

EDITORIAL



The prospective new European Commissioners eventually passed the European Parliament hearings and some statements may raise high hopes for the business and research community.

Antonio Tajani, Commissioner-designate for Industry and Entrepreneurship calls combating climate change and effecting the transition to a low carbon economy an opportunity to make Europe more competitive and create at the same time new, high-quality "green" jobs in promising markets.

Commissioner-designate for Digital Agenda, Neelie Kroes, named as one of her four key priorities to generate more, better targeted support for ICT research and innovation.

Finally Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, the Commissioner-designate for Research, Innovation and Science committed herself to fully implementing the Ljubljana process of 2008 which seeks to strengthen co-operation between the European Union and individual Member States in the areas of research. She also pointed at the comprehensive mid term review of the EU Research Framework Programme, commencing in 2010, which shall analyse how more simplified procedures to govern the future operation of FP7 can be put in place.

It remains to be seen whether such promises remain lip service or if policymakers indeed make use of the economic crisis to turn Europe's business and research sector into a more competitive, progressive direction.

Dr Boris Cizelj
Chairman, Management Board

BUSINESS LEAD

● Slovenia's GDP growth ranks second and third-best in EU



Slovenia recorded the second-highest GDP growth rate (+0.6%) in the second quarter of 2009 (Q2) and the third-highest (+1.0%) in Q3 among EU Member States. The EU average was -0.3% for Q2 and +0.3% for Q3 respectively. According to Eurostat, only Lithuania (+6.1%) and Slovakia (+1.6%) outranked Slovenia in the third quarter of last year. The figures looked at percentage change compared with the previous quarter.

However, looking at percentage changes compared with the same quarter of the year 2008, the situation looks – EU-wide – less gloomy. In Q2, Slovenia's GDP shrank by 9.0% (EU-27 -0.5%) and in Q3 by 8.5% (EU-27 -4.3%).

Eurostat figures on the 2008 GDP per capita paint a rosier picture, as Slovenia managed again to catch up. The country reached a Purchasing Power Standard (PPS) of 91, with the EU-27 average marking 100. In 2007, Slovenia reached 89 and the year before 88, showing a clear upwards trend. From all countries that joined the EU after 2004, Slovenia is only outranked by Cyprus with a GDP PPS per inhabitant of 96.

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>

R&D LEAD

● Government supports R&D in smaller companies

Higher Education, Science and Technology Minister Gregor Golobič announced in September that his ministry would allocate €21 million to co-finance 191 technologically-advanced development projects of micro, small and middle size companies. The companies, coming from all Slovenian regions, were selected out of around 600 companies from all over Slovenia that had applied earlier last year to a call published by the ministry as part of its anti-crisis measures.



Gregor Golobič

Minister Golobič pointed out how important it was to support such R&D investments in order to keep the companies strong and competitive both on the domestic and foreign markets despite the current crisis. The respective funds were increased from initially €6.5 million to more than €21 million. Participating companies will have to allocate total co-funding of €58 million.

Most of the 600 projects were IT and electronics projects, with about a fifth of them from the area of industrial production and materials, while on the third place were projects envisaging technological improvements in energy technology.

<http://www.mvzt.gov.si>

Business Briefs

► Slovenia and Russia inked South Stream Agreement



Slovenian Government

Matej Lahovnik

Slovenian Economy Minister Matej Lahovnik and Russian Energy Minister Sergey Ivanovitch Shmatko signed in November in Moscow the agreement that will lead to the construction of

the Slovenian extension of the South Stream gas pipeline. This €10 billion pipeline, to be completed in 2015, will run from Russia to Slovenia through the Black Sea and South-Eastern Europe. Slovenia was last in the round of negotiations that Russia held in order to be able to launch the construction of the 60 billion cubic metre pipeline, joining Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Hungary in the construction of South Stream.

<http://south-stream.info>

► Remarkable expansion of Slovenian IT services market

A report issued this September by market research and analysis company IDC shows a 20% expansion of the Slovenian IT services market in 2008 compared to the previous year. According to IDC it is now worth \$370 (€252) million, even though the analysis reckons that without the economic crisis, the growth would have been even stronger.

The analysis demonstrates that the domestic IT market is maturing. This is noticeable by the fact that custom made applications now outstrip hardware and software support services. They achieved the greatest growth on a year-on-year basis, namely 32%, while their share on the IT services market grew up to 28%.

The main investors in IT services are public and private organisations operating in the field of public administration, banking and telecommunications. They produced 40% of the total turnover of IT services in Slovenia last year.

<http://www.idc.com>

► Promising tourist season for nr.5 top world destination



Slovenian Tourism Office

Skiing in Slovenian Alps

A satisfied Marjan Hribar, head of the Economy Ministry's Tourism Directorate, declared 2009 to be the second best tourist season since Slovenia gained independence. It was only overtopped by the record year 2008, a season tainted by the number of events held during the Slovenian presidency of the EU. Almost all Slovenian destinations increased their number of overnight stays between January and July 2009; according to Hribar, a result of efficient campaigns. Attracting more foreign visitors, mainly from former Yugoslavia will be the priority of future promotion activities.

On a similar note, Slovenia was ranked 5th top world destination by National Geographic Society's Centre for Sustainable Destinations in October. The annual Places Rated Destination Stewardship survey, published in October, addressed two angles: to which extent is a region an iconic travel destination, and how efficiently has the region been able to balance the pressures of mass tourism and other threats while preserving nature.

<http://traveler.nationalgeographic.com/2009/11/destinations-rated/europe-text/15>

► Slovenia advances in cleanliness and user-friendliness of healthcare

The 2009 Euro Health Consumer Index (EHCI), produced by Brussels-based organisation Health Consumer Powerhouse, ranked the Slovenian health system 16th most user-friendly out of 33 European countries and highest among all indexed central and east European countries. Slovenia gained four places since 2008 and is, according to the publishers, thus not following the trend of other Central and East European countries. The index is based on indicators covering

six areas, with Slovenia's strengths being patient's rights and access to information.

Slovenia also ranked 15 out of 140 countries in terms of cleanliness on the Environmental Performance Index. This index, carried out by US Columbia and Yale universities and presented in September, measures the effects of pollution on human health. Slovenia preceded its neighbours Croatia, Hungary and Italy by a few places. Switzerland gets to be the world's cleanest country and the poorest African countries are bringing up the rear.

<http://www.healthpowerhouse.com/>

► Slovenia's FDI affected by the financial and economical crisis in 2008



www.fdv.uni-lj.si

Andreja Jaklič

For the first time since 2004, Slovenia recorded in 2008 more inward than outward Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). In figures, the World Investment Report, released in September by the United Nations

Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), revealed that inward FDI reached \$1.815 billion in 2008 and outward FDI \$1.44 billion. But last year, as the world was experiencing the deepest recession after WWII, both inwards and outwards FDI decreased at the global level. Andreja Jaklič, of the FDV International Relation Centre explained that Slovenian companies are joining the other developed countries in helping overcome the financial crisis by injecting more outward FDI in the global economy, as demonstrated by the figures of the first half of 2009.

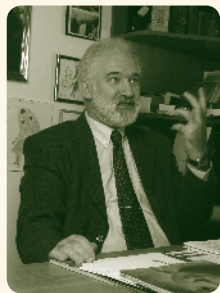
<http://www.unctad.org/WIR>

R&D Briefs

► Ljubljana University researcher co-drafts European food system report

The report 'Forward look: European food systems in a changing world', written by Peter Raspor of University of Ljubljana and Rudy Rabbinge from Wageningen University in the Netherlands, pleads for Europe to undertake a new approach on Food security, as health and sustainability in research and using a

holistic view in policy making should be prioritised in the near future. Released by the European Science Foundation (ESF) and the European Cooperation in the Field of Scientific and Technical Research (COST) in September, the report claims that the EU decision-makers should adapt policies to a more environmentally friendly and more acceptable European food system.



Peter Raspor

It underlines that both the complementary parts making up Europe's food systems and the system as a whole urgently need to be upgraded. Indeed, innovative technologies, methods and

policies are needed, to increase food availability by all while reducing the environmental impact of the food chain. The report also identifies other key research priorities for national and European agencies such as food security and food.

www.esf.org/activities/forward-looks.html

◆ **Slovenia applies for CERN membership**



The Slovenian government decided in September to apply for membership to CERN, the European Organisation for Nuclear Research,

based in Geneva. CERN is the world's largest particle physics laboratory, associating the work of thousands of scientists including several Nobel Prize winners with an annual budget of more than €1 billion. During a visit of Slovenian president Danilo Türk, CERN officials pointed out that Slovenian scientists would bring an important contribution to further development in the areas of physics, IT and other sciences.

www.cern.ch

◆ **Festival of Slovenian sciences in Ljubljana**

The 15th annual festival of Slovenian sciences took place in Ljubljana last September. The aim of this fair, as Prime Minister Borut Pahor highlighted, is to raise young's awareness that science can boost development and quality of life and eventually convince students to work in this field. In line with

the fact that Slovenia joined the European Space Agency in July 2009, space was one of the main topics of the festival. , Slovenian NASA astronaut and former ISS crew member Sunita L. Williams and NASA physicist Dusan Petrač were amongst the VIP guests.

www.szf.si

SBRA Partners

◆ **Maribor University paves the way in cloud computing**



The University of Maribor, in cooperation with IBM Slovenija, launched in October the first cloud computing centre of the country, and one of

the first in the world. The centre is open to university teachers, companies and students. Cloud computing is a new concept which enables the development of computer applications available online as opposed to applications installed on local computers or servers. This innovative technology is considered one of the major discoveries of the upcoming decade. It is polyvalent in the sense that it can be used in industry, public administration and the academic sphere to improve capacity, streamline business processes and encourage innovation.

www.uni-mb.si

◆ **NLB named Slovenia's best foreign exchange provider**

NLB received in November the award for best foreign exchange provider in Slovenia. Global Finance, the international specialised financial magazine who attributed the award has based its choice on criteria such as transaction volume, market share, customer service, competitive pricing and innovation products and technology. On another level, at the end of November Marko Simoneti from the faculty of law of the University of Ljubljana was elected chairman of NLB's Supervisory Board.

<http://www.gfmag.com/>

◆ **Ljubljana University celebrates 90th anniversary and elects new Rector**

On 3 December, the University of Ljubljana celebrated the 90th anniversary of its first lecture. The celebrations culminated in President Türk conferring to the university

the Order for Exceptional Services for its contribution to scholarship, research, arts and teaching.



Radovan Stanislav Pejovnik

Ljubljana University also elected Radovan Stanislav Pejovnik as new Rector for the term 2009-2013. Holding a PhD in chemistry, Pejovnik served prior to his new appointment among others as the Higher Education state secretary and

dean of the university's chemistry faculty. He also was a member of the management boards of both Maribor and Ljubljana Universities.

<http://www.uni-lj.si/en/>

◆ **New members – IMT & Municipality Kamnik**

The Institute of Metal and Technology (IMT) based in Ljubljana is a public research institute that operates in fundamental and applied researches on natural, technical and environmental sciences related to metallic material and process technology. It also has an educational role. As part of the program of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, the IMT teaches students in the frame of their Master's and PhD degrees.

www.imt.si



Kamnik is a town located in central north Slovenia, only 15km away from Brnik Airport and 23km away from Ljubljana. The municipality encompasses a large part of the Kamnik Alps and is the region's cultural, educational, economical and administrative centre.

Besides being a notable tourist destination, the city is also home to more than 200 cultural events and festivals. The nature beauties surrounding the city, the Alps and the Predaselj ravine, a 20m deep gorge cut by the river, are also great tourist attractions.

www.kamnik.si

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Editor: Dr Boris Cizelj
www.sbra.be

● Ljubljana designated as seat of ACER

EU Member States decided at the beginning of December to locate the new Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER) in Slovenia's capital Ljubljana. The timely set-up of the Agency was welcomed by Energy Commissioner Andris Piebalgs as it paves the way for the effective implementation of the Third Legislative Package on the Liberalisation of the Energy Markets.



Irena Praček

Slovenia's government called the decision "a major achievement for Slovenia and the result of almost a full year of intensive efforts on the part of the Slovenian government". The head of the national Energy Agency Irena Praček was nevertheless quick to state that ACER's powers are limited to cross-border connection and cross-border infrastructure and will not replace national energy regulators or have direct powers in individual Member States. "It will adopt formally non-binding framework guidelines, rules and regulations, which can however be turned into binding acts by the European Commission," she said.

The Agency will be fully operational as of March 2011. As of then, ACER will complement and coordinate the work of National Regulatory Authorities. Its competences will include the participation in the creation of European network rules, taking binding individual decisions on cross border energy infrastructure and giving advice on various energy related issues to the European institutions. The Agency will thus be key to the functioning of the EU markets in electricity and gas.

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● Slovenian MEP named Person of the Year in Bosnia and Herzegovina



Tanja Fajon MEP

Readers of Bosnia and Herzegovina's newspaper 'Nezavisne novine' named in late December Slovenian Member of the European Parliament Tanja Fajon Person of the Year 2009. The parliamentarian was praised for her endeavours to abolish visa requirements for citizens of the Western Balkan countries.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs congratulates Ms Fajon sincerely, as this title also represents a significant acknowledgement of Slovenia's endeavours in this regard. Visa liberalisation is a project which makes the principled policy in the countries of the Western Balkans more tangible, as it has a direct impact on the quality of life.

As of 19 December 2009, citizens of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina no longer need visas to enter the 25 EU Member States (not UK and Ireland) and 3 non-EU countries (Iceland, Norway and Switzerland) that are part of the Schengen area. The new regulation applies for short-term trips up to 90 days every six months.

www.tanja-fajon.eu

Internet access and broadband connection by enterprises, January 2009 (%)

	Internet access	Fixed broadband connection		Internet access	Fixed broadband connection
Finland	100	94	Lithuania	95	57
Denmark	98	82	Malta	94	93
Austria	98	76	Italy	94	83
Slovakia	98	78	EU27*	93	82
Germany	97	88	Portugal	93	82
Norway	97	88	Ireland	91	76
Luxembourg	96	87	UK	91	85
Netherlands	96	86	Poland	90	58
Slovenia	96	85	Greece	89	81
France	96	92	Cyprus	88	82
Czech Republic	95	77	Hungary	87	74
Estonia	95	86	Latvia	87	61
Spain	95	93	Bulgaria	83	68
Sweden	95	88	Romania	72	40
Croatia	95	72	Belgium	:	:

* EU27 aggregates exclude Belgium
 : Data not available

Source: Eurostat News 12/2010 - 19 January 2010