

Editorial



SBRA has had a busy and fulfilling first half of the year, organising several conferences covering issues regarding digitalisation, regional policy,

circular economy, energy and in particular hydrogen, as well as healthcare (specifically harm reduction). In the second half of the year, among a number of planned events (including one in partnership with the Slovenian Research Agency), a conference of special interest for Slovenian SMEs will cover the European Defence Fund and related calls. It is a continuation of a host of events we have organised in partnership with the Slovenian Ministry of Defence. While defence has been at the forefront of research and innovation for quite a while, especially concerning dual-use technologies, it has – understandably – gained even more significance in response to the latest global developments and long-term concerns.

In fact, Slovenia is crafting a roadmap for the implementation of its defence spending commitments to NATO. It plans to reach the Alliance's 2% of GDP target (currently 1.22%) well before 2030, which is the current target year.

Other notable developments include Slovenia's negotiation of over €300 million from the EU Modernisation Fund. The green transition is one of Slovenia's key priorities, which is why the agreement on the Fit for 55 legislative package is an essential milestone in addressing climate and energy challenges.

In the hope that any of the thematic areas or topics mentioned are of interest to you, we welcome you to get in touch with us, to partner or co-organise a conference of common interest, or cooperate in an EU project.

Dr. Draško Veselinovič
President of SBRA

Business Briefs

Slovenian economy continues to expand solidly

Slovenia's gross domestic product (GDP) advanced by 9.8% year-on-year in the first quarter of 2022, following a 10.4% growth in the previous three-month period, according to data released by the Statistics Bureau of Slovenia (SURS). It was the fifth consecutive quarter of economic expansion and at a robust pace, mainly boosted by household consumption (20% vs 22.9% in Q4) and fixed investment (12.7% vs 11%). Meanwhile, government spending slowed (2.9% vs 7%). On a quarterly basis, the economy grew by 0.8%, after a downwardly revised 5.3% rise in the previous quarter.

Slovenian Tool and Die Development Centre (TECOS) wins two awards



TECOS has won first place at the award ceremony of the Innovator of the Year of the Lower Savinja Valley for 2021 for the development of biodegradable materials and BioTHOP products, the eponymous LIFE BioTHOP project, won another outstanding award; the gold award for the best innovations in the Celje region. The latter is awarded by the Celje Regional Chamber of Commerce. This goes to show the outstanding recognition of TECOS's efforts to promote the circular economy and environmental innovation.

Koper port completes south quayside extension



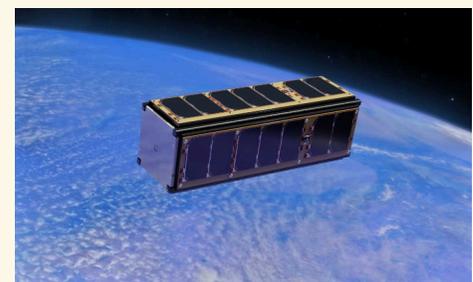
Luka Koper, Slovenia's sole maritime port, has wrapped up an EUR 45.6 million investment by acquiring an operating permit for the last section of the new extension of Quay 1. The work began mid-2020 with part of the funding secured in the NAPA4CORE project as part of the EU's Connecting Europe facility. Last year, the port inaugurated a 98.5-metre quayside extension at Quay I of the container terminal and recently added two new on-shore container cranes.

Thousands of companies benefiting from SPIRIT programmes

Investment agency Spirit has announced that over 12,000 companies had been launched through its SPOT support programme for entrepreneurs since 2018, while more than 1,400 startups were incubated by its SIO programme between 2019 and 2021. The SPOT programme gives free access to a comprehensive system of support services provided by the state to companies, with a number of centres located throughout the country.

Research Briefs

Slovenia reaches for the stars, again



The Trisat-R, the latest Slovenian satellite was successfully launched into space from French Guiana on the VEGA-C rocket on 13th of July. Its main purpose are measurements of ionising radiation in the medium Earth orbit to model the magnetospheric environment and better understand space weather.

The main contractor behind Trisat-R, coming after Trisat and Nemo HD were launched into space as the first Slovenian satellites in September 2020, is Maribor's Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science. The faculty executed the project on the basis of a contract with the European Space Agency and in cooperation with the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) as well as the Slovenian space technology company Skylabs. This step will enable Slovenian companies to consolidate their position in the space technology market.

Two Slovenian researchers receive prestigious ERC grants



Projects led by astrophysicist Maruša Bradač and mathematician Franc Forstnerič, have secured nearly EUR 2.1 million and EUR 1.5 million respectively as part of the European Research Council 2021 Advanced Grants competition. Forstnerič's is Slovenia's first ever maths project to win this prestigious grant. The projects of the two professors from the Ljubljana Faculty of Mathematics and Physics are among 110 picked from 762 applications in the physical sciences and engineering section.

Bradač received the financing for her Firstlight project, with which she wants to focus on "the early history of the Universe, the time when the first stars and galaxies were created". Forstnerič, who received the ERC advanced grant for Holomorphic partial differential relations, said the financing would allow him "to focus on research in the next five years and form an international group of researchers, which will be an important thematic extension of the existing group for complex analysis and geometry".

Engineer, chemist and biologist win L'Oréal-UNESCO scholarships



Mechanical engineer Katja Klinar, chemical technologist Tina Kegl and biologist Eva Turk have won the national L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science scholarships for 2022. The trio were presented with the EUR 5,000 scholarships to join the 43 promising young women researchers who have won the awards in Slovenia in the 15 years since the start of the programme.

L'Oreal Adria and the Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO, which presented the awards, cites UNESCO Institute for Statistics figures showing that women still represent only a third of scientists globally and have won less than 4% of the Nobel Prizes in science. Women hold only 11% of senior research roles in Europe.

Slovenia 22nd in Global Knowledge Index

Slovenia has placed 22nd among 154 countries in the Global Knowledge Index, released as part of the UN Development Programme to measure countries' performance in higher education, research, development, economy and information and communication technology. More detailed indicators show Slovenia above the global average in all levels of education. Slovenia thus ranks 13th among 154 countries at the pre-university level of education, which includes education from pre-school to the end of secondary school. The top three are Finland, Denmark and France.

Slovenia placed 24th in technical

and vocational education and training, and 26th in higher education, ranking 25th in research, development and innovation, and 27th in information and communications technology.

Regional Briefs

Ljubljana wins the European Best Destination 2022 award



Ljubljana has won this year's Best European Destinations award, after being chosen from a list of 20 finalists by over 75,000 people. More than half a million people, from 182 countries around the world voted their favourite European destination and the results are clearer than they have ever been. Since the start of the competition, there has been no other destination that won with such a large share of votes from outside its country. Moreover, almost half of the votes are from outside Europe, Ljubljana being the preferred destination of American travellers.

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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