

Slovenia National Day Special

30 years on, richer ties and a green EU push await

ANA POLAK PETRIC
AMBASSADOR OF SLOVENIA



This is a very special and important time for Slovenia. On June 25, we are celebrating the 30th anniversary of our independence and almost at the same time, on July 1, Slovenia will take over the

presidency of the European Union Council. Both events are important and significant signs of our development as a democratic, prosperous and free country in the heart of Europe.

The events that unfolded in Slovenia 30 years ago made an enormous impact on the lives of our citizens. For the first time in our history, we decided to form our own state, and thus a 1,000-year-old dream of Slovenians to live in an independent state finally came true. With our independence from Yugoslavia, Slovenia also joined the democratic world, with free elections and the adoption of a new constitution devoted to respect for human rights and the rule of law. I and fellow Slovenians who experienced the evening of June 25, 1991, will never forget the feeling of this glorious day.

Today, Slovenia is an active member of the EU and NATO, devoted to nourishing and strengthening cooperation with friendly nations and building effective multilateralism. For the second time since its membership in the EU, Slovenia will in 2021 assume the presidency of the EU Council, this time in quite unpredictable and difficult circumstances. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our economy and social life and imposed limits on our travel. Thus, we are fully aware that with the presidency comes also the responsibility — to engage, lead and participate with all our knowledge and resources to recover from the pandemic and build a European and globally bright future.

The main objectives of our presidency

will be to address the damage from the pandemic, restore the normal functioning of European societies and promote the recovery of the economy, which the members of the EU believe should be green, renewable and sustainable. We will strive to improve the resilience and strategic autonomy of the EU so that we are better prepared to meet such challenges in the future. Slovenia will also engage in debate under the framework of the Conference on the Future of Europe and help promote the European way of life, rule of law, and equal criteria for all.

Among our foreign policy priorities, it is our aim to reaffirm the EU perspective of the Western Balkans. This region is at our doorstep, and due to its geographic proximity, common history and economic ties, the peace, stability and development of this part of Europe is in Slovenia's vital interest. We will also encourage the EU to hold debate on the importance of the Indo-Pacific region for global stability, peace and prosperity.

During this time of celebration, Slovenia remembers all nations that helped us along the path toward sovereignty and independence. Japan recognized Slovenia in 1992, and since then our relations have been friendly and developed further. Japanese have discovered the treasures of Slovenian nature, food and wine, and Slovenians admire Japanese hospitality and kindness.

Political ties are growing stronger. To mention just the latest official visit, Slovenia was honored to host Minister of Foreign Affairs



The Port of Koper is becoming an important hub for transportation between Japan and central Europe. SPIRIT SLOVENIA

Toshimitsu Motegi in April. Common projects and cooperation are blooming in economics and science, and the Port of Koper is becoming increasingly attractive for Japanese transport to Central Europe. We are also exploring possibilities for further collaboration with Japan in digitalization, cybersecurity, high-tech and artificial intelligence. I must say that we are proud to emphasize that Slovenia is one of the most active countries participating in the projects and activities behind the implementation of Japan's "Society 5.0" plan

In past years, our mutual respect and long-lasting friendship were reflected in successful economic cooperation. Slovenia has been recognized by Japanese companies as a reliable partner and as a business environment that offers qualified and skilled labor, high productivity, a friendly atmosphere and easy access to the vast markets of the EU and Western Balkans region. The number of Japanese investments in Slovenia is only growing, and mutually they are viewed as success stories. Since 2013, foreign direct investment from Japan to Slovenia has grown 10 times,

placing Japan among the top 10 countries investing in Slovenia.

Another passion that unites Slovenia and Japan is sports. Both nations are devoted to active life, and there is ongoing and long-lasting collaboration between teams, athletes and federations. Therefore, in conclusion, allow me to wish also that during the upcoming Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games, the ties between Slovenia and Japan will become even stronger and that our appreciation of the importance of solidarity and mutual understanding will prevail.



Slovenia is celebrating 30 years of independence.

Keen interest in further expanding trade, investment

ZDRAVKO POCIVALSEK
MINISTER OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY



Cooperation with Japan is extremely important for Slovenia, as we are connected by the same values, a diligent and highly educated workforce, an investment-friendly

environment and innovation-driven minds. Various Japanese partners and investors already trust Slovenia, which shows that Slovenian know-how meets the high standards of Japan.

Japan has strategically been a priority market for the Slovenian economy since 2015. Our trade exchange has been stable and I am especially honored that we are recognized as a reliable partner by such an economic powerhouse as Japan and that the number of Japanese investments continues to increase every year, especially in areas that bring higher added value. Japanese investments have increased more than 10 times since 2013

and now account for more than €360 million. Actually, Japan is today one of our most important and largest investors.

We are highly interested in further strengthening our trade exchange and attracting more Japanese investment in Slovenia, as we offer a stimulating and stable business environment. Our government is committed to improving even further with proactive reforms to create a competitive, transparent, simple and investor-friendly environment. As you may know, we have one of the lowest corporate tax rates in the EU and offer many types of tax relief and incentives for investors, especially in the field of research and development.

Our central geostrategic position in the heart of Europe, with direct access to the Adriatic Sea and modern infrastructure, are important factors of our competitiveness. But our most important advantage lies in people who are highly motivated, educated and experienced and have a good knowledge of languages and strong regional connections. Our companies are committed to diversifying our exports further and to developing products and services with high added value. To accelerate this process, we wish to attract

investments with high-tech products and services.

The slogan of the Slovenian economy — "Green, Creative, Smart" — confirms that we are focusing on the so-called green economy and sustainable development to become an advanced, low-carbon society that actively responds to global challenges and sets new trends. With emphasis on research and development, Slovenia will continue with its creative and smart vision toward faster development of a digital society based on science and information technologies. We are strong in some niche areas, such as robotics, fintech, cybersecurity and blockchain technology, and our companies excel at health and biotechnology and in the measurement technology sector. We also have an excellent track record in scientific and technological fields, such as physics, materials, biochemistry and more recently climate. Moreover, we are pioneers in artificial intelligence and recently set up an international AI Research center with UNESCO. Last year, Slovenia used its know-how to join 49 other countries who have satellites in space — a privilege long reserved for big states.

I am convinced that we have many



With the slogan "Green, Creative, Smart," Slovenia is focusing on the so-called green economy and sustainable development to become a more advanced, low-carbon society. SPIRIT SLOVENIA

opportunities to strengthen our partnership to face the challenges of how to use technology for the benefit of people, as this is ultimately the core of all our efforts for a better tomorrow.

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.

XLAB is headquartered in Ljubljana – the capital of Slovenia. Since 2001, we have been providing software for remote support, remote access and work from home. Our remote desktop software called ISL Online is used by businesses across 100 countries whereas Japan is the most important market for us due to excellent collaboration with OceanBridge. Let's celebrate together the 20th anniversary of both companies and the 30th anniversary of friendship and successful partnership between Slovenia and Japan!

Congratulations on
30th
Independence Anniversary

This year OceanBridge marked 20 years since its founding with XLAB d. o. o.. We have built a good relationship for more than 15 years. I hope our business activity has contributed, even modestly, to developing both Slovenia and Japan. Slovenia is the only country with the word "love" in its name, in addition to containing the two letters that spell *ai*, which means love in Japanese. It is indeed a pleasure to extend my heartfelt congratulations on Slovenia's 30th independence anniversary.



XLAB
NOT IDLE

Established on
20 June, 2001

XLAB d.o.o. CEO
Jure Pompe



OceanBridge

Established on
13 June, 2001

OceanBridge Inc. CEO
Akira Nakada



Slovenia National Day Special

Visit the fast-rising star in the heart of Europe

SLOVENIAN TOURIST BOARD

Slovenia is one of Europe's best-kept secrets, as well as one of its greenest and safest countries. Sharing a border with the north of Italy, this is a land of natural beauty and diversity where the warm Mediterranean breeze rolls in toward the Alps and where mountains, rivers and thermal waters combine to create one of the greenest natural playgrounds on earth.

At the crossroads of Europe, such diversity is packed into a country just 5% the size of Japan — it is just a two-hour drive from its highest peak, Mount Triglav, to the coastal Venetian architecture of Piran. Here's why Slovenia is the perfect option for a European adventure.

Adventure at every turn

Where better to start than Slovenia's capital, Ljubljana was named the Green Capital of Europe in 2016 and you'll soon discover why as you wander the many green spaces or enjoy a coffee along the leafy banks of the Ljubljanica River, which flows through its heart.

The city's famous central market and relaxed restaurants bustle with local

people seeking out the freshest Slovenian produce while the beautiful architecture of Slovenia's great architect Joze Plecnik makes walking the cobbled streets a true delight.

Another undeniable Instagram-worthy highlight is Lake Bled. Bled is perhaps Slovenia's most famous example of natural beauty, with a picture-postcard church perched on a small islet surrounded by emerald green waters and the peaks of the mighty Julian Alps in the background.

Adventurers can enjoy Bled's many hiking, biking, canyoning and other water sports opportunities while those who appreciate a slower pace can indulge in a slice of traditional Bled cream cake at one of the many cafes that populate the shoreline.

Alternatively, people can take a journey to the coast. Slovenia's coastline is modest yet beautiful, with a handful of sun-drenched coastal towns famous for their wine, olive oil and salt. Of Slovenia's three main seaside towns — Koper, Izola and Piran — it is Piran that is most impressive. With its Venetian Gothic architecture, Piran's Old Town is one of the best-preserved historical towns any-

where in the Mediterranean.

Adventure even awaits underground at the Postojna Caves. This subterranean paradise is one of the world's most captivating, with magnificent cave formations and diverse fauna. The Postojna Caves boast towering mountains, murmuring rivers and vast subterranean halls, not to mention Postojna's most iconic inhabitant — the famous "baby dragon."

Europe's new culinary capital

In recent years, Slovenia has established itself as one of Europe's most exciting culinary destinations. The country was named European Region of Gastronomy 2021 and a new Michelin guide to Slovenia has been unveiled to celebrate the chefs who are helping raise Slovenian cuisine to new heights. Among them is Ana Ros, named the world's best female chef in 2017 and now proud owner of two Michelin stars at her restaurant Hisa Franko.

And what better to accompany first-class food than first-class wine? Slovenia's winemaking tradition goes back centuries. The fertile soil accommodates 52 varieties of grape, including the country's own Teran, a full-bodied grape grown

from the rich red soils of the Karst region.

The country is also home to what has been voted the world's best orange wine, a floral, honey-colored variety unique to the Goriska Brda region. The Vipava Valley, one of Slovenia's most prominent wine-growing areas, is just an hour's drive from Ljubljana.

A Green&Safe destination

Already considered one of the world's safest and greenest countries, Slovenia has gone one step further and created the Green&Safe responsible travel standard to ensure that travelers remain safe as tourism reopens. In fact, Slovenia was one of the first countries in the world to receive a Safe Travels Stamp from the World Travel and Tourism Council.

The Green&Safe label represents Slovenia's commitment to responsible, green, and safe tourism. It has only been presented to those tourism businesses and destinations that guarantee travelers the highest possible hygiene standards and protocols. What's more, Slovenia's tourism sector is also a priority in terms of the country's vaccination efforts to help keep travelers safe.



The medieval town of Piran is beloved by many for its Venetian Gothic architecture. JAKA TVANCIC



The Postojna Caves are popular for their magnificent formations, diverse fauna and famous "baby dragon." DRAGAN ARRIGLER



Above left: Lake Bled and its tiny islet with a church surrounded by pristine water makes for a beautiful Instagram-worthy image. Above right: Slovenia has long history of winemaking. Orange wine from the Vipava Valley in the Goriska Brda region is especially celebrated. JOST GANTAR, CIRIL JAZBEC



Congratulations

to the People of the Republic of Slovenia on the Occasion of the 30th Anniversary of Their Independence



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CONGRATULATIONS ON SLOVENIA'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY!

Rainbow of Smiles

HELIOS has been closely cooperating with local communities. Our responsibility towards society is shown through projects that encourage children's education and creativity, such as "Rainbow of Smiles".

Together with our Slovenian company HELIOS, KANSAI PAINT will continue to support the people and the society in Slovenia with inspirational colours, eco-friendly paints and services for a sustainable future.



Renovation of parquet floors in Slovenian kindergartens

