

Bled Forum on Europe

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Bled Forum on Europe is an influential international think-tank (knowledge-sharing platform) which advocates knowledge-based governance and the use of futures studies and foresight in the decision-making process. Bled Forum on Europe is supported by the European Commission, governmental institutions, the scientific community, the business sector and NGOs. Bled Forum on Europe is registered as a research association according to Slovenian law on associations (NGOs). The main issues for Bled Forum on Europe are global challenges of today that will influence our future. The whole “international knowledge-sharing platform” is structured as a network of people, stakeholders, forward-looking ideas and projects.

At the IX Bled Forum, we discussed these issues with Director of CeGD (Centre for eGovernance Development for South East Europe) Blaž Golob, president of Bled Forum on Europe.

The theme of this year’s Bled Forum on Europe – Foresight and Policy-making in Relation to Climate Change – is currently at the very forefront of the challenges posed to global policy-makers. In what way does Bled Forum initiative identify and decide upon the subject of the annual conference?

The agenda-setting process is of great importance for the success of the key Bled Forum project, namely the annual Foresight Conference. The starting point of the agenda-setting process is definition of a relevant theme that is in line with our vision and mission



statements. The objectives, the title of the conference and the first composition of sessions are decided one year in advance by the Futures Committee of Bled Forum. The Futures Committee is composed of international and Slovenian experts on foresight, science and policy-making. During the following year, key stakeholders, relevant projects and scientific authorities are identified. The relevant policies and

strategies of the conference theme are also analysed, and this leads on to the final construction of the agenda of the conference. The whole agenda-setting process involves creative teamwork and, in my opinion, brings real added value to the final drafting of the agenda, topics selected and speakers invited. In 2007, the climate change theme was identified as the relevant topic for the 2008 Foresight Conference.



Bled Forum on Europe operates as a think tank. What is in your opinion the key instrument of Bled Forum on Europe for influencing the policy-making process?

There are two crucial instruments for influencing the policy-making arena. First is the involvement of relevant stakeholders in the agenda-setting process and at the conference in the final stage. Stakeholders identified are those that can bring not only awareness but also different perspectives to the various scenarios (the different scenarios for the selected themes are produced by the use of foresight). Second is the composition of the final document, which has the status of a declaration, as in the case of the 2006 statement on Knowledge-based Governance and Foresight. The other good example was an appeal for the foundation of a new international institution, in 1998. The final document of the 1998 forum debate called for strengthening the common position of the European Union, at that time fifteen member states, to achieve a common position at the UN Diplomatic Conference in Rome where a new institution to combat global challenges was founded, namely the International Criminal Court (ICC). It would be naive to think that the ICC was founded solely because of the Bled Forum appeal; nevertheless, the effect on the partners involved was of great importance. At that time, the message from the region to the UK Presidency of the European Union was an example of an innovative approach for the support of the foundation of a new international institution.

Foresight is more and more perceived as a valuable policy instrument complementing more classical steering approaches. What is in your opinion the key added value of foresight methodology?

The key added value of foresight and futures studies in general is the process, in which relevant stakeholders, such as the research community, policy-makers, civil society and the private sector, define the long-term priorities, trends or scenarios. This process means that the channels of communication for various partners are opened and this leads to the exchange of prospective future-oriented thinking and a consensus-building definition of priorities. Those long-term priorities can steer concrete short-term actions



VISION

“SOL OMNIBUS LUCET”

TO EFFECTIVELY INFLUENCE THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AT EU AND GOVERNMENTAL, PRIVATE SECTOR AND CIVIL SOCIETY LEVEL TO BRING ABOUT “PUBLIC VIRTUE”;

PUBLIC VIRTUE DEFINED as EU VALUES & UN VALUES such as HUMAN RIGHTS, THE RULE OF LAW, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION and VALUES DERIVED from MILLENNIUM PROJECT CHALLENGES.

MISSION

Bled Forum is an international think tank. Bled Forum practises and promotes futures studies and foresight with the aim of influencing the decision-making process.

GOALS

To promote knowledge-based governance with ethical considerations, and the use of futures studies and foresight.

To connect researchers, scientists, business people, policy makers and civil society with the aim of responding to global challenges.

To influence the above-mentioned stakeholders to implement Bled Forum recommendations in long-term planning and short-term action.

There are five projects currently running at Bled Forum on Europe:

- 1. The annual Foresight Conference in Bled. The IX Bled Forum on Europe (for 2008) has already been held.**
- 2. Bled Forum Institute (knowledge-sharing platform).**
- 3. South Eastern Europe foresight meeting point.**
- 4. Node of the Millennium Project, which publishes the annual State of the Future report and, through the Mexican node, organises the Global Millennium Prize competition.**
- 5. Node of the UN Global Compact Slovenia, which brings business partners and their perspectives into futures studies and foresight.**

THE CHALLENGE OF BEING A NODE OF THE MILLENNIUM PROJECT

The Millennium Project of WFUNA is a global participatory futures research think tank of futures practitioners, scholars, business planners, and policy-makers who work for international organisations, governments, corporations, NGOs and universities. The Millennium Project manages a coherent and cumulative process that collects and assesses judgements from its several hundred participants to produce the annual State of the Future and Futures Research Methodology series, and special studies such as the State of the Future Index, studies on future scenarios for Africa, lessons from history, environmental security, applications of futures research to policy, and a bibliography of 700+ annotated scenarios.

It connects local and global perspectives via regional nodes (groups of individuals and institutions) in Baku (Azerbaijan), Beijing (China), Berlin/Essen (Germany), Brussels (Belgium), Buenos Aires (Argentina), Cairo (Egypt), Caracas (Venezuela), Dubai (United Arab Emirates), Helsinki (Finland), Istanbul (Turkey), Kuwait (Gulf region), Lima (Peru), Ljubljana/Bled Forum on Europe (Slovenia), London (UK), Madurai and New Delhi (India), Melbourne (Australia), Mexico City (Mexico), Moscow (Russia), Ottawa/Montreal (Canada), Paris (France), Prague/Bratislava (Central and Eastern Europe), Pretoria and Johannesburg (South Africa), Rome (Italy), Santiago (Chile), Sao Paulo (Brazil), Seoul (South Korea), Silicon Valley (US), Tehran (Iran), Tel Aviv (Israel), Tokyo (Japan) and Cyberspace (Hawaii).

The Millennium Project was selected among the “100 Best Practices” by UN Habitat, the best seven foresight organisations by Battelle Northwest for the US Department of Energy, and among the “Top Picks” of the Future Survey of the World Future Society.

The purpose of the Millennium Project is to be an international utility to assist in organising futures research by continuously updating and improving humanity's thinking about the future, and making that thinking available for feedback as a geographically and institutionally dispersed think tank.

The Bled Forum award in 2008 was delivered to Jerome C. Glenn Director of the WFUNA Millennium project.



Glenn: "It is too late to say later!"

of the stakeholders involved. The outcomes of foresights could be used as a valuable input for various strategies and policies of the stakeholders involved. Many successful

countries in the top 10 according to the Human Development Index, regions, cities, NGOs and corporations use this method to define long-term priorities.

Every year during the Bled Forum Foresight Conference, we present various successful cases of foresight. In this respect we co-operate with the EU-funded project, the European Foresight Monitoring Network. The European Commission and the EU have also recognised foresight as a useful tool for a long-term planning and priorities setting. This fact was recognised by the huge financial support from the European Union to foresight studies in the EU Seventh Framework Programme, from 2007 until 2013.

Bled Forum on Europe became a UN Millennium Project node in July 2007. What does the privilege of becoming one of the 27 nodes worldwide bring to Bled Forum on Europe?

The fact that Bled Forum has become a Millennium Project means a new



Director of CeGD (Centre for eGovernance Development for South East Europe) Blaž Golob, president of Bled Forum on Europe.

challenge and responsibility. The new challenge means that we are involved in the daily business of a leading global think tank, which brings us new up-to-date ideas about the possible responses to global challenges. The real value of being a node is a connection to people, institutions, ideas

Nadya Zhexembayeva, Vice President, UN Global Compact Slovenia: "The annual conference of the Bled Forum on Europe each year focuses on a distinctive topic, which is debated from different angles by participants with different professional backgrounds. The key topic is selected in a structured process of several months in which different groups of relevant actors are consulted, with a final decision made by the programme committee of the conference (a section of the Futures Committee, with additional invited experts). The aim of this wide consultation is to ensure the social relevance and importance of the topic, so that the intellectual potential and capacity of the conference can have a significant social influence. To achieve visibility and influence, it is important to involve adequate stakeholders from different levels. Therefore, at the end of the each annual conference, a statement of conclusions or a declaration is prepared



with key findings and recommendations of the forum. These findings are addressed to the media, key politicians, economic and other relevant actors at all levels.

Important topics which have been addressed in past events include:

- An appeal for the establishment of the International Criminal Court;
- The European quality of life area;
- Towards a global research area;
- A forward look for Europe;
- The future of legal education in Europe;
- The Bled Forum declaration on knowledge-based governance;
- Foresight and climate change.

Think papers are available at the webpage: www.bled-forum.org

In 2008, the Bled Forum on Europe addressed one of the most important challenges of the forthcoming decades – climate change. The question is how can this topic be addressed through the business, policy-making and research agendas on different levels. The conclusions and the resulting Bled Forum Declaration on Foresight.



Jana Kolar, Chair of the session on climate change and its regional impact on South Eastern Europe: "Climate change will have far-reaching effects on the people and economy of South Eastern Europe, which will lead to long-term impacts on society and the environment."



Dr Franci Demšar, Director, Slovenian Research Agency: "Thus, it is extremely important that the facts and the science get a fair hearing. Without that balanced outlook, the global warming debate is motivated by fear, rather than science. We are all aware of the fact that climate change requires an immediate and effective response from all actors. But such a response should be based on scientific evidence alone and should supply a clear vision of the possible alternatives to this situation."



Lučka Kajfež-Bogataj, Slovenian member of the IPCC, Nobel Peace Prize winners in 2007, in conversation with Tanja Cegnar from the Environmental Agency of the Republic of Slovenia.

Kajfež-Bogataj: "It is necessary to talk about topics which are currently untouchable. The topic of climate change is inevitably connected with demographic questions and the question of changing our core values. Without that, the debate about climate change will have only limited success."



Vida Ogorelec Wagner, Director of UMANOTERA Foundation for Sustainable Development, and Jerome C. Glenn at the plenary session.

Ogorelec Wagner: "Things can not be changed top-down. It is important to bridge the gap between what science says is necessary and what politics accepts as feasible."



use in the operations of the forum. We have a responsibility to contribute to the research and futures studies that are necessary to bring about the publication of an annual State of the Future report, which analyses 15 global challenges. Each node around the world also has its own specialism. As a policy-making node, Bled Forum's vision is to influence policy-making circles, with an emphasis on the EU policy-making system, through foresight studies. In the area of connecting foresight and policy-making we are practising a new, innovative approach that is recognised by the various actors involved.

The UN Global Compact Initiative Slovenia is an enrichment to Bled Forum on Europe. What is the main purpose of the initiative and in what way does it complement the existing Bled Forum instruments and initiatives?

Romana Jordan-Cizelj, Slovenian Member of the European Parliament, in the company of the two main organisers of the IX Bled Forum, Miroslav Polzer, Director, Austrian Science and Liaison Office in Ljubljana, and Blaž Golob.

Jordan-Cizelj: "For fighting climate change, it is important to use a cross-sectoral holistic approach. The fact is that poor and less developed countries will be hit hardest and it is the responsibility of all the others to help them to manage that challenge."

and policy initiatives related to global challenges from all around the world. The other advantage is that the Millennium Project has the best collection of futures studies methodologies and case studies, which could find future



Members of the organising committee of the Bled Forum as a ++Dream Team++

Today we live in a complex world of global challenges, such as climate change, that impact in every corner in the world. To effectively respond to those challenges, there is a need for co-operation with the private sector. In responding to global challenges, there are also significant business opportunities for the private sector. If everyone gains, then I see this as an opportunity for the creation of a win-win situation. The principles of the UN Global Compact, which define how business could be socially responsible, are in line with the forum's vision statement. Due to the fact that the basic principle of foresight is to create synergies between similar initiatives where one of the stakeholders is the business sector, it is natural that we co-operate with, or

I would rather say that we are a responsible part of, the UN Global Compact Slovenia.

One of the areas of operation of Bled Forum is the regional impact of its activities. Where do you see opportunities for the region of South Eastern Europe?

From the first Bled Forum annual conference, there were always many initiatives established in relation to the region. One of the major influences at the early stage was the creation of the law school on peace in Sarajevo in the summer of 1996. On one side there were the European Union and international foundation initiatives, and on the other side demand from the region. The creative process undertaken by Slovenia, Sarajevo and Brussels at that time was the identification of the curriculum of the school in order to satisfy the expectations of both law students (from three different entities – Banja Luka, Mostar and Sarajevo) and international donors. Deals were successfully brokered and the project delivered more than the planned objectives. The other example of our positioning in the region of South Eastern Europe is that, as a side event of Bled Forum, from 2006 onwards we have organised an annual foresight training seminar for participants from South Eastern Europe. We finance the participation of 25 to 30 participants who are selected from applicants across the region. This process is carried out in co-operation with the European Commission and the Austrian Science Liaison Office in Ljubljana.

What is the topic for the 2009 Bled Forum?

The Futures Committee has decided that the theme for the 10th Bled Forum will be the role of culture as a driving force for the future development of economy, science, international co-operation and European integration. The theme will be subject to evaluation and foresight throughout the European, global and South Eastern Europe dimensions.

History

Presidents of the Republic of Slovenia, namely Mr Milan Kučan, Mr Janez Drnovšek and Mr Danilo Türk, have actively supported debates about the future of Europe at the Bled Forum.



Slovenian President Danilo TÜRK in 1996, as ambassador of Slovenia to the United Nations, with international lawyers during the debate about the future development of law and foundation of the International Criminal Court (ICC).



Bled Forum debates about the future development of Europe started in 1996, when for the first time law students, lawyers, diplomats and policy makers met in Bled under the patronage of the former president of the Republic of Slovenia, Mr Milan Kučan.



Keynote speaker at the Bled Forum in 2006, Mr Janez Drnovšek, former president of the Republic of Slovenia, received the Bled Forum award sundial from its creator, the European artist and researcher Mr Bojan Frantar.