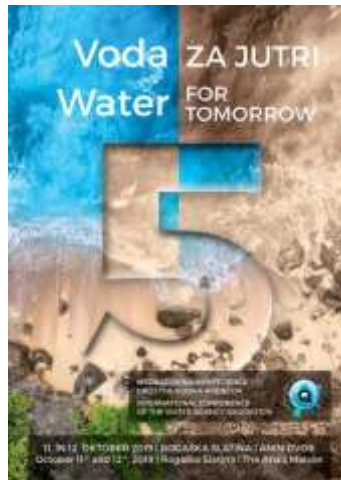


5th International conference of the Water agency Association – »Water for Tomorrow«
Rijeka and Kalovac/Croatia, Rogaška Slatina/Slovenia, October 11th and 12th 2019



Integration and cooperation of the stakeholders for sustainable water management

On October 11 and 12, 2019, was held, the 5th International Conference of the Water agency Association, this time entitled "Water for Tomorrow," . The conference was attended by 120 participants from eight countries: Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Hungary, Austria, Czech Republic, Belgium and Israel. The papers were presented by 36 lecturers in three thematic sections, presented at three locations, in Rijeka and Karlovac in Croatia and in Rogaška Slatina in Slovenia. The conference presented examples of sustainable management of water resources, examples of networking and participation of different stakeholders in river basins at local, national, transboundary and regional levels, and the integration of water topics in education with a particular focus on awareness.

On the first day of the conference, we headed to neighboring Croatia, where we were received in Rijeka by representatives of KD Waterworks and sewage system Rijeka. We attended lectures by representatives from Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia and Hungary on the topic of water management, presented various projects and highlighted problems and solutions. In the field we took a look at the spring of the drinking water on the Zvir. The afternoon part was held in Karlovac, where representatives of Serbia, Croatia, Israel and the Czech Republic spoke about compromising drinking water quality, waste water recycling and its reuse. In the field we took a look at the central treatment plant of Waterworks and sewage system Karlovac and Aquatika – Freshwater aquarium. A lively debate has developed in both locations through the exchange of views and experiences and networking at interstate and regional level.

The second day of the conference was held in Ana's maison in Rogaška Slatina and was primarily intended for the educational sphere. In terms of content, the emphasis was on integrating water and water resources into the educational process. We had possibility to listen to examples of involvement of schools in various water projects and examples of good practice of cooperation of schools with local water companies, presented by representatives, primarily teachers, from Slovenia, Austria, Croatia, Serbia and Belgium. The participants of the conference agreed that awareness of the sustainable use of water resources should be started within the framework of education, emphasizing the importance of connecting schools with local water companies. In addition to the lectures, there were practical

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presentations aimed primarily at teachers. On this occasion, company Henkel Maribor d.o.o. was awarded the certificate for the "special treatment plant", which was created within the framework of the Water Agents of Podravje project. Within the framework of the conference, a workshop on integrating water management organizations in the Carpathian Basin was also held.

During the conference, there were also three exhibitions in Ana's maison: Photos of Drops, students' products created under the project Water Agent during the European Sustainable Development Week, and an exhibition of children's artwork created under the project Introduce and preserve the waters of Slovenia, our natural and cultural wealth.

At the end of the two-day international conference, the participants adopted 5 decisions proposing to improve local, national, cross-border and regional integration and cooperation in planning effective measures for the sustainable use of water resources and reducing flood risk. It is important to cooperate and connect all stakeholders, from water management companies, nature conservation institutions, educational institutions to the local population - the general public. At the same time, we propose that, based on the examples of good practices in integrated water resource management and flood risk reduction, appropriate strategies be prepared with concrete proposals for implementation in local settings. Also, it will be necessary to develop strategies for the cooperation of water

management institutions, educational institutions, state institutions and media to inform and raise awareness among the general public and to strengthen active cooperation. The transfer of experience and knowledge on water resources and the functioning of water in the local environment is key to intergenerational cooperation, with schools playing an important role. These can make a significant contribution to the protection and sustainable use of local water resources through the mentors' knowledge and the upbringing and education of students. It is a new, responsible form of partnership for local water resources, where schools play a very important role. Achieving the set goals does not require new financial resources, nor does it require the adoption of new laws or the establishment of new institutions, and the integration and active involvement of all stakeholders in the basin is crucial.

The International Conference was an important opportunity to exchange views and experiences of different stakeholders related to water and water resources and to connect and establish cooperation at local as well as national, cross-border and regional levels. Water resources are increasingly threatened, both by increasing human pressure and by climate change. Therefore, we are facing the great challenge of providing younger and future generations with safe drinking water supplies and reducing the risk of high water and the effects of droughts. The challenge we must urgently actively face today.

Chair of the Conference Organizing Committee
PhD. Tatjana Kikec

Rogaška Slatina, October 16th 2019