

The Government of the Republic of Slovenia Passes a Light Pollution Law

PRESS RELEASE

Ljubljana, 30 August, 2007

Today, the Republic of Slovenia adopted a Light Pollution Law. Over the past 15 years Slovenia has seen a rapid increase in light pollution, which makes the arguments of nature protection organisations striving for the adoption of a suitable Law for over 12 years essential.

The new Law is expected to have numerous positive impacts. It prohibits lighting above the horizon into space for most luminaries and demands the use of totally shielded ones. Lighting above the horizon is namely the main cause of light pollution. Shielded lights produce less glare, which improves road safety and increases visibility. Less glare will also be welcome to the older population who is greatly disturbed and impeded by it.

The Law limits the direction of lighting in residential dwellings. Several surveys worldwide have shown a connection between the increase in cancer occurrences and the exposure of people or animals to artificial light. At night-time, light reduces the generation of the hormone melatonin, one of the essential antioxidants that protects us from cancer. It is difficult to predict what the adoption of the Law will bring health-wise, but by all means, people will be more content with streets illuminated effectively and less light intruding into their bedrooms and residential areas.

The Law demands the reduction of the amount of energy used for public lighting, which means that municipalities will have ensure the economical consumption of energy. Lighting should only be used where necessary and during the hours it is needed. In the middle of the night, when there is no traffic, lighting levels can be reduced.

Buildings considered a part of cultural heritage, including many churches, will be illuminated to a lesser extent. In this area, we welcome the efforts and cooperation of the Roman Catholic Church in the preservation of nature and the environment.

The use of a large number of shielded lamps will have a positive impact on numerous nocturnal animal species, with insects and bats being among the most endangered. Thus, the Law will contribute to the preservation of biodiversity, which is one of the essential aims of the EU.

With a population of two million it is expected that in ten years time, when lighting will have been entirely adjusted to meet legal requirements, up to 10 million euros worth of energy will have been saved. Accordingly, the levels of greenhouse gas emissions are expected to drop, which is definitely a contribution to the reduction of climate change.

Today, the great majority of Slovene citizens is unable to see the Milky Way from their homes. With the abolition of lighting into space, the Law will enable the preservation of the night sky. Respect and wonderment for the origins of our existence – space – will also be passed to our children and grandchildren and, last but not least, to all current and future professional and amateur astronomers.

The Law is a result of complex yet successful coordination between the Environment Ministry of the Republic of Slovenia with the Government Office for Growth, numerous government departments, lighting experts and nature protectionists. It represents an important contribution to the quality of life at night and has a positive effect on the preservation of the environment and nature. The adoption of this Law makes Slovenia one of the leading EU countries and can be a model for numerous countries that have not yet legally regulated this field.

We would like to use this opportunity to thank the Republic of Slovenia Environment Minister, Dr. Janez Podobnik; Republic of Slovenia Development Minister, Dr. Žiga Turk; Marko Hren from the Government Office for Growth, Dušan Janez Gačnik and Radovan Tavzes MSc from the Republic of Slovenia Environment Ministry, competent departments, Government of the Republic of Slovenia, Members of the National Assembly Tomaž Štebe MSc and Samo Bevk, and everyone who has contributed to the long and challenging coordinated procedure culminating in the development of suitable solutions.

It is expected that the adopted Law will serve as an aid and model to many EU countries and will therefore be presented at the 7th European Symposium for the Protection of the Night Sky, which will take place on 5 and 6 October in Bled, Slovenia. For more information on the Symposium, please visit www.darksky2007.si and for more information on light pollution, www.temnonebo.org.

For the coalition of the nature preservation organisations Dark Sky Slovenia:

Andrej Mohar
Herman Mikuž
Dr. Tomaž Zwitter

Dr. Tomi Trilar

For the electronic version of the text, please contact:
andrej.mohar@tp.lj.si