



Eurozine Editorial

Slovenia into the EU limelight

Portrait of the life of a nation

Slovenia is the first former communist country to take charge of the EU. During its six-months presidency, from January to June 2008, the two-million country — once notable because President Bush confused it with Slovakia — will face a tough test. Alongside energy and climate issues, the question of Kosovo's independence poses a major challenge, not only for the Slovenian presidency but for the whole EU. But what country could be better suited to handle this crisis than a former Yugoslav republic with a deep understanding of the region? Dimitrij Rupel, Slovenia's foreign minister, has made clear that one of the main aims of the Slovenian presidency is to pave the way for lasting stability in the western Balkans, stressing that the countries in the region "must be guaranteed a European perspective". This means not only Croatia and Macedonia, but also Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia–Herzegovina.

In 2002, as Slovenia was emerging from its first decade of independence, poet, essayist and social analyst Ales Debeljak asked what role the then aspiring EU member could and should play within the Union:

Instead of a Europe built on gradual and enduring solidarity — as was begun with the successful integration of Ireland, Portugal, and Greece into the EU — nothing really excludes the possibility that the EU's eastward expansion will lead to an internally divided Europe, where citizens, burdened with the legacy of the new borders, are categorized according to their country of origin and their purchasing power. The only question is whether we Slovenes will experience this divided Europe from the inside. We already do so now, one way or another, from the outside.

Since then, the outsider has become an insider. It seems as if Slovenia's potential mediating role in Europe will depend on how well it manages to make use of both experiences, of being outside and being inside.

Slovenia is the most developed of the former Yugoslav republics, a member of the Eurozone and the Schengen area — and of NATO. It is in most respects an insider. But the country is more than a European success story. In a [selection of articles](#) painting a broad picture of the life of a nation, Eurozine offers an often critical insight into Slovenian culture and politics.

