

Editorial



The second half of 2022 proved to be a busy one; SBRA spearheaded organising a number of conferences both offline and in-person – in Brussels, as well as Slovenia – covering research and innovation across several sectors.

In particular, the conferences covered the European Defence Fund, European Partnerships in Horizon Europe, European Chips Act, as well as EU health policy including harm reduction, bioeconomy and the environment. Besides conferences, brokerage and matchmaking events, on 28 & 29 November SBRA organised alongside the Slovenian Research Agency and the Research Foundation Flanders a special networking event for Slovenian and Flemish researchers in Brussels. The visit also included trips to Ghent University and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. To top off a successful year, we also had the honor of welcoming Dr. Igor Papič, the Slovenian Minister of Education, Science and Sport, to our office earlier this month.

In 2023, SBRA has big plans, which include more tailor-made events to spur greater collaboration between Slovenian researchers and the international community. We are always looking to expand our horizons and are open for all sorts of partnerships; do not hesitate to get in touch with us no matter the subject. We strive to develop our business to deliver even greater impact. One of our top priorities for the year will also include inviting high-level delegates, in particular those from the EU institutions, to come to Slovenia.

Dr. Draško Veselinovič
President of SBRA

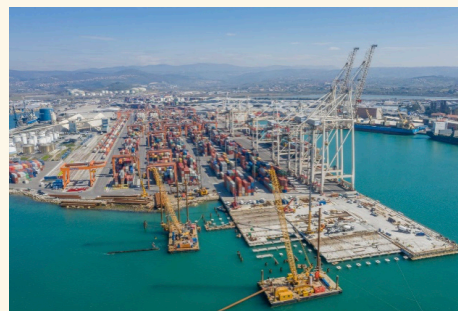
Business Briefs

International credit rating agency Fitch affirms Slovenia stable outlook

Fitch Ratings

Slovenia's ratings are supported by high governance and human development indicators, improving external finances, and a credible policy framework anchored by EU and eurozone membership. Fitch now expects GDP growth to reach 5.5% in 2022, down from 8.2% in 2021. The economy has continued to perform better than, driven by solid momentum in private consumption in line with strong labour market dynamics, fiscal support and release of pent-up demand. GDP is project to expand by 1.3% in 2023.

Robust growth in foreign trade in 2022



According to the latest figures, Slovenia exported €5.3 billion worth of goods in September, 53% more than in September of last year, as imports rose by 34% to €5 billion in the same period. Exports to the EU market was up by 31% year-on-year to just over €3 billion, as imports from EU countries rose by 17% to €2.84 billion. Meanwhile, trade with third countries also increased, with exports going up by 95% to €2.29 billion, and imports rising by 64% to €2.20 billion. A major share in trade with non-EU countries were operations involving processing, including modification with the aim of making new or significantly improved products.

€3.26 billion for Slovenia's economic competitiveness, digital transition, and climate goals

Slovenia will benefit from €3.26 billion in Cohesion Policy funding between 2021-2027 to support the sustainable development of its economy. The details and strategy for these investments are set out in the Partnership Agreement between Slovenia and the European Commission. Slovenia will invest €806 million under the European Regional and Development Fund (ERDF) the Cohesion Fund for a greener, low-carbon transition towards a net zero carbon and resilient economy.

Research Briefs

Researchers in Slovenia first to discover microplastic in hailstones



The discovery resulted from a study by Slovenian scientists from six different organisations, including the National Institute of Chemistry, the Biotechnical Faculty of the University of Ljubljana, the Jozef Stefan Institute and the Institute for Water. The researchers analysed large samples of hail – some measuring up to 13 centimetres – that hit the Poljanska Valley along the Kolpa River in Bela Krajina, Slovenia. The finding is important and warns that microplastics can also contribute to the formation of large hailstones. Should microplastic pollution continue, this could indicate an increasing tendency for severe hailstorms to occur.

Slovenian mathematician wins prestigious ERC Synergy Grant



European Research Council
Established by the European Commission

The first Slovenian researcher to win the prestigious grant is Professor Bojan Mohar from the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics of the University of Ljubljana. He will lead the interdisciplinary research project “KARST” in cooperation with colleagues from France, Spain and Switzerland, focusing on researching Karst underground cave systems. The European Research Council will grant €9.9 million to the project. Karst aquifers are both a treasure and a threat. While up to 25% of the world population depends on them for drinking water, they also have capabilities for extremely fast conduction of water and contaminants.

National Institute of Chemistry to build development centre for carbon-free technologies



NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF CHEMISTRY

The research and development (R&D) center is to be built some 50km north east of Ljubljana, Slovenia. The Centre for Development, Demonstration and Training for Carbon-Free Technologies – covering an area of 1,600 sq. metres – will include the development of a whole segment of green transition technologies, including hydrogen technologies, carbon capture and conversion technologies, as well as development of advanced battery technologies. The €25 million investment is expected to bring plenty of new opportunities and high-tech jobs to the area.

Slovenia higher education reform aims to create a supportive environment for students and teachers

Slovenia’s ministry of higher



education is gearing up for substantial reform of its public universities towards sustainability and climate resilience. These activities are the fruit of the strategic collaboration with EIT Climate-KIC under the Deep Demonstration programme of Circular Regenerative Economies in Slovenia. The initiative aims to introduce a circular economy in the country by activating a coordinated portfolio of innovation actions in key economic sectors and selected value chains through cooperation with Slovenian ministries and local stakeholders. EIT Climate-KIC brings a systemic approach, stakeholder engagement and knowledge transfer focused on transforming the education system to the Slovenian governance system.

also received a financial prize of €200,000 to support their efforts.

Škocjan Caves receives new UNESCO geological designation



The Škocjan Caves are among 100 global geological sites of great international importance that the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) has declared as part of its 60th anniversary celebrations. They have contributed to the emergence and development of karstology, speleology and speleobiology as scientific disciplines. The Geological Survey of Slovenia (GeoZS) explains that the IUGS Global Geosites recognition gives the selected sites additional visibility and identifies them as being of the highest scientific value. The sites were selected by more than 250 experts from 40 countries and 10 international organisations representing different disciplines of Earth science. In the 19th century, this geosite in the heart of Classical Karst, contributed to the emergence and development of karstology, speleology and speleobiology as scientific disciplines.

Regional Briefs

Slovenian city of Velenje receives the Green Leaf award for 2024



The title of European Green Leaf 2024 went jointly to the Slovenian city of Velenje and Elsinore in Denmark. Velenje is working towards phasing out coal, while opening up new employment opportunities in the green jobsectors. Their motto is “from black to green & bright”. Velenje was one of the first cities in Slovenia to install a separate waste collection system and has been improving waste management ever since. The city is eager to share their experiences on the transformation from a coal mining to a climate neutral city. Velenje

Most – meaning bridge in the Slovenian language – is a news bulletin published by the Slovenian Business & Research Association (SBRA). SBRA is a non-profit organisation acting as a ‘bridge’ between the business and research communities in Slovenia and the EU institutions, and other public and private bodies at EU level.

Slovenian Business & Research Association SBRA

Rue Belliard 40, B-1040 Brussels
Tel +32 (0)2 786 3032
E-mail: info@sbra.be
Web: www.sbra.be

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