

# WHAT MAKES THE NEWS



## The Future Is in Their Hands

Blaž Peček, photo: Jaka Koren/Jana Magazine

Slovenes have contributed many important inventions to the treasure chest of world knowledge and many Slovenian scientists and other talents have made a recognisable name for themselves in the world. Vega, Stefan, Plemelj and others gained reputations in the international scientific community. Researchers all over the world know their most important work, sometimes even better than their Slovenian counterparts. For a small nation, we have had an unusually large number of investigators since the 11th century. And even today, there is no lack of promising young people in the field of science.

### **Our students outdo the most prestigious universities**

At the beginning of November, students from the Biotechnical Faculty (studying microbiology) and the Faculty of Chemistry and Chemical Technology (studying biochemistry) outdid their competitors from 36 other universities with their research on human cells. They studied the modifications of human cell responses to bacterial infections in order to prevent excessive response, which can lead to sepsis or contamination. The research was carried out at the National Institute of Chemistry.

MIT has been organising the Genetically Engineered Machine competition since 2004. The representatives of four of the best universities – Harvard, Cambridge, Berkeley and MIT also participated. The hard work of our students, as they said, was worthwhile.

After the presentation of the project, they started to receive offers to continue their studies in the USA; the decision is now in their hands. With their work, Slovenian students have proven that a victory of ideas over prestige and money is possible. Thirty-seven teams entered the competition. Our

students were able to take part in it because they raised SIT 2.5 million (approximately € 10,500) from EU funds and domestic sponsors and donors (Ad futura, Lek, Krka, Mediline and Farmadent), while another 2 million (approximately € 8.300) were donated by the Laboratory of Biotechnology at the National Institute of Chemistry.

### **The Ad futura foundation awarded the ten best doctoral theses**

On the last Thursday in November, the scientific and education foundation Ad futura bestowed, for the first time, the Futurum award for the best doctoral papers in the fields of natural and technical science, and medicine. The awards went to Andrej Zorko, Barbara Gerič Stare, Damjan Osredkar, Katja Kristan, Katarina Cankar, Luka Pavlovčič, Marko Anderluh, Mitja Lainščak, Uroš Grošelj, and Zdenka Peršin. Each of them received a statuette and a plaque, and an award of SIT4 million (€16,600) for their post-doctoral studies abroad. They were selected from among 44 candidates by a committee composed of the best Slovenian scientists, recipients of the Zois award etc. The award is intended for people who earned their doctoral degree at a Slovenian educational institution in the preceding three years and who are not older than 33 in the year when they receive their PhD.

The purpose of the Futurum award is to present the best young scientists, publicly acknowledge them and offer them a springboard for post-doctoral research work at the best foreign institutions in the world. At the same time, the award will give young researchers who have not yet finished their doctoral studies additional motivation for their commitment to research work. There is, therefore, no need to worry about the future of Slovenian science.