

# Alpe-Adria Region can be Successful with Mid-Sized Companies in the World Economy

*The 12<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the European Leadership Centre, taking place at the IEDC-Bled School of Management in June 2014, attended by over 100 managers and leaders, focussed on leadership from a regional perspective. Asking the question, "how can regions make a difference in the global economy", the Alpe-Adria region was used as a model.*

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"In December 2013 the European Council invited the European Commission, in cooperation with member states, to elaborate an EU strategy for the Alpine region. The region involves seven countries - Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Slovenia and Switzerland - and is one of the largest economic and productive regions in Europe with huge potential, particularly in tourism. However, to hold and improve its position, it has to deal with the effects of economic globalisation, demographic trends, climate change, the energy challenge and the specific geographical position as a transit region with unique natural features," highlighted in her opening speech

Dr. Danica Purg, President of the European Leadership Centre and of IEDC-Bled School of Management, and added, "I believe that there is a unique opportunity for the Alpe-Adria region to become an important player in this initiative".

"Regions are intermediate levels between the state and companies and are therefore very important. Alpe-Adria is a fantastic example of a cross-border cooperation which can happen in the future. We should see the opportunities and ways of working together. Indeed, this region makes me optimistic not only for the region but for Europe", said Dr. Peter Kraljič who presided over the conference.

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The keynote speaker, Dr. Hermann Simon, Chairman of Simon-Kucher & Partners, Germany, started with the observation that "Only strong companies export. The state doesn't export!" He then further exposed mid-sized companies, hidden champions, as export turbo-motors: "Business success globally, especially in exports, does not primarily depend on large corporations but on mid-sized world class companies, so called hidden champions. Innovation, a strong manufacturing base and cost competitiveness are factors of their success".

He concluded with the observation, "The Alpe-Adria region has made huge progress in the last two decades. But the road towards the

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globalised world of the future remains long and challenging. The region has the human resources to be successful. Some companies have already become true hidden champions. If many more entrepreneurs and leaders follow this model, Alpe-Adria has a real chance to become a world class region".

Discussing key leadership endeavours, Dr. Peter Kaiser, Governor of Carinthia and President of the Alpe-Adriatic Alliance, pointed out the need for joint cooperation on a common EU platform and the importance of exchanging best practices within the region.

The conference was further enriched with reflections on regions playing an active and

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positive role in the local and global economy by Dr. Erhard Busek, Chairman of the Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe, Austria, Benjamin Wakounig, President of the Slovenian Economic Association of Carinthia, Andrej Šik, Director of the Slovenian Economic Association in Italy, Sandi Češko, founder and co-owner of Studio Moderna, and by other speakers who, themselves, focused on the role of culture, tourism, education and youth in regional economic development today and in the future. ◀

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- 01 Dr. Danica Purg opening the conference
- 02 Dr. Peter Kraljič moderating the panel discussion
- 03 Dr. Hermann Simon, keynote speaker
- 04 Dr. Peter Kaiser, Governor of Carinthia
- 05 Sandi Češko, Dr. Danica Purg, Dr. Erhard Busek, Dr. Peter Kraljič, Dr. h.c. mult. Hermann Simon