




Weekly Briefing

**Slovenia social briefing:
Slovenians commemorate their culture
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Slovenians commemorate their culture

Summary

The Slovenian Culture Day, also called Prešeren Day, is celebrated in Slovenia on 8 February. On this day various events are held throughout Slovenia and visits to most museums, theaters and exhibitions are free. There is also a national ceremony at which the Prešeren Prizes and the Prešeren Fund Prizes, the highest awards in the Republic of Slovenia for achievements in the field of art, are presented. This celebration is seen by many art creators as the only opportunity for art to speak to the politicians and the public.

France Prešeren, Slovenian cultural symbol

The Slovenian Culture Day, also called Prešeren Day, is celebrated in Slovenia on 8 February. On this day the greatest Slovenian poet France Prešeren died in 1849. Prešeren died as a great poet of world stature, so Culture Day is celebrated on the anniversary of his death. His free thinking was politically suspicious to some people in the country, which caused him problems during his lifetime. In spite of the difficult life, difficult employability, unhappy love and alcohol abuse, France Prešeren has made a great contribution to Slovenian poetry and its recognition in the world. His remarkable creative achievements date back to the Romantic period. His best poems are published in a collection entitled Poetry.

Another proof of his importance for the nation is the fact that he was depicted on a banknote for 1000 tolar (Slovenian currency until the introduction of euro), and today his relief outline is decorated with a two euro coin.

On Prešeren Day, various events are held throughout Slovenia under the title 'This happy day of culture'. Visiting most museums, theaters and exhibitions is free of charge, which increases cultural awareness in Slovenia. On the occasion of the Slovenian Culture Day, the cultural institutions open their doors and prepare a varied program for all generations.

Celebration of the Prešeren Prizes, an opportunity to review the situation in the field of culture

Since 1945, 8 February has been an official holiday, and since 1991 there has been a day off.

On the occasion of the Slovenian Cultural Holiday, a central celebration takes place during which the Prešeren Prizes and the Prešeren Fund Prizes, the highest awards in the Republic of Slovenia for achievements in the field of art, are presented. The first awards were given in 1939, but the award ceremony was first held only in 1946. The law passed in 1955 named the awards after France Prešeren. Originally, they were not only intended for achievements in the field of art, but were also awarded to academics and scientists, researchers and innovators. Since 1961, the Prešeren Prizes have been dedicated exclusively to artistic creation and are divided into Prešeren Prizes and Prizes of the Prešeren Fund. The number of awards varied until the adoption of the law at the end of 1981, when the number of awards was limited to a maximum of three Prešeren Prizes and a maximum of ten Prešeren Fund Prizes. The 1991 amendment to this law further reduced the number of awards to a maximum of two Prešeren prizes or a maximum of six Prešeren Fund prizes. The law provides that the Prešeren Prizes and the Prešeren Fund Prizes are awarded by the Board of Directors at a central ceremony in honor of the Slovenian Culture Day. As a rule, a person can only receive the Prešeren prize once.

Prešeren Prizes are given to creators who have permanently enriched the Slovenian culture with outstanding artistic achievements or life-long work. The Prešeren Fund Prizes are given to the creators for their significant artistic achievements, presented in the last two years before the award, which represent an enrichment of the Slovenian culture.

Prešeren Prizes are also given annually by the faculties and academies of arts, members of the University of Ljubljana. These awards are called the Prešeren Student Prizes and the Prešeren University Prizes, and are bestowed upon the best students in both the arts and sciences.

On the occasion of the Prešeren Prizes celebrations, the artistic program is dedicated to the work of the famous poet, whose works are presented through speeches and music by various contemporary Slovenian artists. The program of this year's event was entitled "Where to?" An important part of the event is also the annual speech of the chairman of the Board of Directors. It is common knowledge that the speaker with his or her speech tries to convince the people

and their elected representatives that art is necessary for the identity of the individual and also for the existence of a nation, in short, to justify the reasons for the existence of art.

This year Ira Ratej, the designated President of the Board of Directors, began her speech by welcoming people with hearing and visual impairments, who for the first time in the history of the celebrations in Slovenia were able to watch the events with the audience in the hall and at the same time directly with everyone on television and radio.

In her speech, she then made twelve statements that should apply to Slovenian culture and culture in general, namely: Slovenian art was state-forming until independence, art establishes national and individual identity, a country that does not support artists and art is not cultural, a nation that despises and spurns art, and artists is not cultural, the artist does not have to be cultural at all, art cannot survive on the market, the Ministry of Culture must take care of the development of art, the meaning and purpose of the work of art only reveal themselves in contact with the addressee, art is not always beautiful, pleasantness, intelligibility and appropriateness cannot be the criteria by which the quality of a work of art is judged, artists die, works of art remain, without creative individuals, nation and state have no future.

Moreover, she repeatedly reminded the country that the plight of the arts is devastating, as the conditions under which artists work only worsen. She also stressed that this is the only celebration where artists talk about politics and politicians remain silent.

In the speech Ira Ratej focused on those who considered tax money for art unnecessary and reminded them that without tax money, art is reserved for the richest. If we didn't pay taxes, we couldn't afford tickets for theaters, exhibitions, events, because everything would be too expensive and the selection too small. Art could only afford the notorious one percent of the population.

She critically described the financing of the arts and the role of the Ministry of Culture by setting up a regional agency, paying it well and approving the allocation of funds, which then regulates the flow of public money according to the principle that everyone receives less. She also criticized the media: those, mostly privately owned, no longer have to worry about the public good.

She also pointed out the role and development of new technologies that present us with a different challenge than we were used to in the past, and wondered what role art plays in today's world of thought and perceived dissemination generated by the new media in the unprecedented omnipotence of social network despotism.

Slovenian culture in figures

Let us conclude with a few facts about Slovenian culture in figures. According to the latest official data, in **2018** the state provided an average of 209 euros per capita for culture, while each inhabitant spent an average of 216 euros on culture.

The state provided just over 432 million for the operation of libraries, museums, galleries, theaters, concert, stage and film productions, for art events, monuments and memorial houses, cultural celebrations, subsidies for artists, etc., for radio, television and publishing.

1450 publishing houses published 5,262 books in **2018**, of which 3,610 were original Slovenian works, 1792 literary works, of which 57 percent were original Slovenian works, 260 poetry collections, of which 75 percent were original Slovenian works, 79 poetry works for children, of which 71 percent were original Slovenian works.

In Slovenia there were 286 book borrowing sites in 2018, of which 273 were local libraries with a total of 473,000 members. They made 9.6 million visits, an average of 26,363 per day. On average, library members went to the library 20 times a year.

In **2018** there were 1202 occasional and 245 permanent exhibitions in museums and galleries. 2.7 million were visitors, 30 percent of them foreigners. 7500 people per day visited the exhibitions.

In the same year we recorded 25,109 events, of which 28.4 percent were theater performances, 24.6 percent film and video productions and 23.1 percent music events. There were 4753 free events, 241 festivals. 4.7 million people have visited these events.

A total of 109 films were made, 42 percent of which were fiction films, 26 feature films, 12 of which were fiction films. 134,000 viewers of Slovenian films watched films in cinemas, while 2.4 million viewers watched foreign films in cinemas.

According to data from October **2018**, 14,861 people worked in the cultural sector, of whom just over 36 percent were self-employed. The five most common professions in the cultural sector are journalists, translators, interpreters, editors and other linguists; librarians and documentalists, technicians, operators and musicians, singers and composers. Otherwise, 57 percent are female and 43 percent male.

Conclusions

While the whole country is enjoying a day off for the Slovenian Cultural Day, and in many places can enjoy the fruits cultural workers free of charge, artists are wondering where to. Culture is one of the cornerstones of national identity. The government remembers this at anniversaries or when discovering various monuments, but it is deaf when it comes to solving the problems of those who create culture.