with positive and talented people, and to put smiles on children's faces all over the world. This is what matters most," Rado Daradan says. "Besides the tears of joy. We like those as well," Mic Melanšek adds with a smile.

Solution 2020

# myWater

## Water & Ocean

Slovenia

INNOVATION

#HeroesOfChange

KATJA KRIŽNAR  
Photo: myWater archives



MYWATER

**A SUSTAINABLE URBAN SOURCE  
OF DRINKING WATER**

CLEAN AIR, GOOD-QUALITY WATER ACCESSIBLE TO ALL, LOCALLY-PRODUCED FOOD, FERTILE LAND. THESE ARE THE RESOURCES WE TAKE FOR GRANTED ALL TOO OFTEN. THERE ARE FEW COUNTRIES SO PRIVILEGED TO HAVE DRINKING WATER AVAILABLE PRACTICALLY ANYWHERE, STRAIGHT FROM THE TAP. SLOVENIA IS ONE OF THE LUCKY ONES.

Almost everyone in Slovenia has access to drinking water – more than 90 percent of the population. Households buy little or no bottled water, which is a rarity among European countries.

**Just 0.3 percent of all water on Earth is available to the world's population as drinking water. People buy huge amounts of water in plastic bottles, which further pollutes the environment. Last year, 480 billion plastic bottles were thrown away. Plastic represents as much as 85% of all waste found on beaches.**

The world's population is increasing, we are witnessing climate change and water sources are becoming increasingly polluted. We are facing ever greater global challenges and we have to start solving them together. Today.

#### MYWATER URBAN WATER DISPENSERS ARE THE SOLUTION

Some “world-changing” solutions were recently presented in Paris, at the ChangeNOW world innovation fair. People from all over the world whose innovative and breakthrough solutions address the most critical global challenges were invited to the fair. Among them were also Slovenian representatives from the family start-up myWater, as well as members of the Technology Park Ljubljana and Climate-KIC Accelerator. Their business idea is related to the problem of waste plastic. They made a water dispenser as a solution to the problem of access to drinking water in cities. Without plastic bottles, free of charge for users, sustainable and thus environment-friendly. A simple way to fill or refill your own bottle. They designed attractive filling stations that can simply be connected to a local water-supply network.



Robert Slavec and his son Aljaž Slavec, founders of myWater, at the Paris ChangeNOW world innovation fair. Photo: Government Communication Office

“The innovation is intended for Europe, the Mediterranean region in particular, Africa and Asia. For areas where there is a great demand for high-quality drinking water but no public drinking fountains available,” explained **Robert Slavec**, one of the company owners and founders.

“These water dispensers provide uninterrupted public and sustainable access to pollutant-free drinking water. Each dispenser is equipped with advanced water filtration nanotechnology, which removes all pollutants, including those that cannot be seen, such as microbes, microplastics and chemicals.”

“We are focused on always providing only good-quality drinking water, regardless of the local water source or the region. Efficient, low cost and with no energy consumption. The myWater water dispenser protects users’ health and reduces any adverse impact on the environment, as we do not use single-use plastic bottles,” adds Mr Slavec.

The company also has a solution for places without drinking water. “For the past two years we have been developing and also publicly testing an advanced technology for the production of drinking water from air. We condense the water vapour in the air, clean it, add minerals, and thus create a new water source for people,” explains Mr Slavec.



The advantage of the dispenser is that you pour the water into your own bottle and do not pollute the environment with unnecessary plastic. Photo: myWater archives

The first myWater dispenser in Slovenia was installed by Koper Municipality on the Semedela promenade. It is estimated that the dispenser will reduce the number of waste plastic bottles by more than 250,000 per year. The dispenser has been well received by the residents of Koper and visitors to the city. It is made of Slove-

nian wood, has a modern design with a filling window in the shape of a water drop and is accessible from both sides. It blends in well with its environment. The product has received several awards. It is already used in Slovenia, but the goal of the company is to install its water dispensers at the World Expo in Dubai this summer.

## GASTRONOMY

### DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION OF SLOVENIA'S GASTRONOMY

# SLOVENIA IS A MUST GO DESTINATION - SAYS MICHELIN

BARBARA ZMRZLIKAR  
Photo: Ciril Jazbec/www.slovenia.info

IN RECENT YEARS, SLOVENIA HAS BECOME A BRIGHT SPOT ON THE MAP OF TOP GASTRONOMIC DESTINATIONS. THIS POSITION AMONG THE GREATEST WAS ATTAINED PRIMARILY DUE TO THE CREATIVITY OF CHEFS WHO HAVE THE SKILLS TO REFINE OUR RICH TRADITIONAL CUISINE AND MAKE IT APPEALING TO THE MODERN GUEST.

They use exquisite, locally grown ingredients that retain the pristine taste of the land. Their ambitions are supported by the Slovenian Tourist Board, which has placed gastronomy in the heart of development and promotional activities of Slovenia's tourism for the next two years.

**The unspoilt nature of Slovenia provides the setting for a great variety of activities craved by stressed people from all around the world.**

In the global competition among tourist destinations, Slovenia's image of a sustainable country is becoming more and more recognisable, with its offer of bringing greater health while allowing a focus on oneself. The green and innovative identity of the country, shown in numerous pictures of natural and architectural wonders that have been seen around the world, is wonderfully complemented by its gastronomy.

#### FOCUSED MARKETING PROVIDING A POSITIVE EFFECT ON SOCIETY

The Slovenian Tourist Board (STO) has identified gastronomy as one of the key products of in the nation's tourist offer. Not only does it create added value, one of the goals of STO, which aims to develop unique, authentic, personalised, high quality opportunities for five-star experiences, but it also complements and enhances everything else Slovenia can offer. Moreover, it has an exceptional, positive impact on both the local and national economy and society as a whole, in terms of awareness of the importance of preserving local features, protecting natural heritage, and following the principles of a healthy diet.

**STO incorporates gastronomy into all its activities related to the promotion and marketing of Slovenian tourism.**

It presents this feature at major events abroad and at more than 100 workshops and fairs worldwide, and in 2020 it will also be present at the Olympic Games in Tokyo. Gastronomy has a central place on the Slovenia.info website. It is marketed as a package and advertised on social networks. It is an important component of global digital campaigns and is also presented in

Local ingredients retain the pristine taste of the land.  
Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik/www.slovenia.info



specialised off-line media. Last year STO issued a publication entitled Taste Slovenia, which along with traditional dishes proposes a selection of gastronomic experiences. STO also organises study trips where foreign journalists and influencers get to know the details and pleasures of Slovenian cuisine. In March this year STO will launch a special website, [www.TasteSlovenia.si](http://www.TasteSlovenia.si), to present and share the best of Slovenian gastronomy.

#### GASTRONOMY AS A LEVER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DESTINATION

In 2006, there was a major shift in the development of gastronomy with the adoption of a gastronomy strategy, the Taste Slovenia brand and the gastronomic pyramid.

Thanks to the Slovenian chefs' creativity the traditional cuisine is refined and enriched.  
Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik/www.slovenia.info



The pyramid will shortly be revamped to embrace the model of four macro destinations and to create specialised pyramids of representative dishes, foods and drinks. The recently adopted Action Plan for the Development and Marketing of Gastronomy Tourism 2019-2023 provides strategic guidelines and sets as a priority the appropriate global positioning of Slovenian gastronomy under the brand Taste Slovenia.

**The title of European Region of Gastronomy 2021, the development and promotion project which, in addition to the promotion of the destination, promotes the development of gastronomic services through the integration of various stakeholders with the aim of increasing the overall quality of life and sustainable development, will be a welcome impetus in this respect.**

Other projects, such as the European Food Summit in March this year, which will bring together top chefs, scientists, media and individuals from all corners of the world, will also provide momentum to the promotion and cooperation. Under the slogan Food for a Better Tomorrow, the general public and foreign guests will be able to experience high level cuisine, which will also be a feature of the traditional Restaurant Week. With a view to promoting sustainable gastronomy in Slovenian society, STO plans to incorporate this concept into the Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism, a project contributing to the country's comprehensive sustainable development.

#### SLOVENIA IS NO SURPRISE FOR MICHELIN

The Slovenian Tourist Board has identified gastronomy as the central development and promotional theme of Slovenian tourism up until 2021, to enhance and promote key gastronomic experiences. This will contribute to raising value added in Slovenian tourism and will help reach out to guests with higher purchasing power.



In the creation of unique, authentic, personalised, high quality touristic offer for five-star experiences, the gastronomy is crucial.  
Photo: Ciril Jazbec/www.slovenia.info

**The arrival of the most prestigious gastronomic guides shows that Slovenia is ready for this development.**

Following Gault&Millau in 2018, the prestigious Michelin announced its arrival this year: "Slovenia is a highly exciting destination for gastronomic tourists. The quality of Slovenian gastronomy is not a surprise to Michelin. Slovenia is a unique destination with exceptional natural features and a strong sustainable commitment allowing the production of the highest quality ingredients. It is a must go destination."

The announcement of the best restaurants according to Michelin will take place on 18 March, and Michelin will also invite a selected delegation of Slovenian chefs to the European Star Revelation, to be held in Parma on 30 and 31 March, where, in the presence of the leading gastronomic media, and special attention will also be devoted to Slovenia as a new Michelin destination.



Slovenian Tourist Board incorporates gastronomy into all its promotional activities, and it supports different events such as European Food Summit.  
Photo: Marko Ocepek

GASTRONOMY

EUROPEAN FOOD SUMMIT

FOOD FOR FUTURE'S GOOD

KATJA KRIŽNAR

Photo: Matevž Kremžar/ European Food Summit (EFS) archives

NUTRITION SCIENCE IS GAINING NEW DIMENSIONS. IN RECENT YEARS, SLOVENIA HAS EXPERIENCED A REAL CULINARY REVIVAL.

The food has become increasingly refined, and the subject of nutrition is practically on the daily menu. We are recognized as a unique top culinary destination, and it is no coincidence that Slovenia has been awarded the title of European Gastronomic Region 2021.

#### CONSISTENTLY PURSUING THE ZERO WASTE TARGET

Food is the essence of our lives. Not only in terms of survival, but as a good companion to share the best moments of life, milestones, welcomes and goodbyes. We live in a part of the world where food is abundant. However, abundance is a privilege that comes with great responsibility.

Slovenia generates 86 kg of food waste per capita per year, which is less than other parts of the developed world where the average annual amount is between 95-115 kg. However, as the quantity of food wasted is still very high, Slovenia is making various efforts to reach the Zero Waste target. There is never too much awareness, and we still have time to reverse bad practices.

The European Food Summit serves as an excellent example of collective awareness raising.

## Last year Slovenia hosted the event for the first time. According to the organisers and partners of the event, Slovenian Tourist Board and Tourism Ljubljana, it left a significant mark on Europe.

“The event was recognised as unique, which was also our goal. It is ranked among Europe’s premier culinary events. The participants were impressed by the excellent team of local culinary masters and international speakers, and, last but not least, they were fascinated by Slovenia as a culinary travel destination and boutique country,” said Martin Jezeršek, General Director of the European Food Summit, as he summarised the

impressions of the first summit. The event focused on three distinguished names in the culinary world – Ana Roš, Andrea Petrini and Martin Jezeršek.

#### GOOD FOOD IS MORE THAN JUST A MATTER OF GOOD TASTE

The European Food Summit will return to Ljubljana and other Slovenian cities between 28 and 30 March 2020. “Also this year, we remain faithful to the basic idea that good food is more than just a matter of good taste. It has the power to build a better and sustainable future for Europe and the world. The event reflects this in terms of sustainability as well as science, culture, art and more. We truly believe that food is not just fuel for life. This is our message to the world, with the aim of influencing the way of thinking and behaviour of each individual, and ultimately the whole of society,” added Martin Jezeršek, who is planning an unforgettable culinary treat for this year, too. “Slovenia will be hosting nearly 20 renowned culinary gurus, among them Juan Roca, Vladimir Mukhin, Nicolai Nørregaard, Alberto Landgraf and others. The event will feature lecturers from Brazil and Canada. The central part of the event will take place in Ljubljana, while invited international journalists and speakers will get to know most of Slovenia and taste the culinary specialties

of our country. The programme continues with an innovative culinary walk through the capital, entitled the Gourmet Ljubljana Crawl and featuring top Slovenian JRE chefs. The walk ends at special edition Odprta kuhna in the beautiful setting of the Križanke open-air theatre.”

Of course, the organisers did not want to reveal everything to us.

According to Martin Jezeršek, this year’s European Food Symposium has been enhanced with a special Experience dinner where best ranked Slovenian Chefs according to prestigious Michelin guide will join forces and prepare masterpieces to take you into the future of flavours.

Also top Ljubljana chefs will join forces at Ljubljana Soul Chefs event and unite their souls to create unique dishes. In different restaurants across Ljubljana, they shall prepare a one-of-a-kind menu from local ingredients.

More: [www.foodsummit.eu](http://www.foodsummit.eu)



Andrea Petrini (Curator), Ana Roš (Hiša Franko), Martin Jezeršek (Event organizer, Jezeršek gostinstvo). Photo: Matic Kremžar / European Food Summit.



GASTRONOMY

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ  
Photo: Personal archives

# MIRA ŠEMIĆ – OUR GREATEST AUTHORITY ON WINE AMONG THE WORLD’S TOP SOMMELIERS

SHE IS ENTHUSIASTIC AS SHE RECOUNTS HOW IN RECENT YEARS WE HAVE BEEN WITNESSING A TRUE RENAISSANCE IN SLOVENIA, WITH TALENTED CHEFS, NUMEROUS NEW RESTAURANTS AND TOP WINES.

A growing number of renowned chefs are putting their regions on the world map by using local ingredients in order to share the typical tastes of the local environment with their guests. In some ways this is not very difficult, stresses Šemić, as there is no lack of top quality produce in Slovenia, with meat from free-range animals, fish from clear waters, fruits from nearby forests and locally grown vegetables.

**Foreign chefs are often astonished to find out how many top chefs in Slovenia have their own vegetable gardens or gather ingredients from the forests and fields.**

Here, however, it’s no secret that almost every Slovenian has a small garden to grow their own vegetables, all the more valuable because they are grown without chemicals. Gastronomy, to which Mira is passionately devoted, is thus, in her opinion, one of Slovenia’s key assets. She herself contributes to make Slovenia’s gastronomy richer with her extensive knowledge and experience as one of the greatest authorities on wine and one of the world’s top sommeliers.

**She loves to share her experience, and her educational programmes, the Little Wine School and Youth Wine School, are always full. She has also accumulated experience abroad.**

She is the only woman in the region to have graduated from the renowned London Wine and Spirit Education Trust (WSET) and obtained the title of “Wine Academic” in Rust in Austria, in this way enhancing her third-level sommelier skills.

### GAULT&MILLAU CULINARY GUIDE

Thanks to Šemić, Slovenia now has its own edition of the world famous Gault&Millau Culinary Guide, first published 50 years ago and now covering 23 countries. In one year a total of 180 restaurants and inns were evaluated by Slovenian foodies, and 157 were awarded at least one chef’s hat.

**In addition, the Guide lists 76 popular spots (PoP), 57 wineries and 12 craft breweries, the best tourist farms and a selection of typical Slovenian food products.**

The Gault&Millau Culinary Guide has thus placed Slovenia on the world gastronomy map. This edition of the Gault&Millau Culinary Guide for Slovenia is added value for the country’s tourism offer, and an excellent tool for visitors coming to Slovenia and interested in its gastronomy. The Guide confirms the uniqueness of Slovenian cuisine and the excellence of its wines, which are among the best in the world.



**Jacques Bally**, President of Gault&Millau International: “It’s time for the Slovenian Gault&Millau Guide to discover and support the talent from all Slovenia. Slovenia is an extremely rich country with a long culinary tradition, and this we want to show to the rest of the world. Slovenian chefs surprised us with their creativity and finesse and love of nature and its fruits.”

## SERVICE – SLOVENIA'S BLACK SPOT

Šemič points out that there is a chronic lack of high-quality, trained staff. In workshops on quality service, she is striving to arouse interest in the hospitality industry among young people. With regret, she notes that in Slovenia the waiting profession has traditionally had a low reputation and value. This is actually very surprising, as the profession requires a large variety of skills: a waiter must be agreeable, have a good presence, have the necessary know-how, have good manners, be well dressed and more. The waiter is a host and as such they must be able to understand the guest and feel what the guest likes or does not like, they must know what wine to pair with food, speak foreign languages, and must be accomplished and have a strong personality! Not everybody can be a waiter! This is also the slogan under which she educates young waiters. If we liked the waiter, even if the food was not the best, we will return to the restaurant because of the waiter, their smile and their service. It is the waiter who might even resolve a difficult situation created by the chef. This is why Mrs. Šemič's next challenge is to educate and raise awareness among young people of how important the work of waiters is.

## TOP TASTES OF SLOVENIA

Mira Šemič is proud of the unique location of our country. "Within one hour's ride from the capital there are three regions of gastronomy, the Alps, the Mediterranean and the Karst, and Pannonian Slovenia. In terms of food and wine, they could not be more different. There is a lot to show in such a small area." She is also very happy to see that the younger generation is increasingly taking an interest in cuisine in old, well-reputed restaurants and inns. They travel and study abroad, and bring back new skills in a desire to preserve the Slovenian culinary tradition, while at the same time enriching and expanding it.

In 2021, Slovenia will have the title European Region of Gastronomy; this will certainly have a significant impact on the overall sustainable development of the country, including gastro-tourism and local self-sufficiency, and will further strengthen the image of Slovenia as a unique destination for gastronomy.



**Mira Šemič**, Director of Gault&Millau Slovenia: "I am very passionate about food and wine. We have excellent chefs in Slovenia, we can be extremely proud of our food and wine, and we are not even aware how good the food we eat is."



Mira Šemič with Ana Roš

## GASTRONOMY



VESNA ŽARKOVIČ  
Photo: Culinary Guide Gault&Millau

## GAULT&MILLAU AWARDS SLOVENIA

### BEST OF THE BEST

THE WORLD-RENOWNED CULINARY GUIDE GAULT&MILLAU, PUBLISHED IN SLOVENIA FOR THE SECOND YEAR, HAS SELECTED THE BEST CHEF IN THE COUNTRY, THE BEST RESTAURANT, CHEF OF THE FUTURE, CHEF OF TRADITION, THE BEST YOUNG TALENT, THE BEST WAITER AND THE BEST PASTRY CHEF IN 2020. WHAT THEY ALL HAVE IN COMMON IS THAT THEY RESPECT TRADITION AND THE ENVIRONMENT, AND PREPARE THEIR DISHES IN A MODERN, CREATIVE WAY AND FOLLOW GLOBAL GUIDELINES.



Photo: Suzan Gabrijan

**Chef of the Year 2020**

**ANA ROŠ, HIŠA FRANKO**

What distinguishes Ana's cuisine from others is her ability to pay homage to her home, while combining that with the right measure of inspiration from abroad to make the perfect dish. Where else would you find lamb with crab, different variations of jota (a stew with beans, sauerkraut and potatoes), trout à la meunière and čompe (potatoes) with ricotta on the same menu? Her inherent ability to blend different flavours is her strongest suit. Ana's cuisine is like the most incredible journey around the world that always leads to Staro Selo.



Photo: Peter Irman

**Best Restaurant 2020**  
**TOMAŽ KAVČIČ, GOSTILNA PRI LOJZETU**

Tomaž Kavčič may have been born to be a chef, but without his passion, dedication, hard work and love for the profession, his flavours would not so playfully evoke different emotions and memories. It is the simplicity and tradition that make his dishes great and capture the hearts of his guests. With innovation and creativity, he has transformed his local cuisine into a world-renowned phenomenon. He never ceases to explore, and always strives to improve and present his guests with something new and different. Above all, he values the ethical and sustainable approach to cooking. His plates are a witty interpretation of the fields, woods and vineyards. His personal but always professional attitude coupled with good prices is the winning formula that lets his guests be themselves and keeps them coming back.



Photo: Peter Irman

**Chef of the Future**  
**JURE TOMIČ, OŠTERIJA DEBELUH**

Service is a lot more than just the way food is brought to the table; it is a small part of the whole dining experience, and this is Tomič's winning formula. Everything is important, from tablecloths to glasses, the plates themselves to what is served on them, every little detail matters. He respects the traditional classic recipes, but never shies away from trying new things to combine local ingredients into even tastier dishes. His flavours are clean and harmonious. He seeks inspiration in his roots: the local Krško pig, his neighbour's pears and local wines. As an ambassador of the latter, he likes to add another dimension to his dishes with just a touch of the local product while offering an exquisite wine list in his restaurant. The chef is also an excellent sommelier with a distinguished feeling for combining food and wine.



## Traditional Cuisine Chef 2020

**UROŠ ŠTEFELIN**

In the Vila Podvin restaurant, the old meets the new in a subtle way. The chef uses seasonal ingredients from his home garden and local farmers, and blends them together with modern cooking techniques. Uroš's inexhaustible creativity is, in part, also inspired by French and Mediterranean cuisines. He realised the importance of local ingredients long ago. In his kitchen there is a special place for tepka pears: pears that are not harvested, but rather left to drop from the tree and picked when they become mellow. Along with tepka pears, he has also dusted off and rebranded dishes such as pork, trout, Kaiserschmarrn, strudel and barley soup. He never runs out of ideas.



## Young Talent 2020

**JAKOB PINTAR**

Jakob learned from the best Slovenian and European restaurants, but decided that he did not want to fit the mould of a typical chef and would go his own way in his creations. Devising his own menu was quite straightforward, maintaining the quality of each plate for the growing number of guests, however, is still a challenge. It is certain that Jakob will continue to indulge, surprise and excite us with his talent and creativity, therefore, Gault&Millau Slovenia is presenting him with the Young Talent 2020 award.



## Confectioner of the Year 2020

**KSENIJA KRAJŠEK MAHORČIČ**

Ksenija learned her craft from the top confectioners in Italy and Britain. She wanted to understand the intricacies of each ingredient and how it can be used in different ways. Her plates are, like her creations, inspirational and enticing. They are the products of her imagination – original and free. Her dishes show the utmost respect for local seasonal ingredients and the tradition that defines the land she is so proud of, at the meeting point of the Brkini Hills and the Karst region. The Mahorčič restaurant celebrates the forgotten boutique masterpieces of their grandmothers, who carried their produce in baskets on their heads from the Karst edge to Trieste along the railway tracks. This is also the story Ksenija would like to tell with her tasting menu: "From the sea, over the Karst edge, homewards". And all of this is reflected in her original desserts created with an abundance of love.



## Waiter/Sommelier of the Year

**SIMON SITAR**

A good waiter has to be fond of people. He appreciates that he is an important part of the whole culinary experience and knows that he is not only a courier who delivers the meal and carries the plates and glasses away – a waiter is also a host. A satisfied waiter makes a satisfied guest. Yet it is undeniable that a lot of work goes into good service. Gault&Millau Slovenia is working to restore the standing of the waiting profession and thus recognised Simon Sitar as an excellent waiter and sommelier with all the necessary skills as well as professionalism and dedication, and therefore present him with the Waiter/Sommelier of the Year award.

GASTRONOMY

TANJA GLOGOVČAN BELANČIĆ  
Photo: TIC Velenje archives

## VELENJE UNDERGROUND

### ENJOY CULINARY DELIGHTS IN AN UNDERGROUND DINING HALL

SLOVENIA IS CERTAINLY AN ATTRACTIVE CULINARY REGION, NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF THE GREAT VARIETY OF ITS CUISINE, BUT ALSO DUE TO ITS MANY ORIGINAL AND INTERESTING EXPERIENCES THAT DELIGHT BOTH LOCAL AND FOREIGN GUESTS. ONE EXAMPLE IS THE CULINARY ADVENTURE CALLED VELENJE UNDERGROUND THAT VISITORS CAN ENJOY 160 METRES BELOW THE SURFACE.

Three quarters of all Slovenian coal was mined in Velenje coal mine.

This adventure, which is part of the Slovenia Unique Experiences project, makes visitors feel as though they have embarked on a time machine.

**After the miners' salute of good luck, you will descend with the oldest continuously operating lift in Slovenia to our country's deepest dining hall, located no less than 160m below the surface.**

There, you can enjoy a four-course Štajger's meal (the supervisor's meal) prepared by the Chef of the Villa Herberstein gourmet restaurant. During the meal accompanied by music, you will taste delicious culinary masterpieces created after the typical knaps' (miners') dishes in a modern way. After a ride on a mining train, you will be offered a glass of sparkling wine in the miners' black changing room.

The meal starts with knaps' culinary delights, consisting of four courses called the knap's salute: Hajer's (the first digger's) first meal, strong garlic soup, roast duck with vegetables and crumble cake with strawberry icing. Then you will be served fried pancetta, curd with truffles, vegetables, deer carpaccio with oranges and balsamic plum cream, creamy garlic soup with shrimp, fried onions and sage, honey roasted duck breast, Porto sauce, mashed root vegetables, candied kumquats, vanilla mousse, strawberry purée, lemon crumb cake and a brownie.

## UNIQUE EXPERIENCES

The Velenje underground adventure, designed by the Šaleška Valley Tourist Board in cooperation with the Coal Mining Museum of Slovenia and Gorenje Catering, has been included in the Slovenia Unique Experiences project, which bring together the content and events that represent Slovenia as a green boutique destination.

**The experiences requires booking in advance as well as it is organised on set dates.**

Last year, five such events were held and were attended by about 200 guests from Slovenia and abroad. Most foreign visitors enjoyed the culinary adventure in December.

The first mining adventure this year will take place in February and it will certainly not be the last, as there is increasing demand for this event. Good luck among the miners, and enjoy this unique experience with top chefs!

**If all the lignite that had been mined in the Velenje coal mine were loaded onto wagons, these would for a line that could circle the Earth two times.**

The most basic foods that miners used to buy were flour (wheat or buckwheat), bacon, coffee substitutes and basic spices. Rarely did the miners buy commmeal, rice and pasta, or barley and porridge, beans, potatoes, cabbage and turnips. Meat was sparse on the table, and brandy was served only exceptionally. As a rule, there were no sweets, and toilet paper was never available. At home, the miners and their families kept rabbits, chickens and goats, using their meat for soups, stews and similar dishes. Pigeons, jays and crows were also served occasionally to enrich the daily menu.



Part of the culinary experience is also learning about the history of the miners.



All visitors are delighted with this culinary experience.



The Coal Mining Museum in Velenje, founded in 1957 in the 180m-deep and abandoned old mine shaft of Škale near Velenje. The Coal Mining Museum collection in Velenje shows the living and working conditions of miners at the beginning of lignite mining in the Velenje and the surrounding coal mines in the natural mining environment.



Ralf Schumacher is very passionate about wine.

POLONA PREŠEREN  
Photo: Klet Brda archives

## RALF SCHUMACHER

### “I’M NOTHING BUT IMPRESSED ABOUT SLOVENIA”

IT’S SAID THAT THERE’S NO SUCH THING AS COINCIDENCES. HOWEVER, IT IS PRECISELY COINCIDENCES THAT OFTEN LEAD US TO THE MOST EXCITING THINGS AND TURNING POINTS IN LIFE. I BELIEVE THAT THIS HOLDS TRUE FOR THE STORY OF THE FORMER FORMULA 1 DRIVER RALF SCHUMACHER AND THE KLET BRDA WINERY.

Ralf Schumacher and I met at the Klet Brda winery on his last visit to Slovenia. During our extremely pleasant encounter, we tasted excellent wines from the vineyard and talked about the drink and all things related to it. It is clear that this former race car driver is a man who knows what he wants and how to get it. He does not leave anything to chance, not even wine.

But why did I mention coincidences? Because the true story goes like this: one day at a Salzburg restaurant Ralf Schumacher tasted a glass of Rebula, a variety of wine very dear to him and which deeply impressed him. He wanted to find out the name of the producer to serve the wine at his Mediterranean restaurant. He got in touch with the Klet Brda winery, and ended up in Goriška Brda.

“Not only the Rebula I tried made it to my restaurant, but we also agreed on a working relationship with our own ideas, and very successful ones, I could say. We increased the range also to other white and red wines as well as sparkling and sweet wines. I’m very happy about it,” he explains. “Today I’m here for next season and I’m really happy with the varieties and everything that is produced here. We have really high-quality standards,” adds Ralf, explaining how it all began. Their partnership developed even further, and the Schumacher Selection wine brand emerged.

The Schumacher Selection was carefully curated by Ralf. The line is very versatile, as Ralf chose a traditional sparkling wine, the fresh white wines of Rebula and Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay aged in barriques, light Pinot Noir, distinct Cabernet Franc, and a Brda speciality, Picolit, a traditional dessert wine.

**The wines are only available at select restaurants – including those with Michelin stars – and bars.**

When Ralf Schumacher talks about wine, you can feel his passion for this noble beverage as well as his devotion and perfectionism concerning wine and everything related to it, including sophisticated wine glasses and bottle openers. His interest in wine is not something he started after his successful career in sport, in which, he politely educates me, he is still very active. “My interest in wines goes way back, to when I was just 20. Interestingly, my son who is only 18 now loves the Cabernet Franc we make here together with Klet Brda.”



His wine is 100% natural product.



Ralf Schumacher with Silvan Peršolja, director of Wine Brda.

He discusses all the details with the head oenologist Darinko Ribolica from the Klet Brdo winery.

**He knows precisely how he would like his wine to be, but at the same time he is aware that wine gets its charm and touch from nature.**

Indeed, during our pleasant talk, he reveals that he is led by nature. Even his lifestyle is active and nature-related.

“If you do something extremely alive, you want to enjoy healthy food,” says Ralf, who is very fond of everything natural. “We should never forget that the most interesting thing about wine is that we can manage it only to a certain point of our abilities, because it is a natural product. Then we can only leave it to the temperature, water, earth, sun ... That is why wine is so interesting to me. It needs the love of people who are around it. And here in Slovenia it has all of this. There are families that care for the grapes, and that is one thing I learned

in Slovenia and find impressive. The results are simply amazing. It’s something special. Wine is a 100% natural product, it’s pure and each year offers itself to you.”

**SLOVENIA CAME AS A TRUE REVELATION**

Ralf honestly admits that this was his first contact with Slovenia, and it proved to be a true revelation.

**He was impressed by its wines, nature and people, whom he finds dedicated and hard-working.**

“So far I’m nothing but impressed with Slovenia. I’m amazed not only about the quality of its wine, but also its beautiful landscape and excellent food. I’ve only met straightforward and honest people here. For me it is an asset in life, and I only hope that we continue in this way.”

According to him, he is lucky to have been able to travel around the globe and taste different wines. Ralf is a wine connoisseur, wine lover and a passionate wine collector, who has always wanted to have his own winery. His wish has partly come true by forming a partnership with the Klet Brda. “This winery is very flexible, although it is quite big for Slovenian standards. They are also market oriented, and this is helpful,” says Ralf, who developed close ties with his partners in the Klet Brda winery.

Last year, he picked up a pair of scissors and a bucket and helped with the harvest.

**He has thus experienced this important part of the Slovenian grape-harvesting tradition, where everybody works together towards a common goal.**

“I was picking grapes and impressed how everybody joins in, from six to eighty-year-olds and it was amazing being part of it. But the most wonderful thing about it is that the product is fantastic,” explains Ralf, who in this way participates in the production of the Schumacher Selection from the beginning to the end.

He remarks with some disappointment that people from Germany, France, Austria and Italy who work in this field prefer to stay in regions they know, and with which they are familiar. The British, Dutch and Americans are much more open about this.

“I grew up in Germany and was familiar with German wines, also Italian and French. I wasn’t aware of how truly impressive the area here in Brda is, where you can find wide range of varieties on just 1,000 hectares. All these circumstances and also the effect of the local climate result in truly amazing products,” explains Ralf, who last year became a true ambassador of Slovenian wines, especially of his favourite, Rebula. He believes that Slovenian wines are the perfect product. “I was impressed by the authenticity, whether for red, white, sparkling or dessert wine. And I must say that my customers enjoy it.”



He knows precisely how he would like his wine to be.

### THE SCHUMACHER SELECTION

Apart from Ralf's carefully-selected range of wines, the Schumacher Selection also includes wine glasses, bottle openers and other accessories. The Schumacher brand is only available in select restaurants and bars. As Ralf explains, this is because if you want to sell certain quality of wine then this goes together with a certain price.

"I don't like people Googling the prices of wine. They have no idea how much effort it takes to run a restaurant or bar and how much service is behind these types of endeavours. That is why I want the Schumacher wine to be exclusive, so people cannot Google the price. Also, it takes so much work and energy to produce wine. There's so much manual work involved,

and also climatic influences, that the price shouldn't be discussed that much."

When asked about his future plans, he smiles politely. "Well they are very simple," he adds warmly. "I'm happy where I am. With my partners here, we will keep trying new things. I have some ideas that come from my personal taste. I work very closely with Darinko and it has been going really well. I must say that people underestimate the quality of Slovenian wine and this is where I want to contribute. I think what people are doing here is really good."

Considering that all this is the result of a glass of Rebula, it's hard not to believe in the power of coincidences, isn't it?

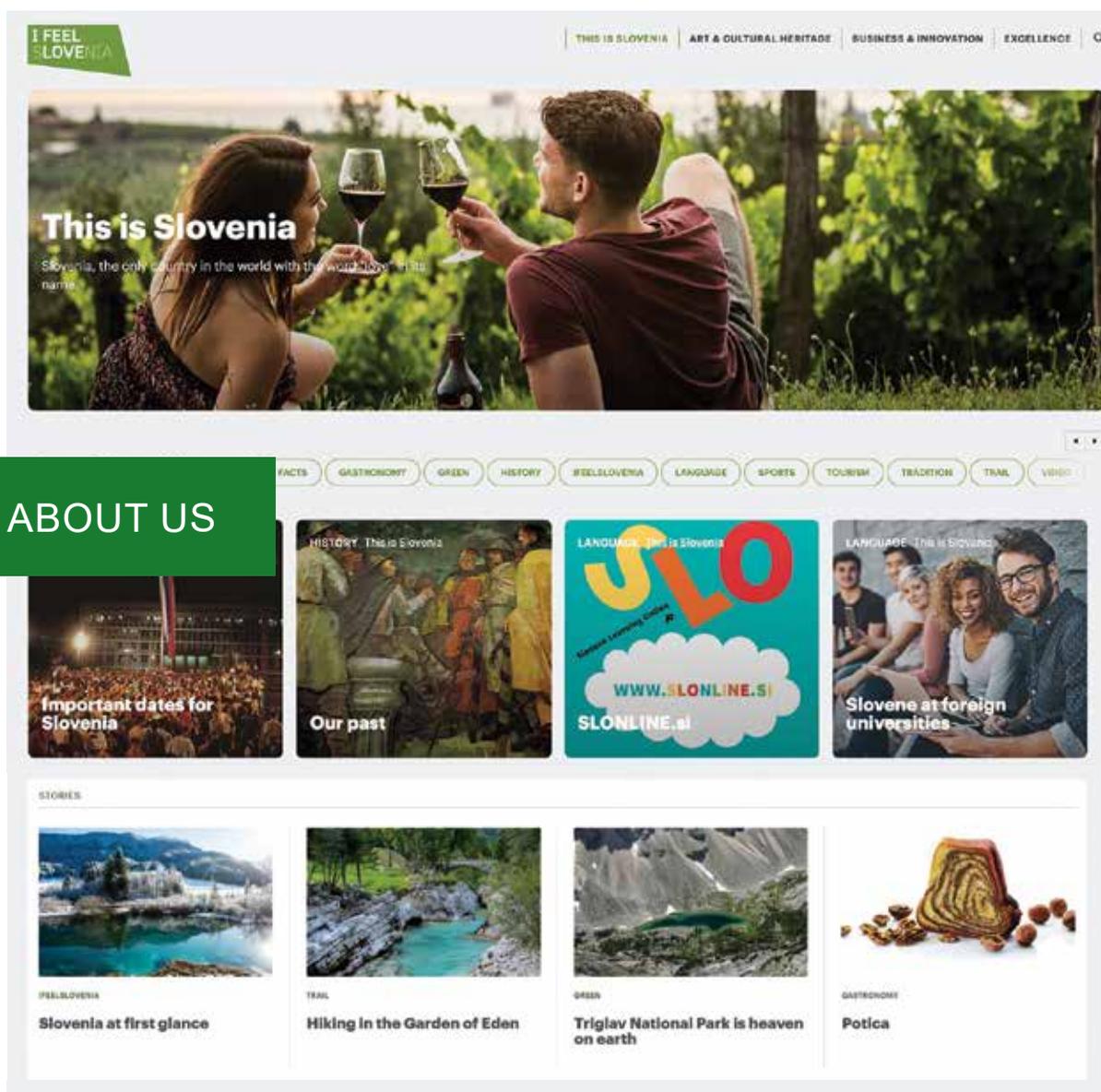


Ralf Schumacher at the Klet Brda winery.

# Baguer

The Schumacher wine is to be exclusive.





## ABOUT US

## SLOVENIA.SI

TANJA GLOGOVČAN BELANČIČ  
SOURCE: SLOVENIA.SI

IN MID-NOVEMBER LAST YEAR, A NEW SLOVENIA.SI WEBSITE CAME TO LIFE, REPRESENTING SLOVENIA THROUGH WRITTEN AND VIDEO STORIES, INCLUDING THE NATIONAL BRAND I FEEL SLOVENIA.

Who are we Slovenians? What are our particular traits? What are our specific habits? What is Slovenia best known for? What are we proud of? Who has marked our past and who are the Slovenians who through their achievements took the nation into the world? Here, you might also come across a joke about Slovenians and a recipe for holidays and ordinary days.

You will find all this and more in four sections on the revamped slovenia.si website: This is Slovenia, Art & Cultural Heritage, Business & Innovation and Excellence.

### VALUES OF THE NATIONAL BRAND I FEEL SLOVENIA

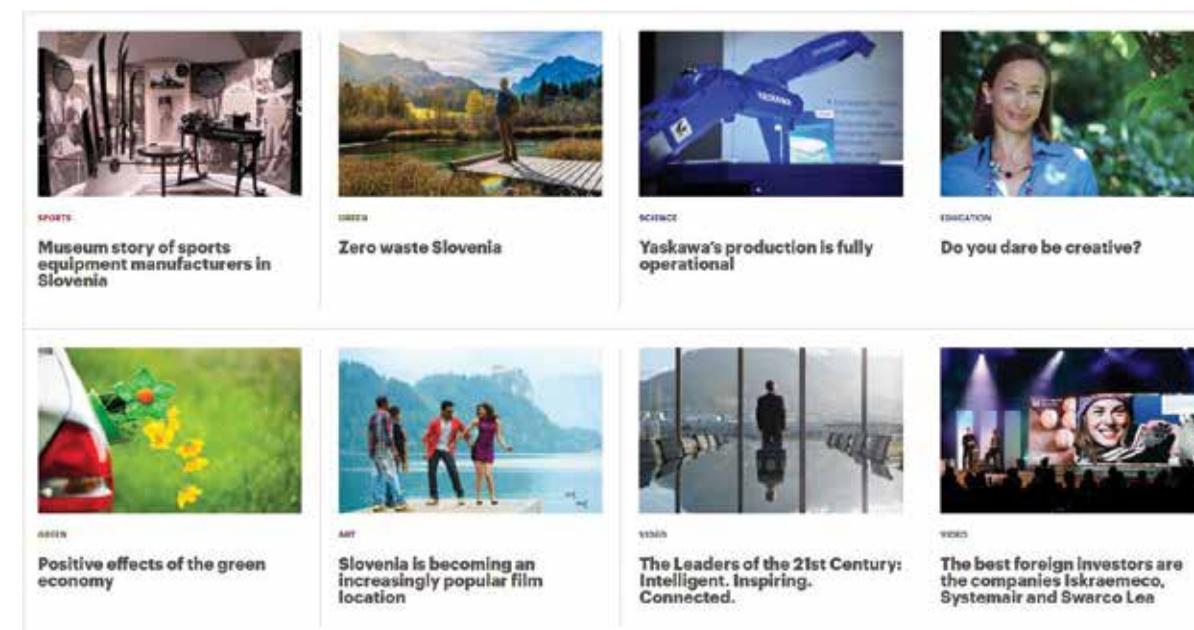
**In addition, the slovenia.si website adheres to the values and guidelines of the national brand I Feel Slovenia that are evident from the visual characteristics of**

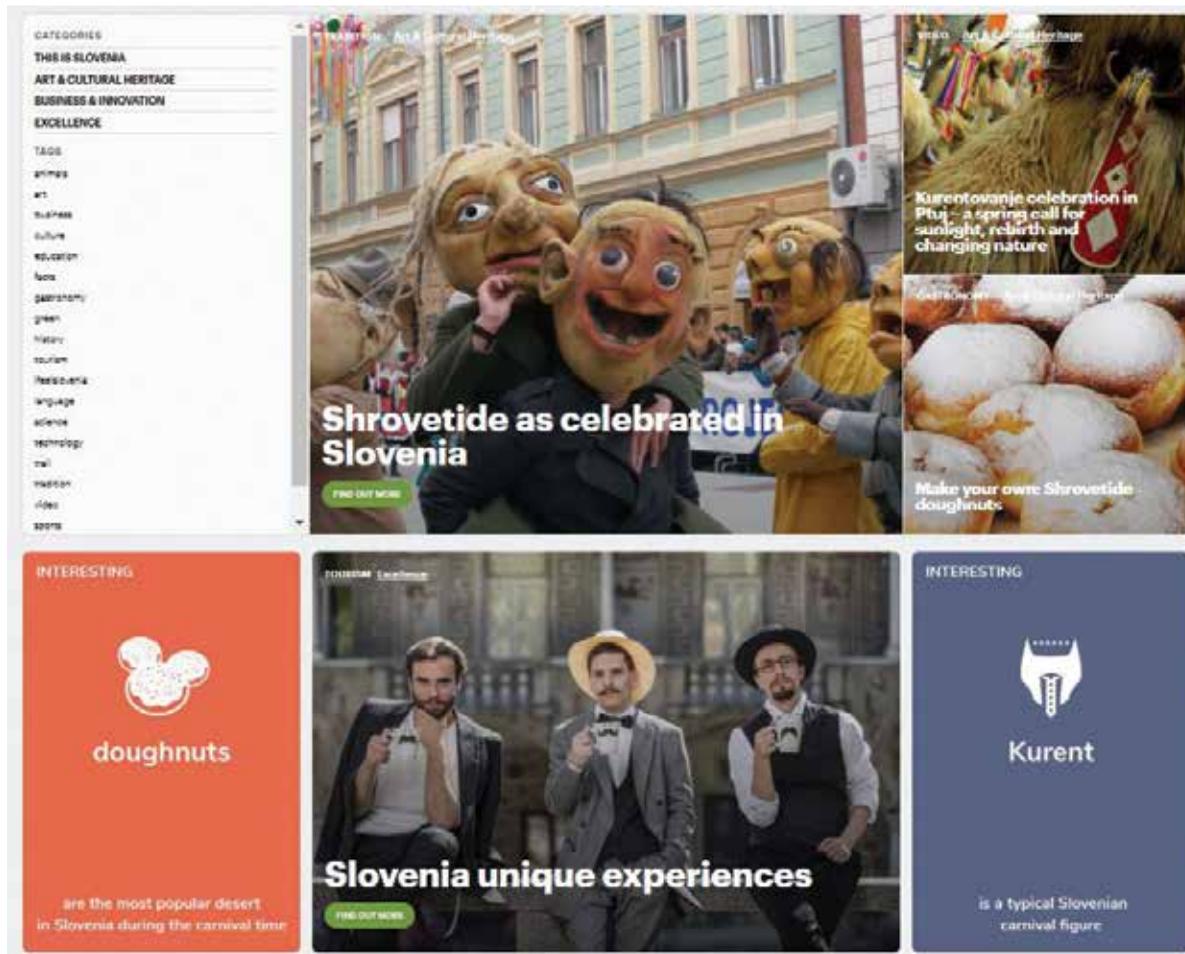
**the website, including the content, photos and videos.**

In Slovenia, green is more than a colour – it is a Slovenian green expressing a balanced lifestyle, coexistence with nature, a focus on what we can feel with our hands, eagerness for everything Slovenian, innovation, creativity, a green boutique character, stimulating environment and uniqueness.

Here you can find articles on Slovenian history and its most important landmarks, the most beautiful Slovenian places, ethnological peculiarities, exceptional and successful people or business ideas. And of course sports.

The most read subjects include the world's oldest wooden axle wheel, the Neanderthal flute, articles on the Slovenian language and landscapes, and green-oriented Slovenia. You are still fascinated by Slovenian cuisine, most notably potica (festive cake) and prekmurska gibanica (Prekmurje layer cake). The attention paid to the incredible Slovenian basketball player Luka Dončić on the slovenia.si website seems to have no limits.





**A VERSATILE SOURCE OF INFORMATION**

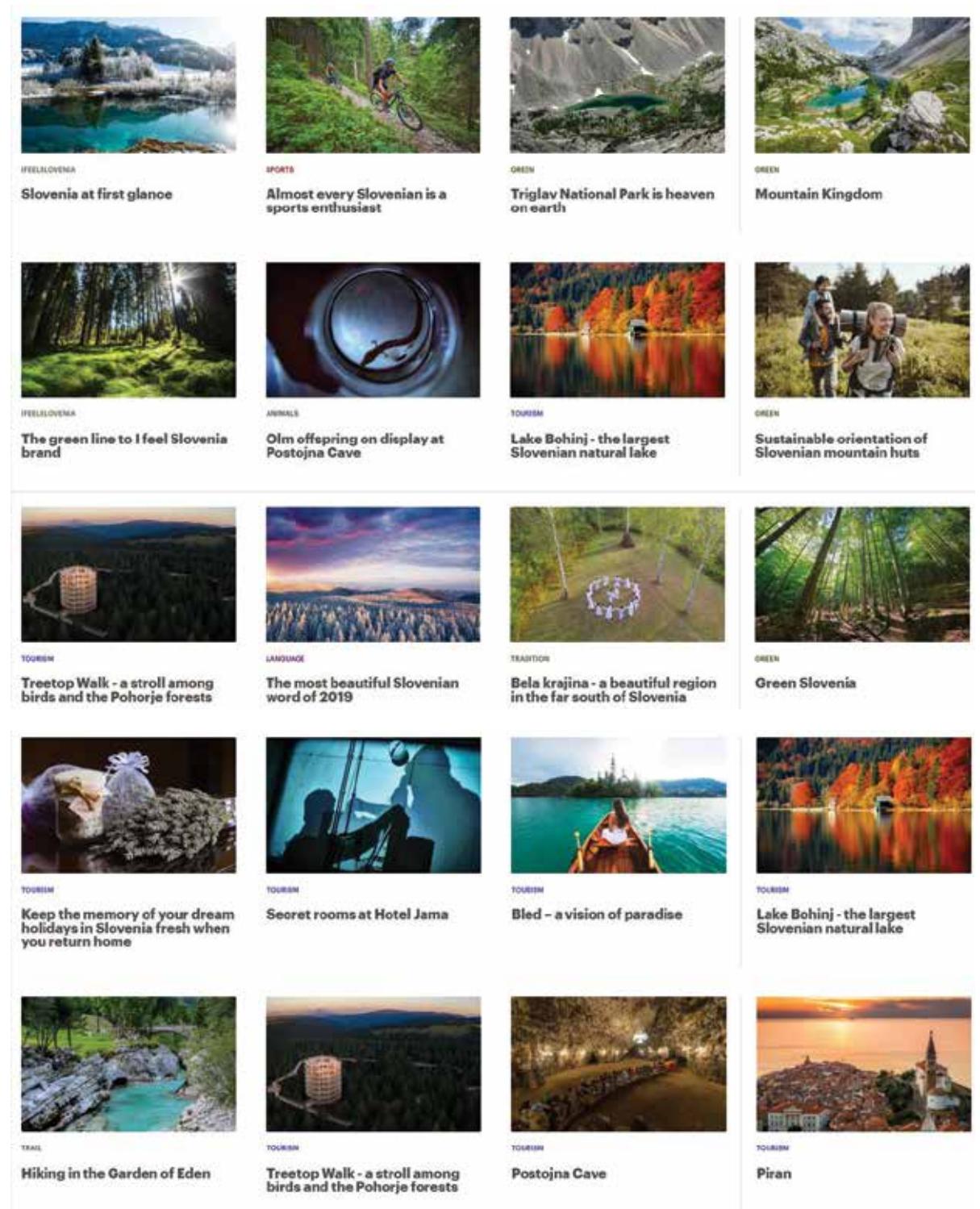
The website is in English and intended for an international audience, but it may also be interesting for Slovenians so we can be reminded of what we can be proud of and what makes us unique.

**We have made sure that the stories about Slovenia can be read anywhere, as the website is also adapted for mobile phones.**

Interesting stories about the country and its people seem to have no end. We would be very happy if you came up with your own suggestions and in your own way contribute to our even better image in the world.

Your response is monitored, and thanks to the slovenia.si website we will try our best to maintain your interest in more and more unique Slovenian stories.

The website is also being adapted for use by those with disabilities, as it is our wish to share our love of our homeland with everyone. I Feel Slovenia, I like Slovenia.si.



## ABOUT US

# WHAT ARE SLOVENIANS LIKE?

POLONA PREŠEREN

Photo: Ciril Jazbec/www.slovenia.info

Slovenians are a special nation. The Slovenian population alone is remarkable – there are just two million of us living in Slovenia and less than half a million in other parts of the world. We could have chosen to live in the suburbs of one of the metropolises, but instead, we found our place under the sun at the junction of different worlds – the Alpine, the Pannonian and the Mediterranean – making us unique.

**Slovenians can be reserved like Alpine people, open like Mediterraneans or good-hearted like Pannonians.**

Since there are not that many of us, we often joke that in Slovenia everyone knows each other. We also love sports, hiking in the mountains, cultural events and singing. We put our free time and quality of life first. We speak many foreign languages, swear by all things green, and have been shaped by different circumstances – from our geographical position, to our varied historical and cultural contexts. We believe that all its natural beauty make Slovenia the most beautiful place in the world.

We love discovering the world and trying new things, which means we travel a lot and are not afraid of innovation. At the same time, we highly value our home along with our families, health and quality of life. We are also sports enthusiasts, be it climbing, skiing, ski jumping, athletics or team sports. Slovenia is one of the smallest nations in the world that has qualified for all the major world and European championships in team sports, along with basketball, volleyball, handball, football and ice hockey at the Olympics. It's just who we are!

We enjoy spending our free time getting some exercise, especially outdoors. There is a saying that you are not a true Slovenian until you have conquered Triglav, the highest mountain in Slovenia (2,864 m) and a symbol of the Slovenian identity.

*The Alpine Association of Slovenia is one of the largest, with 60,000 members. Slovenia has a network of 10,000 kilometres of mountain trails with 178 mountain cottages, shelters and bivouacs, accommodating more than 10,000 day visitors and offering 7,400 beds. In 2019, there were over 1.7 million visitors to the mountains.*



Not only do we enjoy playing sports, we also love to cheer on our favourite teams. Slovenians support their athletes at competitions at home and abroad.

*The traditional Ski Jumping World Cup in Planica is visited by some 60,000 people every year. At the last European volleyball championship in Paris, the Slovenian team was cheered on by over 8,000 Slovenian fans.*

The Slovenian language has many particularities, including no swear words, and it is one of the very few languages in the world that uses a dual grammatical number. Among all Slavic languages, Slovenian has the most dialects – more than 50 – and even Slovenians have difficulty understanding them all.

*Slovenian is a South Slavic language, and one of the few Indo-European languages that has preserved its dual. We (un)consciously use dual every day in our speech and this makes us a rare breed. The Slovenian language has 25 letters: a b c č d e f g h i j k l m n o p r s š t u v z ž. It has three grammatical numbers, six cases with eight inclinations and three grammatical sexes.*

a b c č d e f g h i j k l  
m n o p r s š t u v z ž



When we are at home, we take our shoes off and put on slippers. Foreigners might find it unusual when they are asked to take off their shoes upon visiting a Slovenian at home, but we really don't like it when someone walks around our homes with shoes on.

*This is a cultural habit that has been passed on from generation to generation. Of course, this is also common in some other cultures.*

We speak a lot of foreign languages: in Europe, we are in fourth place (behind Luxembourgers, the Finnish and Norwegians). Almost half of Slovenians aged between 18 and 69 speak three or more foreign languages.

*This is also due to the Slovenian education system, which encourages learning foreign languages from a very early age.*



We are known for being very compassionate and always ready to help. Slovenians often spend their free time volunteering for firefighting associations or helping the less fortunate.

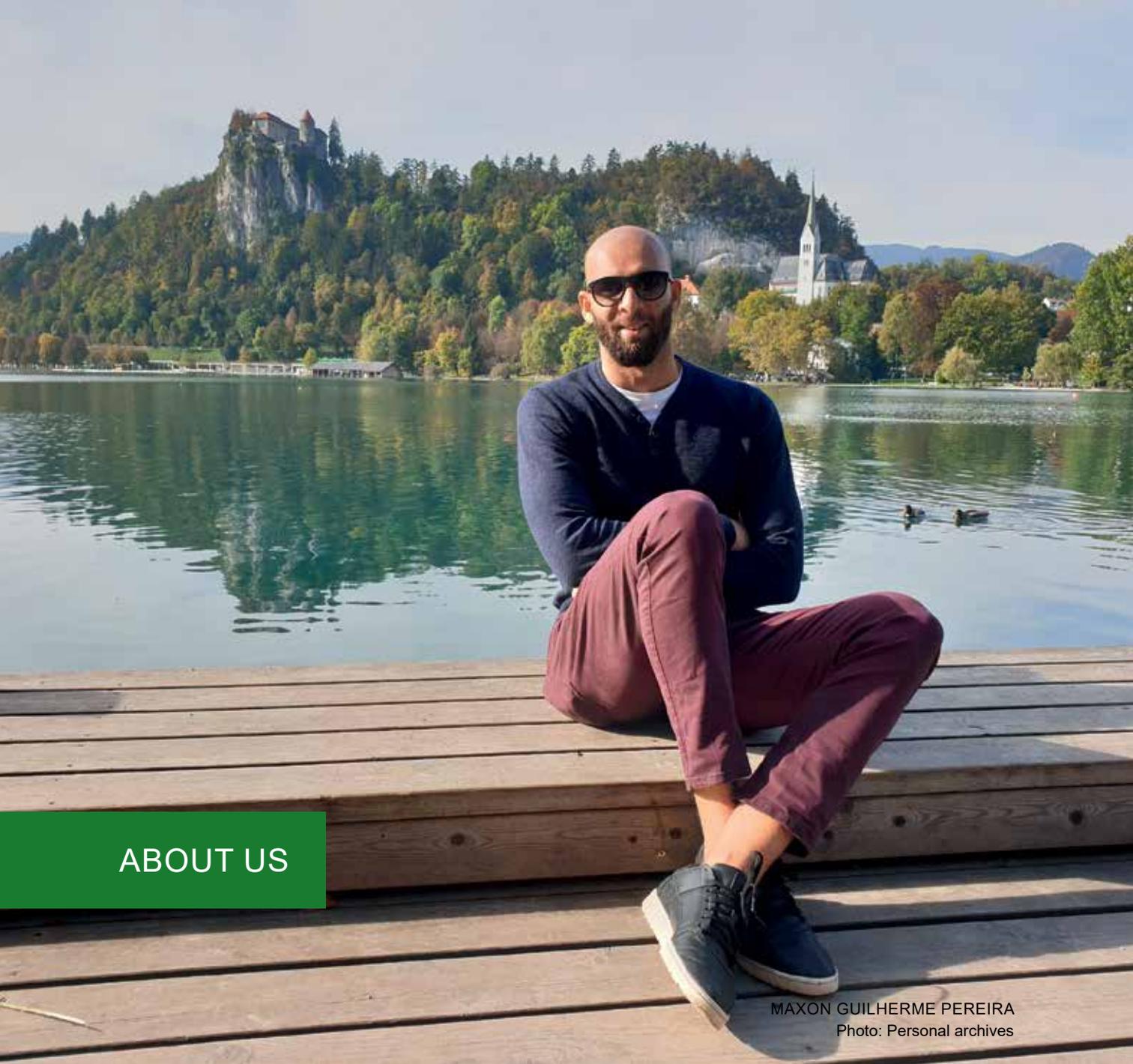
*According to Slovenian Philanthropy, there are 1,650 volunteer organisations and more than 290,000 volunteers registered, which is 30% of all Slovenian citizens.*

hello  
hallo  
salut

Slovenia presents itself abroad with its country brand "I feel Slovenia", based on that typical Slovenian green colour. The choice of colour was no coincidence, with green being the prevalent colour we see if we observe Slovenia from the air. Slovenia is also a very sustainable and eco-friendly country, active in sustainable technology and concept development.

*Slovenia is characterised by having a lot of forest cover (58% of the country), which ranks it in third place in Europe in this category. According to the findings of the European Commission, Slovenia's forests have the highest level of species diversity among all EU countries, and they are very important for the preservation of biodiversity in both Slovenia and the EU as a whole.*





## ABOUT US

MAXON GUILHERME PEREIRA  
Photo: Personal archives

## HOW I SEE SLOVENIA

### MAXSON GUILHERME PEREIRA, CALCIT VOLLEY KAMNIK

I first arrived in Slovenia in November 2016. It was a huge change for me. I used to live in Sao Paulo, where there are always too many people everywhere and people are always in a hurry. I moved to Kamnik, which is a small and very calm town. I liked the change because I needed a break from all the stress that a big city brings you.

**My first impression about Slovenia and Slovene people was really good. I felt welcomed by my teammates and people in the city. What I like the most about Slovenia is that because the country is so small, you can do many things on the same day.**

Nature here is truly beautiful. What really impresses me is how clean the cities and nature are, how government together with the people takes such good care of it. I find Bled just magical, unique. I've been to Velika Planina too and I love it. Ljubljana is also a beautiful city that amazes me, because even in the capital you still find so much green, like Tivoli Park.

**I also love your food. One of my favourite dishes is goveja juha. I simply love this soup. And prazen krompir. Potica is my favourite desert, but please never offer me apple štrudel, I definitely don't like that.**

I have noticed some great customs that you Slovenes have. Wearing slippers, for instance. I find it very positive. It helps keep the house clean, and for sure I will try to implement this habit in Brazil. The only thing is that I will need a closet full of slippers, because in Brazil we get visits all the time.



Maxon and his girlfriend Mateja, discovering Slovenia.

One thing that really disappoints me is markets and restaurants closing too soon. I'm currently living in Ljubljana, and sometimes even on the weekend restaurants are already done with food around 10 p.m.. I wish that there was a market open until late night or 24h. In Brazil, in big cities, you can find those things more easily.

The other thing that I found negative is that Slovenes need to go everywhere by car, even if the destination is in walking distance.

**I know the song Na Golici because it's played at almost if not all sports events in the world where Slovenes compete.**



Maxon enjoying Piran.

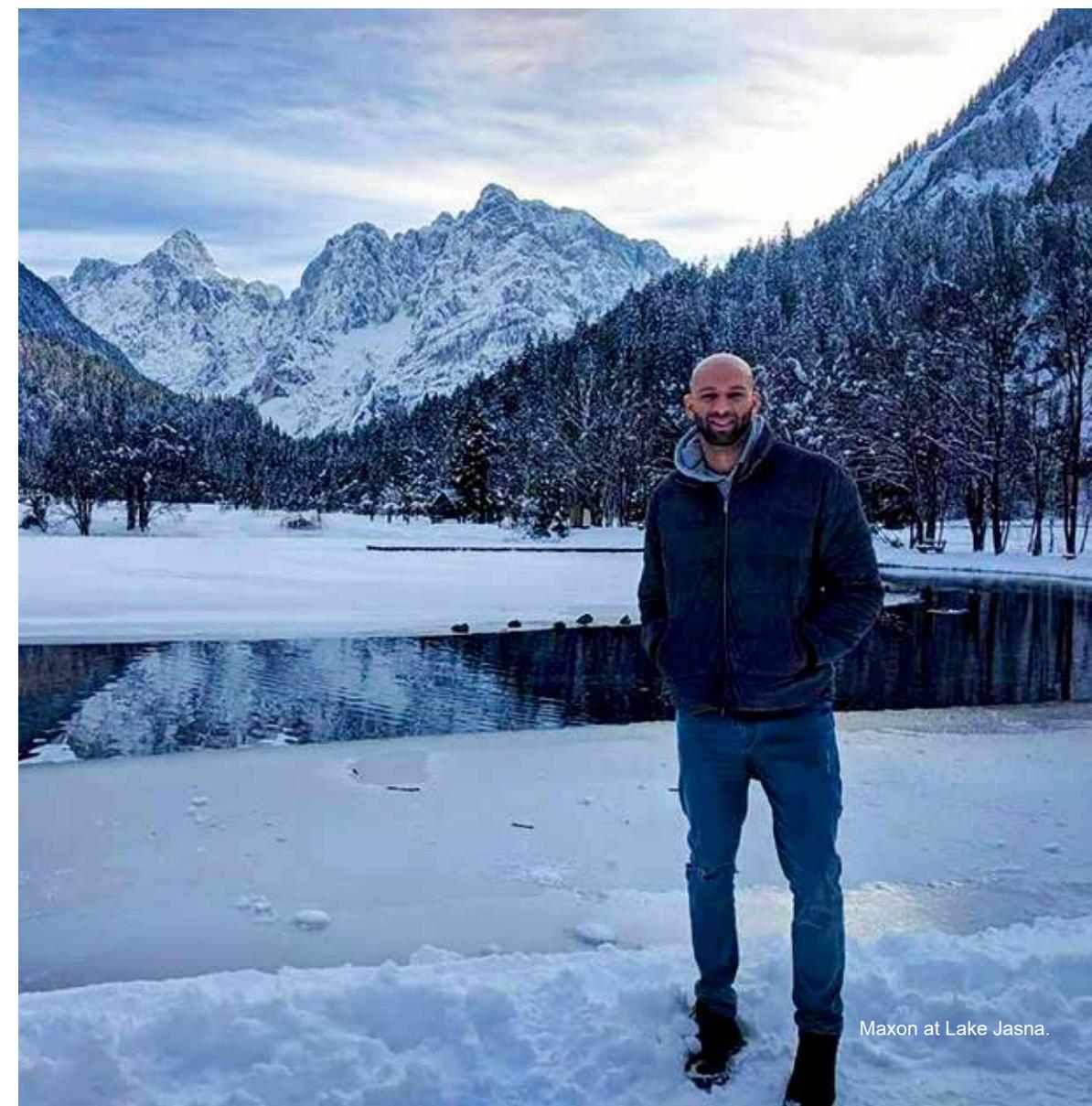
I follow Borut Pahor's Instagram page and he seems to be such a character, I have a feeling that people like him very much. Once I was behind Marjan Šarec in a market cashier line in Kamnik, and I remember thinking to myself that that guy must be someone important because literally everybody was talking with him.

I find your language a bit strange and difficult to learn, but luckily Slovenes are very good English speakers, which makes my life much easier. My goal is to speak

Slovene fluently and I'm studying really hard – I even have my own private teacher.

In general, I can say that I like living in Slovenia.

**I think that Slovenia is the safest place I have ever lived.**



Maxon at Lake Jasna.



LITERATURE

ANJA KOVAČ  
Photo: Anže Malovrh/STA

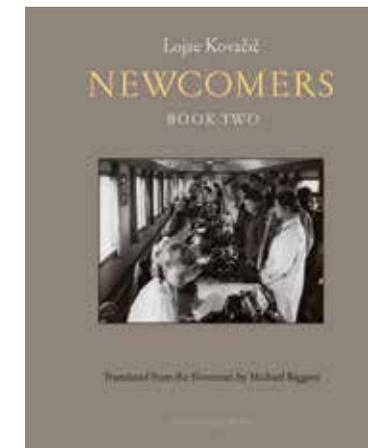
## HIGHLIGHTS OF SLOVENIAN LITERATURE FOR FOREIGN READERS

### HERE'S WHO YOU SHOULD READ

HAVE YOU VISITED SLOVENIA OR ARE YOU PLANNING A VISIT SOON? DO YOU WANT TO GET FAMILIAR WITH THE COUNTRY THROUGH ITS TOP LITERARY ACHIEVEMENTS, OR ARE YOU INTERESTED IN THE WRITING OF SLOVENIAN AUTHORS? THE SLOVENIAN BOOK AGENCY, WHICH OVERSEES THE PROMOTION OF SLOVENIAN LITERATURE ABROAD, HAS PROVIDED SOME RECOMMENDATIONS OF TOP-QUALITY SLOVENIAN BOOKS TRANSLATED INTO FOREIGN LANGUAGES.

We present you with Lojze Kovačič, a 20th century Slovenian literary classic, Ana Schnabl, a young but awarded author, and Marta Bartolj, an illustrator whose wordless picture book is entering international markets, including an Arabic edition.

**Enjoy your reading!**



**Lojze Kovačič: *Newcomers: Book Two*** (Archipelago Books, 2020, translated by Michael Biggins)

The much-anticipated book two of the cult Slovenian novel *Newcomers* (*Prišleki*) was published by the renowned American publisher Archipelago Books in January 2020. Lojze Kovačič (1928–2004), a giant of 20th century Slovenian literature and the son of a Slovenian father and German mother, draws from his childhood which began in Basel and continued in occupied Ljubljana after the family's expulsion from Switzerland in 1938. A newcomer to both Switzerland and Yugoslavia, he grew up in poverty and witnessed major historical changes that marked him for life. The novel is also available in French, Spanish, Italian, German, Dutch and Croatian. The third and final book in English will be published by Archipelago Books next year.

**Ana Schnabl: *Disentangling*** (Folio Verlag, 2020, translated by Klaus Detlef Olof)

This collection of short stories published in German as *Grün wie ich dich liebe grün* by the Austrian publisher Folio Verlag brought the author the best literary debut award. The protagonists of her short stories are people from the social margin: a girl suffering from anorexia, a heavy marijuana smoker, a young mother feeling like a stranger to her new role, and many others. If many an author from her generation gets caught in the trap of cynicism and moralising, Ana Schnabl deftly avoids it, relating her protagonists' stories without any judgment and with a great deal of sincerity, empathy and psychological insight. This sharp and original voice of Slovenian literature can be also read in Spanish and Serbian.



**Marta Bartolj: *Where Are You?*** (Baeschlin Verlag, 2019)

The German edition of this wordless picture book featured in last year's prestigious international catalogue of recommended children's and youth books, when *The White Ravens* was published by Swiss publisher Baeschlin Verlag as *Wo bist du?* The story of a lost puppy, addressing readers of all ages, reveals the power of simple actions, where one action encourages another and leads to a happy end. The German publication of this poignant picture book by the Slovenian author Marta Bartolj is only the beginning of its international journey, as English and Arabic editions will follow soon.



Jan Oblak and Matea Benedetti

FASHION

## MATEA BENEDETTI AND JAN OBLAK WHEN HIGH FASHION AND FOOTBALL UNITE

POLONA PREŠEREN  
Photo: Personal archives

WHEN AN ATHLETE COMMITTED TO SUSTAINABILITY AND A FASHION DESIGNER WITH THE SAME MISSION UNITE, A CAPSULE COLLECTION IS BORN. JAN OBLAK, ONE OF THE WORLD'S BEST GOALKEEPERS, AND MATEA BENEDETTI, A FASHION VISIONARY, RECENTLY PRESENTED THEIR SUSTAINABLE CAPSULE COLLECTION.

We have already written about Matea Benedetti in our magazine: she has made it her mission to raise ecological awareness, which she pursues with all her heart. She is constantly searching for new, innovative eco-sustainable materials, and thus attracted the attention of the world media and all those who recognise high quality products and industry innovations.

How was this interesting cooperation born? "It was actually a happy set of coincidences that led to mutual consideration, friendship and the exchange of ideas. I say that it was written in the stars, as I have never really believed in coincidence," says Benedetti.

"For me this cooperation is of utmost importance, not only because it unites fashion and football, but also because of the environmental message we communicate together and our action to raise people's awareness. Football is the most powerful global communication tool; it speaks in a simple universal language, while fashion transforms this language into a tangible product and allows people to embrace this message in the most intimate way. Everybody understands football and its structures, while high fashion is less accessible and targets a more restricted circle of people."

**During the autumn Ljubljana Fashion Week, she presented her new collection, which was created in cooperation with the Slovenian football star, Jan Oblak, who plays as goalkeeper for the Spanish club Atletico Madrid.**



The collection is based on nontoxic and biodegradable materials.

## MAKING CHANGES

Benedetti is treading the path of sustainable fashion with courage, wishing to make a change. She is fearless, even visionary; her collections explore all facets of sustainability, combining environmental aspects with social accountability.

**Matea Benedetti and Jan Oblak decided to focus on one product with his signature, which will be sustainable, universal, wearable, communicative, symbolic, intimate and stylish.**

The collection is intended for all generations, from the youngest to the oldest, for men and women. The creations are designed for casual, everyday wear.

It should be noted that up to 99% of all garments in shops, and in particular in sports shops, are made of synthetic materials. This means that once discarded, these garments will need more than 500 years to break down naturally, and during this process they will produce gases even more harmful than CO<sub>2</sub>, that use oxygen, pollute the soil and so forth.

“The fashion industry is the third most toxic in the world. So I was happy to undertake this small, but important project together with Jan. We have developed a non-toxic and biodegradable product. The T-shirt is made of bamboo, and all the labels and Jan’s box with autograph card are made of locally handcrafted sustainable paper. Production of the T-shirt respects the principles of Fair Trade, securing fair pay for the workers, without child exploitation and with a water print without heavy metals,” say Benedetti who makes “leather” jackets from pineapple. Her last collection was inspired by parrots, which due to the persistence of illegal trade in wild-caught birds catering to people who want to have them as pets, and the loss of their natural habitats, are now an endangered species.

The collection is available from the Football Association of Slovenia outlet in the centre of Ljubljana and online at: [www.benedetti.life](http://www.benedetti.life).

This T-shirt is made of bamboo and holds Jan Oblak’s signature.



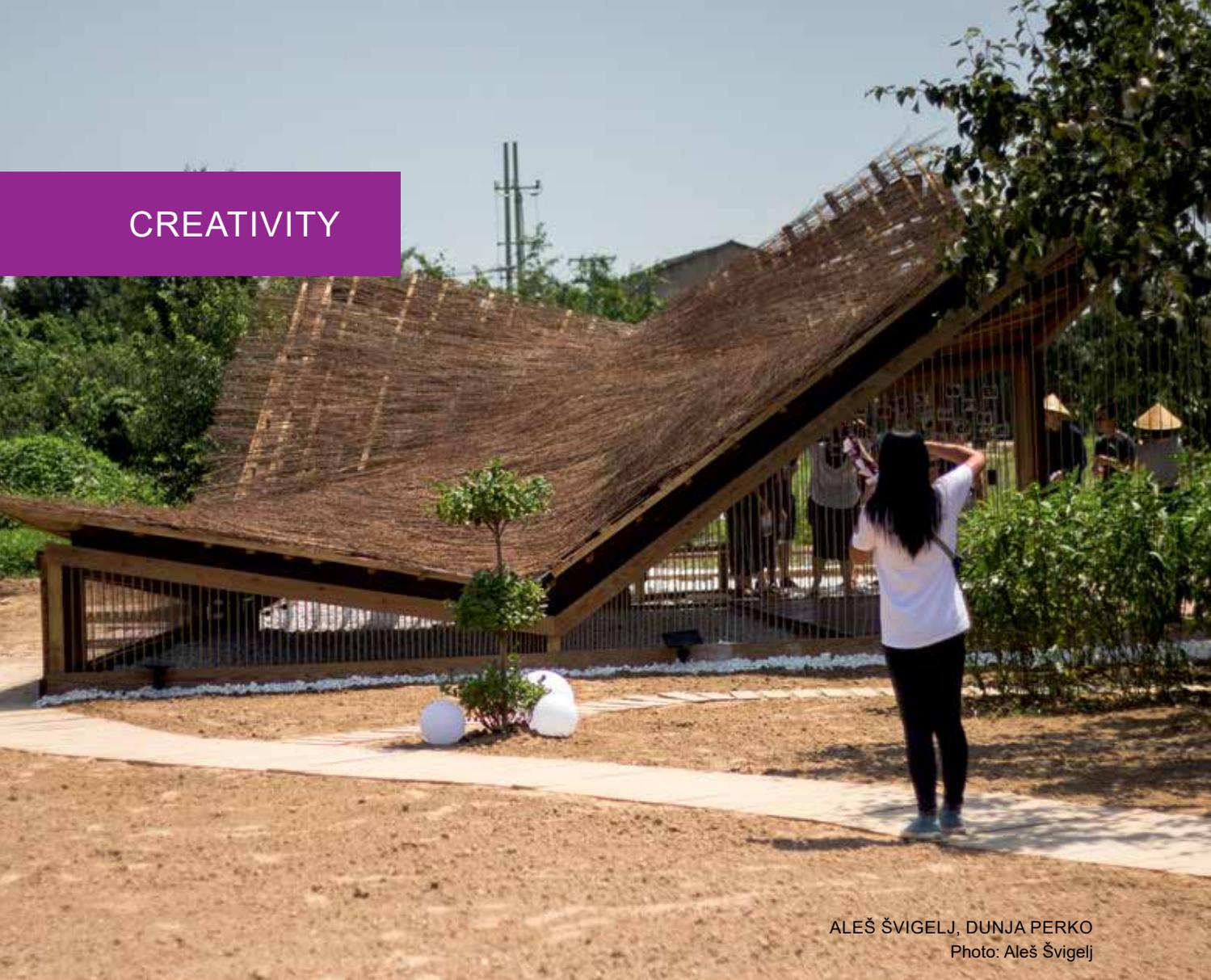
Matea Benedetti (right) with her sustainable gown.

This February, designer Matea Benedetti received another major recognition for her work in the field of sustainable fashion. She was invited to collaborate with the Red Carpet Green Dress™ (RCGD) organisation whose mission is to raise awareness of sustainability in the global fashion industry. At the organisation’s Pre-Oscars Gala in Los Angeles, the Benedetti Life brand presented a stunning gown designed by Mateja Benedetti.

“I am very proud that Vegan Fashion Week and RCGD have selected Benedetti Life to design the first high-fashion dress for the Red Carpet Green Dress Pre-Oscars Gala using Tencel Luxe fabric alongside Louis Vuitton who designed a gown for the Bond girl Léa Seydoux. The introductory speech was delivered by James Cameron and RCGD Director Samata Pattison, who highlighted the importance of sustainable fashion and lifestyle. We enjoyed a plant-based dinner, while film director James Cameron and I exchanged some thoughts on ecology,” Matea Benedetti shared after the event.

The Red Carpet Green Dress™ is a global change-making organisation founded by a leading environmental advocate Suzy Amis Cameron. The Benedetti Life eco dress was displayed alongside Vivien Westwood and Louis Vuitton eco-friendly evening gowns that adorned the Oscars’ red carpet in previous years.

## CREATIVITY



ALEŠ ŠVIGELJ, DUNJA PERKO  
Photo: Aleš Švigelj

## LIE BETWEEN

## BETWEEN SKY AND EARTH

STUDENTS OF URBAN PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE FROM THE FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA, TOGETHER WITH STUDENTS FROM TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY, PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, PARTICIPATED IN THE 2019 UIA-CBC INTERNATIONAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES COMPETITIVE CONSTRUCTION WORKSHOP AND WON SECOND PRIZE. AS THEIR PROJECT HAS BEEN SHORTLISTED, THEY HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACTUALLY BUILD THEIR CONCEPTUALIZED PAVILION.

The pavilion "Between Sky and Earth" is the result of excellent cooperation between educational institutions in Slovenia and China.

**Students from the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Ljubljana first established a connection with their co-constructors, Chinese students from Tsinghua University in February 2019.**

Together they designed the concept of the pavilion and applied for the workshop. In May 2019, the International Commission shortlisted their project together with 14 others, while more than 100 concepts were received. All 15 shortlisted projects were given the opportunity to build their concept.

In August 2019, the projects came to life. The Slovenian students travelled to the People's Republic of China, where they met their Chinese partners for the first time. The Slovenian students were impressed both by the sheer size of the country as well as by Chinese culture and the friendly local population.

The pavilion "Between Sky and Earth" is located in Guoyan village in the far eastern part of China. This village is famous for centuries-old white pear orchards, although in recent times it has undergone drab industrial development. The objective of the workshop was to design public spaces where locals would be able to socialise.

### OPEN-AIR THEATRE

The pavilion is designed as an open-air theatre that builds on the concept of connection with the spirituality of man. It follows the idea of "lying between the sky and earth".

With its image, it floats above the earth and creates the latent thought of connecting space, people and events. The space under the roof offers a stage for performing, playing, socialising, and drinking tea, while the roof serves as a grandstand to open views of the surrounding area. This makes the whole orchard a backdrop. The roof floats above the events of the earth and brings us to the infinity of thinking in the sky.

### THE SEEDS OF THE PROJECT

As a result of the workshop, not only was a pavilion created, but also new partnerships and friendships. Students had a chance to enhance their knowledge of architecture and to get to know new cultural perspectives.

All the flowers of the future are the seeds of the present. The Government of Slovenia continues to sow the seeds of cooperation.

**With a focus on cultural and creative industries, Creative Forum Ljubljana will take place in regional cooperation among countries of the Central and Eastern European Countries and China between 15 and 17 September 2020.**

The cultural and creative industries are among the fastest growing sectors, with great potential for the employment of the younger generation as well as for intercultural dialogue and understanding. The Slovenian cultural and creative sector is strongly encouraged to develop ties with their partners in Central and Eastern European Countries as well as in China.



ROK HREN  
Photo: Karolina Prica

## SLOVENIAN INVESTIGATIVE ART

WE ALL KNOW SLOVENIAN ARTISTS AND RESEARCHERS. WHAT ABOUT SLOVENIAN INVESTIGATIVE ARTISTS? SOME OF THEM HAVE BEEN ENGAGED IN CONTEMPORARY INVESTIGATIVE ART OVER THE PAST TWENTY YEARS, PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES OF UNDERSTANDING THE MODERN TECHNOLOGICAL WORLD.

“Their works of art, with their own poetics and techno-culture emerging from the new findings in advanced computer science, telecommunications, social networks, artificial intelligence, synthetic biology and other interesting intersections between biological vitality and cybernetics, have contributed to some of the greatest cultural breakthroughs of our time,” explained the artistic director of the Kersnikova Institute and KONS project programme manager, Jurij Krpan.

### PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES

You may wonder what art and science have in common. The two share a thirst for exploration, discovery and creation that impels both artists and scientists to better understand and change the world today. Scientists use their research work to create knowledge, while artists are guided by their sensibility to examine the world that science reveals to us and to concurrently open up the aesthetic, behavioural and ethical issues arising from the use of the latest technologies, says Krpan.

**Slovenia seeks to advance the efforts in contemporary investigative art to a higher level, which is why September 2019 saw the launching of the Platform for Contemporary Investigative Art – KONS.**

The platform is co-financed by the European Cohesion Fund. It serves as a network of arts and cultural organisations throughout Slovenia with the aim of developing capacities in this field and translating their outstanding creations into breakthrough ideas for innovations in the Slovenian economy.

According to Mr Krpan, the Kersnikova Institute is currently running eight European projects that are being implemented within the framework of the financial support mechanisms of Creative Europe, Horizon 2020 and the European Cohesion Fund.

**The long-term goal is to establish an international centre for contemporary investigative art that will enable us to capitalise on and improve our many years of successful work in the international arena.**

Further information will be provided at the 2020 Ecsite Conference in June in Ljubljana.

### ECSITE Festival

The Kersnikova Institute, in cooperation with the Technical Museum of Slovenia and the Agency for congress tourism – INK Conferences, will host the ECSITE international conference of science and technology centres from 11 to 13 June 2020. The three-day conference will host more than 120 expert meetings and a series of evening activities aimed at networking with key promoters of science culturisation from around the world. It will offer an excellent opportunity for all participants to meet and connect for joint projects in the future.

The laboratories operating within the Kersnikova Institute are developing several projects at the meeting point between artificial intelligence algorithms and cognitive matrices of plants and animals. As the most avant-garde, Mr Krpan highlighted the artistic project created by Mojca Založnik and Gregor Krpič and directed by their biotechnological laboratory, Biotehna, where the two are developing an investigative art platform for insights into molecular sculpture based on quantum biology.

## INNOVATION



POLONA PREŠEREN  
Photo: Alpina archives

## THE HIKING BOOT IN GREEN BRAND COLOURS ALPINA'S I FEEL SLOVENIA HIKING BOOT

SLOVENIANS LOVE TO BE ACTIVE. EXERCISE FILLS US WITH VIGOUR AND WE THOROUGHLY ENJOY ALL KINDS OF OUTDOOR SPORTS ACTIVITIES. WE LIKE TO SPEND OUR FREE TIME ACTIVELY, AND HIKING HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN ONE OF OUR FAVOURITE PASTIMES.

Alpina is a high-quality footwear brand and a symbol of Slovenian shoemaking. Seeing that this is especially true for their hiking boots, the company wants to build on this fact and further emphasise it by developing the first ever I feel Slovenia boots. These embody both the company and our country.

**When the company decided to use the I feel Slovenia national brand a year ago, it immediately started developing new footwear models.**

The hiking boot was chosen as the first shoe to bear the national brand. Is this surprising? Not at all. The hiking boot was the first shoe ever made by Alpina more than 70 years ago. And which shoe would better represent all the mountain and tourist spots in Slovenia than a hiking boot?

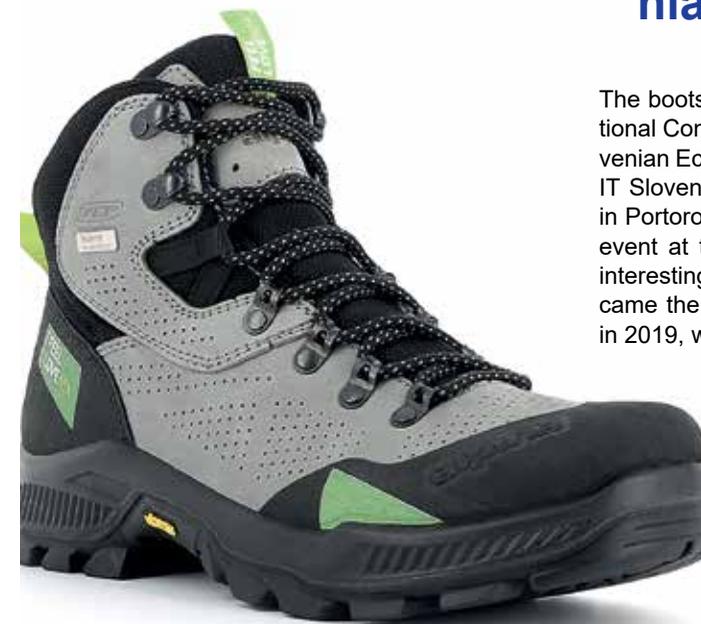
### GREEN IMAGE OF SLOVENIA

This is the story behind the first boots on the market bearing the I feel Slovenia national brand. Given that it was developed, designed and made entirely in Slovenia, it combines Slovenian know-how, creativity and quality.

Apart from the new design in the image of the national brand, the shoe has all the features of a high-quality hiking boot, which reflect the constant technological development of the company.

As a result of this development, Alpina's outdoor programme and innovative collections have been gaining recognition worldwide.

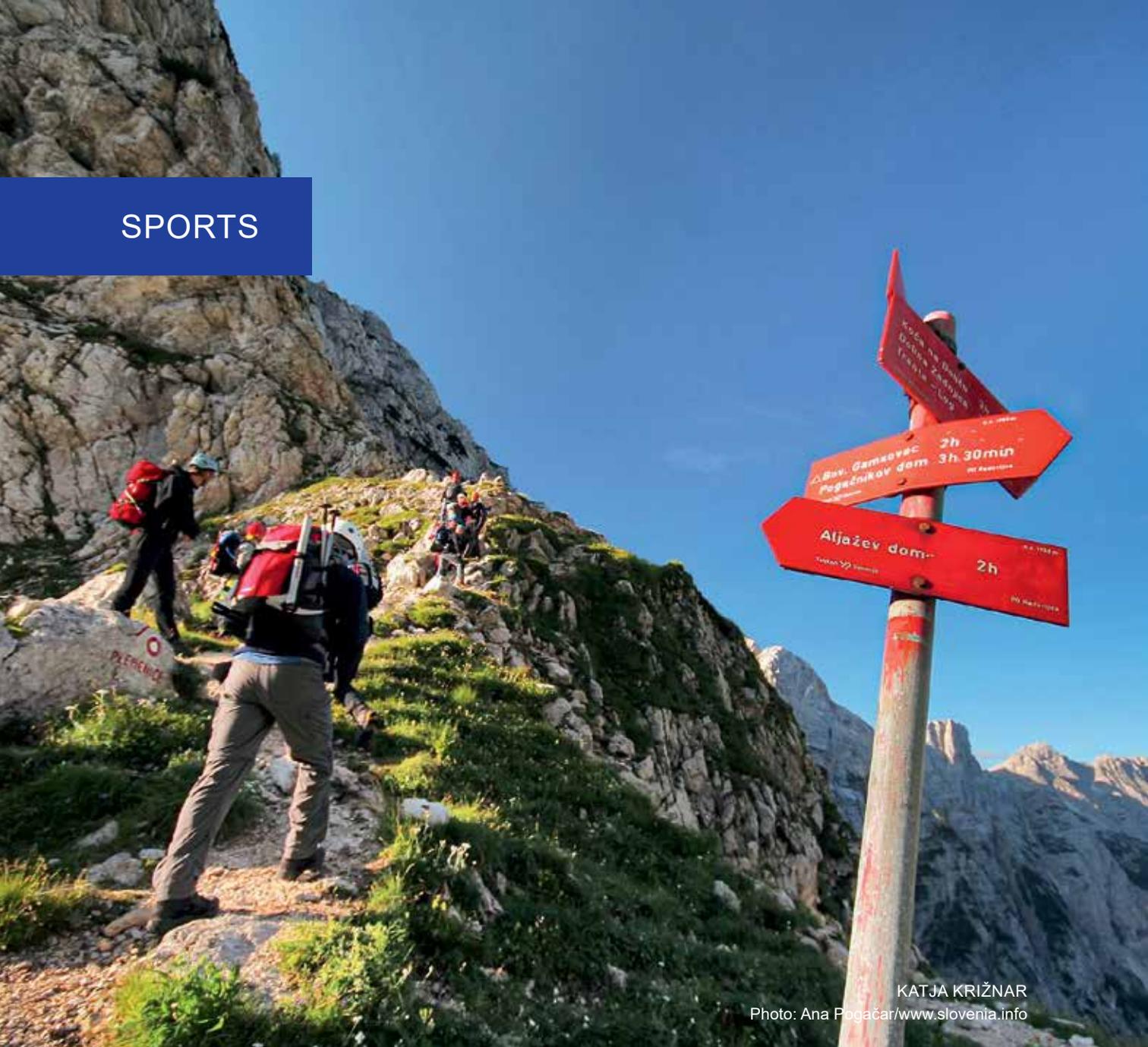
**By manufacturing the I feel Slovenia boots, Alpina not only demonstrated its innovative spirit, but also its willingness to invest in the green image of Slovenia and preserve it. It shares this goal with all the stakeholders in the I feel Slovenia brand.**



The boots were first presented to the public at the National Conference on the Internationalisation of the Slovenian Economy in Brdo pri Kranju, organised by SPIRIT Slovenia, and at the Slovenian Advertising Festival in Portorož. In December, Alpina took part in an official event at the cross-country world cup in Planica. It is interesting to note that 19-year-old Jera Mušič, who became the first Slovenian to walk the Appalachian Trail in 2019, walked part of the trail in I feel Slovenia boots.

The first I feel Slovenia boots are the result of a joint effort, work and inspiration found in nature. Owing to the way the boots are made, everyone is able to experience and take home a part of this.

## SPORTS



KATJA KRIŽNAR  
Photo: Ana Pogačar/www.slovenia.info

## HIKING

### SLOVENIANS LOVE MOUNTAINS

SPORT IS IN THE BLOOD OF SLOVENIAN PEOPLE. WE RUN, CLIMB, CYCLE, JOG, AND EVEN PLAY UNDERWATER HOCKEY. WE WILL TRY ANYTHING! EVEN WHEN YOU COME FOR A VISIT, WE INADVERTENTLY LURE YOU INTO EXERCISING.

If nothing else, then at least for a visit to Bled or Ljubljana Castle and thus a walk uphill. This is just how we are. We live with nature and spend our free time actively. This is also confirmed by statistics. More than 70 percent of Slovenians do sports regularly.

One of the reasons we like sports so much is certainly the wonderful natural environment, with hiking the most popular leisure activity among Slovenians.

#### TRIGLAV – THE SYMBOL OF SLOVENENESS

Slovenians have always had a close relationship with mountains. They are our pride and joy. It is no coincidence that we chose the 2,864-metre-high Mount Triglav to be one of our nation's symbols.

**There are probably no primary-school pupils who have not committed its height to memory. This year marks 242 years since the first ascent of Triglav.**

In 1895, Jakob Aljaž, a priest and a great lover of mountains and mountain climbing, bought the Triglav peak and erected the famous Aljaž Tower there. In September 2018, the turret was temporarily removed for the first time due to renovation. After less than a month, a helicopter flew it back to the top of the mountain.

#### WHY GO TO THE MOUNTAINS?

There many very simple answers to this question. In the mountains, a person can find peace, freedom, quiet, wonderful views and the most beautiful sunrises and sunsets. As well as excellent food, such as jota and

štruklji. The late Slovenian mountaineer Nejc Zaplotnik – who, together with another renowned Slovenian mountaineer, Andrej Štremfelj, were the first Slovenians to summit Mount Everest in 1979 – wrote in his book Pot (Path): “Mountains were my home, I felt safe there, it was the only place where I felt I was in charge of the situation. In the valley, I was led by moments, however they came and went. I had to do things other people demanded or expected but mountains were limitless, as were my dreams.”

#### THE ALPINE ASSOCIATION OF SLOVENIA

Since Slovenians like to socialise, we often head to the mountains with company or in organised groups. We are members of many mountaineering societies, which operate under the auspices of the Alpine Association of Slovenia.

**Today, the Alpine Association of Slovenia is the most widely spread sports organisation. It includes 290 societies with a total of 58,413 members of all age groups, which is more than 2.8% of Slovenia's population.**



Wonderful nature calls us to get moving.  
Photo: Jošt Gantar/www.slovenia.info

Mountains also attract young people. The Alpine Association boasts more than 18,000 young members, ranging from pre-school children to 26-year-olds, which amount to almost one third of its members.

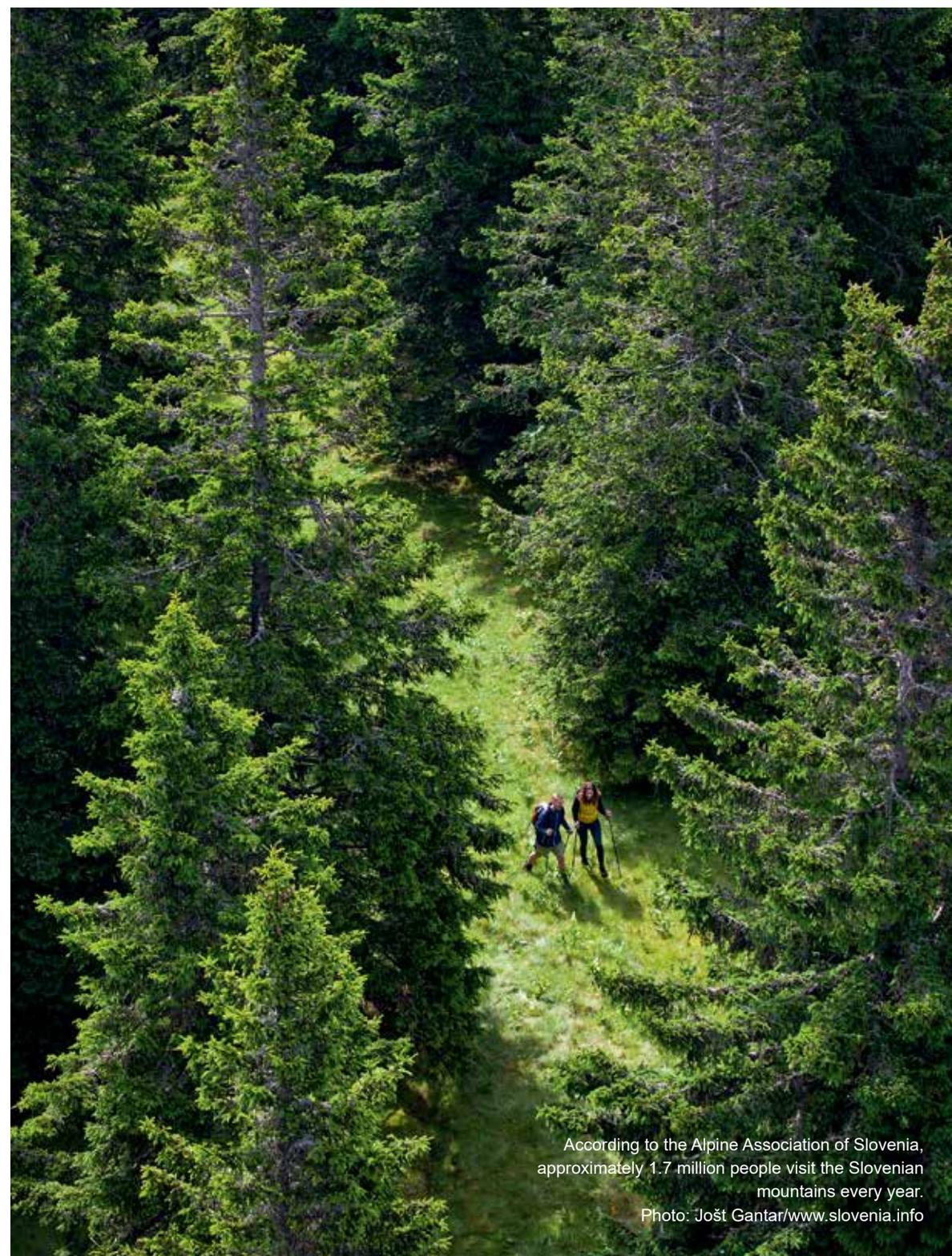
### **350,000 SLOVENIANS REGULARLY HIKE IN THE MOUNTAINS**

According to the Alpine Association of Slovenia, approximately 1.7 million people visit the Slovenian mountains every year, 350,000 of them are Slovenians who regularly hike in the mountains. The Alpine Association maintains more than 2,000 mountain trails with a total

length of more than 10,000 kilometres. The trails include 64 long-distance trails. People hike in Slovenian mountains practically throughout the year. From some mountaintops you can see all the way to the Adriatic Sea, or even further.

If the weather spoils our plans, we like to take a walk underground. The caves of Postojnska Jama (Postojna Cave), Škocjanske Jame (Skocjan Caves) and Vilenica are stunning even when it rains. Scandinavians say that there is no bad weather, only bad clothes. But we Slovenians say that there is no bad weather, only bad excuses.

Hiking is a national sport practiced by all generations.  
Photo: Ababsolutum-GettyImages/GulliverFilm&Foto



According to the Alpine Association of Slovenia, approximately 1.7 million people visit the Slovenian mountains every year.  
Photo: Jošt Gantar/www.slovenia.info



Photo: Dallas Mavericks

SPORTS

## WHEN DALLAS FEELS SLOVENIA

## JUST THE RIGHT SIZE FOR SLOVENIA

MATEJA MALNAR ŠTEMBAL

IT IS OFTEN SAID THAT EVERYTHING IS BIGGER IN TEXAS. SLOVENIA, SMALL IN SIZE ONLY, HAS RECOGNISED THE GREAT POTENTIAL OF ITS PARTNERSHIP WITH THE DALLAS MAVERICKS BASKETBALL TEAM, STARRING OUR WORLD-CLASS ATHLETE LUKA DONČIĆ, FOR GREATER VISIBILITY OF SLOVENIA AND THE I FEEL SLOVENIA NATIONAL BRAND, INCLUDING OPPORTUNITIES IN BUSINESS, INVESTMENT AND TOURISM.



Our Office, which has been the guardian of the I feel Slovenia national brand for over 12 years, considers that promoting a national brand or country is a marathon rather than a sprint, and that such partnerships represent more than just marketing.

Media Focus, Slovenia's partnership with the Dallas Mavericks brought together the Government Communication Office, the Slovenian Tourist Board, SPIRIT Slovenia and Tourism Ljubljana. The business conference is organised in cooperation with Slovenia's Foreign Ministry and AmCham Slovenia.

**I firmly believe that the soft power of sport generates an enormous amount of interest in Slovenia, a country of extraordinary people and exceptional opportunities.**

The partnership promotes and increases the visibility of the I feel Slovenia national brand at 10 NBA Mavericks home games in the 2019/2020 season, and a further 10 NBA games in the 2020/2021 season, where it will present Slovenia as a country and a tourist destination in the games' half-times. Within its framework, an exhibition and promotion venue will be set up, with promotional activities of partners carried out during the event.

Tomaž Ambrožič, Director of Sport Media Focus, said that Slovenia will be presented as the main partner, a brand and a destination that, with the help of Luka Dončić, has gained considerable visibility and popularity in that part of the US. He believes that the story we are creating with Luka Dončić is one of a kind. As a Slovenian, he is proud that we have taken advantage of the possibility offered by the partnership with the Dallas Mavericks.

Sport has a domino effect that connects people in a special way, bringing out their pride and sense of belonging. Nelson Mandela once said that sport has the power to change the world. Furthermore, it has the power to inspire and unite.

Slovenia's loyal fans play an important role in this, as they always make sure that the spirit of Slovenia is actually felt at games.

To feel Slovenia does not only mean that we adorn ourselves with national symbols. I believe that emotional experience is an export product as well. And just like the I feel Slovenia' national brand suggests, it has a very strong impact.

### SPORT BRINGS TOGETHER DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS

Under the auspices of the Slovenian company Sport

**Slovenian athletes have always been the best ambassadors of Slovenia. As sport is both emotionally charged and unites people, its impact spills over to other areas as well.**

## WHEN TEXAS FEELS SLOVENIA ON A BASKETBALL COURT ...

Texas will get its first opportunity to feel Slovenia at a basketball game on 11 March 2020. This will be a true I Feel Slovenia Night! Not only will this be the official name of the game, but Slovenia will also be represented on Dallas' home court by Luka Dončić from the Dallas Mavericks, whose performances and charisma brought the attention of the club to Slovenia in the first place, and Vlatko Čančar from the Denver Nuggets. Every aspiring basketball player dreams of an NBA career, and a nation with only two million people will have two players representing them at the game.

Cynt Marshall, Chief Executive Officer of the Dallas Mavericks, said that "Luka's impact on the team and on the city has been tremendous, actually it's been amazing". She added that he is an ambassador on and off the court.



Photo: Dallas Mavericks

**Cynt Marshall**, CEO Dallas Mavericks: "I truly believe that through our joint efforts I feel Slovenia will also receive great attention in Dallas and in Texas as a whole as a green, creative and smart business and travel destination."

## ... AND WHEN TEXAS FEELS SLOVENIA AS A BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

Maja Pak, Director of the Slovenian Tourist Board, has often emphasised that many years ago the Board, in cooperation with the Slovenian tourism industry and other key partners, recognised the US market as one of the key overseas markets, where it will continue to intensify its activities in 2020. The aim of the partnership with the Dallas Mavericks is to present Slovenia as a tourist destination to those seeking active experiences. American tourists have greater than average spending power and also like to travel out of the high season. Over the past three years, we have been seeing a steady increase in their numbers.

The Texas Feels Slovenia business conference on 12 March 2020 at the Hilton Anatole in Dallas will be a unique opportunity to familiarise the business community from Dallas, the fifth biggest city in the US, and indeed across Texas, with the investment, business and tourist opportunities of our country. Furthermore, Slovenian companies will be able to establish contacts with potential business partners in Texas.

Ajda Cuderman, Director of SPIRIT Slovenia, highlighted that the government's strategy defines the United States as a priority market for an increase in the volume of trade, an export market for Slovenian products and services, and a source of potential investors with sufficient capital and from the relevant industries.

Apart from being rich in petroleum and coal, Texas has become one of the world leaders in the field of renewables, in particular wind power, high-tech companies and the space industry, and its businesses are seeking opportunities abroad, including in Europe.

According to Ajša Vodnik, Director-General of AmCham Slovenia, we need to adopt a strategic approach to the enormous American market. The city of Dallas has 1.2 million inhabitants; its wider surroundings are home to 6 million people and the State of Texas to 28 million. She thinks this is a unique opportunity since Texas offers numerous possibilities and it is the 10th largest economy in the world in terms of GDP. This is a great opportunity for Slovenian companies that would like to enter this market.



Slovenian athletes have always been the best ambassadors of Slovenia.  
Photo: Dallas Mavericks



Read our articles and watch our videos to stay up-to-date with what's going on in Slovenia. New stories are added every week. We hope these will make you want to come to Slovenia and experience the country yourself. Maybe for the first time, but surely not the last. Learn more at [slovenia.si](http://slovenia.si)