

1st INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING IN THE
SEČOVLJE SALINA

Sečovlje Salina is an exceptional locality in the Slovenian and Mediterranean area and is known for its immense biodiversity (ornitofauna, halophytes, rare & endangered species, outstanding diversity of habitat types) and important natural and cultural heritage, including natural salt production in the traditional manner. For decades Sečovlje Salina has attracted the attention of scientists from different fields such as chemistry, biochemistry, microbiology, geology, pharmacology and others. Today, at a time of global and rapid devastation and even loss of Mediterranean Salinas and coastal wetlands as well, Sečovlje Salina represents a successful model of symbiosis between the conservation of outstanding biodiversity and the cultural heritage and traditional use of the natural resources found within Sečovlje Salina Nature Park. Comparable trends are observed also for other similar environments.

Transmission of new knowledge, exchange and dissemination of best practices, ideas for innovative approaches to sustainable development, and other important dialogues among scientists across disciplines and across methods, all usually transpire during joint seminars. The idea behind our intention to combine diverse knowledge covering all aspects of the scientific and professional activities involved in Salinas and similar wetlands prompted us to organize a start-up multidisciplinary meeting. Therefore, the first international meeting entitled "Sečovlje Salina as a Scientific and Educational Basin" was held on October 5th 2012 in the multimedia hall at Sečovlje Salina Nature Park. It was hosted by the Marine Biology Station of Piran (National Institute of Biology) in collaboration with the company SOLINE Pridelava soli d.o.o. and Sečovlje Salina Nature Park, with the financial support of the Slovenian Research Agency and Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO.

The meeting began in the morning with opening remarks by Klavdij Godnič (Director of SOLINE Pridelava soli d.o.o.), Prof. Dr. Tamara Lah Turnšek (Director of the National Institute of Biology Ljubljana), Marjutka Hafner (chief executive of the Slovene office for UNESCO), Assoc. Prof. Dr. Vlado Malačič (head of the Marine Biology Station), Dr. Andrej Sovinc (Head of Sečovlje Salina Nature Park), Prof. Dr. Lovrenc Lipej (chairman of the organizing committee) and Dr. Peter Bossman (Mayor of Piran), the latter of whom gave the welcome speech. More than 60 scientists and experts from Slovenia, Croatia and Italy gave excellent speeches and poster presentations about different studies performed in Salinas and similar environments. Research topics presented in

plenary lectures and posters and also published in the book of abstracts included:

- the main scientific research and new results about Sečovlje Salina, including flora, vegetation, sedimentology, biogeochemistry and biodiversity of fungi and yeasts,
- the scientific research activities and conservation efforts of Salinas and other Adriatic coastal wetlands like Val Canavata, Comacchio Saltworks, Marano and Grado Lagoon, Škocjan Inlet Nature Reserve, Strunjan Lagoon, Makirina Bay, and WWF Nature Reserve Salinas of Trapani and Paceco,
- traditional salt production in Sečovlje Salina (based on the petola microbial mat) and other healing by-products from the salt pans (brine, saline mud-fango) and their role in the development of tourism (thermal and wellness) in Portorož,
- innovative algal technology for the revitalization of Salinas based on sustainability and renewability,
- historical data about salt harvesting in Sečovlje during the Maunder Minimum.

In conclusion, the importance of cooperation among all professionals as well as other entities/participants was stressed. The participants at the meeting also recognized the need for the continuous sharing of new information, so we hope to repeat the meeting in two years' time.

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