

ENCOURAGING INITIATIVE AND INDEPENDENCE, APPRECIATING PROACTIVITY AND FLEXIBILITY

IZTOK BRICL, MSc, DIRECTOR

Gospodarsko razstavišče - Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre

INTERVIEW BY **NIKA PIRNAR** / PHOTO CREDITS **GR**



Iztok Bričl, MSc (ISCED 6) started working in MICE in 2010 when he was appointed Director of the GR – Ljubljana Convention and Exhibition Centre. Prior to that, he excelled in his work at the most senior positions where he demonstrated excellent managerial and organisational skills in the Slovenian food industry. As the director of a leading event centre in Slovenia, for a second term, he has been successfully leading the company with its 28 employees. Among his greatest achievements are the modernisation of infrastructure of the centre and the introduction of new fair events, in particular the development of congress activities.

Q: What does it take to be a meetings star winner?

Once more, thank you very much for the award. The GR – Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre is the event centre with the most varied events in Slovenia. About 400,000 people visit us each year. In the role of the organiser we stand out mainly in the exhibition area, but we also host diverse cultural and entertainment events, for example the Kurzschluss, this year's EMA and some other events of RTV Slovenia, as well as about 150 assorted business meetings, international conferences and other kinds of event. With a longstanding tradition of trade fairs in our organisation and we have become renowned, mainly as an exhibition venue, over the sixty years since being established. Last year we registered almost thirty trade fairs and we have noticed that recently the interest for trade shows has been increasing, in both the number of exhibitors and the quantity of visitors. We have also been developing the congress segment more and more intensively and thoroughly. Here we are also making external connections – with Ljubljana Tourism and the Slovenian Convention Bureau – for better recognition in international competition. Just last year we hosted eight bigger international congresses, half of them in the medicine field. Among this year's congresses, the following are worth highlighting: EUROSON 2017, 29th Congress of the European Federation of Societies for Ultrasound in Medicine and Biology, the 16th World Congress in Fetal Medicine, and The Eurocities Annual General Meeting 2017.

Q: What are your biggest challenges?

At the moment, the biggest challenge for us is the revival of the 24th Slovenian Motor Show Slovenia, which is coming back to Slovenia after ten years away, and to the capital Ljubljana after a hiatus of sixteen years. The show is going to be held from the 27th March to the 2nd April, jointly organised by the Slovenian Automobile Dealers section of the Slovenian Chamber

of Commerce and GR – Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre. The 24th Motor Show Slovenia will be opened just after our biggest exhibition, the Home Fair, hence additional exhibiting areas are going to be available in the prefabricated halls. We are planning to present the latest car industry trends over 12,000m² of exhibition space and at this show we are expecting anything from 80,000 to 100,000 visitors. Cars sales in Slovenia have been on the rise for the last two years, which is great for our economy. We, the organisers, agree that people want to see new cars and we must prepare an interesting exhibition for them, showing them the latest cars coming on the market here, in Ljubljana, just after the show in Geneva.

For the visitors, together with the exhibitors and partners, we are preparing an interesting accompanying programme. In co-operation with media partner Automobility RTV Slovenia, we will introduce some original extra show content: the technical pavilion, thematically guided tours of individual exhibition halls, and expert discussions on various areas of the motor industry and mobility.

On the first day, the show is intended for the business public and media, the rest of the time being for the general public. We are planning for this, the biggest exhibition show of the motor industry in Slovenia, to happen every two years.

We are also planning important strategic changes in organising congresses that we are already going to start implementing this spring.

Q: How do you use social media?

We are active on Facebook – we have developed a home page as well as individual sites for the Natour-Health Fair, Vino Ljubljana, Ambient Ljubljana, Natour Alpe-Adria and the Home Fair. With accurate publishing, promotional campaigns and quick response in connecting with partners of our events we are achieving very good results. In regards to the promotion of congress organising, we work with Toleranca Marketing agency, Ljubljana Tourism and the Slovenian Convention Bureau.

Q: How do you best motivate your staff?

We invest in the company's good organisation, the management, in where the responsibilities and competencies of employees are clear and consistent, and for all of this transparent communication is important. We hold weekly board meetings and if necessary I also participate in online meetings of teams or external partners. I encourage initiative and independence, and I appreciate proactivity and flexibility. I find personal communication with employees important, as well as when we meet in an informal occasion. Therefore, twice a year we organise team-building events, which are an opportunity for business growth, good mutual relations and for relaxation.

Q: Which other hotels do you admire?

We usually admire the centres that are bigger and better than our own. It is true, the halls of GR – Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre are multifunctional and flexible, but just look at The Swiss Tech Convention Centre – EPFEL, with its breath-taking technology...exceptional! You can just imagine that the personal contact with different target groups is also as perfect. Good stories are still created by people.