***Press release***

***An excellent year in 2015, and a good outlook for 2016 for tourism in Slovenia***

**2015: A record-breaking year for tourism in Slovenia**

**29 January 2016 – According to** [**provisional figures from the SORS**](http://www.stat.si/novica_prikazi.aspx?id=6794)**, in 2015 the tourism sector in Slovenia saw a rise of 11% in the number of tourists and a rise of 7% in the number of overnight stays on the previous year, as Slovenia exceeded 10 million overnight stays for the first time since independence.** **With rises of 12% on the number of foreign tourists and 8% in the number of overnight stays by foreign tourists, tourism in Slovenia recorded above-average performance in European and global terms.** **According to estimates, revenues from exports of travel services will reach their highest level since 2008, as export growth reaches close to 10%.**

A press conference was held today at the Natour Alpe Adria 2016 fair at the Ljubljana Exhibition and Conference Centre by the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology (MoEDT) and the Slovenian Tourist Board (STB), where **Eva Štravs Podlogar**, acting director of the Tourism and Internationalisation Directorate at the MoEDT, and **Maja Pak**, acting director of the STB, highlighted the excellent, record-breaking performance of the tourism sector in Slovenia in 2015, and discussed key activities in the development and marketing of Slovenian tourism in the period ahead. The press conference also saw the signing of a **trilateral agreement** between Austria, Italy and Slovenia on the joint marketing of the Alpe Adria hiking trail over the next three years.

The performance of the tourism sector in Slovenia in 2015 provided further evidence that tourism is an increasingly important economic sector in the country, which still shows much potential for further growth. Tourism in Slovenia accounts for **more than 12.7% of GDP**, **8% of total exports** and **approximately 40% of exports of services**. At the same time the sector makes a key contribution to Slovenia’s profile, and positions it as a **sustainability-focused, green, active and healthy country**. Further evidence of this comes from the recently announced **list of the** [**10 greenest countries on the planet**](http://epi.yale.edu/sites/default/files/Yale%20EPI%202016_Report.pdf), where Slovenia was ranked a high fifth among 180 countries.

**Zdravko Počivalšek, Minister of Economic Development and Technology:** “We will remember 2015 not just for its large number of tourists, but also for the measures that influenced that number: the independence of the Slovenian Tourist Board and the exceptionally successful campaign of promoting Slovenia abroad. At the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology we will continue to do everything we can to give tourism in Slovenia the place that it deserves. We have set ambitious goals, and I believe that we will be able to achieve them. Foreign media and tourism experts rank us high on lists of desirable tourist destinations. Our efforts to develop high-quality and innovative sustainable tourism are beginning to show their initial results. I am very pleased that the guidelines that we wrote for our partners in the Slovenian tourism sector in the Tourism Development Strategy 2012-2016 are not being implemented only by the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology and the Slovenian Tourist Board, but are now a living part of the economy. Tourism providers and destinations recognise the competitive advantage of sustainable and innovative products and connections. This is demonstrated by the recipients of numerous domestic and international awards, such as the Jakob, Sejalec and Snovalec awards, all of the European Destinations of Excellence, the European Green Capital, Alpine Town of the Year, etc.”

**Eva Štravs Podlogar, Acting General Director of the Tourism and Internationalisation Directorate:** “We have just had a record year in tourism, but we are still working to ensure that next year will be even better. We are focusing on both the key objectives of Slovenian tourism and on improving the business environment for the operation of the Slovenian tourism economy. The Ministry of Economic Development and Technology’s key projects for 2016 are amendments to both of the laws governing the field of tourism, the Hospitality Industry Act and the Promotion of Tourism Development Act. With the amendment to the former, after five years of coordinating, the e-reporting project will be launched, which means that overnight providers, who currently send their data to five different addresses, will send them only to Ajpes. This is a significant lightening of the administrative burden, which will have several follow-on effects.  
With the amendment to the Promotion of Tourism Development Act, we are looking for a way to generate additional funding for the STB through tourist taxes, and the tourism field is also following the guidelines of carefully thought-out deregulation. This year we will also begin preparations for the new tourism development strategy for 2017-2021. We are also preparing two new calls for applications for European funding: a grant for the development of new and innovative tourism products and services worth 4.2 million euros and a grant for the development and umbrella promotion of new or attractive tourism products by destinations worth 3 million euros. In the past we have invested large amounts in infrastructure, but now we are focusing mainly on promotion. European funds will be significantly lower than in the past, so we have to use them even more wisely and target them more effectively. We hope that the recipients of both grants follow the primary guidelines of the promotion of Slovenian tourism. We are all part of the same story.”

In addition to the record statistics, 2015 will also be seen as a historic year for tourism in Slovenia because of major milestones such as the STB’s independence and reorganisation, and the realisation of the most intensive promotional campaign in the history of tourism in Slovenia, financed by EU funds, which certainly had an impact on the excellent results of the year now ended. An ambitious marketing plan for tourism in Slovenia for the 2016-2017 period was approved, having been designed in conjunction with the STB, with a focus on carrying out larger digital campaigns, designing a new portal www.slovenia.info, upgrading communications via social media, updating the CRM system and systematically creating content. Projects to increase the effectiveness of digital marketing, such as ambassadors of Slovenian tourism, are in progress. The promotional strategy drawn up in 2015 again focuses in 2016 on the key target markets for tourism in Slovenia, with selected products that position Slovenia as a **green**, **active** and **healthy destination**. There is a particular focus on two themes: *Healthy Water* and *Ljubljana as European Green Capital 2016*.

**Ms Pak**, acting director of the STB, said: “The numerous awards that Slovenia is winning for sustainable and innovative tourism and the intensive and coordinated promotion of Slovenia as a green, active and healthy destination have been major factors in the exceptional publicity in foreign media, and growth in the number of foreign tourists that was two and a half times the global average.

In 2016 we will further strengthen our promotional activities, and will focus intensely on digital marketing, where a third of all promotional funding will be directed. At the very heart of our developmental and promotional activities will lie Slovenia as a green, diverse, boutique destination for wonderful experiences, with the spotlight on this year’s themes of healthy water and Ljubljana as the green capital of Europe.

At the press conference, the heads of the three tourist boards, Christian Kresse of Kaernten Werbung, Marco Tullio Petrangelo of Turismo Friuli Venezia Giulia and Maja Pak of the STB, signed a new three-year **Agreement on cooperation on the Alpe Adria Trail project for the 2016-2018 period**. The agreement will provide for a continuation of the ambitious cooperation on this exceptionally successful cross-border product.

According to **Ms Pak**: “The Alpe Adria Trail project is one of the most successful new tourist products of recent years in whose development the Slovenian Tourist Board has been involved. It is the fruit of excellent cooperation between the tourist boards of the three regions, and in particular the coordinated work with the Slovenian partners on the ground. The STB has been intensively involved in the project since the very beginning, because it is an ambitious and modern project, and above all because Slovenia’s exceptional diversity is one of the foundations of the project, which is in perfect harmony with the strategy of tourism in Slovenia, and the slogan of “Slovenia: green, active, healthy”. The project boasts excellent results, including being rated by National Geographic Traveller as one of the top ten hiking trails in the world. The project has exceeded all the initial expectations, and last year was responsible for more than 60,000 overnight stays, of which approximately 9,000 were in Slovenia.

Livija Kovač Konstantinovič

Slovenian Tourist Board

T: +386 1 5898565   
E: [livija.kovac@slovenia.info](mailto:livija.kovac@slovenia.info)