

Quarterly  
Newsletter  
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# EURAXESS NORTH AMERICA

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

With 2020 behind us, we have marched into spring and look to summer with optimism that vaccinations will continue at a fast pace and help bring an end to the pandemic. We will continue to highlight global cooperation efforts among researchers to combat COVID-19, as well as share news on the European Commission's [coronavirus response](#).

Are you or your team working on related research? [Let us know](#) so we can discuss further and promote your work! Looking for related funding? Check out an additional €123 million (approximately \$147m USD and \$185m CAD) in [European Commission funding](#) for research and innovation to combat the threat of variants.

January 1<sup>st</sup> was not only the start of the month, quarter, and year, but also marked the launch of [Horizon Europe](#), the European Union's next seven-year framework program for research and innovation. It features a budget of €95.5 billion for the 2021-2027 period (approximately \$114b USD and \$143b CAD), includes the new [European Innovation Council](#), and boasts an open science policy, among many other important components and priorities. Read a [comprehensive overview here](#) for more details.

–Your EURAXESS North America Team

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This newsletter is also intended as a communication tool with you all, so please do not hesitate to contact us at [NorthAmerica@euraxess.net](mailto:NorthAmerica@euraxess.net) for comments, corrections, or if you want to advertise a particular funding scheme or event.

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EURAXESS North America Team



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Capital: Ljubljana

Area: 20,271 km<sup>2</sup>

Population: 2.081 million  
(2019), 83% Slovene

Language: Slovenian, Italian,  
and Hungarian (co-official  
languages) with English  
widely spoken

Currency: euro (€)

Unemployment rate: 4.2%

GDP per capita: \$25,946  
(USD, 2019)

Funds for R&D activities in  
Slovenia around 2% of GDP

Discover Slovenia at  
[www.slovenia.info/en](http://www.slovenia.info/en)



Slovenia's network of  
EURAXESS contact points  
and centers are served by  
eight main universities and  
research institutes.

**Largest universities:**

[University of Ljubljana](#)

[University of Maribor](#)

[University of Primorska/](#)

[Università del Litorale](#)

[University of Nova Gorica](#)

# 1 EURAXESS country in focus: Slovenia

**Slovenia: Small, diverse, and full of surprises! Read on about this quarter's highlighted country as we cover a new one every three months.**

Slovenians like to joke that it is the only country in the world with *love* in its name! It is a small yet diverse, green and safe country for the 2 million people who call it home. As a multicultural and multilingual society, Slovenia is seen as a welcoming place to all. Visitors can enjoy the seaside, mountains, forests, rivers, lakes, vineyards, and many historical and cultural sites. Slovenia is also well positioned geographically with neighbors Austria, Italy, Hungary and Croatia.

As home to six universities and 16 public research institutes, there are many opportunities for researchers in various disciplines. There are visible research successes in many disciplines, ranging from medicine to nanotechnology, social sciences, engineering, artificial intelligence, environmental sciences and so on.

Research and science have always been an important part of Slovenian society – a predecessor of today's Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, *Academia Operosorum Labacensium*, was established in 1693 in Ljubljana.

Today, there are 15,327 researchers working in 989 research organizations, organized in 1581 research groups and working on 6703 projects.<sup>i</sup>

According to the 2017 Better Life Index by the OECD, Slovenia performed well in several measures of well-being, ranking above the average in job and earnings, housing, health status, social connections, education and skills, work-life balance, environmental quality, and personal security.

Slovenia is proud of its low income inequality and high record of tertiary education among the adult population (33%), offering a high quality and accessible education, social and healthcare system.<sup>ii</sup>

The national research and innovation (R&I) strategy is currently being revised. The main ministries involved are the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the Ministry of Economics with their agencies and public bodies.

The most relevant funding agency is the [Slovenian Research Agency](#), a public funding organization that performs tasks related to the national research and development program and the European Research Area. Among many of its activities, the agency promotes international cooperation and funding.

In general, the Slovene R&I strategy is very much focused on responding to the needs of society and international cooperation, while encouraging co-creation and greater involvement by relevant stakeholders.

Backed by stable funding, this strategy aims to enhance the attractiveness and value of researchers' work through supporting infrastructure and efficient and fair conditions.



Slovenia's National Agency, [CMEPIUS](#), is closely linked to the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, and responsible for the implementation of Erasmus+ program, one of EU's largest programs in the field of education, training, youth and sport. It is also responsible for the coordination of the Slovenian EURAXESS network of service centers and contact points, to assist international researchers and their families. It has a special EURAXESS portal for Slovenia, where researchers can find information about working and living in the country.

#### Main research institutes:

[The Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts](#)

[ZRC SAZU – Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts](#)

[Jožef Stefan Institute](#)

[National Institute of Chemistry](#)

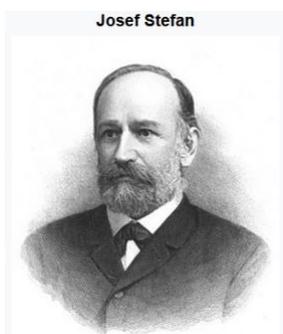
[EURAXESS Slovenia](#) is dedicated to enhancing its own skills to improve the services it offers to international researchers, assisting them while moving to Slovenia, searching for a job, funding or partners, as well as providing support with practical matters. It cooperates closely with relevant ministries, local authorities and embassies to make international mobility easier. The Slovenian branch is part of a larger pan-European network, cooperating in various projects and activities, exchanging valuable knowledge and experiences.

EURAXESS creates synergies with many other educational programs and initiatives such as 'Study in Slovenia', a network of Slovene universities and higher education institutions (HEIs) which aims to promote Slovenia as a study destination. There is a comprehensive [Study in Slovenia website](#), supported by social media, promoting Slovenian institutions and the quality of education, research and life.



#### Main Slovene research institutions

The [University of Ljubljana](#) is the largest and oldest HEI. It is internationally recognized for the high caliber of its scientific and research output. Its research and artistic activities are carried out at faculties and academies covering all research and artistic fields. In 2018, it established the Research and Development Centre of the University of Ljubljana linking various fields of research.



The [Jožef Stefan Institute](#) is the leading Slovenian scientific research center, covering a broad spectrum of basic and applied research. The staff of about 1050 specializes in natural sciences, life sciences and engineering. Physicist and mathematician [Jožef Stefan](#) (1835-1893) discovered the law of light radiation, which is now called [Stefan's Law](#).

Funded in 1938, the [Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts](#) is the supreme national institution of sciences and arts. In 1693, the predecessor of the present-day Academy, the *Academia Operosorum*, was founded in Ljubljana (i.e., the same century as the *Académie française*, the Royal Society in London, and the *Deutsche Akademie der Naturforscher in Schweinfurt*, or Leopoldina).





<https://www.euraxess.si/>



EURAXESS - Researchers in Motion is an initiative of the European Research Area (ERA) that addresses barriers to the mobility of researchers and seeks to enhance their career development. This pan-European effort is currently supported by 42 countries, of which we will profile one in our quarterly e-newsletter.

The [University of Maribor](#) has an ambitious development strategy focusing on sustainable, socially responsible and high-quality research. The university is committed to excellence in research and to building and maintaining a strong international profile in the wider research space.

### Why Slovenia?

The best people to answer this question are researchers who have already experienced working and living in the country.

[Julian Ascencio Vasquez](#) came from Chile to do his research at University of Ljubljana with the help of the EURAXESS portal. He says he very much appreciates the supporting environment he found himself in.

[Mike Burnard](#) came to the University of Primorska from Oregon, USA. He says that university-industry cooperation is solid, and there is funding available which meant he was able to create his own research environment. Slovenians have been welcoming hosts and he feels well integrated.

[Fayruza Ismagilova](#) is Russian but has no problems communicating with locals in English about everything. Her initial lectures in Slovenia soon grew into more international cooperation and projects, and she finds living in Slovenia very friendly.

Many international researchers that have found their place in Slovenia highly value the quality of life, dedication and cooperation among research teams, excellent infrastructure, tight links with industry, funding opportunities, as well as the support given by the host institutions.

All of the universities and research centers focus on cooperation with industry through joint projects, start-ups, spin-offs, and other forms of cooperation, making their shared work relevant and beneficial to society.

Slovenia certainly has a lot of potential and it is well worth exploring the mainstream as well as more niche disciplines, projects and developments. Some international researchers decide to stay, others leave and become bridges between countries and ambassadors of bilateral cooperation. Either way, it is a win-win situation for all.



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## 2 Slovenia's researcher diaspora

To complement this quarter's country profile, EURAXESS North America sat down (virtually) to learn about the Slovenian researcher presence in the United States and beyond. Professor Andrej Košmrlj of Princeton University, a member of the Board of Directors of ASEF, spoke about the organization.

**EURAXESS North America:** *Professor, thank you for taking the time to discuss this quarter's country in focus! Please tell us about ASEF.*

**Professor Košmrlj:** The American Slovenian Education Foundation, or ASEF, supports a diverse community of highly talented, prospective students but also educators and leaders of excellence, character, and service. The Foundation aims at enhancing Slovenian education activities and uniting Slovenian scholars and educators across the globe. It offers a variety of high-impact grants and endowment programs, teaching and learning materials, as well as foreign exchange opportunities for students and faculty.

*What does your membership look like?*

The ASEF network connects over 50 professors in North America, Europe, and Oceania who cover a wide range of disciplines in natural sciences, engineering, humanities, and social sciences. In recent years, ASEF has awarded fellowships to over 120 students who remain actively involved with its activities. Via regular newsletters, ASEF reaches thousands of readers across the globe.

*What kind of activities and outreach does ASEF do?*

ASEF offers fellowships to talented Slovenian students that enable their personal growth and professional development via a series of workshops, tutorial programs, and ten-week research visits abroad with one of the professors in the ASEF network. Fellows are expected to return the gained knowledge to the Slovenian community via established ASEF programs, and they are encouraged to develop new programs. ASEF also offers fellowships to students of Slovenian descent to do ten-week internships in Slovenia, where they get an opportunity to learn the language, culture, and explore their heritage. ASEF promotes science to the general public and youth via a regular series of lectures given by professors and fellows, and by producing documentaries about successful Slovenians. The Foundation is also doing a study about how to ameliorate the effects of brain drain and enhance brain circulation, which is supported by the Slovenian Research Agency and Slovenian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

*As an organization, ASEF seems robust and has an outsize presence compared to the relatively small population of Slovenia. How do you keep it running successfully?*

ASEF was built from the ground up from dedicated professors and other established Slovenians volunteering their time and investing their money because they strongly identify with its mission. ASEF is strongly supported by the Slovenian diaspora, which raises significant funds during the annual gala events. The Government Office for Slovenians Abroad provides substantial financial support



for the fellowships to students with Slovenian descent to discover the country. For specific projects, ASEF also received funds from the Slovenian Research Agency, Slovenian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, and the U.S. Embassy in Slovenia.

*It seems like the government really recognizes and values the work of ASEF. What is the working relationship like between ASEF and the government of Slovenia? Do you have strong relations with other groups too?*

ASEF has strong moral support from the political leadership and has been recognized as an institution of national interest. ASEF actively works with the Slovenian government and their ministries, the Slovenian Research Agency, and the Association of Slovenes Educated Abroad to develop new programs for enhancing the mobility of researchers and for stimulating their return to Slovenia.

*For researchers looking to make the move to a new country, why should they consider Slovenia?*

Slovenia has an excellent higher education system and researchers have an opportunity to work with very talented and extremely motivated students. Slovenia offers a very good work-life balance, provides a number of social benefits, and provides a very family friendly environment. Slovenia has a beautiful landscape and provides many opportunities for outdoor activities.



For information on ASEF's annual gala, which will be virtual this year, [click here](#).



## 3 Horizon Europe: New opportunities for international cooperation

### ERC in a nutshell:

The European Research Council offers grants through open competitions to projects headed by early stage and established researchers. As its sole selection criterion is scientific excellence, it strives to attract top researchers from anywhere in the world to come and stay in Europe. So far, the ERC has funded over 9,500 top researchers at various stages of their careers, and over 70,000 postdoctoral fellows, PhD students and other staff working in their research teams. An independent review in 2020 found that some 80% of projects funded are scientific breakthroughs or major advances, showing the outstanding quality of this EU-funded research.

Learn more: [erc.europa.eu](http://erc.europa.eu)

**As Horizon Europe gears up, EURAXESS Worldwide takes a closer look at the international dimension and what stronger cooperation means for mobile researchers who take the plunge.**

Despite its name, Horizon Europe (HE) has a decidedly international flavor that extends way beyond the European continent. Running from 2021 to 2027 and with a budget of €95.5 billion – including €5.4 billion for the Next Generation of the EU ‘Recovery Fund’ – HE is the EU’s main funding program for research and innovation.

Horizon Europe offers a number of new opportunities for international research cooperation. Take the European Research Council (ERC), for example, which has already issued, on 25 February, the [first call](#) under the Horizon Europe banner. This call sets aside €619 million of its €16 billion total HE budget for ‘starting grants’ to help top researchers get their own research team or program up and running. That call’s deadline is 8 April!

What matters most here is the caliber of the research and here there is good news for international researchers: “The ERC offers grants to top researchers from anywhere in the world who are ready to come or to stay in Europe to pursue their breakthrough scientific and technological discoveries that can form the basis of new industries, markets, and social innovations of the future.”

On 15 March, the European Commission published its [Horizon Europe Strategic Plan](#) (2021-2024). This plan sets out the key directions that European research and innovation will take over the coming years, including a specific focus on international cooperation. It elaborates on a number of co-designed societal missions and how the EU can achieve other priorities including a climate-neutral and green economy which is “fit for the digital age and works for the people”.

For the uninitiated, Horizon Europe has three main strands: Pillar I prioritizes excellent science, scientists and infrastructure; Pillar II addresses global challenges and European industrial competitiveness; and Pillar III concentrates on stimulating innovation. Horizontal actions explore ways to widen participation and strengthen the European Research Area (ERA), and other priorities.

This is also where EURAXESS and its international cooperation role comes into play, linking and promoting ERA as a single research destination (for incoming mobility and collaboration) from the rest of the science world – so-called third countries not ‘associated’ with the framework programs, i.e., Horizon Europe and its predecessors.



### ***A dedicated platform for international researchers***

EURAXESS Worldwide is a networking platform and reliable source of information and ideas on research and innovation jobs, funding and hosting opportunities in Europe, helping talented European and international researchers explore and create transnational ties with researchers, employers and scientific communities, and develop careers within the global R&I system.

**Contact your local EURAXESS hub:**  
[northamerica.euraxess.org](http://northamerica.euraxess.org)

### ***Worldwide endeavor***

The science community's rapid response to Covid-19 and the EU's commitments to meet global challenges and build a resilient 'green and digital' economy through the Green Deal, Recovery Facility and other initiatives show what a connected community is capable of achieving. It also underlines the importance of **cooperating with the rest of the world**.

"International cooperation is a common priority throughout Horizon Europe," according to a [fact sheet](#) produced by DG RTD to explain the main thrusts of its new Strategic Plan. "It is essential for tackling many global challenges and therefore underpins all four key strategic orientations."

International cooperation is also a **key enabler**, providing valuable access to resources, infrastructure, know-how, value chains and markets outside the EU. The fact sheet points out that: "The EU will balance openness with the need to safeguard its interests in strategic areas and act in accordance with its high standards and principles."

Clearly, global challenges call for international scientific responses. EURAXESS and its worldwide hubs and networks have a vital role to play in delivering the skills and making mobility and knowledge exchange as simple and enjoyable as possible. Take the plunge!



## 4 In case you missed it...

### Recent and upcoming webinars

While not a complete list, here are a few past and future virtual events of ours—watch the recordings and sign up to attend live on the event webpages below!

<u>Event</u>	<u>When</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>Organized by</u>	<u>URL</u>
<b>Beyond the Freeze: Trans-Atlantic Job Opportunities</b>	9 March 2021	Virtual	Marie Curie Alumni Association – North America Chapter and EURAXESS North America	<a href="#">Link</a>
<b>How to Get Published series: Publishing in Academic Journals</b>	25 March 2021	Virtual	EURAXESS North America and EURAXESS Latin America & the Caribbean with publisher Taylor & Francis	<a href="#">Link</a>
<b>How to Get Published series: Research and Publishing Ethics</b>	29 April 2021	Virtual	EURAXESS North America and EURAXESS Latin America & the Caribbean with publisher Taylor & Francis	<a href="#">Link</a>
<b>Additional webinars in the How to Get Published series</b>	May, September, and October 2021	Virtual	EURAXESS North America and EURAXESS Latin America & the Caribbean with publisher Taylor & Francis	<a href="#">Link</a>

### About EURAXESS North America

EURAXESS North America is a network of thousands of European and non-European researchers, scientists, and scholars throughout North America (USA and Canada). This multidisciplinary network includes members at all stages of their careers. It allows them to connect with each other and with Europe, ensuring that they are recognized as an important resource for European research, whether they remain in North America or return to Europe.

For further information about EURAXESS North America, please visit:

<http://northamerica.euraxess.org>.

To sign up for membership in our network, [subscribe here](#).

*Content in this quarterly newsletter includes pieces produced by EURAXESS Worldwide.*

<sup>i</sup> (Source: Slovenian Current Research Information System - SICRIS).

<sup>ii</sup> [OECD iLibrary](#)

<sup>iii</sup> Photos provided by EURAXESS and Study in Slovenia members, Slovenia.info, and Wikipedia