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Ten Years of EU Membership

The European Union has become an integral part of everyday life for Slovenians. Since joining the EU in 2004, Slovenia has adopted the euro and joined the Schengen area. The country on the sunny side of the Alps was also the very first new EU Member State to preside over the Council of the EU in 2008. Slovenia actively participated in strengthening the EU by implementing the Treaty of Lisbon and advancing EU's enlargement process.

Although many positive aspects of integration cannot be expressed by figures alone –no one can deny the benefits of free movement within the EU – many indicators, despite the rather severe consequences of the financial and economic crises, do tell a part of the success story.

Slovenians are more and more educated

The jobs of the future will demand higher qualifications, so its welcome news that Slovenians – of all ages – are determined to achieve their full potential. Figures show that more young people are determined to achieve their full potential; the share of workforce with tertiary education in Slovenia is rising. In 2004, only 25.1% of the population aged 30-34 years had successfully attained tertiary-level education, however by 2013 the figure had risen to 40.1%. That's already above Europe 2020 strategy's headline target of 40% by 2020.

Achievements in R&D

Slovenia's gross domestic expenditure on R&D has increased too – from 1.39% in 2004 to 2.8% today. As has the number of scientific papers published and number of researchers (see table below).

EU Funds

Slovenia acquired over 4 billion euros from EU funds. According to the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy, every municipality in Slovenia has received funding for at least one project. In the current financial perspective, a total of over 5,000 projects have been supported.

Financial and economic crises

The financial crisis affected Slovenia badly. As such, as in other EU states, the country has been pushed into unpopular austerity measures. Growth since 2009 has been slow to non-existent and the country entered a double dip recession in 2012, returning to growth in late 2013. Nonetheless growth is slow. Unemployment in Slovenia is relatively high at 10.1%. Social order has been threatened by anti-austerity and anti-corruption protests in 2012 and 2013.

Slovenia in Figures: Past & Present

INDICATORS	Slovenia in 2004	Slovenia in 2013	EU-28 (2004 / 2013)
Real GDP per capita (€)	€13,800	€14,800 (2013)	€22,100 / €23,100
GDP growth rate (%)	4.4%	-1.1% (2013)	2.6% / 0.1%
Unemployment rate (%)	6.3%	10.1% (2013)	9.3% / 10.8%
Gross expenditure on R&D (GERD)	1.39%	2.80% (2012)	1.73%/1.94%
Tertiary educational attainment, age group 30-34 (%)	20%	29% (2013)	27% / 36.8%
Total researchers (number)	4,030	9,093 (2012)	1,314,471 / 1,661,499
Total Patents awarded based on national applications (number)	243	308 (2011)	58,724 / 66,700
Total scientific publications (number)	1,925	3,701 (2008)	367,207 / 546,837

Editorial



In September SBRA will celebrate its 15th anniversary. During this respectable period the Association has undergone at least three stages:

(a) the initial period (1999-2004) with the important input from the Government and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry – members were interested to be part of this joint representation in Brussels to be close to EU institutions, and wanted to understand how it all works as we were preparing to enter the European family.

(b) The second period (2004-2013) was accompanied by growing awareness by the members that we are part of this complicated entity. We have benefited importantly from Cohesion and Structural Funds, as well as from numerous centralized programmes, particularly FP6, FP7 and Erasmus. SBRA had lost some of its public funding, as well as some members from the private sector (viewing EU programmes strictly from the financial aspect), but consolidated its membership base and collected some direct experience with EU programmes.

(c) Starting with this year SBRA is placing even stronger emphasis on its involvement with Brussels-based networks, especially IGLO, ERRIN, as well as with KEN – being its secretariat since its establishment in 2011.

On 13 April the Council has elected Prof. Dr. Draško Veselinovič as the new Board Chairman, starting with 1st September. The other two Board members will be Prof. Dr. Boris Cizelj, and Prof. Dr. Stane Pejovnik – immediate past Rector of University of Ljubljana.

Prof. Boris Cizelj
 President, Management Board

SBRA Welcomes New Member – IKTS Žalec Development Centre: Provider of integrated mobile and self-service solutions

IKTS Žalec Development Centre and its associated companies develop and market various program solutions or business applications for retailers, banks, airports, caterers and others and integrated modern services of mobile technologies for different purposes. Their most recognizable products are: self-checkouts in stores; touchscreen cash registers in stores and restaurants; services of mobile payment, marketing and communication; service of mobile loyalty programs, websites and applications; and the **24alife** solution guiding the user towards a healthier lifestyle.



24alife (formerly @life) is a solution that guides the user towards a healthier lifestyle. It helps achieve goals in fields of: sports, balanced nutrition, general health and personal hardiness. **24alife** is available free as a mobile application and internet portal accessible at www.24alife.com. Being one of the first in the world they combine knowledge of experts from medicine, psychology, sports and nutrition in one project and assure a better quality of life for the user.



Special packages that will upgrade the **24alife** solution are being developed and are intended for specific needs of users:

- **24alife - Fitness:** was developed for the needs of fitness centres, intended on individuals and trainers;
- **24alife – Corporate:** is intended to enhance health at work and is suitable for organizations;
- **24alife – Seniors:** is adapted to activities for the elderly;
- **24alife – Hotels:** is intended for the needs of hotels and their guests;
- **24alife – Diabetics:** is intended to enhance health of diabetes patients.

SBRA Welcomes New Member – Sistem VVE d.o.o

Sistem VVE d.o.o. is a dynamic consulting company, specializing in helping companies and other organizations attain funds for their research, innovation and investment projects. With Slovenian structural and cohesion budget for 2014-2020 cut considerably (in the context with the 2007-2013 budget), and given the current unstable political situation, this presents an important bump in the road towards 2014-2020 Slovenian structural and cohesion policy implementation.



Sistem VVE helps identify projects and form consortia in a variety of fields, ranging from ICT, nuclear safety, wearable sensor systems, to sustainable milk production. While for some of its clients proposals have already been prepared, others are still waiting for a suitable topic to be announced. In May and June, the SME Instrument has been the focus of its activities. The project proposals will have to pass strict evaluation criteria and successfully contend with thousands of other hopefuls.

Business Briefs

Ljubljana Craft and Small Business Fair 2014



The Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia and the Ljubljana Exhibition & Convention Centre organized the fourth Ljubljana Craft and Small Business Fair. Over the course of three days, visitors were offered free counselling concerning tax related issues, advice on accounting and business registration queries, given information on labour laws, and other barriers which entrepreneurs often face. Participants were also offered numerous discounts, showcased innovative products and tasted culinary specialties. During the fair, the Forum of Crafts and Entrepreneurship was also organized. They presented measures aimed at improving the competitiveness of the Slovenian economy, as well as creating a friendly business environment aimed at supporting fast-growth start-ups.

China looking for investment opportunities in Slovenia



In May 2014, Chinese representatives expressed serious interest in investing in Central and Eastern Europe, including Slovenia. Slovenia's geographical location was highlighted as very important. China is said to be especially interested in investing in Luka Koper - Slovenia's only port. The port offers excellent links to Central and Eastern Europe. Trade between Slovenia and China amounted to slightly over €750 million in 2012, with Slovenian exports accounting for €135 million. Last year saw a decrease of some €80 million to €668 million, of which Slovenian exports accounted for €127 million.

Slovenian economy to grow by 0.3% in 2014

Slovenia's economy is projected to expand by 0.3% this year according to the latest figures released by the OECD. Growth is expected to accelerate to 1.2% in 2015. The latest outlook, is an upgrade on the previous forecast in November of a 0.9% contraction for Slovenia for 2014 and a 0.3% growth for next year. The correction was expected following upgrades by several other forecasters. Slovenia's unemployment rate is projected to stand at 10.2% in 2014 and 2015, while general government deficit is forecast to drop from 4.1% of GDP in 2014 to 2.6% in 2015 and inflation rise from 0.7% this year to 0.9% in 2015.

Research Briefs

Slovenian Forestry Institute partner in LIFE+ international project



The European Commission has approved funding for 225 new projects under the LIFE+ programme, the European Union's environment fund. Overall, they represent a total investment of some €589.3 million, of which the EU will provide €282.6 million. The Commission received 1,468 applications in response to its latest call for proposals, which closed in June 2013. Of these, 225 were selected, one of which was the LIFE+ international project. The Slovenian Forestry Institute will lead a consortium of 6 partners from 3 countries/states (Germany/Bavaria, Greece and Slovenia).

The project will last from July 2014 until June 2020. The total finances are €5.84 million, from which the EU shall finance almost 50% (€2.7 million); partners of the project have to contribute the other 50% from their own (national) sources.

National Institute of Biology hosts Brazilian researchers

NIB hosted Brazilian researchers from the Brazilian National Institute for Research in the Amazon (INPA) recently. INPA is the main institution in the Amazon Basin, which is responsible for a wide range of researches and actions that lead to sustainable development of one of the largest and highly vulnerable ecosystems on the planet.

The visit was a part of bilateral cooperation, where NIB together with the visiting researchers studied the different responses of aquatic organisms to climate changes in tropical and temperate zones. During the visit NIB researchers, together with Prof. Dr. Adalberto Val and his colleagues, performed another of experiments in which they determined the influence of various disturbances in the ecosystem (temperature, oxygen) on physiological and biochemical processes of fish in tropical and temperate zones.

Contemporary challenges of international environmental law

From 5-7 June 2014 the second conference, in a series of biannual international environmental law conferences, was organized at the Faculty of Law, University of Ljubljana. The aim of the scientific conference was to critically assess the challenges posed by environmental protection at the international level and address them through the provision of creative international environmental law solutions.

The participants addressed the areas of climate change, forest, sea and biodiversity protection, including issues of sustainable development, human right to a clean environment, migration of populations, state responsibility, the role of non-state actors, as well as the importance of international legal regulation of these issues.

Anticancer drugs in the aquatic environment



The National Institute of Biology is coordinating an FP7 funded project entitled

CytoThreat. The project focuses on the evaluation of the environment and human health risks posed by anticancer drugs released into aquatic environment. The project, which has been running for three and a half years now, is conducted by an inter-disciplinary group of scientists from six EU countries. Partners developed new highly sensitive analytical methodologies capable of detecting the residues of targeted anticancer drugs at the very low concentrations at which they can be present (and eventually active) in the aquatic environment. The results of the project are filling important knowledge gaps regarding the adverse effects of anticancer drugs to aquatic organisms.

Presentation of Scientific Achievements

The Faculty of Mathematics and Physics presented the scientific achievements and joint ventures of researchers from the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, the Jožef Stefan Institute and the Centre of Excellence Space: Science and Technology. They jointly published seven articles in the most prestigious international scientific reviews and journals (Nature, Science, Nature Materials, and Physics Reports). These achievements continue to build the global reputation and contribute to greater visibility of the University of Ljubljana.

International conference: Today's Education for Tomorrow

Over the past ten years, considerable changes have taken place in the field of higher education. As an important milestone, the rectors of Slovenian universities signed a resolution to develop a culture of excellence. The conference offered possibilities for exchanging good practice cases on a variety of issues; possibilities of internationalization, linking operational and institutional goals, reforming the teaching and learning environment, better knowledge transfer to promote innovation, increasing creative potential and learning capacity. The conference also formulated recommendations for further improvements. With over 150 participants from a number of countries, including the United States, Slovenian universities were able to better assess themselves on a global level.

Regional Briefs

Scientific Research Centre Bistra Ptuj

The Scientific Research Centre Bistra Ptuj, which acts as the regional development agency for the Municipality of Ptuj, is currently involved in two transnational projects of the MED Programme. A transnational programme of European territorial cooperation along with 16 other municipalities from the statistical region Spodnje Podravje. The two projects are ECO-SCP-MED and ZERO WASTE PRO. ECO-SCP-MED promotes sustainable promotion and consumptions with green business and ZERO WASTE Pro educates and promotes 3R (reduce, reuse and recycling) strategy of waste management in the region. In the second half of this year, a wide media campaign will be undertaken to promote and educate people about SCP and ZERO WASTE concept management.

Ljubljana placed first by ISSO criteria



The Zlati Kamen (Golden Stone) portal has published the list of the developmental prosperity of the Slovenian municipalities. The City of Ljubljana is placed in the first place by the ISSO criteria – the Information System of Slovenian municipalities.

The Slovenian capital reached the index value of 50.96 and earned the first place among the Slovenian urban municipalities and the seventh place among the 210 estimated municipalities. The ISSO index comprises of 54 indicators in eight fields. It demonstrates the developmental prosperity of a municipality from three aspects: the achieved level of development, the developmental dynamics and activity.

Enterprisingly into the Business World – RRA LUR Supporting Young Entrepreneurs

The Regional development agency of the Ljubljana urban region (RRA LUR) has kicked-off activities for its third group of 10 young entrepreneurs within the operation 'Enterprisingly into the Business World 2014'. The operation, which is implemented throughout Slovenia, is

focused on promoting job creation and entrepreneurship among unemployed youth with higher education. The basic idea behind 'Enterprisingly into the Business World' is to equip participants, selected through a public call, with all the basic knowledge and skills they need to turn their business idea into an operating business.

During a four-month training period the participants are employed at one of the participating regional development agencies (e.g., RRA LUR), where – with the help of experienced mentors – they prepare a business plan and further develop their ideas. The objective of the operation is for 35% of participants to set up a company, become self-employed or employed by another employer within one year after the completion of the training. The results so far have exceeded this goal enormously.

Ljubljana one of five finalists for European Green Capital 2016



In April Ljubljana became one of five finalists which will proceed to the final stage of the selection process for the award European Green Capital 2016. In addition to Ljubljana, Essen (Germany), Nijmegen (The Netherlands), Oslo (Norway) and Umeå (Sweden) also qualified. The European Green Capital Award is presented to one European city every year, rewarding its achievements in environmental sustainability according to 12 criteria, including water, waste, transport, climate change management, and commitment to green spaces. The five shortlisted cities will now proceed to present their vision, their potential to act as a role model to other cities, and their communication strategy to the jury in Copenhagen on 23rd June 2014. The final result will be announced the next day at an official award ceremony to be held in Copenhagen on 24th June 2014. Ljubljana is committed to sustainable and environmentally friendly development, which aims at high quality of life of its citizens in all aspects of life and well-being of its visitors.