



Predsednica Republike Slovenije

**NATAŠA PIRC MUSAR**

**Address by the President of the Republic of Slovenia Nataša Pirc Musar  
at the reception on the occasion of the opening of the 75<sup>th</sup> Frankfurt Book Fair  
held by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia**

Frankfurt am Main, 17 October 2023

Check against delivery.

*Dear President of the Bundesrat of the Federal Republic of Germany, Peter Tschentscher,  
Dear Minister of Culture of the Federal Republic of Germany, Claudia Roth,  
Dear Minister Asta Vrečko and Minister Matjaž Han,  
Your Excellencies, Diplomatic Corps,  
Distinguished Guests.*

*V veliko čast mi je, da vas lahko nagovorim ob tako svečani priložnosti otvoritve Frankfurtskega knjižnega sejma, ki letos prav našo državo postavlja v ospredje. Hvala vsem prisotnim za vašo dolgoletno naklonjenost in prijateljstvo s Slovenijo.*

*(It is a great honour for me to be able to address you on such a solemn occasion of the opening of the Frankfurt Book Fair, which puts our country in the forefront this year. Thank you to everyone present for your long-standing affection and friendship with Slovenia.)*

*Allow me, dear guests, to continue my address in English.*

*"Every human being is important due to the very fact that he or she exists, but an artist is essential because he or she saves stories and images, bearing witness to what it is to be human," wrote the contemporary Slovenian writer Dušan Šarotar, describing the stories of individuals, Jewish ancestors from Prekmurje.*

*His stories, which are about the lives and fates of a particularly persecuted group of people, and the intimate and great stories of other talented writers and poets which are on display at the Frankfurt Book Fair, are stories for relaxation, stories that sober us and that are a reminder to us.*

*They bear witness to what it is to be human.*

*How to live fully. How to live in one's environment.  
They are stories of love and hate.*

*And I agree that we cannot experience our own stories fully if they are not familiar to us.*

*Books do not have a specific recipient like a letter, they are there for everyone who is eager to read. Human memory has limited capacity, and the books that fill our libraries and our shelves at home are a guarantee that we readers can also reach for this 'human immortality', as the Argentine writer Miguel Manguel refers to books, in all its shades.*

*The stories are waiting for us. And there are many of them. They are waiting for us to immerse ourselves in them as in an adventure that takes us into the unknown and unsuspected. The stories in books offer us a respite in a world that so rarely allows it. The stories of the great Boris Pahor, Vitomil Zupan, Drago Jančar, Maja Haderlap, Dušan Šarotar and many others are stories to be read today, tomorrow, always.*

*Because they speak of times and of solidarity, of love, of resistance and of the suffering of people in a time that brought devastation and sobering realisation.*

*And they are so relevant in a time when the war in Ukraine is raging on the doorstep of Europe and we are once again witnessing the suffering of civilians in Israel, Gaza and elsewhere in the world.*

*Allow me to make special mention of Boris Pahor, European thinker from Trieste, who lived through the worst evil of the 20th century, but who, despite being deported to a concentration camp, remained faithful to his Slovenian and European identity throughout his exceptionally long life. His work Necropolis reminded the world that we can never, and should never condemn nations, but only dictatorships that have led to the humiliation and disparagement of individuals and communities in the world. This still holds true today.*

*The Frankfurt Book Fair is therefore one of the most beautiful manifestations of what is wonderful and precious this year. It is one of the most important events of the year.*

*For Slovenian literature and culture.*

*For writers and poets.*

*For the book, our best mentor, which helps us grow personally and professionally.*

*The great poet Aleš Debeljak once wrote that readers confirm their place of residence in the same common country – the republic of letters. That is what the Frankfurt Book Fair symbolises these days, and it is a great honour to be able to welcome you all here today as the President of the Republic of Slovenia.*

*I invite you to continue to immerse yourselves day after day in stories that inspire, teach and open up our worlds.*

*Thank you, all of you who save stories, all of you who write stories, and all the publishers who publish stories in books.*

*Because, as Dušan Šarotar also wrote: If you save one writer, you save all stories.*

*Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.*

*Slovenian identity is based on words. Slovenians identify themselves by our language rather than by the boundaries of a territory. And therefore by our literature, which is the most authentic expression of our Slovenian character, our history, our soul.*

*A big thanks to the Frankfurt Book Fair, which has presented Slovenian literary and philosophical works so powerfully, and many thanks to all of you who have contributed to the excellence of this presentation and today's event.*

*In this regard, I would like to mention in particular the Ambassador of Slovenia, Dr Ana Polak Petrič, and her team, to whom I am grateful for the excellence of this evening.*