



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA  
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

# NEWSLETTER

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## President Decorates Tony Petkovšek

**President of Slovenia Dr. Danilo Türk conferred on Wednesday, September 12, the Order for Service on a Slovenian living in the United States, Tony Petkovšek, for his "important contribution to the preservation of the Slovenian community in Cleveland". Türk's office also highlighted Petkovšek's efforts for recognition of Slovenia during independence efforts.**

Petkovšek, who comes from a Slovenian family which moved to the U.S. around 1890, has become "practically a symbol



Mr. Petkovšek receiving the honors from the President of Slovenia Dr. Danilo Türk.

of Slovenia" in Cleveland, Türk's office said. He has made a name for himself as an author and editor of the most popular radio show among Slovenians in Cleveland, which he has been hosting every day since 1961. The show intertwines music with interviews of notable public Slovenian and American figures and has made Petkovšek "one of the focal points of the Slovenian identity".

Petkovšek has also organized several group trips to

Slovenia and lead many American Slovenes to their homeland as a tourist guide. He has also significantly contributed to the festival activities in Cleveland and is the founder of the Polka Hall of Fame.

The Minister for Slovenians Abroad, Ljudmila Novak, likewise, congratulated Petkovšek for his many lifelong contributions to promote Slovenian music and culture and being a vital force in the Slovenian community.



## New Additions to the Staff



The Embassy of Slovenia is happy to announce a new addition to our staff. Mr. Borut Blaj, First Secretary, who took the post at the Political Department, previously served as third secretary at the Permanent Mission of Slovenia to the United Nations., Mr. Blaj's Washington appointment is for four years.



Mr. Borut Blaj.

## CULTURE

## Four Years of the Slovenian American Times

The monthly newspaper "Slovenian American Times – Slovenski ameriški časi", the most widely read "Slovenian" newspaper in the United States celebrated its 4th anniversary with a Music Fest. The publication, based in Cleveland, is keenly fostering communications vital to Slovenian communities and has been, year after year, gaining the number of its subscribers. The festival took place on September 8, 2012, featuring performances by some of American Slovenian favorite bands, choirs, and singing ensembles. The festival was also designed to gain some donations for further publication of the newspaper. It was visited by more than 500 guests, and many donors attended the special occasion.

At the event, Mr. Jurček Žmauc, the Consul General of the Republic of Slovenia in Cleveland, emphasized the great importance of Slovenian American Times and thanked the editors and writers of the



A contingent of Slovenian American Times Founders' Circle, supporters and staff celebrate the successful launch of the newspaper in November, 2008. (Source: <http://slovenianamericantimes.com/>)

newspaper for their dedicated work. He also read the letter of the Minister for Slovenians Abroad, Mrs. Ljudmila Novak, in which she expressed her appreciation of the community's

realized initiative for informing Slovenians in the United States about the events in their homeland and in their community, and wished a lot of success in the future.



## Government's Measures to Boost the Economy

Today, September 14, 2012 Radovan Žerjav, the Minister of Economic Development and Technology outlined the package of measures aimed at boosting the economy which was approved yesterday by the cabinet. It comprises 155 concrete proposals aimed at reforming labor and pension legislation, ensuring the stability of the banking sector and improving the wider business environment. Mr. Žerjav stressed that this was one of the most significant strategic documents to emerge as part of the Government's program this year. In total, the package contains 60 measures, including 21 acts, 12 by-laws and 10 strategic documents.

The crucial part of the third package of measures to boost the economy relies on the labour market and pension system reforms, as the Government seeks to promote competitiveness and create conditions for greater productivity in companies in this respect.

The amendments to labor legislation reduce the segmentation of the labor market, introduce flexicurity, adjust the legislation to take into account the ageing population, set minimum rights and standards and simplify dismissals.

With respect to labor market regulation, greater flexibility is introduced, along with temporary and occasional work for the unemployed and pensioners and shorter periods of receiving unemployment allowance. The major novelties in the pension reform refer to raising and equalizing the retirement ages of men and women, greater flexibility in the case of partial retirement, establishing a more stimulating policy of bonuses, as well as adjustment of job-related insurance. Amendments to the Act Amending the Prevention of Undeclared Work and Employment Act will lead to more effective work by supervising bodies, the inclusion of the Customs Administration in the supervision and higher fines for those who breach the law.

The second part of the package deals with the rehabilitation of the banks. It includes an act aimed at strengthening the stability of the banks and foresees a fund to rescue bad investments and loans within banks. This Act will be accompanied by the Banking Act. The act on measures to strengthen the financial sector will establish a company and a fund to ensure stability of banks which will take

over the claims of banks in exchange for bonds guaranteed by the state. These measures will improve bank stability and consequently accelerate loans to the non-financial sector. The new act on Slovenian state holding seeks to ensure stable ownership and maximum sustainable profitability for Slovenia's assets. Amendments to the Banking Act will establish a specific legislative framework for supervisory measures of the Bank of Slovenia.

The third part is aimed at improving the business environment and comprises several acts, particularly pertaining to finance. Amendments to the Tax Procedure Act envisage the publication of a list tax defaulters and a ban on software that allows for the manipulation of turn-over figures, with fines for offenders. With regard to taxing physical persons, amendments to the Income Tax Act upgrade the system of establishing a taxable base from income from activities by considering actual income and normalized expenses. The ceiling for inclusion in the system of normalized expenses is 50,000 Euros. The amended act also introduces a retention tax on income from rent, reduces normalized costs to 10% and introduces the possibility of claiming actual expenses based on enclosed invoices.

## Diplomatic Regatta Attracts Record Turnout

The annual diplomatic regatta drew a record turnout as 53 countries were represented at the event taking place in Izola on Saturday, September 8. Among those taking to sea were as many as 33 ambassadors and 19 consuls, and more than 700 guests attended the evening ceremony.

The tenth annual informal gathering of foreign diplomats and Slovenian politicians, business representatives and sailing professionals took place in excellent weather conditions. The Jadralni klub Veter sailing club, the organizer of the event, labeled Saturday's regatta a major success.

The idea for the diplomatic regatta was given in 2002 by Australian Honorary Consul Viktor Baraga, who wanted to invite his fellow diplomats to a sailing meet. Jadralni klub Veter organized the event for the first time in 2003 and since then the number of participants has been growing every year.



## Ribnica

On the road from Ljubljana toward Kočevje, at a distance of some 40 km (25 miles) from the Slovenian capital, lies the town of Ribnica. The name of this urban settlement, Ribnica (from Slovenian "riba" meaning "fish") has long been attested to by the town's coat-of-arms, featuring a fish, as well as by the several miles long karstic intermittent river, the Ribnica, which flows under the eastern part of the Velika gora mountain, a small distance from the town itself.

From a distance, the traveler is greeted by the two bell-towers of the Ribnica parish church, rebuilt in 1957 in a baroque-cathedral style after plans by Jože Plečnik. With this stylistic characteristic, the great Slovenian architect wished to give to the church, partly destroyed during the Second World War, a particular mark, which the whole town had already borne through the ages. Ribnica was, indeed, one



Bell-towers of the Ribnica parish church.

of the original Christian parishes and the center of a missionary territory covering the western Dolenjska region at the time of the conversion to Christianity (in the 8th century). This territory stretched from the Ljubljana marshes to the Kolpa river. In this area, a total of 45 parishes have been established over the centuries.

Ribnica is one of the

oldest towns of Slovenia and has a rich history. A special place here is occupied by the local Ribnica wooden-ware and pottery making, crafts which both have a distinguished and ancient tradition and which are closely connected with nature.

The greatest natural resource of this whole area is its forests. The harvesting and use of various types of wood and clay for the production of functional and decorative objects and numerous tools have been preserved right up to the present day. Every first Sunday in September, there is the traditional and well-attended Ribnica fair of wooden-ware and pottery, featuring the products and sale of local hand-crafted items.

The inhabitants of the Ribnica valley make much of the "peddler's patent" issued by the Emperor Frederick in 1492. At that time, the town faced the threat that, because of endless Turkish raids and



Fair of wooden-ware and pottery in Ribnica.

pillaging, the entire population would leave. For this reason, Emperor Frederick III gave the townspeople written permission to carry on untaxed trade of their products throughout the Austrian lands, and subsequent emperors confirmed the patent. This also explains the origin of the local song "I am Urban from Ribnica, known throughout the world."

The material culture of the densely populated Ribnica valley, which cultivated the meager land and made the greatest possible use of its wealth of timber, occasionally gave rise to a more spiritual expression. Records dating back to the end of the 14th century mention a 7-grade Latin school, one of few in Slovenia. Schooling in this area was also placed on the map at the beginning of the 19th century, for it is known that the greatest Slovenian poet, France Prešeren, spent his first two years of school life right here in Ribnica, where he was inscribed in the Golden Book of Distinction as the best pupil.

Ribnica is also the birthplace of the world-famous



Ribnica's coat-of-arms.



Postcard of Ribnica in 1900.

baroque composer Jakob Petelin Gallus (1550-1591), the great patron of the Slovenian intelligentsia Luka Knafelj (1621-1671), and the linguist and Slovenian language scholar Father Stanislav Škrabec (1844-1918). Ribnica's surrounding area was also the birthplace of literary and cultural historian and one of Slovenia's first university professors, dr. Ivan Prijatelj (1875-1937); sociologist, politician and Slovenia's first economic theoretician as well as founder of loan societies and loan cooperatives, dr. Janez Ev. Krek (1865-1917; a sculptor known at home and abroad, France Gorše (1897-1986); a businessman, patron of the arts and founder of the PEKO factory, Peter Kozina (1876-1930); and many others.

Visitors to Ribnica can tour the partly preserved castle, which features a cultural park, a summer theater and a museum of wooden-ware and pottery. The cultural park is a memorial park, with 17 stone pillars bearing names of 70 notables which the

Biographical Department of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts regards as deserving contributors to Slovenia's spiritual and material culture. A rather less illustrious episode of human history is embodied in the entirely preserved record of the 1701 trial in which we learn that in that year in Ribnica it was the last time that a witch was condemned and burned at the stake.

In the Ribnica valley, between Velika and Mala gora, the visitor is afforded splendid viewing points in unspoilt nature, the chance of touring karstic caves and chasms, and the prospect of hiking to the top of Sveta Ana above Ribnica. The lodge on Travna gora offers quiet tranquillity, with excellent skiing in winter. The local church buildings are also well worth a visit, particularly the baroque church at Nova Štifta and the parish church in Ribnica with the famous altarpiece of St. Stephen, the work of painter Ivan Grohar.



## Appeal for the New Members of the Council for Slovenians Abroad

A Slovenian government's permanent advisory body: the Government council for Slovenians in neighboring countries and Slovenians abroad, established in 2007, which cooperates in forming and implementing the policy and strategy of the Republic of Slovenia in the field of concern for Slovenians abroad, is appealing for the proposals for the appointment of new members of the council.

The council enables a permanent dialogue between the government and Slovenians living around the world in line with the government's efforts to

preserve the Slovenian culture, identity and language among Slovenians abroad.

The Council is chaired by the prime minister and consists of 19 members, 13 of whom come from outside of Slovenia: four represent Slovenians living in European countries, three come, respectively, from either South or North America, two from Australia, and one represents Slovenians who live in other countries on the remaining continents.

This year, the term of office of the current members of the Council expires, which is why the Prime Minister

Janez Janša and the Office of the Government of the RS for Slovenians Abroad invite organizations and societies of Slovenians abroad, as well as state authorities and institutions and civil society to propose their candidates to the [Office for Slovenians Abroad, Komenskega 11, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia](#), or to the e-mail address: [urad.slovinci@gov.si](mailto:urad.slovinci@gov.si). The proposals should be sent to be received no later than **September 30, 2012**, and should include the name and surname of the candidate, a short biography (CV) and a statement in support of the proposal.

## CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

## Fulbright Scholarships for 2012

The subject-matter of the call for applications published by The Slovene Human Resources Development and Scholarship Fund on August 24 are scholarships for the participants in the Fulbright program – Generation 2012, specifically for visits by Slovene citizens to the United States and U.S. citizens to Slovenia, with a total of EUR100,000.00 (about \$129,075.00). The Fulbright generation 2012 applies to those Fulbright program participants who will conduct the majority of their visit in the 2012/2013 academic year.

The fund provides reimbursement under the Fulbright program for flight expenses between the two countries only. It also provides

to U.S. citizens a refund of the costs of basic health insurance in the Republic of Slovenia and a monthly stipend in the amount of EUR800.00 (about \$1,000.00) if they are visiting students or EUR1,000.00 (about \$1,300.00) if they are visiting scholars. The applicants will be awarded the funds under this call for applications for up to the number of months approved by the relevant authority in the U.S. Applicants must be citizens of the sending country and be selected to participate in the Fulbright Program – Generation 2012 in the hosting country by the relevant authority in the U.S.

The application deadline is **September 30, 2013**. More on the conditions of the call for application, together with the

application form, can be found on the web page of the Slovene Human Resources Development and Scholarship Fund at: <http://www.sklad-kadri.si/en/calls-for-applications-and-news/front-page/call-for-application/n/fulbright-scholarships-for-the-2012-year-141-jr/> (in English).

The Fulbright Program is the flagship international educational exchange program sponsored by the U.S. Government and is designed to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries. The Fulbright Program offers grants to study, teach, and conduct research for U.S. citizens to go abroad and non-U.S. citizens to come to the United States.

# Slovenian Presidential Elections

Presidential elections will be held on **November 11, 2012**, at the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in Washington D.C. and the Consulate General of the Republic of Slovenia in Cleveland. If required, the second election round will be held on December 2, 2012.

Slovenian citizens with registered residence (»stalno prebivališče«) in the United States can vote in person at the above listed representations or by mail. Instructions and voting material, which will include two official blank ballots for the first and possible second round of elections, will be sent to the voter's permanent residence address abroad.

Slovenian citizens with registered residence in the United

States may check whether they are listed in the electoral register and if their information (name, address) in the register is correct. Voters can call the Consular office at the Embassy of Slovenia in Washington D.C. at 202-386-6613 or 202-386-6614. Calls will be accepted until October 26, 2012, Monday through Friday, 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon.

Slovenian citizens with registered residence in Slovenia and visiting or temporarily residing (»začasno prebivališče«) in the United States can vote in person at the listed representations or by mail. In either case, voters need to register with the National Electoral Commission by **October 11, 2012**.

In order to register, a completed and signed registration form, which can be found on [www.dvk.gov.si](http://www.dvk.gov.si) must be sent directly to the National Electoral Commission. All registration forms must be received by October 11, 2012, and can be sent to the National Electoral Commission: by mail to Državna volilna komisija, Slovenska cesta 54, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia, by fax at (011)(386)(1)433-1269, or by e-mail (scanned for the signature) at [gp.dvk@dvk-rs.si](mailto:gp.dvk@dvk-rs.si)

Detailed information on elections and nomination/support of presidential candidates is available on the website of the National Electoral Commission [www.dvk.gov.si](http://www.dvk.gov.si).

## TO DO LIST

### 33rd Annual "Vinska Trgatev" Festival

Slovenian Union of America Branch 20 in Chicago will host the Slovenian Grape-Harvest Dance Festival, which celebrates the annual harvesting of grapes. Tickets are \$10, and children 10 and under are free.

When: Saturday, September 15, for an American rendition of Vinska Trgatev; doors open at 3 p.m., festivities begin at 4 p.m.

Where: St. Joseph Park Hall, corner of Raynor and Theodore Streets in Joliet. Four Thirty One 416 North Chicago Street, Joliet, Illinois 60432

More information: [www.slovenianunion.org](http://www.slovenianunion.org)

### EURO Night

For the fifth year in a row, the European embassies in Washington, D.C., are proud to present the "Euro Night!" The 2012 version will present embassies of more than 20 E.U. members each showcasing its respective culture, traditions and culinary specialties.

When: Friday, September 28 from 6:30 p.m. until 11:30 p.m.

Where: La Maison Française at the Embassy of France, 4101 Reservoir Rd, NW, Washington, D.C. 20007. Parking is available on Reservoir Rd and across the street from the Embassy of France at the Georgetown University Hospital's pay lot.

Tickets: <http://euronight2012.eventbrite.com/>

More information: <http://www.euronightdc.org/>

### Grape Festival

Club Slovenia hosts its 88th annual Grape Festival. If you like great food, music and dancing, plan to attend the afternoon festivities

When: Sunday, September 30, 2012.

Where: Slovenian Hall in San Francisco, 2101 Mariposa Street, San Francisco, CA 94107

More information: <http://www.clubslowenia.com/>

**Embassy Series: Andrej Goričar, piano**

The Embassy Series and the Embassy of Slovenia present the pianist and composer Andrej Goričar, who will accompany a silent classic Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans (director F. W. Murnau, U.S., 1927, 95 min) with his unique music.

When: Wednesday, October 31, 2012 at 7:30 pm

Where: Embassy of Slovenia, 2410 California Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20008

Admission: \$55/buffet reception

**Embassy Series: Caroline Calleja, piano**

In cooperation with the Embassy of Malta and the Embassy of Slovenia, the Embassy Series presents pianist Caroline Calleja from Malta. Program: Beethoven: "Waldstein;" Chopin: "24 Preludes."

When: Friday, November 2, 2012 at 7:30 PM

Where: Embassy of Slovenia, 2410 California Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20008

More information: [www.embassyseries.org](http://www.embassyseries.org)

Admission: \$75/including reception. Order online or call (202) 625-2361

**Slovenia - a Photographic Journey 2013**

Live life to the fullest and explore the most beautiful and secret places of Slovenia, the hidden gem of Central Europe. From the spectacular rocky limestone peaks to the medieval towns, this ancient country includes castles, vineyards, glistening lakes, and offers amazing photo sessions. Assistance by professional photographer Hank Miller.

For more information and to receive your sign-up forms, please contact

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Tel: 415-924.4627 / 800-569.6228

[info@cosmopolitanadventuretours.com](mailto:info@cosmopolitanadventuretours.com) or [www.cosmopolitanadventuretours.com](http://www.cosmopolitanadventuretours.com)

**Discover Enchanting Slovenia**

Zoya D. Pinto, a native of this little known and enchanting scenic part of Europe, will take you on an extended video tour of Slovenia, a country rich in beautiful art, architecture and a long history influenced by the Roman Empire, the Republic of Venice, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

This video by Zoya D. Pinto, will introduce you to Ljubljana (the vibrant political and cultural capital of Slovenia), Ptuj (a town dating back to the Stone Age), the dramatic Julian Alps, the year-round resorts of Bled and Bohinj lakes, the mysterious caves of Postojna, and the charming Adriatic Sea resorts of Koper, Piran, and Portorož. You will also learn about some traditional festivals and much more.

This DVD is a perfect gift for anyone wanting to learn about the country of his ancestors. It is also a nice gift for American or Canadian friends who like to enrich their lives through the experiences of other travelers.

For a one-minute trailer click on <http://svn.amebylon.net/blog>

For any additional info or for the order form sent email to either [zdproduction@hotmail.com](mailto:zdproduction@hotmail.com) or to [zdpinto@yahoo.com](mailto:zdpinto@yahoo.com).

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