ECHA CONFERENCE NEWS 2014

Re:thinking giftedness: giftedness in the digital age

17 - 20 September 2014
Ljubljana - Slovenia
www.echa2014.info

Slovenia, Hungary, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Germany, Croatia, Serbia, Italy, Austria, USA, Peru, Czech Republic, Australia

Reflection on giftedness in the digital age

Possibilities and challenges of digital age for the gifted

Trends in research and theory of giftedness

Horizons: gifted beyond the digital age

Important dates

Abstract Submission Deadline
10th May 2014

Early Registration Deadline
31st May 2014

Final Registration Deadline
31st August 2014

ECHA
EUROPEAN COUNCIL FOR HIGH ABILITY

University of Ljubljana
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Issue 1

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Invitation from the Chair of the Programme Committee

Assoc. Prof. Mojca Juriševič
Chair of the Programme Committee

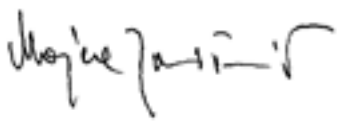
Distinguished delegates, dear colleagues and ECHA friends,

It is a great honour and privilege for Slovenia to host the fourteenth ECHA conference, entitled "Re:thinking giftedness: Giftedness in the Digital Age". In today's world of rapid change driven by ongoing technological development, globalisation and information overload, gifted education is facing major challenges which will be the main focus of our exciting four-day forum of researchers and professionals from Europe and many other countries worldwide.

The conference committee has put together a truly unique programme that addresses key issues of gifted education and the related research findings addressing various challenges of the digital age. We are extremely proud to welcome a number of brilliant speakers and leading experts in the field of gifted education, who will each examine the conference theme from their own perspective. The first and the current presidents of ECHA, Professor Joan Freeman (UK) and Professor Peter Csermely (Hungary) will open the 14th ECHA conference with a keynote lecture critically outlining the challenges that ECHA has encountered so far and is likely to be faced with in the future. Professor Albert Ziegler from Germany will present a critical overview of the current methods used in gifted education and propose an action plan on how to support gifted students in the digital age. Among the keynote speakers we are also delighted to welcome to Professor Norbert Jaušovec, the leading Slovenian expert in neuropsychology and creativity, who will discuss the main findings of the research in neurophysiology related to intelligence and creativity and their impact on the understanding of giftedness. Further, we are truly honoured that Professor Marta Fulop from Hungary, an internationally recognised researcher in the psychology of competition, will be talking on the individual psychological components of successful and adaptive coping with competitive experiences and winning and losing as a constant in today's life of the gifted. And a great surprise - we are extremely grateful that Professor Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (Hungary/United States) will address us via video conferencing to discuss the latest research findings in the positive psychology related to gifted education. The conference will also give us opportunity to listen to many other well known speakers, who will share various theories and examples of practices in educating the gifted in different European and more distant educational contexts, including; Maria Rosa Angelo (Italy), Sheyla Blumen (Peru), Jasna Cvetković Lay (Croatia), Csilla Fuszek (Hungary), Lianne Hoogeveen (The Netherlands), Martin Kubala (Czech Republic), Slavica Maksić (Serbia), Peter Merrotsy (Australia), Claudia Resch (Austria) and Frank Worrel (United States).

Last but not least, on behalf of the organising and programme committees, I am pleased to announce the launching of the 14th ECHA conference NEWS, a bulletin planned to come out in several issues. The main aim of the bulletin is to additionally inform and motivate all the participants to learn, share and communicate actively in the interesting discussions on re-thinking giftedness during the conference, which will allow us to develop and diversify in the digital age. We believe that this event will be a memorable, highly educational, inspiring, and "not-to-be-missed" intellectual feast.

The digital age has brought the 14th ECHA conference to Slovenia and
we are delighted to offer the most hospitable welcome we can.



Assoc. Prof. Mojca Juriševič
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Invitation from the President of ECHA

Prof. Peter Csermely
President of ECHA

ECHA's great strengths in a nutshell

The European Council of High Ability (ECHA) has three great strengths. The first is its continuously enriching traditions spanning of more than 25 years. The second is ECHA's superb quality in many areas related to research and practice associated with talented people. This high quality is exemplified by High Ability Studies, which is the most prestigious journal in the field. And last but not least, ECHA's strength comes from the large variety of approaches of its members, reflecting the cultural richness of Europe. This richness is exemplified best by the biannual ECHA Conferences, which have always been a great success throughout the 25 - years history of ECHA. These three great strengths of ECHA form our ECHA spirit.

Vision on the future of ECHA

What can ECHA's major goals be for the coming years? ECHA has to lead the development of a European Talent Support Network of all people involved in European talent support including researchers, teachers, mentors and also the talented young people themselves and their parents. My vision is to make this process a self-maintaining one, where young talents will serve as mentors for future talented generations. Ultimately, we need to build a talent-friendly continent.

Talent Support Centres in many European countries (to pick just a few examples from among the many possible, those in Denmark, England, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Scotland and, last but not least, the beautiful country of our 2014 ECHA meeting, Slovenia) may serve as regional hubs of this network, building a contact structure going beyond their own countries. None of these European Talent Centres should act as THE main node of the network, but all of them should serve the common goal. ECHA's leading role will be to guide and ensure the high quality of the network formation process, especially at its beginning. However, ECHA certainly does not want to form a small "exclusive club" of a few institutions. Enrichment, openness and mutual cooperation of the European Talent Support Network should be its major hallmarks.

Importantly, ECHA needs to expand its membership, and needs to enrich what it gives to its members. And, it also needs to build up an intensive contact structure with other European actors involved in talent support. I am sure that our firm ECHA spirit will lead us to a much stronger and happier ECHA in the coming year than ever.

Benefits of ECHA membership

Regular ECHA members receive the ECHA News and the ECHA journal High Ability Studies for free. We are also working on electronic access to the journal content, including for student members. We are also updating the ECHA web-site, which will include a continuously increasing number of networking options in the coming years. However, most importantly ECHA members become members of a growing, high-prestige family, where an increasing number of networking options awaits them, especially at the 2014 ECHA Conferences in Ljubljana (Slovenia) and the 2016 conference in Vienna (Austria).

High Level Intellectual Ability and Digital Communication

Prof. Joan Freeman
Keynote speaker, ECHA 2014
Founding President of the European Council for High Ability (ECHA)

Digital communication is surely the biggest distinct influence on the intellectual development of the most able throughout history. Although it is not yet possible to explain exactly what effects it might be having, I am offering here just a glimpse of some emerging evidence and concerns. Obviously, emotional and cultural influences are part of all human development, but that aspect is for another time.

Researchers and pundits differ strongly about how digital communication influences children's minds. Enthusiasts are passionate about the benefits of its ease and speed and claim it must increase gifts and talents. The detractors, though, warn that such eagerness is not entirely justified. They say too much reliance on instant information encourages superficiality of thinking.

It is concerning that it is not only children's cognitive functioning which might be changing, but most probably the physical make-up and functioning of their brains. We already know that structures and functions of the brain can be changed by the way it is used. A clear example comes from studies of London taxi drivers.

To earn their licenses, drivers in training spend three to four years cycling around the city, memorizing a labyrinth of 25,000 streets as well as thousands of tourist attractions and hot spots. They must also be able to instantly calculate the swiftest route between any two points. 'The Knowledge', as this learning is called, is unique to London taxi licensing which culminates in a series of very difficult exams which only about 50 percent of candidates pass.

MRI scans over five years showed that a taxi-driver's right posterior hippocampus (a seahorse-shaped section in the brain that is crucial for long-term memory and spatial navigation) was 7% larger than normal (Zeidman et al, 2012). That intensive learning appears to be responsible. In fact, the longer someone had been driving a taxi the larger his or her hippocampus. Excelling at one form of memory, however, may have inhibited another as the taxi drivers did significantly worse than non taxi drivers on tests of visual memory.

If this can happen in adult brains, it is more than likely that the effects of intensive daily digital interactions will have some effect on the make-up and functioning of the immature brains of children. The consequences will probably last for the rest of their lives. Because this is still a relatively little researched area, it would seem wise to carefully monitor these major changes in stimuli and demands on children's brain function.

Nicholas Carr (2010) won a Pulitzer Prize in 2011 for his considerable research into the effects of electronic communication. He said that that although we enjoy the Web's bounties, it may be at the cost of deep thinking. Yet, one can argue that its quickie procedures, such as Tweeting, focus the mind as well as providing a platform to get creative ideas out there and noticed.

Carr explained how the technologies we use to find, store, and share information can physically affect our neural pathways (as with the cab drivers). We have known for many centuries that creativity is influenced by tools of hand and mind, such as painting a picture with different kinds of brush and approaching a subject from different viewpoints. It therefore seems reasonable that by electronically and radically changing the tools of perception creative endeavour will also be changed.

Marshall McLuhan too had famously said in the 1960s, "The medium is the message", meaning that it changes the way information is delivered and so reperceived. If Carr's thesis is true, deterioration of deep intellectual thought would in time be measurable. There is evidence, though, that certain kinds of intelligence are actually going up.

In the 1950s, James Flynn of New Zealand found a strange phenomenon (Flynn, 2012). He observed a rise in measured intelligence of about three IQ points a decade, called the 'Flynn Effect'. In Europe, this increase has been highest at 20 points per generation, notably in Belgium, Holland and Israel, and lowest, at 10 points per generation, in Denmark and Sweden. Although the data are limited, it seems that the increase in IQ is accelerating. In Holland, for example, scores went up most strikingly over 8 points for the most recently measured period, 1972 to 1982.

Flynn suggests this rise is because of more intellectually demanding work, smaller families and greater use of information technology which helps children manipulate concepts such as hypotheses and categories. Something major is happening in their heads.

In theory, then, as the years go by we should be seeing a higher proportion of children we now see as gifted. This change could even alter the familiar bell-shaped curve of IQ measurement and the old reliable instruments will have to be adjusted or completely change to accommodate the new styles of knowledge acquisition and reasoning.

The danger is that developing countries have yet to see this rise, and the gap is widening. What's more, it is too soon to be aware of the long-term consequences of this swift and unstoppable advance in electronic communication only available to the richer parts of the world. The possible outcomes are potentially far too significant to be welcomed uncritically with open arms.

Fortunately, there is work in progress. Just one example is that of Ziegler and Stöger in Germany who are running an exciting electronic venture, an e-mentoring programme of CyberMentors offering students (notably girls) personal mentoring in Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) using a virtual community (Ziegler, 2012). Across Germany, more than 2,500 mentoring pairs have been involved. The scheme is well advanced and the outcomes will be of importance.

The widespread use of electronic communication is influencing education for the most able in the more developed parts of the world by moving it further in the direction of flexibility. The trend has been gathering pace to see these children less as a tiny fixed minority whether chosen by IQ or other achievements (Freeman, et al, 2010). It is being replaced by a more rounded and flexible picture of the gifted and talented involving potential and opportunity in the social context. Indeed, in Europe we seem to be rediscovering the seminal work of Vygotsky in 1920s Russia (Kutnik, 1993). He had promoted the child as an active agent in learning, the teacher's job being to tap into potential, the 'Zone of Proximal Development'. In fact, in Japan the teacher is regarded as integral to the child's intellectual development.

In Europe, unlike North America, specific gifted programmes are rare, though we do have selective schools which specialise in subject areas to a very high level, such as in music or dance, and others teach to very high intellectual standards. But on the whole, the gifted and talented are taught in mainstream education with some extra provision where possible, and grade-skipping is unusual (Freeman et al, 2010).

Research has indicated that special provision for the gifted has been variable in educational value, particularly in any significant long-term benefits. Moreover selection often misses children who have not had appropriate opportunities to be recognised as gifted. Currently, by far the most promising though least understood influence on the development of high level intelligence is digital communication. It's wonderful potential is its availability to youngsters who can now access the level of learning they need – if only on screen.

Learning from machines is not new, but until recently it has taken a far less important part in children's lives. If we knew more about the effects of the surge and even dominance of present day electronic communication we would also know better how to manage it. We need more evidence of what it may be doing to the hearts and minds of our children in order to create the most valuable interactive electronic support for the gifted and talented.

ECHA's 14th conference is pertinently aimed at investigating what is going on for the gifted and talented with regard to electronic communication. The conference participants will be taking a wide look both at what we can rely on and have yet to find out. I am not alone in keenly anticipating what we are going to find out in Ljubljana in September 2014.

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Three Times Elected President of ECHA
Prof. Franz Mönks
First Elected President of the European Council for High Ability (ECHA) and Three Times Elected President ECHA

(1) In which domains have you observed the most progress in gifted education in the last 30 years?

- increasing political and societal acceptance;
- more openness and more cooperation between scientists, practitioners and policymakers;
- increasing awareness and willingness by teachers to cope with gifted and talents children.

(2) What are in your opinion the main challenges of digital age in gifted education?

- knowledge is less exclusive for privileged members of society;
- it provides opportunities to challenge gifted individuals regardless the socio-economic background;
- especially of underprivileged groups in society it opens new developmental perspectives;
- we can expect shocking but also pleasant experiences.

(3) How do you see the future of gifted education in Europe?

- inclusive education provides possibilities for heterogeneous grouping and learning, it is a major challenge for European schools and it will have an effect on gifted education. Whether this effect is positive or not de pends to a great extend on teachers and policymakers;
- it is important to perceive gifted persons as human beings with many characteristics. The possibility of high achievement is just one of them;
- heterogeneity exists not only within groups but also within the individual person, i.e. gifted persons are not excluded from this reality.

(4) Your personal message for the 14TH ECHA conference?

I hope that all participants go home with the consciousness that giftedness is not only a gift, but also an imperative to convince other people that gifted education is essential for the future of our societies.

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Challenges in Gifted Education in the Digital Age

Dr Lianne Hoogeveen
Invited speaker ECHA 2014
Secretary of the ECHA
member of the Programme Committee ECHA 2014

When the title of the 2014 ECHA conference became public, it raised a lot of questions. People felt uncomfortable: "Will this be a conference only for people working with technology in gifted education?" "What happened to good old ECHA conferences with familiar titles?" .

I hope we were able to make it clear: NO, this is not only a conference for "digital whiz kids" and "good old ECHA topics" are welcome as always. But we have to be realistic: whatever we do on behalf of our gifted students, whether using i-pads or slate pencils, we are doing it in a digital age. As Bill Gates (Gates et al.) already stated in 1995 (and this was almost 20 years ago!): "One thing is clear. We don't have the option of turning away from the future. No one gets to vote on whether technology is going to change our lives"(p. 74). We cannot deny it: technology did change our lives, whether we like it or not, whether we make use of it or not. Our children certainly do make use of it, many of them even before they start school. So, as parents, teachers and policymakers, responsible for the education of those children, we have to keep pace, because, as Roosevelt stated in era in which people could not imagine how technology would change our lives : "We may not be able to prepare the future for our children, but we can at least prepare our children for the future." And although we cannot predict how that future will look, a good chance that it will be even more digital than it is now.

For some of us, this might sound an unpleasant prospect, but is it really? Let's think of the fact that declining cost of computation will make digital technologies accessible to nearly everyone in all parts of the world (Resnick, 2002), which for example may lead to free online courses for underprivileged children in Rwanda (Bartholet, 2013). And, thinking of the children we are talking about during the conference, consider the endless possibilities in developing challenging lessons in different forms, up to at level that is still challenging for our most gifted students even if it is goes beyond the teachers' knowledge.

Of course we also have to consider the pitfalls. As Resnick states: new digital technologies can make a learning revolution possible, but they certainly do not guarantee it. We need to fundamentally rethink our approaches to learning and education.

This conference is an excellent opportunity to do just that: to rethink (gifted) education. As ECHA-members, we are a community of people who have the same goal: improving education for all children, including the gifted. Let's not be afraid of all the high-speed (and, indeed, sometimes frightening) technological developments, but help each other to take advantage of them. Our (gifted) students will be grateful.

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Why and/or How, in your Opinion, Digital Age has Challenged Gifted Education?

Prof. Rena Subotnik
member of the Programme Committee ECHA 2014

Gifted education is challenged by the digital age in at least three ways:
One is that most creative efforts require some long, uninterrupted periods of contemplation and problem solving. Young people must make increasingly concerted efforts to find time for solitude and deep thinking. With more mechanisms coming into play for communication, it's very easy and tempting to be constantly in touch with family, friends, colleagues, and associates.
Second, the rapid pace of communication and knowledge dissemination has made the notion of patience more difficult to endure. Yet patience comes into play when encountering new and unexplored areas of research or in the realm of practicing challenging tasks or skills. It still does take many hundreds of hours to achieve mastery of important performance dimensions such as debating, speaking a new language with fluency, a tennis serve, or complex lab technique.
Finally, our task as teachers, parents and guides becomes more difficult with the dissemination of so many perspectives on so many topics. Sorting credible, scientific sound evidence from websites is very challenging, even for very bright young people.
With all these challenges, there are also advantages that will make it more likely that the next generation will have more tools than we ever did to face and courageously solve global health, environmental, and aesthetic challenges.

Knowledge is Power, and Power is Seldom Voluntarily Shared

Prof. Norbert Jaušovec
Keynote speaker, ECHA 2014
member of the Programme Committee ECHA 2014

The digital age presents a challenge for education in general and not just for the gifted. Recent hardware advances in computers, smartphones, smartboards and tablets, along with the development of software such as E-learning and multimedia presentation will continue to revolutionise our concept of teaching, learning and education in a way that is hard to foresee. The most efficient way to teach a gifted child is to find a mentor who is an expert in the domain of the child's giftedness and to enable the development of a relationship between them. This process may prove a difficult endeavour, often characterised by logistic and financial problems. There is a big difference if you are a gifted child in New York (USA) or Rankovci (Slovenia). However, the possibilities of the digital age can help overcome this difference. The main question is this: Will the global society be enthusiastic about this process? Knowledge is power, and power is seldom voluntarily shared.

Respect, Justice and Equity

Dr Margaret Sutherland
member of the Programme Committee ECHA 2014

The digital age has opened up many opportunities for education. A challenge for educators is how best to embrace and incorporate the opportunities it offers into classroom practice and pedagogy. As with developments that have occurred in the past we must be careful not to disregard current practices that are good in the belief that "the new" will be better. It is perhaps a blending of old and new that will allow us to develop a more coherent way forward. A key aspect for personal and professional development of educators and pupils alike would seem to me to be discemment. It is perhaps this that will allow us to sift through the multitude of information that is available in digital format. The digital age is both exciting and scary. while the digital age offers seemingly limitless opportunities relationships remain a key feature of human development. The digital age will only serve our communities well if respect, justice and equity are at the heart of development.

Supporting Talent and Creativity of EU Citizens

Mojca Kleva Kekuš
EU Parliament member
www. http://sl.mojcakleva.eu/

The future of the European Union depends on the ideals, values, knowledge and talents of its people. In the last couple of years, we have been faced with the challenges of the biggest financial and economic crisis, which has had not only economic, but also social effects. And most companies recognize that their long-term needs for talent are not disappearing. On the contrary, now, more than ever, we need to use the talents of Europeans in order to find our way out of the crisis.

That is why we should make talent development and support important for everyone. This means helping individuals to achieve their own aspirations which will ultimately benefit the whole society. However, as the first step, we need to recognise that personal talent does exist and that it can be developed. People need to get an opportunity to show how talented they can be when given access to the right information, advice and support.

Talent development is not important only for young people and children - it is important for people of all generations. The EU should promote talent and creativity in all stages of lifelong learning. Talent development and support stimulate and spread innovation and creativity, economic growth and higher competitiveness, ensure business success, reduce inequality, and increase social mobility. Educational institutions, businesses, governments and non-governmental organisations must therefore come together to propose new frameworks and solutions that will create a new talent environment. This would increase employability and prevent brain - drain.

The European Parliament is well aware of the fact that talent needs to be promoted and supported. Also because of the written declaration on talent support which was presented to the Members of the European Parliament in 2012. It is important to remind people that talent is not only a privilege of certain individuals - it can be found in everyone; however, some people have problems expressing it as society does not give them the right tools or mentoring to develop it. This is not a national problem, but rather a European one.

I truly believe that the European Union has an enormous amount of talent that has, unfortunately, not yet been discovered. It is therefore important to raise awareness and give talented people the self-esteem and the tools to express their knowledge and their abilities. That is why I fully support the efforts of the European Council for High Ability which has spent many years trying to put the topic of talent and excellence on the European agenda. This is a topic that definitely deserves our attention now and in the future.

The Center for Research and Promotion of Giftedness (CRSN), Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana

Assoc. Prof. Mojca Juriševič
Head of the CRSN

The Center for Research and Promotion of Giftedness (CRSN) was established in the 2009/2010 academic year as a complementary unit of the Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana. Namely, the Slovenian teacher education is following an integrative model regarding gifted education and the CRSN attempts to contribute additional support by interconnecting knowledge, experience and research ideas with practice in gifted education. CRSN members manage a range of research, educational and consulting projects and aim to promote giftedness by enhancing the quality of life of the gifted and to promote the vision of the Faculty of Education of the University of Ljubljana.

The main aims of the CRSN are:

- to support The Faculty of Education in study programmes, research and professional work;
- to conduct research in the field of giftedness (fundamental and applicable);
- to enhance the development and promotion of educational projects for the gifted;
- to offer testing and counselling support in the field of giftedness to the interested public;
- to cooperate in the development of educational policies in gifted education; and
- to build up a network with different institutions in Slovenia and internationally.

In 2013, activities for gifted education in Slovenia were strpngly marked by various activities on the part of the CRSN, with which Slovenia joined the celebration of the International Year of Giftedness and Creativity promoted by World Council for Gifted and Talented Children. To this end, various professional conferences for teachers and other educational professionals have been organised - several efforts were aimed mainly at raising attitudes among both professional and general public towards the importance of gifted education in different fields, from science to arts and culture, and their integration in order to overcome stereotypes about gifted students and their education as elitist or socially unjust. The basic goal of these professional meetings was to provide support for teachers at pre-school, primary and secondary level, school counsellors, graduates and students of the Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana, and other professionals in education, to motivate gifted students for learning in kindergarten and school as well. Conceptually, the initiative was based on the findings of the 2012 research project "Gifted Education in Slovenia" , promoted by CRSN, in which it was concluded that teachers have different needs for further professional training for teaching gifted students, especially in the area of motivation. In 2013, altogether six conferences were conducted and two lectures for parents and other professionals were organised, along with a professional colloquium on giftedness identification in early years and a round- table discussion entitled "Teacher Education for the Gifted Education", with which CRSN concluded a year-long celebration with great success and approx. 1000 participants from all over Slovenia. In 2014, CRSN is continuing with the activities of networking researchers and practitioners to stimulate gifted education in Slovenia and finally cooperating in the organisation of the 14th ECHA conference.

Poster exhibition

Lectures

UMMI: Summer Camps for Gifted Youth in Slovenia

WE STARTED OFF WITH THE BIRTH OF SLOVENIA

Marija Mahne
Winner of the National Award of the Republic of Slovenia for Extraordinary Achievements in education - for the first time awarded for achievements in gifted education – organiser of camps for gifted youth, and retired headteacher and teacher.

We have been organising research camps for gifted Zois scholarship holders since 1991. The basic aim of our work is to connect two seemingly distant and independent fields – art and the natural sciences. In our programme these two fields are closely intertwined. The rich cultural heritage of the Istrian area and its current artistic endeavors form the basis for the former, while the sea and coast with their economic and research activity leads the way for the latter.
Throughout our programme, the young people are motivated to address relevant issues. By exploring and creating they discover original and well-founded solutions. Their ideas also bring concrete and useful results. During these years we have had the pleasure to work with more than 50 field experts (researchers and artists) and more than 1,200 young gifted Zois scholarship holders from Slovenia, occasionally joined by youth and mentors from Italy, Austria, England, Czech Republic, Serbia and Croatia.

Of the utmost importance was the creativity and innovativeness of the youth and mentors, working together as a team, their creative energy mixing and creating new dimensions. We have also published 20 books that containing the ideas and projects of certain groups and individuals, with projects being integrated in youth's home places.
We insist that neither being gifted nor accumulating knowledge is enough if an individual's creativity is not stimulated at the same time.

"The digital age gives youth immense freedom in an almost infinite space. They only have to swerve past those obstacles in education that do not and cannot stimulate creativity!"

Gifted Zois scholarship holders of 2002 created a sculpture which represents a memento to the teachers who renovated Slovene schools in Istria after World War II. The mentor is Janez Lenassi, an internationally acclaimed academically educated painter. The sculpture is situated in front of the

UMMI team: 20th Anniversary

Ljubljana City

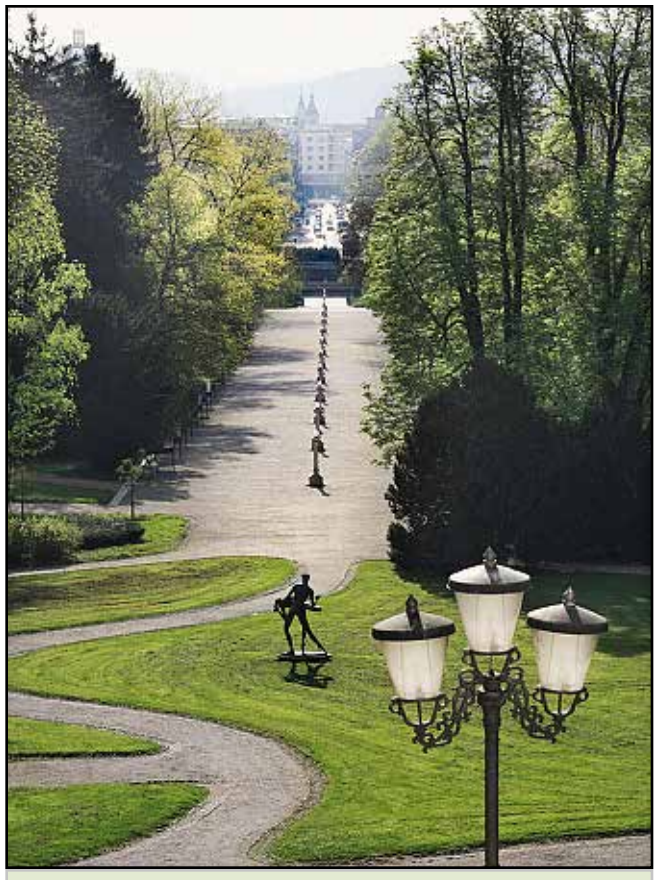
Ljubljana is a city of delights renowned for its rich tradition, culture and art, a unique style and an atmosphere which is both central European and Mediterranean. Those who make acquaintance with the people living here also add the adjectives "multilingual" and "hospitable".

As Ljubljana is located in the very centre of the country, close to many of Slovenia's top attrations, you can use it as a base for discovering the many faces of Slovenia. Please take the time to explore one of the smallest and most charming of European capitals, whose name is derived from the Slovenian "ljubljena", meaning "the beloved".

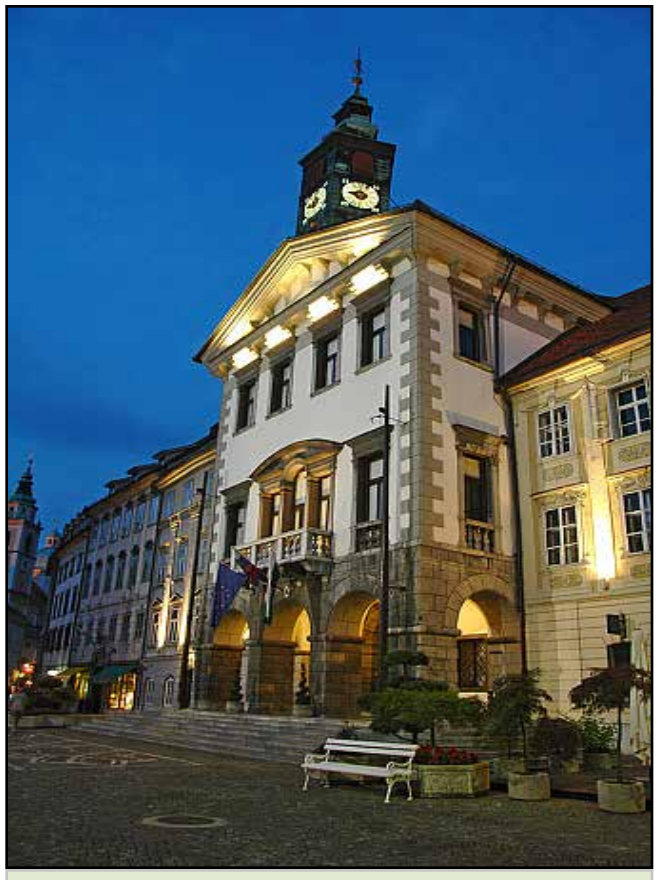
Ljubljana is ...

- a harmonic blend of Baroque, Art Nouveau and newer architectural styles;
- a city reflecting the genius of one architect, master Jože Plečnik;
- a lively city with about 10,000 cultural events a year;
- a city crowned by a medieval castle, protected by a mighty dragon and crossed by the river of seven names;
- a city of 'Wine and Vine', offering a range of culinary experiences – from national to international or ethnic cuisines, from slow food to fast food – the choice is yours;
- a city that loves and respects the green – parks and forest areas extend right into the urban centre.

(Source: visitljubljana.si)



City park Tivoli (Photo: www.visitljubljana.si)



City Hall (Photo: www.visitljubljana.si)

Dragon Bridge (Photo: A. Frelih, www.visitljubljana.si)

Three Bridges (Photo: www.visitljubljana.si)