

Brexit Ambassador series: The view from Slovenia

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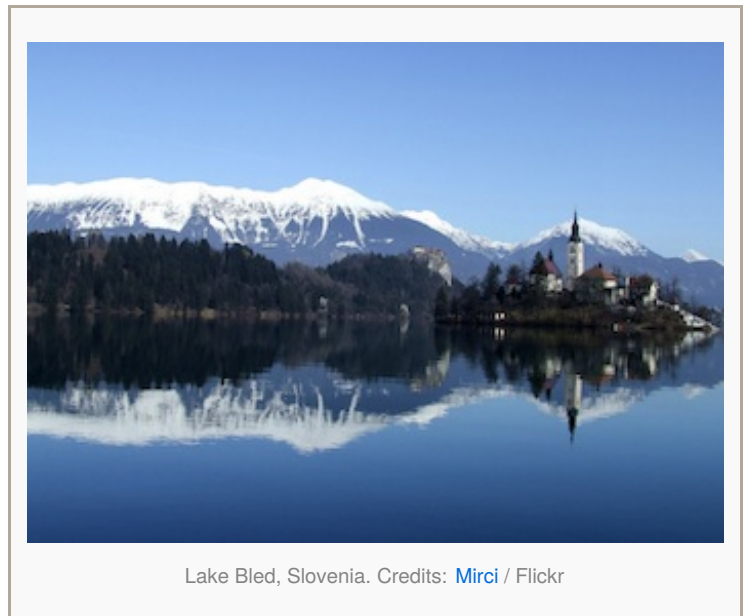
*If Britain chose to leave the European Union, it would not only have an effect inside the UK, but also on the rest of Europe. In the final month of the referendum campaign, we will be featuring comments from some of Europe's Ambassadors to the UK on how they view a potential Brexit. **Tadej Rupel**, the Slovenian Ambassador, outlines why Slovenia hopes it will be able to continue its partnership with the UK through the EU.*



When discussing the topic of UK membership in the EU we have to take a brisk view on the European era after the Second World War. We witnessed the process of European integration which enabled deeper and closer cooperation among the European states. This has been a foundation of a sustainable peace facilitating prosperity within Europe.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the European integration process became a self-evident target of the East and Central European States, due to its unstoppable force of attraction. The two paradigms of that era – Europe whole and free and at peace with itself and a 'return to Europe' – reflected the spirit of that turning point in history, its bright promise and its demanding goals. The young democracies and newly established market economies got support of the EU Member States in the form of enlargement policy. The underlying foundation of the process of Europeanisation and the advancement of countries towards their membership status was the normative power of European values and the institutional structure of the integration process.

Today, this historic process is much closer to its aims. With the EU and NATO enlargement, the historic injustices of European division after WWII have been dealt with to a large degree. Democratic culture is now firmly anchored in the societies of the new Member States. And this is also the experience of Slovenia. EU membership has benefited Slovenia greatly. As a small and open economy, its growth strongly depends on the wider markets. Three quarters of our GDP come from the export of goods and services. Therefore, being part of the well-functioning internal market and clear competition rules are crucial for Slovenia. Furthermore, the firm institutional framework ensures strong and flexible support to the euro and efficient common endeavours towards security.



The United Kingdom has contributed significantly to the great achievements of the EU. The UK has been the main supporter of the single market project from which all Member States, economic players and European citizens benefit. Through its commitment to free trade the UK has contributed to the shaping of an EU that is open to the world. As the energetic advocate of competitiveness and market liberalisation, the reduction of administrative burdens for enterprises and better regulation, the UK is an indispensable Member State in helping the EU to generate more growth and jobs. The UK was also one of the earliest and strongest supporters and shapers of the successful enlargement policy, which has been a huge geopolitical success and remains of immense importance for stability, security and prosperity in Europe.

The European Union is an evolving project, but it is one we can all contribute to. There is still much to be done in many areas, in completing the single market in services, in building an energy union, in creating a framework free of barriers for the digital economy, in continuing with a firm commitment to freer trade, in ensuring the continuous European leadership against climate change and in confronting other geopolitical challenges. I wish to underline the indispensable and beneficial contributions of the UK's liberal tradition to the European project, its openness, pragmatism and virtue of knowing how to achieve progress with small steps. And vice versa: the UK has been much better off for the last four decades as a member of EU.

The solutions to the requests of the UK for EU reform in some areas that are of particular importance for Britain prove that, within the EU, the Member States are able to respond to modern challenges and act in solidarity with each other. We need to be able to shape our future, our destiny. And we can do this much better when acting together than acting alone, when acting jointly – within a framework that is firm and at the same time flexible enough to enable us to respond appropriately to the circumstances.

The upcoming referendum on EU membership on 23 June will reflect a decision of the British electorate. As friends of the United Kingdom we would like to stress our wish and hope that we will be able to continue our friendly engagement together also within the framework of the European Union.

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Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of EUROPP – European Politics and Policy, nor of the London School of Economics.

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