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Special focus on City of Ljubljana

Ljubljana a finalist for the 'European Green Capital 2015' title

The City of Ljubljana has been chosen to present its good practices in achieving the highest environmental standards and commitments towards environmental improvement as well as sustainable development as one of the four finalists for the title of the European Green Capital 2015. The aim of this annual award initiative is to commend and reward local efforts to improve the environment, economy and the quality of life in cities. A delegation from Ljubljana successfully presented their case to a jury of representatives from the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, the European Environment Agency, ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, the European Environmental Bureau, and the Covenant of Mayors Office on 24 May 2013 in Brussels. Along with the three other finalists – Bristol, Brussels, and Glasgow – Ljubljana will also attend a final ceremony on 14 June 2013 in Nantes, the current European Green Capital, where the winner will be announced.

Slovenia to host EuroBasket 2013

This year's European basketball championship – EuroBasket 2013 – will be hosted by Slovenia in four of its cities: Ljubljana (the capital), Jesenice, Celje, and Koper. 24 European national teams will compete between the 4 and 22 September 2013 for the championship's winning trophy. A wide and varied programme of events will accompany the tournament. In Ljubljana, which will host the first-round matches in Group A, the second-round matches between the top 16 national teams, and the championship finals, a vibrant fan entertainment zone will be set up including a large number of free open-air events. In order to promote the tournament as well as Slovenia on EU level, the EuroBasket 2013 host country will organize a special event in Brussels on 3 September. Teams from the European Parliament, the European Commission, permanent representations, and the Council of EU, will be invited to participate in various competitions and games. Stands promoting Slovenia – its tourism, economy, and gastronomy, will be placed near a fabricated basketball court constructed by a Slovenian company Extrem d.o.o.



World's oldest wooden wheel exhibited in the City Museum of Ljubljana

Slovenes are the proud possessors of the world's oldest wooden wheel with an axle, which will be exhibited in the City Museum of Ljubljana from 24 May 2013 until 20 April next year in an exhibition entitled 'THE WHEEL – 5,200 years'. The invention of the wheel is one of the foundations of modern civilisation and culture. The oldest wooden wheel with an axle, aged 5,200 years, was discovered in Slovenia at Barje (the Ljubljana Marshes). It consists of two ash panels which are joined together by four oak wedges. There is a square hole in the middle, into which the axle was placed. The manufacture of the wheel is surprising in its accuracy and exceptional creativity. The adherence to the expansion and contraction of the wood, the methods of mounting and bonding and other details demonstrate that this was a highly skilled craftsman and connoisseur of different kinds of wood. In its technological sophistication and age, the wheel and axle rank at the very peak of global cultural heritage. As such, the exhibition will go on tour to other European cities after 24 April 2014.

Country Statistical Profile: Slovenia 2013

	Unit	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
GDP per capita	USD current PPPs	22 268	23 472	25 444	27 218	29 065	27 153	26 941	27 402
Real GDP growth	Annual growth %	4,4	4,0	5,8	6,9	3,6	-8,0	1,4	-0,2
Government deficit	% of GDP	-2,3	-1,5	-1,4	-0,0	-1,9	-6,0	-6,0	-6,3
General government debt	% of GDP	34,9	34,0	33,8	30,7	30,4	44,3	48,4	56,3
Imports of goods and services	% of GDP	59,1	62,6	67,1	71,3	70,4	57,0	64,9	71,3
Exports of goods and services	% of GDP	57,8	62,2	66,5	69,6	67,1	58,4	65,4	72,3
Outward FDI stocks	MIn USD	9 055	8 175	7 802
Inward FDI stocks	MIn USD	15 186	14 466	15 107
Unemployment rate: total labour force	%	6,3	6,5	6,0	4,9	4,4	5,9	7,3	8,2

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Editorial



Next month Croatia is becoming the new member of EU. Welcome!

And how could one characterize the Union at mid-2013?

Though well deserved the Nobel Peace Prize should

not make us complacent.

Economically, Europe has enjoyed long periods of prosperity, but the last 4 years have changed much of that, and polarized the continent economically into strong North and weakened South, which cannot blame others for their failures and lack of responsibility. The North, however should be more flexible and accept the common sense instead of insisting only on austerity.

In terms of governance, the implementation of Lisbon Treaty seems to be less than a mixed success. The Parliament is on paper more important, but is it also more powerful? In the Council, the Franco-German leadership is becoming increasingly obvious, while most of the other member states are far too passive. Instead of being the guardian of the Community method, by deciding most of issues by written procedure, the Commission seems to increasingly accept the Intergovernmental method! This is a step back, and we are having less Europe instead of more Europe in times when our continent represents a shrinking component of the increasingly global economy.

This is somehow similar to the shortcomings of classical representative democracy we are experiencing: voters facing reduced electoral choices among center-oriented, mainstream parties, with the media becoming a key political actor, and consequently low electoral participation. Result: lack of proper consultations and many inadequate decisions.

The 21st century democracy must be adjusted to the information age, we all should become much more involved, and insist on professionalism and responsible governance at all levels, from local to the EU.

Dr. Boris Cizelj
 President, Management Board

SBRA welcomes new member – Municipality of Slovenska Bistrica

Municipality of Slovenska Bistrica is one of the oldest and the largest municipalities in Slovenia, both in terms of population as per its area. Geographically it is situated in the east part of Slovenia, between Maribor and Celje. The city of Slovenska Bistrica was built on the remains of a Roman town known as Civitas Negotiana and it has long been endowed with a commercial vocation. On the territory of the municipality there are a large number of natural attractions and cultural and historical monuments, which provide for variety of tourism activities. A number of them are protected as natural and cultural heritage.

Municipality of Slovenska Bistrica



The best known natural attractions in the municipality include: Pohorje ridge with its famous peat bogs and marshes, and the characteristic flora and fauna, the Black Lake in Pohorje, Maroltova fir as an example of dendrological monument.

Local economy is dominated by manufacturing, which represents approx. 2/3 of the economy in the municipality (dominated by wood processing, manufacture of metal products - aluminum and food processing industry). The municipality is also a home to about 800 craftsmen.

Municipality of Slovenska Bistrica successfully received funding from EU in the pre-accession period and during the period 2004-2006. The most important projects completed in this period are the construction of a central sewage treatment plant, and the construction of enterprise zone.

Municipality continued with obtaining the EU Funds in the period 2007-2013 for 12 projects or operations:

- nine projects financed by the European Regional Development Fund and
- three projects co-financed by the Cohesion Fund.

Economic Outlook: Slovenia

Since late 2012 Slovenia has been often mentioned by the media, as "the next bailout candidate", and the Commission has actually strengthened its macroeconomic monitoring, mostly due to increasing imbalances in terms of budget deficit, delayed dynamics of structural reforms, and continued shrinking of economic activity. The last report of the Commission gives Slovenia 2 more years to stabilize its economy and supports its programme of economic recovery.

15 years ago Slovenia has been recognized as the best candidate among the 10 countries applying for EU membership. The critical comments from the Commission were mostly on excessive role of the government in the economy (slow privatization), rigid labour market, limited influx of foreign direct investment, and slow judiciary.

What has caused this negative turnaround?

The current economic crisis has hit Slovenia really hard, mainly due to 2 factors: delays in structural reforms, and a system of privatization which could easily be exploited by some greedy new owners without proper management experience. As a newly independent country Slovenia experienced a massive departure of government employees into retirement (currently 130 active vs. 100 retired people). As a post socialist country Slovenia still did not reform its labour legislation - which keeps labour cost high and net salaries low. The banking sector is another huge liability, being bailed out already, but still needing additional money from the tax payers – before any foreign buyer will be interested to acquire them.

The recently formed centre-left government has a heavy agenda: follow restraint in public spending (in order to reach 3% target), and simultaneously generate growth. Faced with over 120,000 unemployed and further looming closures of companies, they have to sell some of its economic assets and to increase its otherwise relatively modest foreign debt.

Business Briefs



ENVIT's innovative soil washing technology

ENVIT Ltd developed and patented novel remediation technology based on soil extraction with ethylenediamine tetra acetic acid (EDTA). The main innovative element of ENVIT's technology is ability to recycle EDTA within imposed pH gradient and to treat and recycle process solution in a closed loop using electrochemical advanced oxidation processes. There is therefore no waste water generated during remediation process or any other uncontrolled emissions into the environment. ENVIT's technology enables treatment of contaminated soils rich with organic matter, carbonates and fines. This technology efficiently removes toxic metals such as lead, zinc and cadmium simultaneously present in soils and greatly reduces bio-accessibility and legibility of residual toxic metals. It is also able to treat both contaminated soils from metal and organic pollutants. Our remediation technology is "soil gentle" and preserves soil functions as a natural plant substrate. It has been extensively tested in pilot scale (picture) for its feasibility and is now ready to be applied on large commercial scales.

ENVIT is looking for metal (especially lead) contaminated urban areas in Europe and worldwide to further verify technology efficiency at diverse sites and soil types.

Entering foreign markets with high tech products

As internationalisation is crucial for the development of enterprises and their products and services, the

Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia connects and cooperates with the Ministry of the Economic Development and Technology, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Public Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Entrepreneurship and Foreign Investments, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, Slovenian business clubs abroad, foreign offices of Slovenian companies, international partners in EU Member States and the countries of SE Europe, and other organisations related to internationalization.

Organisation and implementation of international events and other activities are aimed at promoting Chamber's members and their entry on foreign markets, increasing their foreign trade operations and promoting Slovenian business. The Chamber also aims to enable new business contacts to enterprises which should lead to new business deals and the resulting growth of those companies and increased Slovenian exports.

The Chamber's efforts to accelerate the capabilities of SME to keep abreast of perspective technologies, among them nanotechnologies, should help them to develop products with essentially higher added value, thus contributing to SME's more successful internationalization and boosting their export capabilities and results. Nanotechnological Days represent an event, which has been organized by the Chamber's Committee on Science and Technology for 10th consecutive year up to now and which contributes to these efforts, while also enhancing the small business – academia collaboration in Slovenia.

New TCS Regional Collaborative R&D Program »Innovative Technologies – InnoTECH 2020«

In the context of EU and Slovene Cohesion policy 2014-2020 and

within the process of preparation of Operational program of Slovenia and Regional development program of Savinjska region, TCS – Toolmakers Cluster of Slovenia (www.toolscluster.net) has prepared program InnoTECH 2020, which is oriented towards smart specialisation of the region in the area of advanced manufacturing technologies.

This program is an integral part of the international R&D program entitled »Smart Machine«, initiated and coordinated by support of LENS Living Lab (www.3-lab.eu). It is based on search, support and promotion of holistic, cross-sectoral technical and non-technical innovative solutions and regional open innovation infrastructure development.

It consists of three interrelated projects, namely InnoTECH - Machine, InnoTECH – Network and InnoTECH – Knowledge.

Research Briefs

University of Ljubljana accredited for further seven years

The Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency accredited the University of Ljubljana for further seven years. The University of Ljubljana began preparations for the accreditation application already in November 2011 and produced some 6000 pages of documentation. The evaluation was conducted by eight external evaluators in December 2012, among them were also foreign experts and students' representatives.

The evaluation report says that »the University of Ljubljana abides a central position in the Slovenian higher education area and in the Slovenian society, being active on all nationally important areas, and thus contributing

to the cultural, social and economic national development. The University of Ljubljana has the most concentrated research and development as well as higher education potential«. The report also states that »the University of Ljubljana has made a significant progress towards integrated university model and that the progress is the most evident in the development of a comprehensive quality assurance system«. The report exposed good practices of the Career Centre, websites and human resources in the provision of the study programs, as well as in the scientific research, professional and artistic performance. The evaluators also reported good reform of the study programs according to the Bologna process principles and goals and noticed that the reduced national budget funds allocated to the University of Ljubljana have an impact on the educational provision.

JSI researcher will participate at the Lindau meeting

Dr. Kristina Žagar, postdoctoral fellow from the Department for Nanostructure Materials of the Jožef Stefan Institute, is among more than 500 researchers from more than 70 countries, selected by the Council for the Lindau Nobel Laureate Meetings, which will have the unique chance to participate in the meeting of Nobel Prize Winners with young doctors and researchers.

On the occasion of the 63rd Lindau Nobel Laureate Meeting, to take place at the end of June 2013, 34 Nobel Laureates have announced to congregate in Lindau to meet the next generation of leading scientists and researchers. The scientific program, dedicated to the Nobel Prize discipline of chemistry, will comprise lectures, discussion sessions, master classes and panel discussions. Green Chemistry as well as biochemical processes and structures are among the main topics.

Cooperation with Honda has been established

Dr. Robert Dominko from the Laboratory for Materials Electrochemistry responded to the invitation of the Honda R & D Europe together with Dr. Boštjan Genorio and applied for the competition Honda Initiation Grant Europe 2013.

The purpose of the award is to finance research in the field of the automobile industry that has the potential of becoming commercial in 10 years.

The proposed project, which engages in batteries of the future, was selected for financing and opens up new opportunities for future cooperation with Honda.

In the present time of crisis, the prestigious award represents a great encouragement for such research and development and at the same time confirms the work of the Laboratory of Materials Electrochemistry is oriented in the right direction and acknowledges that the Laboratory has a globally leading role in the field of batteries.

Regional Briefs



SPRINT project final conference

ZRS Bistra Ptuj organised on 22nd of April 2013 a final conference of SPRINT project, whose aim was to analyze the innovative potential of the economy in the border area of Slovenia-Croatia, and to identify ways to encourage entrepreneurship and innovation. Linking the companies with research, educational and other support organizations in order to seek common solutions to more innovation and improve the competitiveness of

the economy was an ongoing activity throughout the project.

The conference was divided into two parts. In the first part round tables of experts were organized, discussing relevant topics (synchronization of economy and education, promotion of innovation and R&D, business incubators, internationalization). The aim of the round tables debates was to formulate project proposals that could be included in the upcoming Regional Development Programme for the period 2014-2020.

In the second part of the conference, the public was presented with the key results of the project SPRINT and the results of the expert round tables.

Participants have identified key challenges related to the flexibility of employees, guiding of employees and young people towards entrepreneurial mindset, establishment of business incubator in the Lower Drava region, increase the availability of financial resources, the creation of a business environment that will attract foreign investments, and increasing the internationalization of companies.

The conclusions of all working groups were that more discussion is needed and that common solutions should be sought more often. It is also important that the approach to the promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation is comprehensive. Different perspectives should be considered and interests of various stakeholders should be taken into account. Key future projects are: the promotion of entrepreneurship based on innovation, consolidation of support organizations into a unified network of supportive environment for entrepreneurship and innovation, the creation of a center for business solutions and designing a package of incentives to attract foreign investors and promoting the internationalization of the regional economy.