



Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU

1 July – 31 December 2021





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1. Context

1.1. Current developments

In recent years, Europe has been dealing with important challenges – from the economic crisis, the United Kingdom leaving the EU, the pandemic and migration waves to the issue of maintaining the EU's influence in the wider international arena. All this raises questions among citizens about the effectiveness and benefits of the EU. Portugal's tenure has taken place amid the COVID-19 pandemic resulting, not only in one of the deepest political and economic crises in the EU's history, but also impacting its foreign relations on the global stage.

Portugal has handed over the EU Council Presidency to Slovenia on 1 July 2021. Slovenia holds its second presidency of the Council of the European Union and celebrates the 30th anniversary of its independence. There has been some controversy around the Slovenian Presidency revolving around Slovenia's support of Hungary's anti-LGBT law and the perceived curbing of media freedom.

Slovenia is assuming the presidency at a crucial moment when the EU is adopting important packages concerning the green and digital transformation and the building of the EU's resilience. "The presidency is an opportunity to strengthen the integration within the EU27 and within EU institutions and to direct development towards an innovative and creative community based on sustainable development." Slovenian Foreign Minister Anže Logar.¹

1.2. COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on our health, economies and social life, and has restricted travel. All this has had a significant impact on preparations for the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU. While many measures to mitigate the effects of the pandemic have already been taken during the German and Portuguese Presidencies, there are still many important tasks to be done.

The Slovenian Presidency will proceed on the approach of the German and Portuguese presidency. The core priorities being the accessibility to vaccinations and the monitoring of the Delta-variant and other <u>possibly concerning mutations</u>.

¹ <u>https://bit.ly/3dZRbTP</u>





1.3. Approach

The priorities under the Slovenian Presidency are targeted on bolstering the bloc's post-pandemic recovery, its crisis resilience, strategic autonomy and EU enlargement.

Commissioners and ministers will hold talks on a range of themes including the European Green Deal, digital transformation, recovery and resilience, foreign relations with the emphasis on the Western Balkans and migration, security, the rule of law and the Conference on the Future of Europe. Lastly most of discussions connected to the recently launched Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE) will take place under the Slovenian Presidency.





2. Presidency

2.1. Basis

2.1.1. EU Strategic Agenda

The program of the Slovenian Presidency is based on the <u>EU's Strategic Agenda 2019-2024</u> with as its four main priorities protecting citizens and freedoms, developing a strong and vibrant economic base, building a climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe, promoting European interests and values on the global stage.

2.1.2. Trio Presidency

Together with Germany and Portugal, Slovenia set up the <u>Trio Presidency Programme</u> which has started on 1 July 2020, once the COVID-19 Pandemic had hit. Dealing with the pandemic and its consequences has become the central guiding principle for the Trio's joint action. The member states strengthened their cooperation within the Council of the EU to ensure an immediate and effective response. They agreed on activities to protect European citizens, strengthen Europe's resilience and deal with the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 crisis. This will contribute to the recovery of the European economy and accelerate the green and digital transition to enable us to emerge from the crisis even stronger while preserving our common European values and way of life.

2.1.3. Main points Trio Presidency²

- Speed up robust and sustainable recovery, strengthen the resilience of the single market, boost investment and create jobs, and strengthen the recovery and autonomy of the European economy.
- Build a climate-neutral, green and fair Europe.
- Take forward the digital transformation of Europe.
- Consider the social dimension of the crisis and strengthen the European social model.
- Protect citizens and freedoms and strengthen the importance of the rule of law and human rights.
- Strengthen the resilience of our societies in cases of emergencies such as pandemics or large-scale cyberattacks.
- Reach an agreement on the future relationship and comprehensive partnership between the EU and the United Kingdom.
- Promote, together with the High Representative of the Union for Foreign and Security Policy, European values at the international level.
- Start the Conference on the Future of Europe.

² <u>https://slovenian-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/en/programme/the-trio-presidency-programme/</u>





2.2. Pillars³

2.2.1. Slogan

Together. Resilient. Europe

2.2.2. Four Pillars

Slovenia will strive to actively contribute to strengthening the EU's resilience to health, economic, energy, climate and the cyber crises. In order to tackle these challenges, Slovenia has set-up the following priorities for each Configuration and has divided its priorities into four pillars:

- 1. A resilient EU that enjoys the trust of its citizens
- 2. Economic renewal of the EU based on a digital and green transition
- 3. Union based on the rule of law and a European way of life
- 4. Secure EU, a good and reliable partner in the neighbourhood and in the world

2.2.3. A resilient EU that enjoys the trust of its citizens

The Slovenian Presidency will prioritise the EU's preparedness for and resilience to crises, particularly in the fields of health, pandemics and cybersecurity and it will focus on the CoFoE.

<u>Health</u>

Focus on The European Health Union and establishing European Health Emergency Response Authority (HERA). Focus on three EC proposals in Health, medicine and disease control: Reinforced role for the European Medicines Agency* (2020/0321 COD); European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control* (2020/0320 COD); and serious cross-border threats to health* (2020/0322 COD).

Cybersecurity

Strengthening Cyberresilience of Critical Infrastructure and the Digital Single Market. Slovenia will find a base for discussions regarding the Proposal Directive on Security of network and information systems (NIS Directive)* (2020/0359 COD).

<u>CoFoE</u>

Slovenia will further the work of the CoFoE, with a view to reaching a conclusion in 2022. It will aim to streamline the interests of the Member States and represent the Council in the governing structure.

³ <u>https://slovenian-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/en/programme/priorities/</u>





2.2.4. Economic renewal of the EU based on a digital and green transition

Green transition

Effective and prompt implementation of <u>the Next Generation EU recovery plan and recovery</u> <u>instrument</u> (<u>RRF</u>) with a focus on digitalisation and the <u>Climate change Fit for 55</u> legislative package, to adopt by the Commission July 2021 and composed of the following:

- Revision EU Emissions Trading System (maritime, aviation, CORSIA) incl. ETS as EU resource
- Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and proposal for CBAM as an own resource
- Effort-sharing regulation
- Amendment Renewable Energy Directive to implement the 2030 climate target
- Amendment Energy Efficiency Directive to implement the 2030 climate target
- Revision Regulation incl greenhouse gas emissions and removals from land use, and forestry
- Reducing methane emissions in the energy sector
- Revision Energy Tax Directive
- Revision Directive on deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure
- <u>Revision Regulation CO2 emission performance standards for cars and vans</u>

Digital transition

A Focus on the regulation of the digital services markets, including the <u>Digital Services Act</u> (2020/0361 COD) and the <u>Digital Markets Act</u> (2020/0374 COD), encouraged to happen swiftly by the Members of the European Council. The <u>Artificial Intelligence Act</u> (2021/0106 COD), adopted by the Commission on 21 April 2021, will also be given priority.

2.2.5. Union based on the rule of law and a European way of life

Migration

The aim is to make progress on the <u>New Pact on Migration and Asylum</u>, adopted by the Commission on 23 September 2020. The Pact is composed of following proposals revolving around, Crisis and force majeure, Screening of third-country nationals at the external borders, Asylum and migration management, Returning illegally staying third-country nationals, a Union Resettlement Framework, A common procedure for international protection, Qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, Reception of applicants for international protection, Eurodac and European Union Agency for Asylum.

Schengen Area

The focus to strengthen the Schengen area. The aim: a fully functioning and resilient Schengen Area, and the establishment and operation of an evaluation and monitoring mechanism to verify the application of the Schengen acquis, and a Revision of the Schengen Borders Code.





Rule of Law

The institutionalisation of the new process on the rule of law review in the Member States, with an annual discussion on the Rule of Law Report: the rule of law situation in the EU as well as a country-specific debate. And a discussion with Member States that are due for reporting: Italy, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia and Lithuania.

2.2.6. Secure EU, a good and reliable partner in the neighbourhood and in the world

On the international level, promotion of closer cooperation with the US and with NATO and particular attention to the Western Balkans and the process of EU enlargement with the countries in the region. It will be crucial to focus on regional security issues from the past, economic recovery of the Western Balkan countries, strengthening the region's cybersecurity and resilience, improving connectivity, implementing the Green Agenda as well as furthering youth programmes.

2.3. Entry Points for philanthropy

2.3.1. General

With regards to the first pillar: "A resilient EU that enjoys the trust of its citizens", one of the main focuses will be the CoFoE. Philanthropy could use the momentum of engagement with Civil Society actors to increase the visibility and credibility of the philanthropy sector.

With regards to the third pillar: "Union based on the rule of law and a European way of life", the emphasis on the rule of law could be seen as a reminder of the non-discrimination principle within the EU. The European way of life can be promoted through regional philanthropic organisations.

With regards to the last pillar: "Secure EU, a good and reliable partner in the neighbourhood and in the world", transnational cooperation outside the EU puts an emphasis on cross-border cooperation which might benefit the call for a Single Market for Philanthropy within the EU. Furthermore, the aim of the Slovenian Presidency to enhance engagement with the Western Balkans could raise the visibility and credibility of the foundations and philanthropic organisations in the Western Balkans and the rest of Eastern Europe.

We as Philanthropy Advocacy, will closely follow developments related to rule of law, democracy and conditionality of the Multiannual Financial Framework of the EU (EU MFF). We will further monitor and follow developments in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans through our <u>country profiles</u>.





2.3.2. CoFoE

Entry Points

The <u>Conference on the Future of Europe</u> (CoFoE) is a unique opportunity for European citizens to debate on Europe's challenges and priorities. We would like to raise awareness and stimulate engagement among in the philanthropy sector about the CoFoE and its entry points. In this <u>Briefing</u> <u>Note</u> we discuss different ways in which the philanthropy sector can engage. For any further questions on the CoFoE and engagement around it, please contact Nikoleta Bitterová: nbitterova@efc.be.

Below a short overview of the entry points for engagement for philanthropy and foundations:

- European Economic and Social Committee directly via EFC/Dafne members who are members of the EESC. EESC President holds a seat in the executive board and EESC also signed a MoU with members of the EESC LG including the EFC in order to join forces in view of the Conference and to partner up the organisational and visibility efforts of the EESC and of the LG CSOs at the maximum possible extent.
- European Parliament: Guy Verhofstadt (BE), Daniel Freund and Helmut Scholz (DE, AFCO) engaging around the Civil Society Convention for the Conference for the Future of Europe (see more below for explanation) and authors of the Working Document on citizens' and civil society's participation in the Conference on the Future of Europe.
- European Commission: Věra Jourová the spokesperson for civil society, European Democracy Action Plan is under her auspices, Dubravka Šuica, Maroš Šefčovič.

Timeline:

- Second half 2021 Launch of EU-wide expert meetings and citizens dialogues (by EU institutions and member states)
- 2022 Closing Conference, during the French Council Presidency the Conference is expected to reach conclusions and provide guidance on the future of Europe

Next steps

The European Citizens' Panels will convene in September and October to prepare their input to future plenary debates, including a set of recommendations for the Union to follow-up on, based on citizens' contributions collected via the Platform. The Conference is committed to giving maximum space to young people and in this vein, preparations for the European Youth Event organised by the European Parliament on 8-9 October will also continue. The next Plenary session is scheduled for 22-23 October.





3. Who is Who

Council configuration			Presidents-in-Office ⁴
General Affairs		GAC	Anže Logar, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Foreign Affairs			Josep Borrell, High representative of the Union ^[4]
	Responsible ministers	FAC	Anže Logar , Minister of Foreign Affairs
			Matej Tonin, Minister of Defence
			Zvone Černač , Minister without Portfolio responsible for Development, Strategic Projects and Cohesion
	Minister responsible for Trade Configuration (PiO) ^[5]	FAC/Trade	Zdravko Počivalšek , Minister of Economic Development and Technology
Economic and Financial Affairs		ECOFIN	Andrej Šircelj, Minister of Finance
			Zdravko Počivalšek , Minister of Economic Development and Technology
Agriculture and Fisheries		AGRIFISH	Jože Podgoršek, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food
J	ustice and Home Affairs	JHA	Marjan Dikaučič, Minister of Justice

⁴ <u>https://bit.ly/2UvA5pR</u>





		Aleš Hojs, Minister of Interior
Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs	EPSCO	Janez Cigler Kralj, Minister of Labour, Family and Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
		Janez Poklukar, Minister of Health
		Zdravko Počivalšek , Minister of Economic Development and Technology
Competitiveness	COMPET	Zdravko Počivalšek , Minister of Economic Development and Technology
		Simona Kustec Lipicer, Minister of Education, Science and Sport
Transport, Telecommunications and Energy	TTE	Jernej Vrtovec, Minister of Infrastructure
		Boštjan Koritnik , Minister of Public Administration
Environment	ENV	Andrej Vizjak , Minister of Environment and Spatial Planning
Education, Youth, Culture and Sport	EYC	Simona Kustec Lipicer, Minister of Education, Science and Sport
		Vasko Simoniti, Minister of Culture





Function	Name
Permanent Representative Head of Coreper II	Ambassador Iztok Jarc
Deputy Permanent Representative Head of Coreper I	Ambassador Tamara Weingerl-Požar
Representative in the Political and Security Committee	Ambassador Veronika Bošković-Pohar
Antici Coreper II and European Council	Vesna Hojnik
Mertens Coreper I	Janja Pevec Živkovič
Nicolaidis Political and Security Committee	Dejan Vidic
Military Representative	Brigadier Milan Žurman
Deputy Military Representative	Colonel Vincenc Arko





Background

4. Slovenia: Facts & Figures

4.1. Demographics⁵

- Population size 2.1 million
- Growth Rate 0.2%
 - 81.38 Years
- Life expectancyBirth rate
 - 1.6 births per woman
- Official language
- Slovene, Italian Hungarian
- Minority languages

Religions

Romani, Croatian, Serbian, German
 Roman Catholic (72.1%), Orthodox, Muslim, Protestant

4.2. History⁶

- Prehistoric settlement: evidence of human habitation as far back as 250,000 years ago
- Bronze Age: 2500 BC wooden wheel discovered (almost simultaneously in Mesopotamia)
- Roman era: present-day Slovenia was shared between the Venetia and Histria region
- Slavic settlement: Samo's Kingdom after Roman era and before Middle Ages
- Middle Ages: Carantanian, Carniolan, Habsburg, Turkish ruling
- Early modern: Slovenia part of the Austrian Empire extensive emigration end 19th century with simultaneously a momentum for a United Slovenia with the revolutions in 1848
- WWI: many casualties in the Austro-Hungarian Army with subsequent Italian fascist ruling
- 29 October 1918 independent State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs became the Kingdom of Serbs and in 1929 the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, with Slovenia being economically strongest.
- WWII: annexed by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Slovene was banned, 8% population died.
- Socialist period: part of Federal Yugoslavia with its own pro-Communist leadership with gradual cultural liberalisation and rapid economic development under Josip Broz Tito
- Slovenian Spring: after a mass democratic movement and initial opposition of the Yugoslav People's Army, the independent Republic of Slovenia was born on 25 June 1991.
- EU: Slovenia joined the EU 1 May 2004, joined NATO, the Eurozone and the OECD.
- January June 2008: Slovenian Presidency European Council

⁵ <u>https://pxweb.stat.si/SiStat/sl</u>

⁶ <u>https://bit.ly/36m8Dxp</u>





4.3. Political system⁷

- Political system
- Parliamentary democratic republic
- Statistical regions
- 12
- President of the Republic Borut Pahor
- Prime Minister
- Janez Janša
- President National Assembly Igor Zorčič
- Mail Political Parties⁸
 - Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS): centre-right, party to the ruling coalition government
 - List of Marjan Sarec (LMS): social -liberal, populist, primary opposition party
 - Social Democrats (SD): centre-left
 - Modern Centre Party (SMC) : social-liberal, party to the ruling coalition government
 - New Slovenia-Christian Democrats (NSi-KD): centre-right
 - Democratic Party of Slovenian Pensioners (DeSUS): centrist, party to the ruling coalition government
 - Party of Alenka Bratušek (SAB): centre, social liberism
 - The Left (Levica): eco-socialist
 - Slovanian National Party (SNS): slovenian nationalism

4.4. Economy⁹¹⁰¹¹

- o GDP
- \circ Current growth
- GDP per capita
- Trade: exports & imports
- Main trading partners
- Largest sectors by revenue
- Unemployment rate
- 48,393 Euro
- +3.2%
- 23,165 Euro
- Export 32,53 B Euro Import 36,01 B Euro
- Germany, Italy, Croatia, Austria and France
- Packaged Medicaments and Cars
- 8.2%

⁷ <u>https://www.gov.si/en/topics/political-system/</u>

⁸ https://bit.ly/3yH9JQF

⁹ <u>https://www.stat.si/StatWeb/en/Field/Index/1/29</u>

¹⁰ <u>https://oec.world/en/profile/country/svn</u>

¹¹ <u>https://tradingeconomics.com/slovenia/unemployment-rate</u>





4.5. Fun facts¹²

- 90,000 beekeepers which means a solid 9% of the entire population keeping mostly the Carniolan bee, valued for their non-aggressive nature and team ethic
- With an average of 180,2 cm, is part of top-10 of countries with the tallest people
- The largest city, the capital Ljubljana has a mere 277,554 inhabitants
- More than half, 53,6% of the country is protected forest land
- Slovenia belongs to the top-5 countries of <u>Global Peace Index Score</u>

¹² https://bit.ly/3hmMC86





5. The Council of the EU¹³

The Council of the European Union

The Council of the European Union, often referred to in the treaties and other official documents simply as the Council, and informally known as the Council of Ministers, is the third of the seven Institutions of the European Union (EU) as listed in the Treaty on European Union. It is one of three legislative bodies and together with the European Parliament serves to amend and approve the proposals of the European Commission, which holds legislative initiative.

The Council of the European Union and the European Council are the only EU institutions that are explicitly intergovernmental, that is, forums whose attendees express and represent the position of their member state's executive, be they ambassadors, ministers or heads of state/government. The Council of the European Union is composed of the governments of 27 EU member states. Tasks:

- 1. Negotiates and adopts EU laws
- 2. Coordinates member states' policies
- 3. Develops the EU's common foreign and security policy
- 4. Concludes international agreements
- 5. Adopts the EU budget

The Presidency

Every six months a different member state holds the presidency of the Council, in accordance with the principle of rotation. The presidency is responsible for managing the Council's work. This means that it organises and chairs the meetings of its working bodies and seeks to align different positions of the 27 member states regarding legislative proposals and other matters. It is important that it acts as an honest and neutral broker.

Member states holding the presidency work together closely in groups of three, called 'trios'. This system was introduced by the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. The trio sets long-term goals and prepares a common agenda determining the topics and major issues that will be addressed by the Council over an 18 month period. On the basis of this programme, each of the three countries prepares its own more detailed 6-month programme. Tasks:

- 1. Organising and chairing meetings
- 2. Representing the Council in relations with other EU institutions

¹³ <u>https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/european-council/</u>





6. Previous Slovenian Presidency

The first Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU

Slovenia held the presidency of the Council of the EU for the first time in the first half of 2008 as the first of the ten member states that joined the EU in 2004. The first presidency under the slogan "Si.nergy for Europe" was marked by the preparations for the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty. Upon Kosovo's declaration of independence, Slovenia succeeded in maintaining the unity of the EU with regard to key questions and preventing the destabilisation of the Western Balkans. An EU-US Summit was also held and the Black Sea Synergy began to be implemented during the first Slovenian Presidency.

Official Website

"The Slovenian Presidency of the EU Council: How the 16th Member State Performed"

'The 16th Member State'12 Slovenia's Presidency of the Council of the EU symbolically rounded up the process of enlargement by proving that the country was integrated in Brussels affairs. The administration was well prepared, promoted causes close to its heart and listened where it lacked either interest or expertise. It was innovative in solving problems, although sometimes at the expense of playing by the rules (instead of going around them). Given the decreasing support for the European project across Europe, lessons can be learned from the Slovenian government's poor communication strategy during the Presidency.

The experience of the Trio format has two sides to it: the teaching effect on the new member-state should be maintained, no matter what tasks the future Presidencies have, but at the same time it speaks in favour of having longer-term posts for the highest political and external representatives of the Union.

The Presidency launched Slovenia into the spotlight for half a year; it let it into the secrets of behindthe-scene negotiations, thus enabling it to learn various mechanisms and ways of promoting its interest in the EU. The ability to capitalising on this in the long term, 12 Quoted by an interviewee, Brussels, 9 June 2008. Area: Europe ARI 105/2008 Date: 15/9/2008 9 however, will depend on its willingness to seriously reflect on its experience in the driving seat and its ability to translate it into a medium-term strategy for its European and foreign policies. A constructive, active new member state can only be desirable for the EU as a whole and for its partners abroad.

ARI 105/2008 - Date: 15/9/2008

Author: Sabina Kajnč EFSPS Postdoctoral Researcher (funded by VolkswagenStiftung, Compagnia di San Paolo and Riksbankens Jubileumsfond Sverige) at the University of Ljubljana and currently Visiting Research Fellow at IUEE in Barcelona





7. Additional recourses

7.1. Information

Official Website: <u>Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2021</u>

Events Slovenian Presidency: Events Calendar

EPC: <u>Slovenia's priorities for the Presidency of the Council of the European Union</u> – 10 June 2021

EP Think Tank: Priority dossiers under the Slovenian EU Council Presidency – June 2021

7.2. Media

Politico

- <u>Von der Leyen, Janša skirt controversy during Parliament appearance</u> 6 July 2021
- Janša pushes gripes with Brussels as Slovenia takes EU presidency 2 July 2021
- <u>Rule of law disputes cast shadow over opening of Slovenia's EU Council presidency</u> 1 July 2021
- EU conservatives under fire over soft line on Slovenian PM 1 July 2021
- <u>Slovenia a 'huge risk' for EU funds, EU chief prosecutor says</u> 1 July 2021
- <u>A call for vigilance as Slovenia's EU presidency begins</u> 1 July 2021
- <u>Brussels Playbook: Slovenian Takeover</u> 1 july 2021
- <u>4 policy problems facing the Slovenian Council presidency</u> 30 June 2021
- <u>Slovenia tussles with EU's new prosecutor office before it even launches</u> 29 May 2021
- Inside Slovenia's war on the media 16 February 2021

Reuters

- East-West rift over values as Slovenia assumes EU's presidency – 1 July 2021

Bloomberg

- <u>A Trump-Inspired Twitter Troll Gets Chance to Set the EU Agenda</u> 1 July 2021
- <u>Slovenia's EU Moment Comes With Firebrand at Helm: Brussels Edition</u> 30 June 2021

Euractiv

- <u>Slovenia hosts College of European Commissioners for working visit</u> 1 July 2021
- <u>Slovenian Presidency with Janša: What happens on Twitter should stay on Twitter</u> 30 June
 2021

EU Observer

- MEPs tell Slovenian PM to appoint his EU prosecutors 7 july 2021
- <u>Slovenia's Janša in MEPs' crosshairs This WEEK</u> 5 July 2021
- <u>Slovenia to push for Western Balkans enlargement</u> 5 July 2021
- Public spat with Brussels mars start of Slovenian presidency 2 July 2021





- <u>Slovenia takes over EU presidency amid wave of criticism</u> 2 July 2021
- <u>Slovenia recovery plan agreed, as EU presidency gets underway</u> 2 July 2021
- EU Presidency row MEPs call out Slovenia's prosecutors failure 30 June 2021

AP News

- Thousands rally against Slovenian PM ahead of EU presidency – 28 May 2021

EP news

- What Slovenian MEPs expect from their country's Council presidency – 1 July 2021

Eurotopics

- <u>EU Council presidency: Janša's conciliatory inaugural address</u> 07 July 2021
- EU presidency: which face will Janša give to Europe? 01 July 2021
- <u>Control over media: Is Slovenia trying to copy Hungary?</u> 03 December 2020
- <u>Slovenia also shifting to the right?</u> 05 June 2018

24ur.com (Slovenia)

 Von der Leynova at the end in Bled: Today dreams are allowed, tomorrow is a new day – 1 July 2021