

# WELCOME SPEECH ON BEHALF OF FIG, COMMISSION 7

## ANNUAL MEETING IN SLOVENIA, MAY 12-17, BLEĐ

*Jurij Režek*

Dear Mr. Van Der Molen, the chairman of the FIG Commission 7, dear colleagues, members of the FIG Commission 7, who have come from other Countries, even Continents, to attend this meeting, our dear Slovene guests and friends who host the Commission in Slovenia, in the name of the Slovene Association of Surveyors I welcome you all to Slovenia!

It has been quite some time ago, when I personally was also, for some years, the delegate of Slovenia in your Commission. It was in late 90's and from that period I remember that very good and productive working environment has always been present in Commission 7 and that supporting, respectable and friendly relations have ruled between its members. And I have recognised that this and the professionalism are making it a very respectable FIG Commission. I was always proud that I was the delegate of Commission 7.

From that times I remember that my colleague Roman Renner, the correspondent, and myself have wished and have also modestly proposed that one of the next Commission 7 meetings would be held in Slovenia. And I remember how disappointed I was when I realized that there was a long list of candidate States, where this meetings were to be held before Slovenia. After I was withdrawn from Commission 7 as a delegate, in 1998, I forgot about this ambition and my wish, but Roman did not. And today I thank him that he didn't and that he has managed to bring this meeting to Slovenia.

But in-between I was elected as President of the Slovene Association of Surveyors, and now I have the honour to host you on events during the next days.

### FACTS ON SLOVENIA

Dear delegates, you came to Slovenia, a young independent state.

To those, who do not feel comfortable as to Slovenia's location on the map, let me mention some facts. Slovenia lies on the South side of the Alps. Its capital is Ljubljana, but the meeting is held in Bled, 50 km from Ljubljana. Distances from Ljubljana to some major foreign cities are:

- to Vienna, Austria, about 400 km
- to Venice, Italy, about 200 km
- to Budapest, Hungary, 500 km

- to Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro, about 500 km.

Slovenia is small, but, as we say in Slovenia, good stuff comes in small bottles.

The area of Slovenia is 20,000 km<sup>2</sup> and Slovenia is home to 2 million people. This hardly puts us on the map of the world. On the map of Europe, things are looking better.

The population has not grown significantly in the last 15 years. By no means does this imply that it is not good to live here, since I believe that this is the general population trend in almost all developed countries in Europe. But many people from other countries have already discovered Slovenia and are moving here and also buying real estate. One reason is that it is close to almost any place in Europe, and it is now cheap to fly in Europe. The next reason is that Slovenia is beautiful, as you will discover by yourselves, and the next reason is that real estate prices in some areas, which are of interest to foreigners are relatively low, that is, in rural parts, not in the Slovene Capital or cities.

I have mentioned Ljubljana and Bled. Ljubljana, the capital, has 300,000 citizens. And the city of Celje, where you will attend the Symposium on Tuesday has 40,000 inhabitants. It is 50 km from Ljubljana, which means a 2 hour bus drive from Bled. In between you will also visit the Slovene Coast, the old city of Piran, which is a little more than 100 km from Ljubljana. But my colleague, Tomaž, will take care of this itinerary. Let me continue on some facts about Slovenia.

Slovenia has become a member of the EU since 2004 and has fulfilled the conditions to adopt the Euro as its currency in January 2007.

Slovenia has had fast economic development since 1991. The GDP is 13,600 EURO, which is 3 times more than 10 years ago, and one third more of that in 1999 (10,500). We consider this a success. Our economic growth is more than 4% per year (in 2005) and we are predicting that it will go up to more than 4% this year.

Our most important economic partners are Germany, Italy, Croatia, Austria and France. And our main developmental paradigm is sustainable development, balanced economic, social and environmental components of development. We count on our knowledge, willingness to work, further stimulation of knowledge and on our social sensitiveness.

And we have a beautiful country to manage and take care of. A lot of people and friends who have come to Slovenia from other countries or continents have said that it was a hidden treasure and it still has to be discovered by many.

## **FACTS ON THE SLOVENE ASSOCIATION OF SURVEYORS (SAS)**

The Slovene Association of Surveyors (SAS) is a civil, non-governmental organisation of professional geodetic individuals, and this year we mark 55 years of its existence. It consists of 6 regional associations and of a student association of surveyors. All together we have more than 1000 members. Our regional associations as well as the Slovene Association of Surveyors itself take care of professional progress of its members through organising professional workshops on different professional themes, through organised visits and excursions of professional nature,

through developing cooperation with related professions such as urban planning, real estate management, civil engineering, environmental protection, geography.

We also take care of the social part of associating with organising events of social nature. We like to hike, go to mountains and play sports. And in 10 days we will organise a geodetic dance in Ljubljana, to mark and celebrate some anniversaries joined with Celebration of 50 years of publishing of our Geodetic Journal and 55 years of existence of SAS..

The Association of Surveyors of Slovenia works in three commissions (physical planning, remote sensing and cartographic one) and annually we organise a Slovene professional geodetic conference. We have had 35 of them, with the last one last year in Ljubljana on issues of Spatial Management and the Role of Geodesy, with close to 300 attending geodesists and other guests. We also importantly participate in the processes of preparation of legislation, in introduction of new technologies to our profession, in development of professional standards and ethics and also in the process of modernisation of university studies (the so-called Bologna process). The Slovene Association of Surveyors has a yearly assembly, where we discuss and accept working programmes for the next period and also financial arrangements. The association of Surveyors regularly, i.e. four times a year, publishes its professional geodetic magazine called "Geodetski vestnik" (geodetic gazette or journal), which is an important medium, through which geodesy presents itself to other professional branches and also to general public. This year we celebrate 50 years of its publishing.

Here are some newest titles of professional scientifically categorised articles published in the Geodetic Journal in the recent months, which somehow touch this Commission:

- Land management and comprehension of the role of geodesy
- Baselines for the new legislation on spatial planning
- Geodetic and topographic system in spatial planning
- System of spatial databases
- The role of geodetic profession and services in the process of obtaining building and operating permits
- Rural development with land consolidation
- ...

SAS is also member of the FIG, ISPRS, IAG, and its individual members are also members of many professional associations in different areas of geodesy, from measurement sciences to real estate valuation and of much in-between.

## **INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS**

How is geodesy institutionally organised in Slovenia?

The civil part of geodesy in Slovenia is the SAS. We have heard some words about it.

The geodetic private sector consists of almost 100 companies and contractor units. They perform

geodetic services and develop geodetic business opportunities. They have at their disposal the newest technology (digital aerial camera, GPS equipment, computer tools) and a high degree of knowledge (more than 500 geodetic engineers). The companies form and express their interests through the Geodetic and Business Association of Geodetic Companies.

The central geodetic educational institution is the department for geodesy of the Faculty for Civil Engineering and Geodesy, which produces around 40 university level geodetic engineers every year. The university study takes 4 years, but in the near future it will be reorganised according to the 3 + 2 year model.

Geodetic engineers also successfully cooperate and create professional bonds with other engineers within the Chamber of Engineers of Slovenia, where we have a Geodetic Section. This section takes care of the professional degree of licensed geodetic engineers, which perform different geodetic tasks, for which a special licence is required. It also takes care of developing appropriate business and professional ethics.

The governmental institutional parts of geodesy are the Geodetic Authority of Slovenia and the Geodetic Institute of Slovenia. The first one represents an important pillar of the State, since it is responsible for administering data on land cadastre, building cadastre, state geodetic system, collection of topographic data, and most importantly, providing this data, products and services to other governmental institutions, citizens and private sector to develop its own, value-added products.

The Geodetic Institute of Slovenia is responsible for expertise in different fields of geodesy, and performs highly professional geodetic tasks, which cannot be found on the free market in private sector. It also successfully competes on the market with its professional and technical potential.

## MAJOR THEMES

What are the major themes in geodesy in Slovenia this year?

I should definitely begin with two major themes:

This year, only weeks ago the Slovene Parliament has adopted the new Law on Administration of Real Estate. The Law has to some degree simplified some procedures of registering real estate (parcels, buildings, apartments) into official, so-called *de-iure* registers, of which the most important ones are land cadastre and the cadastre of buildings and parts of buildings.

However, quite some of the buildings and apartments are still not registered, officially and in accordance with the prescribed procedures. The new law does not bring data to registers. This situation was caused by years of neglecting the importance and value of real estate. Therefore we have legally introduced a **register of real estate** which on one hand joins both cadastres and adds to them also real estate properties, which from some reason were not legally registered into cadastres. This is the so-called *de-facto* register of real estate and we need it to assist development of real estate market, mass valuation of real property and to develop and introduce a new system of tax on real estate property. And data can be added to this register and updated even without

complex and time consuming administrative procedures, only by the fact that there exists a real estate unit, which is someone's property, representing capital to the owner and can be put on the market. And the new law gives geodesy the right to identify and register it using its professional tools.

I have already mentioned **mass valuation of real estate**. Several days ago the law on mass valuation of real estate was adopted, which is, generally speaking, based on establishing the expected market value of the property and putting this value into real estate register. The law gives the legal base to professionals to develop models of real estate valuation. By granting public access to this data it will help the real estate market to be better informed and as a consequence we expect that the prices of real estate could be more realistic and less speculative, and the state or local communities will have the base to determine the tax rate on the real estate, based on the expected income, to finance their public services.

These are big novelties for Slovene geodesy, since they open new job opportunities and new professional challenges.

We are also in the process of implementing an idea to closely **link the land register** (the register, for which courts are responsible for) **with the land cadastre**. A working group was formed by the Government, which investigated, which legal acts have to be modified and in what way, to allow this. The reason behind this is that we have to synchronise both the cadastres and the land register and to link and simplify the necessary official processes to register real estate transactions. The final goal is to institutionally join both registers into one institution, maybe into an **Agency for Real Estate of Slovenia**, which may be removed from the public sector to a possible degree, as it is a case in some of your countries.

Of course the introduction of **a new co-ordinate system** is also one of the important tasks for Slovene geodesy. Our law says that every geodetic measurement, which as result will put coordinates into geodetic official registers, will have to produce coordinates in new European Spatial Reference System. This fact puts on us, the geodesy, obligation to establish state GPS network of permanent GPS stations, to re-measure thousands of geodetic points and to transform accordingly existing spatially referenced databases. And the GPS network already exists, we have 15 of them, and we are on the way re-measuring necessary geodetic points.

One of important tasks is also establishment of a **Data distribution Service** of data, for which geodetic authority is responsible for. Those data will (and to some degree are already) be used to assure better services of a state to citizens, to real estate market, to physical planning, to investors and to private sector to create value added product. It can also form opportunity to maybe future real estate agency to, of course in accordance to arrangements with the Government, get some money from the reuse of geodetic public sector information.

And of course all this together with the Bologna reform of university level studies requires significant restructuring of our geodetic studying programmes.

## MOTTO OF THE SLOVENE ASSOCIATION OF SURVEYORS

Let me now go back to the Slovene Association of Surveyors, and describe and present our motto, vision for the next period.

As mentioned, 15 years ago Slovenia has become an independent State. This is a short fact, but has had a deep meaning for Slovene geodesy. It has been rapidly changing since then. At first changes occurred only in the heads of some individuals in creating new institutional arrangements and new relationships within geodesy. The private geodetic sector was developed, comprising 100 geodetic companies, some geodetic services have been by law of 2000 removed from the public sector, and the geodetic public sector has been restructured.

Also some geodetic professional goals have been achieved. Land cadastral records, based on land cadastral maps and books, have been digitised and made official as such. New topographic data have been captured in digital form and are the base for renewed state cartography. Public infrastructure data are being collected based on some other legislation (on spatial planning and construction). Broader use of the geodetic data emerged both in the private and public sector, with development of new services. The GPS technology has been introduced, and now the new coordinate system is being introduced. Also in the public sector geodetic data are obtaining more and more significance. They provide support of the public sector services to citizens, support to land management, real estate market, to physical planning. Geodesy in Slovenia has become more effective and more diverse than it ever was. But this is a view from geodesist's perspective.

The other perspective shows that geodesists' working areas in Slovenia in the eyes of general public and also of perspective of the other professions too often remain within the traditional comprehension of the geodesy. It follows from past decades of our societal arrangements. In general, geodesy is still too much seen and understood strictly as a technical science and expertise of measurements, which is »anyhow not as important as it was, since new technologies enable uneducated and unskilled individuals to perform it«. At best we are too often seen as »administrators of real estate records, land cadastral ones and in the last period of time building cadastral ones«. **This we still have to change.** I say that geodesy's working areas in Slovenia are broad and exciting as they have not been for a long time.

This general perspective, general view to geodesy, expresses the lack of understanding of demands of modern times and of the modern society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Decades of neglecting the concept of private property of real estate in socialistic countries in general, neglecting the role of land and of real estate as capital and value, decades of spatial planning, where colours on maps were more important than the consequences on real estate value, undeveloped goals and instruments of land policy and decades of command economy have resulted in incapability to think about geodesy and develop it as an important part in the processes of land management and not only as a technical or land administration routine.

The Slovene society is still in the process of change and so is geodesy. Maybe not so much because of its transition to market economy, this has been introduced. In Birmingham, at a FIG

Conference, was once said that geodesy is a »developing profession in a developing world« - this is still true in Slovenia. We are under a process of change, of reshaping geodesy and of seizing new opportunities. And so is, as I understand, geodesy in many countries.

But at the same time we are threatened by this changes and by our possible incapability to accommodate to them. But geodesists in Slovenia do not only want to be driven by the changes and develop ability to accommodate to them, we want to make the changes. We want to manage the changes which influence us, and to be ahead of them, to foresee them and to create them. We want to shape our own future.

But shaping the future and directing the changes to our own and common benefit means that we have to be active, even proactive. It is on us alone to secure the future that we wish for today and to create our geodetic identity for tomorrow. We will be successful if we secure the future which will allow us to be creative, productive, efficient, and where we will develop self-confidence and earn respect from other branches, professions, governmental institutions and civil society by professionalism and expressed willingness for cooperation and assistance. Therefore the Association of Surveyors of Slovenia's goal is to motivate, to create conditions and to encourage individuals who want to take active part in managing the change for the benefit of our geodetic prosperity, for the benefit of today's geodesists and above all to those, who will come after us.

Therefore the driving motto of the Slovene Association of Surveyors is:

»Let the changes represent opportunities and not threats. Let's create the changes and not only accommodate to them, as they dictate. Let's manage the changes. This is our only way and only this way and no other leads to our sole, common and final objective; self confidence and identity, reputation and prosperity of our community and its every individual.«

Dear colleagues and friends, we have set this vision for the present period of the leadership of the Slovene Association of Surveyors. With building closer ties with you, who, I am sure, have already seen and experienced some things which are in the process here in Slovenia, with professional experiences how to do it, which I know a lot of you have, or maybe by sharing concepts with some of you, which may have similar ambitions for our profession in your countries, I know that we can make this story a success.

Dear and respected representatives and delegates, in the name of Slovene surveyors I hope that you will find your stay here in Slovenia worthy, that you will have some productive days, good professional debates, and that you will spend some nice time in sightseeing and going around our beautiful country.

Thank you,

*Jurij Režek*  
*President of the Slovene Association of Surveyors*