

## Editorial



As 2023 comes to a close, SBRA looks back on an especially productive year. In fact, in the second half of 2023 we organised a number of events that covered a diverse range of sectors.

In September, in cooperation with the Slovenian Ministry of Defence, we organised a conference that covered Funding EU Defence Capabilities. Still in September, we organised an online event that dealt with the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP). In October, during the European Week of Regions and Cities, we coorganised two workshops that showcased regions' best practice cases in post-industrial and clean energy transitions. In November, together with a number of partners, including the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency, we organised both a large conference entitled Research & Innovation Transforming European Healthcare, followed by a delegation of Slovenian researchers visiting the renowned university KU Leuven, which included a visit to its state-of-the-art Health House. In December, SBRA alongside its Brussels-based partners coorganised an event on the newly unveiled EU Hydrogen Bank.

To conclude, make sure to visit [www.sbra.be](http://www.sbra.be) and follow us closely. 2024 promises to be an especially exciting year!

Dr. Draško Veselinovič  
President, Management Board  
of SBRA

## Business Briefs

**Slovenia submits application for full membership of European Space Agency**



### European Space Agency

This step has ushered in a comprehensive year-long phase during which the ESA authorities and various working bodies will meticulously assess Slovenia's preparedness for full membership. The final decision on membership will be made by the ESA Council in 2024. Noteworthy is Slovenia's development of a thriving space sector featuring over 40 SMEs, actively engaged in Earth observation, the advancement of cutting-edge technologies, and the creation of innovative materials. Among their remarkable achievements is the construction of three Slovenian satellites, with Skylabs Trisat-R soaring to an orbital altitude of 6,000km above Earth.

**Slovenia's Krka recognized as one of the leading firms in S&P Corporate Sustainability Ranking in the pharmaceutical sector**



Krka, a Slovenian pharmaceuticals producer, has secured a position in the top ten companies within the pharmaceutical industry according to the S&P Global Corporate Sustainability Assessment (CSA). This annual

evaluation scrutinizes companies' sustainability practices, emphasizing criteria that are both industry-specific and financially significant. In the 2023 S&P CSA, Krka achieved an overall score of 50 out of 100, with distinct scores of 60 in governance, 42 in environmental considerations, and 41 in social responsibility criteria.

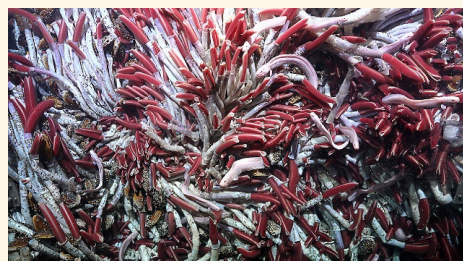
## Research Briefs

**National Institute of Chemistry to launch the Centre for the Technologies of Gene and Cell Therapy**



An independent infrastructure and research centre that aims to bring together researchers, clinicians and patients, linking research institutions at home and abroad, officially started its work in September. The centre will be located on the premises of the National Institute of Chemistry in Ljubljana and will develop technologies to prepare advanced medicines until clinical trials are conducted to treat rare diseases. The main goal of the CTGCT is to develop new, personalised treatments and thus improve the survival and quality of life of patients in the long term. Advanced treatment approaches are highly effective because they are targeted, tailored to individual patients or groups of patients and address the immediate cause of the disease. European partners that will participate in this €30 million project, are University College London, University Medical Center Utrecht, Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin and Dresden University of Technology.

**The Marine Biology Station in Piran played a crucial role as part of a research team that uncovered a novel ecosystem on the seabed**



The Marine Biology Station of the National Institute of Biology in Piran participated in an international research expedition in the Pacific, revealing a previously unknown ecosystem within volcanic cavities beneath hydrothermal vents at a depth of approximately 2,500 meters. The team anticipates that their findings will contribute to understanding how marine animals utilize hydrothermal fluid for migration and colonization of new habitats.

The research, conducted 2,500 kilometers off the coast, utilized a remotely operated vehicle (ROV) to extract volcanic crust samples from cavities formed by the separation of magma layers due to seawater condensation. These cavities were discovered to be populated by worms, snails, and chemosynthetic bacteria, confirming the team's hypothesis on the migration of animals through hydrothermal vents.

**A humanoid robot introduced to Maribor University Medical Centre**



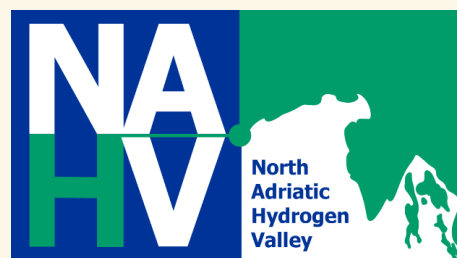
For the past eighteen months, medical staff at UKC Maribor

have been aided by a robot named Frida. This initiative is a key component of the broader EU-funded project titled "HosmartAI – Hospital Smart development based on AI." The project encompasses eight large-scale pilots, engaging 3000 patients, 300 healthcare professionals, and 600 stakeholders, including healthcare managers, across five distinct European regions.

**University of Ljubljana acquires a microscope valued at €1.25 million**

The Faculty of Electrical Engineering has obtained a super-resolution microscope valued at €1.25 million, marking the most substantial single equipment investment ever made by the University of Ljubljana. This cutting-edge microscope will enable researchers to delve into cellular processes with heightened precision. Funding for this acquisition was shared, with half covered by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARIS) and the remainder split equally between the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and the University of Ljubljana.

The Zeiss Elyra 7 Lattice SIM2 microscope enables the observation of living biological cells and their processes with a remarkable resolution of 60 nanometers. Additionally, it allows the examination of fixed slides containing biological cells at a resolution of up to 25 nanometers. This exceptional capability is shared by only approximately 50 devices worldwide, providing a unique capacity to scrutinize cells at such an incredibly high resolution.



Valley (NAHV), the inaugural transnational initiative of its kind under the Horizon Europe program and supported by the Clean Hydrogen Partnership, has been officially launched. Partners from Slovenia, Croatia, and Italy have entered into an agreement to execute 17 pilot projects over the next six years, aiming to generate 5,000 tonnes of renewable hydrogen annually. This ambitious €700 million project, featuring 37 partners, intends to establish a comprehensive chain encompassing renewable hydrogen production through the use of green electricity, storage, distribution, and eventual consumption. The anticipated impact of these pilot projects is a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions within industries such as steel, cement, glass, and transportation. The overarching objective is to establish a robust hydrogen supply and demand system, positioning hydrogen as a competitive and sustainable energy source.

*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.*

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Published: December 2023

**Regional Briefs**

**The ambitious North Adriatic Hydrogen Valley launched**

The North Adriatic Hydrogen