



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

NEWSLETTER

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Parliament Confirms New Government

The National Assembly confirmed the cabinet of Janez Janša in a 50-10 vote on Friday, February 10, completing the formation of the 10th Slovenian government following the 4 December general election.

Members of the centre-right cabinet have already been sworn in met for the inaugural cabinet session. Janša has already assumed duties from outgoing PM Borut Pahor.

The cabinet has 12 ministers alongside Janša as the prime minister: four from the main coalition partner, the Democrats (SDS), and two each from the remaining partners, the Virant List, the



People's Party (SLS), the Pensioners' Party (DeSUS) and New Slovenia (NSi).

Former ministers in the first Janša cabinet from 2004-2008, Karl Erjavec (DeSUS) and Andrej Vizjak (SDS) will take over the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs.

The new minister for Slovenians abroad will be Ljudmila Novak (NSi), while party colleague Aleš Hojs will take over the Defence Ministry. The Health Ministry will be

headed by Tomaž Gantar (DeSUS).

Former development minister from the first Janša cabinet Žiga Turk (SDS) will head the new Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport. The Finance Ministry, regarded as the main department in the upcoming term, will be headed by Janez Šušteršič (Virant List), while his party colleague Senko Pličanič will take over the Justice and the Public Administration Ministry.

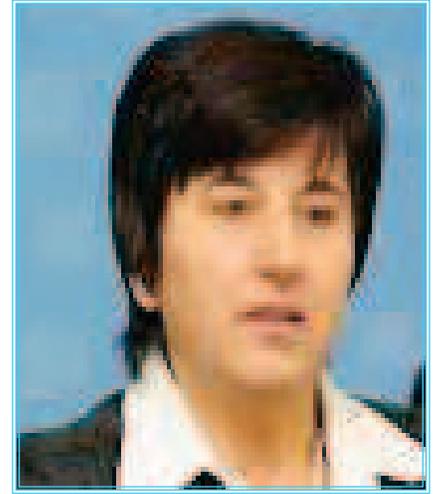




Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Erjavec.

Radovan Žerjav (SLS) will head the Economy Ministry and Franc Bogovič (SLS) the Agriculture and Spatial Planning Ministry.

The vote came after nearly six hours of debate. A total of the 82 MPs voted on the cabinet line-up, with the coalition contributing the votes for and the opposition the 10 votes against. The 28 MPs abstained from voting.



Minister for Slovenians Abroad Ljudmila Novak.

POLITICS

Žbogar Appointed EU Special Representative to Kosovo



Slovenian former foreign minister Samuel Žbogar.

Samuel Žbogar, Slovenian former foreign minister, was appointed the EU's special representative to Kosovo by the EU Council on January 25, 2012. Žbogar's term has begun with February 1 and will run until 30 June 2013, but may be extended. At the same time, Žbogar

will serve a four-year term as a head of the EU Office in Priština. His double-hatting is expected to significantly reinforce the EU presence in the country.

Žbogar is a diplomat with 24 years of experience in key strategic postings, including China, the UN in New York, and Washington, DC.

POLITICS

Türk Decorates Pleskovič with Golden Order

On Monday, February 6, 2012, Slovenian President Danilo Türk decorated Boris Pleskovič, the head of the Slovenian World Congress, Marija Pirjevec Paternu, a Trieste-based professor of Slovenian, Rudi Vouk, a Slovenian minority lawyer in Austria, and Darko Šonc, the head of the association of Slovenians in Zagreb, for their contribution to Slovenian culture abroad.



Türk said these decorations reflect the idea of a common Slovenian cultural space. "It is right that we recall the meaning of this concept in the days around 8 February", said Türk, referring to Slovenia's Culture Day.

Pleskovič was decorated with the Golden Order for Services for his ground-breaking work in Slovenia's economy and his efforts to connect Slovenians around the globe.

Boris Pleskovič was a Research Manager, Development Economics at the World Bank. He previously served as the Chief Economic Adviser to the Prime Minister of Slovenia in 1991-1992, and taught economics at MIT and the Universities of Illinois and Cincinnati. He was a Visiting Research Fellow at MIT and a Fulbright Fellow at Harvard University; also frequently lecturing as a Visiting

Professor at American and European Universities. He is widely published and co-editor of many books. Pleskovič was decorated by Charles University in Prague on the occasion of its 650th anniversary, won three awards in urban design and architectural competitions in Slovenia and served as the President of the Slovenian World Congress from 2000 to 2011.

CELEBRATING

Celebration of Slovenian Culture Day

Festivities were held across Slovenia as well as abroad on Wednesday, February 8, as Slovenians observed Culture Day, a national holiday dedicated to Slovenia's foremost poet France Prešeren (1800-1849).

The main event in Ljubljana took place on Tuesday, when the Prešeren Prizes, the highest honor in culture, and Prešeren Fund Prizes were awarded. At a ceremony in the Cankarjev dom arts center, Matjaž Vipotnik, one of the internationally best known Slovenian graphic designers, and veteran writer and poet Jože Snoj were honored with the top national awards for lifetime artistic achievement.

At the same time, the Prešeren Fund also conferred six prizes for individual achievements, honoring trumpeter Franc Kosem, conductor Stojan Kuret, director Ivica Buljan, actor and singer-songwriter Iztok Mlakar, writer Andrej E. Skubic, and architect Maruša Zorec.



Ambassador Kirn next to Ms. Gorana Sipič and Mr. Žiga Vodušek.

The Embassy of Slovenia in Washington marked the Culture Day by hosting a reception. Around 50 Slovenian guests were welcomed by the Ambassador Roman Kirn and his wife Jovana. After the introductory remarks by Ambassador Kirn on the importance of culture to one's nation, the attendees enjoyed short film screenings featuring

The things We've Never Done Together (Stvari, ki jih nisva nikoli naredila) by a young Slovenian director, Martin Turk; The Visit (Obisk) by the best-selling and award-winning Slovenian writer Miha Mazzini; and Wolfy (Vučko), written and directed by Matevž Luzar, casting Evgen Car, Silva Čušin, Polona Juh, Mojca Funkl, Klemen Sladkonja, and others.

Slovenian Embassy Joins Green Partnership

On Tuesday, January 31, 51 embassies and international organizations signed the District of Columbia Diplomatic Missions and International Institutions Environmental Performance, Climate and Sustainability Pledge. The idea for this unique partnership was initiated by the D.C. Greening Embassy Forum, a partnership between the Government of Washington, D.C., the U.S. State Department, and foreign embassies located in D.C. On behalf of the Slovenian Embassy in Washington, the pledge was signed by Ambassador Roman Kirn.



Ambassador Kirn signing the pledge.

The signatories signed the pledge stating their intent to work together to make their embassies and the city of Washington greener and more sustainable. Washington, D.C. ranks among the top 10 greenest cities in the United States. With more than 175 embassies, representing nations from around the world, the city plans to implement its ambitious sustainability program,

cooperating with these foreign missions. The governments and partners will be sharing their best practices and greening tips for addressing energy and water conservation, recycling, pollution, and a number of other issues.

The signing ceremony was hosted by the Royal Netherlands Embassy, which during the event announced having received the LEED (Leadership in Energy and

Environmental Design) silver standard. This is the second embassy of the E.U. member states - next to the Embassy of Finland - to achieve this environmental standard.

During the ceremony, the Mayor of Washington, D.C., Mr. Vincent Gray, expressed his belief that cooperation between the international community and the city could improve the quality of life for everyone living and working in Washington, as well as set an example of sustainable practices for all capitals throughout the world. The U.S. Under Secretary of State for Management, Patrick Kennedy, also emphasized how going green is incredibly important, both for the U.S. State Department and for the city of Washington, and how the sustainability pledge connects shared endeavors of both local and international communities.



Group picture of all the signatories.

Murska Sobota

Located minutes from the borders of Austria, Hungary, and Croatia in the region of Pomurje, the northernmost part of Slovenia, Murska Sobota is a city of cross-cultural interconnections with a tradition of coexistence between Slavs, Germans and Hungarians, since Murska Sobota has been subsumed over the centuries into different political entities. For instance, Murska Sobota was incorporated into the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians in 1918, and later was under the occupation by Hungary during World War II. Murska Sobota is also notable in being the only town in Slovenia situated on a flat plain, unlike the rest of Slovenia, which tends to be alpine.

One special attraction in Murska Sobota is the Renaissance castle dating back



Murska Sobota Castle.

to the 16th century, which hosts the Regional Museum. The museum details the history of the region from prehistory to antiquity and the Middle Ages, through Romanesque and Gothic to Baroque. Special mention is made of the Jews and

their stay in Prekmurje, rural life in the region, development of the region after incorporation into first Yugoslavia, and the suffering experienced in World War II.

In 2011, Murska Sobota saw the opening of the renovated multipurpose theater and concert hall Gledališče Park, an architectural gem which reaffirms the town's position as the regional center of Pomurje. Fittingly, on February 4, 2012, the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) project in Murska Sobota was launched at the concert hall. The overall ECOC program of Murska Sobota will focus on contemporary art. The two main events in the 19 program sections will be the festival of contemporary dance, Fronta, and the "Odkrito/Zakrito" (Revealed/Concealed) project, focusing on the symbolism of doors.



Mura river.

Throughout the year, the life of the town is enriched by cultural, traditional, culinary, and entertainment and sports events, one of them being the Sobota Days (Soboški dnevi). This event will be the biggest European Culture of Capital project in Murska Sobota. The 'Heart of the Sobota Days' festival will be in the town park, which will be transformed in June into a diverse cultural happening

for all ages. The program will include classical music, choral performances, Roma music, guitar and drum workshops, rock'n' roll, country, gothic, metal, popular folk music, and other genres accompanied by theater shows and musical acts for children and teenagers, street theaters for adults, and folk dance acts (featuring folk dance groups from the Lent Festival).

Murska Sobota is a sister city to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, as the result of many years of continued friendly relationship between the Slovenian-Americans in Bethlehem, most of whose ancestors came from Slovenia's Murska Sobota area, or whose relatives and friends are still living in Slovenia. The Ambassador of the United States to Slovenia Joseph Mussomeli honored the city with a visit on Monday, February 6.

BUSINESS

Slovenian Green Businesses

Slovenia is enthusiastically committed to environmental sustainability while simultaneously determined to become a more competitive business destination. Slovenia does not see environmental sustainability and successful business enterprise as diametrically opposed. Rather, Slovenia promotes distinctive business success based upon personal social responsibility. Indeed, "Forward with nature" is the joint mission of businesses covering everything from prefabricated motorway architecture, to ecological housing construction, to hospitality industry built around "wellness" and "slow food".

Our businesses are motivated by huge opportunities in the green industry. From light bulbs to cars, boats, planes, and houses, our companies are driven to produce environmentally friendly products of top-notch quality.

For instance, Seaway is the world's leading boat-development company, based at the J&J design studio, created in 1983 by Jernej and Japec Jakopin. Greenline Hybrid, a small luxurious yacht, is considered one of the most advanced and



House by Riko.

innovative products on the market, resulting in numerous international "Boat of the Year" awards. For more information about Seaway, you can visit: <http://www.seaway.si/>

The Riko Group, established by Slovene businessman Janez Škrabec, comprises companies and trademarks working under a common business philosophy and a strong value system. The Riko Group with its partner companies provides technological solutions in the fields of industry, energy, environmental protection, logistics systems, and civil engineering.

For instance, the Riko Hiše company implements energy-efficient living in ecological

buildings. If you would like more information about the Riko Group, you can visit: <http://www.rikogroup.com/en/>

When the ministers of foreign affairs of the Green Group of six countries: Cape Verde, Costa Rica, Iceland, Singapore, Slovenia, and the United Arab Emirates, convened in 2011, they emphasized that the "...development of a green economy...does not only bring social and environmental benefits but also economic growth." Slovenia practices this belief by innovation in green technologies because it is committed to finding ambitious solutions to the challenge of sustainable development.

Ljubljana University on Top in Eastern and Central Europe

Slovenia's oldest higher education institution, Ljubljana University, has placed 81st in the world in the international Webometrics university ranking. According to the ranking, which covered some 20,300 universities, Ljubljana University is the best in Central and Eastern Europe, and 13th in Europe.

The university said in a press release on Friday that they advanced 126 spots compared to

January 2011, ahead of the likes of Charles University in Prague and Masaryk University in Brno. The Webometrics ranking is issued twice a year, in January and July.

Maribor University placed second in Slovenia, 614th in the world and 27th in Central and Eastern Europe, while Primorska University in Koper is third in Slovenia, 1456th in the world and 92nd in Central and Eastern Europe.



University of Ljubljana.

YOUNG TALENTS

Lara Pucko wins National Geographic Photo Contest

Lara Pucko from Slovenia was named the winner in the "Humor" category of the National Geographic International Photography Contest for Kids. Thirteen-year-old Lara was the first-place winner for her street-sign portraiture.

More than 12,000 photos were received from kids in the United States and other countries, including Canada, Bulgaria, Egypt, Hungary, Indonesia, Lithuania, Slovenia, South Africa, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

Each country held a national contest and, in the final round, sent one photo from each of the four categories -- People, Scenery, Animals, and Humor -- to National Geographic headquarters for judging. From the four category winners, Makayla Hayes from the U.S. was chosen as the grand prize winner.



"National Geographic's International Photography Contest for Kids is a terrific avenue for National Geographic Kids magazine to encourage kids around the globe to document the world around them in a creative way," Melina Bellows,

National Geographic Society executive vice president, said in a press release. "With each year, the number and quality of our entries continue to grow, and we hope this activity will inspire a lifelong love of photography among our readers."

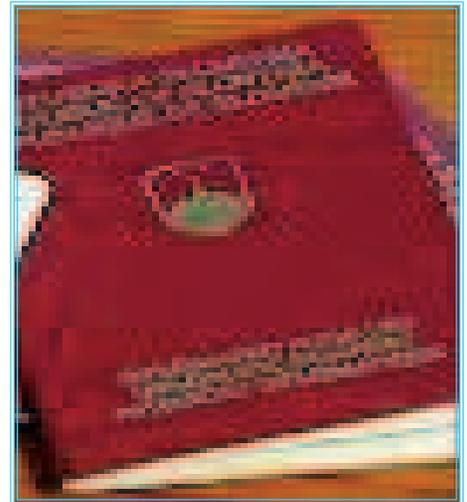
Expiration of Passports and Identity Cards in 2012

A large number of passports and identity cards are expected to expire in 2012, which may result in a longer waiting period for obtaining new documents. We encourage citizens of the Republic of Slovenia to check the validity of their documents and submit applications for new documents in a timely manner. Thus, citizens are encouraged to apply for a new document at least one month before the expiry of the old document. Certain countries require a passport valid for at least six months when entering their territory. Citizens are advised to find out the specific conditions of entry, especially to countries with a visa regime, in advance of traveling.

Slovenian citizens residing abroad can apply for a new passport only through diplomatic-consular representations of the Republic of Slovenia.

Applicants from Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin should contact directly the Consulate General in Cleveland (<http://cleveland.consulate.si/en> ; e-mail: kcl@gov.si).

Applicants from Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont should contact directly the Consulate General in New York (<http://newyork.consulate.si/en>; e-mail: kny@gov.si).



Applicants from all other states, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Mexico should contact the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in Washington D.C. (<http://washington.embassy.si/index.php?id=421&L=1> ; e-mail: vwa@gov.si).

TO DO LIST

Memories of A City: Miha Štrukelj

For his first solo exhibit at the gallery, Slovene artist Miha Štrukelj will create an installation of murals and small drawings on panels throughout the gallery to address the limitations and confines of the gallery space.

When: Ongoing – March 11, 2011

Where: 139 Eldridge Street, New York, NY 10002

More information: (212) 255-9707, email: info@lmakprojects.com, web: www.lmakprojects.com, www.miha-strukelj.com

All-Star Accordions exhibition

For the first time, the accordions of legendary polka bandleaders are brought together on display. The exhibition celebrates the 25th anniversary of the Polka Hall of Fame Awards Show with award-winning musicians performing in person.

When: Opening Wednesday, March 21, 2012. The program begins at 7:00 p.m. Admission free.

Where: National Cleveland-Style Polka Hall of Fame and Museum

More information: call (216) 261-FAME, toll-free (866) 66-POLKA, or check www.polkafame.com.