2018 BLED STRATEGIC FORUM: Bridging the Divide

CONFERENCE REPORT

Publishers:
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia
Prešernova cesta 25, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia

Centre for European Perspective
Grajska cesta 1, 1234 Loka pri Mengšu, Slovenia

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DTP and prepress: Premedia, Andrej Juvan
Printing: Grafični studio K
Print run: 400

Ljubljana, November 2018
Ours is an era of endless streams of information, instant access and around-the-clock interaction. An era of tweets, posts, shares and re-shares. An era in which the practical negation of time and space through digital exchange has made the uncertainty begotten by informational blindness a distant memory. So it seemed. Because ours is also an era in which human kind lost its ability to communicate. Perhaps counterintuitive at first glance, lack of communication does not necessarily manifest itself in silence. Our times could hardly be characterised as silent. Images of visceral violence mixed with mundane scenes of everyday lives all appearing within the length of a single scroll. Furious men wielding the fiercest of tools fill our daily news feeds. Strategies and memes. Grave warnings and GIFs. Treaties and troll posts. Trade wars and flame wars. Catastrophes and cats. There no longer seems to exist a clear divide between what matters and what does not. And while everyone is busy talking and shouting, we are running out of time to stop and listen. In all this chaos and confusion, one divide does exist – that between people. A divide which is becoming wider by the day, and one that we will be able to bridge only by regaining our capacity to listen. For listening necessarily precedes understanding. This is what we set out to do at the 13th Bled Strategic Forum.

Listening, we discovered, is not easy. Even if we could somehow liberate ourselves from all the informational clutter, it would hardly make much difference. Because the unsettling truth about our world is that it contains no single, universally internalised reality, but is instead composed of multiplicities. Our worlds are in a constant process of mutual negotiation. As long as we are willing to hear what each of us has to say, they will continue to co-exist. It does not mean they will not change; however, they will do so peacefully and probably for the better. If, on the other hand, we allow our perception of other people’s voices and the realities they portray to become reduced to mere inconveniences at best and existential threats at worst, sooner or later our worlds will collide.

Earnestly stating that Bled Strategic Forum 2018 succeeded in bridging any of the deepest contemporary divides would do little more than signal a profound lack of insight into the complexities of our time. What this year’s conference did achieve was an honest and open exchange of views, made possible by everyone’s willingness to listen. And as we slowed down just a little, we discovered that, although rifts run deep and bridging them will require patience, some of the bridges still stand, at least for the moment. Needless to say, merely preserving them will not suffice. Nor will it be possible without also allowing ourselves to change. Yet as we contemplate the new, we should not lose sight of the old. Because it was built for a reason. We are immensely grateful to all our participants, our partners and sponsors, the organising team, and everyone else who in any way contributed to another successful Bled Strategic Forum for making us realise that – by helping us to listen.

**Peter Grk**
Secretary-General of Bled Strategic Forum
Mr Peter Grk, Secretary-General of Bled Strategic Forum, who led the opening ceremony, used his address to outline the inspiration behind the main theme of the 13th forum, titled ‘Bridging the Divide’. He began by noting how the organisers, when contemplating different themes, kept returning to the same conclusion: that, as a society, we have forgotten how to communicate. A paradox, Mr Grk stressed, given the array of communication tools available to us today. Our failure to talk and to listen to each other is making the divide between us wider and wider. One reason for this is that other people’s views are often perceived as disruptive, as a threat to our way of life and our point of view. Consequently, we are becoming a society with no time for compromises or shared ideas.

This divide is making us angry and uncomfortable, leaving many feeling excluded and forgotten, and turning to populism, nationalism, radicalisation, hate speech, and sometimes even violence in a search for answers. Stating plainly and clearly that multilateralism too requires a more dynamic approach, that there is no denying Brexit will have severe consequences, that even in developed countries women are often equal only on paper, and that no amount of denial will help us undo climate change, Mr Grk advocated a sober reckoning with reality if we are to ever bridge the divides.
Welcome Address by H.E. Mr Karl Erjavec

Bled Strategic Forum 2018 saw two opening addresses, the first being delivered by H.E. Mr Karl Erjavec, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia and the host of the forum. Mr Erjavec made it clear that trust, dialogue and compromise were the only way to bring people together, and emphasised the important role that the forum plays in this process by providing an open platform for taking a closer look at some of the most pressing issues of our time.

Looking back on its history, he noted that in the last seven years, the Forum had expanded beyond all expectations, with the number of participants almost tripling since 2012. Providing his view of the substantive dimension of the conference, the minister noted that the event had discussed many topics dedicated to the European Union, including the economic and financial crisis, integration, migration, solidarity, people’s trust in institutions and, of course, Brexit. While the Western Balkans and its place in the future in the EU have also been traditionally high on the agenda, the Forum is not afraid to look beyond European borders. He mentioned discussion on the Mediterranean and Middle East, as well as more esoteric topics, such as technological advances and the digital revolution, demographic change, tourism, sport, art and media, as only a few examples of the conference’s far-reaching outlook.
Address by H.E. Dr Miro Cerar

In the second opening address, H.E. Dr Miro Cerar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, observed that the world had changed dramatically over the last few years. The existing economic order and strategic alliances that have been known for decades are suddenly coming into question. “All this is giving a boost to growing individualism and divisions in our society. If we really care for the prospects of our countries, for the wellbeing of our citizens, for the future of Europe and the world, we need to bring change,” he said.

One way to confront those who continuously sow fear and division is by making them face hard facts about reality, while continuing to promote shared ethical and democratic values. Survival requires acting in unison and with sincere intent, so we need to continue our efforts to bridge the divide, and promote freedom and security, he added. With Europe finally experiencing steady economic growth, a spike in investments, and much-needed job creation, the basis for optimism does exist, although we should not get ahead of ourselves. “I truly hope that our focus will be on how to make the EU better, stronger and more united. Only in this way can we, as Europe, be a genuine player in the relentless global arena, bridging the divides of our time,” he concluded.
Delivering the keynote address as an introduction to an interview with Mr Barnier, H.E. Mr Borut Pahor, President of the Republic of Slovenia, picked up on the theme of Brexit, saying how the process epitomises the standstill of the EU and signals a return to national policies. “A standstill does not mean that everyone is waiting, standing in place. It is obvious that those who are not in favour of the future strengthening of the EU are moving on. And those of us who are in favour of such strengthening are standing still,” he warned.

In his view, merely believing in a strong EU will not be enough without a clear vision of how to turn this faith into reality. If those responsible do not offer some sort of a vision soon, the European idea will not only remain paralysed, but is likely to decline. “The standstill experienced by the EU will turn into a crisis if nationalist politics begin to prevail. For the time being, this is not yet the case. However, it is becoming stronger than ever,” Mr Pahor cautioned, proposing more political risk-taking as one possible way out of the ideational and political deadlock.
One of the highlights of BSF 2018 was the interview with Mr Michel Barnier, Chief Negotiator of the Task Force for the Preparation and Conduct of the Negotiations with the UK, moderated by the internationally acclaimed host and TV presenter Mr Ali Aslan. Despite the uncertainty that followed in the weeks that followed, Mr Barnier’s key message at the opening of Bled Strategic Forum was that agreement on the first stage of the UK’s exit from the EU was well within reach.

At the time of the interview, roughly 80% of the draft agreement under negotiation was already finalised, according to Mr Barnier. Asked which remaining issues were toughest, Mr Barnier listed agriculture, governance of the Brexit treaty, and Northern Ireland.

The difficulty of negotiating agricultural affairs stems primarily from protected geographical indications, of which there are about 3000 in the EU and which the EU wants to keep protected. Speaking on the topic of Northern Ireland, the current stability on the island achieved with the Good Friday Agreement was underpinned by 140 types of cross-border co-operation supported by EU law, EU funds and EU policies. However, the EU is obliged to implement controls on its external borders to check goods coming into the single market. To resolve this dilemma, efforts were being made to simplify and diversify controls on the border as part of the Brexit agreement.

Asked whether the exit of the UK was a major blow to the EU, Mr Barnier confirmed that, at its heart, Brexit, and the accompanying negotiations have an undeniably negative connotation. For him, it is a lose-lose game in which there will truly be no winners. There is nothing to commend Brexit, with no one having been able to prove otherwise thus far. Nevertheless, he indicated there was no cause for pessimism, as the EU tends to survive crises, even if it is often slow to react. Quoting the French politician Jean Monet, Mr Barnier said that he is neither pessimistic nor optimistic, only determined.
The State of the World panel at Bled Strategic Forum 2018 saw the participants debating what constitutes people’s happiness and well-being, concluding that economic progress does not necessarily correlate with these concepts.

H.E. Ms Ohood Khalfan Al Roumi, Minister of State for Happiness and Wellbeing at the United Arab Emirates Government, noted that people today enjoy privileges unimaginable to previous generations. However, increasing levels of depression and rising suicide rates in developed countries suggest that economic progress has not been without its drawbacks. Al Roumi highlighted well-being as one possible alternative that could usurp economic growth as the primary benchmark of economic progress.

According to Dr Christian Ketels, Chief Economist at the BCG Henderson Institute, Sweden, the economy is still in a good shape if quantitative analyses are any measure; however, behind the data lies an increased feeling of anxiety. Ketels noted that GDP was not an optimal indicator, since the growth we are generating fails to translate into higher standards of living for everyone. While arguing that defining an optimal economic policy will always be a struggle, Ketels agreed that we need to change the way we perceive and define economic success.

Discussing the state of the world, Ms Violeta Bulc, European Commissioner for Transport, said that efficiency was still a problem. She noted that in transport, there were at least three major negative externalities of connectivity: a tenaciously high number of injuries on the roads, borderless pollution, and the challenge of replacing fossil fuels. Speaking on the topic of the EU’s general orientation and self-perception, Ms Bulc noted that the EU was going through a very clear transformation in international politics:

“We are changing from a global payer to a global player, from the mentality of a coloniser to innovator.”

Professor Alf Rehn, Professor of Innovation, Design, and Management at the University of Southern Denmark warned against romanticising the future, as change is much slower to materialise than we are prone to believe. Furthermore, we are poised to sooner or later encounter challenges previously unknown. One example of this is the very realistic prospect of a war for water and other resources, which have thus far been taken for granted. He sees solutions in what he calls “new contenders”, countries that are not afraid to break the mould and approach newly emerging issues in a novel way.

State of the World
In partnership with Politico.
Monday, 10 September, 16.30–18.00
@Bled Festival Hall

Speakers:
Ohood Khalfan Al Roumi, Minister of State for Happiness and Wellbeing at the United Arab Emirates Government and Director General of the Prime Minister’s Office at the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs and the Future
Violeta Bulc, European Commissioner for Transport
Christian Ketels, Chief Economist at The BCG Henderson Institute, Sweden
Alf Rehn, Professor of Innovation, Design, and Management at the University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

Moderator:
Matthew Karnitschnig, Chief Europe Correspondent at Politico, Germany
The Bled Strategic Forum special panel held on the first day of the conference, discussed the prospects for multilateralism and whether the EU still has a role to play, either as a global power or as an incentive for aspiring members. The speakers argued that despite lingering problems, there were grounds for optimism.

H.E. Mr Igor Crnadak, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, rejected the notion that the EU may be less attractive to aspiring member states, arguing that membership remained one of the strategic pillars of Bosnia’s foreign policy. In his words, one of the few good things to have come out of the migration crisis is that it made people in the EU understand that for major problems, “you don’t just need the EU, you need Europe. Enlargement is not only in the interest of applicant countries, but also of the EU”. In this sense, Mr Crnadak stressed, the European idea is not lost.

Ms Reva Goujon, Vice President of Global Analysis at the US security analytics firm Stratfor, meanwhile analysed US trade and foreign policies. According to her, after a long period of uncertainty regarding the meta-dynamics of world politics, the world was now once again shifting to great-power competition. Today, the US is engaged in competition with China and, to a lesser extent, Russia. The disruptiveness of the rebalancing tactics pursued by the current US president could have severe consequences for everyone else caught in the middle, including the EU. Even so, Europe remains highly relevant, according to Ms Goujon, especially in the Middle East and in relation to Russia, and the US wants Europe to hold together.

H.E. Mr Thomas Greminger, Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, made a case for continued multilateralism, despite all the pressure the concept has faced in recent years. “We need to make it a business case; we need to tell ordinary people why multilateral approaches matter when it comes to solving global problems,” he argued. We should also take a cue from the numerous populist movements, whose success depends in no small part on the utilisation of modern communication techniques. This would be in line with his general call for more willingness to evolve, including by looking at instruments and mechanisms developed over past decades and seeing to what extent they remain relevant today.

**Special Panel**
Monday, 10 September, 18.00–19.00
@Bled Festival Hall

Speakers:
- **Igor Crnadak**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- **Reva Goujon**, Vice President of Global Analysis at Stratfor, United States of America
- **Thomas Greminger**, Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Moderator:
- **Ali Aslan**, Presenter and Journalist, Germany
In a one-on-one talk, moderated by Ms Ajša Vodnik, CEO of AmCham Slovenia, President of the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Aleksander Čeferin presented his views on football’s role in a wider societal context, while also laying down plans for the organisation’s future if he is re-elected as its leader.

Quizzed about the exorbitant amounts of money that we see flow through the industry and its managing organisations, Mr Čeferin responded that, in his view, the amount of money is in fact too low. What really matters is how we allocate and redistribute it. Football has immense potential to do good, which can be amplified only with proper and transparent financing. UEFA thus distributes 85% of its revenues back to the sport, including to finance football-related projects in many underprivileged parts of the world.

Discussing his initial 2016 nomination, Mr Čeferin singled out the public support given to him by the Scandinavian countries and Italy, and later followed by the Balkans and Russia, as the turning point in the election. With the next election scheduled for 2019, Mr Čeferin admitted that, this time, he expects things to be somewhat easier, given how familiar people have become with him personally, the work he has done, and his vision for the organisation. If he is re-elected, narrowing the financial gap between big clubs and small clubs would be at the top of his priority list. While it would be illusory to expect these differences can be undone entirely, we should at least try to stem the current trend of increasing disparities.

Answering a question from the audience, Mr Čeferin said that there were no plans at the moment to establish a regional football league in South-East Europe, since this would probably harm local leagues as was the case in basketball. While not going into any detail about the project, he did announce the creation of a new international league that would cater to clubs’ growing wish for more international matches.

Touching on some of the more personal aspect of his life, Mr Čeferin admitted to often skipping the more fancy events, spending his time instead with his wife and family. Also amusingly revelatory was his remark that as a teenager his favourite club in the former Yugoslavia was in fact not from Slovenia, but Hajduk Split from Croatia.

Power Talk: One-on-One with Aleksander Čeferin, President of UEFA
Monday, 10 September, 19.00–19.30
@Bled Festival Hall

Speaker:
Aleksander Čeferin, President of the Union of European Football Associations

Moderator:
Ajša Vodnik, CEO of AmCham Slovenia
Photo: Nebojša Tejić, STA

Photo: Nebojša Tejić, STA

Photo: Stanko Gruden, STA

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek, STA

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek, STA
This year’s BSF Distinguished Partner Award went to Mrs Fatou Bensouda, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Mrs Bensouda received the award in recognition of her long-standing work at the ICC, which this year is marking the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute.

Presenting the award was Mr Andrej Logar, State Secretary at the Slovenian Foreign Ministry. Mr Logar said the award honoured Mrs Bensouda’s professional as well as personal dedication and contribution to strengthening respect for human rights, international justice, and the rule of law, all of which also contributed to furthering BSF’s aims and objectives. Mr Logar noted that Slovenia was a staunch supporter of the ICC, and remains committed to strengthening international justice “based on the rule of law, respect for international law and the awareness that lasting peace, security and progress are impossible without respect for human rights, dignity and the prosecution of the most serious crimes.”

While Mrs Bensouda could not attend the Forum for personal reasons, she addressed the participants via video link. In her address, she said that she was deeply moved by the award, and expressed her sincere gratitude for Slovenia’s staunch and consistent support for her office and the court. Mrs Bensouda said it was a privilege to be associated with the Forum as a platform for high-level strategic dialogue and innovative thinking. She said the event, focusing on bridging divides, celebrated the inherent value and impact of accountability for atrocity crimes as an essential cornerstone of a law-based international order.

The award was given at the beginning of a reception that also saw addresses by Mr Janez Fajfar, the Mayor of Bled, and Mr Janez Škrabec, the CEO of Riko, one of Bled Strategic Forum’s strategic partners.

Networking Reception
Monday, 10 September, 20.00–22.00
@Grand Hotel Toplice, Grand Hall

Presentation of the Bled Strategic Forum Distinguished Partner 2018 Award:
Andrej Logar, State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia
Fatou Bensouda, Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court

Addresses by:
Janez Fajfar, Mayor of Bled, Slovenia
Janez Škrabec, CEO of Riko, Slovenia

Chaired by:
Peter Grk, Secretary-General of Bled Strategic Forum, Slovenia
Almost everyone is talking about gender equality these days. The #MeToo movement, this year’s G7 discussions and SDG5 brought into focus the need for gender equality. Women are taking the helm in countries like Iceland and New Zealand, but women everywhere still face significant structural inequality. Epidemic levels of gender violence, challenges of access to education, health and reproductive rights, and political representation are indicators that women are still falling behind. On top of that, a growing cultural backlash, driven in part by a perceived threat to masculinity, could significantly hamper future progress.

Main Questions

– What is missing from global efforts to achieve gender equality and what can be done to make this an issue for everyone?
– How do we deal with the competing backlash stemming in part from a perceived threat to masculinity?
– If calls for gender parity are denounced, what other measures should be taken to attain a better gender balance in decision-making, corporations, politics, military and other institutions?

Key Policy Takeaways

State of equality: It is estimated that at the current pace, a gender-balanced society will be a reality in 80-100 years. The gender equality movement has momentum, but continues to face headwinds. A combination of systemic measures and a change of culture will be needed. The latter can be brought about only gradually, through education and a shift in perspective, so that individuals, both men and women, will be able to look beyond their personal perspective when considering the question of gender.

Illusion of progress: Despite the impression that recent years have seen a palpable improvement, especially in public discourse, in retrospect many turning points have proven far less radical than initially thought. This is not a recent phenomenon, with older activists and experts tracing a similar trend back to the feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970. The potential illusion of progress underscores the importance of continued and unrelenting efforts to achieve greater gender equality.

Holding us back: The lack of progress can be attributed to a combination of psychological, cultural and institutional reasons. In the business environment, people are known to be more at ease when they surround themselves with similar people. According to one of the panellists, competitiveness among women themselves can sometimes prevent progress. The example of fewer women on the ballot emphasises the cultural dimensions, with conservative parties being especially reluctant to propose more women candidates.

An ongoing effort: Gender equality is a transformation process that requires time and, above all, continued efforts on all sides. Comprehensive long-term planning can be decisive, as shown by the Canadian example of establishing a gender-neutral cabinet, where Prime Minister Justin Trudeau started identifying suitable candidates immediately after becoming the leader of his party.
Night Owl Session – More Seats at the Table: Achieving Gender Equality Today
In partnership with Global Diplomacy Lab.
Hosted by The Boston Consulting Group.
Monday, 10 September, 22.00–00.00 @Grand Hotel Toplice, Lake Lounge

Speakers:
Tanja Fajon, Member of European Parliament, Slovenia
Steph Guthrie, Impact Producer at A Better Man, Canada
Susana Malcorra, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Worship of the Argentine Republic
Melanie Seier Larsen, Partner and Managing Director at The Boston Consulting Group, Slovenia

Moderator:
Chi Nguyen, Gender Equity Consultant, Canada
In recent years, the EU has been facing significant challenges, which have lifted the veil of its unity. Frequently, the Union seems to be fragmented, criss-crossed with divisive lines running from West to East, from the centre to the periphery, and from North to South, making it seem like a variable-geometry Union. However, despite the reality of often diverging interests that arise from different historical, demographic, geopolitical and economic backgrounds, interdependence remains a key underpinning element of the EU’s daily reality. In the light of shared challenges, European leaders have reconfirmed the need for unity between Member States; however, approaches to finding solutions appear to differ.

**Main Questions**

- Should common values and norms remain the focal point in the future development of the EU, or should they take a back seat to a more pragmatic, interest-based approach?
- Has the EU lost its ability to inspire its own Member States and their citizens, and how does this translate into the wider lack of political vision?
- Should the EU continue to strive towards further political integration through large-scale reform, or should greater emphasis be put on incremental steps?
- Is the awareness of the EU’s historical roots sufficiently strong to safeguard us from relapsing into the ruinous practises of the past, and how can we pass this awareness onto younger generations?

**Key Policy Takeaways**

**Values vs. interests:** One of the main rifts dividing EU Member States is the dichotomy between values and interests. While some strictly reject this distinction, arguing that interests are an intrinsic part of value-driven politics, others warn that, without a clear normative focus to help channel diverging interest, the EU’s potential could be decisively curtailed.

**Power to inspire:** The current normative crisis also has implications for the Union’s capacity to inspire political action. Of particular concern is the inability of the EU to inspire its own Member States and their citizens. While values and norms are essential, they are of little use if they are not brought closer to the people. However, this should in no way serve as an excuse for a predominantly inward focus that prevents the EU from retaining its relevance within the global context.

**Large-scale vs. incremental reform:** For some, the solution to the EU’s current impasse lies in large-scale reform. Others consider grand institutional changes unviable and potentially detrimental at present, as they could create a multi-speed Europe, in turn leading to less unity, rather than more. Instead, they advocate incremental steps, shifting some of the focus from political deliberation to well-designed operational action.

**Not forgetting our roots:** It is feared that the older generation has failed to transmit to younger generations how monumental the creation of the EU was and continues to be. Not only can continued collective awareness of the historical experience from which the EU gradually emerged serve as a beacon for its future development, it is also the main safeguard against emerging centrifugal tendencies.
European Union: What Keeps Us United
Tuesday, 11 September, 9.00–10.30
@Rikli Balance Hotel, Arnold I Hall

Speakers:
Carmelo Abela, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion of the Republic of Malta
George Ciamba, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for Bilateral and Strategic Affairs within the Euro-Atlantic Area at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania
Anna Clunes, Director for Institutions & Member States in the Department for Exiting the European Union, Government of the United Kingdom
Tobias Flessenkemper, Senior Fellow & Balkans Project Director at Centre International de Formation Européenne, Germany
Pierre Heilbronn, Vice President Policy and Partnerships at European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
Colette Mazzucelli, University Professor at New York University, United States of America
Iztok Mirošič, State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia

Matthew A. Palmer, Deputy Assistant Secretary at the U.S. Department of State
Konrad Szymański, Secretary of State for European Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland

Keynote listener:
Thomas Ossowski, Deputy Director General for European Affairs at Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany

Moderator:
Shada Islam, Director for Europe and Geopolitics at Friends of Europe, Belgium
By adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, world leaders pledged their commitment to a new approach to global development and well-being. It is based on the realisation that states are no longer the only drivers of development, and that other partners have to assume greater responsibility for sustainable development, including financial institutions, the private sector, civil society and local communities. Only with the engagement of the whole of society will the 2030 Agenda produce transformative effects.

Main Questions

- How can we challenge the current mindset and create societies of co-creation and co-operation to build a future in which everyone has the opportunity to flourish?
- Is the existing economic rationale compatible with new modes of thinking, such as those foregrounding human wellbeing and happiness? If so, how can the latter be implemented at the operational level?
- What are the idiosyncratic needs of our communities and how can broadly defined approaches, such as the circular economy, be tailored to specific geographic, economic, cultural and political settings?

Key Policy Takeaways

Resources: In the past, the world was dominated by nature, and the limiting factors of human well-being were labour and infrastructure. Today, the emphasis has shifted, and natural resources together with environmental sinks are becoming the limiting factors. The current trend of global population growth is set to drastically exacerbate this problem.

Unequal distribution: The main problem lies not in the general lack of resources, but in their distribution. Eight people own the same as the poorest half of the world; over two billion suffer from micro-nutrient deficiencies, while over two billion people are obese; globally, roughly one third of the food produced for human consumption is wasted. This could be alleviated by changing the ways we produce, consume, distribute and reinvest.

Re-thinking our priorities: Change will be impossible without re-thinking the behaviour of human kind as a whole. Current economic models, which remain premised on notions of continuous growth and the consumption required to sustain it, are already proving fatal. Their devastating effect will only be amplified in the upcoming years. They should be replaced by more circular modes of production and consumption, while also foregrounding human happiness and well-being.

Following things through: All solutions must be customised and tailored to the needs and capabilities of local communities, and implemented through a feedback-oriented process. Once the strategy is devised, it needs to be clearly communicated to all stakeholders; its implementation needs to be ensured by staying in touch with people on the ground; performance needs to be measured to ensure proper progress and enable evaluation; and the results of the efforts need to be communicated to all relevant stakeholders, in order to identify good practices and potential room for improvement.
Alone We Fail: Working Together for a Sustainable Future
Tuesday, 11 September, 9.00–10.30 @Rikli Balance Hotel, Arnold II Hall

Setting the scene:
Janez Potočnik, Co-Chair of the UN International Resource Panel, Partner SYSTEMIQ, former European Commissioner for Science and Research, and former European Commissioner for Environment

Speakers:
Anas Al-Modefer, Director of Planning of Analysis at Delivery and Rapid Intervention Center, Saudi Arabia
Ohood Khalfan Al Roumi, Minister of State for Happiness and Wellbeing at the United Arab Emirates Government and Director General of the Prime Minister’s Office at the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs and the Future

Vasja Bočko, CEO of Iryo, Slovenia
Harald Neumann, CEO of Novomatic AG, Austria
Vasantha Senanayake, State Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
Miloš Popović, United Nations Coordination Analyst (Young BSF Representative)

Keynote listener:
Danica Purg, Dean and President of IEDC-Bled School of Management, Slovenia

Moderator:
Timotej Šooš, National Coordinator for Agenda 2030 at the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy of the Republic of Slovenia
Digital Bridge: Transformation for Institutional Resilience

Digitalisation is a modern imperative. Institutions find themselves in a fast-paced and evolving environment in which rapid changes in communications media and power dynamics have significant effects on the role and voice of governments, business, media, and civil society organisations. Global digitalisation was envisioned as a means of bringing us closer together, but discussions are now focusing on how it pushes us apart. In order to remain resilient and flexible while further serving the best interests of society, institutions must embrace the digital future, and transform and transcend traditional ways of operating. They must form a new bridge.

Main Questions

– How can we tackle the filter bubble phenomena, which existed long before the digital communication revolution, but which was amplified by digital communication platforms?
– How has empowering individuals to be their own editors and arbiters of truth hindered everyone’s ability to validate the accuracy of the information to which they are exposed?
– What is the role of different stakeholders, ranging from private business and governments to civil society, in adapting our institutions to the digital age?

Key Policy Takeaways

Nurturing trust: Re-establishing and sustaining trust between all stakeholders will remain paramount. Mistrust is a multi-level phenomenon that has its roots not only in disinformation, but also in the creeping suspicion that digital technology is becoming oppressive in our daily lives. The importance of trust is being recognised in the public as well as the private sector, with major companies previously focused primarily on research and innovation beginning to shift large portions of their resources to the issue.

Laying down the rules: Given the all-encompassing character of digitalisation, we will require clearer guidelines, as well as legally binding rules, on what is allowed under what circumstances if we wish to retain trust as the cornerstone of economic, political, and wider social interaction. At a time when the pace of transformation is hindering networks of collaboration and research, while also redefining past power constellations, crafting such a set of rules will require an inclusive cross-sectoral approach. As things stand, however, the initial push is still expected to originate from civil society supported by the government sector.

Building resilience: While some societies are more resistant to disinformation than others, the problem is that resilience-boosting measures take a long time to build. They include education, a pluralist media system, and trust in both public and private institutions. To provide context and deeper understanding of more complex topics, experts should be made an integral part of the new media landscape. Equally important is the quality of content, which should convey a clear message, while still keeping people engaged. To achieve this, we should look to more creative ways of creating content and communicating.
Digital Bridge: Transformation for Institutional Resilience
In partnership with Centre for European Perspective and the U.S. Department of State.
Tuesday, 11 September, 9.00–10.30
@Rikli Balance Hotel, Zrak Hall

Speakers:
Corneliu Bjola, Associate Professor of Diplomatic Studies at the University of Oxford, United Kingdom
Nataša Briški, Co-founder and Editor-In-Chief at Meta’s list, Slovenia
Crystal Patterson, Global Civic Partnerships Manager at Facebook, United States of America

Matthias Sachs, Director Corporate Affairs at Microsoft CEE, Germany

Moderator:
Matthew Jacobs, Public Affairs Specialist at the U.S. Department of State
The global landscape of destabilising factors has undergone profound change. Not only is the number of threats rising, the threats are also becoming increasingly diverse. Today’s conflicts are becoming increasingly asymmetrical and interconnected, with a diversity of actors barely conceivable only a few years ago. With several conflicts around the globe, both open and nascent, the need for mediation is greater than ever. Yet to remain effective in an increasingly polarised and fragmented world, current mediation practices need to be re-examined and adapted to meet not only the direct need for conflict resolution, but also to be able to lay the wider groundwork for sustainable and long-lasting peace and stability.

Main Questions

– What role should mediation play in the complex intertwinement of security and wider social challenges, where conflicts are no longer neatly defined along state, ethnic, or religious lines?
– What characteristics should state and non-state actors possess to qualify as respected and trustworthy mediators?
– How can an inclusive mediation process be ensured, in which the needs of parties not directly involved in the dispute but essential for long-term stability are also taken into consideration?
– What are the limits of mediation, and what is its role within wider processes of conflict and dispute resolution?

Key Policy Takeaways

Continued need for mediation: In a world where major powers are increasingly resorting to unilateralism, the need for mediation is greater than ever. The issue is exacerbated by the expanding presence of non-state entities, which are detrimental to the resolution of disputes, yet often remain without formal representation. Appropriate mediators are essential in facilitating initial interaction and, once talks begin, can ensure that the needs of all relevant stakeholders are addressed.

Multiplicity of mediators: Mediation is no longer confined solely to state actors and international organisations. NGOs and other non-traditional actors are contributing much-needed creativity, flexibility, and inclusiveness. Combining old and new approaches will become essential, with honesty, respect, and trust continuing to feature as the common guiding principles of any successful mediation process.

Role of women: Women are among the many stakeholders that remain excluded from mediation processes. We need to start thinking of women as agents rather than as merely victims. Since women are affected differently by conflict than men, they also tend to bring different issues to the table. By putting greater emphasis on social issues, their inclusion can prove decisive in the long-term success of the mediation process.

Mediation has its limits: While mediation can yield great results, it does have its limits. It is part of a much wider set of practises, and should not be conflated with crisis management, as is often the case. One of the main challenges in the future will be how to use the entire repertoire of conflict prevention and early warning mechanisms in a complementary and well-integrated manner.
Mediation in a New Multipolar World – Between Expectations and Reality
Tuesday, 11 September, 11.00–12.30
@Rikli Balance Hotel, Arnold I Hall

Keynote address by:
Helga Maria Schmid, Secretary General of the European External Action Service

Speakers:
David Gorman, Director Eurasia at Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, United States of America
Bassma Kodmani, Member of the Syrian Negotiation Commission and Executive Director of the Arab Reform Initiative, Syria
Katarina Kresal, Founder and President of the European Centre for Dispute Resolution, Slovenia

Roman Vassilenko, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan
Samuel Žbogar, Head of EU Delegation to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Keynote listener:
Peter Semneby, Special Envoy at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Sweden

Moderator:
Antje Herrberg, CEO of mediatEUr, Belgium
The growing threat of advanced cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure and industrial systems presents a unique challenge for businesses and countries alike. Increasingly, governments are being called on to respond to cyberattacks and provide a secure cyber environment, despite the fact that cyber security infrastructure has so far been in the hands of the private sector, not under state control. Cyber security has become one of the pillars of national security, and partial solutions by individual organisations are no longer sufficient to counter cyber threats. Going forward, it will be imperative to build more comprehensive and, above all, inclusive systems for ensuring cyber security.

Main Questions

– What should the respective roles of government institutions, security agencies, business and end users be in building a resilient cybersecurity environment?
– How can a culture of basic digital hygiene be fostered regarding our online lives, both in the government and business sector, as well as among everyday users?
– How can the lack of a skilled workforce be overcome, and what forms should co-operation between the public and the private sectors take in this case?
– How can we adapt our institutional, legal and operational frameworks to the disappearing division between defensive and offensive action in cyberspace?

Key Policy Takeaways

Cross-sectoral co-operation: Given that 90% of all cyberspace is owned by private entities, actions to ensure cybersecurity should be harmonised across all relevant sectors. This will require improved communication and coordination structures. When dealing with skilled workforce shortages, some governments have embraced the fact that the private sector will poach experts from the public sector. In their view, the only way to proceed is by training them, letting them go, and then offering them incentives to provide their expertise voluntarily.

Change of culture: The trend of digitalisation is all-encompassing, with even traditionally analogue devices becoming part of an expanding Internet of Things. To ensure even a basic level of security all stakeholders, including everyday users, we need to drastically improve the users’ digital hygiene. Everyone should be educated on the functioning of cyberspace and how to ensure their own security online.

Blurred lines: In cyberspace, defence and offence are only one step away from one another. We should take this into consideration when devising both policy and technical solutions, with the application of AI serving as a prime example. While useful in detecting anomalies on a macro scale, AI has been noted by military planners to display escalatory behaviour when applied in a more active format.

Trust: In cyberspace, the integral role of trust is amplified. Whether state agencies are exchanging information or private firms are considering the risks of investing in an environment with a substandard cyber security environment, trust plays a pivotal role. Equally important is the relationship between citizens and their respective governments, as people remain wary of most government institutions, even if the objective is to protect them. One way of addressing this divide is by ensuring better data integrity.
Cyber Security System: Achieving Resilience
In partnership with Siemens.
Tuesday, 11 September, 11.00–12.30
@Rikli Balance Hotel, Arnold II Hall

Speakers:
Dobran Božič, Director of the Office of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for the Protection of Classified Information
Jerry Chappee, Deputy Director Joint Cyber Center at European Command, United States of America
Kai Hermsen, Global Coordinator for the Charter of Trust at Siemens AG, Germany
Mitja Jermol, Head of Center for Knowledge Transport at Jožef Stefan Institute, Slovenia
Antonio Missiroli, Assistant Secretary General for Emerging Security Challenges at North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Uzi Moscovici, Major General (ret.), Vice-President of Missile Division at Israel Aerospace Industries, Israel
Gregor Pipan, CEO of XLAB d.o.o., Slovenia
Tanel Sepp, Deputy Director of the Cyber Policy and IT Department at the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Estonia

Moderator:
Guy De Launey, Correspondent and Presenter at BBC News and Monocle, United Kingdom
International Criminal Court: 20 Years after Rome – Setting a Path for the Future

The year 2018 marked the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Over the years, the Court has become a meaningful actor and achieved notable results, including with its judicial pronouncements on sexual and gender-based crimes, child soldiers and cultural heritage. In addition to celebrating the Court’s many accomplishments, the 20th anniversary is an important opportunity to undertake a strategic assessment of challenges ahead, given that, as it becomes increasingly active, the Court could come under greater pressure. This was made evident by the statement of the National Security Advisor of the United States, John Bolton, delivered the day before the BSF panel was held, in which he responded to ICC’s request to investigate American citizens in connection with alleged detainee abuse in the wake of the September 11 attacks, by stating that “for all intents and purposes, the ICC is already dead.” The panellists at Bled Strategic Forum begged to differ.

Key Policy Takeaways

For whom: While the ICC may be considered irrelevant by some institutions and their representatives, victims – the women, men and children who were subjected to the most heinous of crimes imaginable – do not share this view. Going forward, we must not lose sight of the Court’s mandate by forgetting the people whom it was meant to serve and the fact that its very inception was the result of our collective failure to protect those most vulnerable in the first place.

Source of systemic legitimacy: In addition to serving the victims by investigating and trying individuals charged with the gravest of crimes, the Court also functions as a source of legitimacy for the international system as a whole. As such, it provides great value to the states, both great and small, which make up this system and will continue to rely upon its stability for some time to come.

Complementary role: As a court of last resort, the ICC was never meant to replace national courts, but instead functions on the principle of complementarity. This means that, in addition to relying on states and international organisations for funding, the Court also depends on other institutions in procedural matters. While opinions differ on whether the greater involvement of more powerful states would help the Court or damage its impartiality, the inextricable link with state institutions, together with the mutual benefit it provides, should be kept in mind by everyone in whose interest it is to retain a strong yet independent ICC.

Main Questions

– What do recent threats of withdrawal accompanied by several denouncements of the Court’s work mean for its future and for the future of international justice?
– Could the Court in any way increase support for its mission by strengthening global awareness of its work?
– What can states which remain committed to the Court’s mission do to help it to weather the recent deluge of obstruction and criticism and ensure its uninterrupted functioning in the future?
International Criminal Court: 20 Years after Rome – Setting a Path for the Future
Tuesday, 11 September, 14.00–15.30
@Rikli Balance Hotel, Arnold I Hall

Speakers:
Richard Goldstone, Retired Justice of the Constitutional Court of South Africa
Amal Jadou, Ambassador, Assistant Foreign Minister on European Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the State of Palestine
O-Gon Kwon, President of the Assembly of States Parties of the International Criminal Court
Phakiso Mochochoko, Director of the Jurisdiction, Complementarity and Cooperation Division at the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court

Ernest Petrič, Senior Advisor to the President of the Republic of Slovenia

Moderator:
Dan Damon, Presenter at BBC Radio, United Kingdom
At times, our society feels like a runaway train. Technologies in artificial intelligence, biotech, nanotech, to name only a few fields, are developing at an extreme pace, but are not accompanied by a strategic analysis of their impact on not only our daily lives, but the whole of humanity – on social relations, on our emotional and biological selves, as well as on our legal systems and regulatory frameworks. The infrastructure for such fundamental changes is not in place.

Main Questions

– How can we ensure that new technology will be used to improve our lives and not to perpetuate the cycles of global violence and wars that mark human history?
– How can we ensure better understanding of inherent technological risks and opportunities through furthering knowledge about new technologies among the lay public?
– What steps can we take to make technology more human, and should part of the responsibility for doing so also be taken up by the scientific community?
– How can the EU avoid slipping into insignificance in the global AI race?

Key Policy Takeaways

State of technology: Despite noteworthy developments, the current state of AI is often overemphasised, especially in mainstream media. State-of-the-art algorithms can sense, i.e. see, hear and read, but they lack the capacity to understand and reason. However, the technology can already be put to use in most major industries, from agriculture and transportation to communications and health care. The current AI boom comes after two major leaps in the 1980s and 1990s, with another significant wave of advances expected in the next 10 to 15 years.

Adapt and adopt: AI systems are poised to become one of the most disruptive technologies in human history. While their benefits are undeniable, they do not come without risks, widespread job loss being just one of them. Understanding what makes us human by employing concepts like emotional intelligence, coupled with a drastic overhaul of our education systems, will be essential in pre-empting potential negative consequences.

Geopolitical dimension: Global AI competition is in full swing, with major powers like China and the US as well as smaller players like Japan and Canada leading the race. Computational power, algorithms, a skilled workforce, and above all large amounts of high-quality data are the main resources. The EU has been largely absent from the scramble, partly due to its inability to bring together science, technology, innovation and the business sector with the aim of competing on the global stage.

New institutional approaches: The network of technological, economic, political and wider social processes that make up the global assemblage of AI development is bewilderingly complex. To tap its potential, novel ways of institutional co-operation will need to be devised that bring together governments, businesses, academia, and non-governmental groups. One such example is the Office of Denmark’s Tech Ambassador, which has a mandate to engage with key technology stakeholders around the world in a process dubbed TechPlomacy.
Being Human in the Age of Technology
In partnership with IBM.
Tuesday, 11 September, 14.00–15.30
@Rikli Balance Hotel, Arnold II Hall

Speakers:
Marko Grobelnik, Researcher at the Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, Jožef Stefan Institute, Slovenia
Iskren Krusteff, Chairman of Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Bulgaria, Bulgaria
Martin Svik, Executive IT Architect at IBM, Czech Republic
Jakob Hjortshøj, Associate at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Denmark (Young BSF Representative)

Moderator:
Katja Geršak, Editor of Bled Strategic Times, Slovenia
Trust in institutions is one of the most critical elements of healthy and resilient societies. It is particularly relevant in periods of economic, political and social fluctuations, when credible institutions are mandated with absorbing shock waves that would otherwise have profound destabilising effects. While levels of trust in institutions vary across time and cultures, analyses across a number of institutions, sectors and geographies reveal a world of stagnant distrust in business, government, NGOs and the media alike. In the light of rising geopolitical tensions, increasing inequality, environmental degradation and the prospect of another economic crisis, our inability to restore trust in key social institutions could prove fatal.

Main Questions

- What are the root causes of people’s declining trust in both well-established and alternative institutions?
- How can we approach the issue of distrust at different levels and stages of institutional activity?
- How can institutions better convey their work to the public, and what are the limits of institutional self-communication?
- How can we improve trust by enhancing public engagement and bringing institutions closer to the people?

Key Policy Takeaways

Main reasons for distrust: Deteriorating material conditions, brought about by a decade of economic recession and stagnation, and especially alarming levels of inequality, are the main driving forces behind people’s lack of trust in public and private institutions. In the eyes of the public, the political system no longer defends their interests, or worse, is not able to protect them even when the institutional and political will to do so do exist.

Quality of service: If institutions are to regain trust, they first need to understand the needs and concerns of the people they serve. On this basis, they must provide the highest possible quality of service. The countries that have managed to avoid the negative trend are those which have invested in more participation, that are promoting open-government policies, have participatory budgets, and employ new technologies to optimise their services.

Communication: An unfavourable image can persist long after its root causes have been addressed. It is thus important for institutions to communicate their work clearly and in an engaging manner. All attempts to convey one’s work should always be based on actual activities and achievements; novel communication techniques and technologies should be used to increase the impact of the message; and the communication strategy should be integrated into the wider feedback loop of performance assessment and improvement.

Youth participation: The message of young people is clear: representation is not the same as participation. They do not want to be merely presented, they seek to be present and directly involved in decision-making processes. With the aim of achieving this goal, the youth in some countries are already being consulted on legislative changes before they are passed, while other countries, like Sweden, have taken a step forward by reserving a specific number of seats in parliament exclusively for youth.
Bridging the Trust Divide between People and Institutions
In partnership with Global Diplomacy Lab.
Tuesday, 11 September, 14.00–15.30
@Rikli Balance Hotel, Sonce Hall

Speakers:
Marcos Bonturi, Director for Public Governance at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Kristina Plavšak Krajnc, Director of the Government Communication Office of the Republic of Slovenia
Zsofia Racz, United Nations Youth Delegate of Hungary (Young BSF Representative)

Moderators:
Ahmad Maaliji, Member of the Global Diplomacy Lab, Canada
Hanina Ben Bernou, Member of the Global Diplomacy Lab, Kenya
Scholars and security agencies around the world view the issue of climate change from two angles: climate change as a threat, and climate change as a threat multiplier. According to the IPCC, the increased magnitude of climate change disasters in coming years will alter countries’ environmental, social, and economic fabric. The resulting degradation of natural resources, reduced opportunities for employment and mass displacement and migration will increase competition for resources, and could lead to conflicts, unrest and even wars.

Main Questions
- What are the various dimensions of the security threats that are emerging from the effects of climate change?
- How does the move from climate change mitigation to climate change adaptation affect the current mode of collective action, and how will it redefine the way we frame security both internationally and internally?
- Can water, considered as an integral part of the wider security nexus, be redefined as an instrument of peace and co-operation, rather than as merely a factor of instability?
- Can existing public and private legal instruments accommodate the needs arising from climate change; can they be made more relevant through innovative application?

Key Policy Takeaways

Paradigm shift: Humanity’s collective failure to curb greenhouse gas emissions has led us to miss the time window within which mitigation would still have been possible. We are now forced to reconsider our options and readjust our strategies as we enter a period of climate adaptation. In spite of numerous bottom-up and top-down initiatives seen in recent years, we are still far from the sort of cross-sectoral co-operation required to shift from carbon-based energy to renewable sources.

Water scarcity: Although not an entirely new consideration, the prominence of water within the wider security nexus has grown substantially as a direct result of climate change and is becoming a fulcrum of the security equation. Water is a destabilising factor on its own, while also amplifying other root-causes of conflict. Mass migration caused directly and indirectly by the lack of access to drinkable water is just one example of the threat-multiplying effect of climate change.

Legal instruments: The effectiveness of existing legal instruments is being called into question. While some consider the current legal framework sufficient, and identify the main issue in a lack of viable polices (e.g. the underuse of instruments for the shared management of water resources), others maintain that international law (e.g. the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees) cannot accommodate the needs arising from climate change. However, until new provisions can be established, we will need to rely on a combination of political willingness and innovative use of existing instruments.
Climate Change and Security Dynamics
Tuesday, 11 September, 16.00–17.30
@Rikli Balance Hotel, Zrak Hall

Speakers:
Aira Kalela, Senior Adviser at the Office of the President Tarja Halonen, Finland
Adil Najam, Dean of Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies, Boston University, United States of America
Ana Stanič, Founder and Director of E&A Law Limited, United Kingdom
Danilo Türk, Former President of the Republic of Slovenia

Moderator:
Mome Saleem, Program Coordinator Ecology at Heinrich Boell Stiftung, Pakistan
Western Balkans: Lost Years or New Hope?

The EU enlargement process has always been a political process. Despite the technical benchmarks, monitoring missions, evaluations and progress reports, it took only one sentence from the President of the European Commission five years ago to raise doubt and fear about belief in the enlargement policy and the Western Balkans. After several years of uncertainty, it again took only one sentence from the same President to revive hope and enthusiasm in the region, which in the past was much more concerned about having a positive external appearance than internal reforms. Yet why would things be different this time around?

Main Questions

– Are the political elites ready to trade in their own privileges for institutional reform and progress? In the absence of political will, is the civil society ready to step in to act as a watchdog and catalyst for change?
– To what extent is the EU normative appeal being challenged by other major powers and their respective visions for the region?
– How can regional states, as well as the EU, move beyond the accession-focused narrative for reform and development of the region?

Key Policy Takeaways

Taking stock: While the past few years were not entirely wasted, both the EU and the representatives of regional states admit that more progress could have been made. The recent agreement between Skopje and Athens on the name of Macedonia signals that progress is possible, while the persisting rift between Belgrade and Priština continues to remind everyone of the thorny road ahead. Also noticeable is that the divide between politicians and civil society persists in the perception of the region’s progress on its Euro-Atlantic path.

Geopolitical competition: Some state representatives warn that without continued commitment on the part of the EU, reform efforts could be hampered, and other powers could improve their position in the region. While for the time being, pro-EU sentiment remains high across the region, the EU should be aware that it is not without strong competitors, each with their own geopolitical calculus.

Reform, but for whom? Despite frequent reproaches that the EU should do more, many consider blaming the lack of reform efforts on the recent inactivity of the EU as a failure to understand the rationale behind any reform process. Instead of undergoing reform for the sake of one day joining the EU, regional states should enforce the rule of law of their own volition, because they will reap the benefits in the long run. One way in which the EU could help bring about this much-needed shift in rationale is by moving its own development narrative beyond the prospect of accession.
Western Balkans: Lost Years or New Hope?
In partnership with Riko and European Fund for the Balkans.
Tuesday, 11 September, 16.00–17.30 @Rikli Balance Hotel, Arnold Hall

Speakers:
Florian Bieber, Professor and Director of Centre for Southeast European Studies, University of Graz, Austria
Gent Cakaj, Deputy Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania
Srđan Darmanović, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro
Enver Hoxhaj, Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo
Srdjan Majstorović, Chairman of the Governing Board of the European Policy Center, Serbia
Hedvig Morvai, Executive Director of European Fund for the Balkans, Serbia
Terens Spenser Nikolaos Quick, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic
Momčilo Radulović, President of the European Movement in Montenegro, Montenegro

Charlotte Ruhe, Managing Director, Central and South Eastern Europe at European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
Andrej Zhernovski, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia

Keynote listener:
Adnan Ćerimagić, Analyst at the European Stability Initiative, Germany (Young BSF Representative)

Moderator:
Tim Judah, Balkans correspondent at The Economist, United Kingdom
Diaspora’s Role of a Bridge in Contemporary International Relations. In partnership with Office of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Slovenians Abroad. Monday, 10 September, 9.00–11.00 @Rikli Balance Hotel, Arnold II Hall
Speakers: Terens Spenser Nikolaos Quick, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic; Raymond Xerri, Director for the Directorate for Maltese Living Abroad, Directorate- General for Political, EU Affairs And Maltese Abroad at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion of the Republic of Malta; Zvone Žigon, Advisor at the Office of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Slovenians Abroad; John Doma, Honorary Consul General for Slovenia in Canada and Managing Partner at Bateman MacKay LLP, Canada; Blaž Tomc Zidar, Production pharmacist/engineer at Teva, Representative of the Association of Slovenes Educated Abroad (VTIS) Slovenia. Moderator: Igor Evgen Bergant, TV news programme host & journalist & commentator at RTV Slovenia, Slovenia. Photo: Tamino Petelinšek, STA.

The Role of South East European National Security Authorities in Ensuring Cyber Security. In partnership with Office of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for the Protection of Classified Information. Tuesday, 11 September, 8.30–11.00 @Rikli Balance Hotel, Voda Hall
Speakers: Dobran Božič, Director of the Office of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for the Protection of Classified Information; Antonio Missiroli, Assistant Secretary General for Emerging Security Challenges at North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Uzi Moscovici, Major General (ret.), Vice-President of Missile Division at Israel Aerospace Industries, Israel; Goran Svilanović, Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council. Moderator: Jure Tepina, Executive Editor at 24ur.com, Slovenia. Photo: Nebojša Tejić, STA.
Tuesday, 11 September, 11.00–12.30 @Rikli Balance Hotel, Zrak Hall

Tuesday, 11 September, 13.00–15.30 @Rikli Balance Hotel, Voda Hall
Speakers: **Eirliani Abdul Rahman**, Executive Director of YAKIN (Youth, Adult survivors & Kin In Need), Singapore; **Imran**, a 43-year-old male survivor of sexual abuse. Photo: Nebojša Tejić, STA.
Engagement, Conditionality or Both? Security and the Rule-Of-Law Through a Renewed EU Perspective. In partnership with IISG – Integrative Internal Security Governance. Tuesday, 11 September, 14.00–15.30 @Rikli Balance Hotel, Zrak Hall
Speakers: Rajko Kozmelj, Chair of the Integrative Internal Security Governance (IISG) Support Group, Slovenia; Oliver Spasovski, Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and Minister of Internal Affairs; Sonja Stojanović Gajić, Director of Belgrade Centre for Security Studies, Serbia; Goran Svilanović, Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council. Moderator: Sabina Lange, Senior lecturer at EIPA, Belgium. Photo: Tamino Petelinšek, STA.

Putting European Consensus on Development into Practice: Political Foundations as Bridge Builders for the Implementation of SDG’s. In partnership with ENOP – European Network of Political Foundations. Tuesday, 11 September, 15.30–17.00 @Rikli Balance Hotel, Voda Hall
Speakers: Florian Lütticken, Policy Coordinator for European Development Policy in the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO) of the European Commission; Gudrun Kopp, Member of ENoP Advisory Board and Former Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany; Đuro Blanuša, Secretary General of Regional Youth ion Office (RYCO), Serbia; Sabina Wölker, Director of Multinational Development Policy Dialogue at Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Germany. Moderator: Mojca Kleva Kekuš, President of Progresiva and former Member of European Parliament, Slovenia. Photo: Nebojša Tejić, STA.
UNLOCKING POTENTIAL

We go deep to unlock insight, challenge established thinking and drive transformation
We are in an economic cycle in which jobs as we know them are rapidly changing. Studies suggest that 5 million jobs will be lost to automation before 2020. Most likely to find themselves out of work are manual and clerical workers, as they do not possess the required skills to compete for the new roles. In a world where many will only be as good as the skills they possess, should we look to alternative values to guide our economic and business endeavours? What will automation, machine learning and artificial intelligence mean for tomorrow’s workforce, and what effect will they have on jobs, skills, and wages? What are the skills and competences of the future, and how can we make sure that we keep pace? How do we bridge the rising divide between human beings and artificial intelligence?

Key Policy Takeaways

**Job polarisation:** The advancement of technology has created severe job polarisation. Whether in Central and South-East Europe or in the more advanced EU economies, middle-skill jobs are disappearing, and are being replaced by low-skill and high-skill jobs. Exacerbating this trend are demographic changes, including longer life expectancy, with older people having to learn new technological skills to remain competitive in the job market.

**Human element:** More than being replaced by robots, people should fear becoming robots themselves as they forget how to connect with each other on a human basis. This worrisome trend is being perpetuated in large part by a logic of absolute competitiveness championed by companies whose sole interest has been to increase productivity. Drive for profit should be supplemented by sincere attempts to establish deeper connections with people, i.e. both clients and employees. Only in this way can we ensure that technology serves us and not vice versa.

**Creative and critical thinking:** When looking to adapt to the new reality, embracing merely technical skills and professions will not be enough. As autonomous technologies advance at an ever-greater pace, companies, as well as whole societies, will need more people with a background in social sciences, humanities, and other fields grounded in creative and critical thinking. To understand and possibly predict the relationship between humans and technology, an ability to ask the right and, often unpleasant, questions will be crucial.

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**AmCham Business Leaders Club Breakfast – Shaping the (Digital) Future of Work: How to Bridge the Divide Between Humans and Technology?**

In partnership with AmCham Slovenia.

Tuesday, 11 September, 8.30–10.00

@Rikli Balance Hotel, Sonce Hall

Speakers:
- **Patrick Cowden**, Founder of Beyond Leadership, Germany
- **Tina Mendelson**, Principal at Deloitte Consulting LLP, United States of America
- **Tamara Pavasović Trošt**, Assistant Professor of Sociology at the Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
- **Alexander Plekhanov**, Deputy Director of Research at European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

Moderator:
- **Ajša Vodnik**, CEO of AmCham Slovenia, Slovenia
AmCham Business Leaders Club Breakfast: Shaping the (Digital) Future of Work: How to Bridge the Divide Between Humans and Technology? / Photo: Nebojša Tejić, STA
In his lecture on the human brain and artificial intelligence, Dr Nikolaos Dimitriadis called into doubt the concept of artificial intelligence overtaking the world, questioning whether bridging this divide is even possible.

All concepts originate from the human brain, more specifically from its left perceptual system. This part of the brain likes to develop mental models and fit reality to them. On the other hand, the right side of the brain tends to connect with people and nature, perceiving reality as it is. Unfortunately, we often prioritise the left, which among other things has begotten the scientifically unfounded belief in an omnipotent and potentially run-away general artificial intelligence.

Thus the question is not how to bridge the divide between artificial intelligence and the human brain, but whether these two systems are even compatible. Because of intentionality, humans remain far ahead of artificial intelligence in high-level strategic thinking. At any moment, the human brain crunches an enormous amount of data, mostly subconsciously, and decides what to do. This means that it possesses intention and consciousness, either to do something or not. Since people can provide artificial intelligence with neither intention nor consciousness, as we do not know how they were created, this also precludes the possibility of technological singularity any time in the near future.

Session 2:
Bridging the Divide: The Human Brain and Artificial Intelligence
Tuesday, 11 September, 10.15–10.45
@Rikli Balance Hotel, Sonce Hall

Speaker:
Nikolaos Dimitriadis, CEO of Trizma Neuro, Serbia
Protect those satisfying moments.

We’ll protect the rest for you.
A digital society is quickly emerging and blending the physical and the virtual worlds. It is affecting not only business models and how we work, but how we live and interact. More than ever, technology is becoming a part of our identity, while our digital and physical worlds are increasingly converging. The Internet of Things, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence are changing the nature of work in ways that could empower and liberate people and reduce inequalities between people and between countries; or the outcome could be diametrically opposite.

**Key Takeaways**

**Embracing technological progress:** To truly benefit from new technological solutions, we need to be able to make use of all the opportunities they offer. In addition to developing a properly skilled workforce, trust will be essential in embracing our technological future. To build trust, all new solutions need to be fair, reliable and safe, trustworthy, inclusive, responsible, and transparent. Furthermore, we will need to be able to properly communicate the benefits of new technologies, so as not to invoke unwarranted fear and opposition, but instead present technology as a supplement that will enable everyone to focus on those more creative and enjoyable aspects of their work..

**Turning the tables:** Whether intentionally or not, much of today’s information is public. Although considered by many as a fault of the system, we should also engage in more active deliberations on how to turn this fact it into an opportunity for collective benefit. One way is to apply technologies that are public by design, namely blockchain, and design solutions that will provide more streamlined and organic ways of ensuring trust. Governments have the potential to become the standard-bearers when it comes to leveraging public information, given the central position of transparency within their mandate.

**Bridging the technological divide:** One of the more common ideas floated in connection with ensuring an inclusive technological environment is that of the internet becoming a constitutional right, which would help everyone enjoy the benefits of digitalisation. While indeed indispensable, legally enshrined principles alone will not suffice. For example, to enjoy the benefits of digitalisation, people first need to have access to basic infrastructure. Bridging the technological divide will thus require an apt combination of inclusive guidelines, political will, stakeholder co-operation, skills, and sufficiently allocated resources.
Bridging the Divide

In his brief lecture and the ensuing Q&A session, Dr Thomas Killion, Chief Scientist at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), outlined the changing dynamic of technological innovation and the newly emerging relationship between the military and the commercial sector.

Unlike in the past, when major technological breakthroughs like GPS and the Internet were initially developed for defence purposes, the military is now no longer at the forefront in most digital projects. Instead, investments in commercial uses are driving technological progress. Moreover, commercial technology is even becoming a dominant part of the fabric of our military systems. That being said, there are core components of military systems that will never become commercialised, except for very specific uses, construction and exploration being two examples.

Turning to NATO, Dr Killion pinpointed science and technology organisation as one of the advantages of the alliance, with members sharing knowledge, information, and collaboratively exploring technology. To retain this advantage, as well as to reap its benefits in the commercial sector, we will need to devise an even more robust programme of science and technology that keeps young people excited about science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The Positives and the Dark Side of a Hyper-Connected World

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Session 4: The Positives and the Dark Side of a Hyper-Connected World
In partnership with Pristop.
Tuesday, 11 September, 12.45–13.15
@Rikli Balance Hotel, Sonce Hall

Speaker:
Thomas Killion, Chief Scientist at North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Moderators:
Jaka Repanšek, Founder of RePublis, Slovenia
Ajša Vodnik, CEO of AmCham Slovenia, Slovenia
RIKO BRINGS TOGETHER COMPANIES TO ENABLE BOLD ENTRY INTO SOME OF THE MOST DEMANDING MARKETS.

We connect outstanding companies, their technological expertise, solutions and products, thus attaining refined excellence through new, common achievements. Our success is always comprehensive - we support art, culture and all that enriches life in Riko’s surroundings.
Tourism is one of the sectors that have been transformed most by technological development, and that stands to benefit greatly from new technology. Cultural tourism based on tangible and intangible cultural assets is one of the biggest and fastest-growing global tourism markets. Culture and the creative industries, with the support of innovative ICT, are increasingly being used to promote destinations and enhance their competitiveness and attractiveness. Yet at the same time, tourism is putting a great deal of stress on our cultural heritage, threatening to irreversibly damage that which it seeks to promote and celebrate. So how can technology drive the creation and promotion of local distinctiveness, which constitutes a comparative advantage in the globalised tourism market, while at the same time raising general awareness about the importance of a more sustainable approach to enjoying cultural heritage?

**Key Takeaways**

**Sustainability:** Cultural tourism, and mass tourism in general, is not without its negative effects. Whether it is environmental degradation, damage caused to cultural sites by overcrowding, or the impact on the lives of local populations, harmful side-effects can be curtailed only by sensibly combining new technology with general education on responsibility. This will require locally tailored initiatives developed together by the public and private sector, which will take into consideration hosts, tourists and the local population.

**Gamification:** One way of achieving greater sustainability is through gamification, the application of game-design elements aimed at improving user, i.e. tourist, engagement. One example is the use of crypto tokens, which visitors could earn (to spend later on) for reporting on environmental issues, using local natural resources sparingly, reducing their use of hotel services, and other ways of contributing to the community.

**Personalised storytelling:** As is the case with many services today, tourism too will need to be personalised to better cater both to the needs of visitors and locals. Using technology, we can offer differing interpretations of a single cultural site or work, inciting visitors to think critically not only about the artefact, but also their role in preserving it. Furthermore, digital storytelling can be a potent way of raising awareness of sustainable tourism by conveying what cultural heritage and its preservation mean to local residents.
How Will New Technologies Affect Cultural Tourism – Science Fiction or Reality? Tourism as an Instrument for Cultural Co-Operation
In partnership with Ministry of Economic Development and Technology of the Republic of Slovenia and Slovenian Tourist Board.
Tuesday, 11 September, 9.00–12.00 @Grand Hotel Toplice, Grand Hall

Opening addresses by:
Zdravko Počivalšek, Minister of Economic Development and Technology of the Republic of Slovenia
Maja Pak, Director of Slovenian Tourist Board, Slovenia

Speech by:
Manuel Butler, Executive Director of the World Tourism Organization

Keynote speeches by:
Tomi Ilijaš, Founder and President of Arctur, Slovenia
Urška Starc-Peceny, Chief Innovation Officer at Arctur, Slovenia

Speakers:
Zenel Batagelj, Partner at Valicon, Slovenia
Helena Bulaja Madunić, Art Director & Creative Producer at Teslopolis @ My Magical Thoughts, Croatia

Georg Steiner, Tourism Director at Tourism Board Linz, Austria
Nienke van Schaverbeke, Head of Europeana Collections at Europeana Foundation, Netherlands
Eva Štravs Podlogar, State Secretary at the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology of the Republic of Slovenia

Verena Vidrih Perko, Museum Curator at Regional Museum Kranj and University Teacher at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Moderator:
Igor Evgen Bergant, TV News Programme Host, Journalist and Commentator at RTV Slovenia
Slovenia’s attractiveness as a destination for green-field investments as well as acquisitions was highlighted at a special Bled Strategic Forum panel entitled InvestTalk Slovenia 2.0. Contributing to Slovenia’s competitiveness are a strong ability to adapt, a skilled workforce, suitability as a trial market and a place ideal for boutique manufacturing based on reliability and quality, as well political and economic stability, a business-friendly environment, and relative proximity to regional corporate headquarters.

After a period of acquisitions by funds, it is strategic partners that are now beginning to come to the fore. Whereas especially Chinese investments in the West previously focused on finance and real estate, the recent financial crisis compelled Chinese investors to refocus on the ‘real sector’, including manufacturing, logistics, tourism and banking. This shows that the Slovenian investment environment is becoming very similar in structure to the one Germany, which goes to show that despite occasional sideways movement, the economy is gradually maturing.

The Bank Assets Management Company (BAMC) remains one of the key channels for investment in Slovenia, with somewhere between EUR 500 million and EUR 1 billion in foreign direct investments made through the institution thus far, with indirect contributions estimated to be even higher. Roughly EUR 600 million in claims, EUR 200 million in real estate and EUR 100 million in equity remain on BAMC’s books.

InvestTalk Slovenia 2.0
In partnership with Bank Assets Management Company. Tuesday, 11 September, 11.15–12.45 @Rikli Balance Hotel, Voda Hall

Speakers:
Imre Balogh, CEO and Executive Director of Bank Asset Management Company, Slovenia
Gregor Benčina, President of Slovenijales Group, Slovenia
Michael Hummelbrunner, Global Director Finance/Controlling, Magna Steyr, Austria
Shengke Liu, Managing Director of Pingan Ventures, China

Moderators:
Matej Škočir, Head of Division for Internationalisation at the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology of the Republic of Slovenia
Gregor Umek, Senior Advisor - Slovenian National Contact Point OECD at the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology of the Republic of Slovenia
DIGITALISING A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITIES

www.telekom.si
Bridging The Divide Between Generation

Introduction

The structure of the global population has radically changed. Predictions show that in the next few years, there will be more people over the age of 65 than children under 5. As a result, the disparity between these two population groups will constantly increase, bringing about drastic change in intergenerational relations. To successfully address these changes, our efforts will need to be geared to ensuring a decent life in all life periods. That said, what are the biggest challenges facing different generations regarding the labour market, housing and involvement in social decision-making? What needs to be done to enhance intergenerational co-operation? What are the inspiring best practices of intergenerational co-operation?

Key Takeaways

From conflict to co-operation: The narrative of intergenerational conflict, which emerged as a consequence of the financial and economic crisis that was begotten by older generations yet hit young people around the world the hardest, often persists to this day. It is only in the last few years that we have witnessed an invaluable move from intergenerational conflict to intergenerational co-operation.

Intergenerational synergy: Faced with a shortage of skilled workers, while at the same time seeking to retain decades-old knowledge, companies should look for new ways of bringing together the old and the new. By combining older people’s know-how and experience with younger generations’ enthusiasm and creativity, we can avoid the risk of knowledge gaps, while making one group active sooner and the other longer at the same time.

Bridging the Divide between Generations
Powered by the National Youth Council of Slovenia.
Friday, 7 September, 18.00–19.30
@Ljubljana Town Hall

Speakers:
Tjaša Sobočan, International Lead at Simbioza, Slovenia
Tin Kampl, President of the National Youth Council of Slovenia
Edita Hasanović, Assistant to the Director of Home Care Institute Ljubljana, Slovenia
Matej Repič, Adviser to the Advocate of the Principle of Equality of the Republic of Slovenia

Moderator:
Anja Fortuna, Vice President of the National Youth Council of Slovenia
How Can Smart Communities Drive Sustainability?

Introduction

The advent of new technology has brought about the emergence of smart cities and smart tourism, which aim to provide advanced technology-based solutions that ensure an efficient use of resources and optimal user experience. Yet what does it mean to be ‘smart’ in a context that seamlessly blends local and global initiatives? Where is the balance between a top-down, capital-intensive approach and locally based bottom-up efforts? How should circular economy models be designed, evaluated and implemented? Which stakeholders drive sustainability in smart communities and what can be done to facilitate their co-operation?

Key takeaways

**Progressing slowly:** Locally, progress is often slow, since large projects depend on strong support from mayors and municipal councils. The public’s understanding of the concept of smart communities and the issues it addresses has also been modest. The term ‘smart’, which has not been without opposition, is being increasingly replaced with ‘cooperative communities’, with co-operation among all stakeholders considered the cornerstone of future endeavours.

**Progressing gradually:** Although lack of ambition can be detrimental, patience and expectation management are equally important. A revolutionary approach that advocates changing things overnight can often lead to a backlash, regardless of how good the intention. Instead, we should encourage an un-wavering commitment in the form of incremental steps.

**Progressing smartly:** The first step is to clarify what it actually means to be ‘smart’, and how we define success based on that. We need to ask ourselves what the purpose of doing business is, i.e. how to transcend the rationale of constant growth and profits, and begin reconnecting business with society. This, in addition to simultaneously understanding the local and global context, will allow us to move from reducing negative effects to creating positive ones.

How Can Smart Communities Drive Sustainability?
Powered by the Club Alpbach Senza Confini.
Friday, 7 September, 20.30–22.00
@City Hotel

Speakers:
- **Simon Mokorel**, Project Manager at Arctur d.o.o., Slovenia
- **Ladeja Godina Košir**, Founder & Executive Director of Circular Change, Slovenia
- **Massimiano Tellini**, Global Head - Circular Economy at Intesa Sanpaolo Bank, Italy
- **Martin Mössler**, Managing Director of the Science Park Graz, Austria

Moderator:
- **Vesna Kuralt**, President of the Club Alpbach Senza Confini, Slovenia
Alone we Fail: Working Together for a Sustainable Future

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a comprehensive and cross-sectorial blueprint for a better and more sustainable future. It consists of seventeen Sustainable Development Goals that address pressing global challenges, including poverty, inequality, climate change, peace and justice. These and many other issues are interlinked and call for a more system approach. The “Alone We Fail” workshop took its participants on a journey of direct experience in order to showcase how we can develop solutions that go beyond the silo mentality.

In the introductory, three challenges were presented: global food waste, obesity and hunger. We produce enough food to feed everybody in the world, but we end up wasting a third of production (1.3 billion tonnes), while over 815 million people globally are still suffering from chronic malnutrition. Meanwhile, obesity is an epidemic in its own right, with more than 1.9 billion adults being overweight. Participants were asked to seek tangible solutions that would address all three issues at once and contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals 2 (zero hunger), 3 (good health and well-being) and 12 (responsible consumption and production).

The 2030 Agenda also calls for partnerships to share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources in order to achieve the SDGs. To increase awareness of stakeholder co-operation, participants were divided into 7 groups. Each participant was given a new identity related to government, civil society, R&D or the business sector. They all had to utilise their strengths and overcome their biases in order to complete the task.

Each group presented their best solution, describing the impact it would have on society, the role individual stakeholders would play, and where problems might occur. The solutions ranged from mobile apps and recycle kitchens to school programmes, development assistance projects, and research initiatives. Unknowingly, all participants were tapping into the SDG 17 (partnerships), showing that without co-operation, the 2030 Agenda is merely a wish list. Alone we fail, but together we can co-create a brighter future for all.
In a workshop organised by the Gender Equality Research Institute Slovenia (IPES – Inštitut za proučevanje enakosti spolov), and run by one of the institute’s directors Ms Nina Pejič, young leaders set out to discover underlying gender stereotypes and explore the reasons why and how they arise. Subjected to a classic Harvard study test, many discovered they were not immune to gender bias, clearly grading the same journalistic text, which was distributed to different groups, lower if told the author was female.

According to the creators of the workshop, this happened despite the general perception of this specific group of leaders as open and tolerant. The workshop went on to explore various stereotypes and how they are constructed, and looked at why the share of women in social sciences is much higher in comparison to the natural sciences, where they tend to be significantly underrepresented when compared to their male counterparts. For instance, one seemingly benign yet in fact impactful root cause that leads to women and men making different career choices and adopting different attitudes lies in childhood toys.

Male dolls and action figures tend to be strong and determined, which in a workplace could translate into men’s willingness to ask for a raise, or to make their voices heard at company meetings, gradually solidifying their role as leaders. Female characters, Barbies being the most commonly known example, tend to embody more passive, at times even subservient roles, which strongly influences girls’ self-perception at a young age. One of the participants pointed out that female action figures, such as Wonder Woman, also exist, but it was quickly pointed out in the debate that Wonder Woman is hyper-sexualised and acquires her superpower only after she falls in love. Insignificant at first glance, once added, such factors have tangible implications for our behaviour in the long run.

**Disrupting Gender Stereotypes: Are You a Born Leader?**
Powered by the Gender Equality Research Institute Slovenia.
Saturday, 8 September, 12.00–13.30
@IBM Slovenia

Workshop facilitators:
- **Kaja Primorac**, Director of the Gender Equality Research Institute, Slovenia
- **Nina Pejič**, Programme Director at the Gender Equality Research Institute, Slovenia
Making A.I. Work – Exploring Practical Ways for Human-Machine Co-operation

One way to offset some of the disruptive tendencies seemingly inherent in AI-related technologies is to explore how humans and algorithms can work side by side and complement each other. However, for such deliberations to retain their practical merit, they need to be grounded in at least a basic understanding of how AI can be applied in particular fields, sectors and contexts, each of which is determined by its own idiosyncrasies, all the while keeping sight of the wider socio-economic perspective. To this end, the panel brought together leading experts from academia, technology, business, NGOs and policy-making, and challenged them to engage in a productive exchange that delineated both the potential and the limits of human-machine co-operation.

The future is now: Contrary to what was heard from some other panels discussing the current state of AI systems, the panellists opined that, in its first wave, AI is already very much present in our lives. Whether in the form of personal assistants, or on the stock market with more than half of trades in the United States being executed by algorithms, the extent to which we depend on automated systems capable of limited decision-making tends to exceed common perception.

Peering into the black box: The advances made with machine are nothing short of astonishing compared to the lacklustre developments of the previous decade; however, researchers in fact fail to understand much of progress was made. Deep learning algorithms are ‘black boxes’, with their decision-making rationale unknown to their creators. This could have significant implications both for political deliberations, as well as in entirely practical situations, as is the case with legal liability claims.

Data is the new black gold: In addition to raw processing power and proper algorithms, AI development based on various forms of machine learning depends primarily on immense quantities of data. Whether it is business models of companies like Google and Facebook, the right to privacy and EU’s legal initiatives for greater data protection, or the establishment of a universal social credit system in China, these developments should all be analysed through the prism of the global political economy and geostrategic competition aimed at developing the most advanced AI systems, paving the rise of future superpowers.

Making A.I. Work – Exploring Practical Ways for Human-Machine Co-operation
Powered by MUNSC Salient & Triglav Lab.
Saturday, 8 September, 15.00–18.30
@Triglav Lab

Speakers:
Filip Muki Dobranič, Responsible for Hacking and <3 at Today Is A New Day, Institute for Other Studies, Slovenia
Lazar Džamić, Former Head of Brand Planning at Google ZOO London and Lecturer at the Digital Marketing Department of the Faculty of Media and Communications in Belgrade, Serbia
Dénes András Nagy, President of Talos, Hungary
Pika Šarf, Junior Researcher at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Moderator:
Simon Sovič, Business Developer at Cheer.io, Slovenia

In partnership with MUNSC Salient

Making A.I. Work – Exploring Practical Ways for Human-Machine Co-operation / Photo: Marko Arandjelovic, Kraftart
Participants at the Young BSF had a chance to engage in a fireside chat with the acclaimed international TV presenter and journalist Ali Aslan, who was given 60 minutes to share his views on the current global situation. Taking questions directly from the audience in a relaxed atmosphere, Aslan expressed serious concern and outright outrage about several recent developments, ranging from our collective failure to act in solidarity with refugees to the rise of extremism across Europe.

Touching upon the former, Aslan spoke of families being torn apart in the US, of a coalition partner in Austria who believes that having Austrians of Jewish descent register might be a good idea in the 21st century, of blatant xenophobia and racism in countries like Hungary, and the rise of the far right even in his county, Germany, which he said had felt immune to this.

What concerns him is that we can now hear things that only a few years age would have cost the person uttering them their political and professional existence. While at first we may not notice the change, there will soon come a time when it will be too late to stop it. In his view, a large part of the problem lies in the silence of people otherwise opposed to these trends.

Aslan, who feels it could well happen that the EU in its current form will no longer exist ten years from now, agreed with remarks that people should not simply be dismissed as xenophobic or as falling for populism. Much of the discontent is warranted, due to the fact that in Western Europe democratically elected leaders are no longer the people making the key decisions. In his understanding, this is in large part due to our failure to rein in the financial sector after the 2008 financial crisis.
Introduction

Although today each platform provides a unique product, all digital campaign creations should complement one another in order to achieve the larger objective. The digital communication workshop provided Young BSF participants with a theoretical framework and practical advice on digital campaigns, which are the cornerstone of any successful messaging strategy.

Key Takeaways

New media, old tactics: The lessons of old authorities on rhetorical theory still apply. Cicero defined three basic goals of communication: to change somebody's mood, change their opinion, their soul, and to get them to act. Today, communication is all about awareness, awe, acceptance, and action. The first step is essential: once people are inspired, we can get them to do anything. In doing so, we must be clear and direct, know exactly what our purpose is, be consistent, curate, engage third parties and, above all, we must experiment.

Going visual: Today, communication is all about visual storytelling. The author needs to find a way to stand out, know the audience, understand the message and know how to evoke emotion. Apart from crystallising one's message, a thorough knowledge of how the visual social platform works is also indispensable (quality of sound, video format, text length, tagging options, SEO etc.). To acquire this knowledge, one must be willing to learn through experimentation.

A perfect tweet: Although considered esoteric by many, Twitter remains the go-to platform for journalists, researchers, policy makers and even businessmen. In crafting a perfect tweet, we should engage our audience with action and add a call to action, add up to two hashtags, a link for people to read more, include a picture or a video, tag other users, use emojis, and include the location of the tweet. In sum, a perfect tweet should make appropriate use of all the features that the platform offers.

Log In, Reach Out: Building a Digital Bridge to Your Audience

Powered by the Centre for European Perspective and the U.S Department of State.
Sunday, 9 September, 17.00–19.00
@City Hotel

Workshop trainers:
Matthias Luefkens, Managing Director at BCW / Twiplomacy, Switzerland
Marko Zoric, YouTube Editor at BBC News, United Kingdom
Matthew Jacobs, Public Affairs Specialist at the U.S. Department of State
Many divides that we observe today are the result of conflicts, which often cause divides not only between countries, but also between people. For a harmonious society, we cannot avoid resolving problems that cause conflict; however, the nature of conflicts is changing, and we need to tackle newly emerging problems with new perspectives. This panel set out to find ways to prevent conflicts, using mediation, and building lasting peace, by focusing on several contemporary research projects that dealt with the Balkans and the Middle East.

**Achieving a common narrative:** As shown by the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where there exist at least three narratives on the devastating conflict, one cannot expect that the past will somehow be forgotten. What is important, however, is to gradually reach a common narrative, which will provide a solid basis for engaging critically with the past and pave the way for a gradual normalisation of social relations.

**European disunity:** In the past, the EU’s approach to the Mediterranean region was based on three misguided assumptions. First, when engaging in region building, it ignored the historical fact that the region had never been homogeneous. Second, it neglected the influence of other international players, which themselves were well aware of the power competition in the region. Third, a high level of unity in policy formation and implementation was assumed, when in fact the EU’s foreign policy remains inter-governmental and consensus-based at the same time.

**Beyond simple divisions:** Policy makers often operate with abstract conceptions that are only partially based on the situation on the ground. The cases of Iran, where only roughly half of the population is Persian, as well as Kurds, with their numerous intra-group divisions, are two such examples. Employing a more sociological and anthropological approach can be very useful for understanding how ethnicity is being constructed and deconstructed in the region, including by political players.
Mediterranean Dimension of the OSCE – Youth and Security

The panel discussion, which was held under the auspices of the Italian OSCE Chairmanship and its commitment to working under the motto of “Dialogue, Ownership, Responsibility” to build a “genuine partnership” of Mediterranean countries, addressed the role of youth in resolving interconnected security issues in the Euro-Mediterranean region. These include radicalisation, climate change, migration, gender equality, freedom of the media, and many more. The event was also intended to shed more light on the role of youth, who are often left out of official debates and resolutions, while their voice is often neither heard nor included in resolving current issues in the region.

Radicalisation: While the young are often associated with traits such as ambition, creativity, and eagerness to learn, this can also take a darker turn if they are not provided with security and given the opportunity to properly channel their creative drives. In practice, this means providing young people with opportunities for employment, education and active involvement in political processes. Only in this way will we be able to reduce their susceptibility to radicalisation.

Role of women: It is high time we recognised that security is inextricably linked to gender equality. Not only are women even more vulnerable than men in migration-related illicit activities, such as human trafficking, they should also be perceived as paramount in a more preventive approach to various security challenges in the Mediterranean region. Their active role in processes of deradicalisation and reintegration is just one such example.

No such thing as youth: While commonly addressed as a single and internally coherent group, roughly defined by age, youth is far from a homogenous category. Like many other social groups, it is divided across class, racial and other lines. This is reflected in the marked fragmentation of opinions among the young when it comes to migration, as well as, for instance, in their attitude to the establishment.
Western Balkans: State of Play and Policy Recommendations

What is regularly described as ‘the Western Balkans’ is in fact a region of six countries which are not members of the EU, but since 2003 have had prospects of becoming full members.

The region faces many socio-economic, political and security challenges. Population decline is caused by low fertility rates and an increasing brain drain. The number of jobs citizens of the Western Balkans can compete for is still low, and none of the six economies is considered free. Compared to EU Member States, institutions in the region (parliaments, public administration, security and judiciary) are underperforming. Compared to the EU average, the quality of education is rather low (best seen through very low results in PISA studies). Ethnicity is still central in the political life of many countries, and several states face de-stabilising tendencies both from inside and abroad. The media are still under enormous political and economic pressure.

Since the 2003 commitment to expand its membership to the Western Balkans, the EU has grown from 15 to 28 Member States, but one Member State is in the process of leaving. Faced with an increased number of migrants and the financial and economic crisis, the political landscape of the EU has changed. Populism is on the rise and the level of democracy and rule of law are under pressure. There is a war in Ukraine, tensions between the EU and Russia and Turkey. Transatlantic relations have been under enormous pressure since the presidential election in the United States.

The EU remains the most important trade and investment partner of the Western Balkans region. All states have contractual relations with the EU (Stabilisation and Association Agreements), enjoy visa-free travel to the Schengen area (except Kosovo), and receive financial and technical support from the EU in order to join the EU. Many EU programmes intended for Member States have been started in the region, from a student exchange programme to support for cultural programmes. Montenegro and Serbia are negotiating EU membership; Albania and Macedonia hope to start in June 2019. Bosnia-Herzegovina has applied for EU membership.

Albania and Montenegro are already members of NATO; Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo are hoping to join, but Serbia does not want to join. The region as a whole is surrounded by NATO and EU members.

Discussions at the Young Bled Strategic Forum took place against a backdrop of increased disruptive actions by non-EU external actors in the region, as well as on-going attempts to address some of the long-lasting bilateral disputes in the region: the Macedonia-Greece name dispute and Kosovo-Serbia relations. The progress made by establishing the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), and ideas provided by the European Commission’s February 2018 strategic paper on the Western Balkans were also discussed. Young participants looked at opportunities and challenges for the region and drew up a list of proposals and recommendations for the following areas: the Euro-Atlantic future of the Western Balkans and security perspectives, reconciliation, the digital economy and youth participation. Below is a summary of the deliberations accompanied by a set of policy recommendations for each of the four issue areas.

The Euro-Atlantic future of the Western Balkans
The future of the Western Balkans in the eyes of youth is, by-and-large, European. The reasoning be-
hind this is simple: it offers a promise of a better society. The NATO as security provider and umbrella in the Western Balkans region offers a welcome change both for those states which want to become full members and those which at the moment do not. Our recommendations:

- Youth voices should become more vocal and involved when the future of the EU and NATO is discussed. This should be done through more structured dialogue between civil society in the region and with partners in civil society in the EU.
- There should be more civil society exchange between those countries which are already NATO members, those in the process of joining and those that do not want to join, as well as between those countries which are already negotiating EU membership, those about to open negotiations and those still far from opening membership negotiations. The line between different groups of countries (NATO- and EU-related) should not be seen as, or lead to, increased division.
- Governments in the region, in the interests of their citizens and economies, should enable visa-free travel (Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo) and travel with identity cards.

Reconciliation
Regarding the process of reconciliation, a lot has been achieved in the Western Balkans, but much still remains to be done. Reconciliation is one of the essential factors for a stable and prosperous future in the region. Our recommendations:

- Civil society should be included in current negotiation processes between Kosovo and Serbia, Greece and Macedonia, as well as in internal reconciliation efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Education reform should be made a priority in the Western Balkans. The current focus of education reforms on the university level is welcome, but much more should be done at the level of primary and secondary education. The fact that all Western Balkans states took part for the first time in the OECD’s PISA study in 2018 should be used to kick-start discussions and develop concrete and robust reforms (results of the testing should be available in 2019).
- Existing national curricula do not promote the development of critical thinking, but rather reinforce deeply entrenched ethnic/national divisions. In opposition to that, the new educational reform should strive to promote adjudicated facts and develop critical thinking skills, as well as enhance active citizenship.
- More effort should be put into finding the remaining missing persons, and all governments of the Western Balkans region should provide all means necessary to support this process.
- Recognising a milestone achievement of the EU, i.e. ERASMUS+ programme, and its positive effect on the development of a common European identity, the EU should extend the scope of availability to the Western Balkans region. In other words, students at the tertiary level should also be given an opportunity to study at universities in the Western Balkans region.

Digital economy
The Western Balkans is going through digital transformation, which presents both challenges and opportunities. Our recommendations:
– Tech sectors, especially IT, are creating new jobs, which are more than attractive to young educated people, which also keeps them in the countries. There should be more government and EU support, from economic and financial to educational support, for the tech sector.
– Financing models such as angel investment, venture capital, as well as diaspora funding should be explored, encouraged and developed.
– Tech business support systems should be further developed, including with investments in tech parks, accelerators programmes and co-working spaces, as well as university supporting infrastructure.
– Opportunity for formal and informal tech-related education should be increased by exploring the level of digital literacy and tackling potential digital illiteracy.
– Digital transformation also has effects on government reforms, so more attention should be given to privacy, security and systematic solutions.

– Local authorities should use and improve existing mechanisms, and develop new, participatory mechanisms at the local level by paying particular attention to bridging the gap between rural and urban areas. One way of doing this could be through the increased involvement of the civil sector in education process, as well as by bringing activism into schools.
– Civic education should enable high-level decision makers to meet youngsters in their respective countries.
– At the national level, youth representatives should be more involved in the policy-making and decision-making process, as well as in the implementation and scrutinisation of policies.
– At the international level, the work of RYCO is welcome, and should be further supported, but youth need to go beyond the scope of RYCO’s mandate, and this should be recognised and taken into account.

Youth participation

Participation is a fundamental right. Through active participation, young people are empowered to play an important role in their own development, as well as in that of their communities, helping them to learn vital life-skills, develop knowledge on human rights and citizenship, and promote positive civic action with the aim of influencing the political sphere (directly and indirectly). Our recommendations:

– Young people must be given the proper tools, such as education and access to information, to become familiar with their civil rights and the role these play in fostering open and stable societies.

Western Balkans: State of Play and Policy Recommendations

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