

# Sinfo

The Best from Slovenia



God bless Slovenia and Europe!

I FEEL  
SLOVENIA



# Sinfo

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## WE REMAIN BRAVE, DETERMINED, GROUND- BREAKING AND INNOVATIVE



Photo: Bruno Toič

Slovenians are celebrating 30 years of independence this year. Over the years, we have reached and even surpassed a number of milestones in the political, economic, cultural, sports and other fields. We can indeed be proud of our determination and courage, of our homeland of wonderful people and of our great achievements. Because it is not enough to say only "I wish", but we also need "I want, I will and, finally, I did!"

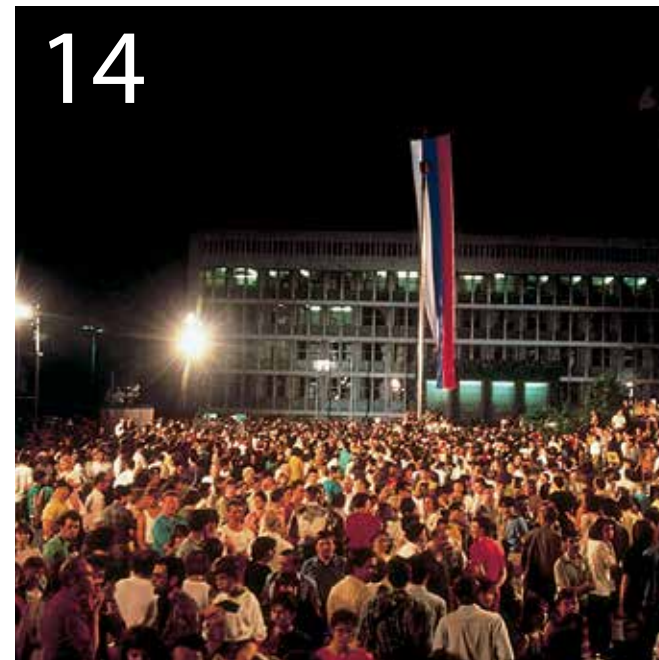
Alongside Slovenia's 30<sup>th</sup> birthday, we are also starting our Presidency of the Council of EU on 1 July. The Presidency will be an opportunity for us Slovenians to show that we are capable of making breakthroughs over and over again. The Slovenian Government has set clear, ambitious, realistic and coordinated goals, so there is no doubt that the Presidency will be successfully implemented.

In addition to the two biggest events, Slovenians will be actively involved in other international activities this year, which will be an opportunity to present what we know and can do in the fields of the arts, business and sports.

Historical breakthroughs are not a matter of chance, but of determination and active (co)operation. We Slovenians are certainly up to the task. All the best, Slovenia!

**Tanja Glogovčan Belančič**, Editor-in-Chief

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In the End what remains is just Love, and not Honour, Riches and Distinction



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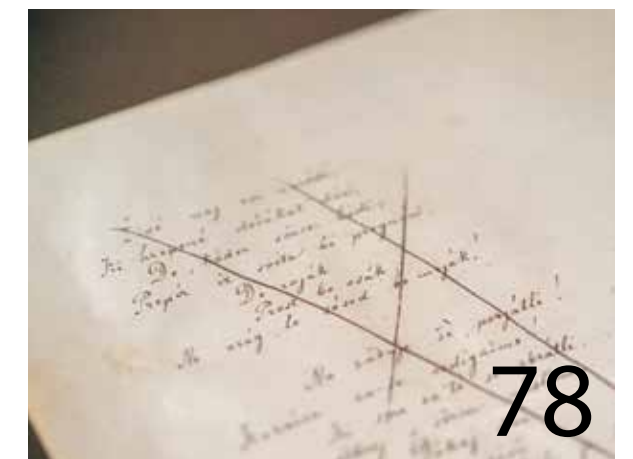
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In the history of every nation there is a precisely defined moment that enables a nation to become sovereign, its own master on its own land. Such a moment reflects the positive attitude of most citizens or members of the nation. Such a moment represents the centre of the nation's values. For us, Slovenians and citizens of the Republic of Slovenia, this is the moment of independence.

Janez Janša, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia

Photo: janez/stock.adobe.com



Photo: UKOM

**We stood up and we survived. We are still standing. And we will keep standing.**

One of the finest gifts Slovenia received upon its 30th anniversary of independence was the chance to once again preside over the EU Council. It is a great challenge and, at the same time, an exceptional opportunity. It is an opportunity to show and prove to ourselves and to others that we possess the ideas, the knowledge and the ambition to actively participate in shaping Europe's present and future. Not so long ago, the Presidency was mainly about the daily fulfilment of often dull obligations, which a state inherits from those presiding before. The current challenges and, in many ways, the momentous times we live in have profoundly changed this perception of the presiding state's role. Today, managing the alliance is not so much about carrying out routine tasks, but it is about being able to effectively respond to the unpredictable challenges of our time.

Much like the rest of the world, the EU is still facing the pandemic, which has affected each and every one of us in one way or another, with far-reaching and long-lasting consequences. It will be necessary to implement as quickly as possible the extensive NextGenerationEU package, and to set the course for future development, which will be based on digitisation, green transformation and revitalisation of the EU's industry strategy.

Each crisis brings experience and new knowledge. Based on these, we will have to establish systems that will make the EU as a whole more resilient both to health challenges and challenges relating to new technologies. The European Union's foreign policy tasks will be of great importance. In that light, the EU must define its foreign policy objectives more clearly; closer collaboration is needed with strategic partners from

around the globe, which share our values, especially the USA. One of the prerequisites for the EU to become a more prominent geopolitical player involves stabilising and securing our direct stakeholder environment, our neighbourhood. I am referring to the Western Balkans, which have real prospects of membership. To this end, Slovenia will hold the EU-Western Balkans Summit.

Moreover, the EU is facing numerous issues of strategic nature. These are issues concerning efficient functioning of the Union, the direction of future development, its role and position within the changed geopolitical relations and, ultimately, issues concerning its very being. What are the foundations that will unite and connect us, Europeans, not only today, but also in the future?

As the state holding the Presidency, Slovenia will be active and ambitious in seeking the widest possible consensus on these challenges. It will encourage open dialogue at the level of states and the level of EU citizens. Everyone will be heard in terms of complete equality of all EU Member States. The future of Europe is, after all, our collective responsibility.

This year, we commemorate the 30th anniversary of the birth of an independent and sovereign state, the Republic of Slovenia. The Slovenian nation knew how to respond to exceptional historic moments and opportunities. God only knows what would have happened to us had we taken a one-size-fits-all, routine, bureaucratic approach to making sense of circumstances back then. Thirty years ago, we had to prove not only to ourselves but also to disbelievers from abroad that we are innovative, confident, brave and, above all, capable of exercising our rights. It was only once we had proven this to the international community that we got the green light in the form of international recognition.

Being responsive and proactive is the only way for us to preserve what we have attained and have been forced to defend even by taking up arms. Sometimes one can notice that far too many people believe our state to be something that can be taken for granted, like the air we breathe. As though our state is quite ordinary. But that is not the case. Realising the two common goals, human dignity and suitable social cohesion, takes continuous effort. This is not only the task of the government, but also of all social strata, and that includes each and every individual.

Certainly, after thirty years, we have lost some of our zeal, unity and courage. Likewise, we have not utilised all of the resources and development opportunities at our disposal. This is because the state was not always well-managed and guided. But Slovenia's potentials are greater than they seem. With the help of European programmes and funds, we can relatively quickly achieve and surpass the development average within the alliance. This must be our goal, instead of remaining a regular recipient of European development funds. We must become self-sufficient as soon as possible. The pandemic has caused a great deal of damage in all areas, the most terrible of which is the death toll. In this trying ordeal, however, we have managed to respond well in many areas, strengthening social immunity and fortifying our resilience in the process. Many social sub-systems were forced to undergo digitisation, to modernise their ways of functioning and thus to prepare for challenges ahead. This is true at the state level, as well, as many areas await important structural reforms, especially the judicial system, the media and education.

Slovenia must be a productive participant in discussions regarding the future of Europe. We are in for an interesting debate, whose substance will be the most varied precisely during Slovenia's Presidency. We will add our touch to it. During its Presidency, Slovenia will represent the alliance at many important international events, such as Expo Dubai and the Olympic Games in Tokyo, where it will present itself as a country of successful businesspeople and athletes, and as a country with a rich cultural tradition.

Dear Slovenians, in this jubilee year, as the 30-year-old Slovenia is once again to lead the EU Council, I wish that the sense of belonging to both Slovenia and Europe burns especially bright in you, along with pride in your identity! God bless Slovenia and Europe!

Janez Janša  
Minister of Defence 1991, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia



Photo: National Council archives

### **The arrival of spring**

*The birth of a state is like the birth of a child; if the child is desired and expected, its arrival in the world is like the arrival of spring, and if it is conceived without mutual love, it brings murky days with itself, burdened by stormy clouds.*

*The Slovenian nation had desired a state of its own ever since the first states were being created in Europe. Poets, writers, intelligentsia and common people expressed this yearning through their lives and work. There were a few instances in the past when the Slovenian nation was quite close to writing laws of its own and voting for its own authorities, but destiny turned its back on us every time. With the first democratic election, the course of history was changed forever. To go on your own became the motto of all social strata in Slovenia. We gained independence. We defended our independence with our own power and unity, with arms in our hands. They say that history is written by the victors, and they are right. Anyone who would like to learn how it was back in the days around 1991 can ask those who dared, who risked not only their future, but also the future of their relatives and nation as a whole and stood up to defend their homeland. Today, some undervalue those heroic days. They speak about an operetta war, leniency of the opponents and incompetence or even unlawfulness of the Slovenian defence forces. The harsh truth is that a person can change everything but their own past. Those who failed to respond to the call of the homeland and watched from a safe distance the outcome of the unequal clash have written their past on the wrong side of history. No word, no belittling, no looking for excuses can change this. The key figures of independence deserve credit for their courage, knowledge and inventiveness. As far as I know, only few among them claim any material reimbursement for their contribution to the creation of a free Slovenia. I was there, I was with them, I know these courageous women and men. The least the homeland can do for them is ensure that their acts are not belittled, forgotten and demeaned, and the most that they could want is that they are rightfully placed in history as those who not only dreamed, but also made possible the thousand year-old dream of the Slovenian nation. Independent Slovenia, born in the whirlwind of war, is divided internally, though. There are as many different ideas and viewpoints as there are Slovenians. However, those who think that Slovenians, if their homeland is threatened again, will not stand together again, regardless of differences among them, are dead wrong. I am not afraid of the future. The indomitable spirit of the Slovenian nation is still alive, and freedom is the value that, for Slovenians, outweighs all other values in this world. Slovenia is in our hearts and our acts.*

Alojz Kovšca, Commander of the Territorial Defence Unit 1991,  
President of the National Council of the Republic of Slovenia



Photo: Personal archives

### **We won because we were ready**

*In the first democratic election after the Second World War, Slovenians had for the first time in history the opportunity to make a democratic decision regarding an independent and democratic Slovenian state. Appearing with this programme was the DEMOS coalition of new parties, while the old political forces were offering Slovenia's future in Yugoslavia.*

*The DEMOS won the election on 8 April 1990 with this state-building idea and, by taking over the legislative and executive power, fulfilled the political conditions for realising the highest political goal of the Slovenian nation. Had the DEMOS not won and its government assumed the principal political responsibility for the independence process, we would have been left with dreams, declarations and hopes.*

*Although the then Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia contained the right to self-determination, it became clear on the day when the DEMOS government was sworn in, 16 May 1990, that our path towards freedom would not be easy. On the same day, the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) started disarming the Slovenian Territorial Defence. On the next day, we started preparations for defence. This is why we were able to line up a unit of the Slovenian army a week before the plebiscite, and why we were ready when the JNA attacked us on the day when independence was declared - 26 June 1991.*

*In the plebiscite on 23 December 1990, 95% of the voters voted for independence (88.5% of all eligible voters). Before that, all parliamentary parties showed unity in agreeing on how the plebiscite should be organised. Although we achieved public unity and determined with a law the deadline for independence, we faced opposition from politicians, trade unions, media and others until the very moment of independence.*

*The government did not only make preparations in the field of defence. It also drafted a number of laws and measures that changed the basic conditions of governance, printed reserve money during the plebiscite, and afterwards secured commodities of basic necessities, paved the way to international recognition and made similar preparations.*

*On the anniversary, I am thankful to all who voted and worked for an independent Slovenian state, and especially to those who gave their lives for it. I am thankful to those who took up the responsible work in the independence-era government. I am proud of bringing together the team that was up to the historic task.*

Lojze Peterle, Prime Minister in 1991



Photo: Polona Avanzo

### **The state in the minds of the people**

*An independent Slovenian state was never a factor in the plans of Slovenian politics before the Second World War or of Slovenian communists throughout all the iterations of Yugoslavia. Of course, the various historical circumstances with which politics was faced in the previous century need to be taken into account.*

*Both Yugoslav states did not last long, only for slightly more than seventy years. Nevertheless, in our eyes and especially in the eyes of our fathers it seems at the beginning of the 1990s that we were giving up on something eternal. In the eyes of communists, this feeling was even worse, as it was also their rule that was falling apart. While it is easy to explain the infatuation of Slovenian communists with the Yugoslav history and future from this aspect, it is much more difficult to understand it. When Jože Pučnik said that Yugoslavia was no more, and that it was not about Slovenia, it was high time to recognise a situation in which, as always happens in history, a true force prevailed over some high-flying principles.*

*What was epoch-making was not only the moment of creation of the Slovenian state, but also its existence and functioning, and its development as a modern state. For this reason, we are able as a nation to face key questions that are being put in front of us today and will be in the future. Even if we delegate part of our powers to supranational institutions such as the European Union, it is only our own state that always enables us to act sovereignly and in our own interest. And to make progress.*

*This is why those who do not see a difference between Belgrade and Brussels and the situation Slovenia is in today and that in Yugoslavia are wrong. Their argument that we have not won much with our own state, that we are actually in the same situation as we used to be, actually relates to the (in)ability of our politics to govern its own country.*

*A mirror image of the same reflex is the opinion, which is not rare among Slovenians, that we were better off in Yugoslavia, although this does not hold true even at a completely empirical level economy-wise, politically and in all other respects. But myths are known to be persistent. A major part of our dismissive attitude towards our own country is still being shaped by the well-known leftist dismissal of the state as such. The Marxist theory about the need for the state to die out on the one hand, and the Yugoslav theory of dissolution of a state through the concept of self-determination on the other, have left their consequences. This is why the transition is taking so long, why changes are so slow. And this is why the power of the old is so strong. This is a problem of nations that developed their national consciousness within a larger state, mostly in defiance of Vienna or Belgrade. To be means to be only when you are against something! This is the reason why they never developed a concept of full freedom, a concept of one's own statehood. In a way, this is what Ivan Cankar already told us.*

*On the 30th anniversary of the creation of the Slovenian state, we should be aware that the Slovenian state is the central point of the Slovenian national question and all relevant questions related to the Slovenian nation. This is why this is the point that must and can represent the field of interest of all political interests that otherwise compete with each other.*

Igor Bavčar, Minister of the Interior in 1991



Photo: Personal archives

### **Independence efforts, sovereignty and independence**

*Various terms are used for the top historic achievement of Slovenia. It might be that the first users of the term independence were inspired by Simon Jenko, who said in his poem *Trojno gorje* (1865): "Miserable is he who does not have a home, who is nowhere a master of his own..." (Gorjé, kdor nima doma, kdor ni nikjér sam svoj gospod...). Self-determination and secession, which are mentioned in the communist constitution from 1974, were interpreted by the regime jurists as having been already "consummated" with the establishment of Yugoslavia, and were otherwise protected by the Brotherhood and Unity slogan and the decisive role of the League of Communists. The 57th edition of *Nova revija* (1987) was entitled *Articles for the Slovenian National Programme*, in which the nation meant a nation state. In the *May Declaration* (1989) we demanded a sovereign state for the Slovenian nation; the plebiscite question (1990) meanwhile read: "Should the Republic of Slovenia become a sovereign and independent country?". The same words were repeated in the *Fundamental Constitutional Charter* (1991). In *Belgrade and elsewhere - outside Yugoslavia - we were reproached for wanting to secede*, while Slovenian representatives retorted that it was dissolution, with which we wanted to say that we would not allow Serbia to assume the state continuity, as happened in the Soviet Union, which was simply replaced by Russia.*

*The process of Slovenia's independence was closely connected with the Yugoslav crisis, the end of the Soviet Union and the Cold War. After 1990, it became a topic of strategic consultations between superpowers, as clearly shown by the minutes from the meetings of US President George Bush with the leaders of the European countries. At first, they were wondering whether it was an ethnic dispute or a democratic movement, while trying to help Mikhail Gorbachev by expressing support for a united Yugoslavia (and Soviet Union). Then they arrived at the idea of writing a new Yugoslav constitution. Later on, they made sure that there was no early recognition, only to eventually give in to Helmut Kohl and Hans-Dietrich Genscher, who compared recognition of Slovenia's independence to the right to self-determination or unification in Germany. What belongs together, should be together, and what does not belong together, should be separated, said the German chancellor.*

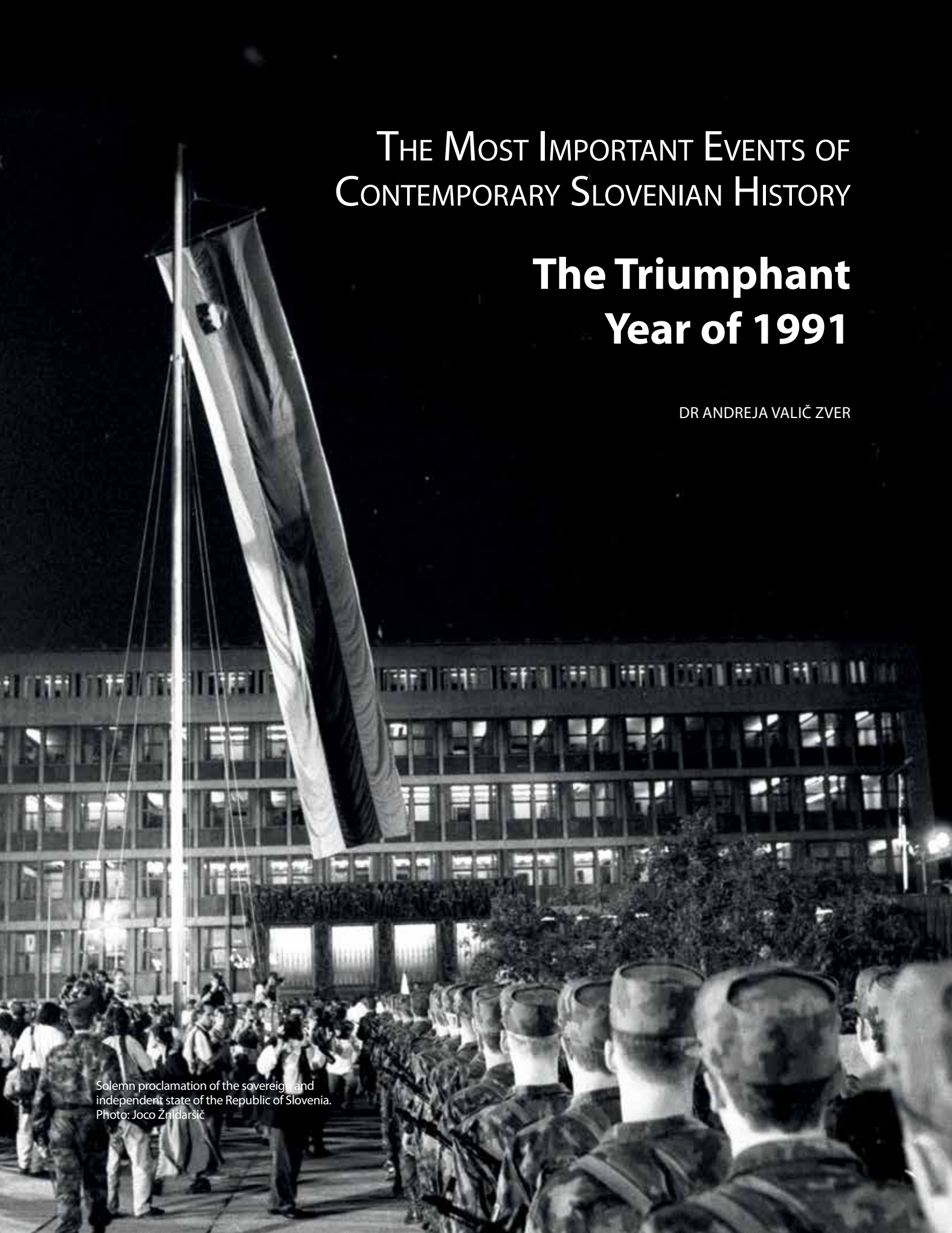
*The preparatory acts were followed by at least three executive/constitutive independence acts: the *Independence War* (June 1991), the *Slovenian Constitution* (December 1991) and *international recognition* (January-May 1992). The first recognitions came from Croatia, Lithuania, Georgia, Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine, Iceland, Sweden, Germany, Belarus and the Vatican; recognitions from the European Union then came pouring in. Russia recognised Slovenia in February, and the USA in April 1992. After entry in the UN on 22 May 1992, doors opened up for new foreign policy achievements, including the accession to the EU and NATO in 2004, the Presidency of the OSCE in 2005 and the Presidency of the EU Council in 2008.*

Dr Dimitrij Rupel, Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1991

# THE MOST IMPORTANT EVENTS OF CONTEMPORARY SLOVENIAN HISTORY

## The Triumphant Year of 1991

DR ANDREJA VALIČ ZVER



Solemn proclamation of the sovereign and independent state of the Republic of Slovenia.  
Photo: Joco Znidaršič

Developing and raising awareness of the core values and the most important events of contemporary Slovenian history is especially important in times of crisis. We must not forget that bold decisions, such as the adoption of the Independence Act in 1991 on the basis of the plebiscite of 1990, the formation of our own army, the declaration of independence on 25 June 1991, the victory in the war for Slovenia and the withdrawal of the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) on 25 October 1991, have preserved the existence of the Slovenian state. Such achievements cannot be taken for granted.

In the shadow of the crisis in Yugoslavia and Slovenia and the turning events in Europe and in the world, which was symbolised by the fall of the Berlin Wall, a civil society was on the rise in Slovenia in the eighties. Thus, the **57th issue of the magazine *Nova revija* in 1987** included Slovenian intellectuals and their articles for the Slovenian national programme.

### SLOVENIAN POLITICAL SPRING

When a group of young journalists and publicists, **Janez Janša**, **David Tasić** and **Franci Zavrl**, and the officer **Ivan Borštner**, were accused of betraying military secrets in 1988 and were tried in a Military Court in Ljubljana in a foreign language, Slovenia woke up completely. The Committee for the Protection of Human Rights, led by **Igor Bavčar**, was established to defend the four accused. Protests and rallies occurred, and there were demonstrations in front of the Military Court in Ljubljana. The authorities could no longer prevent the establishment of new political organisations that published the **May Declaration in 1989** at the rally in Ljubljana, as a common programme of the emerging Slovenian political opposition.

**A sovereign Slovenian state was demanded in 1989 in the May Declaration and the free decision of Slovenians regarding external connections.**

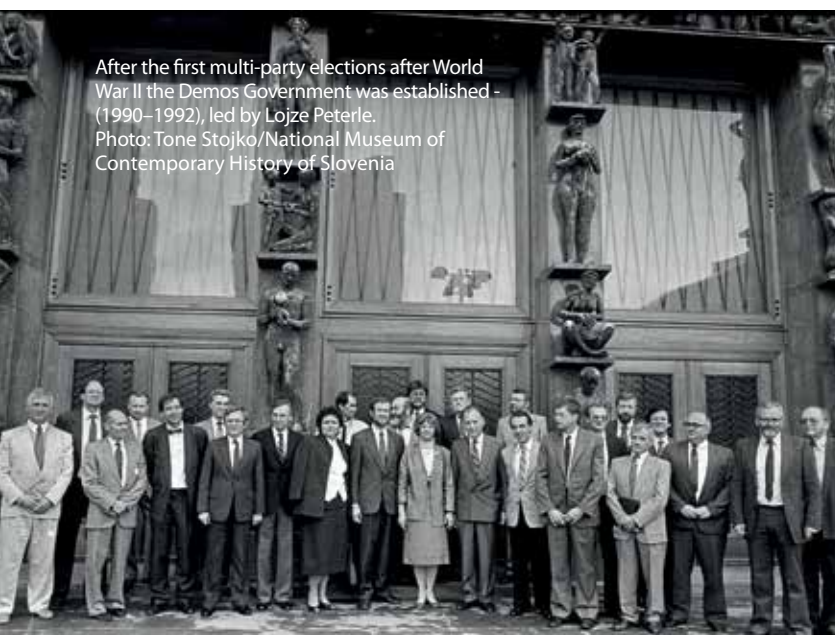
The democratic coalition Demos was established in November 1989. Under the leadership of **Dr Jože Pučnik**, various political

unions formed Demos for joint representation at the elections. The sovereign state of the Slovenian nation and a plural democracy were the two core demands in the programme of Demos, which won at the **first multi-party elections in 1990**, and which managed to form the new Slovenian government under the



Dr Jože Pučnik (1932 – 2003) democrat, former political prisoner and father of the Slovenian state.  
Photo: Tone Stojko/National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia





After the first multi-party elections after World War II the Demos Government was established - (1990–1992), led by Lojze Peterle. Photo: Tone Stojko/National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia

leadership of **Lojze Peterle**. **Igor Bavčar** became the Minister of Interior, **Janez Janša** the Minister of Defence and **Dr Dimitrij Rupel** the Minister for Foreign Affairs. **Milan Kučan** was elected as the President of the Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia and **France Bučar** became the President of the Parliament. Demos was the key actor, not only in the formation of the general consent on the urgency of the independence of the Slovenian nation, which was reflected in the high result of the **plebiscite on 23 December 1990**, but it was also the main actor in the nation's independence, its defence in the war for Slovenia, and its international recognition.

**The path to the independent Slovenian state was difficult and risky, because the opponents made every effort to hinder the realisation of the plebiscite decision.**

The handover of Slovenia's weapons to the JNA without the knowledge of the newly elected government was branded as high treason by Pučnik and Oman.

A military formation began to emerge for the defence of Slovenia and for the protection of the independence processes, which was later named the **Manoeuvre Structure of the National Protection (MSNZ)**. It was the decisive act of MSNZ that, despite its short existence, secured weapons for Slovenia, and it was the **first** one to show the determination and support for democratic efforts.

#### THE WAR FOR SLOVENIA

After the adoption and announcement of the **Declaration of Independence, the Basic Constitutional Charter on the Sovereignty and Independence of the Republic of Slovenia** in the Slovenian assembly on **25 June 1991**, and the formal declarations on **26 June 1991**, the JNA was ordered by the military top command to move towards the Slovenian borders. The JNA started the aggression on Slovenia with more than 22,000 soldiers. Individuals and police officers placed barricades, and the JNA fired its weapons for the first time near Vrhopolje and Vipava valley. In the early morning hours of **27 June**, armoured units made their way from Croatian territory to the Slovenian-Italian



At the plebiscite on 23 December 1990 the vast majority of Slovenians decided for an autonomous and independent Slovenia. Photo: Nace Bizilj/National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia

and Slovenian-Austrian borders, and towards Brnik airport from Vrhnika. The planners of the attack on the then sovereign nation planned to take control of important positions, to close the border, to remove the Territorial Defence (TO), and to establish a puppet regime in Slovenia. Despite prior agreements with Slovenia and the joint defence plan, Croatia did not respond to the movements of the army on its territory, but many Croats on their own initiative set up barricades on in the way of the JNA tanks. Battles broke out at Poganci, Črmošnjice, Trzin, Šentilj, Ormož and Medvedjek. The JNA saw a mass exodus of Slovenian soldiers, and also others, mainly non-Serbian soldiers. The army did not expect an armed resistance of Slovenians. Slovenia then took the initiative with an active defence on **28 June**, and the army responded with air strikes at Brnik airport and in the battle at Trebnje. There were direct conflicts for the border crossings in Rožna dolina near Nova Gorica, Holmec, and elsewhere.

**On 30 June, air-raid sirens were heard throughout the Slovenian territory, and the residents were evacuated to shelters.**

There was an additional mobilisation into the TO, and the JNA planned a more extensive military operation in Slovenia, which is why it also supplemented its units. During the visit of the president of the federal government, Marković, and some JNA generals, to Ljubljana on 30 June, Slovenia demanded a ceasefire and the withdrawal of the JNA units back to the barracks, while the opposing side demanded the release of prisoners and the unblocking of the barracks. Despite the meeting, military actions continued and escalated, because the Yugoslav war planes attacked all the important radio and television transmitters and converters on **2 July** at Nanos, Krvavec, Kum, Boč and Pohorje. On that same day, the TO units and the police attacked the JNA military convoy at the Krakov forest, and the latter surrendered completely. Based on the suspension of the Slovenian independence measures, adopted under the pressure of the negotiators of the European Community, a ceasefire was agreed on **3 July**, as well as the exchange of information in the event of a violation. Observers from the European Community arrived in Ljubljana, as well as the parents of soldiers who served their military service in the JNA during the war in Slovenia. They demanded from the military top command to return their sons. The JNA did not ease

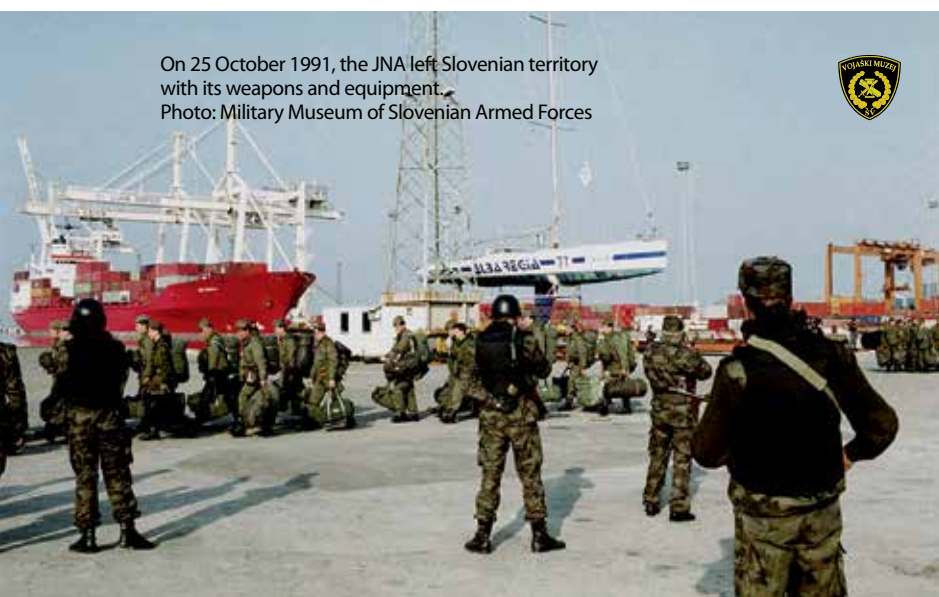


The Slovenian defence and police forces successfully protected the path to independence and won the war for Slovenia. Photo: UKOM

On 26 June 1991, the aggressor, the JNA tried to occupy the Slovenian border crossings.  
Photo: Military Museum of Slovenian Armed Forces



On 25 October 1991, the JNA left Slovenian territory with its weapons and equipment.  
Photo: Military Museum of Slovenian Armed Forces



off, but rather tightened the critical situation, with attacks on the Slovenian and Croatian leadership. On 7 July, at the initiative of the European Community, the representatives of Slovenia, Croatia, and the federal authorities met at Brioni. In exchange for a ceasefire, a postponement of Slovenia's independence processes was demanded. Despite hesitations, the Brioni Declaration was also supported by the Slovenian Assembly on 10 July. The withdrawal of the defeated JNA took place over three months. **In the night of 25 October 1991**, the last ferry carrying JNA soldiers left the port of Koper. The Republic of Slovenia became a sovereign state.

**The victory in the war for Slovenia was majestic. One of the key goals of Demos, the independence of Slovenia, had been reached.**

The victory was achieved mainly because the Slovenian public managed to unify itself, which allowed for the mobilisation of the available resources. Soldiers and police officers had excellent morale, and other sub-systems were also included in the defensive actions which ensured logistical support for the Slovenian armed forces. And the defence was especially well managed; we had a clear chain of command, and controls that ensured the efficiency of the Slovenian army and police, while also preventing any violations of international martial or humanitarian law. This is why the war for Slovenia is the only conflict on the ex-Yugoslav territory that did not have to be defended at the international court for war crimes in The Hague.

During the declaration of the independent state of the Republic of Slovenia, and at the start of the war, the founding assembly of the World Slovenian Congress took place in Cankarjev dom in Ljubljana, which was

attended by compatriots from almost all parts of the world. Their comprehensive support and informing of the global public contributed greatly to obtaining sympathy for Slovenians in their war with the aggressive JNA. Thus, foreign countries and important international political and financial institutions quickly **recognised** the independence and sovereignty of the Republic of Slovenia.

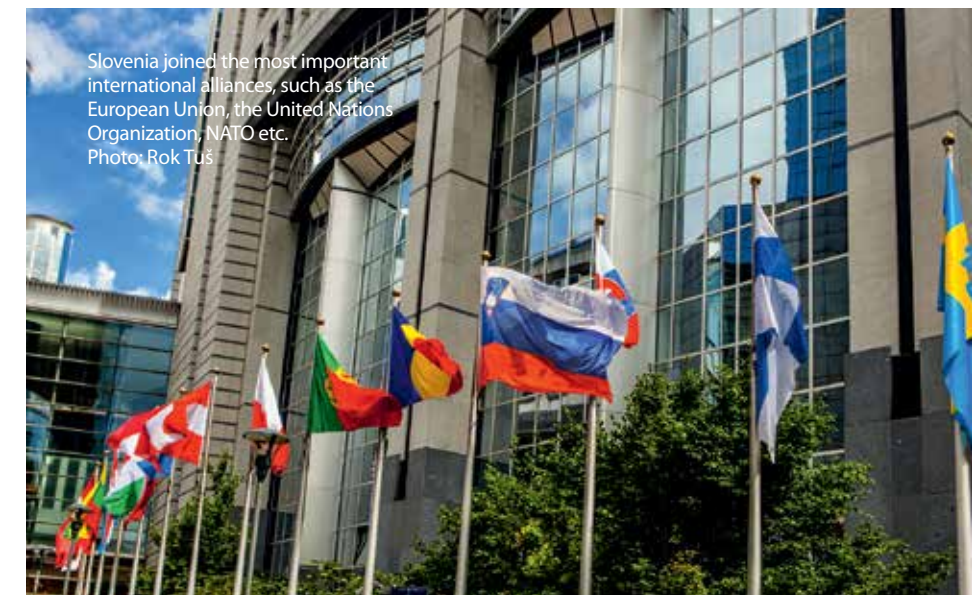
**In addition to the newly established states that experienced similar fates in the past under communism, Slovenia was also quickly recognised by those where emigrants and foreign organisations and individuals were active.**

Austria, Hungary, and Italy recognised us on 15 January 1992, as well as Canada. Australia and Argentina followed the next day. Those that were even quicker included Croatia (26 June 1991), Lithuania (30 June 1991), Georgia (14 August 1991), Latvia (29 August 1991), and Estonia (25 September 1991). The early announcement of the German recognition (19 December 1991) was of crucial importance for the process of international recognition.

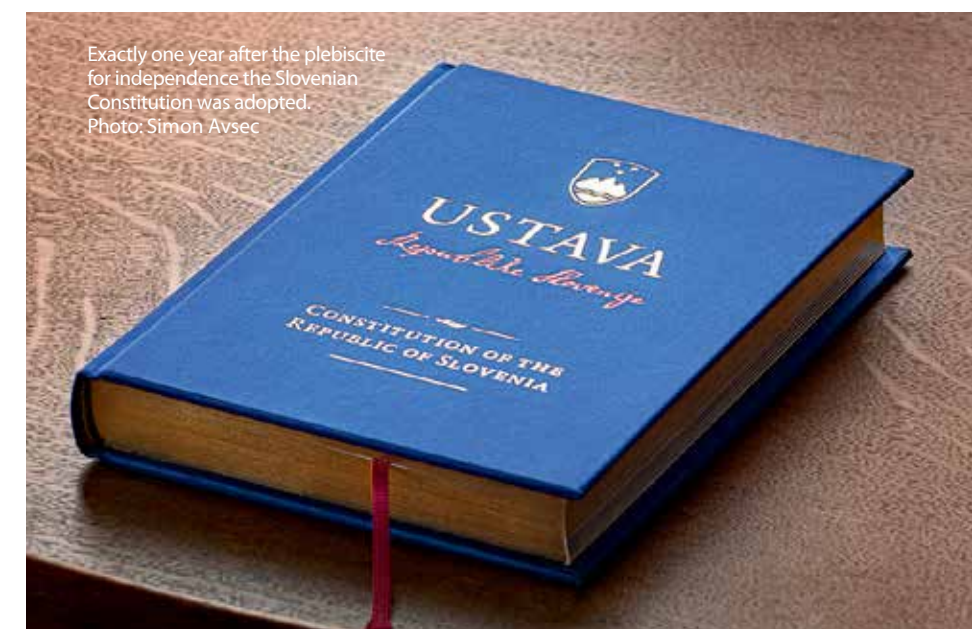
**The triumphant year 1991 concluded with the adoption of the new Constitution on 23 December 1991.**

The independent and sovereign Slovenian state then successfully embarked on the path of being included in international associations (UN, EU, NATO) and towards a bright future for its citizens.

Slovenia joined the most important international alliances, such as the European Union, the United Nations Organization, NATO etc.  
Photo: Rok Tus



Exactly one year after the plebiscite for independence the Slovenian Constitution was adopted.  
Photo: Simon Avsec



# MAIN EVENTS IN 1990 – 1991

FRANCI DONKO  
IRENA KOGOJ

## 1990

**7 MARCH 1990**  
**THE ADOPTION OF THE NAME THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA**

The Slovenian assembly adopts the name the Republic of Slovenia, without the designation "socialist".

**8 APRIL 1990**  
**THE FIRST MULTI PARTY ELECTIONS TAKE PLACE**

The first multi-party elections after the WWII in the three assemblies of the Slovenian Parliament take place, as well as the direct elections of the president and members of the Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia. Demos wins the elections. The leader of the Christian Democrats Lojze Peterle becomes the Prime Minister, Dr Dimitrij Rupel the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Janez Janša the Minister of Defence and Igor Bavčar the Minister of Interior. The elections are not fair as former communist political elite has enormous advantage in finance, media and staff.

**9 MAY 1990**  
**FRANCE BUČAR BECOMES THE PRESIDENT OF THE RS ASSEMBLY**

The Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia meets at its constitutive session. Dr France Bučar of the Slovenian Democratic Union is elected as its president.

**8 JANUARY 1990**  
**DEMOS**

Demos is founded in November 1989 by the Slovenian Democratic Union (SDZ), the Social Democratic Union of Slovenia (SDZS) and the Slovenian Christian Democrats (SKD). Demos was led by Dr Jože Pučnik. In January 1990 the Liberal Party, the Green Party of Slovenia, and the Slovenian Farmer's Party/People's Party join Demos - the Democratic Opposition of Slovenia to win the elections. The main goals of Demos are parliamentary democracy and the right for Slovenians to freely choose their alliances.

**29 MARCH 1990**  
**SLOVENIAN ANTHEM RECOGNISED IN LAW**

The Slovenian anthem, *Zdravljica*, is recognised in law.

**22 APRIL 1990**  
**SECOND ROUND OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS**

Milan Kučan, the former leader of the Communist Party, wins the second round of the presidential elections with 58.6% of votes, Dr Jože Pučnik receives 41.4% of votes.

**15 MAY 1990**  
**DISARMAMENT OF THE SLOVENIAN TERRITORIAL DEFENCE**

The Republic Headquarters of the Slovenian Territorial Defence (TO) issues an order on the disarmament of the TO, an act that endangered Slovenia's independence. The new Demos government is not informed of this, despite the fact that President Kučan and the Presidency know about the disarmament. The weapons are partially or fully retained by only 14 out of 64 municipal TO headquarters.

**16 MAY 1990**  
**THE DEMOS GOVERNMENT**

The Demos government led by the Prime Minister Alojz Peterle is elected. The government consists of the Demos parties and some ministers from other parties. Dr Dimitrij Rupel becomes Minister of Foreign Affairs, Janez Janša Minister of Defence and Igor Bavčar Minister of the Interior.

**2 JULY 1990**  
**DECLARATION OF SOVEREIGNTY**

On the proposal of Demos, the Slovenian National Assembly adopts the Declaration on the Full Sovereignty of the State of the Republic of Slovenia. With this act, the path to Slovenian state independence actually begins.

**4 OCTOBER 1990**

In Ljubljana, a Yugoslav Military Police unit breaks into the Republic Headquarters of the TO, which, however, has already moved to another location. Slovenians are outraged by this dramatic coup of the JNA.

**23 DECEMBER 1990**  
**PLEBISCITE ON SLOVENIAN INDEPENDENCE AND AUTONOMY**

The situation in Yugoslavia is becoming increasingly untenable, so in early November 1990 the leaders of Demos decide to hold a plebiscite on the independence of Slovenia. By voting for an independent state, the Slovenian nation, for the first time in its history, chooses its own destiny. After the successful plebiscite on Slovenian independence on 23 December 1990, which is attended by 93.2 percent of voters and in which 88.5 percent of eligible voters vote for an independent and sovereign Slovenian state, the Slovenian political authorities are bound by the result to implement the decision of the plebiscite within six months.

**17 MAY 1990**  
**HOME GUARD MANOEUVRING STRUCTURE**

The project is led by Ministers Janez Janša and Igor Bavčar, and the organisation entrusted to Anton Krkovič in cooperation with Vinko Beznik. An armed force is formed, consisting of 22,500 members, ready to defend and protect the actions to establish the statehood of Slovenia.

**27 AND 28 SEPTEMBER 1990**

The Assembly adopts constitutional amendments that annul the validity of federal documents that are in conflict with the Slovenian Constitution. The Slovenian TO is transferred to exclusive Slovenian jurisdiction.

**17 DECEMBER 1990**

In Kočevska Reka, the TO covering unit, later named the MORiS Special Brigade, is first publicly 'mustered in' or assembled.

# 1991

## 18 APRIL 1991 MILITARY SERVICE ACT

Heated discussions on military service, relations with the JNA and the federal authorities continue in the Assembly at the April session, where Minister of Defence Janša presents a proposal for the military service act. Once again, calls for peace activism and the rejection of the proposal follow from the left wing, regardless of the aggravated geopolitical situation. The act is adopted on 18 April 1991 and is the basis for the induction of the first generation of Slovenian recruits.

## 25 JUNE 1991 ADOPTION OF THE BASIC CONSTITUTIONAL CHARTER THE CONSTITUTION LAW AND THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

The Declaration of Independence, adopted on 25 June 1991, establishes an independent Slovenian state in the legal sense, and the Basic Constitutional Charter on the Sovereignty and Independence of the Republic of Slovenia, which passes in the vote at the same time as the Constitutional Act, establishes the conditions for the implementation of this Charter. The Slovenian authorities formally take over the rights and property that have until then been the responsibility of the federal state. A number of new administrative institutions are put into operation. Customs offices and their staff are transferred to Slovenia, and Slovenian borders are secured by police officers. Temporary checkpoints were set up on the Slovenian-Croatian border. The Republic of Slovenia is declared an independent and sovereign state.

## 18 MARCH 1991 THE OPERATIONAL COORDINATION GROUP FOR THE COORDINATION OF DEFENCE PREPARATIONS AND THE SECURING OF SLOVENIAN INDEPENDENCE

In the war for Slovenia in 1991, the Coordination Group leads the country's defence against the aggression of the Yugoslav Army (JNA). The Group consists of Igor Bavčar, Janez Janša, Jelko Kacin, Miran Bogataj, Janez Slapar, Tone Krkovič, Vinko Beznik and others.

## 23 MAY 1991 THE INCIDENT IN PEKRE

The JNA reveals its true face and real goals in an incident at the Pekre training centre near Maribor by sending armoured vehicles to the streets, kidnapping the commander of the East Styria TD, shooting at unarmed people and killing Jožef Šimčik in protests held in front of the Maribor barracks. Outrage over JNA actions increases among the the Slovenian public. The events in Pekre are the first serious testing of the balance of power between the JNA and the TO. The people also bravely stand up in support of Slovenian soldiers.

## 26 JUNE 1991 DECLARATION OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF SLOVENIA

The Republic of Slovenia is proclaimed an independent and sovereign state at a ceremony held in front of the Slovenian Parliament on the evening of 26 June 1991. The old symbols are replaced by the new Slovenian flag and coat of arms, as the Slovenian national anthem *Zdravljica* (A Toast) is played. The President of the Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia, Milan Kučan, utters the famous phrase: "Today dreams are allowed, tomorrow is a new day." The Archbishop of Ljubljana, Dr Alojzij Šuštar, symbolically blesses the Slovenian linden tree. There is joy and excitement among Slovenians at the birth of an independent state, but there is also fear of possible military intervention. It soon becomes apparent that the JNA is intensifying its combat readiness, with military aircraft flying over the Slovenian skies and reinforcing border crossings with troops. In the hours that follow, the newly formed state is subjected to armed aggression; in the Primorska region, JNA units under the command of the Reka corps commander, General Čad, have already moved towards the border crossings with Italy the day before. In the Vipava valley, they are first confronted by unarmed locals, who stop tanks with barricades and their own bodies.

## 27 JUNE 1991 THE WAR FOR SLOVENIA

The JNA launches its aggression against Slovenia with a total of over 22,000 men. Following a decree of the Yugoslav government and an order from the Yugoslav military leaders, and in accordance with the pre-arranged Okop plan, its units begin to move against all strategic objectives in Slovenian territory. Despite the lack of weapons and equipment, high morale prevails among the members of the Slovenian armed forces, and all civil defence sub-systems are involved in the defence, providing logistical support to the Slovenian armed forces. The resistance is well led by the coordination group, with a clear command and control structure. This ensures the effectiveness of the Slovenian armed forces and the police, while preventing possible violations of international law on armed conflict.

The victory in the war for Slovenia is indeed glorious. One of Demos's key goals, the independence of Slovenia, around which a broad national, civic and, to some extent, political unity is formed, was achieved. Slovenians at home, abroad and around the world breathe more easily and work towards a common goal.

## 7 OCTOBER 1991 TOLAR THE NEW SLOVENIAN CURRENCY

The Slovenian parliament decides on the Slovenian tolar as its new currency.

## INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

Efforts for international recognition of the independent and sovereign state of the Republic of Slovenia continue. The first countries to recognise Slovenia are Croatia (26 June 1991), Lithuania (30 July 1991), Georgia (14 August 1991), Latvia (29 August 1991), Estonia (25 September 1991) and Ukraine (12 December 1991). The decisive event is Germany's announcement in December that it would recognise the independent and sovereign state of the Republic of Slovenia on 15 January 1992. All EU Member States follow suit, as does the Russian Federation and the United States a few months later. In May 1992, Slovenia becomes a member of the UN.

## 7 JULY 1991 THE BRIONI DECLARATION

On 7 July 1991, at the initiative of the European Community and its chief negotiator Hans van den Broek, representatives of the Republic of Slovenia, the Republic of Croatia and representatives of the Federation gather in Brioni for a special conference. The Slovenian delegation includes Milan Kučan, Lojze Peterle, Dimitrij Rupel, France Bučar and Janez Drnovšek. In exchange for an armistice, the Slovenian authorities are asked to postpone the resumption of the independence process for several months. On 10 July the Slovenian Assembly supports the Brioni Declaration despite reservations. On 18 July 1991, the Yugoslav Presidency decides that the defeated JNA will withdraw completely from Slovenia within three months.

## 25 OCTOBER 1991 WITHDRAWAL OF THE LAST JNA SOLDIERS

The JNA withdrawal takes three months, and on 25 October 1991, under the supervision of the Slovenian armed forces, the last JNA's soldier boards a ferry, which left Slovenian territorial waters in the night. The Republic of Slovenia thus becomes a sovereign state.

## 23 DECEMBER 1991 ADOPTION OF THE CONSTITUTION

The Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia adopts the Slovenian Constitution. The Republic of Slovenia becomes an independent and sovereign state with a modern democratic constitutional order.

## SLOVENIANS ABROAD FOR AN INDEPENDENT SLOVENIA

# Joint Project of all Parts of Slovenia – at Home and Abroad

ANA ŠKET



Slovenians in Melbourne celebrating Australia's recognition of independent Slovenia, 1992 Source: "From Dreams to Reality/Od sanj do resničnosti" Photo: Draga Gelt

Thirty years ago, Slovenians as a nation made one of the most important decisions to make the dream of our ancestors about our own country a reality. This historically significant moment then connected and unified all Slovenians, at home and abroad. An independent and sovereign Slovenia was in fact a joint project of all parts of Slovenia – at home and abroad.

That historic Tuesday, 25 June 1991, when Slovenia solemnly declared itself an independent and sovereign state, resonated not only on Slovenian streets, but all over the world, as compatriots abroad rejoiced together with their homeland. But the next day, when those same streets were occupied by Yugoslav tanks, Slovenians abroad did not stand on the sidelines, but went into action themselves. They organised rallies, wrote protest letters, made numerous phone calls, sent telegrams, and raised funds in support of their homeland.

**Whoever was able to, took advantage of their political contacts to get the governments of the countries in which they lived to recognise the young country as soon as possible.**

Slovenians protested in front of the headquarters of important governmental and international institutions, to warn about the inadmissible aggression of the Yugoslav Army (JNA), calling on them to condemn such conduct and recognise Slovenia's independence. At the declaration of independence, the Slovenian World Congress, established on this occasion as an all-Slovene non-partisan organisation of all Slovenians at home and abroad, organised the All-Slovenian World Congress in Ljubljana, which was attended by representatives of Slovenian communities from all over the world. These delegates played a very important role at that time, as they were able to provide journalists from their countries with first-hand information about the events in Slovenia, and this information was very different from the information published by the officials in Belgrade.

Today in Slovenia we are not aware enough of the important role played by our compatriots abroad in the process of international recognition and promotion of the new state, and how much credit they deserve for Slovenia being marked on the world map as an independent country. Even today, they take advantage of their contacts with the desire to help the homeland make good economic, diplomatic and other connections. The activities of Slovenians abroad started even before June 1991.



Demonstrations in support of independent Slovenia in Buenos Aires. Photo: Zedinjena Slovenija archives

**The idea of an independent Slovenia had been growing among compatriots around the world for many decades before its realisation.**

On the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the demand for a United Slovenia in 1948, France Dolinar (also known as Peter Levičnik), a priest and historian, wrote a booklet titled *Slovenska državna misel* (Slovenian State Thought). In the conclusion of this text, which was reproduced by Slovenians in the Spittal camp in Carinthia, Austria, he wrote: "The Slovenian state, whose leader is the Slovenian political nation in its entirety, is the highest goal of Slovenian politics." In 1950, they also discussed the right to complete national sovereignty in the first issue of the newspaper *Slovenska država* (Slovenian State), which was then published in Chicago and later in Toronto, and was created by the great defender of independent Slovenia, Ciril Žebot; abroad, Franc Jeza was

also promoting the same idea. In the 1980s, this was discussed by speakers who came to the Municipalities of Trieste at Draga. There were many more such initiatives and reflections. The idea of an independent and sovereign Slovenia was always present in the work of the Slovenian emigrant community, and from there it resonated first in the neighbouring countries, and then took root in the homeland.

They were also active in the days before the plebiscite in 1990. At that time, the Executive Council of the Republic of Slovenia received more than six thousand supporting signatures from all over the world. In order to show that they were aware of the necessity of involving Slovenians abroad in the process of independence, and at the same time encourage them to actively engage, members of the Slovene independence government visited almost all the important centres of Slovenian emigrant communities in 1991. Wherever they went, they got the same response – you can count on us.



Demonstrations of Slovenes in Canada in 1991.  
Photo: Slobodnik family



Slovenes from all over Sweden at the 1991 demonstrations in Stockholm.  
Photo: Stanko Ratajc



Demonstrations in Sweden.  
Photo: Karlo Pesjak

# AN EXHIBITION MARKING THE 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF SLOVENIA'S STATEHOOD

## Proud of Slovenia – 30 Years

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ

PHOTO: PARK OF MILITARY HISTORY PIVKA ARCHIVES

40 photos of the exhibition presenting the successes and key events of Slovenia in the 30 years of its independence have been on display since May.

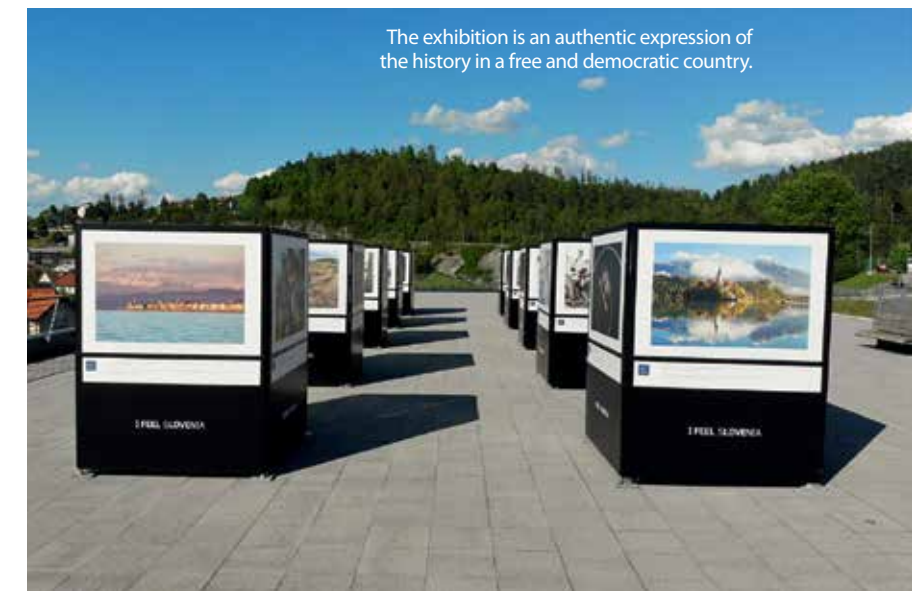


“The exhibition on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of Slovenia’s statehood reminds us that we Slovenes also know how to give seize opportunities, despite the many times we have pushed Sisyphus’ rock up a hill and seen it roll down the slope of history again and again. The events and persons captured in these photos are happy coincidences, like extraordinary mountain peaks rising from a sea of recurring episodes. While navigating through the history imposed on us by others but with the awareness of our national identity and originality, we chose the moments of the historical miracle - the birth of our own country.” These are the words written by the philosopher and conceptual artist Dr Evgen Bavčar, that accompanied the opening of the “Proud of Slovenia - 30 Years” exhibition.

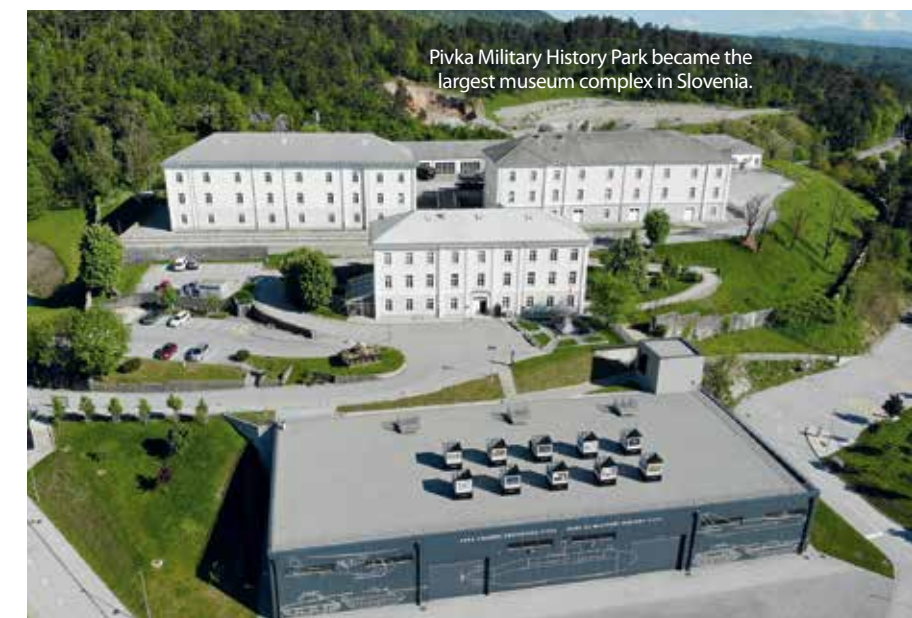
In addition to the permanent exhibition on the process of Slovenia gaining independence, 40 photos that are part of the exhibition presenting the successes and key events of Slovenia in the first 30 years of its independence have been on display in the Park of Military History Pivka since May. It is an authentic expression of the history which we have written ourselves in a free and democratic country.

**The exhibition features photographs that depict the turning points since Slovenian independence was achieved, such as the unfurling of the Slovenian flag on top of Mount Triglav, winning the war to defend our independence, the introduction of our own currency, the Slovenian Constitution, international recognition, the introduction of the euro, high-level governmental visits, sports achievements, economic performance and many of the natural and cultural beauties of the country.**

The exhibition is an authentic expression of the history in a free and democratic country.



Pivka Military History Park became the largest museum complex in Slovenia.



### PATH TO INDEPENDENCE

In 2015, the Park of Military History Pivka completed an important investment in the largest museum complex in Slovenia, a new pavilion, of which a large part is the "Path to Independence" exhibition. After ten years of creating a new story based on the renovation of the decaying old barracks the Park finally became the largest museum complex in Slovenia with the new pavilion, as well as the largest museum collection of military history in this part of Europe.

The "Path to Independence" exhibition in the new building is a major presentation showing the process of gaining independence in Slovenia, with a particular emphasis on the 1991 war. It begins with Yugoslavia and the barracks, continues with the declaration of independence, followed by a symbolic turning point – the fall of the Berlin Wall – and the beginning of the aggression against Slovenia. It is symbolic that a military museum with an

emphasis on Slovenia's attainment of independence was created in the barracks of the former Yugoslav Army (JNA) from which the first tanks drove onto the road on 26 June 1991, with which the aggression of the Yugoslav armed forces began against the newly gained independence of the Republic of Slovenia.

Visitors also encounter a symbolic collapsing wall which separates the old from the new, like a funnel. The collapsing wall symbolises the historical turning points from the 1980s that led to democratisation and the process of Slovenia's gaining independence. A recreation of the living room of a Slovenian family on 27 June 1991, when the historic evening news broadcast with Tomaž Terček was aired on television, evokes nostalgic feelings in visitors. Then there was the war. Reports of that day are broadcast on the television. From the balcony of the apartment you can experience a view looking out over the scene of the War of Independence. Large exhibits spur an interest in historical events, while also reminding visitors that the whole thing was not so innocent.



Opening of the "Proud of Slovenia - 30 Years" exhibition on 15 June. The opening speech was by Janko Boštjančič, Director of the Park of Military History Pivka.

The exhibition space presents all the military technology related to Slovenia's War of Independence: aircraft, tanks, helicopters and other military vehicles.

**In many visitors, the "Path to Independence" exhibition will awaken memories of our nation's recent history, the performance of military service in the JNA, the day of pride when the independent state was declared, and of a time of uncertainty on the one hand, and a firm commitment to establishing our own country on the other.**

Young people who did not experience those days will be able to learn about an important part of the history of our nation.

### FROM DEFENDING AGAINST THE EXTERNAL ENEMY TO DEFENDING AGAINST AN INTERNAL ENEMY

The exhibition gives visitors the experience of the events of the war through direct contact with some important exhibits from that period. The scenic arrangement presenting the penetration of the Yugoslav military unit involves a MiG-21 aircraft, a M-84 tank and BVP and BTR armoured vehicles. The Gazelle helicopter with the mark "Velenje TO-001", which was the first aircraft that managed to defect from the Yugoslav Air Force, and the T-55 tank from a unit based at the Pivka barracks which was the first to start the aggression of the JNA, are important "relics" of the 1991 war. As regards other armoured vehicles of interest, we should also mention a series of BOV vehicles manufactured by the Automobile Factory Maribor, TAM, which took part in various battles, the PT-76 tank and the MT-LBu command vehicle. The BOV M-86 vehicle of the special unit represents, in symbolic terms, the major role of the police in the conflict, and the operational vehicle of the firefighters from Mokronog draws attention to the importance of Slovenian firefighters.

The Park of Military History Pivka now has a new, valuable exhibit – the Mercedes Benz 230-BINZ ambulance, which was donated to the Park for the museum presentation by the Velenje Health Centre. The ambulance is placed in the centre of the "Path to Independence", indicating the important role played by paramedics and other medical staff in the war for Slovenia. "They were fighting for the lives of those who needed them during the war. The medical service of the Slovenian defence relied on civilian structures, and with this vehicle the museum wants to emphasise the important role of medical staff," notes the director of the Park of Military History Pivka, Janko Boštjančič.



Director of the Government Communication Office Uroš Urbanija with Dr Evgen Bavčar, Slovenian philosopher, versatile artist, writer, researcher and photographer at the event in Pivka.



The exhibition is very interesting also for young people.



The exhibition presents sports, diplomatic, economic, etc. achievements.



## ON THIS DAY

# 30 Years ago

DANILO GOLOB

On the day of the plebiscite.  
Photo: Tone Stojko/National Museum  
of Contemporary History of Slovenia



On 23 December 1990, Slovenians voting in a plebiscite decided to live in an independent country. It was on that day that the famous words of Dr Jože Pučnik, the president of the Demos coalition, echoed throughout Slovenia: "Yugoslavia is no more. Now it's time for Slovenia."

30 years ago, Slovenia decided to secede from Yugoslavia and start its own independent journey. The year 1991 that followed was not easy. Political skill, wisdom and courage helped Slovenia overcome all obstacles placed before it, thus becoming a young and successful country.

### SURVEY OF AN IMPORTANT YEAR

Who were the key actors that led us on the path to independence? Who sought solutions and made compromises? What were the differing views on an independent Slovenia? How did



Solemn session at the announcement of  
the plebiscite results, 26 December 1990.  
Photo: Nace Bizilj/National Museum of  
Contemporary History

Slovenians cope with the challenges that lay ahead of them? Which events, documents, and decisions that marked the future of our country were the most important? These are just a few of the questions that authors of articles in "On this day" are providing answers to.

The project, led by the Government Communication Office on the 30th anniversary of Slovenia's independence, was launched on 23 December 2020, and will run until the end of 2021.

**The Government Communication Office invited external authors and researchers, including historians, journalists, commentators, political analysts, and more to contribute. Experts from the Study Centre for National Reconciliation are also participating in the project.**

The authors are researching Slovenia's history from 23 December 1990 until the end of 1991, and are writing various articles on the early days of its independence. They are using newspapers from those times (Delo, Dnevnik, Večer) as sources, as well as foreign newspapers that were published during these months, reporting on events in Slovenia and on the independence-related activities of our compatriots. A very important source of information is the literature that gives a broad insight into the events of those times, as well as the independence acts of the Republic of Slovenia. The articles are peer reviewed by Dr Andreja Valič Zver, a historian and author of original scientific articles, monographs and educational materials, and an expert on Slovenia's independence period.

**The website to mark 30 years of Slovenia's independence, accessible at gov.si/slovenija30, publishes a new article every day that sheds light on the events of that same day three decades ago.**



On 2 June 1991: Oath of the first Slovenian recruits. Photo: Military Museum of Slovenian Armed Forces



In cooperation with the National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia, the article also includes photographs from that period, which allow the reader to come closer to this period in history.

With each article the heartbeat of those times is felt even more. Even though every article stands on its own, they are linked and create a unified collection. The final aim of the project is to have a book of all the articles that will present the actions and events that marked the early days of Slovenia's independence between 23 December 1990 and the end of 1991.

The website, gov.si/slovenija30, which the Government Communication Office launched on the 30th anniversary of Slovenia's independence, hosts all "On this day" articles, in the section "30 years ago", published from 23 December 2020 until today.

The authors of the scientific articles are: Marko Balažič, Dr Matic Batič, Jani Drnovšek, Mirjam Dujo Jurjevčič, mag. Jurij P. Emeršič, Boštjan Furlan, Blaž Karlin, Matej M. Kavčič, Marta Keršič, Tomaž Kladnik, Tino Mamič, Aleš Maver, Martin Nahtigal, Dr Jelka Piškurič, Dr Renato Podbersič, Lenart Rihar, Neža Strajnar, and Aleš Žužek.

## 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF SLOVENIA'S INDEPENDENCE

# Veterans of Slovenia's War of Independence

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ  
PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVES

One of the sections on the government's website dedicated to the 30th anniversary of Slovenia's independence is dedicated to war veterans, who spoke and shared with us their memories of the events of that time when the destiny of Slovenia was being decided. A summary of a few things to bear in mind is presented below.



"We were the first generation to go to the army after secondary school, we went to university only after completing our military service," recalls the current **Minister of the Interior, Aleš Hojs**, who was drafted into the Territorial Defence (TO) several times during his studies to participate in military exercises. He was drafted during the war, but as he points out, he more or less spent it waiting for something to happen, and did not take up arms as there were not enough weapons because Slovenia had been disarmed. "It was then that we actually experienced how the whole nation, both those who were under arms and those who were not, stood up to get their own country," he added. "During the Ten-Day War, I was at home one day, as I was waiting to be called up, when I heard a sudden and violent explosion relatively close to me. We all went outside, and I even climbed onto the roof of my home, to see a huge cloud of smoke some 400 metres away. We learned later that a helicopter had been shot down as it was flying over Rožna Dolina. It had actually first flown over the presidential and government palaces, and because it failed to observe the no-fly zone it was shot down, and unfortunately there were fatalities. I didn't think, though, that the Yugoslav People's Army would disintegrate so fast. I was very surprised by how quickly this large machine fell apart. But if I take a look back at the years when I served in the army, this doesn't actually seem so unusual, as everything was on shaky foundations even then. This is to say that everything was just a big façade, there was a lot of talk and a lot of money, but there was no sense of affiliation or desire for such an army to be protected and survive. ,

**I wish that all our citizens, in the year of the 30th anniversary of independence, will have a great deal of pride in having an independent state and, of course, I would like for all of us to be aware of how privileged a generation we were to be able to achieve this in our lifetimes, that we were there, so to speak.**

I also urge us all, and in particular the younger generation, to always cherish and nurture this value so that it will grow with us."

**Franc Kangler, State Secretary at the Ministry of the Interior**, points out that alongside the TO, it was the police that was the greatest real force able to resist the then Yugoslav Army (JNA). During the period of Slovenia's efforts towards independence, he was employed by the police as a criminal investigator. The police played a very significant role at that time. In addition to the performance of regular tasks, they were also actively engaged in the defence of the homeland.

**Nobody expected such coexistence, cooperation or rebellion of the Slovene Police, the TO and the Slovenian nation.**

The fact that they could count on the Slovenian nation was a clear advantage the police had in some operational tasks against the JNA. The police could rely on the assistance and support of the people, and above all police officers played an important role in blocking roads, barracks and other facilities that were part of important military infrastructure," Kangler further explained.



**Karolina Cvikl is a veteran of Slovenia's War of Independence and a member of the Association for the Values of Slovenian Independence.** She shared her story with us from the time when she decided in the most difficult moments to leave the JNA and join the TO. "It was that Sunday when everything pointed to an air raid, and I no longer went to work on Monday. I went to the staff of the TO in Laško to join them. How did my co-workers in my previous job, the Yugoslav People's Army, take this? With great difficulty. It was not clear to them why I'd done this, but I made that decision because I was a conscious Slovenian. Moreover, I already perceived the JNA as the enemy. So things were extremely bad between us, and they refused to return my employment record to me. After having waited for two months, it was the last day when I was expected to bring the record to the Municipality of Laško so that they could send it to Ljubljana. Since I still hadn't received it I decided to go there myself and get it on my own, even though my husband objected and said that things had been pretty bad down there, and so I shouldn't go. Still, I went and I wasn't afraid. Some members of the TO were there, the Yugoslav People's Army was surrounded, and a TO employee stopped me and asked where I was going, and I told him I was going to get my employment record. He wanted to know how, and I told him that I was just going to get it. I said they didn't send it to me, according to the instructions from the municipality, so I'm going to get it today because it's the last day. And he let me pass."





Thirty years ago, the **veteran Sonja Majer worked at the Secretariat of Defence in Domžale.**

**“If I look back I believe it was quite challenging, even though we did not realise it then. It was only later that we understood what might have happened.”**

“I remember, I believe it was already at the end of the war when a transmitter was attacked. We got pretty scared back then. All of a sudden there was the sound of an air-raid siren and we all reacted, some getting under the desks and others seeking shelter elsewhere. We didn’t know exactly what was going on. It was shocking. We feared for ourselves, for our families, our children. We didn’t know what was going to happen. We were filled with uncertainty.”



On 27 June 1991, **veteran Zoran Dernovšek – Raketka member of the TO and a skillful operator of the Strela 2M anti-aircraft missile system**, shot down the first enemy helicopter during the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Thirty years later, he remembers that fateful day of shooting down the Yugoslav People’s Army helicopter. It was undoubtedly one of the most important events of that time, with a decisive impact on the course of events. “I aimed the Strela 2M missile at the leader of the squadron and, after it had flown over the last houses in Ig, I launched the missile. Its flight was quite unusual, very low. I got the helicopter just 5 to 7 seconds before it would have launched its own missiles. If I hadn’t, its missiles would have flown in our direction. I am often told that it was nothing extraordinary. That I just fired a missile. But we forget that the TO troops were forced into the war from our lives as civilians. We were not trained psychopaths and killers. None of us showed up to kill people.

**We all hoped that there would be no war at all. I can say that each and every one of us hoped that things would not go as far as they did.**

It was crystal clear to me that, if I launched that missile, I might kill somebody. So when I was making my decision to launch it I was shaking like a leaf. I had to decide, but I could have decided to do anything. Once I finally took my decision to launch the missile, the situation was as if I were in the training ground, where we practiced shooting, and I acted calmly as if I were in training and not in a war. Time literally slowed right down. While the missile was in the air, time stood still. The whole war can be captured in this feeling. We had enough courage not to wait, not to be complacent, because complacency could have cost us the country we have today.”

Some lost their lives in the struggle against the JNA. **Jernej Molan** was one of them, and **his daughter Jasmina Molan talked about her father’s sacrifice:** “My father’s sacrifice is something sacred for me, it is the foundation, something that will be written in the history of our country.

**I believe that all the victims of the war of independence are an important foundation of our country.**

It is about the way our fathers decided to go to war, even at the cost of their lives. We should be grateful to them for having our own country, democratic, independent, with the rule of law and a welfare state. I will always fight all those who will make a mockery out of the victims of the War of Independence, because of their low number, or the short duration of this war.

**We should keep in mind that there was a real war in Slovenia, that there were victims who had names and loved ones, and we should be grateful to them that we are living in our own country today.**

My dad died on the first day of the war, and this in a way my childhood ended and my view of the family changed, and got a completely new understanding of things.”

“Due to the proximity of the military airfield at Cerklje ob Krki, sirens often warned us in Brežice of potential air raids, and therefore my father and his coffin was kept at home and not in a chapel of rest. I didn’t want to say goodbye to him, or rather I was not able to do so, because I could not accept the fact that he was really gone. My farewell from him was very quick, I walked into the room where his coffin was, but quickly went out. I did not attend his funeral. My mother respected this decision and accepted it.”



The solid foundations of the country were laid thirty years ago, with the decision of the Slovenes to become independent. Although Slovenia was ready to peacefully secede from Yugoslavia, the war could not be avoided. That is why the Slovenian nation cultivates a spirit of gratitude and takes a respectful approach to the independence fighters and all the victims of the War of Independence. There would be no independent Slovenia without

their sacrifice. That is why we are now expressing our gratitude and deep respect.

See also:  
<https://www.gov.si/zbirke/projekti-in-programi/30-let-samostojnosti-slovenije/slovenijo-cutim/pogovori-z-veterani-in-njihovimi-svojci/>

## WITH LOVE FOR THE HOMELAND

# 30 Peaks for 30 Years

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ  
TANJA GLOGOVČAN BELANČIČ



On 12 June 1991, the Slovenian flag flew for the first time on the summit of our highest mountain - Triglav.  
Photo: Joco Žnidaršič

Slovenia is a visionary state. The 30th anniversary of Slovenia is celebrated by all Slovenes - those living at home and abroad. Peaks and years - in 30 years of independence, Slovenes have accomplished many things, seeded many positive surprises, many first-time visitors keep coming back, Slovenes have reinforced their position vis-a-vis other countries in many areas e.g. tourist opportunities, unspoiled nature, language specificities, culinary delights. Our athletes have been conquering the peaks, artists have been inspiring other world-renowned artists and our politicians have been representing Slovenia on the diplomatic floor in most favourable light.

Upon marking the 30th anniversary of independent Slovenia, the Communication Office of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia has created a project entitled 30 Peaks for 30 Years.

**The underlying idea is to interconnect the values of independence and the *I Feel Slovenia* green brand.**

### STEP BY STEP

Slovenians are an Alpine nation - hiking, climbing, and mountaineering are our preferred ways to spend free time. We like hills and mountains, they are in our genes, they are our heritage, our present and future. In the past, it was on these very mountains and hills that Slovenes fought for and won independence and autonomy through perseverance. Moreover, they are embellished with symbolism, as on the 30th anniversary of the state independence, Slovenia is at the summit of the European Union. We have linked the project to the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and thus added an international dimension.

**In cooperation with the Alpine Association of Slovenia and the Slovenian Mountaineering Club Skala - mountaineering club association, we have selected a set of 30 peaks.**



Lisca is one of the points of the extended Slovenian Mountain Trail.  
Photo: Jošt Gantar/www.slovenia.info

There's a story, and many curiosities, behind every one of them. The peak selection covers peaks throughout Slovenia, and offers something for everyone. The majority of them can be explored all year round. The selection of peaks is regionally dispersed and of great national significance. After all, Slovenians fought their way to freedom on these very mountains and hills. For example, Cesarski vrh is a forested hill in Notranjska, where the Territorial Defence (TO) stopped the armoured units of the Yugoslav People's Army on 2 July 1991. A memorial plaque of the Slovenian Armed Forces is placed at the top of Cesarski vrh to commemorate this event. The Gotenica area had been a military zone until independence. Krvavec is more than just a popular ski resort and visitor attraction in the summer, as it was actually an enemy target during the war of independence. The Yugoslav People's Army attacked the Krvavec broadcasting centre. On Kum, or Zasavski Triglav as it is often called by the locals, there is a television transmitter that was of strategic importance during the war of independence. The Zasavje Regional Association of Veterans of the War for Slovenia

placed a monument on the transmitter, to commemorate two air raids during the Slovenian War of Independence. After independence, Donačka gora was declared a natural monument. It was also the first marked tourist and mountain trail in Slovenia. Črni vrh is the highest peak in Pohorje, which is a popular hiking spot for the inhabitants of the town along the banks of the Drava river. The way up to Črni vrh leads through forests, meadows and past many homesteads.

**Furthermore, we have published a stamp book in which hikers can collect stamps.**

Those who receive stamps from all 30, 20 or 10 selected peaks will receive a token prize. Hikers are invited to take a photo or create a short video clip on the selected peaks, which would then be published on government social networks and on the 30 years of independent Slovenia website.



Črna Prst is a paradise for lovers of mountain flowers.  
Photo: Jošt Gantar/www.slovenia.info

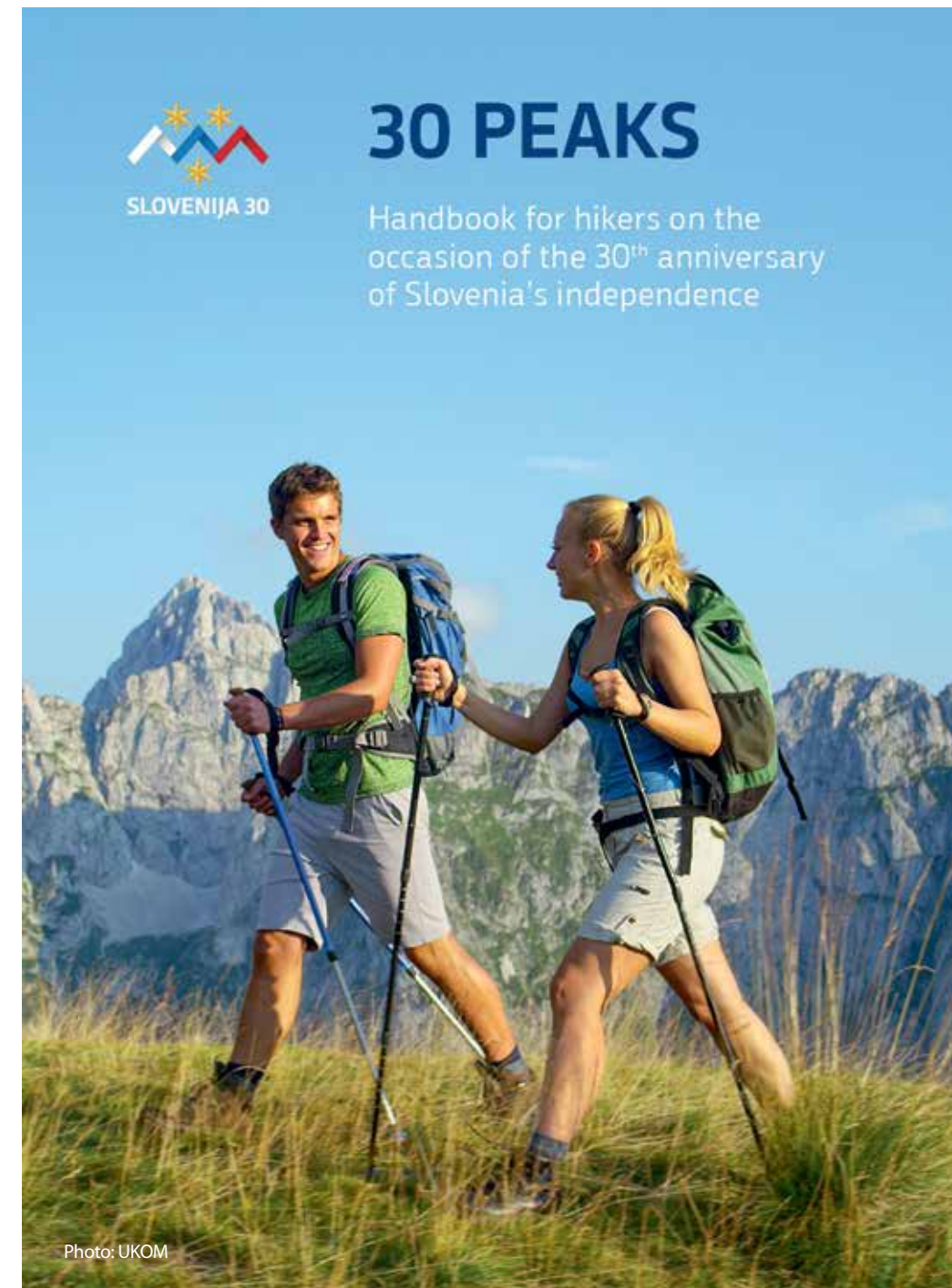


Photo: UKOM

**STAMP BOOK**

The booklet offers interesting suggestions on where to go on a Sunday trip. We wish you great pleasure and many outstanding experiences in conquering the peaks. Enjoy nature, be proud of the history of independence, let the Slovenian cultural heritage enrich you and let physical activity strengthen your mind, body, and soul. The trails leading to the 30 peaks will reward you with magnificent views and fresh air; moreover, you can experience the bravery and determination of Slovenes 30 years ago, when a decision of having an independent state was merely a wish - some of them sacrificed their lives for an independent state.

DR ANŽE LOGAR, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## The Highlights of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU 2021

NATAŠA BUŠLJETA, TANJA GLOGOVČAN BELANČIČ  
PHOTO: MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ARCHIVES



**On 1 July 2021, Slovenia will take over the Presidency of the Council of the EU for the second time since joining the European Union on 1 May 2004. You were part of the Slovenian government during the first Presidency in 2008, so you know very well what a difficult task it is. What are your goals for the second Presidency, taking into account the experience as well as the current difficult circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic?**

One of the fundamental priorities of Slovenia as the presiding country of the Council of the European Union will be to contribute to coping more effectively with various crisis situations, which due to their nature or scope exceed the capabilities of individual Member States, and therefore require a joint response at the EU level. These situations include, in particular, pandemics and various forms of modern security threats, such as large-scale cyber-attacks.

**Among its priorities, Slovenia also highlights the EU's economic recovery, where the main goal is the effective implementation of the NextGenerationEU financial instrument and the mechanism for recovery and resilience.**

The main elements of the recovery will be the green transition and digital transformation. We will focus on the low-carbon circular economy, and begin by addressing the comprehensive energy and climate package – “Fit for 55”. One of the key tasks of the Slovenian Presidency will be the preparation of the EU mandate for the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Slovenia will also strive for progress in the field of digitalisation, where the focus will be on the Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act, the purpose of which is to establish global standards in the field of regulation of online platforms.

The next priority of the Presidency will be the Conference on the Future of the European Union, whose constituent session was

held in Strasbourg on 9 May. An active debate with citizens on key challenges, priorities and the future of Europe in general will take place at the time of our Presidency, as well as a strategic discussion at the highest level. Citizens as well as EU institutions, national parliaments and other stakeholders will be involved in the debate.

**Slovenia will pay particular attention to strengthening the Union based on the rule of law and the European way of life.**

We will lead the debate on the European Commission's annual report on the state of the rule of law in the EU. A fundamental value of the EU for us includes Schengen, which directly affects the quality of life of Europeans, so we will draw attention to the need for a fully functional Schengen area. We will continue to coordinate our positions on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. It is extremely important that Member States find the right balance between responsibility and solidarity.

**In the field of external relations, much attention will be paid to strengthening transatlantic relations, the strategic debate on the Indo-Pacific region and the Western Balkans.**

We will focus on the social and economic recovery of the Western Balkans region following the pandemic, and the sustainable development and progress of the countries of the region on their path to the European Union. We are planning a number of activities that include efforts to establish a common regional market in the Western Balkans, implement the Green Agenda, improve connectivity within the region and with the EU, enhance research and innovation, and provide a positive outlook for young people. We will also pay special attention to the cyber security and resilience of the region. To this end, an EU-WB Summit will be held in early October.

**In the last year, not only Europe but the whole world has gone through probably one of the most difficult crises since World War II. What do you think we have learned from this crisis in the European Union, and how can we strengthen its resilience?**

The pandemic has taught us that we can only be successful if EU Member States work together and respond in a coordinated way. In the last year, some of the foundations on which the EU has grown, such as the internal market, have been put to the test.

**During our Presidency, we therefore want to encourage further reflection on the lessons learned and experiences of the COVID-19 crisis in all the relevant EU areas.**

We believe that Europe's crisis response needs to be improved, and a more coherent division of roles between the various actors at EU and Member State level needs to be defined. Slovenia wants to strengthen the EU's capacities, the so-called strategic auto-

my of the EU, and also ensure the availability of medicines and medical devices, and to accelerate research and development. We will also work to strengthen cyber resilience. The uncertainty brought about by COVID-19 and the increased degree of digitalisation have further revealed the possible extent of the consequences that a large-scale cyber-attack can have on virtually every area of our lives.

**What will be the main task of the Slovenian Presidency in the field of green and digital renewal of the European economy? Can we highlight some of our good practices in this area?**

We will focus on the NextGenerationEU instrument and the recovery and resilience mechanism. The main purpose is to make the best use of their implementation to accelerate the green and digital transition. Under the European Green Deal, the focus will be on the "Fit for 55" climate and energy package, which will ensure that the enhanced climate target of -55% greenhouse gas reduction by 2030 is properly translated into European law. An important task will be to coordinate the EU mandate for the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which will be held in November this year in Glasgow.



Dr. Anže Logar with Pope Francis, Rome 2020.



At the beginning of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU, the Slovenian Foreign Minister Dr. Anže Logar received the Minister of State and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Portuguese Republic, Dr. Augusto Santos Silva. This is the first visit of the Portuguese Foreign Minister to Slovenia in fourteen years.

The Slovenian Presidency will focus on various aspects of digitalisation.

**We will focus on the regulation of digital services and digital markets, the purpose of which is to establish a global standard in the field of online platforms based on European values.**

In addition to this, we will focus on digital sovereignty and the field of artificial intelligence, where Slovenia is traditionally very ambitious. We advocate a human-centred approach to artificial intelligence, based on ethical standards and human rights. The democratic world should be the first to establish an appropriate legal framework for the development and use of artificial intelligence in Europe. Otherwise, others will write our rules of artificial intelligence.

In Slovenia, we have more than 40 years of experience in the field of management, development and research of artificial intelligence.

**Last year, a global centre for artificial intelligence was established in Slovenia under the auspices of UNESCO, hosted at the Jožef Stefan Institute.**

During the Presidency, we will organise various events to promote the progress made in the field of artificial intelligence in Slovenia, including a conference on high-level artificial intelligence.

**The consolidation of the European perspective for the Western Balkan countries is also among the priorities of the Slovenian Presidency. During the Presidency, you are planning to organise an EU summit on the Western Balkans in Slovenia. In your opinion, what are the key challenges facing the region and the European Union towards the integration of these countries into the EU?**

Slovenia emphasises that the region is one of the key geostrategic priorities of the EU, so it must strengthen its activities, its presence and, last but not least, the funds for the development of the



region. One of the greatest challenges of our Presidency will be finding sufficient political will, both within the EU and in the region, to address even the most difficult issues in the region in a constructive way.

The fact is that the stability and development of the region and its placement in European integration processes are in the essential and vital interest of the Republic of Slovenia.

**In this context, during its EU Presidency Slovenia will work to help the countries of the region take a step forward in approaching the EU, both in the context of the enlargement process and through the implementation of specific projects in the field of economic, energy, digital and infrastructure connectivity.**

During its Presidency, Slovenia will also pay special attention to the implementation of the Green Agenda in the region, and to those projects that are crucial for the gradual transformation of the Western Balkan countries into sustainable and green economies.

**Last but not least, Slovenia will strive to strengthen the positive perspective of young people in the region, who are the future and hope of the Western Balkan countries.**

In this regard, it is important for Slovenia that the countries of the region are involved in the debate on the future of Europe, as the region is at the heart of the continent and as such is extremely important for our common future.

**In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges facing the EU and their underlying causes, and what is your vision with regard to addressing them?**

Leaving aside the full range of challenges facing the EU in the global and regional strategic environment, one of the key challenges, especially in the EU's foreign policy field, is the weak or diminishing will of the Member States to seek consensus. Maybe this is also the reason for other challenges reflected in allegations of the EU's inactivity and late response, the rigidity in addressing

neighbourhood and cyberspace challenges, and a lack of consensus needed for the EU's strategic action in the world.

**In this context, we have been discussing for some time the adaptation of the working methods of the Foreign Affairs Council, in order to better ensure the consensual decision-making provided for in the area of the Common Foreign and Security Policy in the Lisbon Treaty.**

Some Member States may also want adjustments to qualified majority voting. In any case, the European family needs to talk openly, but at the same time I think that we could give the High Representative more power for proactive approaches in the foreign policy stage. This would make the EU more responsive and, above all, more recognisable.

**The balance of geopolitical power between the world's largest economic as well as political rivals is also changing considerably. The EU has always been an important actor in promoting democratic values, prosperity and peace in the world. What impact does the EU have in this context in the world today?**

As one of the world powers, the EU plays an indispensable role in ensuring and promoting democratic values. Notwithstanding the current discussions on the conduct of some Member States, the EU is an actor in the international community which stands for stability, predictability, a commitment to cooperation and multilateralism, international law and the principles of respect for human rights. In its work, the EU seeks to keep pace with constant changes in the geopolitical context, while maintaining its fundamental values, such as democracy and the rule of law. An additional element to consider is also defining the power of states in a global context. Increasingly, the power of states, in addition to military power, is defined in terms of digitalisation and technological progress. In the context of catching up with technological research, the EU needs to take quite a few rapid steps to catch up with the pace of modern times.

**My assessment is that we need to build a strong commitment to transatlantic cooperation, also with a focus on deeper economic integration.**

At the same time, Slovenia is a promoter of the so-called EU commitment to the Indo-Pacific region, which is an important geopolitical and geo-economic area. In the future, the EU must seek as much joint action as possible with countries that share democratic values and have a desire for a secure and stable world – especially Japan, India, Australia, and South Korea, but also seek coordinated action with other third countries in key areas such as climate change.

**This year, we are celebrating 30 years of an independent Slovenia. Do you think that Slovenians have successfully achieved their goals in these years? Did we manage to maintain the sense of enthusiasm, unity and courage of that time?** We can certainly be proud, and many things have been achieved. But sometimes it seems that we started strong but lost our momentum later on. Whilst we have maintained a development advantage over other post-transition countries, this advantage has

diminished sharply, and in certain areas we even have to acknowledge the superiority of others. Our weakness was shown especially during the financial crisis, partly due to slow action and the (non)functioning of the judicial system.

**There was also a lack of awareness that the young state needed to strengthen its state and civic awareness.**

I am talking here about that healthy patriotism, which in our country is too often branded as nationalism. Not enough patriotism quickly leads to a lack of courage to act confidently in international relations; such a foreign policy is sometimes silent, while other times it behaves like the centre of the world, and usually both at the wrong time.



Upon handing over the baton, the Minister of State and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Portuguese Republic Dr Augusto Santos Silva said to the Slovenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr Anže Logar: "I wish you a wonderful Presidency and emphasize that the Portuguese Republic is your biggest supporter."

**The fact is that under the current government Slovenia has also made great progress in cooperating with countries whose representatives more recent governments have failed to meet. What is the reason for this?**

Slovenia's foreign policy became a bit tired and exhausted after the first Presidency of the EU. The major objectives were met, and then the country ran out of vision. The 2015 foreign policy strategy partially addressed this shortcoming, but unfortunately only on paper. The actual foreign policy did not follow these guidelines, especially in the areas of Central Europe, the Mediterranean and transatlantic. In 2015, the government knew intuitively what the right path was, but overall there was not enough courage to implement these guidelines. In practice, the system was often subordinated to its ideological prejudices and selectively pursued economic interests when choosing foreign policy partners. Therefore, today, when we are updating the strategy, we are keeping the key orientations but adding emphases that will also enable the realisation of strategic alliances and foreign policy goals in the future.

**What is your hope for Slovenians in this jubilee year, and in the light of the Slovene Presidency, to all of us Europeans and the world?**

To be proud of how far we have come and to maintain the momentum and optimism for the next steps. Together we can do this!

**Why are there such differences in the EU regarding compliance with EU law and democratic principles? What are Slovenia's plans in this area?**

Upon accession to the EU, all Member States commit themselves to respect the fundamental values – including the rule of law and democracy – as set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union. These values are reflected in the European way of life, and unite us in a unique transnational connection, such as the EU, regardless of the different historical, cultural and national identities and contexts that make us say that we are "united in diversity". Both Member States and EU institutions are responsible for the compliance with these values.

**During its Presidency, Slovenia will strive for synergies between the already existing mechanisms for strengthening the rule of law.**

Among other things, it will lead the continuation of the annual Rule of Law Dialogue in two parts. Within the General Affairs Coun-

cil, namely in the general discussion on the rule of law throughout the EU, and in a specific debate on the situation in the third group of five Member States (Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, and Lithuania) on the basis of the second annual Rule of Law Report. Our aim is to transcend divisions, in an effort to better understand fundamental values and learn about the different systems in the Member States.

Respect for the rule of law on the basis of the same criteria is essential for citizens' confidence in the judicial system. As you know, the confidence of our citizens in the judicial system is low. We need to fix this, but the key responsibility for this lies with the representatives of the judiciary, not the government or parliament.

**In addition to the areas to which Slovenia will pay the most attention during its Presidency, there is also a debate on the future of Europe. How do you see it?**

The debate on the future of Europe is, in essence, a reflection on what kind of Europe we want in the future. In its structure, it is a multi-level forum that will involve as wide a circle of citizens as possible, and will listen to their ideas.

The Conference on the Future of Europe started on 9 May, Europe Day. There is a great interest among citizens across the EU in participating in this debate and consultations, and many suggestions from individual actors on the European stage have already been heard. All proposals and ideas will be published on a special multilingual digital platform prepared for this purpose by the European Commission. I want as many Slovenes as possible to take an active part in this debate. Otherwise, our views will not be in the final documents of the conference, and this would be a significant missed opportunity. So, let's be active!

**Acting as President of the EU Council, Slovenia will also stimulate a strategic debate on our common future.**

Therefore, the title of this year's Bled Strategic Forum will be "The Future of Europe". We will invite European leaders to present their visions of the Europe of tomorrow. We will talk about issues such as European values, institutional change, strategic partnerships, demographics, and strategic autonomy. In late autumn, we are also planning a consultation of former leaders who have marked the last decades of European policy, to discuss their experiences and opportunities for changing our common Union. I thus invite you to follow this year's 16th edition of the Bled Strategic Forum, you won't be bored!



**Dr Anže Logar**, born on 15 May 1976, graduated from the Faculty of Economics in Ljubljana in 2000, obtained his master's degree from the Faculty of State and European Studies in January 2006, and his doctoral degree from the School of Advanced Social Studies in July 2016. From 2000 to January 2003, he worked as a product manager in the marketing department at SKB banka. He then continued his career in the European Parliament.

In both governments under Prime Minister Janez Janša, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia appointed him Director of the Government Communication Office. During Slovenia's first Presidency of the Council of the EU, he was the spokesperson of the Slovenian EU Council Presidency. Later he joined the Economic Diplomacy Division within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as Minister Plenipotentiary for OECD relations.

In the 2014–2018 term, Dr Logar was a deputy in the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia. During this time, he headed the commission of inquiry established to identify those responsible for abuses in the Slovenian banking system. In 2018, he was once again elected deputy. Until recently, he was head of the Commission for Public Finance Control.

# Artificial Intelligence at the Heart of Slovenia's Presidency

MIHAJELA ČRNKO

Following the official establishment of the International Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence under the auspices of UNESCO (IRCAI) in October 2020, the Centre has established a dialogue to promote research excellence and multi-stakeholder discussion at the intersection of artificial intelligence and sustainable development. The programs developed within the first six months of its establishment were presented at the official launch event, with a roadmap for work across the Slovenian Presidency.

A launch event for IRCAI, which was founded by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and is based at the Jožef Stefan Institute, was held on 29-30 March. Over 1100 registered individuals from 123 countries attended and were addressed by esteemed speakers on the first day of the event.

**The aim of the event was to present IRCAI's work on AI and sustainable development to relevant stakeholders and the public. Synergies were established between IRCAI's strategic goals and the main objectives of the Slovenian Presidency, with a clear understanding of the potential and with concrete plans for creating a global network of excellence in the area of AI and sustainable development.**



Photo: Screen grab of speakers at the opening: the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Mr Borut Pahor, the Director General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Ms Audrey Azoulay, the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of Slovenia, Prof Simona Kustec, the Minister of Public Administration of Slovenia, Mr Boštjan Koritnik, the Director of the Jožef Stefan Institute Prof. Boštjan Zalar, Anthony Whelan, Digital Policy Adviser from the cabinet of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, the Director of IRCAI, Prof. John Shawe-Taylor

The representative of the European Commission Anthony Whelan, Digital Policy Adviser in the cabinet of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, noted in his speech at the launch that "it is indeed a nice coincidence that the Slovenian Presidency is preparing to work with such an excellent asset on its doorstep, and we hope that this will also serve as a flagship for international efforts". Other speakers also pointed out the importance of having artificial intelligence at the heart of Slovenia's Presidency.

Since IRCAI was established in Slovenia with the support of the Slovenian government and UNESCO, the Slovenian Presidency provides an opportunity to create an active agenda for the use of AI in sustainable development. The goal of IRCAI in the activities of the Presidency also includes the formation of a network that will become a legacy that can be further developed with the French Presidency in the spirit of collaboration and building an international agenda for European AI and sustainable development.

## SUPPORTING THE SLOVENIAN GOVERNMENT IN CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES THAT DRIVE POLICY INNOVATION IN BUILDING RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS

IRCAI and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia have jointly designed an International Event Series of 10 events presenting government and research perspectives on AI and sustainable development around the world, in Abu Dhabi, Brussels, Ottawa, Tel Aviv, Geneva, Bucharest, Tokyo, Paris with the OECD and Berlin, and the main event, Digihack, in Ljubljana.

The Slovenian Presidency and IRCAI are also hosting the main stage event of DigiEduHack, an EIT initiative under the European Commission's Digital Education Action Plan, led by EIT Climate-KIC and coordinated by Aalto University.

In order to motivate various stakeholders and facilitate research and development of solutions in the field of sustainable development with the use of AI tools, the call for an IRCAI International AI Award will be announced at these events as a pan-European and international award, launched by the Slovenian Presidency and to be given annually.

## PARTNERSHIPS FOR AI WITH SLOVENIA

**IRCAI, with its engagement and discussions with relevant Directorates-General of the European Commission and**

**active collaboration with international organisations such as UNESCO, WIPO, OECD, CAHAI, ITU and others, is addressing priorities for future collaboration, especially in R&D areas where partners have a strong common interest, particularly with a focus on sustainability, bringing complementary challenges, regulatory and/or cultural considerations, or expertise to the partnerships, by promoting research and development in AI, with a focus on solving challenging technical issues, and the aim of strengthening bilateral cooperation in science and technology.**

Through IRCAI, a collaborative mechanism for basic and early-stage research and development collaboration on cross-continental sustainability problems will be established among the five regional groups of United Nations, to enable AI innovation and information-sharing on regulatory frameworks and scientific endeavours, and thus remove barriers to innovation while gaining public trust.

## FROM SLOVENIA TO EUROPE AND BEYOND

IRCAI, although founded in Slovenia and active in research activities in the EU, is expanding its international collaboration in the field of AI.

IRCAI organised a sub-regional consultation event for the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, and has produced an analysis of all regional consultations. With these findings, it aims to become an implementing body of the Recommendation to promote the development and use of AI. This includes pooling efforts to jointly develop and use AI, as well as building capacity, knowledge repositories, communities of practice, collaborative research on AI, and solidarity among all countries regardless of their level of AI development, as well as establishing regional and international funding mechanisms to promote and strengthen AI and identifying those mechanisms, including partnerships, that can support international, regional, and national efforts in this regard.

# EU ENLARGEMENT AND THE WESTERN BALKANS REGION – ONE OF THE KEY PRIORITIES OF THE PRESIDENCY

## Region at the Doorstep of the European Union

PETER GRK  
AMELA KASTELEC



EU enlargement and the Western Balkans region will be one of the key priorities of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU. Slovenia has always been a firm and active advocate of EU enlargement towards the Western Balkans. Our first Presidency of the EU in 2008 clearly showed our sincere commitment and strategic foresight regarding the importance of a continued and effective enlargement process, which is the only foreign policy mechanism and tool of the EU with transformational power and a clear goal – the consolidation of Europe. Only a consolidated Europe can play a key and important role on the global geopolitical stage.

We used these affirmative sentences at the beginning of this article only to underline and underscore the importance we attach to the stability, prosperity and sustainable development of the region. We like to say that global Europe starts at home.

**The region is firmly positioned in the heart of Europe and its geostrategic importance has been attracting a lot of attention in the international community.**

Our resolve to bring countries of the region closer to the EU has not changed. It has only become stronger. It is in our vital interest that they fulfil all the necessary criteria and become members of the Union as soon as possible.

### THE SLOVENIAN PRESIDENCY WILL PROVIDE A PLATFORM

In this context, the Slovenian Presidency will provide a platform based on which we want concrete and sustainable progress in EU-Western Balkans relations. We believe that the time is now here to make fundamental steps in deepening the relations between the EU and the region, not only symbolically but also with practical implementation of the connectivity agenda, be it in the fields of the economy, infrastructure or energy.

**Over the years, Slovenia has made an important contribution to bringing the countries of the region closer to the EU with various initiatives and participation in key processes – the Brdo-Brijuni Process, Berlin Process, and Bled Strategic Forum panels.**

Slovenia has been one of the most active members in promoting the region within the EU institutions and with other partners.

During its upcoming Presidency Slovenia will therefore endeavour to ensure an actively managed enlargement process by coordinating positions among the EU Member States. Slovenia will lead the EU Council towards continuing the process of EU enlargement with the countries of the region, as enlargement is one of the fundamental levers of reform processes in the countries of the West-

ern Balkans, including the rule of law. The pace of the process also depends on the speed at which reforms are carried out and the fulfilment of specific conditions and criteria in candidate countries. In this context, Slovenia will pursue the implementation of the revised enlargement methodology during its Presidency with the aim of ensuring a credible enlargement process.

### ECONOMIC AND INVESTMENT PLAN FOR THE REGION

Slovenia will pay particular attention to tackling the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the recovery of economies in the Western Balkan countries, so

**during its Presidency Slovenia will strive for effective implementation of the Economic and Investment Plan for the region.**

In order to ensure sustainable development, it is important to strengthen sectoral integration within the region and between the region and the EU. We will strive to strengthen connectivity in the areas of transport, energy, digitisation, environmental sustainability and the promotion of green technology. We will support efforts to establish a common regional market and to implement the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans. We will seek to strengthen cooperation on research and innovation, including by joining the countries of the region's Horizon Europe programme, which will accelerate the integration of the region into the European Research Area. Special attention will also be paid to measures providing a positive perspective for young people in the Western Balkans.

Strengthening good neighbourly relations in the region, addressing the remaining outstanding issues and work on much needed reconciliation will remain of utmost importance. Our ambitions will also focus on the involvement of the region's partner countries in the Common Security and Defence Policy initiatives, which could provide additional impetus to the process of EU accession. We will also work towards good cooperation in dealing with crises (natural disasters, pandemics) and other common challenges. We will promote an enhanced regional dialogue on cooperation in responding to today's threats and risks, with a focus on the fight against organised crime and corruption, as well as strengthening resilience in the field of countering hybrid threats in particular, including in the areas of disinformation and cyber security.

## THE WEALTH OF SLOVENIAN CULTURAL CREATIVITY WORLDWIDE

# The Cultural and Promotional Programme during the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU

POLONA PREŠEREN



Venice sofas, by Donar, are also part of the Slovenian design exhibition.  
Photo: Donar archives

During the Slovenian Presidency, a diverse cultural and promotional programme will take place in many European cities and at various locations around the world. The aim of the exhibitions, concerts, debates and other events is to showcase the wealth of Slovenian creativity and how it helps to promote European values and overcome the current social challenges we are facing.

The programme is designed to promote integration, intercultural dialogue and active public participation through events and various topics that Slovenia will prepare and present. Many events are related to the key priorities of the Slovenian Presidency – to build a resilient European Union, to promote the digital and green transitions, to ensure sustainable development, and to strengthen partnerships and dialogue with European neighbours

**Through promotional activities, Slovenia wishes to present itself as a creative country focused on sustainable development and as a one that through its activities has contributed significantly to the European Union.**

Thirty years after gaining independence, Slovenia is also taking over the Presidency of the Council of the EU. The path that the country has walked in these three decades is a shift from independence and international recognition to membership in international organisations and the European Union, from its first Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2008 to membership in the euro and Schengen areas.

The activities mentioned below tell the story of “smart” Slovenia and highlight where the country stands out in the fields of artificial intelligence, science, design, etc. They also tell the story of a creative and active Slovenia, which is not afraid of challenges and is an active member of the European Union.

**During the Presidency of the Council of the EU, individual stakeholders or institutions will present their past achievements in their fields, open discussions and debates, and remove borders.**

In December 2020, Slovenia began its activities in this regard at the Vatican, where it erected and decorated the central Christmas tree. Slovenia will continue to organise exhibitions, concerts, discussions and projects that will leave their mark.

A detailed calendar of events is available on the website of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU 2021.



The Collodi chair is made of recycled wool and is on display at the exhibition of contemporary Slovenian design.  
Photo: Donar archives

**THE WATER MAN - Contemporary ballet performance  
Bled Island, 1 July 2021**

The premiere performance of *The Water Man* (Povodni mož) being staged by the Slovenian National Theatre Maribor on Bled Island is, in itself, a unique theatrical awakening of the island.

The central cultural event marking the beginning of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU, the contemporary ballet adaptation of *The Water Man* choreographed by the renowned Edward Clug and performed by the soloists and ensemble of the Opera and Ballet of the Slovenian National Theatre Maribor, invites spectators from all parts and cultures of the old continent to this sacred place to breathe in the air of our ancestors, gaze at the surface of our future and immerse themselves in our music, dancing together in the heart of our homeland.

On this occasion, the old steps that lead the human spirit all the way up to the last, ninety-ninth one, will welcome spectators to a

natural amphitheatre, gently whispering in their ears the verses written by Dr France Prešeren, whose poetic inspiration still stirs the depths of our consciousness and collective memory to this day.

Prešeren's *The Water Man* acts as a portal of time and space for our journey on the sacred Bled Island, which will be extended by a round stage, the island's very own moon. Young men and women will dance to songs of passion and spin in a storm of love under the magical light of the rising moon.

A hole in the middle of the scene creates a tiny lake within Lake Bled, which, for a moment, will change and transform its island into a place of worship, a temple of a kind, where ancient wisdom and cultural heritage intertwine with the challenges, zeal and hopes of today's generation.



Edward Clug is a renowned choreographer.  
Photo: SNG Opera and Ballet Maribor



**EUROPE READR - a free digital platform  
with an edited selection of European  
literature on life in the future**

From 1 July to 31 December 2021, a selection of literary works from all EU Member States will encourage critical thinking across societies about the world we wish to live in. At the intersection of literature, sustainability and digitalisation, the project will create a public space for exchanges on shared European values and the European Green Deal.

Europe Readr was initiated by Slovenia and co-created by EU Member States through EUNIC – European Union National Institutes for Culture. In 25 countries around the globe, EUNIC clusters will bring Europe Readr to life with a series of activities in cooperation with local cultural sectors. SINFO talked to EUNIC Director Gitte Zschoch on the eve of the project's launch.

**What do you like most about Europe Readr?**

Europe Readr is enacting something that I think highly relevant for our network: It is initiating collaboration between our members as part of the EU Council Presidency programme. I like that a presiding Member State chooses to co-create its flagship cultural project together with EUNIC members. I also like that it links itself to previous Presidency projects, notably to Germany's Earth Speakr. I hope this European spirit will be picked up and advanced by future Presidencies.

**How does Europe Readr contribute to the EU's cultural relations?**

EUNIC brings people across borders together through culture. We want to engage in joint learning, joint creation. This is what we call "cultural relations". By not only focusing the EU's external action on security and economy, we create links and relationships that impact people's lives, bring them closer and reinforce their intercultural understanding. The values that the EU stands for are shared by many people in the rest of the world, such as freedom of speech, critical thinking, education and sustainability. Europe Readr invites us to think about and practice them.

**Europe Readr addresses life in the future of being. What is culture's role in creating this?**

Culture and the arts open up a free space of debate, imagination, critique, provocation, utopia. We need to allow spaces like that to flourish, and we need to support artists to freely engage along those lines without an expectation of a certain outcome. If these parameters are given, then our societies can grow, become richer, more creative and resilient, and contribute to providing answers to the questions of our time on issues such as equity, equality, freedom, peace, and prosperity.



Gitte Zschoch, EUNIC Director.  
Photo: Personal archives



The Europe Readr project was also inspired by the Library under the Treetops, which has been promoting the culture of reading in Slovenia for over 15 years.  
Photo: Divja Misel Institute

### ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE – OUR FUTURE?

**A series of international debates on artificial intelligence from different societal angles**

In a desire to contribute to the development of the high-quality and ethical use of artificial intelligence, trusted by everybody, the Slovenian Presidency of the EU Council and the International Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence under the auspices of UNESCO (IRCAI) have jointly designed an International Debate Series. It will take place in ten cities around the world: Abu Dhabi, Berlin, Brussels, Bucharest, Geneva, Ljubljana (Digihack), Ottawa, Paris (at OECD and UNESCO), Tel Aviv and Tokyo.

Experts, universities, governments and businesses will join hands to create a network of excellence and build an international agenda for Euro-

pean AI and Sustainable Development. Livestreamed and covered by local and social media, the debates will be accessible to the broader public. In the cultural centre Bozar in Brussels, for instance, twelve EU Member States will organise a conference called "The Future of Living", focusing on the synergies between the arts and AI. To show them in practice, some leading Slovenian artists will present their most recent works in the realm of artificial intelligence at the exhibition of the awarded STARTS projects in Bozar Lab.



Several Slovenian artists working in artificial intelligence will take part in the STARTS exhibition at the BOZAR Centre of Fine Arts in Brussels. Project by Marko Peljhan. Photo: Kapelica Gallery

### THE FUTURE OF LIVING

**An exhibition of contemporary Slovenian design production, local materials and sustainable principles**

In the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development, the exhibition showcases the central role of design in sustainable development and calls for the green transition.

It demonstrates the innovative ways in which Slovenian design responds to future challenges with products that combine local materials with traditional craftsmanship.

After its launch in Vienna, the exhibition will continue its journey to Berlin, London, Zagreb and other destinations around the world. Developed in collaboration between the Centre for Creativity, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, it is one of the main cultural projects of the Slovenian Presidency of the EU Council.

The exhibition features a selection of products that received the "Made in Slovenia" mark of design excellence. They foresee the future of living in which raw materials are no longer available in abundance, production methods and human resources need to be rationalised, and products are adapted to a new generation of users who want customised solutions.

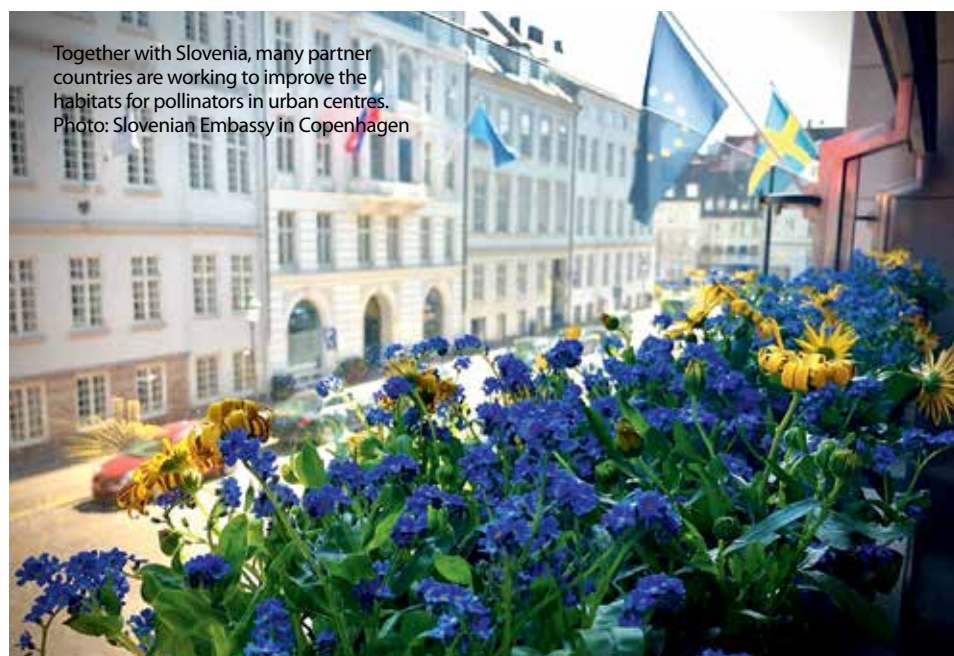


The exhibition features a selection of products that received the "Made in Slovenia" mark of design excellence. Photo: Klemen Razinger

## BEES – AGENTS OF CHANGE

In 2018, Slovenia was at the forefront of the proclamation of the World Bee Day (20 May) by the UN General Assembly. Since then, our diplomatic network has – year by year – engaged with partners worldwide to reinforce the international awareness of the central role of pollinators in sustainable development. In 2021, traditional Slovenian beehives will be placed in twenty countries around the world as a symbolic gesture to underline the urgent need to step up the activities to protect bees and other pollinators.

Moreover, Slovenia will realise more than fifty projects around the globe in cooperation with local partners, from educational activities and awareness-raising campaigns to development projects, empowering vulnerable social groups through beekeeping. In the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development, Slovenia will put special emphasis on the central role of creatives in raising awareness and bee protection activities. As European Region of Gastronomy 2021, it will shed light also on the important place of bee products in gastronomy – and on their health benefits. Honey breakfasts will be organised in around thirty locations worldwide.



Together with Slovenia, many partner countries are working to improve the habitats for pollinators in urban centres. Photo: Slovenian Embassy in Copenhagen



Opening of the Listen to the Bees campaign in Denmark in cooperation with the local company Bybi, which is committed to sustainable urban beekeeping and which cares for the well-being of people, nature and bees through various social justice projects. Photo: Slovenian Embassy in Copenhagen

## THE MAD HATTER'S WARDROBE - Exhibition Brussels, July–December 2021

For over thirty years, the Slovenian costume designer Alan Hranitelj has been designing for plays, operas, classical ballet, contemporary dance, film and exhibitions. His opus so far includes over 400 costume designs and collaborations on various artistic projects.

He has won numerous awards for his work, both at home and abroad. In 2020, he received the highest national award for cultural achievements, the Prešeren Fund Award, for his retrospective exhibition *Parallel Worlds 2006–2019*.

Part of this exhibition, called *The Mad Hatter's Wardrobe*, shows the author's insight into the infinitely colourful world of patterns, materials, structures and reflections. The author has created an entire universe from classic, mostly monochromatic men's shirts, waistcoats, ties, shoes, hats and cuff links. He upgraded, modified and completed his existing fabric samples with various geometric shapes using computer technology. They intertwine with numerous images drawn from the plant and animal world. Each piece comes alive within its own pattern. With the help of duplication and mirrors they seem to undulate in all directions, having a magical and psychedelic effect on our senses, taking us to parallel worlds. In the making of *The Mad Hatter's Wardrobe*, Alan Hranitelj has outdone himself by combining the artisanal perfectionism of handicraft and his exceptional artistic skills.

Twenty display cases from *The Mad Hatter's Wardrobe* will be exhibited in the Justus Lipsius building.



The exhibition of Alan Hranitelj's designs will be on display in Brussels. Photo: Alan Hranitelj's archives



## EUROPA CANTAT FESTIVAL Ljubljana, 16–25 July 2021



This summer, Slovenia will host the Europa Cantat Festival. Ever since its inception in 1961, the festival has been hosted by a different European city every three years. The international committee of the European Choral Association (ECA-EC) was impressed by the candidacy of the Public Fund of the Republic of Slovenia for Cultural Activities, and the festival will therefore take place between 16 and 25 July 2021 in Ljubljana.

The festival welcomes all choral singers, conductors, composers, publishers and choral enthusiasts, and offers an excellent opportunity to anyone who would like to become more familiar with choral music.

Due to safety concerns in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the content of the festival will be slightly changed and carried out in a shorter period of time than originally planned. The format of the festival will also be adapted to the situation, as a significant part of it will be held digitally online, while the opening concert of Slovenian choirs will take place in Congress Square in Ljubljana.

The President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, and the European Parliament are the honorary patrons of the event.



Slovenia will host the Europa Cantat Festival.  
Photo: Ministry of Culture



Singers during practice.  
Photo: Ministry of Culture

## SLOVENIAN FILM RETROSPECTIVE Brussels, December 2021

In December 2021, a selection of classic Slovenian films from the beginnings of Slovenian film production to the present day will be shown in cooperation with the Royal Belgian Film Archive in Brussels. The selection spanning from the silent beginnings to films made by the new generation of young creators who are successful in Europe and around the globe, presents the historical and aesthetical development of Slovenian cinematography, which is marked by the distinct voices of its authors with a special, often critical attitude towards society.

This film and music event will be an introduction to the final part of the promotion of Slovenian culture and creativity at the beginning of December 2021 in Brussels. The screening of the first Slovenian feature film *In the Kingdom of the Goldhorn*, directed by Jan Ravnik in 1931, will be accompanied by live music. This will be followed by a selection of films showcasing the most prominent filmmakers and films from the 1950s and the 1960s New Wave period, expressing elements of social criticism and personal views of the post-war socialist reality. The 1980s period is marked by alternative approaches to film production involving authors' personal and openly critical reviews of social and political events. The end of the 20th century gives rise to a new generation of filmmakers with unique and personal stories involving Slovenian society, which coincides with the beginning of Slovenia's independence.

This retrospective aims to provide an interesting overview of the development of Slovenian cinematography, from its silent beginnings to contemporary production integrated into the European film scene. In addition, it offers a unique insight into Slovenia's social and historical development, as the making of the film *In the Kingdom of the Goldhorn* dates back to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, while the overview will be concluded with films made in an independent and sovereign state.



A selection of classic Slovenian films will be shown in Brussels in cooperation with the Slovenian Film Centre and the Slovenian Cinematheque.  
Photo: Stane Potrč/ Slovenian Cinematheque

## PROMOTIONAL VIDEO OF SLOVENIA'S PRESIDENCY OF THE EU COUNCIL

# An Inspirational Presentation of the Magnificence of the European Idea and Slovenia within it

VESNA ŽARKOVIČ  
POLONA PREŠEREN

*Zdravljica* was written by Dr France Prešeren  
and it is a toast to all good-hearted people.  
Illustration: Damijan Stepančič



A promotional video was made in the scope of Slovenia's Presidency of the Council of the European Union, which is special in many ways. Its direction was entrusted to the Slovenian director Mitja Okorn, who used the lyrics of *Zdravljica*, the Slovenian national anthem, and archive footage of the formation of the European Union and Slovenia to create a story of Slovenia's Presidency.

The promotional video was a major challenge for the creators. The team of the director and music producer had to include the idea of European integration, the values on which such integration is based, the 30th anniversary of Slovenia and the priority objectives of Slovenia's Presidency into the finished product. The script also had to follow the lyrics of *Zdravljica*, written by the giant of Slovenian poetry, Dr France Prešeren, in the mid-19th century.

"I am very delighted to have been chosen as director for this presentation film, which blends with my vision of directing. I have always wanted to direct something like this, some kind of art project on Independence Day or on any other important date for the country. I imagined the video as a powerful musical concert which will satisfy all tastes, addressing the young and the old ...", said Mitja Okorn.

### THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION OF THE SLOVENIAN ANTHEM

In *Zdravljica*, the poet France Prešeren, a notable representative of his time and thus moved by the rebirth of nations in the mid-19th century, highlighted patriotism, the idea of freedom and the equality of all nations.

**The basis of the poem was the domestic Slovenian world, to whom the democratic call in the work is addressed. The poem, however, also addresses the broader idea about the inseparable links between all (European) nations.**

This is especially evident in the seventh verse, which has been the Slovenian anthem since its independence.

*Zdravljica*, which was set to music by the a capella group Perpetuum Jazzile as the basis for the video, plays in the background of Slovenian and European archive footage.

"*Zdravljica*, with all of its eight verses, was made in a fresh way, whereby we considered the core directions of the scenario: Europe after the two world wars as it set out on its path to peace, the establishment of the Slovenian country in time and space, marked by the supremacy of freedom and other core values of the European integration process, the challenges of the EU through time, an ambitious EU, Slovenia as an EU Member State and its 30th anniversary, the strengthening of the EU's resilience, the European way of life, a safe EU and the development power and economic renewal of the EU", explained the director Mitja Okorn.

Okorn wanted to include footage that would move people. This does not mean that the subject matter includes only the greatest of things, as it also includes hard and unpleasant events that we regret, but have a different viewpoint from another perspective of time. RTV Slovenija found some footage in their archives, other clips were obtained from international agencies, and all of them show events surrounding the establishment of the European Union and Slovenia in an interesting and considered way. Rok Omahen, a documentalist who works at the TV archives at RTV Slovenija, said that this was an extensive project which, based on the quantity of the archived footage, was better compared to a documentary than a promotional video, which also shows the dedication of the director and the team to the work.

"I was pleasantly surprised about the approach of the director and his team, because they took more than ten hours of their time to go through all of the materials in order to choose the most appropriate clips", he added.

Živé naj vsi naródi  
 Ši hrepené dočakat' dan,  
 De koder sónce hódi,  
 Prepír iz soéta bó pregnán,  
 Deroják  
 Prost bo vsák,  
 Ne vrág, le sósed bo meják.  
 Na zadnje še, porjatlí!  
 Korárce zase vedignimo!  
 Ki smo zato se zbratlí,  
 Ki dôbro v sêrcu míslimo.  
 Dókaj dní  
 Naj živi,  
 Bog, kár nas dôbrih je ljudi!

Zdravljica has a special, almost mythical meaning for Slovenians.

Mitja Okorn worked with the Polish composer Lukasz Targosz, who prepared the musical arrangement for the implementation of *Zdravljica*. The implementation was given to the vocal group Perpetuum Jazzile, who included their know-how and unique talent.

**"I hope that this interpretation of *Zdravljica* will be used for a very long time and enthuse people. I wanted to create a somewhat explosive presentation of the magnificence of the European idea and Slovenia within it.**

The video features the band Perpetuum Jazzile and the Tarkowski Orchestra under the leadership of Jacek Tarkowski – an ideal combination of something very beautiful and heart-warming", said Okorn. The band was also joined by a young girl who sang the introductory verses, with the presentation being in both Slovene and English versions.

*Zdravljica* has a special, almost mythical meaning for Slovenians. Even Mitja Okorn was somewhat fearful during the creation of the video, so as not to dishonour its importance and tradition.

"I had great respect for this piece of music during the creation of the video. And fear is good in the creative process, fright generates respect for the project, which is always good. Above all, I wish that people would play the music with joy, not just during Slovenia's Presidency of the EU Council, but also afterwards, and I hope the song will be widely recognised, popular and prominent. That people will adopt it and take it as something of their own in their everyday lives."

## MITJA OKORN – A DIRECTOR WITH ENVIABLE GLOBAL ACHIEVEMENTS

Mitja Okorn, the Slovenian director who just released his Hollywood debut *Life in a Year*, starring Cara Delevingne and Jaden Smith, has been enthusiastically realising his cinematographic vision for some years now in Poland. He directed his first feature film *Tu in tam* (*Here and there*) in 2005 in Slovenia, followed by two films, *Pisma sv. Nikolaju* (*Letters to Santa*) (2011) and *Planet samskih* (*Planeta Singli*) (2016), which he shot in Poland and which became international hits. He has also written some screenplays.

**Even your personal story is European. Years ago you moved to Poland to pursue your career, and even to the USA. You have achieved enviable global achievements as a director.**

Before I started working in the USA, I had to obtain many permits; these take much of your time, willpower, strength. This is why I am satisfied that the EU managed to connect the way it did and that there are not that many bureaucratic barriers. In Poland, I do not have to deal with as much bureaucracy because the agreements that apply there apply for the entire EU. Poland is very much like Slovenia, with the difference of it being 20 times larger.

**What else do you do, besides directing?**

I write scripts for new projects, I am also preparing a major project about Dražen Petrović, one of the best basketball players in the eighties and Croatian athletes in general, and Vlado Divac, a top Serbian basketball player, as well as the team that won everything. Slovenia was a part of that in those times because we were part of Yugoslavia. I am convinced that the project could be interesting for the entire world, and not limited to Slovenia. This is a story of friendship and about how war destroys this and makes enemies of people who were friends in the past. The movie will also be topical today, when global frictions are increasing. When we divide ourselves as being left or right, we tend to talk less, because politics destroys us, which is unreasonable because most people have many more common interests in common than those that divide them. Two American producers are also taking part in the project.



Mitja Okorn  
Photo: Personal archives

I think the film is important because these two basketball players opened the door for today's players, like Dragić, Dončić and other European stars who are achieving international fame. This movie could also be the first Slovenian international hit.

**You became a father not long ago.**

Yes, this is my first real child, as all my movies are my movie children. Just like I am doing now with my child or my family, I used to dedicate all my heart and soul to every one of my movies.

**Do you often return to Slovenia and how do you see it from your current perspective – from abroad?**

When I came to Poland, I was pleasantly surprised. I found that they are ahead of us in certain things, and that we were doing them injustice with our views. They were quickly rid of communism and adopted capitalism, which had a favourable impact on their economy. On the other hand the Polish see Slovenia as heaven on Earth, because they've been to the coast and to Planica for the ski jump events, and so on. They see Slovenia as a very beautiful and advanced country. So for me to know both places very well, and the impressions they have of each other, seems a bit funny and weird to me sometimes. Even my movies, which are popular in Slovenia, show Poland in a way that is different to what we are used to. Most Polish movies show war and history in a gloomy and grey manner. While my movies are very colourful, they include beautiful locations, beautiful people, and beautiful

Warsaw. And then people say that they didn't know that Poland was so beautiful. So people see Poland in a different light because of my movies, and some even decide to study Polish because of them. All this is a confirmation that movies can be good marketing for a country.

**What do you miss the most from Slovenia when living abroad?**

My family and friends, and I miss the so-called *hotemaški kruhki*, a kind of bread, very much, which I purchase at Kruhkarija Gorjanc in Hotemaž in Preddvor. Every time I fly to Brnik, I go and buy this bread from a store is near the airport. I like eating, and I also miss fried cheese, which is better in Slovenia than it is in Poland, and *Kaiserschmarrn*, a shredded pancake...

**I also miss the location of Slovenia – the sea and the mountains are all an hour's drive away. In Poland such a drive can last for up to five hours. Even Ljubljana has become a beautiful city in these last few years, which I like to visit.**

**What is, in short, your association with the 30th anniversary of Slovenia's independence?**

The independent state of Slovenia is definitely better than the former Yugoslavia, which was a sort of an artificial formation, artificially maintained with various loans that would have fallen apart in any case. I would be happy, though, if we could manage to get together again in some other way. The Yugoslav market had a population of some 24 million, and having all that open to services again seems like a good thing to me. The Balkan market was closed with the disintegration of Yugoslavia, but at the same time, Europe, with its population of hundreds of millions, has opened up to us, which is also good.



Perpetuum Jazzile is a Slovenian a capella vocal group, mostly performing pop and jazz works. Photo: PJ archives

**PERPETUUM JAZZILE – A GLOBAL MUSICAL ATTRACTION**

Perpetuum Jazzile is a Slovenian *a capella* vocal group, mostly performing pop and jazz works. With their distinctive style they became a global musical attraction, because no similar group exists in Slovenia nor in the wider world. They are thus special and unique, and the group will tour various European cities during Slovenia's Presidency of the EU Council.

**During the tour, the group will visit Brussels, Berlin, Lisbon, Budapest, Rome and Strasbourg. Open-air concerts are planned at locations in city centres and are meant for the general public and wider audiences to enjoy.**

They will perform with a wide repertoire of Slovenian and European songs. The special characteristic of the group is that they perform without an instrumental background, as all sound effects are created *a capella* and the band has about 50 top singers.

Perpetuum Jazzile was placed on the global musical map with their version of the song *Africa*, which was first performed by the band Toto decades ago. The new version of the song has been viewed more than 22 million times on YouTube. They also received a Viktor, the Slovenian award for outstanding achievement in the entertainment industry, for special achievements for their interpretation of the song. Perpetuum Jazzile are a musical novelty on the global scale. The group formed in 1983 under the name *Gaudeamus*, and changed its name in 1999. Perpetuum Jazzile knows what it is doing and does it well. The singers know how to surprise and excite audiences because their performances are also accompanied by a carefully planned dramaturgy that completes the whole show, filled with several global hits sung in the unique *a capella* way.

For more information about the performances of Perpetuum Jazzile, their schedule and where you can see them, visit the website of Slovenia's Presidency.

## SLOVENIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EU

### 190 Events in Various Locations in Slovenia

ANA KRAŠEVEC  
PHOTO: UKOM

The Congress Centre will be the main venue for high-level meetings.



Around 190 events will be held during the Slovenian Presidency, from an informal meeting of heads of state and government, to ministerial meetings and conferences, along with expert meetings at lower levels. In the desire to show Slovenia to foreign guests and bring the Presidency closer to local communities, the meetings will take place in multiple locations around the country. The main venues will be Brdo pri Kranju, Ljubljana, Bled, Portorož, Maribor and Postojna. In the case of an unfavourable epidemiological situation, the events will be held using video-conferencing.

#### MAIN VENUE OF MEETINGS AT THE HIGHEST POLITICAL LEVEL – BRDO PRI KRANJU

**Slovenia will host around 190 events during its Presidency. The Brdo Congress Centre, built for the first Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU, will be the main venue for high-level meetings.**

This is one of the most advanced centres for the organisation of protocol, business and other events in Slovenia. Its location is part of the Brdo Estate, which takes pride in more than five hundred years of history. The main part of the estate includes the Renaissance castle at Brdo which was home to noble dynasties from the 16<sup>th</sup> century on, while today it is used for state functions and ceremonial duties.

The estate of nearly five hundred acres is situated in a beautiful natural setting with a backdrop of mountains. Close to the castle and the Congress Centre there are also an equestrian centre, a golf course, a hotel and the National Football Centre. When in the central park, guests can see a precious collection of statues, a Slovenian beehive and thatched-roof double hayracks, or toplars.



One of the most advanced centres for the organisation of protocol, business and other events in Slovenia.



Ljubljana - one of the greenest cities in Europe.

#### CAPITAL OF SLOVENIA – LJUBLJANA

**Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, is the vibrant political, university, cultural and congress centre of the country.**

The main attraction of Ljubljana is the medieval castle. The picturesque old town centre along the River Ljubljanica was designed by Slovenia's most renowned architect, Jože Plečnik, in the first half of the 20th century.

With more than 542 m2 of public green spaces per inhabitant, Ljubljana is one of the greenest cities in Europe. In 2016, the city authorities' efforts to ensure sustainable development were rewarded with the title of European Green Capital. The city centre has been pedestrianised and closed to motor vehicles since 2008, and Ljubljana is also known for its successful zero waste strategy.

#### NATURAL TREASURE – BLED

**The Alpine lake with an island and a church on it is probably the most famous image of Slovenia in the world.**

This small town on the edge of the Triglav National Park attracted its first tourists with spa tourism, but today it is visited for its unique natural beauty. A ride in a traditional pletna boat is a rare experience, and almost all visitors treat themselves to a slice of the famous Bled cream cake.

In 2019 Bled was selected as the second best place for sustainable development in Europe, and it's a perfect starting point for hikes to the heart of the Julian Alps. The town is also a centre of congress tourism, hosting the annual Bled Strategic Forum, one of the leading international conferences in Central and South East Europe.

#### SEASIDE RESORT WITH A LONG-STANDING TRADITION – PORTOROŽ

The main tourist resort along the Slovenian coast boasts a long tradition directly connected with the utilisation of

the active ingredients of the local salt and seawater. Monks from the Monastery of St Lawrence treated people with seawater and brine back in the Middle Ages, and today these services are offered to visitors in health spas and wellness centres.

**The opportunity to combine pleasure with a learning experience, plus hotels with suitable conference facilities, have turned Portorož into a popular congress destination.**

The Strunjan Nature Park and the Sečovlje Salina Nature Park are in the immediate vicinity of Portorož, and the medieval town of Piran, the cultural pearl of the Slovenian Riviera, is only three kilometres away. Portorož makes the perfect starting point for many sports activities and culinary experiences in the inland part of Slovenian Istria.

#### SLOVENIA'S SECOND-LARGEST CITY – MARIBOR

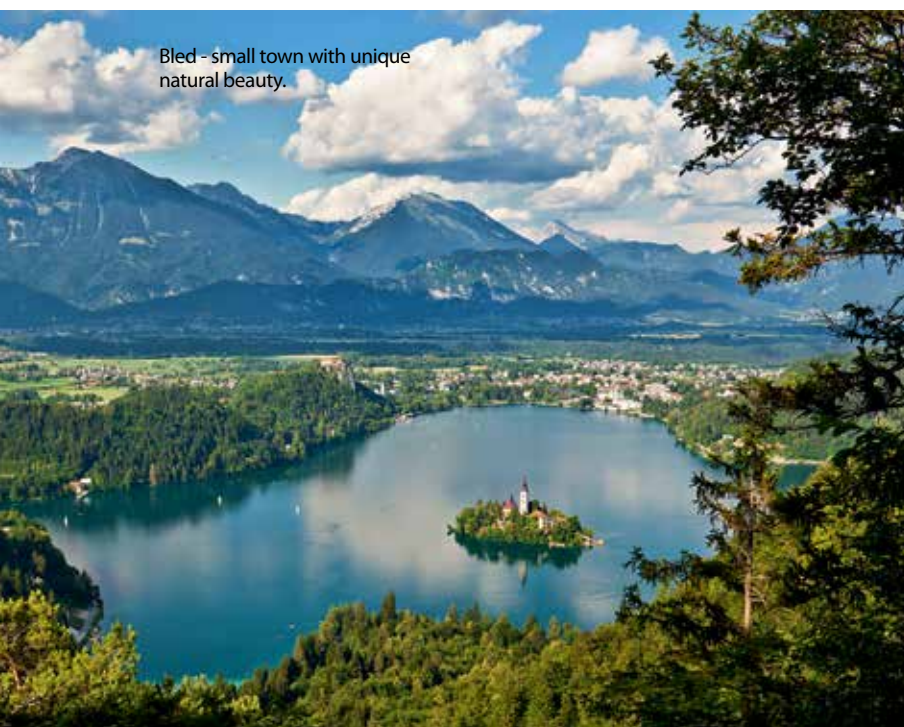
Maribor is the second biggest city in the country, the unofficial capital of the Štajerska region, and the economic, educational, congress and cultural centre of north-eastern Slovenia. The city is closely connected with the River Drava, and the green hills of Pohorje not far away are a popular destination for hikers in all seasons.

**The Štajerska region has an extraordinarily rich wine-growing tradition and top-quality wines, and the old town centre of Maribor is home to the world's oldest grapevine.**

A heart-shaped bicycle trail weaves its way through the vineyards above the village of Svečina in the Maribor countryside, one of the most photographed places in Slovenia.

#### ON THE EDGE OF THE MYSTERIOUS KARST WORLD – POSTOJNA

Postojna is an urban settlement in the Notranjska region, at the junction of the coastal and inland regions of Slovenia. The characteristics of the karst lands include various karst phenomena, including numerous caves of which Postojna Cave is the most frequently visited. Its 24-kilometer system of subterranean chambers is home to various animal species, with the most famous being the olm, or "human fish" (*Proteus anguinus*). It is the only karst cave with a cave railway, and numerous events are held in the larger cave chambers, from concerts to the staging of a live nativity scene each Christmas. Located close to Postojna is the famous Predjama Castle, the largest cave castle in the world.



Bled - small town with unique natural beauty.



Portorož - seaside resort.

SI2021EU

# Visual Identity and Communication Channels of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU

URŠA DOLINŠEK



A uniform and recognisable visual identity is one of the keys to successful communication. The overall visual identity of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU reflects our values, priorities and goals under the slogan "Together. Resilient. Europe." The digital channels of the Slovenian Presidency – the website and profiles on social networks – will play a significant role in communicating to the public and providing it with information.

## SLOGAN AND LOGO

Under the slogan "Together. Resilient. Europe.," Slovenia will actively contribute to strengthening the EU's resilience to health, economic, energy, climate and cyber crises. The main issues of the further development of the EU will be at the centre of the discussion about the future of Europe. Working together, supporting each other and acting in solidarity for the good of each and every European citizen will be key to strengthening the EU's resilience.

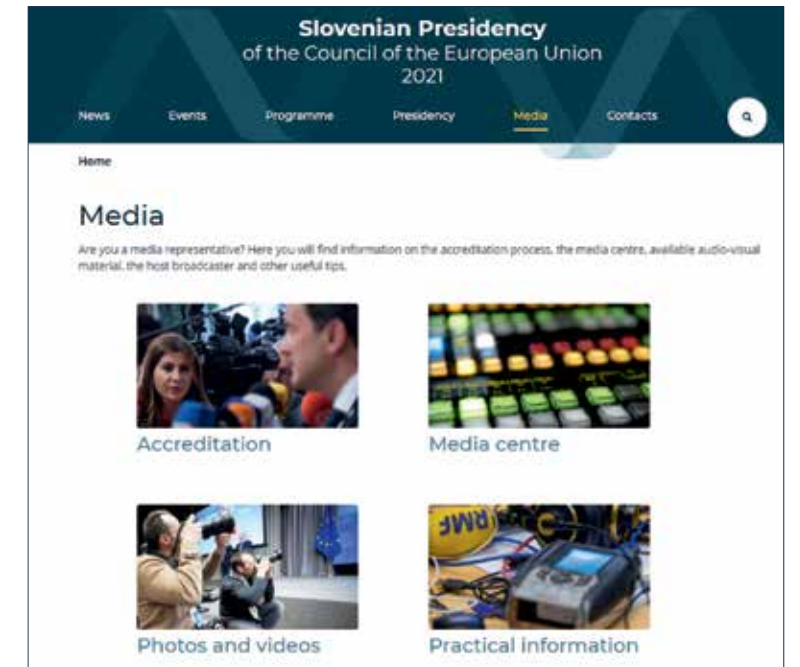
The logo of the Slovenian Presidency was created in cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia and the Government Communication Office. It involves multi-layered symbolism, and above all it captures the connection between Slovenia and the European Union, and reflects the objectives of Slovenia's Council Presidency.

**A silhouette of Triglav, the Slovenian national symbol, reflects a sovereign and independent state that is a strong member of the EU.**

Above Triglav are the stars of the European flag, since the European values are the guiding principles followed by our Presidency. There are also seven stars, which is no coincidence, as the seventh stanza of Prešeren's *Zdravljica* (A Toast) serves as the Slovenian national anthem. The text of the poem, written in 1848, calls for dialogue and an open society, and supports the idea of the peaceful co-existence of all nations. *Zdravljica* was awarded the European Heritage Label in 2020 as a valuable document that bears witness to the history of the European idea and integration.

## WEBSITE SI2021.EU

Today, a large part of communication is online. We have therefore devoted a great deal of energy to the selection and design of the main digital communication channels of the Slovenian Presidency. These channels will be employed to inform the international and Slovenian public about the events, decisions, priorities and achievements of Slovenia as the country holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.



**The website [www.si2021.eu](http://www.si2021.eu) is the result of cooperation between the Government Communication Office and the General Secretariat of the Council. Until now, each country holding the Presidency has set up its own website for the six months of Presidency.**

Several Member States, including Slovenia, took the initiative a few years ago for the General Secretariat of the Council to set up a single website for the Presidency in cooperation with the country holding the Presidency. All countries confirmed the agreement in autumn 2019, and a decision was made that Slovenia would be the first to use this common solution.

The website contains primary information on the Slovenian Presidency, from news and press releases to a calendar of events and priorities, along with information for the media and details of the country's interesting features.

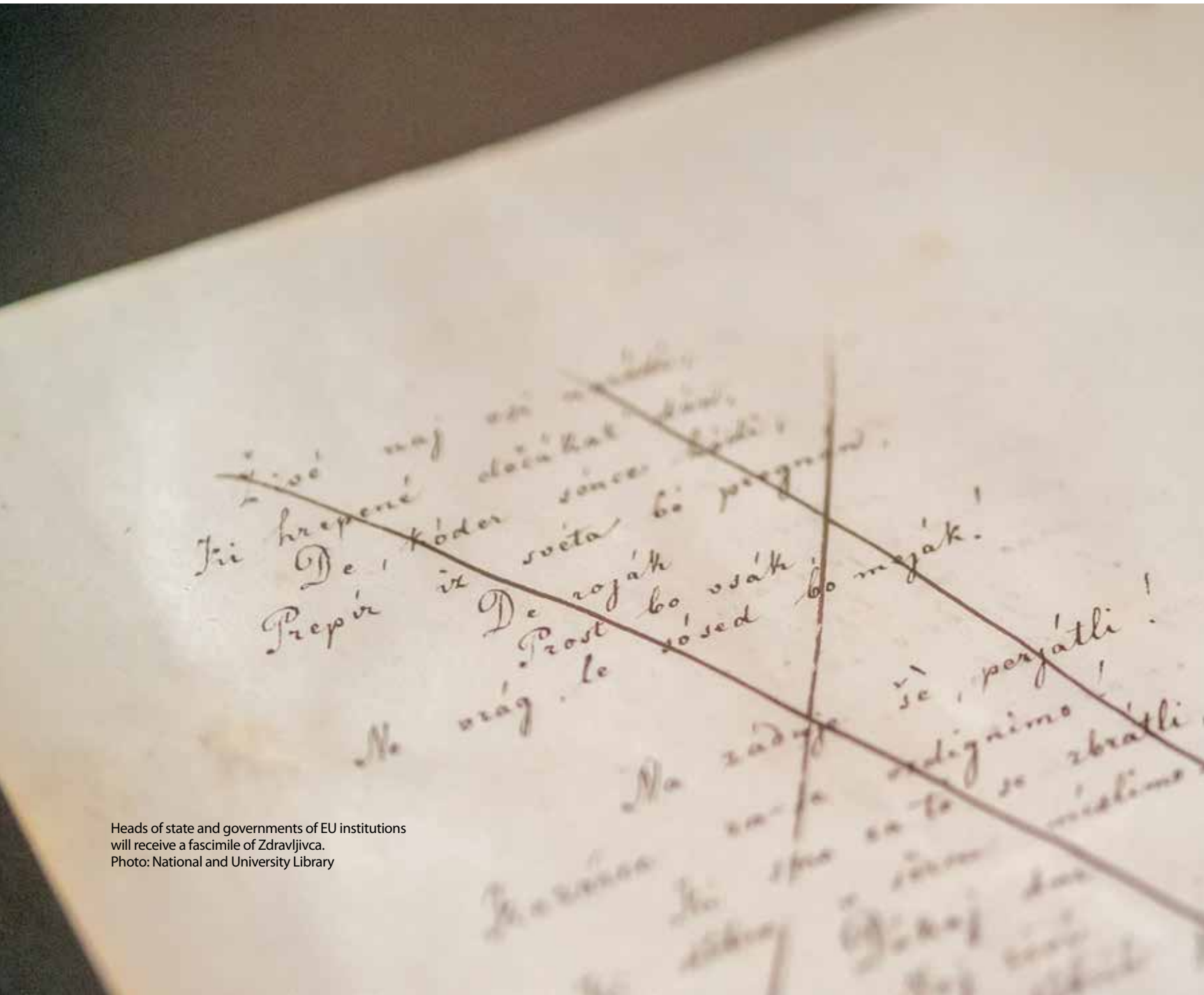
## SOCIAL NETWORKS #EU2021SI

Similarly to other countries holding the Presidency, we will open special profiles for the Slovenian Presidency EU2021SI on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. They will be activated at the end of June, and used to inform you about current events, to provide behind-the-scenes insight into the Presidency, and answer your questions. Follow us online to learn more

# SLOVENIAN PRESIDENCY GIFTS AS AN EXPRESSION OF MESSAGES

## A Facsimile of *Zdravljica* for Heads of State

NATAŠA BUŠLJETA



Heads of state and governments of EU institutions will receive a facsimile of *Zdravljica*.  
Photo: National and University Library

Heads of state and governments and presidents of EU institutions will receive a facsimile of *Zdravljica* (A Toast). *Zdravljica*, a poem by Dr France Prešeren, the greatest Slovenian poet, was written in 1844, during the Age of Absolutism. Its words, however, will always remain relevant. It is a hymn to a world both desired and envisaged. On 31 March 2020, the European Commission awarded the prestigious European Heritage Label to *Zdravljica* for its strong expressive message. The seventh stanza of the poem, making a toast to all nations, forms the lyrics of the Republic of Slovenia's national anthem. The facsimile of *Zdravljica* is a symbolic upgrading of the activities of Slovenia's first EU Council Presidency in 2008. In that year a rectangular monolith was erected in the square outside the headquarters of the Council of the European Union, the Justus Lipsius building in Brussels, as a lasting reminder of the Presidency.

**The monolith carries the verse from the seventh stanza of *Zdravljica*, Slovenian national anthem, "God's blessings on all nations", in 24 official EU languages. Moreover, a publication containing an explanatory introduction and the poem *Zdravljica* has been translated into all 24 official EU languages. This gift thus reaffirms the commitment of Slovenia's Presidency to respect the values of the European integration.**

### SCARVES, NECKTIES AND EQUA SMART BOTTLES

In accordance with tradition of presidencies, scarves and neckties will be given to high-ranking female and male politicians. In addition to a scarf, female heads of state will also receive an EQUA smart bottle. EQUA bottles are sustainable water bottles to ensure the hydration of active women. The smart bottle glows to remind people to stay hydrated and calculates the amount of water drunk by syncing with the accompanying phone app. Moreover, EQUA bottles are built to last and may replace as many as 217 single-use plastic bottles per year.



Female heads of state will also receive an EQUA smart bottle.  
Photo: UKOM



### CUFFLINKS WITH THE CARANTANIAN PANTHER MOTIF

In addition to a necktie, male presidents will also receive cufflinks with a Carantanian panther motif. The Carantanian panther is a symbol of the state of Carantania, and holds a special place in Slovenia's history. It is considered to be a guarantor for the independence of Slovenians. In this way, the gift is symbolically associated with this year's celebration of the 30th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Slovenia.

### GASTRONOMIC GIFT PACKS

Other participants will receive gastronomic gift packs containing genuine Slovenian products and a book with Slovenian recipes so that all European kitchens will be filled with the aroma of Slovenian dishes.

**We wanted to choose a gift that would not collect dust, and since Slovenia has been named the European Region of Gastronomy 2021, gastronomic products seem the right choice. When selecting the items we took into consideration the rich diversity of Slovenian products, as well as a number of food-related restrictions.**

These include, for example, those relating to airline passengers with hand luggage as well as the durability of foodstuffs (they should not be easily perishable), and items creating dilemmas or embarrassment for gift recipients (e.g. meat products for vegetarians, alcohol). The following gift packs were thus prepared based on such considerations.

### GIFT PACK CONTAINING SALT, SALT WITH A MIXTURE OF SPICES AND CHOCOLATE WITH SALT

This is a true "Slovenian classic", coming from Slovenian salt pans. In 2014, the European Commission approved the entry of Piran salt into the Register of Protected Designations of Origin and Protected Geographical Indications, which is the highest level of protection within the framework of the European scheme of protection of agricultural products and foodstuffs.

**Piran salt is harvested according to approved traditional methods using exclusively conventional tools, dating back more than 700 years.**

The taste of the light, unground, unrefined salt is complemented by brine – the mother water caught within the crystals. On average, its mineral composition is richer than that of other salts.



The salt from Sečovlje salt pans is harvested according to traditional methods.  
Photo: Sečovlje salt pans

### GIFT PACK CONTAINING PUMPKIN SEED OIL, PUMPKIN SEEDS AND PUMPKIN SPREAD

The production of pumpkins, pumpkin seed oil and other products is typical of the Štajerska and Prekmurje plains, two regions in the northeast of Slovenia. Both regions have a long tradition of processing pumpkin seeds into pumpkin oil, dating back to the 18th century according to historical records. The pumpkin seed oil of Štajerska and Prekmurje belongs among the Slovenian and EU protected agricultural products and foodstuffs. It is also healthy, as 100 g of cold-pressed pumpkin seed oil contains 50-70 mg of natural vitamin E.

### GIFT PACK CONTAINING HONEY, POLLEN AND HONEY CHOCOLATE

Slovenia proposed that 20 May be proclaimed World Bee Day, with this being the birthday of Anton Janša, Slovenia's pioneering beekeeper.

**The Slovenian beekeeping tradition is a long one, and Slovenia is at the very top of the list of countries ranked by the number of beekeepers per capita.**

Slovenia is the only country with a protected native bee species, the autochthonous Carniolan honeybee, known for its industriousness and modesty, which means that no other bee species are allowed to be kept here. Honeybees are important pollinators and their product, honey, is highly nutritious. It is also very useful for culinary purposes, as it adds a special flavour to dishes.

### GIFT PACK CONTAINING SLOVENIAN TARTUFATA AND OIL

Truffles are gastronomic pearls. Truffles are edible fungi that grow underground and have a very intense taste and aroma.

They also thrive in Slovenia, in Istria. Our truffle pickers harvest only around 300 kilograms of truffles per year, making the truffles even more precious. Truffles are used in very small amounts in dishes, as they quickly become dominant due to their intense flavour and aroma.

### POTICA

**Potica is the most famous traditional holiday dish and dessert in Slovenia.**

It is impossible to imagine a holiday without it. Its filling is usually made from walnuts. According to tradition, cracking the nuts needed to make it symbolises tackling one's own problems, while its circular shape symbolises infinity and perfection.



Potica is a Slovenian culinary classic.  
Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik

## Raising Awareness of the EU among Young People

ANA KRAŠEVEC

*If a piece of bread falls on the floor,  
pick it up and kiss it*  
Author: Lana Išpanov, 8th grade,  
Primary School Metlika

During the preparations for the Slovenian Presidency of the EU Council, special attention was paid to young people. Although our plans were thwarted by the pandemic, which forced us to cancel many of the activities, we intend to re-introduce them as soon as conditions allow. Above all, we want to raise the level of awareness among young people of the European Union, its institutions, regulations and benefits for the population, and the importance of Slovenia's Presidency of the EU Council.

### EUROPE IN SCHOOL

In the 2020/21 academic year, we carried out the Europe in School competition for primary and secondary schools, which has been conducted in cooperation with the Friends of Youth Association for many years. This time the topic was waste and discarded food, and we chose the old Slovenian expression "if a piece of bread falls on the floor, pick it up and kiss it" as the slogan.

**The theme of this year's competition is therefore linked to the 12<sup>th</sup> Sustainable Development Goal – Ensuring sustainable consumption and production.**

Each year, the National Committee of the Europe in School competition adjusts the content and slogan to the theme of the European Year, and it has increasingly focused on the sustainable development goals set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In recent years, young people have already given thought to climate change, gender inequality, the importance of cultural heritage and similar important topics.

**This year, primary and secondary pupils were thinking about what waste food is and how it is generated, how it affects the environment, and how this problem can be solved.**



*The Bela Krajina flat cake for everyone*  
Author: Ana Hutar, class PPVI V., Primary  
School Milka Sobar Nataša

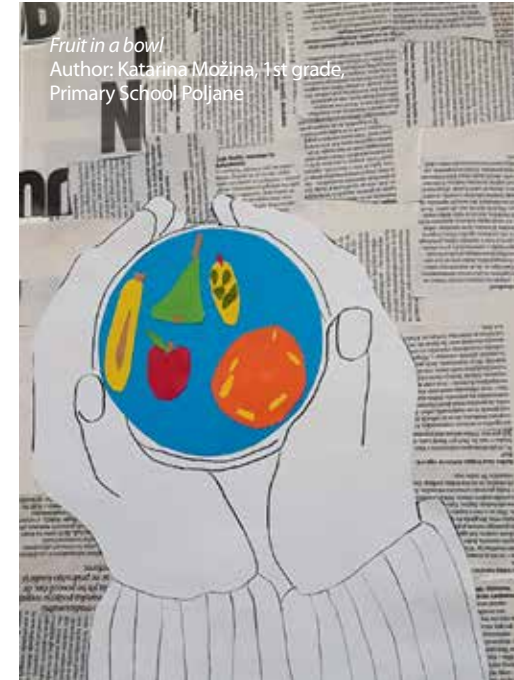
The main objectives of the Europe in School competition are to contribute to creative solutions to the social problems that we face in Slovenia, Europe and globally, and to strengthen mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity. Through participation in annual literary, art, photography, video and internet competitions, primary and secondary pupils reflect on the challenges of the future, and develop their creativity and independent and critical thinking.

**BEST FINAL THESES COMPETITION**

In the period of preparations for the Presidency, we drew up a competition for the students' best final theses of undergraduate and master's studies on the topic of the Slovenia's Presidency of the EU Council, or Slovenia's role in the European Union. The competition will be completed in July 2021, and the winners are expected to be announced in October. Three theses will be awarded in each of the categories: the natural sciences, social sciences and arts. The first prize in each of the categories will be a two-day visit to Brussels and the EU institutions, and the presentation of the awarded theses to the relevant audience, while the second- and third-prize winners will win a two-day visit to Brussels and the EU institutions. The visit to Brussels will take place in November or December, and we hope very much that such a trip will be feasible with as few restrictions as possible.



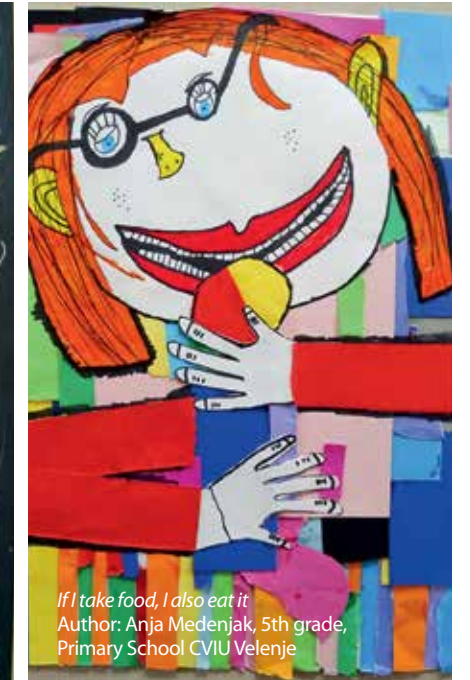
*Hey, give some to me too!*  
 Author: Beti Jene, 9th grade, Primary School Boštanj



*Fruit in a bowl.*  
 Author: Katarina Možina, 1st grade, Primary School Poljane



*I have too much candy! I have too much food!*  
 Author: Spela Ogulin, 4th grade, Primary School Metlika



*If I take food, I also eat it*  
 Author: Anja Medenjak, 5th grade, Primary School CVIU Velenje



*Thrown away*  
 Author: Anja Rupač, 4th grade, Secondary School Šolski center Novo Mesto

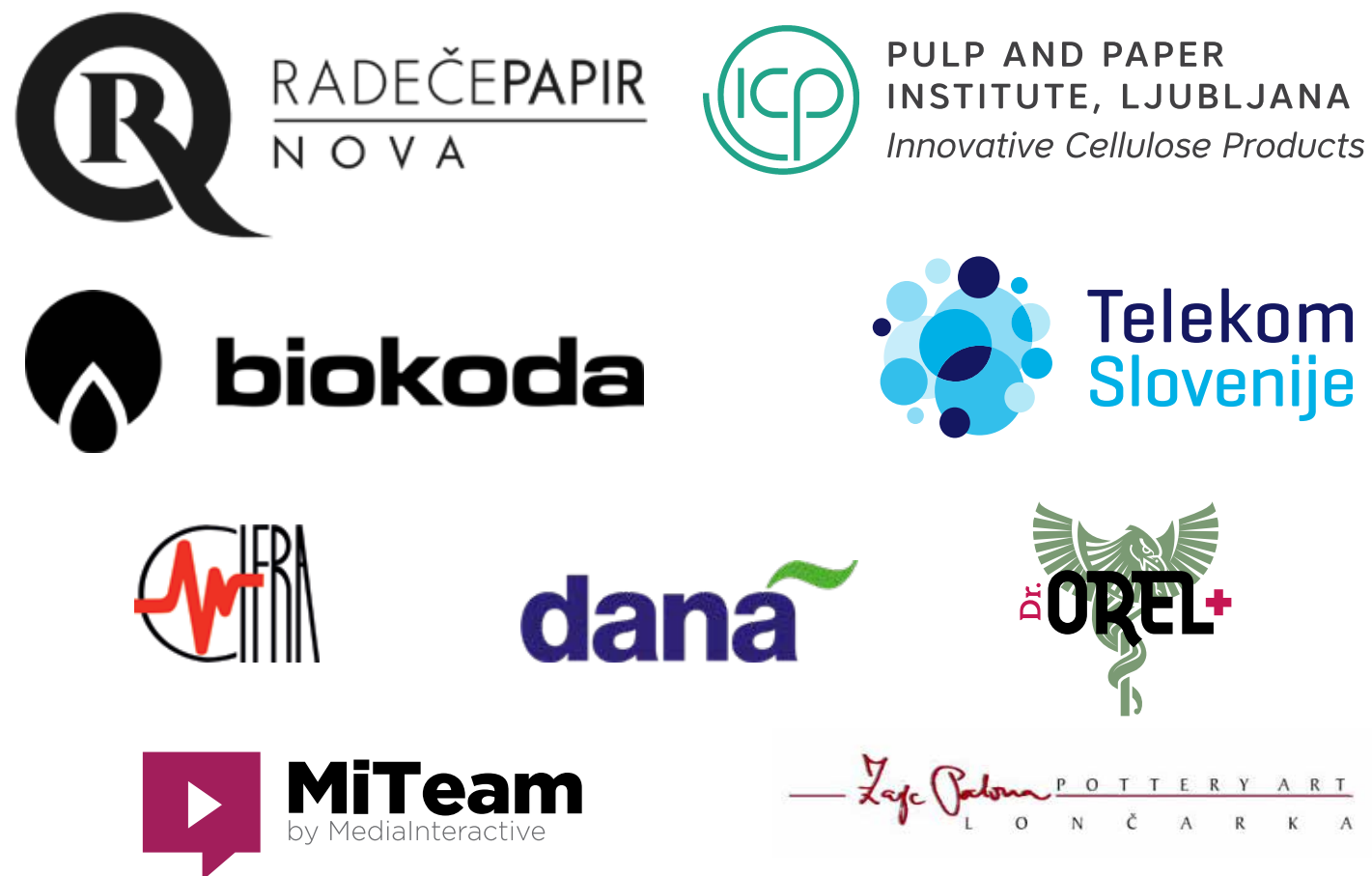


*Do you also throw food in the trash?*  
 Author: Sara Miketič, 6th grade, Primary School Belokranjskega odreda Semič

## SLOVENIAN COMPANIES ENRICH THE PRESIDENCY

### Partners of the Slovenian Presidency

POLONA PREŠEREN



Various companies have joined the Slovenian Presidency of the EU Council, and they are using their products and services to participate in the implementation of the Presidency in their own way. These are Slovenian companies and independent entrepreneurs who want to contribute to and enrich the Slovenian Presidency. They all offer exclusively domestic products and services created with Slovenian knowledge, which are environmentally-friendly and intertwine with the programme and priorities of the Presidency. From the principles of a circular economy to technologically advanced and innovative services, cottage industry, innovative food products, and telecommunications solutions.



#### RADEČE PAPIR NOVA - VISIONS START ON PAPER

The company Radeče papir nova provided paper products for the Slovenian Presidency, and printed the gift book of recipes of the Slovenian Presidency. The book cover is made of Slovenian wood, and includes a special NTF chip.

Paper has been a loyal companion of people in Radeče for 285 years. Today, the tradition of paper manufacturing is continued by Radeče papir nova and its subsidiary Muflon – with a clear vision of sustainable development, and in co-existence between the latest technological achievements, digital processes, and careful, creative manual work. Here is the home of knowledge of generations of local papermill masters, reflected in the excellence and innovation of all types of papers – high security, office, graphic, artistic, technical, or school products, and modular wallpaper. You can sense their quality with your eyes closed. It is tangible. It is as though one is touching nature.

#### Antibacterial paper also protected against coronavirus

A new addition to their offer is an innovative paper protected with a special antibacterial coating. It is treated with antimicrobial and antiviral technology. The latest tests con-

firm that it is protected against numerous bacteria. The antibacterial paper of the Radeče papir nova and Muflon masters is thus the most suitable solution for any company, school or organisation where paper-based transactions still have an important role in the working process.

#### High security paper

The tradition of high-quality paper production also includes a world renowned production of high security paper for banknotes, passports, visas, tax stamps, and other similar solutions. The result is paper demonstrating its authenticity with a watermark, security thread, security particles, chemical sensitivity, and much more. This paper is distinguished by high mechanical strength, resistance against wear, and resistance against other external impacts, which ensures its durability.

#### Muflon brand – Innovation and added value

The Muflon papers and solutions are distinguished by an extremely wide range of applications, including for school, studies, artistic creation, or office. It is especially worth pointing out that they are specialised in making and printing labels for marking products in the pharmaceutical, food, chemical, and automotive industries.

[www.radecepapir.si](http://www.radecepapir.si), [www.muflon.si](http://www.muflon.si), [www.trgovina.muflon.si](http://www.trgovina.muflon.si)



**PULP AND PAPER  
INSTITUTE, LJUBLJANA**  
*Innovative Cellulose Products*

#### PULP AND PAPER INSTITUTE

The Pulp and Paper Institute is a private research and development institution, an agile and R&D-oriented organisation that offers integrated development services from idea to prototype. They are committed to a sustainable and circular use of resources, as evidenced by their story of how they put the circular economy into practice. A lot of their investments go into research on the potential of waste, unused biomass sources, and in the development of their own products from locally available sources. The Institute is leading interdisciplinary research, and invests its knowledge in the development of competitive products using biomass building blocks from paper and paper packaging to construction. They are participating in the Slovenian Presidency with a unique packaging of promotional gift packages. The packaging is made of paper which was produced at the Pulp and Paper Institute from the stems of Slovenian tomatoes.

The Pulp and Paper Institute is a private research and development institution which supports its partners in various value chains, by providing skills and services for the development of eco materials, and the introduction of sustainable, circular business models. The Institute uses interdisciplinary knowledge in the area of advanced use of biomass in the entire circuit of production, the use and re-use of this natural resource,

and thus provides support in the development of competitive products using biomass building blocks from paper and paper packaging to construction.

The Institute offers integrated development services from idea to prototype. New innovative materials, products, and procedures are developed in specialised laboratories, and on pilot equipment for industrial testing. Pilot equipment for the production of lignocellulosic fibres, and the production and processing of paper and cardboard, which is unique in the wider region, enables the production of prototypes and test batches of new materials or products – such as special papers, filters, multilayer composites, and final packaging solutions with added advanced features – for marketing applications. The Institute's accredited laboratory provides testing of the compliance of the final products with the requirements regarding safety (food contact) and waste management (recyclability, biodegradability, compostability).

They are demonstrating their commitment to a sustainable and circular use of resources by investing in research on the potential of waste, unused biomass sources, and in the development of their own products from locally available sources under the brand CiP, Circular Innovative Papers.

[www.icp-lj.si](http://www.icp-lj.si)



#### BIOKODA

Biokoda is a privately-owned research and development company from Slovenia, established in 2008. Biokoda is primarily focused on building security software.

Biocoded is the flagship product of Biokoda. It is a platform for secure communication in the era of the Internet of Everything and it is built to provide secure communication for human communication, machine communication and interaction with services, processes and the internet of things. It is a future-proof solution that provides the highest possible security measures and is ready to grow and adapt through the complex period of advanced cyber-threats that lies in front of us.

At present, Biocoded already covers secure human-to-human communication with advanced functionalities, such as ephemeral communication through self-destructible messages and a situational-awareness service with a completely autonomous mapping solution.

Biocoded Bot technology, in contrast, represents the machine-

to-machine communication spectrum, where secure communication between things can take place without exposing the underlying network infrastructure. This means that the mesh of secure tunnels between things comprising an end-to-end encrypted software-defined network, which is a unique software feature of the Biocoded platform.

Through integrations, the Biocoded platform has become one of the most advanced platforms for high-risk cyber-defensive operations. Biocoded was independently audited and received government-level certification from the NCSA for the RESTRICTED level in 2017.

Biokoda is working closely with system integrators, telecom operators, governments and information security experts and is recognised as a reliable partner and offers global services for users of its publicly accessible products. Biokoda provides a variety of turn-key solutions ranging from over-the-top media distribution, a content delivery network solution that integrates a streaming server with protection schemes, and a secure large-scale storage platform, amongst its product portfolios.

During the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU, Biokoda will make 700 Biocoded Private Cloud Enterprise licences available for the Slovenian Presidency to use and will provide diagnostics and support for administrators and users in the event of problems or errors.

[www.biokoda.com](http://www.biokoda.com)



#### TELEKOM SLOVENIJE D.D.

Telekom Slovenije is the leading and comprehensive Slovenian provider of cutting-edge ICT services and solutions. It is always focusing on the introduction of new technologies. It manages the largest and fastest network, which is, according to their users, also the best and most reliable.

In 2020, it was the only one in Slovenia to take the next step in the development of mobile technology, and established the national network of the fifth generation of mobile networks (5G), which at the end of the year covered more than 32% of the population. The company also operates the largest and most modern optical network. Telekom Slovenije

provides its users with an excellent user experience, as it is constantly developing new services and solutions, such as e-care, Telehealth, smart wallet, smart cities, villages and communities, and is especially dedicated to providing cyber security services.

Telekom Slovenije has a state-of-the-art Cyber Security Operations Centre, which received the award for the most innovative security solution. The Centre is certified according to the ISO 27001 international standard for information security, and the company also has a ISO 22301 certificate for business continuity, according to which it is qualified to provide key services and processes, even in emergency situations. The Telekom Slovenije Group is also present in Kosovo, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and North Macedonia. Part of the Group is also the company Soline, which takes care of the preservation of natural and cultural heritage in the area of the Sečovelje Salina Landscape Park.

[www.telekom.si](http://www.telekom.si)



**Telekom Slovenije**  
@TelekomSlo

Welcome to the first  
5G network in Slovenia.

#5G #LeadingNetwork



#### CIFRA – DEVELOPMENT, INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE OF SECURE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS

The main activity of Cifra is the development, installation and maintenance of secure information and communications systems. With many years of experience gained in the development and production of secure professional devices and cryptographic software, Cifra ranks among the very best of Slovenian companies, with the longest tradition in this demanding field.

With reputable partners at home and abroad, Cifra covers a wide range of security solutions from secure access to computers and secure Internet to the protection of complex information systems. Cifra designs tailor-made security systems according to specific requirements and different levels of security policy.

It provides their customers with modern software and hardware systems. With a thoughtful combination of hardware and software, the company upgrades the level of security and enables wide usability, which is what users want. Its solutions meet the latest standards in security technology, which allows connectivity with other systems and easy upgrades.

Cifra has gained trust by paying close attention to customer requirements, installing state-of-the-art security solutions and exemplary cooperation. Professionals maintain and upgrade the existing systems with full responsibility, making them work flawlessly even in the most demanding environments. They find new and new challenges in closely monitoring world innovations in cryptography and security in general. Challenges generate new ideas, and the road from ideas to new creations is not long.

[www.cifra.si](http://www.cifra.si)



#### MITEAM BY MEDIAINTERACTIVE

Company Mediainteractive has been created to provide essential tools for digital transformation of businesses, associations, education institutions and other organisations, which are in the process of redefining the way how they communicate, learn, engage and exchange knowledge within and outside their organisation. We are focused on human part of digital transformation.

Mediainteractive is home of MiTeam (r).

MiTeam is a fully integrated, secure, user and management friendly, flexible and open Collaboration and Learning Experience Platform and includes Events Module, Interactive content Creation Module, Community engagement module, everything your employees, visitors and partners will need to speed up their internal and external communication, knowledge and skills exchange from great digital events to learning courses and community engagement.

It includes a powerful "Zoom" or "Webex" like video communication module, "Slack" like content exchange and messaging, multimedia content library and great user experience customisation tools, supports all sorts of devices, from smartphones and smart glasses to PC and interactive screens.

MiTeam for Events is optimized for creation of a great user experience in complex online and hybrid events, includes Stage and Backstage mode with perfect support for visitors and organizers, powerful video channel creation and management, unlimited customisation of multi track agenda, attractive participant networking, asynchronous content exchange, advanced analytics and much more.

MiTeam for Events for EU Presidency has been extended with outstanding multi language translator service support, sign language interpreter channel, multi tenant support, multimedia studio integration, internal notification capabilities and interactive learning center for organizers and visitors and more.

Security has been one of the key advantages. MiTeam is built on top of advanced open source technologies and is installed on the servers of customer choice. Customer is owner of all content and data from start to the end of service. Customisation and personalized support is available in all phases of event, from planning to execution.

[www.miteam.eu](http://www.miteam.eu)

# dana



Svetla is a very special water that has many positive effects on our well-being. It is often used by athletes in their training and competitions, and with its help they achieve better results and increase their performance as well as speed up the regeneration process. "Without Svetla water, there is no real training - it quenches thirst, regenerates and refreshes," says Luka Žinko, a football player for FC Bravo. His teammate Andraž Kirm adds: "Athletes need to take care of their health and Svetla water is the right choice."

Photo: Dana archives

## DANA: THE GOOD WATER

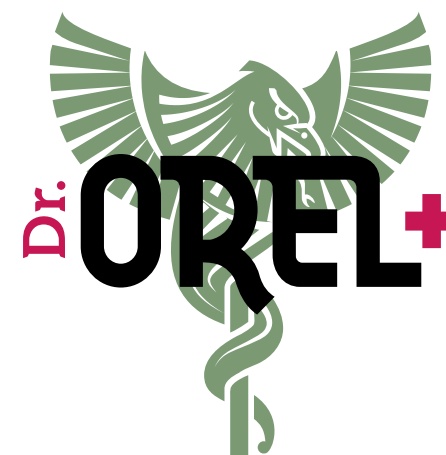
Water is one of the most important natural resources in Slovenia, which was the first country in the EU to enshrine the right to drinking water in its constitution. Dana water is produced at Mirna in the Dolenjska Region, where it is bottled directly from the source, using a cutting-edge technological process.

Dana water and juices will be offered to delegates at the Slovenian Presidency meetings in Brussels. Dana is committed to sustainable development, and its mission to promote a better life through its range of products and services. The company adapts to trends, explores new technological solutions, introduces new flavours and packaging and, first and foremost, meets the needs of modern consumers in both Slovenia and abroad who are interested in nature and a healthy lifestyle. By meeting the strictest quality criteria and knowing its customers, Dana has turned into a state-of-the-art factory that uses the local natural conditions and innovative processes to bottle water and produce juices, syrups, various non-alcoholic beverages, cocktails and limited-edition spirits.

It dedicates a great deal of attention to new products and new technologies and, most of all, is focused on sustainability. Moreover, despite globalisation and its global market activities, it invests in the local community. Ever since its inception in 1952, co-existence with the local community has been among Dana's main aims, and thus over the years its story has grown and even spread across Slovenia's borders.

One of its more prominent products is the natural mineral water with a pH of 7.4, which is the ideal pH value and very beneficial for the human body. This water has a relatively high calcium and magnesium content, a low sodium content, comes naturally without carbon dioxide, excels in high purity and constant and stable composition over the years, and is a low mineral water. It is suitable for low-sodium diets and is the first Slovenian water undergoing constant biological health safety tests. The daily water intake recommended by Dana is at least two litres, because that is the quantity that helps maintain normal physical and cognitive functions, and regulate body temperature.

[www.dana.si/en/](http://www.dana.si/en/)



## DR. OREL, BUCKWHEAT BEER

Buckwheat has a special place in Slovenian gastronomy. Coming from an age-old tradition of buckwheat cultivation, Dr. Orel was the first company in Slovenia to produce beer made from 100% Slovenian buckwheat. Dr. Orel Beer is also the first Slovenian gluten-free beer, and is also suitable for people who have gluten intolerance or are allergic to it. The beer is sweetened using their own technology, and contains several types of hops, plus water and yeast. The common feature of all Dr. Orel Beers is a distinctive honey-fruity scent and buckwheat taste.

The company says that they are not classic brewers, but a health-oriented company composed of experts in the field of medicine and nutrition. When making beer, they were not only focused on the taste, but also the medical and nutritional value.

The idea to make gluten-free beer was created by Dr. Orel treating children with digestive diseases. Since buckwheat is not an established raw material for making beer, they had to radically change the classic technological procedures of malt production. However, this remains their secret. They are participating in the Slovenian Presidency with their beer, which will be available at receptions at the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Slovenia in Brussels.

[www.drorel.com/Home](http://www.drorel.com/Home)

— Zofe Polona POTTERY ART  
L O N Č A R K A

## POLONA ZAJC POTTERY ART

At the meetings in Brdo pri Kranju, visitors and delegates will drink water from unique clay glasses made of black stone, with a motif of a village situla, handmade by the designer of clay products, Polona Zajc.

Her range of products is unique. She mostly makes household and decorative ceramics, stoneware products, ceramic mosaics, and individual pieces of art. She adjusts the shape to the purpose of the product. Her concept is to make traditional clay products imitating ancient pottery, as well as modern artworks. Working with ceramics inspires her, because of the unpredictability of the final product, as well as the myriad design possibilities.

It all started with the idea and desire to become a potter. She learned her first steps on the pottery wheel at the School for Design and Photography. In Komenda, a place with a strong pottery tradition, she learned to make ceramics – from shaping a lump of clay, drying, through firing, and glazing, to the finished product. She established her own company in 1995, and is creating her artworks in her own workshop in Mengeš, her hometown. As well as spinning the pottery wheel, she is pouring liquid clay, rolling clay, and making clay sculptures. The forms adapt to the purpose of the product, but they range from traditional shapes that mimic ancient pottery, to modern original pieces.

[www.potteryart.eu](http://www.potteryart.eu)



URSIV

SPIRIT SLOVENIA

REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA  
MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA  
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

IMF

Bled Strategic Forum

BLED STRATEGIC FORUM 2021

Future of Europe

Bled, 1-2 September 2021

PETER GRK, IZTOK MIROŠIČ  
PHOTO: UKOM

Over the last 16 years, Bled Strategic Forum has established itself as one of the most important strategic events in Central and Southeastern Europe, attracting high-level politicians, executives and members of civil society to discuss and seek solutions for the most pressing regional and global issues.





Among them special focus has always been put on themes and subjects which are fundamentally changing not only geostrategic relations in the global community, but also our society, economy and way of life – the future of Europe, the future of transatlantic relations, digitalisation and sustainable development. These four pillars represent in our view the main building blocks of a new multilateral system, which should be based on the principles of solidarity, responsibility, transparency and efficiency. The EU is not alone on this journey. Together with our partners, we are facing global challenges, such as climate change, which can only be tackled with comprehensive and collective action.

#### **THIS YEAR BLED STRATEGIC FORUM WILL BE DEVOTED TO OUR COMMON FUTURE – THE FUTURE OF EUROPE**

In this rapidly changing global geostrategic environment, Europe must adapt and lead by example in order to secure its global outreach and importance. This outreach starts at home.

**Over a relatively short period, Europe and consequently the EU have been faced with a number of difficult situations, having lived through the financial and migration crises and Brexit.**

The direst of crises – the COVID-19 pandemic – continues, affecting the social, economic and political structure of the entire world, Europe, the EU, its Member States and every individual. The latest health crisis caused by the pandemic has put the EU's functioning to a critical test, both in Europe and at the global level. Where – in this respect – do opportunities for the EU's robust engagement at the global level, together with transatlantic and other like-minded democratic partners, lie? How can we rise to the global challenges the free world is currently facing, including in terms of preparedness for crises – health, cyber or any other?

To be able to enforce its standards and values, the EU must build up its resilience to crisis and its own strategic and production sovereignty in the health, economic, social, defence and cyber fields.

**Post-crisis economic recovery can only be possible through an evolution of the economic model channelling investments into digital and green projects. Investing in knowledge, technology, R&D, infrastructure, energy and digital connectivity, and artificial intelligence is becoming part of the global competitive race.**

An important factor in determining the winner will be the ability to come up with the right responses to the demographic changes in the EU and around the world. Furthermore, the European way of life and values demand prompt answers to questions related to migration management, asylum policy, integration and the functioning of the Schengen system. And even more importantly, the understanding of another common European value – the rule of law – must be deepened.

#### **THE FUTURE OF EUROPE**

The European way of life and the EU itself still inspire and attract many, both in Europe and beyond. However, the EU has competitors promoting different values. This is why it is vital to extend its influence and strengthen its external political power and capability to deal effectively with European and global geopolitical processes, particularly in its immediate vicinity – in the Western Balkans and in its southern and eastern neighbourhood.

**The European Union needs a well-functioning transatlantic partnership to address the most difficult global and re-**

**gional questions, such as the future of free trade and our policy towards the Indo-Pacific region.**

So, what will the future of Europe be like? This year, together with young people at the Young BSF, who will be living this future, we will seek answers to these questions at the Conference on the Future of Europe and the 2021 Bled Strategic Forum. As every year, special gratitude goes to all our international and domestic partners, who have supported us over the years and are a backbone of the growing BSF family.

Thank you again. We sincerely hope to see you all in Bled.



## EXPO

## Slovenian Oasis in Dubai

ANUŠA GAŠI



The Slovenian pavilion stands out with the recognisable green façade.  
Photo: Spirit Slovenia archives

In October, a new edition of the World Expo is being launched in the capital of the United Arab Emirates. Initially, it was scheduled for last year, but was postponed due to the pandemic. This is the only significant change in the plans for this Expo, as it will be held live, unlike too many recent events that have only been on video. Among the countries that will host an anticipated 25 million visitors to the pavilions, Slovenia will present itself with its green experiences and creative potential.

World Expo 2020 in Dubai is located in a venue the size of some 440 football fields, and there will be many architectural approaches, technological innovations and solutions for a better and more integrated world. The organisers have made remarkable efforts to prepare for the first World Expo hosted by an Arabic country, with many new records being set.

**The exhibition venue will be divided into three segments dedicated to three key topics of the exhibition: opportunities, mobility and sustainability.**

Part of the latter will also be the Slovenian pavilion, which stands out from many other national pavilions with a recognisable green façade. This will contain as many as 45,000 plants, and is in an exceptional location, just behind the entrance to the exhibition venue. The pavilion celebrates Slovenian know-how, as Slovenian experts provided both its design and construction. The same will apply to what happens inside. This will be matched by Slovenian stories, which have international potential and address one of the critical challenges of humanity: how to align the demand for development with the needs of people and the environment.

The pavilion is divided into three floors. There will be the European Market on the ground floor, depicting the scene of social and promotional events, particularly tourist events. In a special area immediately next to the market, a number of Slovenian companies will be presented. The neighbouring interactive room will offer insights into the most visible Slovenian stories and icons. On the first floor, an unprecedented visual experience in two oval rooms will be provided.

**Visitors will be able to see the first 360-degree projection on green and creative Slovenia.**

The video projection will be an experience for all the senses, and visitors will be able to enter some of the hidden gems of our country through experiencing authentic stories. They will discover the background of the ideas we have used to change the flow of history and be part of a society of heroes that paved the way for the future.

The Slovenian business centre will be set up on the top, the second floor of the Slovenia Pavilion.

**For six months, from 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2021, this will be the most beautiful home of Slovenia's business ideas, scientific achievements and stories with global potential.**

A number of business, professional and diplomatic meetings will take place there. We all hope that the Slovenia Pavilion, which represents the Slovenian oasis in the middle of Dubai, will also produce new stories of success, placing Slovenia even more firmly in the group of countries with the most relevant responses to the challenges of humanity.

To bring the whole experience of paradise at the intersection of the Alps, the Mediterranean, and the Pannonian Basin to visitors, many guests representing our touristic treasures, regions, cultural heritage, creative works, and unique gastronomy will be present in Dubai. As supported by the Spirit Slovenia public agency, which is responsible for preparing the presentation at Expo 2020, Slovenia will therefore also be the voice of freshness, authenticity, and commitment to responsible development in Dubai.

THE TASTES OF SLOVENIA ENRICH THE VARIETY OF TASTES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

**The Culinary Delights of the 24 Gastronomic Regions of Slovenia**

PROF DR JANEZ BOGATAJ



Bela Krajina flatbread  
Photo: UKOM

Slovenia owes its gastronomic diversity to a century of contacts at the hub of the European Alps, the Mediterranean and the Pannonian Basin, as well as the creativity of the people who live there. The influences of the neighbouring Balkans have also been reflected after the end of the Second World War, and more recently there have been a series of actions and efforts with the aim of making the cuisine of Slovenia more widely recognised. Such efforts include, for example, the protection of the geographic origin of the typical Slovenian foods, dishes and drinks in the EU, a targeted culinary offer in the scope of the country's tourism promotion, and a number of culinary events, which have been proliferating in recent years.

**With its varied tastes, Slovenia has moved away from its long-standing culinary and gastronomic anonymity, and it is no coincidence that it became a full member of the European Region of Gastronomy network in 2021, the year of its Presidency of the European Union.**

In 2006, Slovenia set out its Gastronomy Strategy, a significant expert project that started to be implemented consistently, mostly in the tourism area, although also in other areas in recent years. The Strategy named 24 gastronomic regions of Slovenia, with a total of 430 typical and recognisable foods, dishes and drinks. This means that it established order and a system, a gastronomic pyramid, which allows full gastronomic and culinary recognition of Slovenia. In addition to foods and dishes, the Strategy also includes wines, spirits and non-alcoholic beverages.

**The gastronomic regionalisation of Slovenia not only established a solid system, but also stressed the importance of local, household and regional foods, dishes and drinks.**

This focus on local cultures and regionalism is in line with the core principles of the modern global food movement. In addition to understanding healthy, ecologically suitable or other types of eating, food varieties and diversities are being emphasized, thus contributing significantly to the formation of regional cultures. This also serves as the basis for the culinary offer during Slovenia's Presidency of the European Union at Brdo pri Kranju.

**VARIETY OF TASTES DURING THE PRESIDENCY**

All of the meals available to guests at Brdo pri Kranju will be prepared by a team of chefs following the principles set out the above, presenting delicious foods and ingredients from local and regional suppliers. Guests will be able to discover the variety of tastes of our country. The menus will therefore include, for example, the protected Tolminc cheese and dry-cured Karst meats, buckwheat *krapci* or dough pockets, which are characteristic of the Alpine part of Slovenia, as well as Fonda, the Piran sea bass valued throughout Europe, and a tasty pudding with millet porridge and wild blueberries. Trout will be brought from the Brdo estate, where they will also be smoked. Fallow deer meat will also be sourced from Brdo, which will be complemented



Dry-cured Karst meats.  
Photo: UKOM



Dishes will present the entire variety of Slovenia's tastes to its guests.  
Photo: UKOM

by potato *žganci*, characteristic of the Mura region. The Slovenian *potica*, which has just been protected in the EU, will be among the desserts enjoyed by guests. The range and variety of Slovenia's culinary offer will also be reflected in what's available between formal meals, in breaks. Guests will be able to enjoy the Bela krajina flat-bread, two types of the protected Slovenian *potica*, an entirely natural fruit juice from a farm in Podbrezje, various teas from grassland and mountain herbs, and the tasty barley coffee. The early birds at Brdo will be able to enjoy delicious breakfasts made from the delicacies of local suppliers, such as the house sourdough bread from Brdo along with honey and raw butter from a nearby farm, house Brdo jams, cheeses, and the Upper Savinja Valley stomach sausage and excellent dry-cured meats that were loved by the British King George VI. Warm breakfast dishes will be prepared by chefs, and will include Mura ham in dough, various coastal omelettes with fresh eggs from the neighbouring farms, and the typical Carniolan sausage, buckwheat and corn *žganci*, four types of rolled dumplings and fresh local fruit. Lunch will have an even more diverse offer of the typical foods of the 24 gastronomic regions.

#### DISHES MADE IN MODERN AND INNOVATIVE WAYS

We will not reveal all of them here, but of course they will include dishes that feature the potato, which has 132 different dialect designations in Slovenia. Guests will also be able to enjoy the traditional Idrian dumplings *Idrijski žlikrofi*, the pork dish *mavželj*, meatballs in pork net and the very tasty carrot soup. Appetisers at lunch will include the typical and protected *prleška tünka*, the Karst celery soup or *šelinka*, Gorica pork sausages in wine, selected fresh Adriatic fish and fried chicken legs or wings, which were also appreciated by workers at the former Ljubljana river port in the 16th century. Desserts will include local delicacies, such as Kobarid rolled dumplings, *ribniška povanca*, the Bled *Cremeschnitte* and the Bizeljstyle buckwheat cake. These are just some of the dishes that, in addition to drinks, will aim to present the entire variety of Slovenia's tastes to its guests. It is worth mentioning that the team of chefs at Brdo will prepare all dishes in modern and innovative ways. The rich food heritage will therefore not be presented and served as a gastronomic "museum", but as a realised basis for the creative and contemporary upgrades that preserve the local and regional identities. This can serve as a great example for Europe, and for the world, of how to preserve and develop a nation's gastronomic recognisability in an ever more aggressively globalised context.

#### MICHELIN-STARRED CHEF TOMAŽ KAVČIČ: CUISINE AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL

Vesna Žarkovič



Tomaž Kavčič, Head culinary chef during the Presidency  
Photo: JGZ Brdo archives

The State Protocol Services of the Republic of Slovenia - the Brdo Congress Centre (JGZ Brdo), which is to host most of the events taking place during Slovenia's EU Council Presidency, has decided to team up with Tomaž Kavčič, the Michelin-starred chef. The aim of collaboration with Kavčič is to combine the best of the best - exclusive locations and unique settings, excellent staff and superb service, along with first-class cuisine.

**JGZ Brdo director Marjan Hribar:** "By collaborating with chef Tomaž Kavčič, Slovenia will become the first European state to have a Michelin-starred chef in charge of cuisine at all top-level events taking place during the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU. The identity of the renovated hotel and of the other locations will focus on exceeding guests' expectations in all aspects. The superior quality of the service and the professionalism of our staff, which result from long-standing experience, will be heightened further still through first-hand learning. The chance to work directly with Tomaž Kavčič will be a great source of motivation for numerous young chefs, who are only just stepping onto their culinary career paths. I believe that the combination of all these superlative elements will make the Elegans Brdo Hotel the very centre of activities undertaken by various target groups."

**Tomaž Kavčič:** "For me, working with JGZ Brdo will be an enormous pleasure. I see it as a recognition of my work, and I believe that I will be able to justify the trust placed in me. Working as head chef during the EU Council Presidency is an exciting challenge, which I accept with great pleasure and respect. I am confident that all of the work, experience and knowledge will bear fruit, and that the quality of culinary service at JGZ Brdo will be raised to the highest possible level."

# Marking the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Skala Mountaineering Club and its Activities in Slovenia

FRANCI DONKO

PHOTO: SKALA MOUNTAINEERING CLUB ARCHIVES

Pilgrimages to the top of Škrlatica on the anniversary of the cross' consecration became traditional.



“During the interwar period, a group of idealistic, even romantic and mountain-loving people in the prime of their youth evolved into the strong mountaineering, sports, cultural and educational organisation *Turistovski klub Skala* (Skala Mountaineering Club), which made skiing and especially mountaineering extremely popular in Slovenia. The period of Skala's activities is considered to be one of the most diverse in Slovenian mountaineering history.

**Numerous outstanding mountain climbers, skiers, sledders, mountain rescuers, photographers, writers, lecturers and filmmakers emerged from the club's ranks.**

It is difficult to say in which of these activities the Skala Mountaineering Club achieved the best results, as the club's work was so diverse and its members were often blazing trails,” wrote Peter Mikša and Elizabeta Gradnik in the foreword of the book *Trden kakor skala, Kratka zgodovina Turistovskega kluba Skala* (Hard as a Rock, A Brief History of the Skala Mountaineering Club).

The great geopolitical shifts that took place in the interwar period also brought about new opportunities, including for the development of Slovenian mountaineering. After the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Slovenian people took important decisions about their development into their own hands. The desire for something new and unachieved ran strong through the new generation of Slovenian mountaineers.

## JAKOB ALJAŽ PAVES THE WAY FOR YOUNGER GENERATIONS

Slovenia's mountaineering pioneers, particularly the “Triglav priest” Jakob Aljaž and other exceptional individuals, left a lasting mark of the Slovenian identity in the mountains – they built mountain huts and made and marked numerous trails, leaving a clear sign of their dominance in this beautiful mountain world in Slovenian ethnic lands, which were the subject of dispute among



the Slovenians, Germans and Italians. But the younger generation wanted something more.

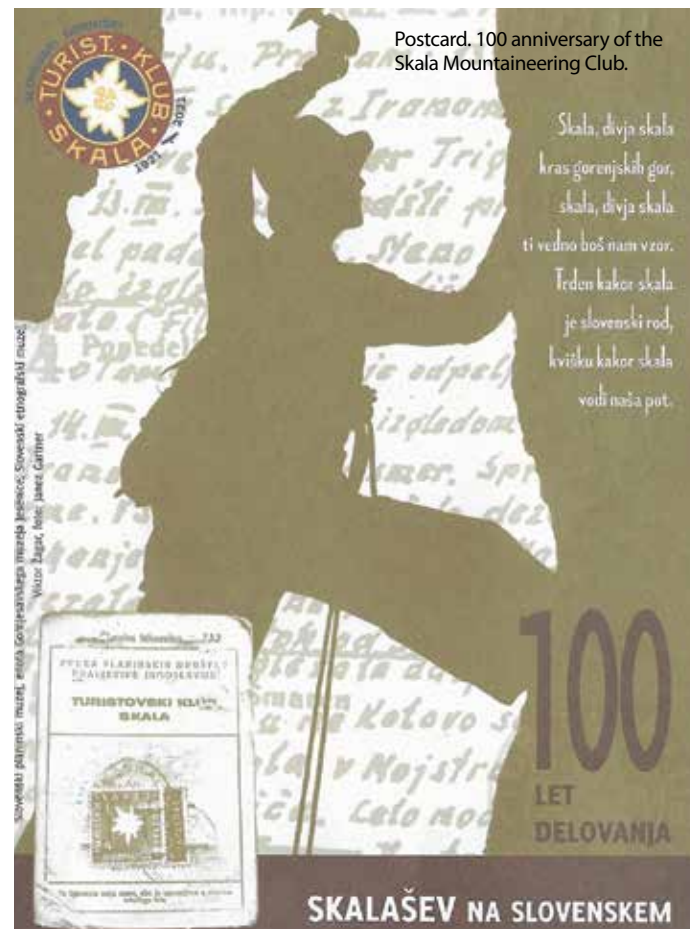
“Where there is a will, there is a way,” was the motto of eager young mountain climbers all around Europe. Young Slovenian mountaineers soon made this slogan their own and founded the Skala Mountaineering Club on Candlemas in 1921 in a joint effort to promote Slovenian mountaineering. This marked a beginning of a new period in which the club's members wanted to bring the mountain world closer to the masses by promoting tourism, climbing, winter mountaineering and skiing.

In his article *Ustanovitev Turistovskega kluba Skala* (Founding of the Skala Mountaineering Club), Vladimir Kajzelj recalls the efforts to found Skala, “We decided to systematically continue the work of Dr Julius Kugy and Dr Henrik Tuma, who climbed accompanied by mountain guides, and of the first organised climbing society, the Dren climbing society, whose members Bogumil Brinšek, Pavel Kunaver, Josip Kunaver, Rudolf Badjura, Ivan Michler, Ivan Tavčar, Ivan Kovač and Ivan Bitenc were solo climbers who also promoted winter mountaineering and skiing.”

In order to become a member of the Skala Mountaineering Club, a candidate first had to pass a trial period, submit the signatures of senior members vouching for them, and meet the requirements of a preparatory period.

**Being a member of Skala was a special privilege and a way of life, and those chosen respected mountaineering traditions and ethics. The club's tasks also included moulding their members into true mountaineers.**

An important part of the club's activity was promoting patriotism and competitiveness, given the strong presence of foreign rivals in the Slovenian mountains. Through systematic hard work and by



introducing modern climbing techniques, Skala's members built a solid foundation for the outstanding achievements of Slovenian mountaineering after World War II. Skala's prominent members who went on to become legends of Slovenian mountaineering include Stane Tomišek, Joža Čop, Miha Potočnik, Pavla Jesih, Vladimir Kajzelj, Matevž Frelj, Stanko Hudnik, Klement Jug, Edo Deržaj, Mira Marko Debelak, Janko Ravnik, Ivan Rožman and other exceptional mountaineers.

Skala's members held climbing schools, courses and lectures, which yielded extraordinary results as early as the first decade of the club's existence: they climbed many new routes all the way to the V grade level, which was a great accomplishment for the time, as the climbing equipment used in those days was simple – only a rope and ice axe, with the climbers themselves often barefoot or only wearing socks.

**The achievements of the Skala Mountaineering Club were soon noted both in Slovenia and Europe, and the club's members were known as disciplined, determined and enthusiastic mountaineers with high ethical principles.**

Many of them were also breaking new ground in cultural affairs. In addition to natural sciences, the members also took a keen interest in photography, literature and painting, and were even successful in film production. Their 1931 feature film *In the Kingdom of the Goldhorn* was a great success, and attracted considerable attention abroad.

Skala's members also built several bivouacs. Their best-known symbol, however, is a cross they erected at the top of Škratica in the memory of all their friends and others who lost their lives in the mountains. Due to ideological blindness, the cross was destroyed in 1953. However, a new cross was erected on the same spot upon the initiative of modern-day Skala members in 1996.

On 14 November 1940 *Turistovski klub Skala* was renamed *Alpinistični klub Skala* (from mountaineering to alpine), but in 1941 a letter arrived from Rome instructing the members to join Club alpino Italiano instead. This was unacceptable for Skala's

members, as patriotism was at the very core of their existence, and their wish was to "protect the Slovenian character of Slovenia's mountains and hills". Skala then started losing members, and eventually chose to dissolve.

#### **SLOVENIA'S INDEPENDENCE BRINGS ABOUT THE REBIRTH OF SKALA**

The period after World War II was not favourable to the spiritual background on which the Skala Mountaineering Club was founded. Communist collectivism, which hampered state-of-the-art development and freedom of the individual, also reduced and restricted mountaineering to a minimum, making it impossible to restore the club.

Despite its self-dissolution, the Skala Mountaineering Club left a lasting mark on mountain climbing and the Slovenian mountainous and cultural landscape for decades, until its mountaineering idea and tradition were revived in 1995.

**On 31 July 1995, following a successful ascent in the Trenta mountains, three mountain climbers, Janez Janša, Dr Anton Jeglič and Bojan Pograjc, decided that the time was ripe to revive the Skala Mountaineering Club. Dr Henrik Tuma Slovenian Mountaineering Club was founded on 28 September 1995 and on 23 June 1997, it became associated with numerous other newly formed clubs all over Slovenia to form Skala Slovenian Mountaineering Club – Association of Mountaineering Clubs.**

On 6 July 1996, on the occasion of the Skala Mountaineering Club's 75th anniversary and five years after Slovenia's declaration of independence, the Dr Henrik Tuma Slovenian Mountaineering Club re-erected the cross on Škratica on behalf of the Skala Mountaineering Club. The cross is the same size as the one destroyed in 1953. Fifteen mountaineers carried the disassembled

parts of the cross to the top of the 2,740-metre high Škratica. A few weeks later, on 1 August, the cross was consecrated by the Dovje parish priest, France Urbanija. More than 400 mountaineers gathered on Škratica for this occasion. Pilgrimages to the top of Škratica on the anniversary of the cross' consecration soon became traditional.

With this symbolic act, the modern-day Skala clearly demonstrated its spiritual roots and showed that it is a true successor to its renowned predecessor. Expeditions to mountains in Slovenia and abroad, cultural activities and volunteer mountain guide training by members of the modern-day Skala uphold the legacy of its prominent predecessor, which helped preserve mountaineering traditions, thus becoming an indelible part of the Slovenian national character.

We would like to extend our best wishes to the Skala Mountaineering Club for a joyful celebration of its 100th anniversary and the anniversary of its activities in Slovenia, as well as our best wishes to the Skala Slovenian Mountaineering Club – Association of Mountaineering Clubs in the hopes that they continue their efforts of passing the noble traditions of their predecessors to new generations of Slovenian mountaineers.



## MISSIONARY PEDRO OPEKA

# In the End what remains is just Love, and not Honour, Riches and Distinction

TANJA GLOGOVČAN BELANČIČ



Pedro Opeka: "My mission is to serve the poorest and the neediest - in this I found the meaning of life."

Photo: Personal archives

Pedro Opeka was born in 1948 in Buenos Aires to parents of Slovenian origin. The family left Slovenia after the tragic events at the end of the Second World War. He has worked as a missionary for a long time in Madagascar, where he has been helping the very poorest people for 32 years. His mission is one of love and compassion. On behalf of the Slovenian state, Prime Minister Janez Janša proposed Pedro Opeka and his humanitarian organisation Akamasoa, which works in a suburb of Antananarivo in Madagascar, for the Nobel Peace Prize.

"This is a great boost to our humanitarian work for the dignity of each person. At the same time it signals that the most wretched among us are not forgotten, and is a recognition of the work among garbage dump dwellers. I do not regard this as a personal recognition, but as a recognition of working together in solidarity," explains Pedro Opeka.

### REFUGEES BECOME ONE BIG FAMILY

His father and mother were devout Slovenians who moved to Argentina after the Second World War, and he was born there. "The post-war communist aggression made refugees of us. If the communist revolution had not perpetrated the killings of innocent people, my parents would have stayed in Slovenia."

A lot of Slovenian families went off to Argentina, and their common loss and suffering bonded them together strongly. "Our faith and love of Slovenian culture brought the expatriate Slovenians into one big family. Slovenian church hymns rang out in Argentinian churches. All the Slovenian families spoke Slovenian at home."

Although they loved their original homeland, they also grew to love their new home. Today Pedro Opeka still nurtures an enthusiasm for football, the national sport in Argentina. There were eight brothers in the family, and things were always lively. "There was respect and affection among us, and we also knew how to forgive each other."

He began his education in Argentina, then continued his studies in Slovenia and France.

**"Argentina taught me that life is a celebration, and joy brings us together and connects us, for we are all brothers and sisters. In Slovenia I developed a strong work ethic, I learned honesty, consistency and reliability. In France I became familiar with critical thinking and the value of deep reflection. And Madagascar taught me patience in difficult moments, and deepened by belief in God's love."**

Pedro took his first steps on Slovenian soil in 1968, when he enrolled in the Faculty of Theology in Ljubljana. "I love going back to Slovenia, to visit relatives and friends. Slovenia is a beautiful country, and the Slovenian nation has powerful religious roots and a rich history and culture."

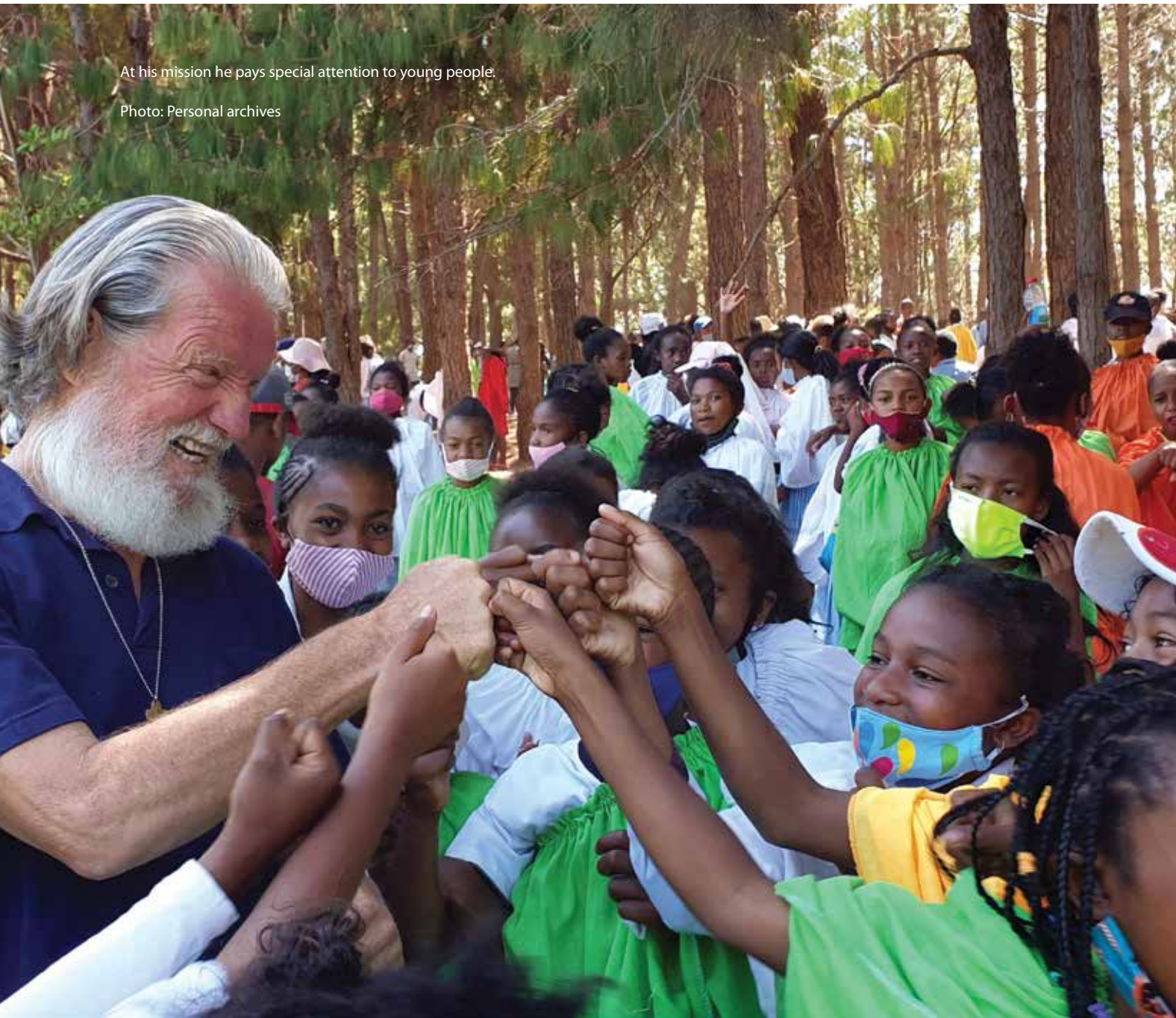
### LIFE AT THE AKAMASOA "GOOD FRIENDS" MISSION

His resolve to work in a mission blossomed at an early age, in the form of a wish in his heart to be of help. "Even as a child I was saddened when I saw how injustices were done to poor families."

"When I came to Madagascar, I felt as though I had been born again, since I had to learn everything all over again. A new language, new

At his mission he pays special attention to young people.

Photo: Personal archives



culture, new customs, climate and environment. Meeting and socialising with people made me very happy. I adopted a humble life, working as a builder in the construction of schools and other buildings, and as a labourer in the rice fields. When they saw that I was working together with them, as one of them, they accepted me as an equal. We were also brought together by sport, especially football. When you score a goal, the whole team celebrates. We all jumped on top of each other, and along with trust, the foundation of our life together grew stronger."

Pedro Opeka worked in the first mission for 15 years. Then, as he does today at Akamasoa – which in Malagasy means "good friends" – he got up at 5 am, beginning the day with prayer and then responding to letters. The working day begins at 7 am. That is when the other co-workers arrive, and at a meeting they find ways to organise education, healthcare, work in the quarry, construction of housing, security, problems with drinking water and so on. "Our aim is to respond to the hardships people are experiencing. An important goal for us is to help people realise that poverty is not a fate, but something that can be overcome through their own effort and mutual support. Each person – child, woman and man – has the right to respect and dignity, and has the right to demand this from those in authority."

**The ability to make decisions in critical moments, as well as strength and courage, come to this Slovenian missionary through prayer. "It links me to the Creator, who is love. It gives me strength and peace, spiritual balance, and helps me understand and forgive others. Prayer is life in love, it is compassion towards your brothers and sisters, it is sharing bread with the hungry, and living with others in danger.**

I pray because I am part of God's people and I cannot come to God if I do not love and help those close to me. And all my co-workers and neighbours are my brothers and sisters. Without prayer I might not be able to keep going in my work, because I would feel isolated. But my co-workers stand by my side and together we fight poverty. I am infuriated when I see people's greed and indifference."

Pedro points out that Slovenians are people who like to offer help. "Almost every year, actions were organised to help missionaries." For Pedro, hope is a daily struggle. "Joy and hope are the identity cards that serve as the building blocks for love and a new beginning. If in our town there are so many children playing and full of joy, it's because in their younger years they got this opportunity at the Akamasoa Association. We are also supported by the current government – especially the President Andry Rajoelina."

#### JOY IN ONE'S HEART

"African children live with a smile on their faces, which can be hard to explain, since they live in deprivation, practically without any toys. But since they live in a community, with the values of community – connection, respect, help for one another – this imbues them with joy. If the reason for joy were wealth, and the number of toys you have, then children who have all that should be happy. But often they are not, because the greed of their parents means they are alone, neglected, and ignored in favour of the interests of their parents and those close to them. No one can be happy when they are on their own and lonely. People who live in big, luxurious buildings do not know each other, and at work they hide behind the closed doors of their offices. The point of our existence lies in seeking a balance between individual and common life."

In connection with this the missionary once again remembers his parents:

**"I learned to build a house when I was ten years old. I am grateful to my mother and father for teaching and encouraging me to work and to respect work and people, for this gave me the knowledge of how to coexist in a large family."**

"Sunday mass is also a celebration. Around 10,000 of us gather together and we listen to God's word. The Eucharist is not just a ritual, but an experiencing of God's love for each one of us. The Eucharist is not just a matter for the priests, it is a celebration of God's people. We cannot praise God if we see a hungry person outside the door. We all dance, cheer and clap for joy. The African children tell their parents on Sunday that they are going to a celebration, to the prayer place."



And what is your message? "In my sermons I touch on life in the village, our common work, sports, school and also politics and the world economy. And I always give specific examples. Often I also ask other people to speak, so the sermon becomes a conversation among us. I want the sermon to be a sincere uplifting of the spirit that brings hope and joy."

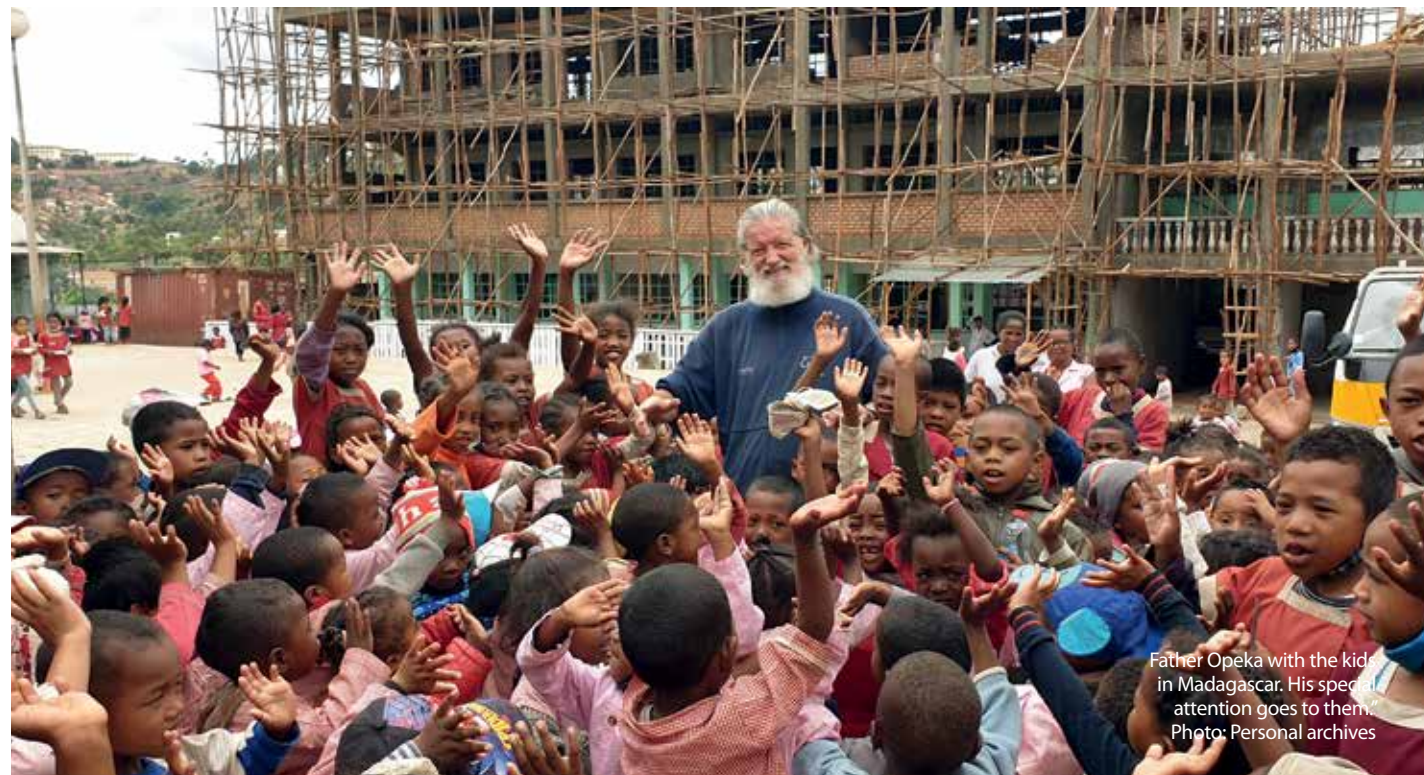
**GOD IS LOVE**

In the difficult moments in life, many of us ask ourselves is God really love. "Where are you, God? Why do you allow so many people to die of hunger, disease, without medication or anything, while in another part of the world people who are doing evil live long, in prosperity and impunity?"

Pedro points out that belief in God is not static, but rather needs to be lived through good works.

**"We maintain our belief when we forgive and help each other. People are free, God allows this and the suffering of our fellow humans and ourselves is a reflection of our free will – including our lies, deceit, killing, and greed with which we bring misfortune to ourselves and those close to us, and this also affects our health and the health of those dear to us. God is love, and faith is a gift."**

"The loss of those near and dear to us is a major challenge in our lives. Here I have experienced the deaths of thousands. But death is not the end of life, although it is hard to accept this if our life is guided by self-importance, egoism, greed and the need to win. For death is an unavoidable fact even for the most privileged. When we think of death, life becomes clearer, so it makes sense to help each other, since it is only love that will remain, and we can't take the rest with us."



Father Opeka with the kids in Madagascar. His special attention goes to them. Photo: Personal archives



Akamasoa is a path of dignity, a path from a dump to a reception center, a quarry, a village, a path from prematurely aged children's faces to the sparks of childhood, a path firmly anchored in the unwavering faith of more than one man - and an invitation to that path! Photo: Personal archives



Pope Francis shares Father's Opeka love to the poorest. Photo: Personal archives

**THIS YEAR SLOVENIANS CELEBRATE 30 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE**

"First I would like to congratulate all my countrymen in their homeland and around the world who voted for and fought for the sovereignty and independence of Slovenia. Our homeland has a cultural and natural wealth, and is certainly a land of good people. Let us maintain a love of our homeland, of the land of our ancestors, and let us work for the common good. Let us pray for the leaders, that they might heed the people, understand them and preserve independence.

**Slovenians need to cooperate, and our independence depends on how well we**

**bond together. We should maintain our aspiration for social progress, so every Slovenian will have a life of dignity.**

The post-war killings and all the evils that were done are our great wound. We must forgive, but first of all we must recognise our faults, and recognise them honestly. I really do love Slovenia, my roots are there. When I visit I feel the depth and eloquence of Slovenian songs, and my heart always sings when I go there."

Pedro Opeka also encounters Slovenians in Madagascar. "When we meet, even just for a few hours, I always sense their support. Slovenians have big hearts and are generous. Everyone who visits me brings some kind of gift."

**FAMILY OF EUROPEAN NATIONS**

This year Slovenia holds the Presidency of the EU Council. The Slovenian Presidency will without doubt be a success, and in the missionary's words also an opportunity for a deeper message. He believes that European Union is a very good idea, and offers a lot of possibilities for progress.

**"The European nations have a lot of knowledge and experience and have endured much. We have survived wars, genocide, famine, epidemics and earthquakes, and have always overcome all obstacles. So**

**today we can offer testimony to the world that it is possible to live as equals, in freedom and respect for minorities."**

And here Pedro is not forgetting about Africa. "Let this also be an opportunity for all the nations of Europe to think about Africa. Slovenia can propose greater and more rapid assistance, so that Africans can find work at home and not seek opportunities in Europe or elsewhere. They, too, love their homes. The hardships being endured by our brothers and sisters in Africa is a howling injustice. The European Union must commit to providing help and development for poor people. Political goals should not be directed just towards the elites. European nations – let us show Africa and the whole world that we have a big heart."



Prime Minister Janez Janša and Pedro Opeka, France, 2021. Photo: UKOM

# The Organ that connected Paris, Zürich and Koper

MIRAN BORDON



Visualisation of the Organs of Koper Cathedral, ACMA d.o.o - Architectural Bureau, 2019.

Exactly six centuries have passed since 1421, when references to an organ in Koper – the first queen of musical instruments in the territory of present-day Slovenia – were recorded. At the end of the eighteenth century, the sound of as many as eight such instruments carried across what was once the northernmost island of the Adriatic Sea. And it is in Koper that the revival of the instrument has taken place. Here you will be able to hear the pipes of one of the most famous European organs, which was installed in the renowned Tonhalle concert hall in Zürich and designed by French composer and organist Jean Guillou. The large symphonic organ, which will be the biggest church organ in Slovenia, has four manuals and 68 registers and was built by German organ builders Kleuker and Steinmeyer. It will be placed in a vibrant setting that reflects the heritage of the painters Vittore and Benedetto Carpaccio and architect Giorgio Massari, and is enhanced by the nearby baptistery, Loggia and Praetorian Palace in the central town square.

**A year ago, it would have been difficult to imagine that a connection would be formed between Paris, Zürich and Koper, that such genuine ties would be forged between artists and music lovers, and that the project of installing an organ at the Koper Cathedral, which runs outside the institutional framework, would be one of the key cultural infrastructure projects in the wider area, enabling visitors to get to know not only the coastal towns and their magical hinterland, but also other beautiful features of Slovenia.**

## KOPER – NEW HOME OF THE ZÜRICH ORGAN

While presenting Koper we cannot set aside its characteristic medieval character and the function it fulfilled as the important town on the eastern Adriatic coast. For many centuries it was a centre of learning, administrative power, a commercial crossroads and a reli-



gious centre. Its many faces have been preserved to the present day. Modern Koper continues to be a commercial city thanks to the Port of Koper, which boasts a thriving business due to its northernmost position in the Adriatic. Shipping and freight forwarding represent an important source of revenue.

The history of the Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Assumption, located in Koper's main square, reaches back to the 12th century. In the first half of the 18th century the church was extended by Giorgio Massari, who created a new hall-shaped area. With a Baroque play of light, a solemn atmosphere was thus obtained.

**The important role that the Koper Cathedral played in the past is emphasized by its dimensions: in fact, the Koper Cathedral is still Slovenia's biggest church.**

It is the place where the relics of the first missionary are kept, St. Elio being the first to bring Christianity to Istrian lands.

### MAJOR FIGURE: JEAN GUILLOU – AN ORGAN REVOLUTIONARY

Jean Victor Arthur Guillou (1930-2019), an extraordinary multi-talented musician, was a virtuoso, improviser and composer, organ design consultant, inspiring teacher of young organists, writer, poet and “travelling organist” who gave recitals, concerts and classes worldwide throughout a distinguished and dazzling career. His avant-garde compositions – innovative, technically demanding, challenging both performers and listeners – will remain revelatory for a long time.



Jean Victor Guillou was an extraordinary multi-talented musician.  
Photo: Daniele Tobio, 2018

In 1945, aged 15, he began studies at the Paris Conservatoire under three French organ greats: Marcel Dupre, Maurice Durufle (harmony), and Olivier Messiaen (composition analysis). In 1963 he took the prestigious post of titular organist at St Eustache Church in Paris. Between 1970 and 2005, he taught organ performance and improvisation at the annual Zürich International Master Course Summer School (relocated to St Eustache in Paris between 2007 and 2015). He inspired his 350 students to freshly reinterpret classic works from their own perspectives.

**Guillou recorded some 100 organ works. He was a leading modern composer of symphonies, concertos for piano and organ, chamber and choral music, works for solo organ, for organ with other instruments and voice.**

He wrote lyrics and poems for some of his own works and brilliantly transcribed for the organ orchestral works by Bach, Handel, List, Prokofiev, Rachmaninoff, Mussorgsky, Tchaikovsky and Stravinsky.

He shared his expertise on organ layout and design with organ designers and builders. As an organ building consultant he co-created organs with the most exquisite sounds not achieved before, at Alpe d'Huez, Birdsong in Brussels, Auditorium Tenerife, Conservatory of Naples, St Anthony of the Portuguese in Rome and the Cathedral of Leon in Spain.

In 2015, Queen Elizabeth II stood near the organ console in St. Eustache Church in Paris listening to him play.

Jean Guillou's last major project was the relocation of the valuable organ from Zürich to Koper, which he visited in May 2018. In the hope that the organ of the Koper Cathedral will continue to convey the spirit of Guillou's creativity, innovation and influence, a total of 17 new pieces for organ and different singing ensembles have been put together prior to the inauguration, and these can be heard in the autumn of 2021. More information on the project and ways to support it can be found at [orglekoper.si](http://orglekoper.si).



The Koper Cathedral is Slovenia's biggest church.

## 30 YEARS OF SPORTING ACHIEVEMENTS

# Exceptional Sporting Achievements put Slovenia on the Global Map

POLONA PREŠEREN



Last year's Tour de France was marked by two Slovenians: Primož Roglič (left) and Tadej Pogačar (centre), winner of Tour de France 2020. Photo: Daniel Novaković/STA

The Slovenian people have a close connection to sports. The extraordinary success of Slovenian sport in the past 30 years has helped promote our country internationally and put it on the world map. Our athletes have made their dreams come true at world and European championships, in the Champions League, at the Olympic Games, at various top-level competitions around the globe... and at the same time we also have some of the biggest sports stars in the world.

**Who doesn't know Tina Maze, Jan Oblak, Anže Kopitar, Luka Dončić, Primož Roglič or Tadej Pogačar?**

Moving fills us with energy and gives us a boost in reaching our recreational as well as professional goals. We are convinced that this is part of the code in our DNA, and this is probably why we excel at sports. The entire country is one big sports venue, and the natural conditions for such activities are truly amazing. And as much as we love doing sports, we are also passionate sports fans. Being distinguished by their sporting way of cheering and extremely positive energy, Slovenian sports fans have carried the name of their country around the world.

We should also note that top-level sports in Slovenia did not begin with the gaining of independence. After all, Slovenia is the home of the oldest skis in Central Europe, and the first ski jumpers honed their skills in the territory of Slovenia, the first climbing enthusiasts conquered Slovenian alpine peaks and broke new ground in Slovenian climbing, thus leaving a significant mark on world alpinism.

### OLYMPIC TRADITION

**Our athletes first competed at the Olympic Games under the Slovenian flag in February 1992 in Albertville, France, slightly more than half a year after Slovenia gained independence.**

Although winter sports are the most typical for Slovenes our athletes returned home without any medals, but richer with valuable experience. In the summer of the same year, all eyes were on Barcelona where our athletes won two bronze medals in rowing, a discipline whose cradle is in beautiful Bled. The rowing legends Iztok Čop and Luk Špik are Slovenia's the most frequent medal winners, who won the country first Olympic gold together with the shooter Rajmond Debevec on the same day at the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney.

Slovenia has also been justly excited about the achievements of its sports heroes on athletics tracks, in swimming pools, at various snow venues, on ice rinks, pitches, courts, judo mats, and more. In fact, Slovenes have been attracting attention in an extremely broad and varied range of sports disciplines for the last 30 years. We excel at judo, motocross, cross-country skiing and ski jumping, sports climbing, basketball and ice hockey, football, snowboarding and gymnastics.



The rowing legends Iztok Čop (right) and Luk Špik (left) are Slovenia's the most frequent medal winners. Photo: Reuters/Photographer/stock.adobe.com

Anže Kopitar, the LA Kings captain and the first Slovenian in the NHL.  
Photo: Marat Akimzhanov



### EXCEPTIONAL SPORTING RESULTS ACROSS A WIDE VARIETY OF SPORTING VENUES

It seems impossible that a nation of just two million could achieve such success in various different sports.

**We are likely the only country this small that has qualified for the highest-level competitions in team sports (football, hockey, basketball, handball, volleyball) and whose exceptional individual athletes have also achieved top-level individual results (skiing, cross-country skiing, ski jumping).**

Our footballers surprised the world by qualifying for the European and World Cups, our basketball players have won the European Championship, while our volleyball and handball players have won the title of European runner-up. Slovenian hockey players have got to compete twice in the Olympic hockey tournament, one of most important tournaments in the world. It is important to note that Slovenia has fewer than 200 professional ice hockey players, but has still defeated world hockey superpowers such as the United States and Slovakia. That said, we only have one ice hockey player in the NHL – Anže Kopitar, captain of the LA Kings.

Since football may claim global dominance in sports, we should say that three of our footballers have played in the Champions League final – Srečko Katanec, Zlatko Zahovič and Jan Oblak, who is currently widely regarded as one of the

Slovenian national football team surprised the world by qualifying for the European and World Cups.  
Photo: Slovenian Football Association



best goalkeepers in the world. The basketball player Luka Dončić has been delivering outstanding performances in the NBA. Tadej Pogačar and Primož Roglič are the world's top-ranked cyclists, striking fear in the hearts of other competitors. The young sports climber Janja Garnbret is one of the favourites for the first gold medal in this new Olympic sport. Tina Maze has pushed the boundaries in alpine skiing, and Primož Peterka and Peter Prevc in ski jumping. Tim Geiser has been at the summit of the world motocross championship.

### FROM MEDALS TO RECREATIONAL SPORT

**For many years, Slovenia has been near the top of the medal-per-capita rankings. Over the course of 30 years, we have won 40 medals at the Olympics – seven gold, 13 silver and 20 bronze medals.**

Our athletes have won numerous medals at European and World Championships, with a total of 1,993 medals. Slovenia also ranks 15th in terms of the number of medals won relative to the nation's gross domestic product (2015 data).

It is thus not an exaggeration to say that sport is part of the Slovenian identity. Slovenia also radiates a special sporting energy because Slovenes are constantly in motion and in touch with nature, and we associate movement and physical activity with a high quality of life. Moreover, Slovenia's rich geographical diversity and numerous year-round recreational and international sports events offer great opportunities for sports enthusiasts and those looking for active recreation.



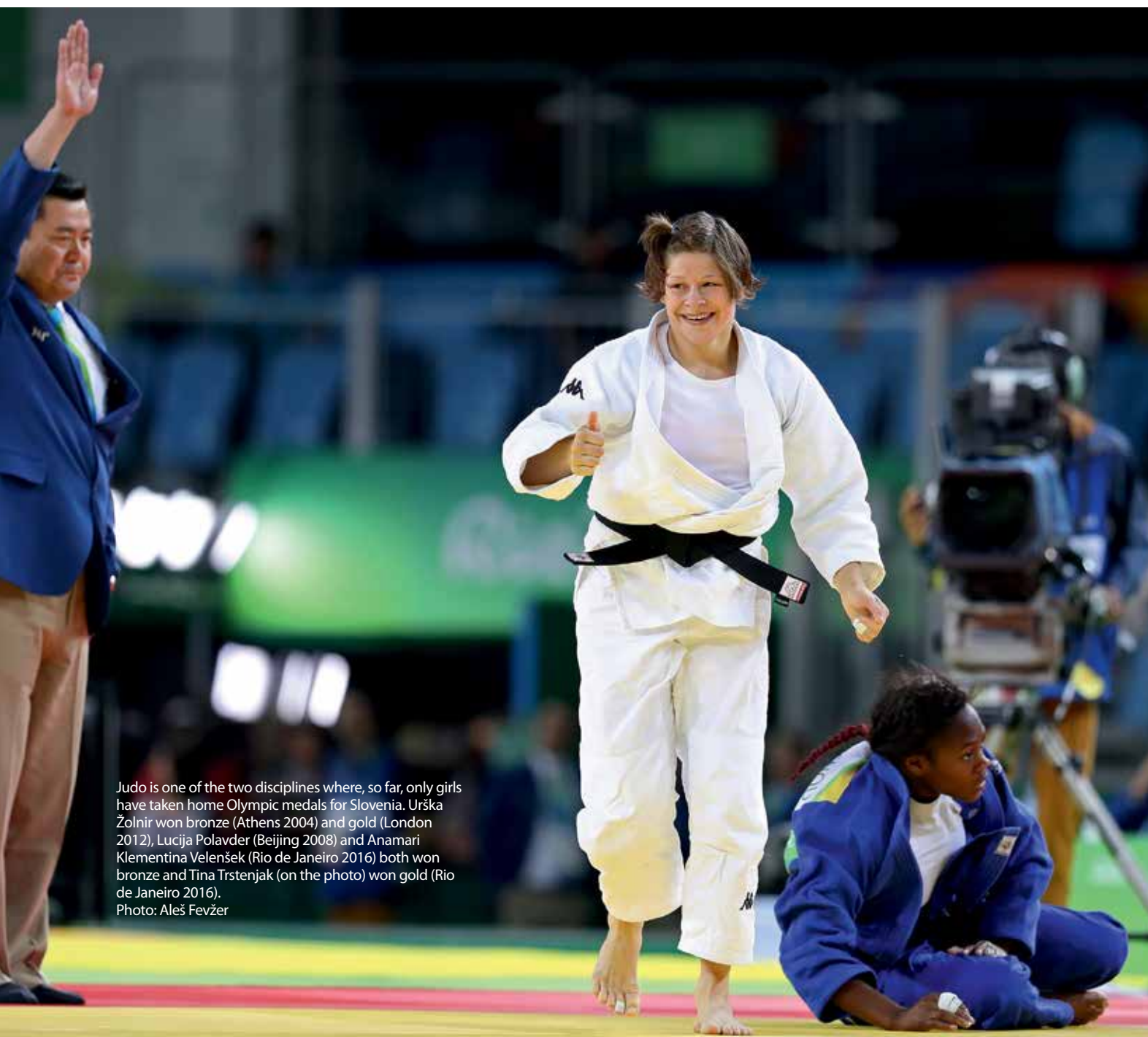
The basketball player Luka Dončić has been delivering outstanding performances in the NBA.  
Photo: Real Madrid

Tina Maze at the Sochi 2014 Olympic Games.  
Photo: Stanko Gruden/STA



# The World's Sports Elite at the Tokyo Summer Olympics

ALJA PAHOR, OLYMPIC COMMITTEE OF SLOVENIA



Judo is one of the two disciplines where, so far, only girls have taken home Olympic medals for Slovenia. Urška Žolnir won bronze (Athens 2004) and gold (London 2012), Lucija Polavder (Beijing 2008) and Anamari Klementina Velenšek (Rio de Janeiro 2016) both won bronze and Tina Trstenjak (on the photo) won gold (Rio de Janeiro 2016).  
Photo: Aleš Fevžer

This summer, sports fans will finally get what they've been waiting for. After a one-year delay, the eagerly awaited Olympic Games will take place in Tokyo between 23 July and 8 August. This is the first time since 1896, when the first "modern" Olympics were held in Athens, that the event has been postponed.

Every time the Olympic Games are held they welcome new sports into the family, one of the key factors being their popularity in the host country. In Tokyo, four sports – sport climbing, basketball 3x3, karate and skateboarding – will be making their debut, while baseball is returning to the scene after a break. The new sports will bring in 474 athletes who will compete for 18 sets of medals. The entire competition will be held at 41 venues throughout the city, which has a population of almost 10 million people.

**In addition to new sports, each Olympics brings something else new to the games. In Japan, it is the emphasis on state-of-the-art technology which will be felt at every step, and the mascot they chose clearly demonstrates this connection.**

The robot-like mascot is called Miraitowa. Its creator, Ryo Taniguchi, drew its head in the shape of a Samurai helmet and used the pattern known as "ichimatsu moyo" for the whole figure, which is reminiscent of a blue and white chessboard. The name also has a symbolic meaning. Miraitowa is a combination of Japanese words for future and eternity, and the mascot's character is based on the Japanese saying about learning old things and acquiring new knowledge from them. Out of the 2,042 designs it received, the Organising Committee selected three and left the final choice to primary school pupils around Japan. Taniguchi's robot secured a convincing majority of votes.



The most decorated Slovenian Olympian was the late gymnast Leon Štukelj. He won two golds in Paris 1924, a gold and two bronzes in Amsterdam 1928 and a silver in Berlin 1936.  
Photo: Archive of Leon Štukelj's descendants

**The organisation of the Olympic Games presents a tremendous accommodation challenge. A special complex by the water comprising 24 buildings was built in Tokyo for this very purpose. It will provide accommodation for around 11,000 people.**

However, all these apartments will not stay vacant come 8 August. They have been sold in advance and will be renovated after the end of the Olympics for their new owners.

These will be the 32nd Olympics. Japan was supposed to host the world's most important sporting event for the first time in 1940, but it was cancelled due to World War II. For the same reason, the biggest sporting event in history was cancelled four times – the Summer Olympics in Berlin 1916 and London 1944, and the Winter Olympics in Cortina d'Ampezzo 1940 and Sapporo 1944. Tokyo's time finally came in October 1964 when it was entrusted to host the 18th edition of the games, which brought together 5,151 athletes, 87% of them men.

Since then, the Olympic Games have grown tremendously. Compared to 67 years ago, Japan will host more than twice as many countries, whose representatives will compete in 33 sports in 50 different disciplines, with 48.8% of the athletes being women.



Peter Kauzer, winner of the silver medal at the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.  
Photo: Aleš Fevžer

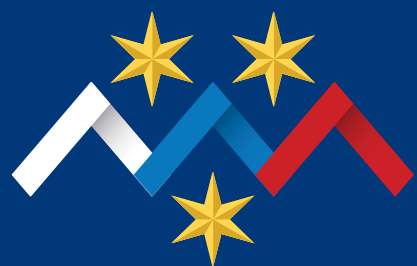


GET INFECTED  
WITH GOOD  
HABITS

GET VACCINATED







**SLOVENIJA 30**