

CULTURE OF
Dialogue

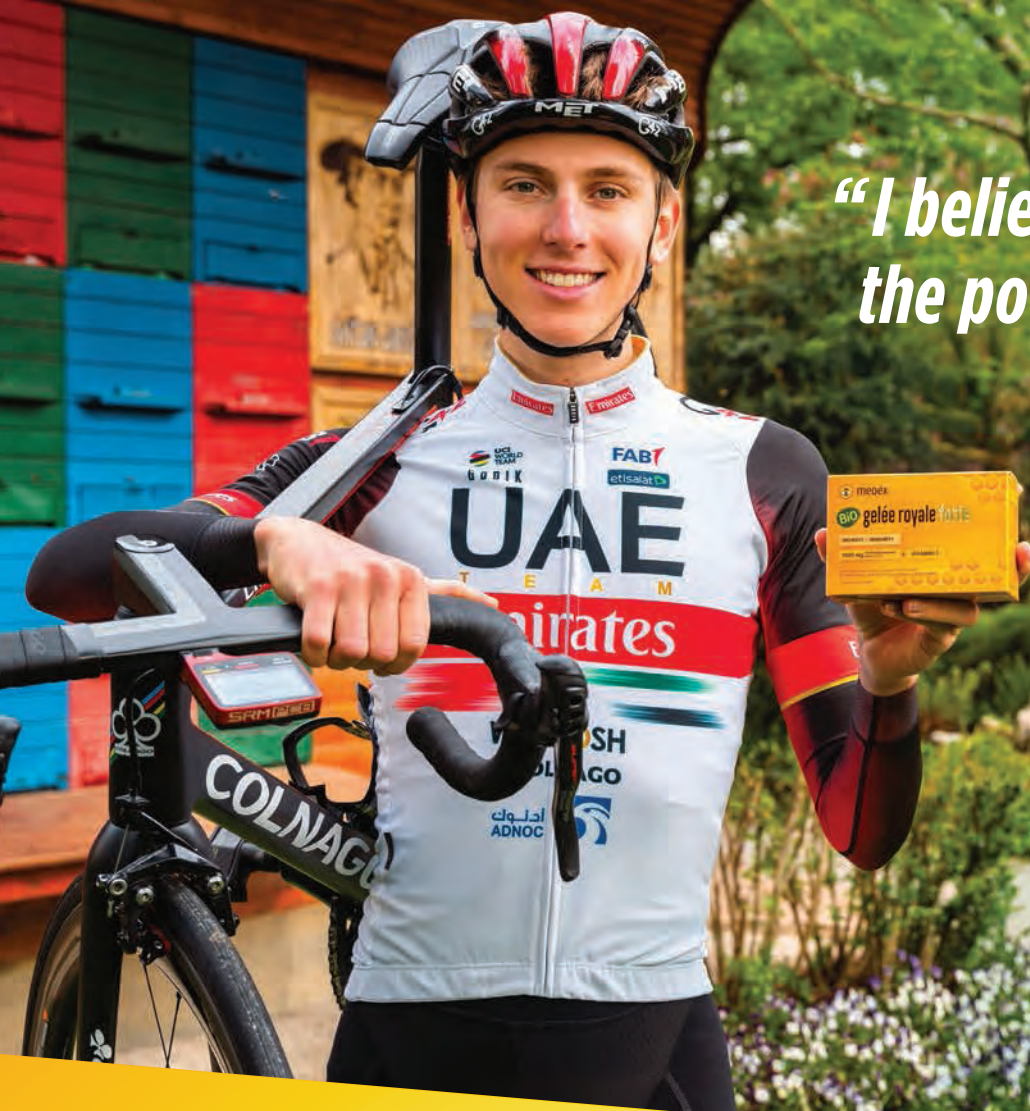
POWER
OF
RELATIONSHIPS



AmCham
Slovenia

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the power of family."*

Tadej Pogačar



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The philosophical concept that describes relationship between two opposite but interconnected forces is Yin Yang. The power of relationships is an abstract and contemporary artistic representation of a big colorful energy sphere, embraced by two shell-shaped elements that display Yin Yang. The new illustration symbolize the main idea of the Dialogue yearbook cover - The Power of Relationships.

**BUSINESS COMMUNITY
OF THE CULTURE OF DIALOGUE**

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FLIP THROUGH DIALOGUE



POWER
OF
RELATIONSHIPS

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*Society is not
only the sum of
individuals but the
totality of mutual
relations between
these individuals.*

▲
Ajša Vodnik, MSc.
CEO of AmCham Slovenia
and Vice Chair of AmChams
in Europe

LETTER FROM THE CEO

THE POWER OF RELATIONSHIPS

Over the past few years, so many unimaginable events have happened. Covid quarantines, war in Europe, a rise in average temperatures once again, and humanity has exceeded 8 billion people. And how are relations between individuals or between countries today? Are they an expression of understanding, compassion, equality and respect, or do they come from selfishness, greed and separation? Unfortunately, there is a lot of the latter, but not in a business community based on a culture of dialogue.

Human beings are fundamentally social animals, and the protective nature of our social relationships has allowed our species to thrive. Decades of research show that social connection is a fundamental human need linked to psychological and physical health, including a more robust immune system, faster recovery from disease, and even longevity. Positive social connections are essential for our physical and mental well-being and can provide emotional support, practical assistance, information and a sense of belonging.

Society is not only the sum of individuals but the totality of mutual relations between these individuals. An individual's wealth is not only in the property he has but, above all, in the extent and quality of the relationships he has with others, characterized by social capital.

All this can be found in family and among friends. Still, I am happy to see that a business community is formed within AmCham Slovenia with one important goal, to co-create a better business and living environment in Slovenia. Meaningful connections, alliances and friendships are also found. As the headquarters of the AmChams in Europe umbrella organization, we spread all this throughout Europe.

Many of you will find yourself in the annual book Culture of Dialogue. Thank you for enriching the AmCham Slovenia business community with your knowledge, experience and personality, thereby contributing to creating an environment in which it is nice to live together.



Ajša Vodnik, MSc.

CEO of AmCham Slovenia and Vice Chair of AmChams in Europe

Why do you say that a new hand of cards is dealt in business and what could the role of Slovenia be?

B.B.— Based on the experience of disrupted supply chains due to the epidemics, the stranded ship in the Suez Canal, the war in Eastern Europe and an ever greater focus on sustainable development, Central and Western European industrial systems have been increasingly actively reducing such risks. Slovenia has a unique geographical position, its people and companies possess knowledge, experience and a suitable mix of the mentality with which they provide the delivery of products and services of appropriate quality within reasonable deadlines. As a highly diversified and productive economy, there is now somewhat greater pressure due to the uncertainty of energy supply and prices; however, we have been offered a truly historic opportunity to further consolidate our position and regain our status as the most successful transitional European economy. Moreover, we have a great natural competitive advantage in the logistics industry, and if we are ambitious, smart and pragmatic, the latter might become the most important development stimulus in our history.

Digital technology is changing our way of life. What are the advantages? Where do you see the dangers?

B.B.— The main advantages are the availability of services in real time from anywhere and at any time, which greatly improves the user experience. The dangers are, of course, related to the possible abuse of information and/or property and the prevention of business operations. Today, cyberattacks can penetrate almost everywhere, and given the accelerated digitization, huge efforts and funds will need to be channeled into protection against such abuses.

What should we do to make technology work for people and not the other way around?

B.B.— It will be necessary to establish a balance between private and pub-

lic, and to legally prohibit anonymity in social media. This is the only way to curb hate speech, the spread of negative sour comments and self-destructive separation in society.

Are we Slovenians the creators or the followers of the digital future?

B.B.— I firmly believe that – depending on the field – with a clear focus on the importance of this development and by adjusting labor taxation and school curricula, we can rank among the best in the world.

ESG. Three letters or a concept of action in business and life?

B.B.— Changing the behavior of each individual and society as a whole. Yesterday.

You always emphasize the importance of meritocracy. Where did it go wrong? Do we understand the meaning and impact of this concept?

B.B.— It is widely present in the private sector, but the public sector pays it no interest, because it would mean the end of employment based on party affiliation. In a world where “shoemakers do not judge beyond the shoe”, there is no room for clientelism and nepotism.

Humans are social creatures, we cannot exist without relationships. Do we know how to cooperate in business?

B.B.— The future is not in competing, but in the so-called coopetition, in which we will apply systemic thinking. We must stop making war on this planet and instead of spending hundreds of billions on weapons, we must direct all this potential to reducing energy consumption and to renewable energy production. This will require planetary unification. The hegemony's struggle for supremacy is leading this civilization towards ruin. The leaders of this world must finally take responsibility for the sustainability of our existence. The maximization of short-term benefits and partial interests, which is the basic characteristic of competitive environment between companies and countries, must be replaced by the coopeti-

tion approach mentioned above. This requires significantly more personal contacts and coordination. It brought sincere tears of pride to my eyes as I watched the future President of the Republic of Slovenia and her opponent exchange a genuine embrace after a long campaign in which they managed to maintain a very high level of respectful dialogue. This embrace is a symbolic turning point in Slovenian society. I sincerely look forward to our future. There is great hope for our nation!

Are you a person who always speaks his mind, is that hard to live with?

B.B.— No, because I never reproach myself for not speaking up when I should have pointed out that common sense and sincere and justified solidarity were missing. I am more of a problem to others, who see in this too much aggressiveness or the imposition of one truth. I try to listen and understand certain phenomena, moves and/or measures without bias, but I find it difficult to accept injustice when a large number of people is all too easily excluded or ignored, least of all if this happens without the necessary social agreement. Otherwise, I absolutely support solidarity and suitable help to all those who rightfully need it, but in no way do I approve of the many abuses that distort the system, thereby rendering it unjust. The independence of the competent authorities brings even greater responsibility. Above all, in Slovenia we are tired of the division stemming from the past and I am sure that very soon directness such as mine will no longer be a rare phenomenon.

You say that AmCham Slovenia is an oasis of normality. What will you personally do to remain a hub of good energy and development mentality?

B.B.— We will remain AmCham Slovenia, an organization of honest patriots who think independently and have proven to be internationally competitive, who promote cultural dialogue and openly advocate measures in public that we sincerely believe will enhance the well-being of Slovenians!

✕

INTERVIEW
WITH THE
PRESIDENT
OF AMCHAM
SLOVENIA
**BLAŽ
BRODNJAK**





THE POWER OF RELATIONSHIPS



As the United States Ambassador to Slovenia, one of my primary goals is to ensure the United States and Slovenia develop reciprocal investment opportunities. Our enduring friendship with Slovenia is the foundation for our economic collaboration. It's based on fundamental democratic values and our shared vision for a better future. The United States Embassy in Ljubljana supports deepening economic cooperation between our countries to build and preserve economic resilience, growth, and security.

Indeed, around the world, our alliances and partnerships form our most strategic assets. Together we support an international rules-based order, indispensable for operating within a framework of best practices, security, and transparency. As our societies become increasingly digital, we must build cyber resilience, innovative technologies, and our collective capabilities to defend our digital economy and society. The United States' partnership with the U.S.-EU Trade Technology Council (TTC), works to advance democratic approaches to trade, technology and security issues such as semiconductor and critical mineral supply chains, trustworthy artificial intelligence, disinformation, and investment screening. Together we will ensure American and allied technologies thrive.

And, as Slovenia quickly transitions to a fully sustainable economy including clean energy independence, the U.S. Embassy seeks to support stakeholders in the public and private sectors with U.S. cutting-edge technology to combat climate change, and environmental and security risks. Capital markets can be a powerful tool to create change. We see the results of ESG standards leading global companies to improve transparency, reduce carbon emissions, diversify corporate boards, ensure employees' welfare, and increase accountability in the board room. Slovenia is leading the way with its first 10-year sovereign sustainability bond, raising EUR 1 billion for environmental and social projects. The U.S. Embassy embraces ESG policy and stands ready to facilitate US companies working with Slovenian companies to support the goal of a more just and sustainable world.

Now, through the power of our relationships, we have unprecedented opportunities.

Jamie Lindler Harpootlian
United States Ambassador
Embassy Ljubljana

AMCHAM BOARD OF GOVERNORS

**What is the value of the
AmCham network and the
relationships it creates?**



“We will remain AmCham Slovenia, a group of independent-minded and proven, internationally competitive, sincere patriots who promote cultural dialogue and freely advocate publicly for measures that we sincerely believe will increase the well-being of Slovenians!”

— **BLAŽ BRODNJAK**, NLB, President of AmCham Slovenia



“A network built on relationships between talented, knowledgeable and supportive members has innate chances for members’ development and growth.”

— **DAMJAN KRALJ**, BTC, Vice President of AmCham Slovenia



“It is important to network with people from various industries, focus on challenges, find solutions, and look ahead to an even more successful future.”

— **ALEŠA MIŽIGOJ**, Medex, Vice President of AmCham Slovenia



“The AmCham network is an advanced business community. If you want to make value for yourself, your company, or the society you live in, you are definitely in the right place to start the right business relationship.”

— **BENO CEGLAR**, NIL



“AmCham provides a platform for connecting different concepts, inspires action and devotion to change things and ideas to progress and transform society for a better tomorrow.”

— **BORUT ČEH**, Labena



“More than ever in the history of mankind, the times we live in demand we cooperate, collaborate, and think together about our future and the future of our planet. We will always try to act and behave responsibly.”

— **NEVENKA ČREŠNAR PERGAR**, NP Consulting



“People are social beings. The AmCham network promotes cooperation, sparks new ideas and brings us together as individuals.”

— **ALJAŽ DOBNIKAR**,
Plume Design, AmCham Top Potential of the Year 2022



“A unique opportunity for meaningful, value-creating interactions with the best and most diverse leaders in the Slovenian market and peers, while all striving for the same goal – a better future.”

— **MATEJ DURAKOVIČ**,
IBM Slovenia, AmCham Top Potential of the Year 2022



“AmCham unites people with diverse views, an incredible breadth of knowledge, but with the same goal: the development of Slovenia. This is how the best breakthroughs are made.”

— EDVARD KÖNIG, EKWB



“Networking is a perpetual activity. The AmCham community brings people together and enables its members to actively cultivate a network of sources to provide useful information.”

— MICHELE LEONARDI, IBM Slovenia



“Being connected to a like-minded community of business leaders committed to U.S.-Slovenia cooperation and opportunity for all.”

— ELIZABETH MACDONALD, U.S. Embassy Ljubljana



“I regard the AmCham network as a safe space where colleagues in the Slovenian business community can come together, share successes and challenges and discuss and find solutions to common issues that we experience in our daily business activities.”

— ZOOLLIS MINA, Pivovarna Laško Union



“The power of the AmCham network is in bringing together a diverse crowd of interesting people who share a common set of values, creating a friendly atmosphere to connect and grow.”

— LUKA PODLOGAR, Generali Investments



“AmCham Slovenia equals the power of relationships and culture of dialogue, and all that is enabled because of our members.”

— AJŠA VODNIK, AmCham Slovenia

AMCHAM DREAM TEAM

2.



3.



1.



4.



5.



6.



8.



7.

9.

1. **Ajša Vodnik**
CEO, AmCham Slovenia,
Vice Chair, AmChams in
Europe
2. **Kris Meršol**
Junior Project Manager
3. **Gregor Hočevar**
Membership & Marketing
Project Manager
4. **Vida Dolenc Pogačnik**
COO & International
Cooperation Director
5. **Nina Marinšek**
Advocacy Director
6. **Mojca Grobelnik**
Communication Director
7. **Tonja Avsenik**
Young Platform Leader
8. **Helena Vrbnjak**
Project Manager
9. **Tanja Petakovič**
Office Manager

AMCHAM ADVOCACY

THE CULTURE OF DIALOGUE

FOR A BETTER BUSINESS AND
LIVING ENVIRONMENT IN SLOVENIA

We at the AmCham Slovenia, the international business community of opportunity and dialogue, are aware that the culture of dialogue is what allows society to progress. We strive for exchange of opinions and constructive suggestions between and at all levels of operation of the economy, science, the state, civil society and other stakeholders.

The AmCham Slovenia advocacy framework comprises eight committees, which include over 320 representatives of companies and experts in their fields. With our knowledge and vision, we wish to contribute to the overall development of society and establishment of a better business and living environment in Slovenia. The Partnership for Change program, which also runs under the AmCham advocacy program, has been connecting the public administration and the businesses for over eight years, thereby pushing the boundaries, breaking down stereotypes and contributing to understanding of how companies and public administration work.

Through the extensive network of members from different sectors, we integrate knowledge, create new ideas and propose concrete solutions through a culture of dialogue, thus acting as the voice of Slovenian and international companies.

Main points of AmCham advocacy for 2023

Health

Health is one of the principal values, which is deeply related to individual responsibility, a healthy lifestyle and a well-functioning public healthcare system.

Knowledge

Own knowledge and development are the greatest competitive advantages of any economy and state. We strive to make education and the labor market go toe to toe with the progress and needs of the economy, and at the same time stress the ever-increasing importance of life-long learning.

International competitiveness

Due to its size, innovation and knowledge, Slovenia can be a reference country in many areas, especially those related to digitalization, smart solutions and new technologies. To increase investments in Slovenia, we need a predictable business and competitive environment.

Sustainability

Sustainability is the key to improving the long-term functioning of society and at the same time an opportunity for growth and innovation. Striving for sustainability calls for reflection on society's priorities, new business models, organizational structures, the nature of work and transformation of companies.

Meritocracy and transparency

Transparency, compliance and values must become of key importance in companies, organizations and the state administration. We work towards a system in which talent and individual effort count.

*Thank you,
Amcham working
committees for
all your work and
dedication. We
are proud of all
the 320 experts,
working for a better
quality of life and
a better business
environment in
Slovenia.*



AmCham Slovenia
**HEALTH
& WELLBEING
COMMITTEE**

Knowledge and Support



URŠA LAKNER
Pfizer



JANKO BURGAR
Cosylab



AmCham Slovenia
**FUTURE OF WORK
& EDUCATION
COMMITTEE**



**NEVENKA
OŠTARJAŠ**
IBM Slovenia



SANJA SAVIČ
PwC Slovenia



AmCham Slovenia
**SUSTAINABLE
GROWTH
COMMITTEE**



MOJCA MARKIZETI
Deloitte



**ALENKA RECELJ
MERCINA**
NLB Group



AmCham Slovenia
**INVESTMENT
COMMITTEE**

Knowledge and Support



**NEVENKA
ČREŠNAR PERGAR**
NP Consulting



ALJOŠA KRDŽIĆ
Law Firm Rojs, Peljhan,
Prelesnik & Partners



AmCham Slovenia
**FINANCE
COMMITTEE**



LUKA GABROVŠEK
Mastercard Slovenia



ŽIGA VIŽINTIN
Pokojninska družba A



AmCham Slovenia
**INTELLECTUAL
PROPERTY
COMMITTEE**



EVA GOSTIŠA
Jadek & Pensa
Law Office



JAKA REPANŠEK
RePublis



AmCham Slovenia
**READY4DFUTURE
COMMITTEE**

Knowledge and Support



UROŠ MAJCEN
S&T Iskratel



Dr. BORIS HORVAT
Abelium



AmCham Slovenia
**CORPORATE ETHICS
& TRANSPARENCY
COMMITTEE**



MARKO SRABOTNIK
Dun & Bradstreet



ALEŠ LUNDER
Law Firm Senica
& Partners

Where do some of the top Slovene M&A lawyers see opportunities for investors?

Slovenia = opportunities

A predictable and stable business environment that ensures legal certainty, predictability, and transparency, with no unnecessary administrative barriers, is key to quality investment. Slovenia is a land of great investment opportunities, high-competitive domestic knowledge, and highly educated people. We believe that with some further reforms, Slovenia can become one of the top 15 most competitive countries in the world.



Simon Bračun, LL.M.
Managing partner – attorney at law
Law firm Kavčič, Bračun & Partners, o.p., d.o.o.

Despite being one of the smallest countries in Europe, Slovenia has one of the highest-income economies¹ and a very high quality of life compared to other countries in the region.

The following areas of investment opportunities, may be considered by foreign and domestic investors:

SMEs

Slovenian small and medium-sized enterprises (hereinafter: "SMEs") represent 99.8% of all businesses in Slovenia, employ over 70% of the total workforce in the business sector and produce 65.3% of the value added (GDP – EUR 15.8 billion). Having advised on both the seller and buyer side of numerous M&A transactions and VC investments in the region, we believe there are continuing investment opportunities in Slovenian SMEs in various industries for both strategic and financial investors.

Renewables

Another area of investment opportunities in Slovenia lies in the production of electricity from renewable energy sources (hereinafter: RES). Compared to other countries in the SEE region, Slovenia has an extremely underdeveloped potential in harnessing wind power, as there are only two wind power plants in the entire country.

However, there is no doubt that the innovative and ingenious approach of entrepreneurs, constructive support from the Slovenian Government and the presence of domestic and international investors can pave the way to the most efficient use of RES, all of which would provide an opportunity to catch up to other countries in the region.

¹ World data bank, <https://data.worldbank.org/country/SI>.



Marko Ketler
Senior Partner
Ketler & Partners, member of Karanovic

Investors have recognized Slovenia's potential. We will certainly remember 2021 as one of the best years in history as far as M&A transactions are concerned. However, M&A activity has cooled down in 2022. As a result, globally, Q3 2022 had one of the lowest M&A activities since 2017, affecting Slovenia too.

Although companies with foreign investments accounted only for 1.9% of all companies in Slovenia at the end of 2021, they play an essential role in the Slovenian business sector by holding 23.8% of the capital, 25.8% of the assets and 23.4% of the employees of the whole business sector. They create new jobs and bring new knowledge and technologies, helping companies grow and develop.

The driving force behind Slovenia's economy is small and medium-sized companies, which financial and strategic investors are targeting. I expect to see many more exits in the upcoming years, especially in companies where current founders do not have a clear succession plan. In recent years, information and communications technology has been one of Slovenia's fastest-growing industries. In the future, start-up companies in this sector could become one of the hottest investment opportunities.

By adopting specific reforms and changes, Slovenia could make the business environment even more attractive and become one of the centers in the EU where smart and innovative companies would thrive. It should therefore promote investment opportunities with optimism and confidence because doing business in Slovenia brings investors numerous competitive advantages and benefits.



Aljoša Krdžić, LL.M. (NYU)

Partner

Law firm Rojs, Peljhan, Prelesnik & partners

A stable and predictable business environment is crucial for attracting foreign and stimulating domestic investments. In the wake of global economic turmoil and the unclear direction of the state in various areas, which we have witnessed in Slovenia since the beginning of the year, a decline in investment activity was observed in all segments of the economy in 2022.

As regards mergers and acquisitions, the core of investment opportunities in the recent period has been the sale of medium-sized companies to domestic and foreign strategic and financial investors. This segment in particular noted increased activity of domestic private financial investors, who invest in a wide variety of sectors of the economy.

With the exception of mergers and acquisitions, Slovenia has stagnated in the recent period in other forms of investment opportunities. There are various reasons for the current investment climate, among which the slow project design and the efforts to reach a consensus on the country's strategic development directions undoubtedly play an important role. Although in 2021 there was much discussion about the implementation of the national recovery and resilience plan, Slovenia did not achieve significant progress in this area in 2022.

Therefore, in the coming period, Slovenia should strive to greatly encourage investment within and into Slovenia by making the business environment more stable and reliable as well as by providing clear strategic directions for the country in various economic sectors. In the period ahead, the greatest investment dynamics from among all sectors at the European and global level can be expected in the energy, information technology and agriculture sectors, which Slovenia can and must take advantage of with smart policies if it wants its economy to advance.




Katarina Kresal

Managing Partner

Law Firm Senica & Partners, Ltd.

In this year alone, in the incredibly short, climate-change-burdened post-Covid period, the unpredictable geopolitical situation has been substantially changing both the global political and economy balance, resulting in major changes in social awareness. The war in Ukraine caused a shortfall in the supply of energy products, intermediate goods and other commodities. All this has accelerated allocation of capital into deficit sectors, while the resulting increase in production capacities in these sectors will make it possible to meet consumer and industry needs for energy and commodities supply. Naturally, such intensive investments help to mitigate and gradually eliminate supply chain disruptions. The transition to low-carbon society, green technologies, sustainable mobility, etc. is no longer just a cliché, it has been instilled into the consciousness of people who understand and support it. Investments in renewable energy sources such as water, wind and solar power and waste-to-energy are undoubtedly the most attractive. In this process, waste is incinerated at the molecular level at a high temperature, namely 14,000 degrees Celsius, which enables the production of both heat and electricity without impacting the environment. The investment trends in Slovenia are therefore very clear, since due to the availability of grants for such investments and very expensive electricity in the long run, many development and very profitable investment opportunities arise both at the regional and national levels.

An abstract graphic featuring several overlapping circles. The largest circle is a light yellow-orange. Inside it, there's a smaller circle with a rainbow gradient (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple). Another circle with a blue-to-purple gradient is partially visible behind the rainbow one. The text "Power of Relationships" is centered over these circles.

Power of Relationships

THE IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSITY

BY **Tamara Pavasović Trošt, PhD**



►
Tamara Pavasović Trošt, PhD
Associate Professor of Sociology
Academic Unit for International Economics
and International Business School of
Economics and Business,
University of Ljubljana

Why is being open to people who are different from us important? Why would companies care about diversity and inclusion?

T.P.T.— To individuals, being open to new cultures, experiences and ways of thinking challenges our own beliefs and assumptions about life. In companies, but also in society more broadly, diversity brings new ways of thinking, of analyzing problems, new perspectives, new solutions, and perhaps most importantly, more creativity. This means not only openness to foreigners (e.g. people of a different nationality), but all types of human similarities and differences: the internal dimensions such as age, gender, physical ability, sexual orientation, the external dimensions such as social status, marital status, faith and spirituality, and the organizational dimensions such as management status, seniority/years of service, department, etc. Research has found time and again that companies with more diversity across all these dimensions end up doing better, make more profits, and have more satisfied and more productive employees and stakeholders.

So there are also economic benefits of diversity in companies?

T.P.T.— Absolutely. A recent [HBR](#) study showed that diverse workplaces have more innovative and creative ideas: a variety of different perspectives, faster problem-solving, better decision-making, and higher innovation. Another large study conducted by [Warwick](#) linked employee higher employee satisfaction and dedication to productivity, supporting the argument that diverse companies have more engaged and more productive employees. It also allows companies to go after the most talented people, and at the same time, to retain top talent. A [PWC](#) study showed that having a culturally diverse workplace increases company reputation and brand image. And perhaps most importantly for people looking for economic arguments, studies conducted by [McKinsey](#) and [Deloitte](#) have shown that diverse organizations are more likely to have higher average financial

profits: they compared the likelihood that a company's financial performance would be above the national industry median, based on the ethnic diversity of employees, and found that companies in the top quartile of ethnic diversity were 35% more likely to have better financial performance than their industry peers.

Given these arguments, why do so many companies still struggle with diversity? What are the main problems companies have in this area?



A recent HBR study showed that diverse workplaces have more innovative and creative ideas

T.P.T.— There are several aspects of this issue, which are both structural and cultural. Structurally, for a company to recruit top talent, it needs to be able to actually attract and retain top talent. The company itself can take a series of steps to attract potential employees, but, if they face structural obstacles, such as the inability or extreme hurdles to get a work visa or resident permit, the employee will go elsewhere. In Slovenia, which due to its size has a relatively small pool of pro-



PHOTO:
Unsplash

spective applicants for many jobs, the issue of being able to both attract foreign and retain domestic talents is even more important. Yet, the country has over the past few years passed a number of increasingly restrictive laws that make it virtually impossible to attract foreigners. For instance, wait times for work visas, even when sponsored by companies and with demonstrated urgent need, can be several months, up to a year of hassles, returned applications, unnecessary complications, ex-

pired documents, etc. The newest law, passed last year, allows foreigners to apply for family unification visas (e.g. to get a resident permit for a person's six-month-old baby) only after two years of residence. This has already shown negative consequences for companies, beginning with my own university, where one of our recently hired professors cannot bring his wife and baby in Macedonia to join him in Slovenia, to very high-up positions in banks and insurance companies, where workers

with non-EU passports frequently simply give up on trying to battle the Slovenian legal system. At the same time, this is not limited just to foreigners; similar restrictive laws prevent many Slovenians living in other countries from returning to Slovenia, something that is, for example, discussed every year at the Slovenian World Congress. I only mentioned structural obstacles to diversity for foreigners, but we could spend a whole day discussing the structural obstacles to gender diversity or physical ability as well.

You also mentioned cultural aspects?

T.P.T. On the cultural side, the main issue is openness to difference and diversity as a value. This is frequently something people are socialized into very early in life, and can be challenging to change at a later stage. When we talk about organizational culture, for instance, if a company wants to encourage any aspect of employee attitudes and behaviors such as risk-taking, speaking up, volunteering new ideas, providing constructive feedback, this will be difficult to implement if the dominant culture workers were socialized into different patterns of behavior: if they were discouraged from speaking out of line, taking risks, or standing out. Or in the Slovenian case, where something frequently socialized as a basic value is to not offend anyone ("ne zameriti se"), which naturally also mirrors into attitudes and behaviors in the workplace and can be frustrating for companies to try to change. It is the same with cultural diversity – if companies have intolerant employees, it will take a lot of work by the company to implement a culture of acceptance of otherness. However, where openness to different forms of diversity – gender, physical ability, LGBT status – is concerned, new generations are already demonstrating a large shift, so the cultural norms have definitely changed. This openness and awareness of the richness of diverse experiences, and the benefits they bring to companies, will hopefully over time gradually reflect itself into the administrative and legal spheres as well. ✕

CHANGE IS A PROCESS

BY Ana Domenis Cankar

A person enjoying social support during change (in this case, support from the team, colleagues, managers) strengthens a more positive attitude towards change and the feeling that difficult challenges will be manageable with each other's help.

Change is a process. As changes are introduced in companies, especially big changes and changes that affect part of the organizational culture or concern new HR or other systems, it is important to be aware that change is a process and that real progress and effect will show gradually. We often say that this takes time. It is not just about time, it is about experience. Each experience, each step in the direction of what the change dictates, increases the likelihood that it will be properly transferred into practice.

PHOTO:
Unsplash





The following four conditions are important for boosting the motivation of employees, their readiness for a specific change and reducing the probability of resistance during the change process:

Bringing meaning to change through advantages, benefits, improvements, vision of the future, etc.

We perceive changes as reasonable if we understand the benefits they bring to the entire organization as well as to all individuals in it. It is very important to communicate about the benefits, advantages, and improvements that a certain change brings. Not once, twice, or three times, but often and through various different channels, in order to strengthen everyone's awareness that the change is reasonable. A person is more motivated if they see meaning in the things they do, even if they are demanding.

Understanding that strengthens a sense of power when facing all the challenges that a change brings

Understanding what the change entails is related to the first point – it is important to know the benefits and advantages of the change. Of course, every change poses new challenges that are directly or indirectly related to it, and certain obstacles often appear. Therefore, it is important to share the right information about the change. We communicate to the employees what will be challenging, what the expected challenges will be, what adjustments will still be necessary, what knowledge and competencies will be needed. At the same time, it is very important to



▲
Ana Domenis Cankar
Senior Consultant -
Psychologist

strengthen the awareness that everything that the change requires of us is doable and manageable, that together we will succeed, that we are all “in the same boat” and that everyone can make a significant contribution. However, it is very important to emphasize in this context that change is a process and to highlight realistic expectations. This will enhance employees' understanding of “what is ahead of them”, how it will affect their work, what additional investment will be needed, and that it is feasible. Naturally, this increases the sense of inner strength – that we will cope with the change. A person who feels that they will be up to the coming challenges experiences less stress, worry or resistance.

Reducing uncertainties by strengthening knowledge and competencies

By understanding what the change requires of us, we can also assess whether we have the necessary knowledge or competencies to carry it all out effectively. It is therefore important to think about what employees will need to learn or what competencies they will have to develop, and to

design a system for appropriate training. It often happens that due to a lack of time employees cannot be provided with adequate training and therefore they acquire the skills during the implementation of a change. In such cases, we can resort to other forms of training, such as mentoring or online content that a company can design itself, working groups ... A person who strengthens and develops their skills is more certain that they will successfully carry out what is expected of them upon change.

Establishing an adequate environment to support the change

Changes have an impact on the “physical and social” environment of the organization (often both internal and external) and the other way around – the environment affects the changes. It is important to set up a “physical environment” that will support the changes and enable their smooth implementation. On the other hand, it is important (related also to the first point) to build a “social environment” that believes in and supports change. Internal promotion of change is important in this context. The attitude of managers at different levels towards change is of particular importance. They must be united to communicate changes positively and regularly to their employees, to build a positive attitude towards change through their approach and attitude among all employees (even those who may not be directly affected by the change). Furthermore, it is important for managers to establish a safe place to talk about change, where mutual feedback on challenges, doubts, expectations, successes and failures can be shared, and mutual support strengthened. Naturally, if changes are such that they also concern the external environment, it is important to develop an outwardly positive attitude as well.



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KAKO SE BOSTE ODZVALI NA TO?

Mi poznamo odgovore!

Z edinstvenim vpogledom v trende na trgu dela, delovanje organizacij in motivacijo ljudi vam pomagamo graditi uspešno kulturo podjetja.

Psychological Security

BY Eva Boštjančič, PhD

How can establishing psychological security in companies (at the micro level) influence a change in society (at the macro level)?

E.B. Psychological security is a construct on the level of a group, not the individual. As a group, we formulate conditions for psychological security to develop. Above all, this means that in our interactions with others, we perceive that we are allowed to make mistakes and also warn others about a mistake they have made. For this, we have to reduce the differences in hierarchy and create a space within the organization which will allow us to tolerate each other even when we make mistakes. The psychological security narrative started when Google undertook a study about why some teams are more successful than others. They found that the teams which reported more mistakes were successful, which runs against our common logic.

Do you feel that constructive criticism or, in other words, rather unpleasant feedback is key to successful cooperation or business, or a barrier to psychological security?

E.B. Let us first clarify what psychological security is not. Psychological security is not being nice or agreeable for we need diversity of views. Neither is it just another word for trust since trust manifests on an individual level. Psychological security also does not require us to lower quality standards. Constructive criticism is necessary as everyone needs feedback about their work; it is a prerequisite for further development of the employee. We must keep in mind, though, that all emotional states are not allowed; we have to be aware of where the limits are and what our responsibilities are. This means that we can share our thoughts, delegate, create a space in which employees feel accepted and safe.

The onset of the pandemic has blurred the line between private and professional life. How can psychological security be incorporated into this new reality in combination with new technologies?

E.B. The epidemic has brought quite a few challenges. Crucial to psychological security are clearly defined roles. So we know what is expected of us even during remote work. The second condition is the support of colleagues – the feeling that we can rely on our fellow workers when we get sick, overloaded or when we are absent from work. The third one is co-dependence, which means that the more interconnected we are, the greater the probability of psychological security being established. During the pandem-

IT IS IN HUMAN NATURE TO CONSTANTLY NEED SOME CHALLENGES. AND THOSE CHALLENGES ARE MET MORE EASILY IN AN ENVIRONMENT THAT IS PSYCHOLOGICALLY SECURE.

ic, we tried to maintain this through informal meetings. Another important factor is keeping the focus on learning and the awareness of the employee that he or she can develop in a given work environment. In psychology today, we talk about employability and not about employment. This means an individual is a competitive candidate in the labor market at any given time. Good communication and a positive relationship between the leader and the employees is key to psychological security. During the Covid pandemic, many leaders felt they had their hands tied because they could not supervise their employees as they had been able to do in the office.

Recently, we often hear expressions such as sustainable leadership, leading by example ...

E.B. Yes, these are one of the elements of psychological security, but for clarification, I prefer to use the transformational leadership theory. This stipulates that it is the leader who transforms

his or her employees, places trust in them, and imparts values to them, while at the same time conferring responsibilities on them and opens possibilities for their development. Research shows that transformational leadership has emerged as one of the most promising leadership styles over the last decade.

According to some studies, stress has increased greatly among the young population, while they are also said to express a desire to be a part of a community with which they share their values and can identify with. What is their take on employment?

E.B.— The young people entering the labor market are different from what we were like, since they grew up in a different social and political environment. This is how it has always been and always will be. The young today work mostly to prove themselves and at the same time also to be able to enjoy life. They want appropriate work experience, skills, challenges and also stimulating interpersonal relationships. As a scientist, I also notice a connection between the shortage of certain human resources and the level of appreciation and trust in these professions. I actually think that young people today who are going abroad for work are not leaving only for better pay, but also for a higher-quality working environment that provides them psychological security or, in other words, a mature working environment.

In what way do companies apply psychological security? Is this already taking place?

E.B.— Employers in Slovenia have yet to identify the concept as an important one; they have not yet made it their own. I have a feeling that the companies in



▲
Eva Boštjančič, PhD
Associate Professor in
Psychology of Work and
Organizations, Faculty of
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which employees dare to report mistakes openly are rare, sadly. The media label the employees who point out mistakes whistleblowers and even expose them, thereby putting them under pressure. As working environments today are changing so much, it is particularly important to create an environment where we are allowed to ask questions about what we are interested in and what we do not understand, and where we can point to mistakes and learn from them.

Where are Slovenian employers compared to those abroad?

E.B.— Scandinavian companies show a high level of psychological security. There are not many steps to establishing psychological security, yet this requires plenty of wisdom as we are changing the organizational culture, and such change normally takes two to three years. When we bring up the subject of psychological security among employees, we must start to encourage them to open up, free themselves from fear and

distrust. We want to create a safe environment where everybody can contribute, including through comments, to the better functioning of the company.

If we use the 'carrot and stick' metaphor – how would psychological security look in this case?

E.B.— It is difficult to say as the relationship between the superior and the subordinate is more about the constructs of trust and motivation. Psychological security, though, is a broader and more elementary construct to which each of us can contribute. To mention gossip, for example. Gossip develops mainly when we are envious of someone, and is mostly negative. Gossip could be eliminated through greater psychological security. We, the Slovenian nation, still have many challenges ahead of us.

Could you make a prediction based on trends about what the working environment will be like in a few years in this sense?

E.B.— The working environment will become very specialized because there will be a lack of human resources in the future and we will be forced to be more attentive to people from the generations entering the labor market today – their values, their motives, their competencies that we can utilize and in what ways we can motivate them. The education system is, for example, still very much like that of our parents', so we must take a step further in this regard. Altered conditions of work, such as a shorter workday, are one of the responses to a developing society. It is in human nature to constantly need some challenges. And those challenges are met more easily in an environment that is psychologically secure.



JOB SEEKERS DICTATE THE LABOR MARKET

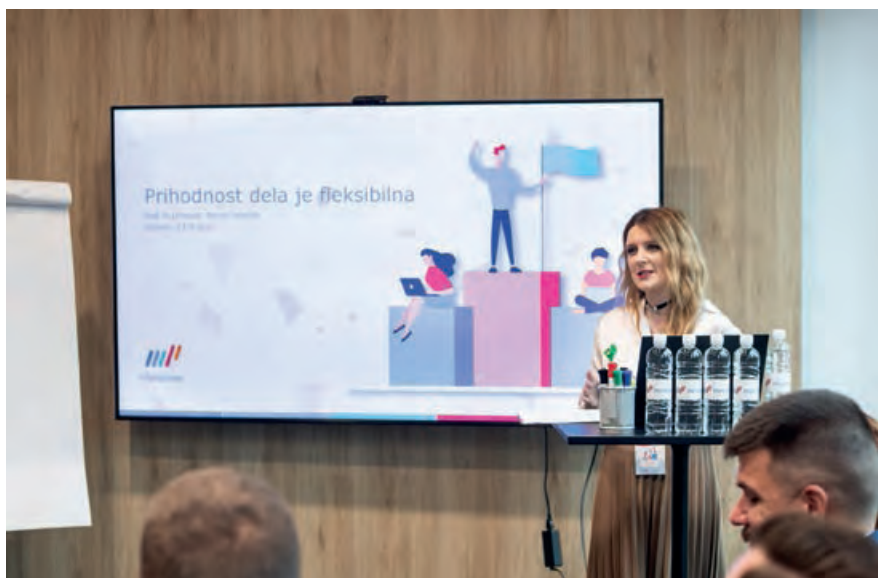
BY Zvone Zajc, MSc



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The turbulent period in the labor market in Slovenia continues. More than half of occupations are already in short supply and employee fluctuation is rising. Job seekers have numerous possibilities for finding a new job. We are filling the workforce shortage with foreign labor, but after one year, foreign workers often leave for the West for a better income. Despite economic growth in 2023 being projected to be lower at around 1.5% (Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development, 2022), it remains positive. Considering the birth rate of 1.6 (Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, 2022) and the outflow of young people from Slovenia, we can expect the gap between the required and the available workforce to grow even larger.

In addition to digitalization, automation



PHOTOS:
Manpower



and robotization, the effects of which will only be seen in the next decade, companies will be forced to invest even more time, resources and money toward retention of existing employees and employee loyalty. On the other hand, using innovative approaches, they will also have to ensure that they are the preferred employer.

Current situation in the Slovenian labor market

The fall of 2022 saw the lowest unemployment since Slovenia's independence. The Occupational Barometer study (Employment Service of Slovenia, 2022), which assessed 182 occupations in Slovenia, found labor shortage in 99 professions, and 46 professions more or less maintained a balance between supply and demand for workforce, while surplus labor was noted in 37 professions. More than 100,000 foreign citizens are already employed in Slovenia. Our citizens, mostly the young people, leave to work abroad and only one third return. It is interesting that the majority are willing to return even for 20 percent lower wages than their current ones, but what they miss most about Slovenian companies are flexible work hours, better work-life balance, stimulation of professional growth and team work, and more accessible company management.

What do employees really want and what do they expect from employers?

The study conducted by ManpowerGroup in collaboration with Thrive Global, the leading behavior change technology company, has revealed how important flexibility is for employees and how it helps improve their job performance and satisfaction. In the last two years, the labor market has irrevocably changed and the pandemic has triggered a breakthrough of trends which are not new. Employee satisfaction surveys and organizational climate assessments should be a regular feature so that we get a clear picture of and understand the situation in the company, and also to facilitate preventive action toward retaining employees, especially the talent. The fact is that more than a third of employees in Slovenia are thinking about a job change.

Fair wages and job stability will always be important, although they are just "hygienic requisites". Employees expect more





– both from their professional life and their employers. They not only want to work, but also be successful and satisfied at it. So what do employees want in their workplace?

- Employees in all sectors and at all levels request more choice and autonomy at work, especially a four-day work week or a six-hour workday and hybrid working.
- Employees are increasingly demanding that their main mission cannot only be that of making a profit. They are seeking a culture of authenticity and trust and for leaders who are role models and who nurture these qualities in themselves and in others. Trust is very important.
- Both women and men want more flexibility and in addition to that, they wish to work with colleagues they can trust, they wish for a manager who will support them, they wish for meaningful work, for the organization to share their values, and for promotion of mental health.
- Working parents want more support in relation to health, education and learning new skills. Working parents want to advance their careers and do meaningful work, but they also would like support in terms of the flexibility that is needed so they can provide care for their children or elderly relatives.

AT THE BEGINNING OF 2022, MANPOWER SLOVENIA INTRODUCED A FOUR-DAY WORKING WEEK.

In view of the above, we can say with certainty that the labor market in our country is truly dictated by job seekers. The five most common reasons for changing jobs in Slovenia are:

- ❶ poor workplace relations or poor workplace climate;
- ❷ inability to advance in career;
- ❸ low salary compared to the average or unattractive compensation package;
- ❹ inability to identify with the employer's vision and the outlook for the future; and
- ❺ insufficient opportunities for personal development.

The future of work is flexibility

At the beginning of 2022, Manpower Slovenia introduced a four-day working

week. After almost a year, we can say with confidence that this was an excellent strategic decision. Not only did it result in higher employee loyalty and motivation, greater commitment and a better work-life balance, it also did not result in any negative changes or effects on our business. The number of overtime hours per day and month has decreased in this year, which is a good indicator that most employees are managing to organize their work and set the right priorities. Productivity has not declined either, while the psychological well-being of our employees has improved.

The companies that take care of their employees and allow them greater work flexibility, while focusing on providing a better work-life balance, will possess the recipe for business success in terms of employee loyalty, attracting new workforce and dealing with competition on the labor market. The same is true for those companies that will offer promotion without requiring appropriate education, and encourage autonomy and flow of information as well as fostering managerial skills. These companies will find it easier to deal with labor market forces – employee fluctuation, attraction and retention. The current situation on the labor market simply calls for a greater focus on people, and that can only be a good thing.





Building a new reality
is humanly possible.



PARTNERSHIP FOR CHANGE

The Partnership for Change is a program of innovative cooperation between employees in Slovenia's public and private sectors whose aim is to transmit and use good ideas, practices, and valuable solutions, and facilitate exchanges between employees. It is a program in which people employed in the civil service and business push boundaries, break down stereotypes, and create positive stories to prove that cooperation between the government and the private sector can work differently and innovatively. Every year we further solve challenges considered crucial by various societal stakeholders.

Partnership for Change – 8th Round

Ledina Kindergarten, the AmCham Ready 4D Future Committee and the Municipality of Kočevje have proven that where there is a will there is a way to overcome important strategic challenges and deal with minor challenges. The common denominator of their success was that they understood the factors that drive change and thus achieved progress by joining forces.

Ledina Kindergarten:

Zone: Ledina Kindergarten

The kindergarten, which has 420 children on the roll, is located in the city center between Čufarjeva ulica and Resljeva cesta, and is accessible through a narrow subway and two main entrances. There is no fence in front of the kindergarten, and the subway is used by other people as well. Cyclists and motorcycle and electric scooter users pass by the two main entrances, and that poses a major problem in terms of ensuring the safety of preschoolers, parents and employees. The aim was to provide the children with a safe environment and make passers-by and drivers-by aware that they are in the kindergarten zone. To that end, a "kindergarten – children ahead" sign was put up, motion sensor lights were installed in the subway, the cyclepath was moved to another street, ground markings (children's footprints) were applied and the kindergarten walls were painted with children's motifs. In the future, they hope the surrounding areas will be arranged in an even more children-friendly way, too.

Municipality of Kočevje:

How to Bring Local Businesses Closer to Young People



In local environments, there is a gap between businesses and young people. Companies have not adapted to the mobility of young people and changes in their career decision-making. At the same time, young people are not familiar with local businesses, do not feel connected to them, and are therefore not even aware of the opportunities offered by the local environment. As they do not see the opportunities that would excite them, they plan their future outside of their local environment. In order to successfully tackle this challenge, companies will have to actively communicate with young people and inspire them to learn through gaining experience. Consequently, young people will know and form a positive opinion of about at least ten local businesses and will "compete" for their positions for holiday work, scholarships, internships, etc. The Kočevje Business Incubator devised a way to to better address young people. By using gamification, they were able to showcase companies more successfully. They once again proved how important career centers are.

AmCham Ready 4DFuture Committee:

There Is No Green and Digital Society Without ICT Professionals

Slovenia lacks several thousand ICT experts specializing in, for example, big data and artificial intelligence. There are concerns that, therefore, as a country, we will fail to fulfill our potential and will be unable to keep up even with the most basic development. If we increased the number of ICT professionals and thus gain new opportunities for the development of the economy, country, and society, we would be able to transition to a green and digital society. Accordingly, the Committee prepared 18 measures for more ICT professionals.



Partnership for Change – 9th Round

Partnership for Change entered its 9th round, in which it is to solve three exceptional challenges.

The Ministry of Infrastructure and the Sustainable Mobility and Transport Policy
Directorate: Sustainable commuting

The Ministry observes that employees most often choose the fastest, cheapest, most comfortable way to commute to work which does not require them to change their habits much. This means that the majority of employees still travel to and from work by car, which increases the level of CO2 emissions and causes congestion on radial roads and in large city centers.

The Ministry wants employees to opt more often for a



sustainable way of traveling to and from work (by public passenger transport, car sharing, on foot or by bicycle), which is why they are proposing a pilot project, which could be used to research and develop solutions for a smooth transition and change in employees' commuting habits. The aim is to halt the growing share of trips by private car and to reduce the number of kilometers covered by motorized transport in city centers. The proposed idea would not only reduce the level of CO2 emissions and reduce congestion on radial roads and in the centers of large cities, but also give rise to better quality free time and greater employee satisfaction. The analysis of the pilot project will improve the understanding of the existing shortcomings and thus contribute to high-quality development of the public passenger transport network.

AmCham Future of Work and Education Committee: Boosting the country's competitiveness by facilitating the employment of foreign experts

Slovenia has a record low unemployment rate with 52,043 jobseekers at the end of September 2022, and very high demand for labor. There is a shortage of staff in practically all sectors. Both unskilled and highly skilled specialist workers are in short supply. The most affected industries are healthcare (physicians, nurses and other healthcare professionals), engineering and IT, as well as education, manufacturing, hotels and restaurants, tourism and construction. Companies and recruiters have to compete for personnel in foreign markets. On top of difficult-to-acquire personnel, the matter is further complicated as employers are faced with large backlogs in the processing of work permit applications, in specific areas at least, with a steady influx of new applications. This discourages foreign labor and prolongs certain processes and procedures that affect Slovenia's competitiveness. In this regard, the focus is primarily on expedited procedures, less bureaucracy, digitization of processes, etc. It is believed that the issue should be considered a priority and should involve the co-operation of various stakeholders. A favorable solution to the challenge would be positive for everyone – the state, citizens, employers and employees.

The University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Computer and Information Science: The introduction of a compulsory course – Computer and Information Science in primary and secondary schools – so that we will design our future

According to the latest EURYDICE survey, Slovenia is one of four EU countries without a compulsory computer and information science basics course in primary and secondary schools. After the reforms announced in the EU school systems, it will remain the only country without it. This science course is one of the fundamental pillars of STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). It is imperative to distinguish between basic knowledge of computer and information science and digital skills – DigComp (see DEAP, Action 10), as providing only the latter creates a risk of developing only the users (consumers) of technology and not its creators. Notably, it is the responsibility of schools to equip students with the skills to be able to use digital technology in a creative way and thus be competitive in the labor market. At the same time, it is important to be aware that as many as 90% of jobs require knowledge of information and communication technologies, due to which knowledge in the field of computer and information is constantly scarce. Here, the focus is on all jobs and not only jobs in the ICT industry. It is estimated that in Slovenia alone there will be a shortfall of as many as 5,000 ICT experts every year over the next five years. ✖

I'M A TEACHER!



The “I’m a teacher!” project highlights outstanding stories of Slovenian teachers who are writing exceptional stories through their innovativeness, dedication to pupils, and sense of responsibility. In the “I’m a teacher!” project, we are not looking just for projects but also a stable way of working and excellent educational practices that prepare children for the future. For the project, we have joined the Varkey Foundation and their Global Teacher Prize initiative and have received the Google.org Impact Challenge Central and Eastern Europe. As part of this year’s AmChams in Europe Best Practice Conference 2022, the initiative also came top of all the projects presented and thus won the AmChams in Europe Creative Award.

Partner

DELO





Uroš Ocepek, PhD
Trbovlje Secondary
Technical and Vocational
School

Uroš Ocepek

This year, the title of Slovenia's representative at the Global Teacher Prize and Teacher of the Year went to Uroš Ocepek, PhD who perceives his work as a mission, looks for the best qualities in his students with exceptional dedication and encourages them to accomplish the most brilliant achievements. The teacher of professional modules in the field of computer science at the Trbovlje Secondary Technical and Vocational School is a teacher who is brimming with ideas to bring the subjects he teaches as close as possible to young people. It is also due to his numerous interests that students expand their horizons and design innovations which win awards and are recognized in the corporate sector. Every year he is involved in projects with students who are looking

for more. Many of them might have expected to play games as they enrolled in secondary school, but now they can program them. Currently, the Trbovlje Secondary Technical and Vocational School is the only secondary school in Slovenia with artificial intelligence integrated into regular computer lessons. When working with students, he also relies on mutual respect and honesty. He claims that there is no such thing as the perfect teacher who could unleash the potential in all their students, but at the same time, he believes it worthwhile to invest in each and every one and is always on the lookout for new ways to motivate his students.



Reception with the
President of the Republic
of Slovenia, Borut Pahor
ACE Best Practice
Conference 2022.

Simon Purger, Primary
School Polhov Gradec;
Nermin Bajramović,
Primary School of National
Hero Rajko; **Hedvika
Lopatič**, Primary School
Brežice; **Borut Pahor**, The
President of the Republic
of Slovenia; **Vera Granfol**,
Primary School Gornja
Radgona; **Uroš Ocepek**,
PhD, Trbovlje Secondary
Technical and Vocational
School



Vida Dolenc Pogačnik,
AmCham Slovenia, **Susan
Danger**, CEO, AmCham EU,
Chair, AmChams in Europe



Simon Purger, Primary
School Polhov Gradec;
Uroš Ocepek, PhD, Trbovlje
Secondary Technical and
Vocational School;
Vera Granfol, Primary
School Gornja Radgona;
Hedvika Lopatič, Primary
School Brežice; **Nermin
Bajramović**, Primary School
of National Hero Rajko

CAN WE LEAD WITHOUT RELATIONSHIPS?

FOUR PRINCIPLES FOR LEADING THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS



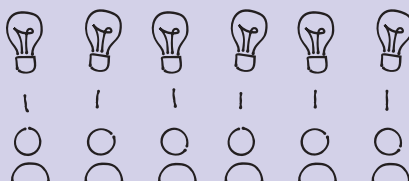
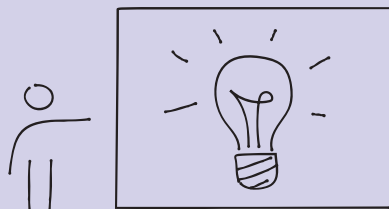
Bojana Florjančič
Partner and Training
leader, Hansen Beck, based
on official Hansen Beck
training materials

Even though many people use the terms “management” and “leadership” interchangeably, they refer to two distinct concepts. The difference was best illustrated by leadership guru John Kotter in his seminal HBR piece: “Management is about coping with complexity. Leadership, by contrast, is about coping with change.”

As the pace of change in the world of business accelerates, leadership is becoming increasingly important for success. However, this raises the question of what makes a good leader. Could we look for the answer in famous leaders, such as Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Bill Gates, or Winston Churchill? What was it? Personality type? Charisma? Looks? None of the above?

It's definitely not just one thing. Great leaders are those who embody a set of core leadership attributes and through our work, HANSEN BECK has identified Four Leadership Principles that can help anyone be a better leader. Find them below, interspersed with quotes from our local trainers.

PRINCIPLE 1: Ask more of yourself



Leadership means you lead by example and you need to step out of your comfort zone and be a role model for your team by always going the extra mile. People will follow you if you clearly demonstrate courage, energy, and dedication to bringing about change.

Take a look at Luis Urzúa. He was a Chilean mining foreman trapped in a mine collapse with 32 of his men. He stepped up, organized them in highly dangerous circumstances, and encouraged them to persist until all of them were saved. He was the last to leave after being trapped below the Atacama Desert for 70 days. That's a leader.



**WE BELIEVE THAT
EVERYONE HAS THE
POTENTIAL TO EXCEL.**

Tožalenič

PRINCIPLE 2: Ask more of your team members



In addition to making a personal effort, we need to make sure we're not asking too little of our team. Leadership is about helping others excel and even exceed their expectations. Just think of sports, where the underdog team is so often motivated to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat in the final moments.

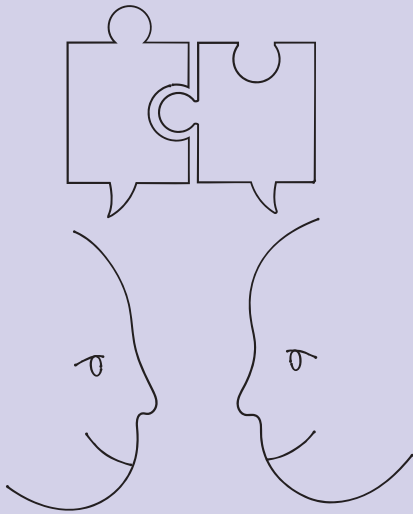
Can you apply this to work in a business team? Certainly. However, motivation will only work if you understand your people's motivations and aspirations. Start learning by regularly engaging with them and trying to understand their professional and personal motivations. Then build on this to recognize and develop their strengths by providing regular feedback and celebrating their success.



**YOU ARE A TRUE
LEADER WHEN YOU
HELP YOUR TEAM
BECOME SUCCESSFUL.
LEADERSHIP IS NOT
ABOUT YOU, IT'S ALL
ABOUT THE PEOPLE
YOU SERVE.**

Boštjan Stražar

PRINCIPLE 3:

Take a personal interest in your team members

There are many stories about great leaders taking a personal interest in others. Nelson Mandela famously visited the widow of former Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd, the main architect of the apartheid regime and the man who effectively put him in prison. Then there's a story about Richard Branson once talking to an airline staffer and remembering personal details about her and her husband even six months later.

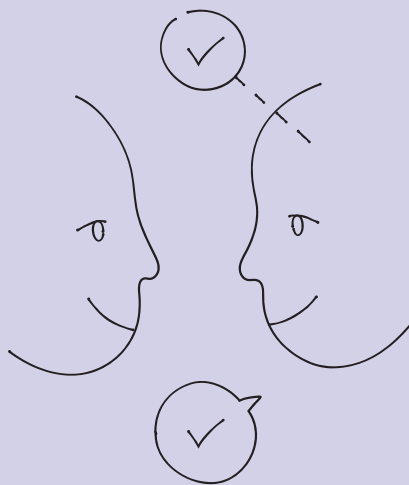
To be an effective leader, take a genuine interest in your team members. Ask them about their families, goals, and feelings about the company's successes or failures. Make sure you are consciously listening to their answers and keep an eye out for the qualities you like, respect, or admire.



SHOWING A SINCERE INTEREST IN OUR COWORKERS IS LIKE TAKING A SHOWER – ONCE A YEAR IS NOT ENOUGH.

Aaron Marko

PRINCIPLE 4:

Give your team members security

People won't give their best effort if they are scared, worried, or anxious. An environment that cultivates feelings of security and support motivates people to release their discretionary effort, defined as the effort that people can choose to give above and beyond the minimum expectation. This is very important. A Gallup Workplace Engagement Survey identified that as much as 50% of effort in the workplace is discretionary.

To create a motivating environment, ask people how they feel about things and then explore the alternatives they offer. To ensure things can move forward, support your people during difficult times and provide clarity and motivation by agreeing on concrete steps.



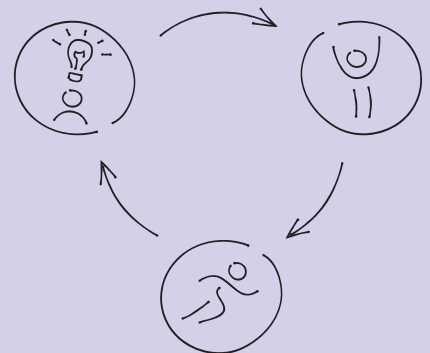
LEADERSHIP IS NOT SOMETHING WE DO TO OTHER PEOPLE, LEADERSHIP IS SOMETHING WE DO WITH OTHER PEOPLE.

Bojana Florjančič

A range of core attributes

To become a true leader, focusing on a single principle will not work. Instead, think of these principles as the four legs of a table. When one leg is shorter or longer, the whole table will wobble or even collapse.

So, how can you become a better leader? Here are the three steps you can follow to start:



- 1 Look honestly at your leadership and identify which of the principles should you develop.
- 2 Have the courage to ask your team members for feedback on your leadership style.
- 3 Make an action plan on how you will consciously develop the principles to strengthen.



THAT'S JUST THE WAY I AM!" IS A MISSED OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH. WHO YOU ARE IS WHAT YOU DECIDE TO BECOME.

Tina Gorenc

HANSEN BECK is an international training company working in 25 countries across five continents and focused on inspiring positive transformation through personal and professional development. Our trainers have real-world expertise in sales, leadership, and change management from some of the world's largest companies. Work with us for custom training that delivers true results and performance!

“Do or do not. There is no try.” YODA



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OUR TEAM IS BRAVE, RESILIENT, AND UNITED

WITH Andy Hunder

Andy Hunder
President of the American
Chamber of Commerce
in Ukraine



AmCham Ukraine stands by its nation and its members in the most difficult times. In what way?

A.H.— We are over nine months into the heroic battle of Ukrainians against terrorism and the atrocities of Russia's brutal war launched against Ukraine. Lionhearted Ukrainians are leading Ukraine to victory, and the business community is among them. Business is united, resilient, and fighting for Ukraine's future and freedom by defending, volunteering, and supporting Ukraine – a great country where we all live and work. Since the very first day of the war, our team has been doing its best to align efforts and actions in supporting our members that continue to believe in Ukraine, pay taxes, and keep Ukraine's economy running and Ukrainians employed. Our members have an opportunity to be part of the most powerful business community in Ukraine to shape a pro-growth agenda at the national level with direct access to Ukrainian and U.S. Government officials and receive daily support. They get access to the global investment community and are involved in AmCham's activities to champion Ukraine's rebuilding and E.U. accession efforts. We also help companies promote their brands, conquer new markets, and grow businesses despite the war.

War in the 21st century is madness. How can one maintain hope in challenging times?

A.H.— Despite the challenges brought by Russia's brutal and unprovoked war, business continues to believe in Ukraine and has already set a stretch target for 2023, which is a positive signal for the upcoming year. 98% of AmCham member companies plan to continue operations in Ukraine in 2023. 77% of members believe the war will end in 2023; and 92% think Ukraine will win the war. Ukraine is open for business, and the role of the private sector in Ukraine's rebuilding and reconstruction will be massive. It will be attractive and profitable for U.S. and international businesses to invest in a free, democratic, prosperous Ukraine after victory. That gives hope. Still, companies need to start preparing to invest in Ukraine now.

What does the power of human relationships represent to you personally?

A.H.— The best example of human relations nowadays is a connected, resilient, and enthusiastic team by your side, so your business can blow open the doors of creativity, innovation and passion. I've found that this connection is the key to boosting team efficiency, and we're lucky to have this synergy in our team.

AmChams throughout Europe united in AmChams in Europe are your sister chambers: are we sufficiently connected?

A.H.— AmChams in Europe and AmCham Ukraine share a special bond. Our relationship is unique and brings many years of cooperation that has intensified from year to year. The support and values we share make us feel connected, help us to succeed, and better serve our members on the ground. We are more than simply allies or friends. ACE is a like-minded family that has built the most productive relationship between business organizations throughout Europe.

Your team remains brave and united. How do you do it?

A.H.— Our team is brave, resilient and united. We collaborate, trust, respect and care for each other. We share one common goal – to make Ukraine a world-class destination for investment, innovation and job creation after the war. Our team continues to serve our members daily, getting ready to rebuild our beautiful and free Ukraine and accelerate its membership in the European Union.





BEST OF THE BEST 2022

In the scope of the Best of the Best program, AmCham Slovenia highlights, presents and rewards the best business practices within our business community for the ninth year in a row. The program provides guidance, inspiration and help in transferring new knowledge and positive business experiences. Through innovative approaches, exceptional projects and the best business practices bring new knowledge, approaches, products, processes and business models to the Slovenian business sphere. Their creativity and energy motivates others, and connection, cooperation and trust help to expand the knowledge, experience and optimism. This year, the program featured three thematic sets: **MOTIVATION**, **ESG** and **INNOVATION**

Meet this year's super finalists

Among the projects in the thematic set **MOTIVATION**, most votes from the jury and the audience went to the project of the company **Manpower d.o.o. – A four-day working week as a shift towards a better way of working and doing business**. Under the auspices of ManpowerGroup SEE, ManpowerGroup Slovenia has introduced a four-day working week for all internal employees along with work process optimization. Three months in, it turned out the pilot project had a positive impact on employees' psychological well-being and boosted their productivity, as well as resulting in a better work-life balance.

At **Novartis in Slovenia, and the University of Ljubljana**, they are aware of the opportunities arising from a joint mission and in that respect focus on activities for the development of young people. Their project **Building a society of knowledge and well-being together** ranked among the best in the ESG thematic set. Among other things, they made individual knowledge centers less reluctant to open cooperation, reduced bureaucracy, and enhanced the connection of experts in individual areas of expertise and the readiness of companies for long-term integration, which strengthens the innovative capacity of the participants and, in a broader sense, contributes to a higher quality of life for everyone.

At **Airnamics d.o.o., a member of the Kolektor**, they realize that we are entering an era of intensive transformation of jobs, and they came up with a brilliant idea – they created an intelligent robot worker and named it KoCo. **KoCo intelligent robot worker earned the title of the best in the INNOVATION** thematic set, as it enables fast and cost-effective automation of low-skilled manual work. It is able to work in semi-structured environments and contextualize its surroundings, and it adapts to changes in the work environment in real time. The company is currently developing additional functionalities based on market needs, while their core technology is already being applied 24/7 in their customers' plants, which is a testament to the contributions of this solution.

Best of the Best 2022 is Novartis Slovenia & University of Ljubljana!





AmCham
Slovenia



SINCERE CONGRATULATIONS
NOVARTIS IN
SLOVENIA &
UNIVERSITY
OF LJUBLJANA,
FOR THE BEST BUSINESS
PRACTICE OF 2022!



GENERAL SPONSOR BEST OF THE BEST

BEST TRAVEL PARTNER



triglav



NLB

NOMAGO

Pridi z nami



AmCham
BUSINESS
LEADERS
CLUB

BUSINESS LEADERS CLUB



AmCham Business Leaders Club is a club of business leaders of the largest companies, members of AmCham Slovenia, which enables the exchange of knowledge, views, and experiences at the highest level.

AmCham Business Leaders Club promotes dialogue with important guests, successful Slovenian and foreign members of the business community, diplomats, and decision-makers; informal networking events and building personal contacts, activities within the AmCham Business Leaders Book Club, and a selection of role models amongst Business Leaders.

AMCHAM BUSINESS LEADERS CLUB MEET

Exclusive meetings of top business leaders in an inner circle aim to establish relationships, exchange ideas, experiences, and best business practices at the highest level. Events are an excellent opportunity to make acquaintances and meet with top-level decision-makers from various fields.

AMCHAM BUSINESS LEADERS CLUB READ

At Book Club for Leaders, we address topics that are important for our business community, general society, and the world as a whole.

AMCHAM BUSINESS LEADERS CLUB LEAD

The Female and Male Business Leaders of the Year is an entirely new initiative in Slovenia. It is a response to the call of the AmCham YLC and addresses several challenges—the issue of role models, urgent changes in business leadership, the culture of dialogue, and fundamental values. It represents motivation and strengthens relationships.

Partners:



AMCHAM BUSINESS LEADER OF THE YEAR

BUSINESS AWARD OF THE FUTURE

In 2021, AmCham Slovenia introduced a new initiative: an award for the Female and Male Business Leader of the Year. The award is given to exceptional female and male leaders in the Slovene business world and was developed within the AmCham Business Leaders Club at the proposal of the AmCham Young Platform. Envisioned by the YOUNG Council and approved by the Young Leaders Club, the Female and Male Business Leader of the Year is their answer to the issues of role modeling, the culture of dialogue, and urgently needed changes in business leadership.



BUSINESS LEADER *of the Year*

AMCHAM BUSINESS LEADERS OF THE YEAR 2022

Three outstanding female business leaders, **Maja Mikek, Lucija Sajevec,** and **Ana Roš,** and three outstanding male business leaders, **Aleksander Čeferin, Jure Knez,** and **Jadran Lenarčič,** were selected by our young members to stand on the victory podium of business leadership for year 2022.

These are their stories!

HERE ARE THEIR STORIES WRITTEN BY MELITA MERŠOL



ANA ROŠ THE WORLD WILL HAVE TO WAKE UP!

From the cradle on, the biblical name Ana, which means grace, bestows on girls tenderness and a gentle view of the world and fellow human beings. The name Ana ranks second on the list of the most common female names in Slovenia, as there are almost 27,000 of them. Among them is a very special Ana. Roš. Having aristocratic roots. A mother. A rebel. A

unifier. A traveler. A woman of the world. A benefactor. Rescuer of the helpless. Self-taught. The best female chef in the world. In fact, the magician of Slovenian cuisine.

As a student, she helped serve guests in her husband-to-be's restaurant, and after graduating in international and diplomatic studies, she decided to stay on at Hiša Franko. She soon took over the kitchen. She worked hard, attended cooking classes around the world, and absorbed as much knowledge as she could, including the most scientific approaches. "From the very beginning, I endeavored to make my dishes highlight the season, the area, my own character, travels and femininity. I admit that I always wanted my hands to keep up with my head." She more than succeeded. To the stars. Even today, she works 16 or 18 hours a day along with her "strong team", as she proudly calls it, whose members come from all over the world, including a regularly employed young Afghan refugee, Hammed. Work inspires her. And her children make her immensely happy. She enjoys a close relationship with her son Sviti and daughter Eva Klara. She adores them. Together they backpack around the world, explore, play cards, dance salsa, drink rum, laugh. Ana considers her greatest success that both children trust her with everything. They tell each other everything,

good and bad. When they were little, they never went without a warm dinner, even though a packed restaurant was waiting for her. "Mom is going back down," they understood, and accepted as adults that their way of life is somewhat different.

A special place in Ana's heart belongs to her grandmother. "Ours was one of the most intense relationships I can remember. She was an incredibly strong woman, formidable, unstoppable, a beautiful aristocrat, with not a hair out of place. From her I get my stubbornness and the conviction that I am right, which is rooted within me," says the charismatic Ana, who had her lucky number 69 tattooed on her arm. At the same time, she admits that she often pays the price for her naivety and for wearing her heart on her sleeve. She never shies away from the problems of others and she cannot keep quiet about the horrors that are happening in the world. Even more, she shouts aloud: "The world will have to wake up!"



ALEKSANDER ČEFERIN A MAN WHOSE STATISTICAL VICTORIES ARE COMPLEMENTED WITH HUMANITY.

"I am not afraid of any of the big names, because I have no reason to be. I wonder if perhaps the unassertive Slovenian politics is to blame for the fact that Slovenians also appear unassertive," said Aleksander Čeferin very decisively once in an interview. The charismatic President of the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) does not lower his penetrating – blue-eyed – gaze. He does not beat around the bush. He speaks his mind. A perfectionist. A wise man. Insightful. Perceptive. Visionary. Free and worldly. Demanding on himself first. Harsh to the arrogant. Compassionate to the fragile. Always in action. Sensitive to injustice. Protector of the needy. A father of three girls and a husband. He loves Slovenia.

The most influential Slovenian at the head of UEFA believes in the power of football: *"Football is a passion. Around the globe, it is perceived as a kind of religion. It is the biggest social movement there is. The broadcast of the Champions League final alone was watched by a billion people around the world! Football unites."* When he was declared Delo's Person of the Year in 2021, it was written that he is aware of his influence when it comes to leading the *"global religion"*; his body of work, however, goes beyond football. He is aware of a leader's responsibility towards society,

Slovenia as well, so he does not keep silent, because he believes: *"When enough people with influence speak up, something will change. I speak up because I think it is the right thing to do."*

He is using his influence for socially responsible action. Responsibility for the well-being of all is one of his values. He demonstrates determination even in the gravest crisis. The first man of UEFA did not forget Slovenia upon the outbreak of the coronavirus. He did not help his country only in terms of sport, football and protective masks in the most difficult of times, but as a distinguished lawyer he clearly and loudly defended the rule of law and advocated respectful public communication. He firmly opposed everything that divides our – his – country, pointing out that such challenges can only be solved within Slovenia. On the day the war in Ukraine broke out, he immediately began bringing football players and their families to safety. With the UEFA Foundation he helps the most vulnerable in the Ukrainian war. Children.

Aleksander Čeferin is a man of many merits. A good man. A man whose statistical victories are complemented with humanity.



JURE KNEZ COMMITTED. RESPONSIBLE. HONEST. CARING.

"I am Jure Knez", is his playful answer to the question of who he is as a person; an outstanding doctor of mechanical engineering, president and co-founder of Dewesoft, an established name in the global market of measuring technology and reputable among prominent customers such as NASA, the Kennedy Space Center, Lufthansa, Bosch and the majority of the biggest car manufacturers.

An entrepreneur. A visionary. In the once powerful, but later rundown industry in Trbovlje, he built an impressive international company, co-owned by the workers. He believes in sharing. And helping. Helping young entrepreneurs. That is precisely the reason he designed Katapult – a startup accelerator. *"The more you give, the richer you are. You give back to the world and receive – I try to pass that on to my four children as well,"* emphasizes the family man and a big fan of ferrata climbing, a sport that gives him the opportunity for a good workout in a very short time and extreme satisfaction when reaching the mountain top. But not only that. He is convinced that: *"Mountains connect people, up there friendships are those rare real friendships."*

Despite his youth, Dr. Jure Knez appears slightly reserved and admits that he had problems speaking on stage, in front of

people, up to a couple of years ago. But when he speaks, one can in an instant feel his genuine, sincere energy and that spark of wit.

He is convinced that the younger generations are different, young people think differently. Therefore it is important to give a sense to everything when it comes to ideas about the future and putting cooperation at the forefront. He always puts moral and ethical values first, of which four are key for him and for Dewesoft: commitment, responsibility, sincerity, and care. He does not measure success in euros! What is most important to him? *"Relationships!"*

He says that if he does not give the answer right away, he will think the matter over and give his answer tomorrow or the next day. He also believes that even the biggest crisis can turn out to be the best business opportunity.

He always speaks in the plural. And he underlines that we must not forget that high mountains are practically unconquerable if we tackle them alone. People follow him because they want to be around him.

Finally, we could describe Jure Knez with a single word that he likes to use and that needs no further explaining: *"cool"* – we can fully attest that Jure is indeed that.



LUCIJA SAJEVEC TODAY, YOU WIN IF YOU COMPETE IN UNISON.

For seven, fairy-tale like years, seven being the magic number, Lucija Sajevec has been at the helm of AMZS, which today employs over 400 people in 30 business units and is undergoing exceptional growth.

She holds a Master's degree in economics. In 2012, she completed the

New Emerging Leaders program at ESADE Business School in Barcelona and the Senior Executive Program at Columbia University in New York. She emphasizes that she is a mother and a wife first. Her family fulfils her. At the same time, she is also a great athlete. She started as a dancer, then became the Slovenian and Austrian carting champion. She frequently points out that with a helmet on, no one knows whether you are a woman or a man – just like when it comes to business. *"The smell of gasoline has been with me since I was little"*, she says with a laugh, adding that it was most likely given to her instead of milk.

She describes her leadership style as collaborative and development-oriented. She firmly believes that today you win if you compete in unison. In her opinion, open communication and target orientation are crucial, while trust and respect are her paramount values. Among colleagues she is valued mostly because of her openness and approachability, sportsmanship and for communicating her position, supporting it with arguments. Lucija accepts opposition, which is required for progress, and explains this by saying: *"Differences enrich us!"* On her professional journey, she set herself the goal to be a leader, not (just) a manager. When her mentee Luka expresses doubts

about his dream job being achievable, she practically exclaims: *"Where there's a will there's a way and if you have a spark, you can achieve the impossible."*

As regards the division of Slovenia, she believes that we are forgetting the content and should follow the example of team athletes. Getting on the same bus, going in the same direction. This is the only way Slovenia will be able to win! She comments on the fact that we concern ourselves a lot with unimportant things by saying that the nation should stick together, stand on each other's shoulders and look to the far horizon...

Lucija Sajevec, winner of the Young Manager Award 2019, presented by the members of the Managers' Association, believes in good energy and chemistry between people. If that is lacking, she is convinced that one should invest in a relationship the maximum, the highest value and make an effort. Even if the energy is not being reciprocated, you always get something out of every relationship. There are people with a special charisma, whose dynamic presence and work inspire others. Lucija is definitely one of them.

In addition to family life, she very much enjoys every first Thursday of the month. These days are reserved for her friends. Seven of them. The fairy-tale circle is closed.



JADRAN LENARČIČ ONE OF A KIND.

There are seas. And there is Jadran* Lenarčič. A man as vast as the sea. A genuine Mediterranean. An intellectual. Sensitive. A scientist. More than a scientist. One of the pioneers and founders of robot kinematics, biorobotics and humanoid robots, with much of the inner child about him. Because children have a vision. Adults, on the other hand, fear vision.

If a crowd goes left, he will ask why not

go right? A sceptic, questioning first himself and then others, he is firmly convinced that everyone has something in them which gives them the edge above others. Whatever others decide, Jadran tends to decide the opposite – it is in his nature to always come up with something original.

A great art aficionado, he says that Picasso's works have such an effect on him that he feels as if he had painted them, living in those days. The piano has occupied a very special place in his life since early childhood. Unfortunately, he did not have the opportunity to learn how to play, but he can recognize its magical spell with his eyes closed.

It does not matter to him how much of a math expert a person is. It is the resonance that counts – when you meet someone you resonate with on the same frequency, it feels as if you have known each other for 100 years or from a previous life. He swears by such encounters. When you look into the eyes of an unknown person and recognize them. He has met many people whom he admired. Extremely intelligent, reasonable, honest and not at all conceited, who immediately took him as a friend, which makes him immensely happy.

He says roguishly that he has qualities a man should not have and he actually managed to do most when he was lazy.

The irony that the first three letters of his surname mean lazy in Slovenian is not lost on him and he likes to point out that any reason for not doing something is hollow. He jokingly says that he is as much of a leader as a guinea pig. He is not a leader, he says. Sometimes there is no rule for leadership, he adds with determination. His leadership was always based on emotions – how people accepted him, understood his emotions. He observed and realized that this is what matters the most. Namely, that people see you, recognize when you are happy and when you are sad. Trust was also one of his assets. *"Everyone should have equal opportunities. Balanced possibilities were my way of running the institute,"* explains the outstanding Dr. Jadran Lenarčič with conviction. He urges young generations to take matters into their own hands as soon as possible.

He points out that we should be afraid of people, not technology. Last but not least, did you know that robot is a Czech word?

Dr. Jadran Lenarčič, who is overjoyed when his grandson refers to him as Iadan, is unique. One of a kind.

* Translator's note: Jadran is Slovenian for Adriatic.



MAJA MIKEK ALWAYS ENTER THROUGH THE MAIN ENTRANCE.

Maja Mikek. Special charisma. Outspoken. Determined, but sensitive on the inside. Co-founder of Celtra, one of the world's leading providers of digital mobile advertising technology, speaks her mind. She loves all the seasons, but spring will always be her favorite, the month of May in particular. She thinks of herself as an old soul and believes they never go away. Although she lost her grandmother a very long time ago, she feels her presence very strongly. Among many pearls of wisdom her grandmother bestowed upon her was that she must enter through the main entrance always and everywhere. With an open heart. And she should think more about others and less about herself. And also to give of herself.

Many people say that Maja, who is a master of planning and financial management, is not a typical financier, which she completely agrees with. If she deals too much with numbers and has no contact with what actually defines them, namely people, it is hard for her to do a good job. That is why she refers to herself as a social worker of some kind. What excites her the most is a person. For her, the most important thing is how people feel. She sees the good in them, looks for purity and relies on human touch. She feels sorry

for those who have no one to hug them.

We should ask ourselves what it is that lights a spark in us, says Maja, and for her these are mathematics, sport and people. She is interested in childhood stories, when individuals really shone, and she points out that we only have one life. So we should live it to the fullest. Also when it comes to business and leadership. One definitely has to be special, different and able to highlight one's special features. She also stresses that it is necessary to find meaning, without delay. Every day, not in two years.

Although she lives in America, as she needs the excitement, she will carry Slovenia – describing it as green, fairy-tale like, sunny, small, innovative – within herself forever. The smell of the Adriatic Sea, the peaks of the Kamnik Alps, contact with beautiful nature ... all this revives her and makes her feel where she comes from.

Maja Mikek is carried by life and she bravely embarks on it. With great feeling. Some stories are simply destined to end in success and convey considerable (personal) greatness.

AmCham Business Leaders of the Year 2022 was illustrated by Vida Igličar.

AMCHAM BUSINESS LEADERS OF THE YEAR 2023

Two outstanding female business leaders, Aleša Mižigoj and Ana Petrič, and two outstanding male business leaders, Blaž Brodnjak and Enzo Smrekar, are on the podium of business leadership for 2023.



ALEŠA MIŽIGOJ
Medex



ANA PETRIČ
DEOS Center starejših
Notranje Gorice



BLAŽ BRODNJAK
NLB



ENZO SMREKAR
Atalntic Droga Kolinska



AmCham Slovenia

HEALTH & WELLBEING COMMITTEE

Knowledge & Support

abbvie

AMGEN®



IBM®

janssen
PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES OF
johnson & johnson

Medtronic


PARSEK

 Pfizer

 Roche

 triglavhealth

An abstract graphic featuring a large, light purple circle in the background. Overlaid on this are several concentric, semi-transparent circles in shades of yellow, orange, and pink. In the center of these circles is a bright blue, teardrop-shaped object. The text 'AmCham YOUNG' is superimposed over the graphic, with 'AmCham' in a light blue font and 'YOUNG' in a white font.

AmCham YOUNG

YOUNg Platform

The AmCham YOUNg Platform represents a way of thinking forward.

Student Entrepreneurship and Internship

AmCham Slovenia, in cooperation with the U.S. Embassy in Slovenia, links students' academic and business career through an entrepreneurship study and internship program. The program was funded and organized in partnership with the U.S. Embassy.

11 SUMMERS

20 STUDENTS

2-WEEK ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM + 1 MONTH INTERNSHIP



AmCham Young Professionals™

Personal and career development for the next generation of business leaders. Every generation in this program has its own ambassador – AmCham Top Potential of the Year.

13 GENERATIONS

2500+ POTENTIALS

150 NEXT BUSINESS LEADERS NETWORK

15 AMCHAM TOP POTENTIALS OF THE YEAR



AmCham Mentor

The one-year mentorship program is tailored to an individual mentorship pair, focusing on leadership and knowledge transfer. Two-way communication is a source of learning for both mentor and mentee.

1 MENTORSHIP YEAR

450 MENTORING PAIRS

1:1 MENTORING



AmCham Young Leaders Club

A network of business leaders under 45 who wish to work together to create a better future, a strong economy and high quality of life and give back to the community. Young leaders focus on the topics of Ecological, Social, and Governance, and strive to set a good example in their respective spheres of work and connect with like-minded individuals.

350 MEMBERS

5 MEETINGS

3 INITIATIVES



First Mentor

First Mentor is a project designed to serve two purposes, firstly to enable students and young people between 15 and 25 to have their FIRST mentor help them with their first big career choice challenges—what to study, how to get a first job and how to approach life, and to provide young professionals with an opportunity to gain their FIRST experience as mentors.

5 GENERATIONS

400+ MENTORING PAIRS

1:1 MENTORING



Snowball

Center of Optimism. A program with the desire, energy, and ambition of youth to take part in shaping the world of Slovenia and to “get the snowball rolling” together with great ideas. Snowball's most recent project is A Prototype of a Country for Talents. A Prototype of a Country for Talents is a call to action to help Slovenia identify and retain its talent and attract additional talents from abroad.



AmCham Equals

AmCham Equals is a community committed to spreading positive stories about the values of equality, diversity, and inclusion.



AmCham Top Potential 2022

JUNE 9, 2022



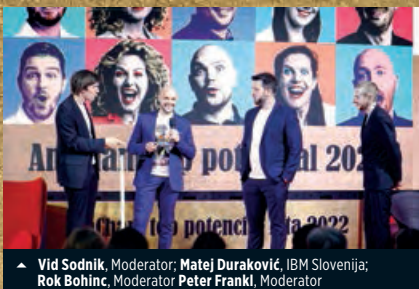
▲ AmCham Top Potentials of the Year 2022: **Matej Duraković**, IBM Slovenija; **Aljaž Dobnikar**, Plume Design



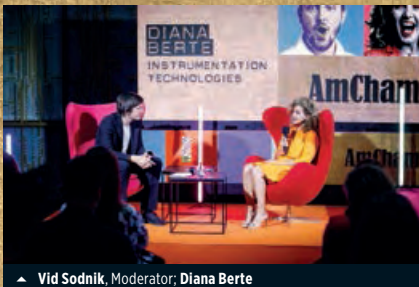
▲ AmCham Top Potentials of the Year 2022: **Matej Duraković**, IBM Slovenija; **Aljaž Dobnikar**, Plume Design



▲ **Vid Sodnik**, Moderator; **Tjaša Tomšič**, PDI Vizija; **Rok Bohinc**, Moderator; **Peter Frankl**, Moderator



▲ **Vid Sodnik**, Moderator; **Matej Duraković**, IBM Slovenija; **Rok Bohinc**, Moderator; **Peter Frankl**, Moderator



▲ **Vid Sodnik**, Moderator; **Diana Berte**



▲ **Vid Sodnik**, Moderator; **Matej Duraković**, IBM Slovenija; **Aljaž Dobnikar**, Plume Design; **Tjaša Tomšič**, PDI Vizija; **Marko Maučec**, Escapebox; **Diana Berte**; **Aljaž Vodnik**, AmCham Slovenija; **Tonja Avsenik**, AmCham Slovenija



▲ **Aljaž Dobnikar**, Plume Design; **Diana Berte**; **Matej Duraković**, IBM Slovenija; **Tonja Avsenik**, AmCham Slovenija; **Tjaša Tomšič**, PDI Vizija; **Marko Maučec**, Escapebox



▲ **Anja Bošković**, Skupina Triglav



▲ **Vid Sodnik**, Moderator; **Aljaž Dobnikar**, Plume Design; **Rok Bohinc**, Moderator; **Peter Frankl**, Moderator



▲ AmCham Top Potential of the Year 2022

ALJAŽ DOBNIKAR

AMCHAM TOP
POTENTIAL OF
THE YEAR 2022

You became representatives of your generation of AmCham Young Professionals having won the title of AmCham Top Potential. What have you learned as participants of the 12th generation and where would you like to leave your mark on the future?

A.D.— I have noticed that many young people want more in life than just what a set of circumstances and completing daily tasks brings. This fills me with optimism. I think it is essential to have a critical mass of young people, capable and eager future leaders who want social progress. I myself joined the 12th generation with the desire to identify my potential and become a part of a group of young people who want just that. I realized that young people have a great desire for socializing and social contact, if only we have the opportunity to make sense of that. We want contact with each other and we want action. Many of us are motivated especially by a common goal. I like to pass on knowledge. It makes me



▲
Aljaž Dobnikar
Senior Software
Development Engineer,
Plume Design, AmCham
Top Potential of the Year
2022

feel good to help someone learn or achieve something. AmCham offers me the opportunity for such engagement.

You emphasize the importance of mentoring, since a mentor discovers answers to unanswered questions and many other things. What is your mentoring style and what advice would you give to your younger self and leaders starting their career?

A.D.— This year, I got the opportunity to be a mentor myself for the first time. Since my mentee and I are both just starting our journey together and for the first time in our respective roles, I will tackle this challenge slowly and gradually. I believe the right mix of self-confidence and humility is key. This

**"I THINK LEADERSHIP
IN THE TRUE SENSE
OF THE WORD ALWAYS
MUST HAVE BEEN
LEADERSHIP BY
EXAMPLE."**

— ALJAŽ DOBNIKAR

way, you can focus both on the quality of the content and the relationship, and as a mentor you ensure that the mentee's goals always come first. It was the desire for direction and example in my younger years that prompted me to decide to be a mentor. There are few universal tips that suit everyone. But I would like everyone to dare try and take risks at a young age. When you are just starting your journey, the experiences you gain early on are much more valuable and have a greater impact on your life than those obtained later. When you are young, they broaden your horizons, provide different starting points and offer new possibilities.

How could we establish a better mentoring relationship and flow of knowledge in Slovenia outside the school systems?

A.D. In my opinion, it is precisely the improvements in the school system that will facilitate the spread of good practices. It is a sort of "solution of the second kind", which will also be the most permanent and will survive the change of culture of the next generations. Systemic solutions would help to a degree, but ultimately a social shift must happen. Mentoring needs to become cool. Young people respond to social network influencers, they are constantly exposed to them. They imitate them in everything that is portrayed as cool and follow their lives. There is a big

gap between that and "boring school", but it doesn't have to be that way. You have to find success stories, give them the recognition they deserve, support and encourage individuals who are trying to do something more. AmCham has been doing this through the "I'm a teacher!" program.

There is a lot of talk about leading by example. What does it mean to you? Do new leadership styles change the perception of authority?

A.D. I think leadership in the true sense of the word always must have been leadership by example. At the same time, it seems to me that people's values and expectations of leaders have changed. In my view, the leadership styles of younger and older generations differ much like the generations as a whole. Nowadays, there are less formalized relationships, both private and business, and a greater emphasis on personal approach. Strict hierarchy and titles are not as important, people value praise, a sense of worth and importance of their work more. These facts make it easier for leaders who have natural charisma and are extroverted and self-confident with great social skills. They encounter fewer formal frameworks and obstacles. At the same time, extra effort needs to be made for a leader to gain respect, as it does not come with the title or a place in the hierarchy, but must be earned in its own right.

You studied in Switzerland. What was the main take-away from living abroad? What are Slovenia's competitive advantages in your opinion?

A.D. Studying abroad is a unique experience, I would recommend it to just about everyone. It puts even the most confident person out of their comfort zone. A different language and culture prepare you for a different perception of the world. Moving to another place brings a series of practical

challenges that give you a new starting point in life and provide you with an opportunity for a fresh start, to organize yourself differently. At the same time, the move awakened in me a strong desire to explore and learn new things in all areas of life. This happened without me realizing it, but everything I did was more intense. However, for many people a foreign country is not the "promised land". I returned to my homeland mainly for personal reasons. At the same time, I realized that the quality of life in Slovenia is very high. With smallness comes accessibility! Slovenia has an important geostrategic position, which helps to retain talent and attract business opportunities.

You are already a successful software development engineer with many interests who strives for high knowledgeability. Do you have any ideas about how to attract young people to ICT professions?

A.D. I am convinced that many young people would be enthusiastic about ICT careers; many simply don't have enough information or encouragement. Knowledge comes with time. As with mentoring, ICT must become a cool profession. Some ideas are systemic. Finding examples of good practice and giving them a voice and visibility. Changing the educational structure so that it presents young people with ICT career opportunities and expanding study capacities. Attracting foreign professors and encouraging cooperation with the industry would certainly have a positive impact. Other ideas are more of a social nature. Promoting hackathon events would certainly improve the perception of ICT professions among many young people. Not everything is technical and complicated, overcoming a common challenge is fun, and the feeling of triumph is even greater when the idea comes to life in the final product.





▲
Matej Duraković
 Executive Search
 Operations Partner, ES&I,
 IBM Slovenija, AmCham Top
 Potential of the Year 2022

MATEJ DURAKOVIĆ

AMCHAM TOP
POTENTIAL
OF THE YEAR 2022

You became the representatives of your generation of AmCham Young Professionals having won the title of AmCham Top Potential. What have you learned as participants of the 12th generation and where would you like to leave your mark on the future?

M.D.— Participation in the AmCham Young Professionals program first of all expanded my horizons, provided me with unique opportunities to listen and learn from both my peers and the best Slovenian leaders, and form many new acquaintances, some of which have developed into friendships. I would like to leave my mark in raising awareness of the importance of diversity and the inclusion of people with different opportunities. I am convinced that this is the

only way for organizations striving to be successful to prosper, grow and achieve the best results.

In those who are not approachable and authentic, the young generation quickly detects inauthenticity. What do young people entering the labor market today expect from leaders and the work environment?

M.D.— True, the new generation and young people of today like to work, but they do not want work to occupy their entire life, because they value their free time very highly. They are primarily looking for flexible jobs in a flexible work environment, they are not keen on clocking-in at the workplace and they expect from their leaders authenticity, empathy, a culture of dialogue and a leadership style based on openness and cooperation.

Matej, you are also an ambassador of diversity and inclusion. How does this manifest in leadership?

M.D.— In my opinion, there is too little talk and not enough action when it comes to diversity and inclusion in the Slovenian economy. I am fortunate to work in an international company that is a leader and sets trends in this field, because it “lives by” diversity and inclusion. I am IBM’s diversity and inclusion ambassador, because I believe that it is diversity that enriches our world and broadens horizons. Successful organizations achieve the best results specifically with the diversity of employees. In everyday life, I am happy to share the good practices we follow at IBM and try to raise awareness of the importance of diversity and inclusion – both for social responsibility and the positive results it brings to both employees and the organization.

Slovenia has an aging population, older employees often do not feel safe because of the current circumstances and constant changes. On the other hand, there is not enough talk in Slovenia about neurodiversity, which also has advantages. How can we establish psychological safety for these two groups as well?

M.D.— Psychological safety at work is extremely important because it contributes to the commitment and well-being of employees, encourages involvement, increases innovation, and much more. I think that every employer’s policy must be aimed at psychological safety, which can be achieved through active listening, an open dialogue, respect for everyone, leading by example and treating mistakes as an opportunity to learn. I also believe that it is crucial to regularly request feedback from employees about how they feel in the company and in their workplace, and give them the opportunity to express their view of psychological safety in the organization.

**“A TRUE LEADER
HELPS TEAM MEMBERS
EXPRESS THEMSELVES
AND LIVE THE
BEST VERSION OF
THEMSELVES.”**

— MATEJ DURAKOVIĆ

Do you think that Slovenia is attractive for young talents in terms of psychological safety?

M.D.— The new forms of work that appeared with the global health crisis have resulted in many changes and thus also the opportunity to systematically create psychological safety in changed circumstances. I believe that Slovenia is generally attractive for young talents in terms of psychological safety, because in recent years many companies have devoted it more and more attention. Still, we should not forget that psychological safety is a two-way street, as it is not all up to the employer: the employee must also contribute their share. In my opinion, trust and integrity are essential in building psychological safety. That is why we should build it every day.

The pandemic gave rise to new forms of work. How can we maintain the connection and culture of a company in a hybrid environment?

M.D.— The perception of work envi-

ronments has changed considerably in recent years. I believe that in a hybrid environment it is of key importance that the employer encourages cooperation, interaction and innovation among co-workers. It is paramount to foster a sense of community, which is often a challenge in a hybrid environment, while maintaining an environment that allows independent and uninterrupted work when necessary.

What qualities do you look for in a leader?

M.D.— Are there any values that today’s leaders are lacking in your opinion? First, I would emphasize the difference between a “boss” and a “leader”. A leader earns the title by gaining trust of their team and through open, honest and transparent communication with team members. A true leader helps team members express themselves and live the best version of themselves. So I look for authenticity and empathy in every leader. We live in a very dynamic and changing environment, which dictates a fast pace of life and quick decisions, which is why, in my opinion, today’s leaders mainly lack patience and an open ear.

What experience has shaped you the most?

M.D.— There were three milestones in my life that have shaped me: the Erasmus exchange program in Spain in 2009, where I first learned to be independent, broadened my horizons and completed my diploma thesis, my first full-time job in 2010, where I am still (after many years) employed today (IBM) and a car accident in 2014, which put me in a wheelchair and from which it took me a year to recover, while the doctors were not sure I would ever be able to walk again. This experience changed my outlook on the world and has completely shuffled my priorities in life.





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Thank you,
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ANDREJKA SMOLNIKAR PRAH
Managing Director Bayer Slovenia
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Atlantic Droga Kolinska

ENZO SMREKAR
Vice-President for Savoury spreads. Donat Mg and
international expansion at Atlantic Grupa and General
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Riko

JANEZ ŠKRABEC
General Manager

Goodyear Slovenija

MATEJ ZAVRL
Managing Director

Avantcar

GAŠPER ŽVAN
Owner



▲
Riitta Fagerholm Mošić
President of Young Leaders
AmChampions, Program
Manager, Dun & Bradstreet

We have the passion and knowledge to move things in the right direction

BY **Riitta Fagerholm Mošić**

How do you see AmCham Young Leaders Club as a community?

R.F.M. I see AmCham YLC as a community of amazing individuals, who bring a great source of energy, ideas, and positive cooperation. I am continuously surprised and inspired by the creativity and talent of the members, not to mention their forward-looking attitude and the desire for continuous learning.

Seeing and feeling this amazing energy and commitment brings me hope for the future and makes me want to engage with them to build a better world for us all — on a personal as well as on a community level. Bearing in mind the uniqueness of each of the members, there is so much to learn from one another. As long as we are all willing to share and contribute to making our world a better place to live in, there are no obstacles we could not tackle together.

What is your mission as president of the YLC?

R.F.M.— I want to make my mission as the president of the YLC to do my best in supporting the work of the Young Leaders AmChampions in driving forward the common goals that we all aligned for at the beginning of our term.

In the scope of our framework, which focuses on the three main pillars of Ecological, Social, and Governance, our goal is to highlight the great content we are offering via our existing framework of events and projects. We want to activate our members even more and take into consideration the wishes of our community members as much as possible. I am already looking forward to all the great events we have in store for the next two years!

For me personally it is also very important to go as public as we can with all the great initiatives we have running. I firmly believe that the more people know of the work we do and all the important topics we are covering, the more they will want to actively join in on the fun! So, I hope that after two years of our committed work, AmCham Young Leaders Club will be an even more engaged and renowned community of great future leaders.

How does YLC fit into the ESG paradigm?

R.F.M.— ESG has become a buzzword in today's world, and we too often see it just as an empty commitment on paper. However, we are determined not to

leave it like that, so I feel the values and the topics that YLC seeks to support fit the paradigm of ESG extremely well.

As I already mentioned, our work in the next two years will focus on the topics of Ecological, Social, and Governance, and, with the specific subtopics of sustainable business models, circular economy, innovation, meritocracy, and transparency, I feel it is a great match. We already have the passion and knowledge to move things in the right direction and hope to do so even more in the coming years as I can see the topics slowly entering our everyday lives and workplaces.

We are planning YLC events around Meritocracy and Transparency, Equality Best Practices, and an event destined to crashing stereotypes with a Human Library. We are also working on a special workshop-type event around the real implementation of good ESG practices, so stay tuned!

What are the projects under the YLC umbrella?

R.F.M.— The current projects under the YLC umbrella are First Mentor (Prvi mentor), AmCham Equals, and Snowball (Snežna kepa).

The common AmCham values of Collaboration, Trust, Optimism, Creativity, and Passion have always served as a basis for all the work conducted in the scope of the Snowball (Snežna kepa) initiative and will continue to do so. Snowball will be, as the name suggests, a generator of ideas that can then be harnessed and directed toward the

different topics in the structural pillars of Ecological, Social, and Governance as described before.

First Mentor is our bridge to the younger generations, and AmCham Equals drives forward the important work of fairness, equality, and equity. We believe that with both programs we are trying to give something back to the community and empower young people and future leaders.

And of course, we have the YLC Fun events with the principal aim of building community and generating good energy among the members.

Which of the projects is especially close to your heart?

R.F.M.— I personally feel very attached to the First Mentor (Prvi mentor) and AmCham Equals projects, since I have been with both initiatives from the very beginning. It is always very rewarding to see an idea grow from a small seed into an actual initiative and grow into bloom. With having the 5th generation of First Mentor kick off just a month ago, I really take pleasure in seeing how the initiative runs forward, has a good structure built on the experience gained, and is already in a mature state of running as "business as usual". This is all because of the great team of individuals, who are selflessly dedicating their free time to the project and really feel the potential it holds. I'm sure we will take this program into a bright future.



FIRST MENTOR

Meet one of the most active mentoring pair from First mentor, Aleksander & Jan

Aleksander Baretić

When I first met Jan, I immediately recognized his strong motivation, discipline and personal drive. Due to his sports background, wide area of student-work experience and inborn curiosity we quickly established a genuine relationship, where we both felt comfortable to speak about any topic, be it personal or professional.

The nature of our meetings was as colorful as nature passing between the four seasons. From setting a general goal for our mentorship year, to finding ways and measures to get there, to ad-hoc addressing operational challenges and overcoming them. We were meeting live in Slovenia and Prague, had few online meetings and were always available to each other over phone. Jan showed a high level of self-initiative and therefore was great to work with. As an observer, I could see significant progress in how Jan developed his approach and achieved many important milestones. Being in the role of mentor also opened up new perspectives to me, showing me key insights of work in a different industry and millennials' perspective and motivation.

Overall, the journey with Jan has been super pleasant, even if we were sometimes addressing difficult topics. In fact, after one year of working together, we mutually decided that we would continue our collaboration in the future. As we share a common passion for sea and recreational spearfishing, we added to our bucket list a fishing weekend on the Adriatic Sea. My main advice to Jan would be: keep on working hard, but don't forget to play hard either!



▲ Aleksander Baretić, AmCham Young Leaders Club, BSH Hišni aparati



▲ Jan Štefan, The First Mentor, Alpod

Jan Štefan

I learned about The First Mentor program at a lecture organized by AmCham with the help of the School of Economics and Business. Right from the start, I thought the idea of successful individuals helping young people at the beginning of their career path was useful and worth trying. Since I work in sales and organization, I thought it best to choose a mentor who has a lot of knowledge in this field. Aleksander and I got along very well in the past year.

He is a mentor with specific knowledge in more than one area. He has a very broad perspective of things and relies on his experience to help solve problems that arise in the course of my career journey. As a young person, I think it is very important to have someone from the outside – in addition to mentors in the company – who gives you different ideas and address new questions. Over the past year, the mentor helped me with advice on the salary and employee remuneration system, building the company structure, decisions on recruitment and dismissals, and shared his views on marketing activities and much more. Without him, I think that we would have solved things differently and not as well as we did together.



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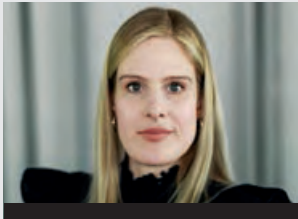


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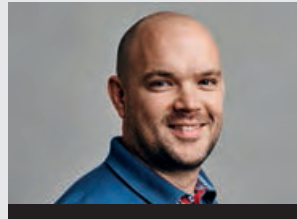
Members of AmCham Young Board



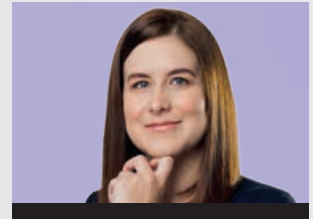
TONJA AVSENIK
AmCham Young Platform Leader



ALJAŽ DOBNIKAR
Senior Software Development Engineer,
Plume Design, AmCham Top Potential
of the Year 2022



MATEJ DURAKOVIĆ
Executive Search Operations Partner,
EMEA, IBM Slovenija, AmCham Top
Potential of the Year 2022



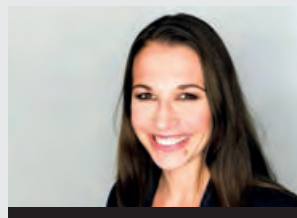
VITA GODEC, PhD, MBA
Managing Director, Lenis farmacevtika
d.o.o., AmCham Top Potential of the
Year 2018



MATEJ GOSTIŠA
Chief Strategy Officer, Login5
Foundation, AmCham Top Potential
of the Year 2019



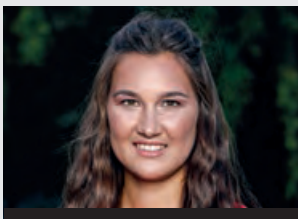
BLAŽ JAKIČ
Member of the Executive Board,
Triglav osiguranje, AmCham Top
Potential of the Year 2013



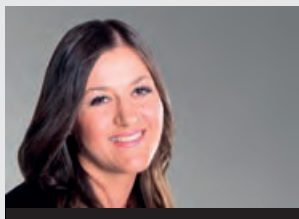
DEANA JEZERŠEK
Co-founder and Managing Director,
LanguageSitter d.o.o., AmCham
Top Potential of the Year 2017



URŠKA KAJTNER
HR Business Partner, Software,
AmCham Top Potential of the Year 2020



NINA KLEMENČIČ
Founder, Cococarrots, AmCham Top
Potential of the Year 2021



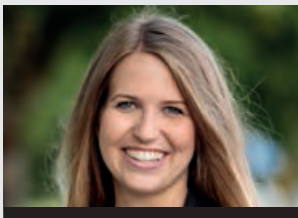
MAJA KOŠIR
Director, Organizacija dogodkov,
Maja Košir s.p.



NINA LANGERHOLC ČEBOKLI
Independent Consultant for
Organization Design, AmCham
Top Potential of the Year 2016



TOMAŽ LANIŠEK
Sector for Development and Smart
Cities, City Municipality of Kranj,
AmCham Top Potential of the Year 2011



NINA PEJIČ
CEO at Projecthouse, Secretary-General
at Slovenian-Chinese Business Council,
AmCham Top Potential of the Year 2020



MATEJ POTOKAR
CEO, Emma, President of the AmCham
Young Board



BOGO SEME
Intuitive Coach of the AmCham
Young Platform



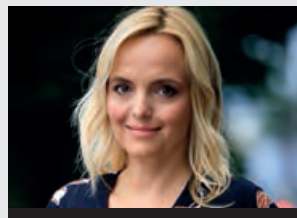
GAJ STAVBER, PhD
Sr. Strategy Manager Global
Development at Sandoz, Lek d.d.,
AmCham Top Potential of the Year 2014



NANA ŠUMRADA SLAVNIČ,
PhD, LL.M.
Ekipa2 d.o.o. (Outfit7), General Counsel,
AmCham Top Potential of the Year 2012



TOMAŽ ŠVAJGER
Commercial Director, Heads Adriatic
d.o.o., AmCham Top Potential of the
Year 2015



AJŠA VODNIK
CEO, AmCham Slovenia

An abstract graphic featuring a large, light purple circle in the background. Overlaid on this are several concentric circles and a central, elongated blue shape. The circles have a gradient of colors, including yellow, orange, and pink. The central blue shape is a solid, vibrant blue. The overall composition is centered and balanced.

Digital 4 Human

DEVELOPING SKILLS FOR A DIGITAL FUTURE

BY Uroš Ocepek, PhD

A shortage of ICT experts is hindering Slovenia on its way to becoming a digitalized country, which poses a big problem for its economy and society. What new possibilities would digitalization open and what would it mean for the quality of life of its citizens?

u.o. Digitalization should make our lives richer. Not only will we learn how to use it and will it replace some analogue solutions, digitalization should actually stimulate everybody to have digital twins (of people, things, services, processes etc.). This would bring greater transparency and give a clearer picture of the state of the society and individuals. Only in this way can we truly be able to help everybody – of course, there is a risk that that a share of population will not accept digitalization or will be

Digitalization should make our lives richer.



PHOTO:
Unsplash



overlooked, due to various factors. This could result in an even greater gap within society. I see digitalization as an opportunity for us Slovenians to catch up with nations who are already considerably ahead of us in this regard.

By 2030, Slovenia will need 5,000 new ICT experts every year. Currently, there are only 1,100 students graduating in the field of ICT annually and the number of university places increases by around 5% yearly. The combination of social and natural science knowledge and skills contributes to a more successful tackling of complex challenges in society. Would this also hold true when planning new specialist and multidisciplinary study programs in the fields of computer and information sciences?

u.o. I believe that the educational system in Slovenia should be revamped. Our schools are excellent and other countries should use our system as a model, but there is still much room for improvement. In my opinion our educational system is very rigid and cumbersome. It is not change-ready, especially when it comes to education in computer science content. First, we ought to change education legislation and completely redesign the school system in such a way that it will be mindful of the requirements of the labor market and follow the career paths of children all the way to their first job. We would need a transparent system (let us say an application), which will follow what content an individual has absorbed, what competences they have acquired as a result of education. I think we should have an education system which supports the uniqueness of an individual's learning (and also professional) path. And not only that. The system should continuously involve employers (the economic sector) – not only in designing professional standards and educational programs, but also in their implementa-



tion. Thus, when students completed their education, we would really have educated market-ready professionals. By enabling each individual to choose between modules, we would truly be supporting multidisciplinary on the entire vertical of the educational system. Or, as I like to say to my students: today you can no longer have only expertise in a specific narrow field, you have to have a breadth of knowledge. It is exactly multidisciplinary which provides this breadth.

What are some other possibilities to ensure a larger number of experts? Could the system of national vocational qualifications and designing of additional certification programs also be the answer?

u.o. — I partially answered this in the previous question. I think that the com-



Uroš Očepek, PhD
Representative of Slovenia
at the Global Teacher Prize

mon thread to education should be life-long learning. With this in mind, our school system should be redesigned so that an individual could enter the educational system at any time and it would not make a big difference as to when this happens. I am certain that in 20 years we will have completely different professions and many educational programs might become obsolete by then – perhaps, they will no longer be part of the curriculum. Therefore, it is of key importance that we start discussing solutions. Obtaining national vocational qualifications and designing additional certification programs are definitely part of the answer – but, as already said, improvements are needed and we should indeed follow the developments on the labor market.

On the one hand, decision-makers swear by increasing digital competencies through the reform of curricula, and on the other, we are faced with a lack of teachers. One could say that the digital competencies of primary and secondary school students in Slovenia are at the mercy of the digital literacy of teachers and their decisions. Can you as a teacher share with us whether the teaching methods utilize digital tools and what the state of computer equipment in Slovenian schools is?

u.o.____ I agree that a teacher with good digital skills can help students obtain digital competencies, but these will not solve the problem of a shortage of experts. In my opinion, colleges endow future teachers with knowledge and skills in digital literacy. Of course, the teachers who are already practising should also be taken care of in this regard. The gaps between generations are getting increasingly bigger. There are some developments, but unfortunately the current education gives only an introduction to technology and provides some recipes for how to work with it. I have noticed a lack of systematically organized seminars (and also training) which would follow the progress of teachers' skills and help them develop digital competencies. Unfortunately – I have to say this – I have been noticing that even the lecturers/providers of education in the field of digital competencies are not familiar with the DigComp and DigCompEdu frameworks at all. Namely, the European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (DigComp) covers several areas of competencies that are still overlooked.

What will be the consequences for our children due to the untimely introduction of the compulsory computer and information science course? What does this mean for the future of our society?

u.o.____ First of all, I would like to say that today many are convinced that a compulsory computer and information science course is already part of primary school education. In fact, there are electives that a student may choose if the school provides them. In any case, these elective subjects only cover a small portion of the computer and information science content. At the same time, there is much talk now about digital competencies as the “savior” for this problem, but in reality this is not so. It is my position that primary schools should have a compulsory subject on

We must not be indifferent about our children – we do keep saying that they are our future.

computer and information science. Let me give you a simple example, which we demonstrate in the RINOS group. Digital competencies teach you how to hold a pen. Knowledge and skills in the field of computer and information science will teach you how write works of art with this pen. You will learn how to hold the pen, what kinds of pens exist, why and how they work, and what innovative solutions are available. I hope you understand the metaphor – only students who have fundamental knowledge and skills in computer and information science will be truly competitive to peers in EU countries. Such students will be able to enroll in a natural science or social science major and use the computer within their field of study to create innovative (or breakthrough) solutions within the natural science/social science profession.

Talent is considered a great innate ability for a certain mental or physical activity, but its development also depends on the environment. What role do teachers play in forging the talent

that young people display? Why is the quality of life in Slovenia not sufficient to attract and retain talent in our country?

u.o.____ The task of the teacher is to monitor his or her students/pupils and recognize their talent. I believe that we all have talent – sometimes we just need an opportunity to show it and improve on it further. The problem arises when the labor market fails to stimulate such talents. The same can be said about the teaching profession – there is a shortage of teachers, as you have already mentioned. The state should find solutions to attract more professionals to the teaching profession. We need to change the mentality – especially because today we have superior and inferior professions. What I just said is, of course, heretical, but let's be honest – some professions are valued significantly higher than others. Maybe, if all professions were valued equally and given the same respect, this would also contribute to retaining our talent in the country.

How could we establish a better mentoring relationship and flow of knowledge in Slovenia outside the school systems?

u.o.____ The solution would be to establish a body that would really take care of the flow of knowledge between teachers and other stakeholders. There are also some study groups, but they have a very narrow focus. I think that mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that teachers also engage in research activity. Currently, we do not have a body that would encourage this, let alone provide a space (not only a physical one) where teachers could exchange experience and examples of good practice and design new innovative projects at the institutional level. In the past, the National Education Institute ran the Innovation Project, which allowed you to develop an innovation in the field of teaching in three years. It is

a shame that such options are no longer available.

More attention should be paid to the digital inclusion of the elderly, since more than half of the adult population is not competent in digital skills. At the same time, it is necessary to make young people excited about the skills and professions of the future. Why is the situation as it is and what is the key to change?

u.o. I totally agree. Older people are mostly forgotten by society. We also tend to forget people with special needs. Digitalization is moving into our lives in a big way. I think one reason for this is that we missed the EU train, which has been working on digital competencies for almost 10 years now. We missed the train when we could have designed a compulsory computer and information science course in a timely manner. We are trying to catch the first train, but as a society we have deliberately missed the second one, without a guilty conscience, and are not even running after it to catch it. Of course, I put this very figuratively – I am thankful that some people do care and we are trying to draw attention to this issue at every opportunity. I could add to the earlier conversation on national vocational qualifications that by reforming the system, we would also save the third age education, which is no less important. What is more, transversal skills should be introduced into the entire vertical of the educational



system, which could help in acquiring competencies for the 21st century.

They say that every cloud has a silver lining. How did the pandemic shed light on the lack of digital competencies and drive the need for digitalization?

u.o. I think the pandemic pushed a lot of people to go outside their box. What is more, we could see that there are still some parts of Slovenia which are digitally cut off from the world – without access to the Internet, which is sad. We also found that not everyone has digital competencies. On the other hand, this experience has also shown that we care, that we try to find solutions and that the teacher never gives up. The teacher looks for solutions and helps students to truly make use of their potential, even if sometimes unstable situations disrupt the flow of life.

In your opinion, how realistic is the establishment of a national platform for predicting competencies based

on the needs of the economy? Would you add any more to our 18 measures? Which measure do you see as the most challenging to implement?

u.o. I support the idea – I might add that this platform could also monitor the current situation in terms of competencies that people in Slovenia have. I read somewhere that Serbia will introduce a new ID number (independent of the personal identification number and tax number), which will allow monitoring of the educational path and acquisition of national vocational qualifications. We should also have such system in Slovenia. In this way, we could quickly see who could acquire the necessary competencies that the labor market demands, and how. The idea is great. Of course, professionally, I feel called to strongly advocate the introduction of the compulsory computer and information science course in primary schools. We must not be indifferent about our children – we do keep saying that they are our future.

✕

We are Creating TRANSATLANTIC ESG ENERGY SHARING BUSINESSES

BY Dejan Spasovski

Why do you think green energy production and management should primarily be a transatlantic, shared commitment?

D.S. — We've learned that the world generally tends to gravitate to a balanced state — different options always converge into one in the long run. Also, it's evident that on both sides of the Atlantic, people benefit from our shared multitude of common values. After all, in long term, we'll merge into one united humanity.

In my business network, we've never primarily searched for or emphasized our differences: we're always striving to build on our similarities as people, of our businesses, or our policies to move ahead and use the exceptions or differences as drivers to explore new concepts, find new business models and processes, and, in the end, share better global business outcomes for us all.

So we can turn the question on its head — why wouldn't we share other essential resources like security and an even more currently very topical and always vital commodity — energy?

Transatlantic cooperation is excellent in some areas. Can green energy production and sharing between the USA and EU improve relations?



▲
Dejan Spasovski
Ineor CEO

D.S. — I believe there is no better way to achieve long-term transatlantic connections than by creating strategic energy production and sharing facilities and policies. We should build common transport, management, and sustainable consumption projects, delivering an energy-connected America and Europe soon. I also believe that this requires the project to involve as many stakeholders as possible.

So, what is your final goal?

D.S. — My California-based energy-related fund has a clear goal. To develop and manage processes and business models to achieve our vision of energy sharing by constantly providing people with cheaper and cheaper energy. As a long-term vision, we'll be achieving net-zero-cost energy for almost everyone — or, at least, for those that are prepared to take the steps necessary to achieve this goal.

In your opinion, is the idea of cost-free electrical energy a realizable vision?

D.S. — I believe it is. Nikola Tesla's idea of cost-free electrical energy is realizable by producing and using energy in a balanced way, primarily locally in buildings and neighborhoods, then regionally in cities and regions, then nationally, continentally, and globally. We're building self-sustained

solutions on all levels, using the grid as little as possible. We're producing locally, storing locally, exchanging locally and only sending only what's not consumed to other areas, creating smart, all-directional, self-balancing grid. We provide technology solutions to achieve this locally, in one or several homes, in a village or city.

How do you turn this vision into reality?

D.S. Regarding our business, we provide world-class services with sustainable living for everyone. We focus on building new green-energy production facilities, providing energy management solutions and innovations, and incorporating circular-economy-based practices, from product reuse to material recycling projects.

With our transatlantic, exclusively ESG (Environment, Social and Governance) funding, we provide a complete package, from financing and engineering to building and managing the energy facilities and resources in Europe and USA – generally influencing the way energy-trading operates.

Our fund creates a variety of possibilities achievable today. Currently, with my transatlantic partners and networking activities, our companies' businesses are working on developing the transatlantic business relationship in green energy – based on ESG principles. We are building a business anyone can join, participate in, help, and benefit from by being directly involved in the ownership, with various business models to choose from. By directly involving all people as business owners and managing every detail of it on ESG principles we'll be providing cheaper, and in the long run basically free energy for all.

Our experience shows us that we have tremendous potential – right here, right now. So, we need to act now! Fortunately, I've always believed in and without exception achieved finishing

our projects on time, on budget and with zero problems - in whatever we do.

We've already created all necessary preconditions – committed to implementing business models that work in Europe in the USA and vice versa- and inventing and creating new, successful business models.

We invest, produce, transport energy, optimize and reduce consumption, and maintain, reuse, and recycling equipment.

Low-cost investments in individual energy production (mostly for private citizens at first and then also for businesses), will enable people to spend more on other goods and services, and businesses to lower product prices, so this positive circle will spin even faster.

Is ESG and circular economy a cornerstone of what you do?

D.S. Circular economy principles are crucial for faster achieving of our goal, cheaper energy production and transportation, as consumers can and will be the most significant producers.

Local electricity production and consumption are resulting in less grid demand. Focusing on local sustainability will bring greener mobility for transporting people and food production. Mobility is also vitally important. And because we are doing it correctly, the influence of energy production on land and water provides many possibilities for entirely new or improved ways of sustainable, environmentally positive food production and water management.

Our ESG businesses and technology enable better world and living conditions – but we also need to influence on policies and governments. Decision-makers must provide sound ESG legislative support to ease investments and technology improvements, support environmental, social, and sustainable projects, and understand that protecting the status quo is constantly undermining our future. We will make sure we all understand and help.



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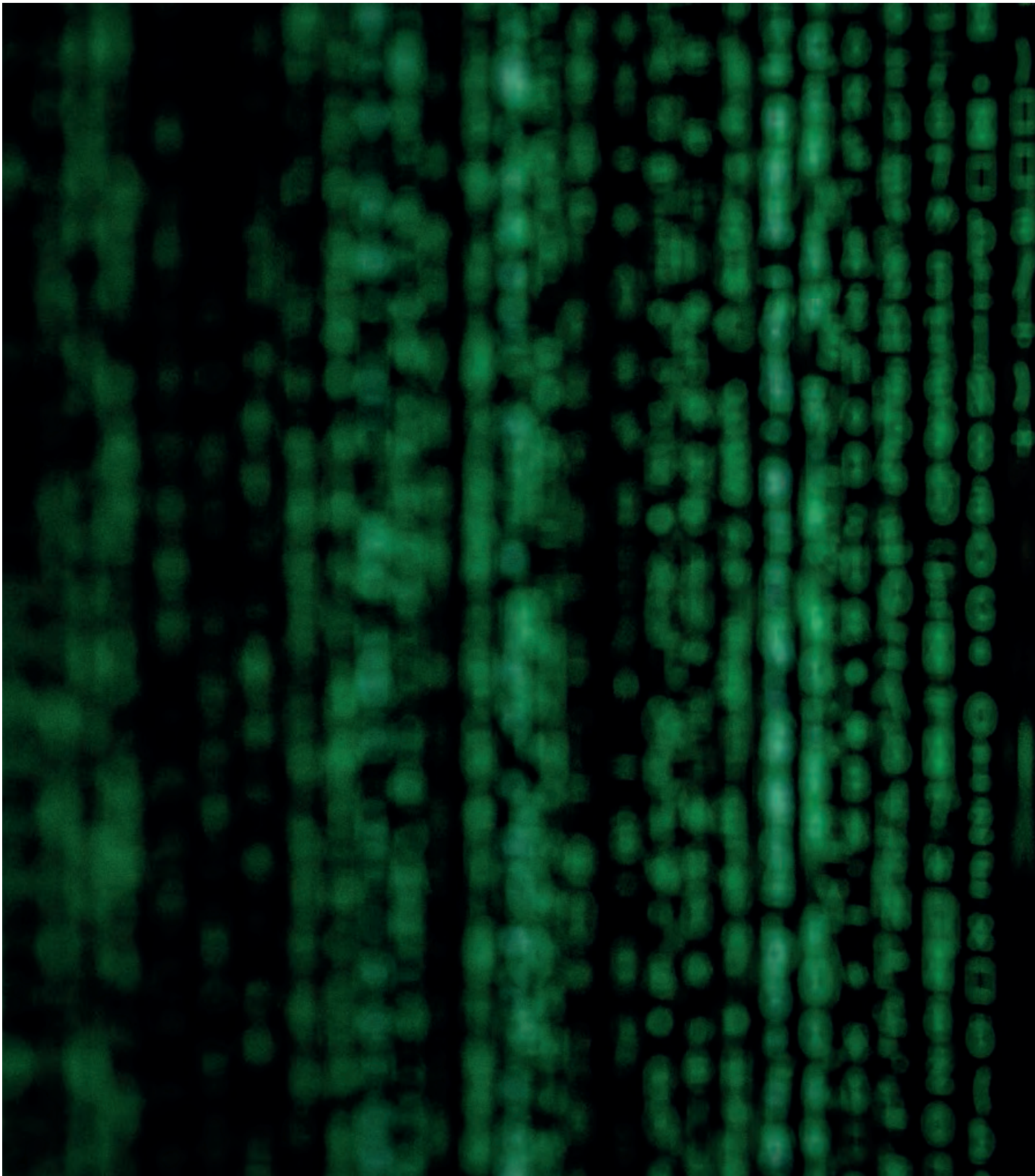
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Diligent Management & Cybersecurity

BY Jure Planinšek, MSc

In business, cyber-attacks have become a part of reality and are no longer something that happens “out there”. Most do not become public knowledge, but numerous companies have already suffered production shutdowns, compromised confidential/sensitive data, and funds stolen or extorted (extortion ware), as well as faced other catastrophic consequences of cyberattacks. We must address these challenges not only technically, but also from other aspects.

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How should management act in the new cyber reality?

H **J.P.** — Managing a company requires a higher level of diligence, namely the due diligence of a prudent businessperson. The manager should be familiar with and understand cyber risks and their management, even though they may not have the specific technical know-how. It is commendable that information security risks (e.g. a cyberattack) are already designated as the most critical in many companies.

Is identification/awareness enough?

J.P. — Due diligence is demonstrated by the management who not only realistically evaluates the risks of a cyberattack, but also introduces ap-



Jure Planinšek, MSc
Head of Compliance
and Legal, NIL

propriate measures and supervises their implementation. In the course of planning, it is crucial to consider the following: How will we measure the success of these measures? “We will not be attacked” is not the best approach, as risks and vulnerabilities are unpredictable. It is more appropriate to consider whether the level of information security has been adequately increased. Despite every effort, not all incidents can be prevented since there is no such thing as absolute security. With carefully planned measures, however, it is possible to raise information security to a level that should preclude critical incidents and the worst consequences.

The purpose of risk assessments and the implementation of security policies and measures is not to create documents, but to be practical: to con-

nect key players in the company (IT, management, DPO, HR, PR, and other critical stakeholders) and provide them with adequate resources. Cybersecurity cannot be the responsibility of the IT team alone, but rather the duty of all employees, as the weakest link is often uninformed users. In the event of an attack, only concerted action and coordinated response can successfully prevent critical incidents and limit negative consequences.

What are the potential legal consequences of insufficient due diligence of the management?

J.P. — (A) Impact on business and contractual damage liability: Contracts with customers or suppliers usually stipulate the legal consequences of delays and extend contractual damage liability. This means that in case of a breach of contract, the company is obligated to pay contractual penalties and/or is liable for damages to the partner. In addition to direct damage, cyberattacks often cause indirect damage as well, mainly in the form of loss of customer confidence and reputation. Indirect damage is more difficult to measure and, in many cases, exceeds direct damage.

(B) Fines: Due to the increasingly complex legislation that stipulates due diligence in protecting confidential, personal, and other types of data, a company can have very high fines imposed as a result of a cyberattack. For example, a well-known airline paid a fine of EUR 22 million for failing to adequately protect customers' personal data.

(C) Loss of license: In the case of regulated activities (banking, insurance, stock brokerage, etc.), companies' licenses or authorisations to operate may be revoked and other consequences may arise as laid down in special legislation.

(D) Criminal proceedings: Since cyberattacks usually have the characteristics of criminal offences, it is also necessary

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to notify the law enforcement authorities about them. In exceptional cases, criminal liability of the management is not completely excluded if severe negligence was involved.

(E) Management's liability for damages: A cyberattack will not be overlooked by the company's supervisors and owners who may decide to replace the management. In case of insufficient due diligence, the legal basis is given for compensation claims to be filed directly against the management.

How can management defend itself?

J.P. — In all the above examples, the key legal question with regards to

the professionalism and consequently the responsibility of the management will be whether an adequate level of information security during a cyberattack was realized. The usual defence that the incident could not have been prevented is only partly acceptable. A manager who proves to have acted with due diligence and provided for the implementation of concrete measures will not be blamed. The analysis of cyberattacks frequently exposes inadequately identified risks, failure to implement appropriate policies, poor coordination of key players, and lack of know-how and resources. If the management can demonstrate that they have in fact done everything that a diligent and prudent businessperson would do, they can be much less concerned about the legal repercussions.

Best practices?

J.P. — Careful planning and prioritization make adequate cybersecurity feasible. Even though hackers are constantly inventing new ways to attack increasingly complex information systems, experienced experts can implement solutions that reduce the likelihood of these attacks being successful. Due to a lack of qualified personnel and the cost-effectiveness of such solutions, most organizations engage experienced partners who have certificates, references, and hands-on experience with security incidents. Drawing from their experience, such partners will also be able to help when an incident indeed occurs, and it is necessary to mitigate the negative consequences and comply with complex legislation. Good cybersecurity plans are not limited to the IT department, software solutions and/or insurance, which cannot cover the entire damage (mainly damage liability and loss of reputation).





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Nina Beguš, PhD

Researcher at UC Berkeley,
Consulting on philosophy
in biotechnology and AI

WHY IMITATE THE HUMAN WHILE THERE ARE SO MANY BETTER WAYS TO BUILD ROBOTS?

BY **Nina Beguš**

How does our mother tongue define us?

N.B.— The Saphir-Whorf hypothesis addresses linguistic relativity, stating that the structure of a language affects our cognition and worldview. Many linguists agree with this principle to the extent that we are influenced by the language we speak.

Is AI defined by the language in which it is developed?

N.B.— It's not the language of code, be it English or Slovenian, but the cultural and knowledge-related aspects of language that define AI. Culture is what gives AI shape: how we build AI is embedded in the tradi-

tion in which it was created. Knowledge and conceptual structures are a part of culture and tradition: imagining and designing AI goes hand in hand with engineering it. This is where language is crucial as it gives form to many of our ideas and spreads them further.

We are currently experiencing a lack of suitable vocabulary to describe the novelty of AI. For example, the words machine and robot bring with them an industrial view of technology, tied to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, AI has long overcome the industrial definition of the machine, where the machine has no freedom, agency, intelligence or creativity. Robots have become more than simple replacements for humans: those that will inhabit our homes need a relational quality. This quality was not a part of the industrial machine, in which humans simply pushed the button or pulled the lever with the purpose to automate or accelerate themselves. Once a machine becomes relational, it is a thing on its own and not a mere extension of the human.

I use this knowledge of the humanities (history of science, philosophy of technology, ethics, linguistics, and media theory) in my consulting business company InterpretAI. Together with machine learning experts, we interpret deep learning models both on a technical and conceptual level to help companies understand their models better and to break out of their limitations.

What is the nexus of biotechnology and AI?

N.B.— Biotech and AI are the main fields of the current technological revolution and are becoming more intertwined every day. Biology has long influenced information science and technology and vice versa. This long-standing relationship materialized in a product for the first time with digital data storage in abiotic DNA. The question of whether this product could be scaled up remains. So far, it does not seem so but if it succeeds, it will solve the problem of Moore's Law.

There are plenty of other examples where the fields intersect: an LBNL biogeochemistry group I collaborated with used AI to create models of the earth system on a scale as small as microbes and as big as satellite data.

People fear the unknown. You are an expert; are you ever afraid of development?

N.B.— People are afraid of development and the unprecedented novelty and uncertainty that technology brings for two major reasons. The first is the industrial revolution which caused, among others, climate change challenges. The second is popular culture, in-

cluding both fiction and journalism, which tends to present novel technologies in a negative light. Every technology has its pluses and minuses, and I wish there were more nuance to these discussions. Technology is not utopian or dystopian, the truth lies in-between. My fear is that we fail to develop AI without its due philosophical reflection.

What was the most emotional moment for you in the interplay of technology, AI and human beings?

N.B.— I felt conflicted when I was watching Tesla AI reveal their humanoid robot. The robot was clearly inferior to what their biggest competitor Boston Dynamics can do; however, the engineering challenges were demonstrated very compellingly to lure the best people to join them. I wonder if these companies ever ponder on why they are building humanoids. Why imitate the human while there are so many better ways to build robots? I've written a book about this question, titled Artificial Humanities: A Fictional Perspective to Language in AI.

How fast is the development of AI? Can we, as humans with our capacities, keep up with it?

N.B.— Nowadays, the machine learning community is overwhelmed with merely keeping up with the biggest developments. We need AI to help us keep up with its own development. This will only stop if we enter another period of AI winter, where breakthroughs don't happen.

Is the U.S. still the most advanced when it comes to AI and business?

N.B.— It's quite exhilarating to live in the San Francisco Bay area, even though the technology sector has just undergone an economic downturn. Silicon Valley is a unique kind of technological hub, but there are many other locales in the world that are equally stimulating and compelling.

Europe is leading in AI law and regulation. The West in general is more dedicated to security and privacy protection, while China and Malaysia have already implemented CityBrain in many of their smart cities. Each of these spaces where AI thrives gives a different flavor to the technology.

How can the ethical use of AI be ensured?

N.B.— It is a difficult set of problems but, fortunately, we have a precedent from which AI ethics can learn in the field of bioethics. The challenge with AI technology is that it is often implemented faster than it can be regulated, which was not the case in bioethics. Technologists realized about a decade ago they need ethicists at the table where technology is being made. This is key to success.



Do Slovenians have enough knowledge in the field of computer science and informatics?

BY Prof. Andrej Brodnik

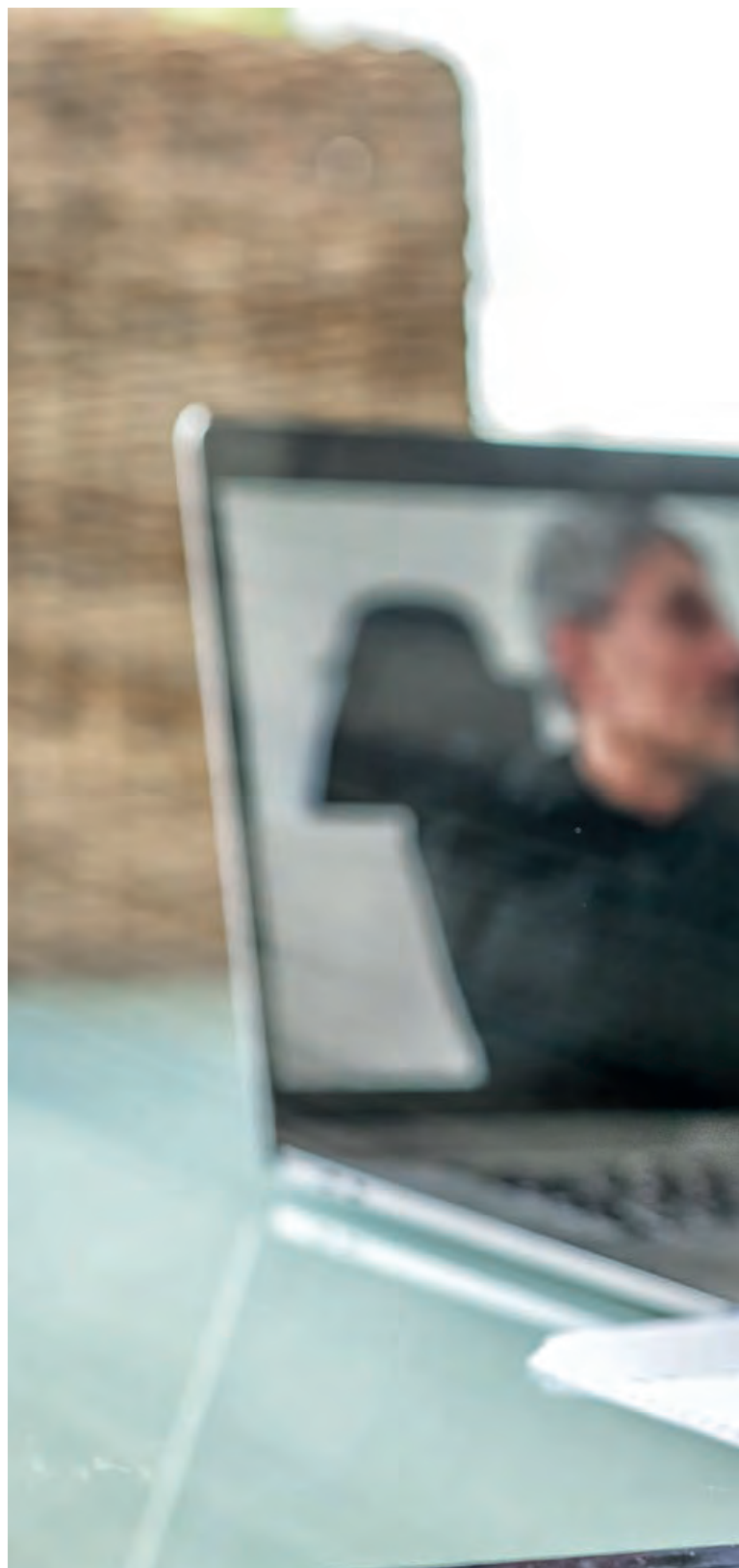


They say that every cloud has a silver lining. How did the pandemic bring to the fore the lack of basic computer and informatics skills and prompt the need for digitalization?

A.B. True enough. More than anything, as individuals and as a society we realized that digital technology comes to our rescue at critical moments. Therefore, technology allowed us to work together. The necessity to cooperate is

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what prompted the awareness in society of the usefulness of digital technology.

For several years now, the state has been talking about digitalization, which will involve everything from politics to the economy. Where do we stand now compared to the promises of the decision-makers?

A.B.____ With regard to the economy, it is undoubtedly true that if the economy does not digitalize, we will simply have none. Although this is a radical and harsh statement, I'm afraid it is true to a considerable extent. And what is the role of state? The state will continue to exist, even if it does not digitalize or, looking from a broader perspective, even if it does not realize the importance of digitalization. Here we encounter the conditions which are related to our former common country. In the former Yugoslavia, one thirteenth of its population, i.e. the population of Slovenia, generated one fifth of the entire GDP and over one third of the country's exports. Further analysis also reveals that even after World War II, the literacy of the Slovenian population was at least 10% greater than in other parts of the former country. Of course, literacy brings a broader general view and knowledge, and most of all, the possibility of the creative use and application of technology. What brought about such differences? The only difference was that Slovenia was situated in the Austrian part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, in which Empress Maria Theresa carried out the reform of the schooling system in 1775. This meant that all Slovenians since then had been learning to read, write and calculate, which gave us a comparative advantage over fellow citizens of the former common country, and beyond it.

When it comes to digital literacy, the average Slovenian will not be doing well in just ten years from now, as their general education will put them at a disadvantage compared to their fellow EU citizens.

How would digitalization transform our healthcare system and put patients first?

A.B.____ Allow me to give an example of my colleague who wanted to go on vacation to the So a Valley with her family. One of her family members required regular medical care once a week. When she inquired whether that member could receive care in one of the health centers in the So a Valley, the biggest problem turned out to be that this family member's medical record was not available. On the other hand, five years ago, I was managing two projects on the use of digital technology in health care. In one of these, which was a bilateral project with the Republic of Italy, we discussed exactly the above-mentioned case – how to provide healthcare service to a person who gets injured on one side of the border, but resides on the other. We identified the problem and defined the standards that addressed and also solved the problem. In the next phase, when it was time to implement the pilot, things got stuck.

In the second project, however, we got to the pilot phase. And not just one, but several pilots, the use of which confirmed a significant improvement in the condition of patients with certain chronic diseases. This was in 2018, where the pilot was using the technology that is now part of the national e-backbone. Our project involved both doctors and nurses and the project received very positive responses from ev-

eryone. And the results of the project? They are lying in a drawer of a desk and are only found in a few articles and book chapters. And this despite the fact that the main goal of the project was to empower the individual to be able to take responsible care of their health.

By 2030, Slovenia will thus need 5,000 new ICT experts per year. Currently there are only 1,100 students graduating in ICT annually, with the number of university places for this type of study increasing by around 5% annually. The combination of social and natural science knowledge and skills contributes to a more successful tackling of complex challenges in society. Would this also hold true when planning new specialist and multidisciplinary study programs in the fields of computer and information sciences?

A.B.____ Three figures are mentioned in your question. The first one is that currently 1,100 experts graduate annually at the higher education level; the second one is that this number (presently) increases by 5% annually; and the third one is that we want to reach 5,000. In fact, we can easily forget the first two figures and just ask ourselves what 5,000 means? If we add to this figure about 17,000, which is the approximate number of freshmen per year, we quickly realize that we would like to reach a level which corresponds to about a sixth of the freshmen generation. This is simply not possible.

What now? First, let's return to the question. Who is an ICT expert? I think we are asking the wrong question. This profile is the profile that appears in any branch of the economy. Moreover, we want the majority of people with this profile to be experts in their field. What shall we do? The clock is ticking.

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We do not realize that consumer does not equal expert. How does a shortage of knowledge and IT experts affect companies in terms of costs? How do you see the IT professions of the future?

A.B.— One hundred years ago, I might have been asked something similar about the experts in the field of electrical engineering, and two hundred years ago in the field of mechanical engineering, to simplify that a bit. And what was the answer back then? The answer was the general science subjects of physics, chemistry and biology. On their foundation, the engineering professions of mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, biotechnology, chemical technology and the like have developed. Which means that, for example, a mechanical engineer needs and uses general knowledge of physics, chemistry and biology. Of course, these natural sciences are developing in parallel with their engineering counterparts.

What about IT? Here we find ourselves in a pickle, because we do not have this basic natural science subject in Slovenia, as they do elsewhere in the world. In the Anglo-Saxon world it is called Computer Science or Computing, and Informatik in German. In Slovenia, we call it Computer Science and Informatics. Therefore, if we add this subject and the knowledge it brings into the set of general education subjects, we will at once broaden the knowledge of all engineers, not only those in the field of ICT. Consequently, all engineers will be empowered to creatively incorporate digital technology into their products. And not only that. It is not only engineers that are thus empowered, but similarly social science professions are also empowered as well as the professions in medicine, humanities and even the arts.



Digital progress, development of new technologies and digital transformation (of business models) do not only describe the future, but are the reality in which we already actively live today. Still, innovations in these areas evoke fear. Why is this?

A.B.— There's a Slovenian proverb that says that fear is hollow on the inside and empty on the outside. Fear is a human emotion that protects us and enables us to survive in unknown situations. To overcome it, one has to fill its hollow interior with knowledge and all that will remain on its outside is just that which we do not yet have the knowledge of. Paradoxically, the more knowledge there is, the more unknown we are exposed to, but now we no longer call it ignorance, but instead, a challenge. To put it simply, fear is basically a good emotion which is managed with knowledge. It is precisely in the field of computer science and informatics where this hollowness is infinite, as the average Slovenian simply does not have the knowledge on this subject. Unfortunately, this also includes politicians and, last but not least, most experts. It is just how things stand. Where, in reality, could they have gotten the knowledge from, since at best, they were only exposed to digital technology in their lives as consumers of it.

To draw a parallel with other natural science subjects, it would be interesting to observe what our attitude towards

physics, chemistry and biology would have been like if these subjects had not already been part of the general education curriculum.

How aware are we of cyber(in)security when using technologies?

A.B.— Let me answer using a metaphor which sounds a bit funny, but is also very true. On average, our awareness of this issue is reminiscent of the Slovenian proverb which says that a man who has been bitten by a snake is afraid even of a twisted rope. To upgrade this comparison a few notches – we will keep using the rope until a snake bites us. Then we will become aware of our shortcomings.

But is this really necessary? If we look at the proposed curriculum framework for the computer science and informatics subject prepared by the RINOS expert group (<https://www.racunalnistvo-in-informatika-za-vse.si/about/>), we find that cybersecurity is part of the pillar related to computer networks and the internet, just as artificial intelligence is part of the pillar on data handling and analysis. This framework is based on the K12CS international standard, which is part of the curricula of the main global educational organization for the field of computing and informatics, the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM).



INTELLIGENT HEALTHCARE OF THE FUTURE IS DATA ENABLED AND PERSONALIZED

BY Eva McLellan

Eva McLellan is a global healthcare executive, known as a forward-thinking strategist and purpose-driven transformational leader. She is the General Manager of Roche Slovenia. Eva brings a track record of leading teams responsible for innovating and transforming value-based healthcare systems. Since joining the biotech industry more than 15 years ago, she has held global strategy and affiliate leadership roles in Canada, Switzerland, Belgium, and Luxembourg. As Roche Slovenia GM, she wants to uphold the importance of sustainable and broad access to innovation for patients and society, and to remain true to her values and personal mission: to help establish strong partnerships and improve health systems and healthcare. Eva holds an Honors Bachelor of Science and a Master's in Biotechnology from the University of Toronto and is a graduate of INSEAD Business School's Executive Management Program.

So many of us wish that we and our medical staff had a complete picture of our health. We wish that we were not the ones responsible for carrying key pieces of information, like lab results, from one doctor to another. We all want more efficient, better-resourced healthcare systems that deliver better outcomes at an individual and at a population health level. The question is how can we work together to get there?

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Roche

What do we need to do in order to establish a connected ecosystem, where inefficiencies and waste are significantly reduced and people receive tailored care packages that promote good health?

At the highest level we need to collectively help each other move from strategy to reality. We need to collaborate by transforming our best intentions into action for better health.

Drilling down to the details, a big part of bold actions is to invest in data: large, secure, interoperable, and accessible data sets are the key to making precision, evidence-based, personalized care a reality – our reality. Through smarter use of data, we will be able to predict and prevent disease and treat people more effectively. The collection, integration and analysis of data will drive early diagnoses and lead to improved monitoring systems as well as the development and greater use of more targeted medicines. The result will be healthier people and healthier societies. It will be an investment that pays out ad infinitum as people are able to live longer lives and maintain a higher quality of life.

Secure and structured health data: putting the pieces together

In today's world, fragments of our "health stories" are floating around in our health ecosystems – individual data points hang like individual sentences in the ether. Some data points are interesting, some are bland, some are intriguing, but ultimately all are meaningless because they lack context, cohesion, and structure. And so, they will never help us, or our caregivers, to understand our entire personal health stories.

Only when we succeed in developing secure and structured data sets that can be easily shared, will it be possible for us to piece together our health stories. Only when we are able to collect and analyze these shards of information, will we be able to turn floating fragments of data into the insights that will drive better health outcomes, improve efficiencies within the health-care system, and deliver an even greater return on the money invested in healthcare.

We need three things to achieve this:

- 1 **Progressive policies** that will support the paradigm shift to prediction and prevention – and move us away from today's focus on treatment and healing the sick.
- 2 **Collaboration and true partnerships that go beyond transactional, and tactical activities.** These need to be amongst all stakeholders who are working within our healthcare ecosystems.
- 3 **Strong and secure infrastructure** nationally and at the European level.

In terms of **progressive policies**, we are already seeing some really exciting initiatives coming from across the EU. The EU Health Data Space is one example of how Europe is seeking to connect the region's national health systems and expedite the exchange of health data across Europe through harmonized Electronic

▲
Eva McLellan
General Manager
of Roche Slovenia

Health Records (EHR), disease registries, and genomics, whilst still ensuring data remains secure and safe.

There is a lot we can learn from the policies of other countries, such as Finland and Estonia. In Finland, for example, the government has ensured that the electronic health records of all citizens are stored in a central database. This includes people's prescriptions, treatment reports, blood tests and X-rays. Industry is also able to use these data – in an anonymized form – for research of new therapies and diagnostics. People in Finland don't have to share their data. But out of 5.5 million citizens, only 217 people have decided to opt out and withdraw access to their data. This is a clear indication that there is a true willingness amongst people to engage with data and embrace a digital approach when it comes to the management of their health.

How does Slovenia compare?

According to the ODI (Open Data Institute), Slovenia is sitting in the middle when it comes to integrating health data into its healthcare system. Validation of the ODI report conducted by the Institute for Strategic Solutions also showed that the wider picture is fragmented, as different institutional systems are not interconnected and not working as closely together as they could be.

And that brings me to the second needed step: collaboration. Meaningful change can only be achieved by all members of the healthcare community working together. I very much welcome the recent establishment of the Strategic Council, which will prepare a proposal for framework changes for the renovation of the health system, including in the fields of digitization and health financing.

We really need to be thinking of alternative models for the health system for the next 20 years and how to address population health.

I see a huge opportunity for Slovenia to demonstrate to other countries how people from all parts of the healthcare ecosystem – and beyond – can come together to navigate the complexity of the challenges we have to deal with.

At Roche, we are striving to be a connector, catalyst and contributor when it comes to reforming the delivery of care. Our business spans Diagnostics, Pharmaceuticals and Insights, which means we are delivering solutions for patients, healthcare providers and other stakeholders across the entire care pathway – and at all stages in people's lives.

And as we seek to make greater use of data, it is clear that we will need strong and secure (infra)structure. The rules, common



“LET’S HELP EACH OTHER TRANSFORM OUR BEST INTENTIONS INTO ACTIONS FOR BETTER HEALTH.”

— EVA MCLELLAN

standards and practices, infrastructures and governance framework set out by the European Health Data Space are aimed at, and I quote, “empowering individuals through increased digital access to and control of their electronic personal health data, at national level and EU-wide”.

It also seeks to foster a single market for Electronic Health Record systems, relevant medical devices and high-risk AI systems, whilst “providing a consistent, trustworthy and efficient set-up for the use of health data for research, innovation, policy-making and regulatory activities”.

We have a tremendous opportunity to move from our sick care systems to ones that are focused on ensuring improved quality of life and healthier healthcare systems. Through smart use of data, by connecting our systems and by collaborating with stakeholders from all parts of the healthcare ecosystem, we will become healthier individuals, our communities will become healthier, and our societies will become healthier.

The aggregate of my experience across countries leads me to firmly believe that standing before Slovenia is a chance to spark real change in healthcare and become the EU healthcare role model for the future. The opportunity that we share is one of healthcare transformation; it's an opportunity to care for the health of our people in new ways and with better outcomes for all.

So let's grab those data fragments, connect the dots, and start writing some incredible health stories together.



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ESG & Meritocracy

As Adrian Wooldridge describes in his latest book *The Aristocracy of Talent*, meritocracy is one of the key concepts of modernity and the world we know today. We cannot imagine our societies without it. On the individual level, we all expect to be judged by our merits and our actions, and not by our background, religion or ethnicity. The vast majority of Europeans believe that society is fair when hard-working people earn more. While in some countries, Slovenia being one of them, the term itself is not often heard in public and political discourse, the ideas of meritocracy are discussed in a number of situations – when we question who should be paid more, in how egalitarian a society we wish to live, or how much to invest in

investment in skills and knowledge and enables the best and most competent individuals to take on the most important roles in society or an organization. While let's be more meritocratic may sound like the recipe for success, as for many other things, the reality is much more complicated.

What is merit?

Meritocracy is a concept with many dimensions and definitions and the implications and outcomes of following meritocratic principles depend highly on the way we understand meritocracy. Most importantly, what do we understand as merit? By definition, merit is a quality or characteristic that deserves or justifies a reward. In the broadest of senses, meritocracy could therefore mean promoting and rewarding any characteristics

questions, of course, depend on the field and type of work of an organization, but they are never completely straightforward. An even greater challenge represents the question of how to measure merit. A diploma or education certificates often play a central role in this, but not always as proof of the existence of skills and knowledge. A degree is sometimes just a formality where the level of education is more important than the field. On the other hand, many employers doubt the quality of knowledge behind the diploma. Especially in the private sector, a diploma can be seen as an indication of an individual's persistence and diligence and ability to learn the skills at work.

Between strict rules and flexibility

In more institutionalized environments, the desire to follow meritocratic principles is usually instrumented through rigorous rules, possibly with indicators, for recruitment and promotion. However, this can backfire and create an environment promoting mediocrity where average people who focus on prescribed criteria are promoted while creative and innovative people can be left out. Even with less rigorous criteria, the question of how to measure, evaluate and compare soft skills, such as creativity, remains.

While in international comparison Slovenia is not among the most meritocratic countries, research* shows that there is a strong awareness and tendency to apply meritocratic principles in all social spheres, but even more so in private entrepreneurship. There is also considerable doubt that these principles are applied at the national level in determining the highest positions in certain fields. Several parallel processes are limiting this, such as nepotism, power preservation levers and political influence. In some cases, limiting factors can also be cultural, when success and standing out from the average is seen as something negative.

Meritocracy and social responsibility

Meritocracy as the promotor of knowledge and innovation is one of the key drivers of the technological development we know today. Investing in people's abilities and promoting those who work harder and contribute more seems natural. However, this leaves the possibility of promoting only skills and knowledge that guarantee fast economic benefits to companies while neglecting other skills needed for a better society.

When asked, leaders from different social fields describe different skills and competencies that are necessary to succeed in their field, meaning that the definition of knowledge and skills also differs. This is not surprising and makes sense when comparing, for example, doctors of medicine to people employed in the non-governmental sector. However, the skills needed to succeed in the field also greatly differ from skills that the same leaders identified as the most important skills for the future of our societies.

With the challenges that are in front of our societies today, it is clear that we need to promote meritocracy and meritocratic processes. However, we also need to strongly consider what kind of meritocracy we are talking about – what do we see as merit, which skills and knowledge do we want to promote and which do we? This contribution does not offer definite answers to those questions, but it aims to stimulate the reflection and discussion of those incorporating meritocratic principles.

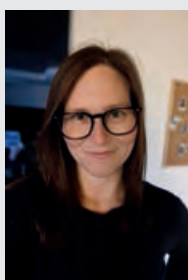
As Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen wrote, "the rewarding of merit and the very concept of merit itself depend on the way we see a good society and the criteria we invoke to assess the successes and failures of the society." (2000, 14).



*Research applies to the findings presented in the doctoral dissertation – Gorišek Maruša: Priložnosti in omejitve meritokracije celovit družbeni razvoj v kontekstu družbe znanja. FUDŠ 2022.

RETHINKING THE MERIT OF MERITOCRACY

BY Maruša Gorišek, PhD



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science and innovation.

Nevertheless, the term meritocracy is most often used in terms of human resources management as a principle of rewarding and distributing positions based on individuals' merit, such as ability, competence, knowledge or effort. Therefore, it is deeply intertwined in the business and entrepreneurship world and inextricably connected to the ideas of economic progress, innovation and the ideas of the knowledge society.

We can understand meritocracy as a principle that helps promote innovation and excellence, encourages individuals'

or qualities that the society, or organization, deems as good or beneficial. Even if we focus on a more specific definition, we see that meritocracy can mean either promoting individuals' knowledge and skills, the quality of their outcomes or even the effort they put in. Those can be entirely different qualities in a person and promoting one or the other can give different results.

Even the decision to promote, for example, skills and knowledge leaves several questions open. What kind of skills and knowledge are we promoting, why and to what extent? The answers to those



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▲
Adriana Rejc Buhovac, PhD
Full Professor, Faculty of
Economics, University of
Ljubljana

WHAT IS NEXT FOR BUSINESS?

BY **Adriana Rejc Buhovac, PhD**

Why does ESG matter for businesses, and what should be the main focus?

A.R.B.— Companies—regardless of size—are facing increased risks from more sources and with greater impacts: climate change, rapidly changing regulation, interrupted and unreliable supply, volatile labor markets, consumer expectations, community reactions and more. This further increases with the rapid development of international communication but also as companies use new technologies, operate with global networks and achieve more global reach. Companies are often both surprised and unprepared. Ignoring these issues can have devastating consequences for all stakeholders involved.

ESG is important for businesses as it provides a structural approach to integrating environmental, social and governance risks into investment decisions and into day-to-day management decisions. But it requires strategic ap-

proach, renewed leadership, supporting processes and structures, and impact measurement.

How can companies better perform their role in creating a sustainable future?

A.R.B.— The key is innovation and trust. Companies with leading sustainability practices are encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship in their organizations to deal with the risks in a sustainable and profitable manner. They are creatively using technology and innovation to overcome ‘win-lose’ scenarios, as we often label the trade-offs between sustainability and financial goals. These so-called playing to win sustainability innovation strategies rely on opportunities and breakthrough innovations rather than on mitigating risks and developing incremental innovations. For example, by foreseeing the future water scarcity and increasing toxic footprints, Adidas and Nike have started to use a carbon-based process that dyes polyester without the use of

water or chemicals. Such processes will revolutionize textile manufacturing, whose footprint comes mostly from dyeing and which relies on enormous amounts of water.

What are the main challenges for companies?

A.R.B.— One of the biggest is related to the various tensions between sustainability and financial goals. The relationship between social/environmental and financial goals is typically characterized by short-term competition and inconsistencies and long-term benefits. More specifically, while sustainability initiatives may benefit one another in the long term, they are often conflicting in their need for resources and agendas. Managers must make resource allocation trade-offs between these multiple goals. In some cases, social/environmental decisions are win-win (improving social/environmental and financial performance—such as when emissions and waste are reduced, saving both company costs and environmental damage). But often they are not. And, even when they are win-win, the financial gains of sustainability initiatives often are long term and thus may not fit well into a traditional capital budgeting format unless the risks and reputation-related impacts are measured and integrated into the decisions. There are also other challenges. Financial initiatives are associated with clear, measurable, short-term metrics, whereas environmental and social measurements are often uncertain and long term. The tensions evolve further as managers have significant incentive pressures to increase short-term earnings. In addition, it is often unclear how stakeholders will respond.

How does ESG create value in companies?

A.R.B.— When ESG principles, structures and systems are put in place properly, new powers may be unleashed. But managers must enjoy the creative challenge of trying to find new ways to incorporate sustainability into new processes, new products, new customer use guidelines, etc. and let employees seek opportunities to innovate within every aspect of a process or a product. At the level of a product, for example, this may include redesigning products and services (including innovating packaging to cut down on environmental footprint), re-engineering processes to reduce consumption, reduce pollution, and avoid risks, reusing waste to reduce the waste accumulation rates on manufacturing sites, designing products for eventual reuse in another product or be used by nature, etc. Opportunities lie in both technological innovation (products and services) and business model innovation (processes). At the level of processes, on the other hand, ESG principles should drive increased attention to employee experience: respect, trust, inclusion and care for well-being and value. Everybody will benefit.

What is sustainable leadership?

A.R.B.— Leading companies in ESG/corporate sustainability have developed genuine sensitivity to stakeholder concerns; however, they are internally committed to improving their corporate sustainability impacts. Sustainable leadership is strong and innovative, consistently communicating both in words and actions that they firmly believe in the benefits relating to sustainability. Sustainable leaders lead by example on a daily basis and decide how much inte-

gration of sustainability concerns they want and how they want to do it. A top manager said, “Making a sustainable decision that negatively impacts margins is not so wrong, but they have to inform me because we can offset this somewhere else.” There is always more than one lever to pull. Sustainable leaders articulate the trade-offs to their subordinates and continually reinforce these objectives throughout the organization. Decision-makers at lower levels will be then able to make right decisions because they know they will be supported.

How do you build sustainable leadership, create the right culture and mindsets, engage people and reinforce the right behavior?

A.R.B.— Leading by example is the only right way to build sustainable leadership and nurture a culture that embraces sustainability. Emanating from an ethical tone at the top, there should be an organization-wide commitment to sustainable decision-making and to meeting the expectations of all stakeholders. The role of the Board of Directors is critical. Their commitment to sustainability concerns must be consistently communicated in both words and actions. This starts with the clarity of strategic objectives. The sustainability business case and payoffs must be clear. Further down, executive managers must showcase examples of their own sustainability-based decision-making, and continually reinforce these objectives throughout the organization. They must clearly communicate to the employees what constitutes responsible, sustainable behavior and set examples of such behavior every day. Formal values, rituals, even rewards should also be put in place to support the right mindset.





Maša Švab
NLB Group Sustainability
Coordinator

SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS GROWTH

by Maša Švab



Today, sustainable growth means growth that is repeatable, ethical and responsible to, and for, current and future communities. And it is key to the long-term success of any business. What does sustainable operation of a company bring to the company besides financial results, and what does it bring to society in addition to a smaller burden on the environment?

M.Š. Five years ago sustainable business and operation may have been equated with social responsibility, but today they entail the addressing of environmental, social and governance challenges in a much broader sense. To many it seems to be a new trend or a passing fashion, but this is not the case at all. If we want to survive as a civilization or society, sustainability must become part of our everyday life. The same goes for companies. Companies must analyze their operations in two ways, namely in terms of their impact on the environment and the environment's impact on their operation. What I have in mind are the products and services that a company offers its customers, the use of natural resources, the governance method and the attitude towards employees – in short, the questions concerning the company's impact on the wider environment in which it operates, the consequences of its operation and vice versa. For a company, the implementation of ESG factors on the one hand means the identification and development of a system for managing (primarily) climate risks and thus adapting the business model, and on the other hand, the development of tools, skills and knowledge that enable it to take advantage of the opportunities of the green transition. It is no longer just about image and hasn't been for some time. The coming generations, and thus potential future employees, have exceptional access to information, they are aware of greenwashing, and in increasing number of them, sustainability is part of their DNA. This means that when deciding where they want to work and what that work should be, top personnel will take into account the company's sustainable operation much more often than they did in the past.

Companies are sometimes not sufficiently aware that sustainable transformation is a long-distance race and that the results yielded by sustainable operations are not immediately apparent. Some set science-based targets, make heavy investments in decarbonizing their operations and accelerate

these efforts to catch up with increasingly demanding consumer expectations. What is less evident, however, is the financial imperative: how can companies ensure a return on these investments?

What you yourself highlighted plays a very important role in profitability as well. In the past few years, the zeitgeist has been transformed, as we have witnessed extraordinary changes in a short time. But when it comes to investments, we will have to take into consideration circumstances such as increasing prices of raw materials, uncertain energy supply, changes in supply chains, geopolitical shifts on the one hand, and reuse and circular economy on the other, while companies will have to adapt products and services to ever-new requirements of their customers or even redevelop them. Customers value locality and transparency more and more. Still, the pressures from investors are also ever stronger and require distinct steps, measurements, and commitments that demonstrate that the company pursues the implementation of ESG factors in the course of its business and is serious about it. Words on paper are no longer enough. The financial potential of the "first" on the market to understand change will not be negligible. The so-called green transition, which can also be understood as the integration of sustainability into business models, is already opening up many new business opportunities. At the same time, it requires companies to develop tools and mechanisms and to acquire knowledge and skills that enable management of risks which we have not witnessed in the past. In this way, companies will also successfully defend themselves against stranded investments.

The most common finding is that without an organized systematic monitoring of energy, companies do not even know where the problem is. For years this was perfectly acceptable, as the cost of energy accounted for only a few percent of a company's total costs. The cost of energy was not perceived as fixed cost and was not much dealt with. What mechanisms allow for monitoring the variability of costs that were once considered fixed?

M.Š. The most important thing is for the company to adopt a systematic approach to monitoring and controlling its consumption to see where it is at. At the same time, quality data on consumption is crucial. This does not necessarily include only energy consumption, the consumption of water, waste, paper, etc. is just as import-

ant. In addition to price, quantity (consumption) also plays a key role. Digitalization is a vital factor of success in this process, since it guides us to decrease consumption and thus leads to cost reduction, first through obtaining high-quality data and getting a clear picture of the actual situation, and later through smart management and monitoring. As far as energy specifically is concerned, today we cannot ignore investing in own electricity production and giving good thought to the type of energy sources and technical solutions that can yield positive effects of energy efficiency. Let me add that the carbon footprint calculation, according to the GHG Protocol, was an important step for NLB. The first calculation was crucial for us to become aware of where our challenges lie, and that dictated the direction of the solution.

Sustainability-oriented companies strive for the common good. To achieve such goals, all links in their value chain must contribute. What are the good signs indicating that our business partners are truly sustainable? How can the state better support sustainability-oriented companies?

M.Š. As regards business partners, it is a good sign when they disclose their non-financial performance indicators without hesitation, even if they may not be the best at the time, but are supported by a plan for their improvement. Business partners will undergo more and more detailed screening by banks, which will consequently be reflected in the terms of business. Proof of sustainability will no longer be the use of recycled paper, but much more, which is also required of banks by the regulatory framework. Together with the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive, the recently approved European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) represent an extraordinary milestone in information that will affect not only the largest corporations, but ultimately their entire value chain. The state can play an extremely useful role, especially through the consistent implementation and development of reasonable regulation, but also well-targeted fiscal incentives. On the other hand, the state can enable banks and companies to obtain and disclose high-quality non-financial data and guidelines, which will facilitate the implementation and further development of the business for stakeholders.



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finance their sustainable
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NLB

WHY PEOPLE ARE THE GREATEST ASSET

BY Tomaž Mahnič



Tomaž Mahnič

FCCA, Grant Thornton
Slovenia Managing Partner
and Head of Audit



PHOTO:
GTIL brand
photography

Going beyond is what makes Grant Thornton Slovenia different – our strong commitment to a caring, high-performance culture drives the way we get work done and do business.

As one of the world's leading providers of audit, tax, consulting and outsourcing services, our strategy is built around the goal of caring for our employees, our clients and communities as part of Grant Thornton International. Knowledge and international experience gained in 30 years of presence on the Slovenian market are the driving force that moves us forward.

The labor market is constantly changing, and in recent years, we could see some significant developments. The coronavirus pandemic had a huge impact on the economy, and more specifically, it had a huge impact on the workforce. In the aftermath, many companies have shifted their operations online and many people started to work from home – which we could see had become the norm in some parts of the world. Based on available data from Eurostat, during

the coronavirus pandemic in 2019, approximately 1 in 20 (5.5%) employed people aged 20–64 years in the EU worked from home. Now combining working in an office environment and working from home is more generally accepted.

Here at Grant Thornton Slovenia we accepted a mix of working from home and working in the office, which has turned out to be a fruitful decision. However, the shift has made it essential for companies to make use of current technologies to increase efficiency and remain competitive. According to the report *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022*, issued by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the total global number of unemployed youths is estimated to reach 73 million by the end of 2022 and that is a concerning factor. So hiring young people is a good idea for many reasons – one of them is of course the technological part. The most obvious reason is that young people represent the future of the workforce. If you want your business to succeed in the future, you need to hire young people, so they can help your business grow.



Tomaž Mahnič, FCCA, Partner and Head of Audit gives us an insight into where he sees Grant Thornton Slovenia in the future: *“At Grant Thornton Slovenia, we motivate job candidates and our employees to have self-initiative and be innovative and disruptive in the sense they solve problems differently. We welcome in our midst those who aspire to elevate their clients’ performance to new heights and ultimately better themselves along the way. That is why we are different, and we do things differently. By that, we are, in a way, trying to change the narrative and, in terms of the future of the job market, set a great example to companies in related fields of business.”*

We say that our people are our greatest asset, and we mean every word of it. The experienced team and the knowledge we have is priceless, and we could not thank our loyal employees enough for the input they bring every day to our company. We strongly agree that treating employees as our greatest asset is an example of good practice that companies should pay attention to. No matter their function, field of work or time in the company, we should treat every person as equal. No matter their age, experience or background, we give every person a chance to prove themselves. When we talk about good practices, we like to emphasize

that we do business in a more personal and flexible way. We offer our team all the support they need, and we accommodate their needs to the best fit for the company. That is why we provide flexible hours so that our employees can maintain a work-life balance and get time off to recharge, so that in the long run, we can deliver on our commitments to our clients.

Vesna Radovanović Ahčin, LL.M., Partner and Head of Tax consulting explains it well: *“We attract the best candidates; we do not need to catch them in a sense. For this, we need well-developed employer branding, which must be based on good working conditions, interesting projects, a people-oriented culture, a manager who trusts and develops, and colleagues who help and support.”*

Our foundations are built from the ground up, meaning there is a level of freedom and trust that we put in the hands of our new employees. How we treat our employees is a reflection of the company – there is no question about that. Having the opportunity to acquire, shape up, invest knowledge, time and resources into new young recruits, and then retain them at the end is an art in itself. At Grant Thornton Slovenia, we welcome everyone with open arms, and by understanding that every person has their own story, a unique back-

ground. We provide them with mentorship and training in the hopes of strengthening the bond with them and passing on the knowledge. We encourage our new hires and employees to grow professionally and personally – giving opportunities, chances to contribute and collaborate with colleagues with the aim of developing new abilities and strengths.

Looking from a professional point of view, we try to identify strengths and weaknesses of our employees because we agree with the phrase “one size doesn’t fit all”.

Tina Remec Podjed, Head of Payroll and HR manager, comments on her views: *»We try to identify what area of work would best suit a particular employee – and that is why we retain the best talents in the company. We help them find the path that is right for them, and by doing that we find the “perfect fit”. By encourage people to learn and to grow we get in return a loyal employee that will go an extra mile for us, for themselves and most importantly, for the clients.«*

As the world continues to evolve and adapt, Grant Thornton Slovenia is also evolving. We have been exceeding expectations on the Slovenian market for more than 30 years, and we are not stopping anytime soon.

SOURCES:

1. International Labour Organization (2022) Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022: Investing in transforming futures for young people.
2. Eurostat (2022) Rise in EU population working from home.





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Grant Thornton

Can finance help humanity remain on the merry-go-round?

BY Živa Jezernik, PhD

The financial sector plays a key role in the success of the fight against climate change and numerous other challenges facing society. Financial organizations act as intermediaries, directing capital flows. Every decision of a financial organization is thus an expression of support or absence thereof for certain projects and activities. This puts the financial sector in a privileged position where it can contribute to achieving sustainable and inclusive growth by redirecting capital flows towards sustainable projects and activities.

Today, humanity is facing many challenges. The most important of them is to ensure the transition of our society and economy to a long-term sustainable system of functioning and development. To paraphrase Kofi Annan, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, the biggest challenge of this century is the transition from an abstract idea – sustainable development – to the reality for all the world's people.

What does that mean? Sustainable development means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations. So why is it the most important challenge? Because the survival



of our species is at stake in this battle. It is not about the survival of this planet, which will probably exist for billions of years to come, it is about our self-protective action.

If all 4.5 billion years of Earth's existence were condensed into 24 hours, human history would begin two tenths of a second before midnight. Despite the short time of our presence on Earth, science today no longer doubts our influence on the changes happening around us. As humankind, we have already caused the temperature of our planet to increase by more than 1°C. We are on our way to exceeding 1.5°C, and the amount of carbon particles and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere continues to grow steadily.

The result of the temperature rise is increasingly frequent extreme weather phenomena, such as droughts, fires, severe storms and tornadoes, in places where this was not common before. We do not have to go far to realise this – let us recall this summer, the drought in the Primorska region and the extensive fires in the Karst. With each degree that the atmosphere temperature rises, air humidity increases significantly and this in turn causes frequent heavy downpours and therefore floods. We experienced that this fall – we witnessed Kostanjevica being cut off from the world, the floods of the Kolpa and Krka rivers, and the sewers.

Global warming has even wider consequences. Much of the excess carbon is absorbed into the oceans, which causes acidification. Over the past 40 years, the populations of wild plant and animal species have shrunk by 60% on average and we have destroyed 50% of primeval forest. We are witnessing the disappearance of Arctic ice.

What does all this mean for humanity? More than 100 million people will not be able

to stay in their current location. Where will they go, how will we as a society solve a problem of such dimensions? New diseases will appear, such as the spread of typical tropical diseases in the Mediterranean.

How can we address these problems? Precisely with sustainable development. With development that meets our needs without compromising the needs and survival of future generations. And, as the eminent environmentalist Sir David Attenborough says – if working apart, we are a force powerful enough to destabilize our planet, surely working together, we are powerful enough to save it.

Almost 40 years ago, Prof. Carl Sagan, an astronomer and physicist, predicted with surprising accuracy the expected consequences of climate change to the US Congress. Thirty years later, the Paris Agreement was signed in 2015, whereby many countries of the world undertook to limit the consequences of global climate change to existing levels. On this basis, the European Green Deal was adopted three years ago, according to which the European Union aims to become the first climate-neutral continent in the world by 2050.

The goal of carbon neutrality can only be achieved with large investments, including by private investors. As a result, sustainable finance plays a key role in the success of the Green Deal and also in achieving success under other international climate and sustainability agreements. To this end, regulatory incentives have been designed to promote the environmental, social and governance aspects of investments, thus making such investments more visible and attractive to investors.

Therefore, the European regulatory framework requires asset management companies to clearly define whether or not they take sustainable aspects

►

Živa Jezernik
Chief Sustainability Officer,
Triglav Skladi



into account in their investment processes. Whatever their decision, they must explain and publicly disclose it. Companies can thus offer investment solutions that do not take sustainability aspects into account, investments that take these aspects into account, and investments the key purpose of which is to pursue certain non-financial or sustainable goals. Companies are obliged to publicly, unambiguously and transparently inform customers and other stakeholders about the characteristics of individual products.

We need a proactive financial system to enable the transition to a sustainable economy. As the famous saying goes, it is money that makes the world go round*. The functioning of the financial sector will significantly contribute to future developments. Will humanity maintain its existence on the merry-go-round, planet Earth?

It is time for responsible decisions, actions and conduct that show that we care and are committed to change.

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A landscape of rolling green hills under a cloudy sky, with two large wind turbines standing on the horizon. The hills are covered in lush green grass, and the sky is filled with soft, white clouds. The wind turbines are white with three blades each, and they are positioned on the ridges of the hills. The overall scene is peaceful and suggests a focus on renewable energy.

There is no future without a green transition and energy

ENERGY OF THE FUTURE



SUVAD BAJRIĆ, M.SC.
Director & Partner,
ALFI Renewables

The EU places a lot of importance on sustainability and the Green Deal. Are we moving fast enough?

S.B. We are definitely too slow. The Green Deal was a political compromise that did not make provision for the possibility of a crisis like the one we are experiencing now. Not only that, during the Covid crisis, certain members spoke of withdrawal from this agreement, as “green transition” was allegedly too expensive. I hope that today we are all aware that there is no future without a green transition and energy.

Is there sufficient awareness of the importance of using renewable resources in CEE?

S.B. Awareness has been increasing, probably in part because of the current crisis. In the past years, renewable resources came up against unfounded opposition, as attempts were made to make it look like customers using renewable resources were paying much higher electricity bills. Naturally, this inhibited development. Unfortunately, consumers are strongly feeling the consequences of insufficient development in the field of renewable resources as energy prices are soaring. A higher share of renewable

resources would make us significantly less dependent on the price of gas and other imported energy sources. It is definitely good news that awareness of the importance of renewable resources is growing.

What about strategy and implementation? Which countries in the region do you think have the most adapted legislation?

S.B. In my opinion, in the region of the Western Balkans, Croatia is the most advanced as regards renewable resources. This is also corroborated by the installed capacity of renewable energy and the number of projects under development (project funnel). The Republic of Croatia has also adopted a long-term energy strategy, wherein it clearly defines the goals. Given the shortage of experts, it is perhaps of paramount importance that Croatia has managed to train a vast number of experts in renewable energy sources in the last decade.

Serbia has also fairly successfully set about implementing renewable resources and successfully attracted international investors. In 2021, vital laws were adopted to expedite said implementation.

Of course, other countries in the region have also picked up the pace of development of renewable energy sources and are seeking opportunities to carry out projects as soon as possible. Non-EU countries of the region are additionally motivated to achieve the largest possible share of renewable resources by the fact that they must implement the EU emissions trading system for CO₂ coupons by the end of this decade. So, the share of renewable energy sources should increase in order to avoid a surge in the price of electricity for end customers.

At this point, it is necessary to mention Slovenia, because we lag far behind other countries in the region as regards the introduction of renewable sources. We are unable to find a way to speed up the siting of renewable resources and we are no doubt the only country in the region without a solar or wind power plant with installed capacity greater than 10 MW. I believe and wish that we will accelerate the development of renewable resources through joint efforts.

Why is CEE attractive for investors in renewable sources?

S.B. The region has considerable natural potential, the wind speed is comparable to or even higher than the European aver-



age. Also, solar radiation is much greater in our region than in Central and Northern Europe. Electricity transmission networks are well connected between countries. This is a prerequisite for the development of the electricity market in the region, which has been undergoing strong development and is integrating into a single market. Last but not least, the region is part of Europe and can also contribute to Europe's reliable supply, since it is much simpler to transport energy from the region than from distant countries, where we are currently looking for a solution to the emerging energy crisis. True, the region is too small to solve the problem entirely, but it can make a significant contribution.

What can we expect in 2023 in terms of electricity?

S.B. Several scenarios are possible. If we enter a recession, consumption will undoubtedly decrease, resulting in price decline. Prices would also decrease if the conflict between Russia and Ukraine settled down. On the other hand, should the war continue, energy prices will go up. The impact of temperature should also be considered. In the event of another hot summer, energy consumption would increase, diminishing the sources of electricity, especially from hydro power plants, wind power plants and also thermal power plants due to the need for cooling.

2023 will be challenging; we will have to adapt and find alternative solutions of supply, and we will become more economical.



PHOTO:
Unsplash

In any case, I do not expect the price of electricity to be at the pre-crisis level.

Which technologies are in for the brightest future in your opinion?

S.B. Certainly wind and solar power plants combined with energy storage. Wind energy has been developing extremely quickly. On-shore wind turbines with a capacity of more than 6 MW and rotor diameters of 170 meters can be set up in locations with lower wind speeds. The development of solar energy is enormous as well, with considerable progress in yield, materials and technologies. Also, batteries are getting better and cheaper, and increasingly applied in the energy industry. We can expect many new projects in this area in the coming years.

It is important that the development of these technologies pursues the goal of reducing the environmental impact and increasing the share of recycling. The wind turbine manufacturer Siemens Gamesa has already produced a 100% recyclable wind turbine blade.

Of course, we must not forget the technologies for extracting pure hydrogen, which will be of great importance for future energy.

Why has hydrogen not yet become more widely established as an energy source?

S.B. Currently, hydrogen is predominantly used in the oil industry, fertilizer production and food processing. In most cases, it is derived from hydrocarbons (mainly natural gas), but with high greenhouse gas emissions as a by-product. More extensive use of hydrogen would be reasonable, if it were obtained in an environment-friendly way, as "pure" hydrogen. One of the most widespread technologies for producing pure hydrogen is electrolysis, drawing on electricity from renewable energy sources. Obviously, hydrogen also needs to be stored, transported and finally converted into a form of energy suitable for the end user. The whole process is complex, involving great losses, which in turn result in high hydrogen use costs. In recent years, major development occurred in pure hydrogen with the aim of reducing costs and consequently lowering hydrogen use. Hydrogen is an indispensable link in the green transition and will be used in industrial processes where direct electrification is not possible. The EU has already adopted a long-term strategy for the implementation of pure hydrogen technologies.





W

ind power now contributes 15% of all the electricity we consume in Europe. The EU would like that to be 43% by 2030. That's a huge expansion of wind over the next 8 years – from 190 GW to 510 GW. It will make wind the number one source of electricity in Europe.

And by 2050 the EU wants wind to contribute over half the electricity we consume and renewables in total to be well over 80%.

At the same time, wind will branch out from (just) powering our electricity consumption today to become an increasingly important source of the energy for our heating, transport and industry for the simple reason that heating, transport and industry are themselves going to become much more electric. And the share of electricity in the energy mix will rise from its modest 23% in Europe today to 75% in the long term.

That 75% will include a large chunk of energy that is originally produced as renewable electricity but then consumed as hydrogen, because there are some parts of transport and industry that we cannot electrify directly and which can only be decarbonized by renewable hydrogen. The



GILES DICKSON
CEO, Wind Europe

EU says this renewable hydrogen will represent 18% of the energy mix by 2050.

This means some wind farms will be feeding into electrolyzers that produce renewable hydrogen. Some may even have electrolyzers inside the wind farm. Either way, some of the wind energy we produce will be transported not as electrons but as molecules.

Many more wind farms will, of course, have battery units inside them or will be connected to batteries. The higher the penetration of variable renewables in the electricity mix, the more important it will be to think about how we help to balance the whole energy system.

What can we expect from turbine technology? (Even) more powerful turbines than those we're producing now, probably. And certainly (even) more efficient. Either way, we can reasonably expect our capacity factors to continue to rise.

Another key technology development will be in circularity. The first recyclable blades are now being installed. The big turbine manufacturers are looking at all new blades being recyclable by 2030, giving us fully circular turbines. At the same time, the number of existing wind farms reaching end-of-life will rise steeply, and our capability in decommissioning and disposal of today's equipment will need to grow.

Finally, to what extent will wind be offshore as opposed to onshore? Well, the EU expects offshore wind to grow 20x by 2050. But they expect even bigger growth in GW terms in onshore wind. And for the EU to have 1,000 GW of onshore wind by 2050 versus 300 GW offshore. Within offshore we will see a growing share of floating wind now the technology has come of age, which will open up the Mediterranean and Adriatic to offshore wind.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IS THE KEY TO FUTURE PROSPERITY

BY Michal Maco



PHOTO:
Corwin

We see sustainable development as an opportunity for growth and innovation, an answer to the challenges of the climate crisis, and the key to the transition to a low-carbon and greener society with a high quality of life. Which criteria determine sustainable construction and which sustainable architecture? What are the obstacles in building a sustainable building in Slovenia?

M.M. Sustainability in development is a very broad question that we try to approach from every angle and it is relatively hard to define. It could probably be summarized by saying that sustainable buildings provide a great quality of life for people today without negatively affecting the quality of life for future generations. For us that means looking at how the building fits into the city, how can it elevate its surroundings, be more efficient and provide a good indoor environment. We are integrating natural solutions like green roofs or rain gardens, introducing technologies that increase energy efficiency, such as heat pumps, and measuring our results to make every new project one step better. On a broader scale, it also means taking positive lessons from cities with a very high quality of life, such as Copenhagen or Vienna, instead of copying Moscow or Dubai.

We are delighted to say that the city of Ljubljana, where we operate, has a very good attitude towards sustainability and the chief architect is especially well versed in questions of good people-centred urbanism and sustainable city development, so building sustainably is encouraged. There are, of course, some old norms and regulations that we need to tackle but same can be said of any country. What is most important is that the city, the citizens and developers are seeing eye to eye, communicate frequently and help each other build a better city for the future.

In the future, it will be even more important to take various aspects into account when planning cities: environmental, social, economic and technological. How do you see and plan the city of the future at Corwin?

M.M. We focus on creating cities where



we ourselves would like to live. Where you want to be a pedestrian or a cyclist and where you also want to stay after you finish work or on the weekend, instead of fleeing it to the countryside whenever you can. That is also why we choose carefully where we work because we need to be in love with the city and know it to truly help it grow in a positive way.

At Corwin, you build according to the principles of a compact city, where the focus is not on expansion, but on the development and optimization of the urban environment. Which areas in Ljubljana are you tackling and how does this also solve the challenge of demolished and abandoned areas in the city?

M.M. Our main focus is always the redevelopment of brownfields or previously used land within the inner city. Although it is usually more expensive, it means the city can develop without growing into the surrounding nature and placing further strain on the infrastructure. Furthermore, because of our use of green roofs and rain retention, we can actually make the city more pleasant, cooler, and more sustainable by building our projects, instead of the other way around. That is why each of our projects in Ljubljana focuses primarily on these abandoned areas.

The epidemic has and will have a significant impact on the future development of smart cities. Working from home, digital nomadism, and fewer daily migrations are changing the everyday reality and thus also the

needs of citizens. So how can we strengthen the social component through urban planning to restore a sense of community even in modern cities?

M.M. A key way is to make workspace better, more pleasant and more accessible. That is something we had been working on for a long time before the pandemic and the current situation only proved us right. Our head office in Bratislava is situated in our own LEED Gold project Blumental and what we have seen, especially when talking with friends from other companies, is that our employees returned to work much quicker and stayed there. Currently, Blumental is fully leased and we are actually expanding our own office to accommodate

more people. It's a very similar story in our LEED Platinum building Einpark. It turns out that people are willing to go to work but it has to be worth it for them and they have to be returning to a place where they feel good.

How are ESG criteria introduced into architecture and construction? How can we set boundaries and find a balance between the investor's needs and respect for the environment?

M.M. I don't believe there is any conflict between sustainability or ESG and investors' needs. Especially if the investor understands that sustainability in real estate in essence means creating long-lasting value and a better product for the customer. Because sustainability is economic, social and environmental and we look at all of these aspects when designing our buildings. In that way, they will help shape the city in a more rational way, have a lower impact and provide a higher quality of interior today as well as in the future. That is why our office and residential projects – apart from being kinder to the environment – also have a tendency to hold their value much better than the nearest competition. Good proof of that is that just this year, while people hail the end of office spaces and rise of remote work, we sold our LEED Gold offices to an international investment fund and it was the biggest real estate transaction in Bratislava. It shows that smart investors already understand that sustainability is beneficial for your returns as well as the environment.



Edina LEED Platinum in LEED Zero poslovna stavba v Sloveniji



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Smart Building
Control



Green Roofs



EV Compatibility



Energy Efficient
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FOOD & AGRICULTURE: THE FUTURE OF SUSTAINABILITY

BY Prof. Aleš Kuhar, PhD

The current global situation, accompanied by the fact that imported food has a greater environmental impact and is somewhat depleted of nutritional value, has reinitiated the debate on the importance of self-sufficiency. What was the main system error we committed in the past that rendered us so dependent on imports today?

A.K.— In terms of natural resources, Slovenia is in a less than optimal position, but this has too long been used as an excuse for inaction. We comfort ourselves with the fact that this is due to unfavorable natural conditions. Perhaps we are waiting for a change in some other area, but it is precisely this lack of ambition that is our greatest impediment. Also, we do not dare understand that the food system is developing very quickly. Although it is technologically a mature industry, the dynamics are very fast, in particular as regards organization, production, offer, and marketing approaches. In a way, there is no proper stimulation in Slovenia. Let us start with the pub-

►
Prof. Aleš Kuhar, PhD

Associated professor of food system economics, innovation management and consumer behavior & EIT FOOD HUB SLOVENIA lead

lic administration, the decision-makers. Just because we do not have at our disposal all the natural resources for agriculture does not mean we cannot be an agricultural superpower. There are no limits in this respect, but somehow we lack the courage to take it on. I am not a fan of the term self-sufficiency, because it serves as a very handy excuse in the genesis of this lack of ambition. I prefer to use the term competitiveness, which is more encouraging and proactive. Self-sufficiency is a passive development concept by the very sound of it. The entire Slovenian food system should strive to strengthen competitiveness.

If I draw a parallel with the USA – they have a well-designed method of professional support for food production and processing. It is an ongoing dream of mine to establish and maintain these models.

Essential for a successful recovery after the crisis is the sustainable survival of primary producers, who are still trailing in terms of income. What would you say about that?

A.K. Agriculture is a very complex world. It is a connection of sorts, a point of contact between households in rural areas engaged in farming and the economy. We should ask a specific question: who exactly is a farmer? Especially among those who are active and economically vital, it is necessary to make a distinction between those who contribute with their activities to the fact that Slovenia has food and the households who grow food for themselves. We have to ask ourselves how we would like the promotion of competitiveness to take shape. Unfortunately, in Slovenia we lack courage or the understanding that a correct distinction is required between self-sufficient farms, households that grow their own food and economically vital farms. A lever for activities is needed, so as to actually thrust Slovenian agriculture on the development track.

We often hear that food systems are not sustainable enough. System solutions are needed. How can food processors and producers reduce their environmental footprint?

A.K. Only with progress. The development of agriculture and food production relied heavily on chemical knowledge. In the previous century, when the agricultural revolution based on the synthesis of nitrogen took place, exceptional progress was achieved, yielding positive effects. Now some believe that we should reduce agricultural processing. This is very risky. On the contrary – we need to intensify the use of biological knowledge, and not reduce the great dependence on chemical pillars. This is a very realistic view. Agriculture and food production are too complex a system to be addressed through emotional debate. There is no progress because two worlds – consumers and environmentalists – are talking about completely different things.

On the other side of sustainable production is sustainable consumption. How do consumers err in their understanding of sustainable eating?

A.K. Sustainable eating is expensive and requires effort, commitment and intellect. In the modern world, people are still passive when it comes to changing themselves and very price sensitive when it comes to food. At the World Food Conference, the UN addressed the



concept of true cost of food. Globally, the price we pay for a product is one third of the total costs incurred in the production, distribution and consumption of food. Another third is unpaid environmental costs, and that leaves social costs. One third is paid for, while the other third is paid by society, as it comprises the costs arising from dietary patterns.

Why is there such a price difference between the same types of food products at different retailers, and how does this reflect the hypocritical habits of an average Slovenian customer? What is the cause of such discrepancy between our wishes and our actions?

A.K. We should know that there are different classes of merchants and food distribution methods. We buy food from a certain provider, but everything related to it differs in some or other detail. I often say that the food available from different types of distribution chains is very different. Take cheese for example – the quality is different, as is the

context. The consumer is not buying just cheese, but a wider product and a feeling. A same type of product is often incomparable at different providers and therefore priced differently. The consumer decides whether to buy very cheap cheese with a completely different mix of technological, sensory, environmental and social attributes than some other cheese. As consumers, we often think that it is price that matters, but of course that is far from the truth. In Slovenia, we are inundated with toxic communication of retail chains. Compared to other countries, the intensity of communication in Slovenia is high. Therefore, our behavior is probably even more price-specific than in any other country in the same income bracket. We do not behave exactly as we think we do or as would be expected of us based on our financial status.

One of the sustainable guidelines is waste management. How can we present these methods (for decreasing the amount of waste) to the public in the most effective way, so that they really internalize them and live in accordance with them? Who should take the initiative?

A.K.— One of the reasons for wasted food lies in being overflooded with toxic communication. Namely, in Slovenia we buy more things because they are cheap and then throw them away because we cannot consume them. Perhaps this is where we should start thinking about the starting points to initiate the transformation of discarded food. This is definitely a point of intervention of the civil public. Alternatives are being developed – insect-based bioconversion of food waste was set up at the University of Ljubljana. Instead of letting discarded food end up in municipal waste and generate CO₂, we capture these flows and return them to the food cycle by growing organisms and converting them into feed for livestock, for which

they are natural food. However, a lot of orchestration is still required. Sustainability lies in advanced solutions. We expect sustainable changes to happen with consumers, with companies, while on a global level, it is changing the sustainable practices of farms that poses a huge challenge. If we ensure a more favorable position of small farms globally, we have every right to expect a shift towards sustainable practices.

Due to the flood of labels, there is confusion in this area as well. Those who are very engaged will seek information, but this does not eliminate the problem, because with the fast pace of life and constant changes in this area it is difficult to keep up despite the engagement of individuals. Do you have any idea how to solve this?

A.K.— There is no longer any effect. Those who have the greatest interest started thinking how to regain attention. The hyperproduction of these labels is most detrimental to those who have an honest long-term intention with the labels. It is necessary to consider how to explain to the consumer what it is all about. It is a very demanding field and it is wrong for private in-

terests to start to dominate it. We are at a point where it would be reasonable for the state to intervene and regulate this area. It is essential to consistently clarify to people the differences between the various categories. There is a similar situation with greenwashing. In terms of public interest, we have every reason to be very afraid that the consumer will become completely arrogant due to all such communication. In Slovenia, there are many good programs; a lot of effort is devoted to “selected quality” in particular, which is a voluntary state label. We have reached the point where we should establish a self-regulation portal, such as the Advertising Chamber, which is a self-regulatory organization. The essence of the business is that it is credible. Self-regulation in other communication activities would perhaps be necessary as well. As consumers, we tend to simplify things, and many people prefer not to give it another thought. But there is a segment of citizens who are extremely strict. They comprise small, niche segments of the market which operate somewhat differently. However, we are interested in the central consumer, who naturally switches to arrogance. ✕



An abstract graphic featuring a large, light purple circle in the background. Overlaid on this are several concentric, semi-transparent circles in shades of yellow, orange, and pink. In the center of these circles is a solid blue shape that resembles a stylized, elongated drop or a teardrop. The text "AmCham Slovenia" is superimposed over the graphic, with the letters of "AmCham" and "Slovenia" appearing in white and the letters of "Slovenia" appearing in a vibrant, multi-colored gradient that matches the background colors.

AmCham Slovenia

Membership Benefits 2023	Patron*	Corporate	Entrepreneur	Non-Profit
Networking, Knowledge Exchange and Best Practices				
Events				
AmCham Business Breakfast*	✓ 3 seats free of charge at all AmCham Business Breakfasts in the current year	✓ 2 seats free of charge at all AmCham Business Breakfasts in the current year	✓ 1 seat free of charge at all AmCham Business Breakfasts in the current year	✓ 1 seat free of charge at 5 AmCham Business Breakfasts in the current year
<i>* AmCham Business Breakfast takes place either virtually (and it's open to all of the members) or live in combination of both, live and virtual events. In case of live events, restrictions from the table apply.</i>				
AmCham Focus	✓ priority invitation	✓	✓	✓
AmCham Exchange	✓ priority invitation	✓	✓	✓
Other AmCham Slovenia events	✓ priority invitation	✓	✓	✓
Events within the organization of AmCham Slovenia partner companies	✓ priority invitation	✓		
Two exclusive events per year	✓			
Priority attendance at events in case of limited seating	✓			
Exchange of Best Practices				
Best of the Best	✓	✓	✓	✓
Community				
AmCham Business Leaders Club meetings	✓	✓		
AmCham Business Leaders Book Club meetings	✓	✓		
AmCham Business Leader of the Year events	✓	✓		
Advocacy				
AmCham Committees	✓	✓	✓	✓
Partnership for Change	✓	✓	✓	✓
OSAC Ljubljana	✓	✓		
Visibility				
AmCham Slovenia website	✓	✓	✓	✓
AmCham Slovenia newsletters	✓ special emphasis	✓	✓	✓
AmCham Dialogue - AmCham Slovenia yearbook	✓ special emphasis	✓	✓	✓
AmCham Slovenia social media	✓ special emphasis	✓	✓	✓
AmCham Slovenia social media (2x annual promotion)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Priority partnership and possibility of promotion at the events where AmCham Slovenia is a partner	✓			
Visibility at all AmCham events	✓			
AmCham Slovenia social media (2x annual promotion)	✓			
Young Programs				
AmCham Young Professionals™ (Enrollment Limitation of 150)	✓ 2 candidates (Priority Enrollment)	✓ 2 candidates	✓ 1 candidate	✓ 1 candidate
AmCham Young Leaders Club	✓	✓	✓	✓
YOUNG platform programs	✓	✓	✓	✓
International Cooperation				
Possibility of receiving basic guidelines for successfully entering the U.S. market	✓	✓	✓	✓
AmCham business delegations to the U.S.	✓ priority invitation	✓	✓	✓
Enter: USA	✓	✓	✓	✓
AmChams in Europe network of 46 AmChams in 44 countries throughout Europe and Western Asia	✓	✓	✓	✓
Access to open events of 46 AmChams in 44 countries	✓	✓		
Individual meetings with executive directors of AmChams in 44 countries throughout Europe and Western Asia	✓	✓		
One-on-one meeting with executive directors of AmCham organisations in 44 countries in Europe and Western Asia	✓			
Additional Patron Benefit				
15% off on partnerships (on all AmCham programs, AmCham Business Breakfast, and AmCham Focus)	✓			
Membership Fee				
A one-time initiation fee in the amount of EUR 100 + VAT is applicable for new members only.	Annual fee EUR 3,300 + VAT	Annual fee EUR 1,650 + VAT	Annual fee EUR 825 + VAT	Annual fee EUR 275 + VAT

* The Number of Patron members is limited. Patron membership by special invitation only.

WHAT DOES AMCHAM SLOVENIA DO?

*AmCham Slovenia =
a Business Community
of Optimism & Opportunities*

4 Pillars of Our Activities

Networking and events

We address various topics and subjects, we inform and exchange good business practices. At the same time, these events represent an excellent opportunity to expand your acquaintances and knowledge.

Advocacy

There are 8 working committees operating in AmCham Slovenija's advocacy framework, and these include over 320 representatives of companies, our members, who are experts in their fields. With our knowledge and vision, we wish to contribute to forming a better business environment and quality of life in Slovenia.

Young Platform

The AmCham Young Platform connects generations of young and active individuals who stand out from the average. Programs within the platform guide the personal and career development of the next generation of business leaders.

International Collaboration

We represent an entry point for Slovenian companies that want to penetrate the US market, and open doors to investors into Slovenia. We are also part of the AmChams in Europe network and currently hold the seat of the organization.

24
YEARS

400+
MEMBERS

130+
EVENTS
ANNUALLY

60+
PATRON
MEMBERS

4.7k
PEOPLE
IN ONE
BUSINESS
COMMUNITY

2k+
MEMBERS
OF OUR
YOUNG
PLATFORM

Networking & Events



AmCham Business Breakfast
Networking with content since 2002.



AmCham Business Leaders Club
Renowned business leaders sharing ideas and networking at the highest levels.



Best of the Best
Innovation, Motivation, and ESG, presentation of best business practices.

AMCHAM FOCUS

AmCham Focus
We create value through knowledge.

Advocacy

As changes in society require an open dialogue between the private sector, science, the state, and civil society, AmCham Slovenia is using its well-branched network of members from various lines of business to connect know-how and act as the voice of Slovenian and international companies.

Health and Wellbeing Committee

For a sustainable, accessible, and fair healthcare system.

Co-chairs: Urša Lakner, Pfizer, & Janko Bugar, Cosylab

Finance Committee

For a predictable and more competitive fiscal-financial environment.

Co-chairs: Žiga Vižintin, Pokojninska družba A, & Luka Gabrovšek, Mastercard

Intellectual Property Committee

Awareness of the importance of intellectual property rights.

Co-chairs: Eva Gostiša, Jadek & Pensa Law Office & Jaka Repanšek, RePublis

Future of Work and Education Committee

Education and the labor market in line with development and the needs of the economy.

Co-chairs: Nevenka Oštarjaš, IBM & Sanja Savič, PwC

Investment Committee

Slovenia should become the first choice of investors coming to Europe.

Co-chairs: Nevenka Črešnar Pergar, NP Consulting & Aljoša Krdžić, Rojs, Peljhan, Prelesnik & partners

Corporate Ethics and Transparency Committee

Transparency, compliance and values at the heart of every company and institution.

Co-chairs: Aleš Lunder, Law firm Senica & Marko Srobotnik, Dun & Bradstreet

Ready4DFuture Committee

We need to be "Future Fit".

Co-chairs: Uroš Majcen, S&T Iskratel & Boris Horvat, Abelium

Sustainable Growth Committee

As individuals and the business community we must actively participate in the sustainable mindset.

Co-chairs: Mojca Markizeti, Deloitte & Alenka Recelj Mercina, NLB Group



Partnership for Change

Innovative national collaboration platform.



Učitelj sem! Učiteljica sem!

Inspiring stories of teachers who are changing the world with their innovation and dedication.

YOUNG Platform

The AmCham YOUNG Platform represents a way of thinking forward.



AmCham Young Leaders Club

A network of business leaders of the younger generation, whose desire and goal is to work together and co-create a better future, strong economy, and a high quality of life.



AmCham Young Professionals™

Personal and career development for the next generation of business leaders.



AmCham Mentor

Informal transfer of knowledge, social capital, and support. A powerful personal development and empowerment tool.



Prvi mentor (First mentor)

Members of AmCham Young Leaders Club offer mentoring to young people between the ages of 15 and 25 who are considering a career, starting to dream about their business path, or looking for the best way to jump from school to business.



Snežna kepa (Snowball)

Snowball is the center of optimism. It is a group of active young people brought together by a common vision—to make Slovenia a country of optimism and opportunity, with a high quality of life.



Student Entrepreneurship and Internship

AmCham Slovenia in cooperation with the US Embassy in Slovenia links academic and business career through its student internship program.

International Cooperation



AmCham Business and Development Delegations to the US

Business and investment opportunities for Slovenian companies in the US.



Slovenia Business Bridge™

Investment and Development Conference

Finding opportunities & making them happen.



USA Meetup

Informal conversations and concrete answers as well as examples and first-hand experience for a better understanding of the US market.

USA Boot Camp

We share knowledge and experience and provide detailed insights into individual industries, their specifics, and trends.



Enter USA

Custom made business training for companies that are entering or expanding business operations on the US market.



Believe in Slovenia

Believe in Slovenia

Discover the stories of our »ambassadors of friendship« and their true belief in Slovenia.



AmChams in Europe

A network of 46 AmChams in 44 countries across Europe and Western Asia. With Ajša Vodnik as Vice Chair of AmChams in Europe, **Slovenia currently holds the Secretariat of the organization.**



INTERNATIONAL

**AMCHAM SLOVENIA –
YOUR PRIME PARTNER AND
ENTRY POINT FOR THE U.S. MARKET**



TEXAS – the “engine” of the American economy was our stop the first week of April 2022. We organized a business development delegation “Go Big in Texas” and business & investment conference “Texas Feels Slovenia” in Dallas. Both took place in cooperation with the SPIRIT Slovenia public agency.

PHOTO:
iStock

APRIL 3 – 8, 2022

AMCHAM BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT DELEGATIONGO BIG
IN TEXASHOUSTON
AUSTIN
DALLAS

AmCham Slovenia, together with the SPIRIT Slovenia public agency organized a 28-member business development delegation to Texas. Members of the delegation visited renowned companies in Houston, Austin, and Dallas to learn about renewable energy sources, telecommunications, digital technologies, artificial intelligence, and space technology and also draw inspiration from successful stories of Americans of Slovenian descent.



AmCham delegations offer an opportunity to learn about the American culture and ways of thinking and doing business, as well as to visit world-renowned corporations that are setting trends in their respective industries.

For additional information, contact:
vida.dolenc@amcham.si

Highlights of the “Go Big in Texas” delegation:

Houston:

- Greater Houston Partnership
- NASA Space Center

Austin:

- Urban Mining Company / Noveon Magnetics
- Strangeworks
- Texas State Capitol

Dallas:

- IBM Global Solution Center (and cooperation with Boston Dynamics)
- Dallas Cowboys
- Sun To Water Technologies



▲ Dallas Cowboys HQ, Frisco, Texas



▲ Greater Houston Partnership



▲ IBM Global Solution Center visit and group photo with SPOT from Boston Dynamics



▲ Dallas Mavericks: Let's go Luka!



▲ NASA Space Center Houston



▲ NASA Space Center Houston



▲ Texas State Capitol in Austin



▲ Urban Mining Company / Noveon Magnetics



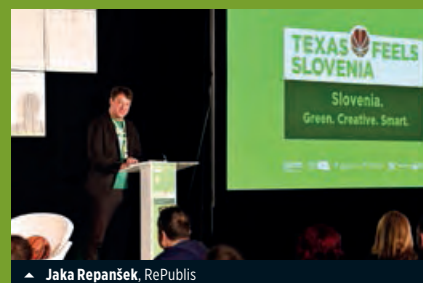
TEXAS FEELS SLOVENIA

Business Investment Conference

April 8, 2022 / Dallas, Texas



▲ **Cynt Marshall**, Dallas Mavericks; **Ajša Vodnik**, AmCham Slovenia



▲ **Jaka Repanšek**, RePublis



▲ **Vid Habjan**, SPIRIT Slovenia



▲ **Bojan Škoda**, Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia to the USA; **H.E. Tone Kajzer**, Former Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia to the USA; **Cynt Marshall**, Dallas Mavericks; **Randolph J. Bresnik**, NASA; **Rebecca Burgin Bresnik**, NASA; **Milena Kajzer**, Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in Denmark; **Simon Zajc**, Ministry of Economic Development and Technology



▲ **Randolph J. Bresnik**, NASA; **Ajša Vodnik**, AmCham Slovenia



▲ **Texas Feels Slovenia**



▲ **Simona Jamnik Čok**, Triglav Zdravje; **Tomaž Švajger**, Heads Adriatic; **Mojca Bartolj Lesar**, PWC; **Tadej Čoroll**, Triglav; **Andrej Knap**, Triglav; **Jaka Repanšek**, RePublis; **Benedikt Ceglar**, NIL

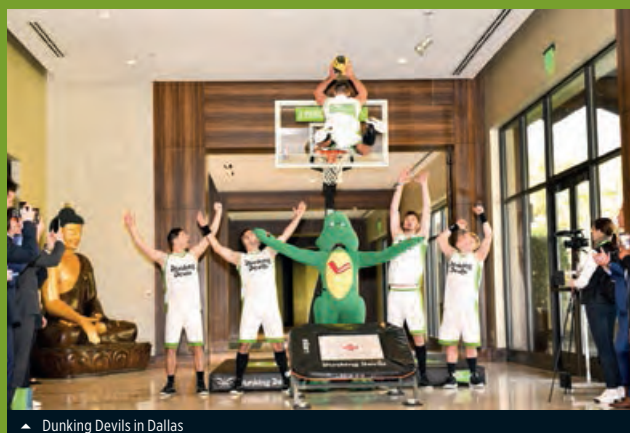


▲ **Sašo Pačnik**, TAB; **Jure Podkrižnik**, Podkrižnik Group; **Randolph J. Bresnik**, NASA; **Boris Horvat**, Abelium

At the "Texas Feels Slovenia" conference, Slovenia was presented as green, creative, and smart country, with many investment, business, and tourism opportunities. Conference participants were able to see Slovenia as an innovative country in the heart of Europe, a country that cares about the future of its talents, including in sport. The entire conference was held in the spirit of basketball and the exceptional basketball player Luka Dončić.

Cynt Marshall, CEO of the Dallas Mavericks and one of the most influential women in the sports industry, was the honorary guest speaker at the conference.

During the conference, we heard a couple of success stories of Americans with Slovenian roots, who emphasized that they succeeded precisely because they have Slovenian DNA. Randy Bresnik, an active NASA astronaut of Slovene descent, shared with the audience his view of Slovenia.



▲ **Dunking Devils in Dallas**

46

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44

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17k

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20

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WE ARE IMMENSELY PROUD THAT THE TURN OF AJŠA VODNIK, CEO OF AMCHAM SLOVENIA, AS VICE-CHAIR HAS BEEN EXCLUSIVELY EXTENDED FOR AN ADDITIONAL YEAR BY THE ORGANIZATION'S MEMBERS. THIS MEANS THAT THE SEAT OF THE ORGANIZATION REMAINS IN SLOVENIA ALSO IN 2023.



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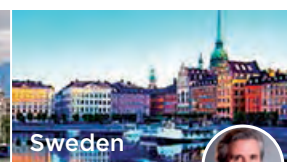
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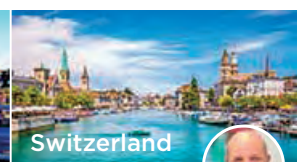
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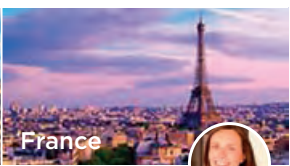























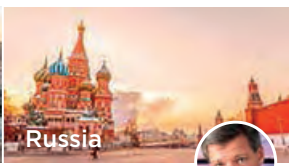

















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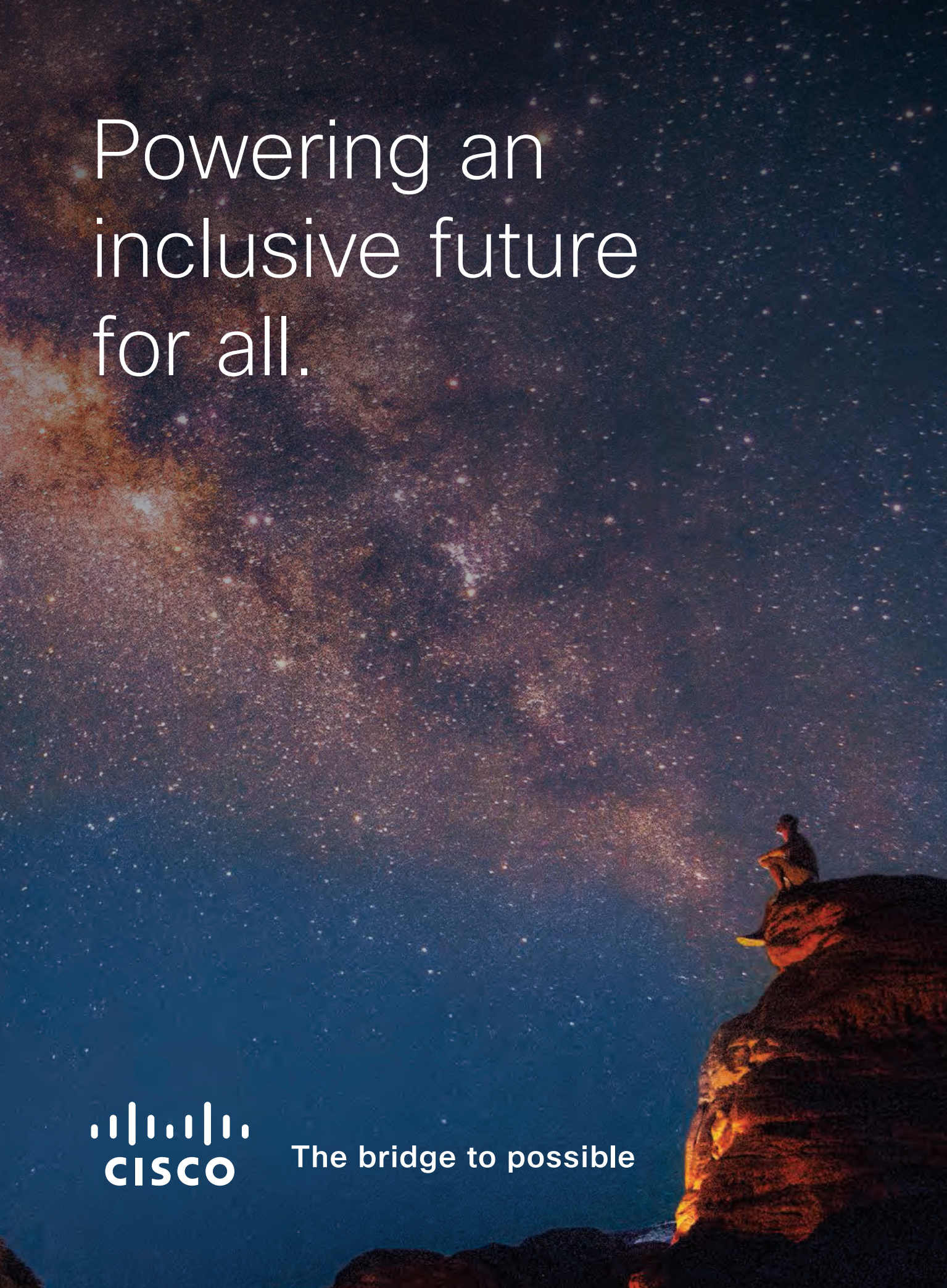


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A person is silhouetted while sitting on the edge of a dark, rocky cliff. The cliff face is illuminated from below, showing its rugged texture. The background is a vast, dark night sky filled with numerous stars and the prominent, glowing band of the Milky Way galaxy stretching across the upper half of the frame.

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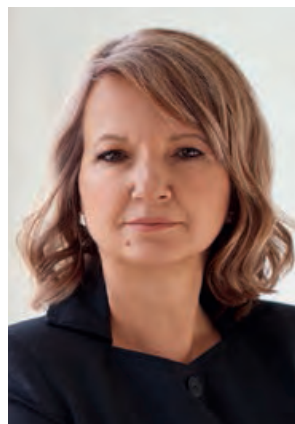


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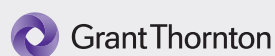
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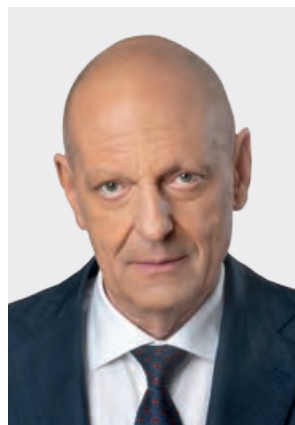
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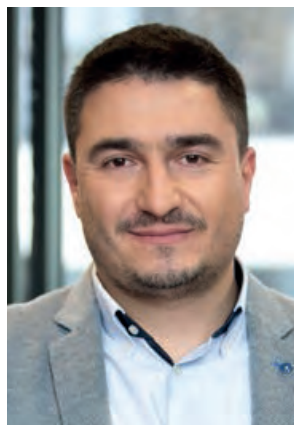
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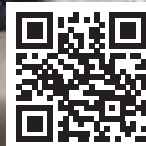
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www.adecco.si



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Sebastijan Marinič, Chief Operating Officer
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www.agitavit.si



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www.mcdonalds.si



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www.av-studio.si



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B



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puklavacfamilywines.com/en

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R



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

















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










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	 delightT. OFFICE SOLUTION	Delight d.o.o. Matevž Borovnik, Country Manager www.delight-office.si		 Fiduro	Fiduro d.o.o. Janez Križaj, MSc, EMBA www.fiduro.net
	 DODO	Dodo consulting, Nina Langerholc Čebokli, s.p. Nina Langerholc Čebokli Director		 FRAGMAT	Fragmat TIM d.o.o. Dušan Žužek, Director
	 dts.	DTSDesign d.o.o. DTSCreate d.o.o. DTSPrint d.o.o. Andraž Prajs, CEO www.dts.si	G	 ONE 6t HOTEL	GAST GOSTINSTVO d.o.o. Dragan Todorović, Director www.one66hotel.com
E	 EDUCELL HELL THE BANG SERVICE	Educell d.o.o. Lenart Girandon, CEO www.educell.si		 GATEHUB	GateHub d.o.o. Enej Pungerčar, Director Taja Kaker, Director gatehub.net
	 EKSPEKTA	EKSPEKTA, pravno-finančne storitve, d.o.o. Andraž Potokar, CEO ekspekta.com		 Gm PARTNERS IN CHANGE	Giacomelli Media Management and Consulting Ltd d.o.o. Jurij Giacomelli, Director www.giacomellimedia.com
	 ERUDIO Z VARNOSTI 1992	ERUDIO izobraževalni center Dimitrij Miklič, Director www.erudio.si		 grilc vouk škof RECHTSANWÄLTE SOZIALRECHTS ANWÄLTE	Grilc Vouk Škof, Rechtsanwälte Roland Grilc, Maria Škof, Rudi Vouk Partners www.gvs3.at
	 Essentia™ Pura	Essentia Pura, Proizvodnja farmacevtskih surovin d.o.o. Nejc Rusjan, Managing Director www.essentiapura.com		 GK	Guzina Kavšek Svetovanje d.o.o. Barbara Guzina, MSc, Partner www.gks.si
	 EVENTNIKA	Eventnika d.o.o. Nika Močnik, Director eventnika.si	H	 Hansen Beck FARMACEUTICALS	Hansen B d.o.o. Bojana Florjančič, Partner & Co-Founder Tina Gorenc, Partner & Co-Founder Aaron Marko, Partner & Co-Founder www.hansenbeck.com

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Dino Starčič, Co-founder & CEO
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Luka Švab, odvetnik
Luka Švab, Founder and Attorney



ISTOST d.o.o.
Tina Štrubelj, Founder, CEO
nelipot.si

M



Madwise d.o.o.
Sašo Palčič, CEO
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Artjom Bajdak, Owner
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K

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Jadranka Jezeršek Turnes, Director
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LabCore d.o.o.
Andraž Žurman, CEO
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Print and Prepress
Nives Ajdovec Lašič, Director
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Founding and Managing Partner
pate-odvetnik.com



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mag. Primož Feguš, Managing Partner
fegus.si



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www.internetofleaders.com



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www.mediaspeed.si

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Matjaž Jerovšek, Director
www.mojakariera.si

N



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Boštjan Prijanovič, Managing Director
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NorthGrant d.o.o.
Peter Groznik, Director



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Miha Zakotnik, CTO
noveon.co

O



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Saša Bezek Mejaš, Procurator
www.okconsulting.si



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Tanja Bohl, Attorney,
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Irena Dobravec Tatalovič,
Director, Lawyer
www.dtk.partners



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Dr. Andrej Fatur, Managing Partner
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Luka Zupančič, Director, Senior Partner



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Rok Jerovšek, Attorney at Law
Peter Malis, Attorney at Law
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Attorney at Law specialised in
Corporate and Commercial Law
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Tanja Martelanc, Director
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Miha Lavtar, Founder & CEO
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P



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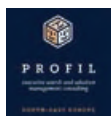
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Martina Merslavič, Founder & CEO
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Luka Stepan,
Founder and Creative Director
www.sito.design/en



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Nada Ulčar, Director
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T



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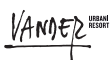
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U



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V



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Rok Šimenc, Director
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Monika Lapanja, Director
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Circular Change
Ladeja Godina Košir, MSc,
Founder & Executive Director
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Jasna Dominko Baloh, Director
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Professor Danica Purg, PhD, President
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www.lissa.si



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Professor Gregor Anderluh, PhD,
Director
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Simbioza Genesis, socialno podjetje
Ana Pleško, Director
www.simbioza.eu



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društvo za širjenje dobrih idej
Grega Čufer, President
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Katja Mohar Bastar, Director
dih Slovenia.si



Zavod Mreža Podjetništva, CEED
Andrej Šolinc, Director
www.ceed-slovenia.org



ZAVOD YPSILON
Dino Kovačević, Program Director
www.ypsilon.si



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AMCHAM BUSINESS BREAKFAST. NETWORKING WITH CONTENT.

Slovenia on the Rollercoaster of Global Trade

📅 **DATE:**
January 21, 2022

☆ **GUESTS:**
Dr. **Anže Logar**, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia; prof. Dr. **Andreja Jaklič**, Faculty of Social Sciences, Chair of International Relations, University of Ljubljana; **Tibor Šimonka**, President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia

🎤 **MODERATOR:**
Ajša Vodnik, MSc,
CEO, AmCham Slovenia, and Vice-Chair, AmChams in Europe



❶ Tibor Šimonka, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia; Dr. Andreja Jaklič, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana; Dr. Anže Logar, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia; Ajša Vodnik, AmCham Slovenia ❷ Tibor Šimonka, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia; Nevenka Kržan, Luka Koper; Blaž Brodnjak, NLB ❸ AmCham Business Breakfast

AMCHAM BUSINESS BREAKFAST. NETWORKING WITH CONTENT.

Are Slovenians Followers or Creators of Digital Reality?

📅 **DATE:**
March 18, 2022

☆ **GUESTS:**
Mark Boris Andrižanič, former Minister of Digital Transformation of the Republic of Slovenia; mag. **Edita Krajnovič**, Director, Mediade; **Alexa Joyce**, Digital Transformation & Skills Director, Public Sector Education, EMEA, Microsoft; Assoc. Prof. Dr. **Peter Gregorčič**, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Department of Optodynamics and Laser Engineering

🎤 **MODERATOR:**
Jaka Repanšek, RePublis, LegalIT, and Co-Chair of the AmCham Intellectual Property Committee



1 Jaka Repanšek, RePublis, LegalIT; Edita Krajnovič Msc, Mediade; Mark Boris Andrižanič, Office of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Digital Transformation; Barbara Domicelj, Microsoft Slovenia 2 Nevenka Črešnar Pergar, NP Consulting; Mark Boris Andrižanič, Office of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Digital Transformation 3 Jaka Repanšek, RePublis, LegalIT; Edita Krajnovič Msc, Mediade; Mark Boris Andrižanič, Office of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Digital Transformation; Assoc. Prof. Dr. Peter Gregorčič, Faculty of 4 Hrvoje Vesligaj, Microsoft; Oliver Zofič, Microsoft 5 AmCham Business Breakfast Mechanical Engineering, University of Ljubljana; Alexa Joyce, EMEA, Microsoft

AMCHAM BUSINESS BREAKFAST. NETWORKING WITH CONTENT.

City From the Green Playground of the Future

📅 DATE:
May 27, 2022

☆ GUESTS:
Miran Gajšek MSc Arch, Head of the Department of Urban Planning of the Municipality of Ljubljana; **Michal Maco**, Country Manager, Corwin; **Lovro Peterlin**, Managing Director, A1 Slovenija; **Špela Videčnik**, u.d.i.a. March (AA), Founder of OFIS Architects

🎤 MODERATOR:
Petra Kovič,
Editor-in-Chief of the publication Svet kapitala



❶ **Miran Gajšek** MSc Arch, Municipality of Ljubljana; **Michal Maco**, Corwin; **Špela Videčnik**, Founder, OFIS Architects; **Lovro Peterlin**, A1 Slovenija; **Petra Kovič**, Svet kapitala
❷ **Tomaž Lanišek**, Mestna občina Kranj; **Matej Matija Grobelšek**, A1; **Lovro Peterlin**, A1 Slovenija
❸ **Miran Gajšek** MSc, Municipality of Ljubljana; **Valentin Hajdinjak**, DARS
❹ **Miran Gajšek** MSc, Municipality of Ljubljana; **Michal Maco**, Corwin; **Špela Videčnik**, OFIS Architects; **Lovro Peterlin**, A1 Slovenija; **Petra Kovič**, Svet kapitala
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AMCHAM BUSINESS BREAKFAST / BLED STRATEGIC FORUM

An Imperative or Just Another Buzzword? The Role of Business in Today's World

📅 **DATE:**
August 30, 2022

☆ **GUESTS:**
H.E. **Jamie L. Harpootlian**, U.S. Ambassador to Slovenia; Dr. **Dejan Verčič**, Partner, Herman & partnerji; **Rowan Barnett**, Director, Google.org EMEA; **Matevž Frangež**, State Secretary, Ministry of Economic Development and Technology of the Republic of Slovenia; Dr. **Adrijana Rejc Buhovac**, PhD, Full Professor, School of Economics and Business of the University of Ljubljana; **John Denhof**, CEO and President of Management Board, Nova KBM

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1 Ajša Vodnik, AmCham Slovenia; Dr. Dejan Verčič, Herman & partnerji; Dr. Adrijana Rejc Buhovac, School of Economics and Business of the University of Ljubljana; John Denhof, Nova KBM; Matevž Frangež, Ministry of Economic Development and Technology of the Republic of Slovenia; H.E. Jamie L. Harpootlian, American Embassy in Slovenia 2 Dr. Dejan Verčič, Herman & partnerji; John Denhof, Nova KBM; Matevž Frangež, Ministry of Economic Development and Technology of the Republic of Slovenia 3 AmCham Business Breakfast



AMCHAM BUSINESS BREAKFAST. NETWORKING WITH CONTENT.

What Does the Slovenian Economy Need?

Dialogue between business representatives and the candidates for the 2022 presidential elections on the business and investment environment in Slovenia

📅 **DATE:**
October 13, 2022

★ **GUESTS:**
Blaž Brodnjak, CEO, NLB, and President, AmCham Slovenia;
Sabina Sobočan, CEO, Varis Lendava;

★ **CANDIDATES FOR THE 2022 SLOVENIA PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION:**
Anže Logar, Ph.D.
Nataša Pirc Musar, Ph.D.
Milan Brglez, Ph.D.

🎤 **MODERATOR:**
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CEO, AmCham Slovenia, and Vice-Chair, AmChams in Europe



❶ Nataša Pirc Musar, Ph.D., Candidate for the 2022 Slovenia Presidential Election ❷ Anže Logar, Ph.D., Candidate for the 2022 Slovenia Presidential Election ❸ Milan Brglez, Ph.D., Candidate for the 2022 Slovenia Presidential Election ❹ Candidates for the 2022 Slovenia Presidential Election ❺ Nataša Pirc Musar, Ph.D., Candidate for the 2022 Slovenia Presidential Election; Anže Logar, Ph.D., Candidate for the 2022 Slovenia Presidential Election ❻ Ajša Vodnik, AmCham Slovenia; Blaž Brodnjak, NLB ❽ AmCham Business Breakfast

AMCHAM BUSINESS BREAKFAST. NETWORKING WITH CONTENT.

Healthcare Today and in the Future – How Can It Be Kept Accessible for Everyone?

📅 **DATE:**
November 18, 2022

☆ **GUESTS:**
Dorijan Marušič, MD, MSc, BSc Eng, Member of Strategic Council of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for the Renovation of the Healthcare System; **Tomaž Gornik**, CEO and Founder, Better; **Kristina Modic**, Executive Director, Slovenian Lymphoma and Leukemia Patient Association and the European Citizen's Prize winner 2021; **Marko Pahor**, PhD, Full Professor, Academic Unit for Mathematics, Statistics and Operations Research, School of Economics and Business, University of Ljubljana; **David Zupančič**, MD, Infectious Disease Specialist, and Public health influencer; **Thibaut L'Ortye**, Director of Public Affairs, AmCham EU

🎤 **MODERATOR:**
Vida Dolenc Pogačnik,
COO and International Cooperation Director, AmCham Slovenia



1 Vida Dolenc Pogačnik, AmCham Slovenia; Dorijan Marušič, Strategic Council of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for the Renovation of the Healthcare System; Thibaut L'Ortye, AmCham EU; Kristina Modic, Slovenian Lymphoma and Leukemia Patient Association; Tomaž Gornik, Better 2 Dorijan Marušič, Strategic Council of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for the Renovation of the Healthcare System; Vida Dolenc Pogačnik, AmCham Slovenia; Kristina Modic, Slovenian Lymphoma and Leukemia Patient Association; Tomaž Gornik, Better 3 AmCham Business Breakfast 4 Urška Kajtnar, Lofware; Mateja Malnar Štembalj, Roche; Vida Dolenc Pogačnik, AmCham Slovenia; Lucija Zlodi, Bayer 5 AmCham Business Breakfast 6 Vida Dolenc Pogačnik, AmCham Slovenia; Dorijan Marušič, Strategic Council of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for the Renovation of the Healthcare System; David Zupančič, MD; Kristina Modic, Slovenian Lymphoma and Leukemia Patient Association; Tomaž Gornik, Better 7 AmCham Business Breakfast

AMCHAM BUSINESS BREAKFAST. NETWORKING WITH CONTENT.

Best of the Best Edition

📅 **DATE:**
December 6, 2022

★ **GUESTS OF HONOR:**
Janja Garnbret, Gold medalist, multiple World and European champion in climbing, ten-time winner of the overall World Cup;
Darko Đurić, Slovenian Paralympic swimmer, world record holder, and two-time world champion;
Edo Murić, Member of the victorious Slovenian national basketball team with the 2017 European Championship title and captain of the basketball club Cedevita Olimpija

★ **GUESTS:**
Marko Thaler, Airnamics d.o.o., Kolektor, d.o.o., **Zvone Zajc**, Manpower d.o.o., **Klemen Kreft**, Novaris v Sloveniji

🎤 **MODERATORS:**
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AMCHAM FOCUS

The Predictability of the Business Environment Creates Value

📅 **DATE:**
March 15, 2022

☆ **GUESTS:**
Blaž Brodjak, CEO, NLB, and President, AmCham Slovenia; Dr. Matej Avbelj, Full Professor for European Law, New University; Luka Podlogar, CEO, Generali Investments; Francis Malige, Managing Director, Financial Institutions EBRD-European Bank of Reconstruction and Development

🎤 **MODERATOR:**
Nevenka Črešnar Pergar, CEO
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1 Luka Podlogar, Generali Investments; Matej Avbelj, New University; Nevenka Črešnar Pergar, NP Consulting; Blaž Brodjak, NLB 2 Luka Podlogar, Generali Investments; Matej Avbelj, New University; Nevenka Črešnar Pergar, NP Consulting; Blaž Brodjak, NLB 3 Luka Podlogar, Generali Investments; Matej Avbelj, New University; Nevenka Črešnar Pergar, NP Consulting; Blaž Brodjak, NLB



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AMCHAM FOCUS

The View of the Economy on Slovenian Health Care

📅 **DATE:**
June 14, 2022

★ **GUESTS:**
Urša Lakner, M.Sc., Policy & Public Affairs Senior Manager Adriatic Region, Pfizer, and Co-Chair of the AmCham Health and Wellbeing Committee; **Polona Peterle**, Authorized Officer of the Management Board, Triglav, zdravstvena zavarovalnica; **Janez Bensa**, Co-Owner and CEO, Parsek; **Janko Burgar**, M.Sc., Vice President for Strategic Development, Cosylab, and the Co-Chair of the AmCham Health and Wellbeing Committee

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COO and International Cooperation Director, AmCham Slovenia



❶ Urša Lakner, Pfizer; Janko Burgar, Cosylab; Polona Peterle, Triglav Zdravje; Janez Bensa, Parsek; Vida Dolenc Pogačnik, AmCham Slovenia ❷ Janez Bensa, Parsek; Vida Dolenc Pogačnik, AmCham Slovenia ❸ AmCham Focus

AMCHAM FOCUS

Psychologically Safety in Companies – a Condition for Progress

📅 **DATE:**
September 21, 2022

☆ **GUESTS:**
Andrej Naterer, PhD, Associate professor, Department of Sociology, University of Maribor; **Darja Ferčej Temeljotov**, Head of Strategic Programs, Lek d.d.; **Jan Kovačič**, Organizational Psychologists, and Senior Consultant and CEO, Uporabna psihologija

🎤 **MODERATOR:**
Nevenka Oštarjaš, HR Partner, IBM and Co-Chair of AmCham Future of Work and Education Committee



1 Jan Kovačič, Uporabna psihologija; Darja Ferčej Temeljotov, Lek; Andrej Naterer, PhD, University of Maribor; Nevenka Oštarjaš, IBM 2 Representatives of the PROMETHEUS Project Partnership 3 AmCham Focus



AmCham Slovenia
**FUTURE OF WORK
& EDUCATION
COMMITTEE**



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
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AMCHAM FOCUS

Going Global. How to be Successful in the USA Market?

📅 **DATE:**
October 26, 2022

☆ **GUESTS:**
Boštjan Leskovar, Executive Director, UNIOR d.d., Program Special Machines; **Matjaž Čemažar**, Chairman of the Board, DOMEL d.o.o.; **Andraž Štalec**, Director and Co-founder of Red Orbit d.o.o., Google Certified Trainer

🎤 **MODERATOR:**
Vida Dolenc Pogačnik
COO and International Cooperation Director, AmCham Slovenia



❶ Andraž Štalec, Red Orbit; Boštjan Leskovar, UNIOR; Matjaž Čemažar, DOMEL; Vida Dolenc Pogačnik, AmCham Slovenia
❷ Ajša Vodnik, AmCham Slovenia; Andraž Štalec, Red Orbit; Vida Dolenc Pogačnik, AmCham Slovenia; Boštjan Leskovar, UNIOR; Matjaž Čemažar, DOMEL
❸ AmCham Focus

Slovenia
Grow with Google

AMCHAM FOCUS

Sustainability, the Only Possible Strategy

📅 **DATE:**
November 30, 2022

☆ **GUESTS:**
Barbara Domicelj, General Manager, Microsoft Slovenia; **Alenka Recelj Mercina**, Sustainability Coordinator, NLB Group; **Jure Šumi**, Head of Digital Marketing and Branding, Knauf Insulation; **Uroš Vajgl**, State Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning of the Republic of Slovenia.

🎤 **MODERATOR:**
Mojca Markizeti, Director for ESG and Sustainable Development, Audit & Assurance department, Deloitte Central, and Co-Chair of AmCham Sustainable Growth Committee





PROMETHEUS PROJECT

We strive to develop an organizational culture that will support the coordination of professional and private life and the policy of gender equality.

In July of this year, we started writing an ambitious story that strives for the transfer and implementation of good practices for improving work-life balance through training and education of employees and managers to establish an organizational structure and culture of companies based on gender equality.

The main goal of the Prometheus project is to empower working men and women, working at home or on location, with reliable measures adapted for different levels of jobs in the various companies included in the consortium to facilitate the coordination of professional and private life.

The expected results of the Prometheus project are:

- Improved employee knowledge and comprehension of the challenges related to balancing professional and private life.
- Increased awareness among national stakeholders and decision-makers of balancing employees' professional and private lives and the importance of gender equality within companies' organizational structures.
- Empowerment of employees and company managers by enabling professional and private life coordination.
- Increased awareness of the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic and of the various personal circumstances of an employed person on the possibilities of balancing their professional and private life.
- Scientific correlation between the challenges of balancing employees' professional and private lives and their satisfaction with the workplace.
- Increased awareness of the importance of gender equality in companies among the general public.



Prometheus project partners

Lead partner and project promotor:
American Chamber of Commerce – AmCham Slovenia

Slovenian partners:

- Gender Equality Research Institute, Maribor
- Merkur trgovina d.o.o.
- Riko, industrijski, gradbeni inženiring in leasing, d.o.o
- Knauf Insulation d.o.o., Škofja Loka
- Public Scholarship, Development, Disability and Maintenance Fund of the Republic of Slovenia
- A1 Slovenija, telekomunikacijske storitve, d.d.
- AMZS d.d.
- University of Maribor

Norwegian partner:

- Norges Automobil-Forbund, the Norwegian Automobile Foundation

The project benefits from EUR 497,867,05 from Norway with funds from Norway Grants (2014–2021), which represent the contribution of Norway towards a greener, more competitive, and inclusive Europe, and the corresponding Slovenian participation within the framework of the program Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship.

The project started on July 1st, 2022, and will end on April 30th, 2024.

For more information, visit www.amcham.si/en/advocacy/prometheus/.

Working together for a green, competitive and inclusive Europe
www.norwaygrants.si/en/



JUNE 23, 2022

A1 AMCHAM OPEN



▲ **Katja Čencur**, Tehnološki park Ljubljana; **Vida Dolenc Pogačnik**, AmCham Slovenia; **Lovro Peterlin**, A1 Slovenija; **Gasper Bolhar**; **Anja Hlača Ferjančič**



▲ AmCham YOUNG



▲ **Luka Rebek**, Lek; **Nina Kelemen**, Zavarovalnica Triglav; **Klara Klaj**, Nielsen IQ; **Lovro Peterlin**, A1 Slovenija



▲ **Lovro Peterlin**, A1 Slovenija; **Nina Kelemen**, Zavarovalnica Triglav





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Janja Garnbret

Janja
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