

9th Tourism Panel at the Bled Strategic Forum: The knowledge society and the careers of the future



In the cover photo (from left): Dubravka Kalin, Director General of the Directorate for Tourism at the Ministry of Economy, Tourism and Sport, Dr. Danica Purg, founder and director of IEDC - Bled Business School, Dr. Emilija Stojmenova Duh, Minister for Digital Transformation, MSc. Maja Pak, Director of the Slovenian Tourist Board, Alessandra Priante, Director of the Regional Department for Europe at the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Matevž Frangež, State Secretary at the Ministry of the Economy, Tourism and Sport, Ulrika Björklund, Executive Director of the Swiss Education Group, Marie Audren, Director General HOTREC and Rodney Dunn, chef and co-founder of The Agrarian Kitchen restaurant and cooking school. Photo: Jošt Gantar

9TH TOURISM PANEL AT THE BLED STRATEGIC FORUM: THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY AND THE CAREERS OF THE FUTURE

The labour market is undergoing rapid transformations due to global influences. Emerging technologies, digitalization, automated business processes, the shift toward a low-carbon economy, globalization, evolving societies, and an aging population poses a significant challenge to the tourism industry: How can we adapt the labour market to effectively address the demand for new skills in the workforce, particularly for the careers of the future? Esteemed speakers delved into this subject during the 9th tourism panel organized by the Slovenian Tourist Board (STB) and the Ministry of the Economy, Tourism, and Sport (MEST). The panel, titled "Knowledge Society and Future Jobs in Tourism," was part of the 18th Bled Strategic Forum (BSF) held today.

Matevž Frangež, State Secretary at the Ministry of Economy, Tourism and Sport, emphasized Slovenia's strategic dedication to sustainable tourism: *"Slovenia is already among the world's most sustainable destinations. Central to the success of Slovenian tourism is the transformative influence of its people. Their ability to craft experiences and infuse the Slovenian tourist offer with authenticity is unparalleled. With this foundation, we are positive that the industry's strategic objectives, including enhancing added value, will be reached."*

MSc. Maja Pak, the Director of the Slovenian Tourist Board (STB), underlined in her opening address that labour shortages present one of the biggest challenges for the tourism sector, alongside the pressing concern of climate change, which has led to increasingly severe weather patterns. As she noted, *"By 2030, millennials and Generation Z will compose nearly two-thirds of the global workforce. Their digital expertise, entrepreneurial mindset, appreciation for cultural diversity, commitment to sustainability and the environment, along with elevated expectations of corporate and organizational social responsibility and adaptability, can significantly enhance the competitiveness of the tourism sector. Meeting these generations' anticipations demands from the tourism employers to be prepared. The challenge is not solely to attract young talents to the industry but also keep, upskill, and empower existing employees. While propelling the digital transformation of tourism is imperative, we must know that, amidst the advantages of rapid technological progression, people should remain central to tourism, as well as to the broader concept of modern sustainability."*

The discussion then focused on three key aspects. The institutional dimension was thoughtfully explored through a guided dialogue between **Alessandra Priante**, Director of the Regional Department for Europe at the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and **Dubravka Kalin**, Director General of the Directorate for Tourism at the Ministry of Economy, Tourism and Sport. The educational perspective was illuminated by **Dr. Danica Purg**, Founder and Director of IEDC - Bled Business School, **Ulrika Björklund**, CEO of Swiss Education Group, and **Rodney Dunn**, chef and co-founder of The Agrarian Kitchen restaurant and cooking school. Delving into the impacts of the technological transformation, insights were shared by **Dr. Emilija Stojmenova Duh**, Minister for Digital

Transformation, and **Marie Audren**, Director General of the European Association of Hotels, Restaurants, Cafés, and Nightclubs (HOTREC).