



IEDC

Bled School of  
Management

*A School with a View*

30  
YEARS

### About IEDC–Bled School of Management

The IEDC–Bled School of Management, founded 30 years ago as the first business school of its type in Central and Eastern Europe, is one of the leading international management development institutions in Europe. It is a place where leaders come to learn and reflect, an international centre of excellence in management development, a business meeting point, and a unique place where works of art complement a creative environment for creative leadership.

The total number of participants since the establishment until today stands at more than 80,000 from 85 countries. In 2009, the IEDC was the only institution from Central and Eastern Europe to be named among the 100 top business schools worldwide in the Aspen Institute's Beyond Grey Pinstripes ranking, for having demonstrated significant leadership in integrating social, environmental and ethical issues into its MBA program.

IEDC Alumni network currently associates 5,149 members from 74 countries, among which 1,334 MBA Alumni; and counts 15 clubs in 15 countries.

The IEDC–Bled School of Management is the headquarters of the international association for Management Development in dynamic societies, CEEMAN, associating 215 business schools from 54 countries, the European Leadership Centre, Coca-Cola chair for sustainable development, and the UN Global Compact Slovenia.

The IEDC is also a recognized innovator in custom made programs for corporate clients, among them: Achmea, Netherlands; Anadolu Group, Turkey; AstraZeneca, Russia; Austrian Post; BAE Systems, Great Britain; Medtronic EMEA; BD (Becton Dickinson), CE; Erste Bank, Austria; Erdemir Group, Turkey; Generali Holding, CEE; Henkel, Austria; OBI, Germany; UNIQA, Austria; Vienna Insurance Group, Austria; Vimpelcom, Russia; and others.

The IEDC–Bled School of Management is an award-winning school. In 2016 IEDC won the AMBA Milestone Award, which is given annually for recognising the on-going success of accredited business schools worldwide by The Association of MBAs (AMBA), the international authority on postgraduate business education, established in 1967.





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## Driven to Do Something Good for the Country

The Albanian students are extremely motivated, with strong entrepreneurial spirit, but they sometimes lack organisational experience on the global corporate level.

"I am leading IEDC-Bled School of Management as its Founding President for already 30 years and I must admit I am still inspired by my work every single day!"

This sentence by the Dean of IEDC-Bled School of Management, Danica Purg, echoes the formula for time-resisting success.

The top lady has built a top-brand in Europe: IEDC- Bled School of Management is a place where leaders come to learn and reflect, an international centre of excellence in management development, a business meeting point, and a unique place where works of art complement a creative environment for creative leadership.

So far, this school has welcomed 100 Albanian students. In the following exclusive interview with **FOLLOW BUSINESS ALBANIA**, Purg explains the challenges of the world business schools in today's competitive environment, the IEDC's approaches and policies given the new international fora, the effect of technology on the business schools and whether a full-time MBA degree is still as popular as before.

### How many years as dean of IEDC and what does it mean for you to take the reins of a recognized business school?

The idea for establishing the school was of the President of the local Chamber of Commerce, Marko Bulc, who was positive that Slovenian managers were in need of more skills and knowledge to be able to compete on the global market.

Knowing that I was ambitious and fluent in foreign languages, I was asked to found this school in 1986. I accepted this challenge, because I wanted to do something good for my country. So, I am leading IEDC-Bled School of Management as its Founding President for already 30 years and I must admit I am still inspired by my work every single day!

IEDC succeeded to build a top-brand in Europe – by being recognized internationally as a place where leaders come to learn and reflect, an international centre of excellence in management development, a business meeting point, and a unique place where works of art complement a creative environment for creative leadership. IEDC-Bled School of Management is located in Bled (Slovenia), near one of the most

beautiful lakes in the world. The architecture of the buildings is unique and the school looks like a gallery.

Since 1986 about 85.000 managers from 85 countries participated in IEDC educational programs. Our school has the reputation of being a trusted, innovative and award-winning educational partner, not only for Executive MBA, but also for the Doctoral program, customized programs for corporate partners, short executive seminars for top management, and a wide range of general management programs including a five-week General Management Program and international summer schools for young managers.

**Comparing IEDC-Bled School of Management to its top peer schools, what are the key advantages of your school?**

From the beginning we are internationally oriented, thriving for the highest quality of management and leadership development, led by (my) provocative statement 'Give us the best (professors, education) from the West and leave the rest'.

The three main pillars of the educational process at the IEDC-Bled School of Management are: art and leadership, ethics and corporate governance, and sustainable development.

Our slogan is 'Creative Environment for Creative Leadership'. The campus itself is a stunning architectural space made by a prize winning Slovene architect Vojteh Ravnikar, with beautiful views to the alpine surroundings of lake Bled. When people enter the school they truly enter an art gallery where in each room they can see prominent art from internationally acclaimed local artists, there is even

a piano in one of our main classrooms. This enlivens the learning and working space of IEDC, creating an inspiring environment for students, staff and faculty.

Our school is conceived as a place where managers will come not only to learn but also for inspiration. We develop competent and responsible leaders and addresses organizations' complex leadership issues. We do this by bringing together the best faculty from around the world, providing a creative environment for creative leadership, leveraging its stunning location in beautiful Bled, Slovenia. We strive for education with impact!

**Your approach is to inspire managers by art. How far has this approach gone for IEDC and its students?**

What makes IEDC special, is that we have embraced arts-based learning more than



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any other management school, as it is the internal part of learning process and not only by showing the parallels between art and leadership. .) Nine years ago, I initiated a new MBA course, Art and Leadership, one of the first of its kind in the world. This isn't just a nice creative add-on, but a central, integrated part of the story. In eight full days of the curriculum, our members of Art and leadership faculty use visual arts, music, choral conducting, theater and film, to take students on an 'experimental journey'. Exactly because of this approach, our Executive MBA Program was awarded with The MBA Innovation Award for being one of the four most innovative in the world.

I firmly believe that using art in leadership development as a tool for reflection and to develop senses, to make leaders better observers, better listeners and more emphatic in general. The integration of art and art experience in educational processes has been a focus of our school from its beginnings, but especially for the last ten years. The inspiration for this unique approach to leadership development is a deep rooted belief that art helps us to, as the celebrated professor Edgar Schein, Doctor Honoris Causa of our school, said: "Art is helping us to see more, hear more, and to feel more." When you combine research and teaching with the art of leadership in the

educational process, it is very powerful. It is important to stress that our inspiration for the MBA program is constantly renewing. The conversations and experiences of our great faculty and guest artists we work with, constantly inspire us with new ideas and new approaches.

**Business and entrepreneurship education are still in high demand, but the competition is larger than ever. How does your degree program differ from other schools?**



*Challenges of tomorrow can only be overcome by people who are motivated, broad in their mindsets and forward looking.*

*This is exactly what we offer: first rate skills in finance, accounting, or marketing, combined with soft skills, which create ethical, socially responsible and innovative change leaders for the future.*

Our Executive MBA programs offer a learning process that stretches the mind, expands the managerial repertoire, and prepares managers for future business opportunities.

We are driven by a vision that successful management is not only affected by one's own company and the business world, but also the society that surrounds it. We aim to promote ethical, socially responsible and creative leadership and, as a whole, create an environment that offers you: exceptional learning process,

More than 50 renowned visiting professors from the best European and North American business schools closely cooperate with numerous local and international management consultants to successfully link the interaction of contemporary management theory and practice. However, IEDC purposely keeps its Faculty and Staff relatively small.

This means that the borderline between functions is flexible and that everybody has an opportunity to be involved in new ventures.

**Do you have Albanian students attending IEDC? What are your impressions about them?**

So far, we had about 100 students from Albania, 15 of them finished our EMBA. I would say that they are extremely motivated, with strong entrepreneurial spirit, but they sometimes lack organisational experience on the global corporate level.

**What impact will technology ultimately have on business schools and how that will look in five years? Almost every university is going online or trying to offer online degree programs. What is your business school doing in the online space and how do you set yourself apart?**

We are not neglecting the challenges of digital transformation. In 2013, for example our faculty team developed an educational invention 'MOOCs with Accelerator Studios' – a unique blended-learning project where the alumni come together at IEDC to build and expand the online learning.

I can hardly imagine pure on-line leadership and management education to be truly transformative.

Our participants value the face-to-face communication, as a thirst for new knowledge and experience is usually



innovative curriculum renowned worldwide, a life-changing experience, a network for life etc.

We believe that executive development is a process of transformation, both professional and personal. To make this change happen, our full attention is focused on our students. From approachable staff members to inviting buildings, from personal library support to small class sizes, our ideas, resources, and attention are there to make your transformation meaningful, dynamic, and real.

**Teaching international relations has taken a special importance given the new realities all over the world. What new approaches or policies have you embraced in this respect?**

We are aware how important it is to have direct and frequent relations with your customers, business and individuals – on the global scale.

This is guaranteed by the ownership of the school, shared by more than 30 businesses, the international and diverse composition of Supervisory and Advisory Board and by regularly researching for the needs of the business leaders and managers by visiting companies/organizations and organizing international fora, for business leaders and human resource managers.







born when you sit to each other and 'feel each other'. In the next five years IEDC shall develop on-line offer with the human touch.

**Do you see the full-time MBA degree becoming more or less popular in the coming years (and why)?**

Management education and development is not getting less important nowadays, even though what you have mentioned is quite true – in the past few years we are witnessing (and the same goes for many business school worldwide) a slightly smaller number of participants in the Executive MBA class.



*That however goes in line with global trends.*

*This is a consequence of the tense situation in the global economy (question of budget and time constraints).*

*Executives are looking for shorter, more intense and perhaps more targeted forms of education, so our school records higher demand in this segment (f.e. in-company seminars, short open seminars etc.)*