

CURRENT NEWS - Moja Gorenjska – Current Affairs

We spoke with Jelena Vidovič, Head of the Smart Communities Program at BSC Kranj. The **INNO2MARE** project brings innovation to the maritime industry. It's funded through the Horizon Europe program and takes a systematic approach to addressing the entire maritime ecosystem.

At the very start of the project, we established connections between industrial and smart solutions, with the aim of implementing and testing them within actual maritime industry environments—whether in companies or other organizations.

But Slovenia doesn't have much coastline - what can we contribute to this project, and what can we gain from it in return?

Ultimately, the project has two main goals. First, it aims to stimulate innovation within the industry itself. For example, take the Port of Koper—we want to offer them industrial smart solutions they can test in their production or other operational sectors. That's one part.

The second goal tackles Slovenia's traditional tendency toward a fragmented, compartmentalized approach to problem-solving. We aim to foster greater collaboration among stakeholders in the ecosystem—researchers, entrepreneurs, and even ports—so they can communicate more effectively and share their activities. This is one of the biggest challenges, not just in the maritime industry, but across all sectors. Our focus is precisely on identifying and establishing future initiatives for the Slovenian maritime innovation ecosystem while engaging all relevant stakeholders.

Thank you for staying with our channel.

As part of the *INNO2MARE* project, special activities are taking place—one such event will be held on April 14 at Kovačnica in Kranj. Jelena Vidovič, Head of the Smart Communities Program at BSC Kranj, elaborates:

As I mentioned earlier, this project includes activities that foster cross-sector collaboration. In Slovenia, one of the biggest ongoing challenges is connecting the research sector with entrepreneurship. We have many outstanding inventions and high-quality patents that never make it to market. This is exactly what we'll be tackling on April 14 at Kovačnica.

Joining us will be the remarkable Dr. Rok Stritar, a well-known entrepreneurial mentor in Slovenia. He'll help us address the various challenges faced by researchers on their path to commercialization and by entrepreneurs trying to figure out how and where to innovate—from early business ideas to fully developed solutions.

Who is the event for?

We're primarily inviting researchers and entrepreneurs—from micro and small enterprises to medium and large companies. The idea is to create synergy between researchers from various universities and providers of practical solutions. The content is broad and inclusive—we'll touch on digitalization, process optimization, robotics, and the use of artificial intelligence, along with more human-centred factors like overcoming gaps between different sectors.

As an invitation teaser: if you haven't heard of Rok Stritar, he's the founder and director of *Kibuba*, an online store specializing in mountain gear, and a mentor who supports start-ups with business model development, bootstrapping, management, and holistic company growth. He's someone you can turn to with almost any entrepreneurial question—and he'll have an answer.

We already organized a similar event this January, and the feedback was fantastic. Now we're excited to expand this working group. The sessions are very interactive, participants are encouraged to engage fully, and the atmosphere is relaxed—everyone is welcome to ask anything.

We're scheduled to start at 9:00 AM and finish around 2:30 PM, but as I said, spontaneous questions and new topics often emerge, and we remain flexible throughout the day."