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Slovakia

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More Women in politics

Poll backs more women in politics but not quotas 28% of women polled said they would vote in the June European elections.



People want to see more women in politics, according to a Europe-wide poll that shows over two thirds of

those asked believe politics is male dominated. However, only one in ten thought quotas a good idea. The results of the latest Eurobarometer poll were presented at a seminar in the European Parliament on Wednesday. **More day care, less violence.** Other issues in focus were calls for more day care facilities and a reduction in violence towards and trafficking of women. The poll found that women are more concerned than men about the economic situation, risks of globalisation and its likely impact of the euro. Women also want the EP to push for time spent looking after children at home to be counted towards pension entitlements. During the seminar, Parliament's Vice-President Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou said the results offer "important elements about the female voters such as their expectations, their image of the EU, their priority policies to be defended or discussed during the campaign, their participation to politics in European level." The European Commission's most senior women, Vice-President Margot Wallström said, "a democracy which does not make enough

room for 52% of the population at the decision-making table is no real democracy at all." **Politics - a man's world?** The poll found that women are less interested in European issues, although the probability of voting in June elections was broadly similar for both genders (28% of women compared to 31 % of men). It found that a clear majority of men (77 %) agree that men dominate the political scene and that more women in politics could lead to a different style. In terms of how they decide to vote, two thirds of women gave importance to candidates' experience on European issues rather than political orientation. The poll of 35,000 women and 5,500 men across the EU's 27 countries was conducted ahead of the June European elections and to mark International Women's Day on 8 March. Presidency Priorities

Languages of Europe

History and language families. What is a language? A language is fundamentally a means of communication, organised according to rules and conventions. The rules are often flexible - languages contain many irregularities and exceptions - and languages consequently go through a





constant process of change. Languages change for a variety of reasons. In the modern world, new words are needed to describe new technologies. Computers, e-mail, the Internet, wireless technology, nanoscience - the use of such words is a relatively recent phenomenon.

Europe's linguistic roots

Languages have also developed alongside historical events. Movements of peoples have brought successive waves of language to Europe. Languages have evolved following historical shifts. For example, the collapse of the Roman Empire generated a process that saw the development of distinct Romance languages, such as French, Italian and Spanish. Most modern European languages developed from common central Asian or Anatolian roots - the Proto-Indo-European language, the precise evolution of which is still a matter for debate.

Consequently, the majority of European languages belong to one or other Indo-European family:

- **Baltic** - Eastern Baltic (Latvian and Lithuanian) and Western Baltic (e.g. Old Prussian)
- **Celtic** - Britonic (e.g. Welsh) and Gaelic (e.g. Irish)
- **Germanic** - North Germanic (e.g. Danish and Swedish) and West Germanic (e.g. Dutch, English and German)
- **Romance** - Daco-Romance (e.g. Romanian), Gallo-Romance (e.g. French), Ibero-Romance (e.g. Portuguese and Spanish), Italo-Romance (e.g. Italian) and Rhaeto-Romance (e.g. Swiss Romance)
- **Slavonic** - East Slavonic (e.g. Russian), South Slavonic (e.g. Bulgarian and Slovene) and West Slavonic (e.g. Czech and Polish)

Albanian and Greek are also Indo-European languages, though not related to other sub-Indo-European languages. Other European languages, however, have completely separate roots. Estonian, Finnish and Hungarian belong to the Finno-Ugrian sub-family of Uralic languages, which are believed to have evolved in the area to the

west of the Ural Mountains in modern Russia. Maltese, meanwhile, is a Semitic language with Arabic roots, while Basque, which is spoken by around 800,000 people, has no proven links with any other language family.

EU and India 23 languages each

Eu, India, both with 23 official languages, sign joint declaration on multilingualism

Today Mr Leonard Orban will sign a Joint Declaration on multilingualism with the Government of India, represented by the Hon. Minister of State Smt. Daggubati Purandeshwari. With this Declaration the European Commission and the Government of



India aim to reinforce their cooperation and dialogue on key issues, including :linguistic diversity and intercultural dialogue; the impact of languages on employability, business competitiveness and social cohesion; lifelong language learning; new technologies for language learning; and terminology. **"India's experience in coping with linguistic diversity is unique in the world and I believe that the EU and India can learn from each other in this area"** said **Leonard Orban, European Commissioner for Multilingualism**. This Joint Declaration is a follow-up to the EU-India Summit in Marseilles on 29 September 2008, where EU and Indian leaders committed themselves to developing a dialogue on the promotion of languages, intercultural dialogue and multilingualism. A first step towards this dialogue was achieved in December 2008 with the conference on "Multilingualism and Cultural Dialogue in Globalisation" that took place in New Delhi, India, in the context of the 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. The Conference was organised jointly by the European Commission, the French Embassy, under its Presidency of the European Union, the Indian National Knowledge Commission and the European Union of National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC-India Cluster). The University of Delhi graciously hosted the Conference on its



premises. With a population of approximately 1.1 billion people, India represents a unique example of ethnic, socio-cultural and religious diversity that brings with it a very rich linguistic diversity. According to the 2001 Census Report, there are 29 languages spoken by more than a million native speakers, 122 languages with at least 10,000 speakers and another 234 languages spoken by a smaller number. The Indian Constitution declares Hindi to be the official language of the union. English may be used for official purposes and the country has 22 official regional languages. This rich linguistic diversity has been a fact of life throughout India's history and it is considered locally to be quite natural. This similarity in the linguistic landscape with the European Union makes India a privileged interlocutor for Europe in the field of multilingualism. This Joint Declaration makes provision for regular debate and exchange of good practices.

Why voting ?



By voting in EP elections, you choose who influences your future and the daily life of close to 500 million fellow Europeans. If you don't bother, somebody else will - and decide who represents you at the only directly elected Pan-European assembly. Elected MEPs shape the future of Europe for 5

upcoming years. Get the Europe you want! If you don't vote, don't complain.

Your MEP is your voice in Europe - why would you let it go wasted? Elected every five years, the European Parliament is a major and powerful player in European Union's decision-making. Its votes shape final EU legislation that influences your everyday life, be it the food on our plates, the cost of your shopping trolley, the quality of the air you breathe, or the safety of your children's toys.

As a European citizen, voting in EP elections is your fundamental right and the means to have a say in how the EU works. By voting, you participate in determining who will represent real people like you, your family and friends, your neighbours and workmates in Europe. And as an EU citizen you can vote (or stand for election!) in whatever EU country you live, even if you are not a citizen of that country. And, what's more, it won't cost you a penny!

Young or old, student or retired, man or woman, employed or independent, mainstream or alternative, town or countrydweller, Europe concerns all of us, often without us realising! Thanks to Europe, we can easily travel, study and work abroad. The EP works tirelessly for a cleaner environment, safer chemicals, better services and jobs. It is an ardent defender of consumer rights, equal opportunities and human rights both in the EU and abroad.

In June 2009, You will have a unique opportunity to go to polls along with 375 million fellow European voters. What for? To elect both the world's only directly elected transnational and multilingual parliament, and the EU's only directly elected institution. Elected by the people since 1979, European Parliament represents today almost half a billion citizens.

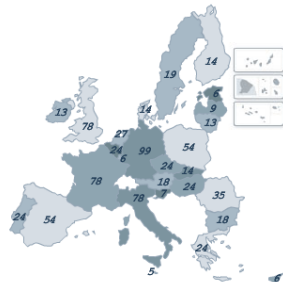
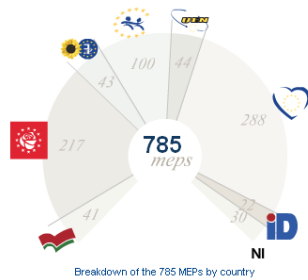
In most cases, MEPs have as much weight as the Member States in EU decision-making. Most laws that concern our daily lives are legislated side by side by MEPs and ministers at EU level. Many, probably most, laws enacted in your country are a transposition of European acts voted by MEPs - your representatives. And it's not just laws: money for new roads, cleaner





beaches, research, education, development aid? MEPs also decide where our EU money goes.

With the new Lisbon Treaty, once it can be implemented, MEPs' decision-making powers over EU affairs will once more increase. It will place the Parliament on an



equal footing as lawmaker with Member States' ministers in virtually all areas of EU policy. The Parliament will also elect the President of the

European Commission, strengthening its control over the EU executive. Furthermore, you as an EU citizen will have a right to

initiate European laws. Europe elects its new members in June 2009.

Coming from 27 countries, these MEPs

represent a wide range of national political parties, constituencies and views. In Parliament, most Members then organise themselves in political groups according to their political affinities. So Parliament, like Europe, is about diversity, prizing it and accommodating it - it even speaks 23 languages.

Love the EU? Hate it? Want it to turn to the right? Or the left? Is there some issue you care passionately about? Are there changes you want to see? Action that can't wait? Investments that should be made? Elect MEPs who see it your way and you could make it happen. That's what democracy is all about. Make the difference.

Come on! It's just a few minutes, maybe you can combine it with a walk in the park or a drink in a café. Not much effort to tell Europe what you want. After that it's easy to follow what your elected members are

doing for you - just visit www.europarl.europa.eu!

Political Groups

EPP-ED Europeans People's Party and European Democrats

PES Socialist Group in the European Parliament

ALDE/ADLE Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

UEN Union for Europe of the Nations Groups

Greens/EFA Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance

GUE/NGL Confederal Group of the European United left - Nordic Green left

IND/DEM Indipendence/ Democracy Group

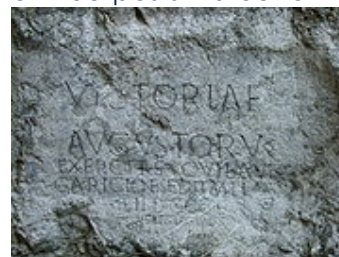
NI Non-attached Group

This month is about Slovakia

Every month the United Euro Bridge will issue a newsletter customised to a different European Country. If you like to contribute with the editing, email us: info@unitedeurobridge.org.

History

Slovakia or the **Slovak Republic** (Slovak: *Slovensko, Slovenská republika*) is a landlocked republic in Central Europe with population of more than five million. It is a member of the European Union (since May 1, 2004) and borders Czech Republic and Austria in the west, Poland in the north, Ukraine in the east and Hungary in the south. Its capital is its largest city, Bratislava. From around 450 BC, the territory of modern-day Slovakia was settled by Celts, who built powerful oppida in Bratislava and Liptov. Silver coins with the names of Celtic kings represent the first known use of writing in Slovakia. From 6 AD, the expanding Roman Empire established and maintained a chain of outposts around the Danube. The



Kingdom of Vannius, a barbarian kingdom founded by the Germanic tribe of Quadi, existed in western and

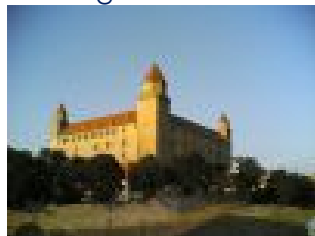


central Slovakia from 20 to 50 AD. The Slavic population settled in the territory of Slovakia in the 5th century. Western Slovakia was the centre of Samo's Empire in the 7th century. A proto-Slovak state, known as the Principality of Nitra, arose in the 8th century and its ruler Pribina had the first Christian church in Slovakia consecrated by 828. Together with neighboring Moravia, the principality formed the core of the Great Moravia Empire from 833. The high point of this (Proto-)Slovak empire came with the arrival of Saints Cyril and Methodius during the reign of Prince Rastislav and the territorial expansion under King Svätopluk.

The beauties of Slovakia



Slovakia is a small, landlocked country in Central Europe. Its capital Bratislava is only 50 miles from Vienna. Slovakia has great natural beauty. The north is forested and mountainous and has great hiking and skiing possibilities. In Poprad there is a huge geo thermal lake. Built on this lake is the world's most environmentally friendly resort. The countryside is dotted with castles that remind the visitor of the attacks the Slovaks suffered from Tartar invasions. The villages and regional towns are lovely with original buildings - no horrible fast food.



Bratislava (425,000 inhabitants) is the capital of Slovakia. It is an old city with a long history and many sights. Bratislava Castle dominates the town, around the castle you find a couple of interesting museums, such as the Museum of Jewish Culture and the Municipal Museum. Opposite is the Blue House, which houses the Exhibition of Arts and Crafts. To the south of the castle hill are the preserved remains of an ancient tower which protected the Danube ford. Other sights close to the castle include the Baroque Church of the Order of the Holy Trinity and the Renaissance Bramer Manor

House, where the Archeological Museum is housed. The Main Square of the medieval town constitutes the center of the historical city. The most important events have happened here since the 14th century. Besides regular markets, all gatherings, celebrations and executions took place here. All the houses on the square have an older Gothic core, several of them were built prior to the fortification of the town as defensive houses with towers. The sandstone Renaissance Maximilian's Fountain and circular reservoir stand in the centre of the square. The square is dominated by the Town Hall.



Bardejov is a small jewel in the north east of Slovakia. It has a beautifully preserved core of a medieval town with a basilica, town hall and a car free center square with a number of cafe and restaurant patios. This is one of the three Unesco World Heritage Centers in Slovakia. At the North end of the town's square is the Roman Catholic Church of St. Egidius. The church was completed in 1464 and the visitor can see one of the finest examples of Late-Gothic architecture in Eastern Slovakia. The new City Hall was built in Late Gothic style at the beginning of the 15th century as a counterbalance, both functionally and ideologically, just a stone throw from the Church of St. Egidius at the main square. From early 18th century Jewish merchants began to settle in the town. They erected a self contained town complex with a synagogue in 1773, school, gathering hall, cemetery and a ritual bath in 19th century. Although there are no more Jews left in Bardejov, these monuments remain as memorials to the 3,000 killed in WWII.

Presov (presh-of) is the third-largest city in the Slovak Republic, nearly 100,000 people.



Archaeological evidence suggests the area (in the Kosice Valley) has been inhabited since the Bronze Age, but the city really got its start in the 1200s as one of the major salt-mining



centres in Europe. Today, the city is characterized by its beautiful Renaissance and Baroque buildings. There are lots of decent hotels, and a few very good ones. Within a short drive are the High Tatra mountains, with numerous ski resorts, grand hotels and Swiss-type alpine villages. All around Presov itself is the green and rolling Slovak countryside, and various interesting villages are within easy reach by bus, car, or even foot for the hiker.

Slovak Culture

The development of Slovak culture reflects the country's rich folk tradition, in addition to the influence of broader European trends. The impact of centuries of cultural repression and control by foreign governments is also evident in much of Slovakia's art, literature, and music. There are 12 state scientific libraries in Slovakia, 473 libraries affiliated with universities and institutions of higher learning, and 2600 public libraries. The University Library in Bratislava, founded in 1919, contains more



than 2 million volumes and is the country's most important library. The Slovak National Library (1863), located in Martin, includes a collection of materials relating to Slovak culture. Slovakia is also home to more than 50 museums. The Slovak National Museum (founded in 1893), located in Bratislava, contains exhibits on Slovak history, archaeology, and musicology, and is probably the country's best-known museum. Other museums include the Slovak National Gallery (1948), also in Bratislava; the Slovak National Uprising Museum (1955), located in Bansk Bystrica; and the Museum of Eastern Slovakia (1872), in Kosice.

20th Century

At the beginning of the 20th century a literary group called



"The Slovakian modernists: whose leader was the poet Ivan Krasko (1876-1958) stood out among the rest. His style is close to those of western symbolists yet exemplifying the worries of the poet for his peoples' fate. Prevalent in this writing style and common to all the literary streams of 19th century Slovakia, is the constant concern to defend the very existence of the nation; its language and its culture. The establishment of the Czechoslovakian republic (guaranteed by France with the treaty of Trianon) enabled young talented Slovaks to go France to continue their studies ; the painters Imro Weiner-Kral and Ludovit Fulla were among them. Guillaume Appolinaire and Andre Breton influenced young Slovakian poetry, whose the most talented representatives were Vladimir Reisel, Jan Rak, Ctibor Stitnický and Rudolf Fabry. Impregnated with their French culture, many were the Slovakian writers like Alexander Matuska, Albert Marencin, Vladimir Minac and Jan Stevecky who contributed to bring the two countries closer together.

Interesting Facts about Slovakia

Celebrities

Tennis champion Martina Hingis (born in 1980), former World No. 1 and winner of five Grand Slam singles titles and nine Grand Slam women's doubles titles, was born in Slovakia to a Slovak father and a Czech mother.

Supermodel and former "Miss Wonderbra" Adriana Sklenaríková (born in 1971), better known in many countries under her married name Adriana Karembeu, was born in Slovakia to a Slovak mother and Czech father.

The most famous American of Slovak descent is probably pop artist Andy Warhol (1928-1987), whose parents immigrated from Miková in north-eastern Slovakia.

Society & Culture

90% of Slovaks have completed at least secondary education - the highest score in the EU (along with Poles, Czechs, and Slovenes).



Slovak women marry the youngest (average 24 years old) within the European Union, along with Lithuanian and Polish women.

Slovakia, along with the three Baltic countries, has the highest death rate for heart diseases in the EU.

Slovakia and Poland have the biggest households in the EU, with 3.1 person per household (this is in fact not much higher than the European average).

Economy

Slovakia has been called a European Tiger Economy, along with the Czech Republic. It has the highest level of foreign investment, in great part due to its 19% flat tax rate.

Kia Motors's European car factory is located in Slovakia, while Peugeot-Citroen and Volkswagen also have manufacturing plants in the country. Thanks to this, by 2008 Slovakia will have become the biggest car producer per capita in the world.

Forecast give the Slovak economy the 3rd highest GDP growth in the EU-27 for 2007 (after Latvia and Estonia).

The GDP per capita in Bratislava (the capital) is 3x higher than in the poorest provinces of the country. In fact, it is 30% above EU average and second in Eastern Europe only after Prague.

Only 5% of all employed women in Slovakia do part-time work.

As of 2006, Slovakia had the highest unemployment rate in the EU (10.8%), although in sharp decrease since 2001 when it peaked at 19.2%. Inflation also dropped dramatically from 12.0% in 2000 to 2.5% in 2007.

Slovakia plans to adopt the Euro as its currency on 1 January 2009.

History & Language

Štefan Banič (1870-1941) invented the first actively used parachute, patenting it in 1913.

One of the most colourful character in Slovak history is Móric Beňovský (1746-1786), a nobleman who during his relatively short life managed to be an adventurer,

globetrotter, explorer, colonizer, writer, chess player, a French colonel, Polish military commander, and Austrian soldier. Above all, he managed to get himself elected as King of Madagascar (!) by the natives in 1776. His memoirs were a bestseller at the turn of the of 18th and 19th centuries. His life was a source of inspiration for many writers, poets, and composers.

Slovak people are mostly of Slavic descent, but many people can also claim partial Hungarian, German or Vlachs (Romanian) ancestry, due to the numerous migrations between the 11th and 15th centuries, and as a result of the country's 500 years within the Austrian Empire, as part of the Kingdom of Hungary. Nowadays, Hungarians are the largest ethnic minority, accounting for nearly 10% of the population (this of course does not include all people of mixed descent).

Slovak and Czech languages are mutually intelligible to people accustomed to the other language's pronunciation, particularly people who have lived at the time of Czechoslovakia (the country split in 1993) .

Food from Slovakia

Beef Rolades

Ingredients

2 pounds beef rounds

2 onions, one sliced, the other diced

1/2 pound of bacon, cut into fine strips

1/2 pound sharp cheddar cheese, cut into strips

3-4 pickles, cut into strips

3-4 tablespoons all-purpose flour

Vegetable oil, for frying

1 bay leaf

1 cup beef stock (or one bouillon cube dissolved in 1 cup hot water)

2 tablespoons sour cream

Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

Preparation



1. Salt and pepper each patty lightly. In the center of each, place a slice of onion, a trip



of bacon, a strip of cheese, and a strip of pickle. Add more pepper.

2. Roll each patty around its filling and close with the toothpick or tie together with thread.

3. Place the flour in the shallow dish. Roll each rolade in flour until it is completely covered with a thin layer.

4. Coat a bottom of a large skillet with oil, and place it over high heat; brown the rolades on all sides.

5. In a separate pot over medium heat, saute the diced onion in vegetable oil until golden. Reduce the heat to low and add a browned rolades and the bay leaf. Cover and simmer.

6. Using the frying pan in which the rolades were browned, heat a stock until it bubbles. Pour the hot stock into a pot with the rolades and simmer over low heat until tender, about 2 hours. Check occasionally to see if you should add some water. Make sure the rolades do not stick to the bottom of the pot.

7. Remove the rolades from the heat, remove the bay leaf, stir in the sour cream, and check the seasoning, adding salt and pepper if necessary.

Chrust, Chrusciki

This is a delicious fried pastry strips for Fat Tuesday or Thursday, Easter, Christmas or any other special occasion.

Ingredients:

2 cups sifted flour
1 tbs. melted butter
2 heaping tbs. sugar
1 egg
1 tbs. vinegar
½ cup sour cream
1/2 cup confectioner sugar (later for sprinkling)

Preparation:

Combine flour with melted butter, egg, sugar, vinegar and sour cream. Form dough of a consistency of biscuit dough, smooth and easy to roll. If it is too sticky add more flour, if it is too soft cool it down in the refrigerator for a while. Divide into four parts. Roll each part thin (about 1 mm or less) on a floured board, keep the rest covered to prevent drying. Cut into strips with a knife about 1 inch wide and 3-5 inches long. Cut a short lengthwise slit through the center of each strip and pass one end of the strip through the slit. Fry in a pot half filled with lard or vegetable oil until golden brown. During frying keep it on medium oven – usually 5-7 pieces in one time depending on size. I use two forks for flipping the strips when one side is brown. After both sites are brown remove all strips to a plate. Sprinkle the strips (they should be brown, hot and hardened) with confectioner sugar through the sift. Can be served warm or cold.

Anything to share?

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The information in this newsletter is, to our knowledge, correct at the time of issue.