

## Regional conference Let's Clean the Balkans in One Day! ends successfully

Slovenia, Rimske toplice, 17 April – Regional conference Let's Clean the Balkans in One Day!, taking place from 15 to 17 April in Rimske toplice, Slovenia, ends today. It was attended by 61 volunteers from 11 countries, who, in their country, will be in charge of organizing the largest voluntary environmental action in world history *World Cleanup 2012*. Seven workshops, executed by recognized experts and members of the Ecologists without borders, focused on logistics, project management, fundraising, conceptual thinking and communication. The conference participants were welcomed by EU Commissioner dr. Janez Potočnik and visited by Slovenia's Minister for the Environment and Spatial Planning dr. Roko Žarnić. The main objectives of the conference were to bring together volunteers from the Balkan countries in one place, to facilitate transfer of knowledge and experience in organizing large-scale voluntary actions and to establish a core management team for the successful implementation of the global cleanup in 2012 in each of the participating countries. Today, the international team presented the conclusions of the conference and announced the world cleanup on 24 March 2012.

The conference was attended by environmental activists from the following 11 countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Estonia, Austria and Latvia.

In his address to the participants on Friday, **the European Commissioner for the Environment Dr. Janez Potočnik**, expressed the full support of the European Commission to the international Let's Do It, World! movement and stressed that events like this are crucial to raising people's awareness and consumption habits. The success of this initiative shows the power of civil society because it compliments perfectly what politics is trying to achieve with legislation. The Commission welcomes and supports the global cleanup initiative, which now stands in front of the challenge of bringing together social networks, voluntary organizations, NGO'S, municipalities across Europe to exchange good practices.

**Slovenia's Minister for the Environment and Spatial Planning Roko Žarnić** welcomed the international integration trends in environmental activism. He emphasized that the biggest cleanup action in the history of Slovenia on 17 April 2010 was historic not only because it united over 270,000 Slovenes for a common goal, but also all because of the positive effects that followed the event. In his opinion, in future much attention should be paid to raising environmental awareness of children and youth. He promised the participants from the Balkan countries his full support in convincing decision makers in their countries.

"Let's Clean Slovenia in one day! started a powerful movement of the civil society in Slovenia as well. More than 270,000 people took responsibility for our planet and together we proved how successful we can be, when working towards a common goal. It is time a similar action unites the whole world. The date has already been set - 24 March 2012, when millions are going to be part of the largest environmental campaign in the history of mankind. Preparations for the worldwide campaign in Slovenia have begun this weekend. We are honoured to coordinate the Balkans area," said **president of the Ecologists Without Borders**



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**Association Petra Matos** and concluded with the words of Victor Hugo: "Nothing is as powerful as the idea whose time has come".

**Tiina Urm, spokeswoman for the World Cleanup 2012 movement**, said that the idea has grown into a movement. "The Let's Do it! cleanup action model was born on 3 May 2008 in Estonia, when 50,000 people came out to clean up the whole territory of the country in 5 hours, collecting together 10,000 tons of waste. After that the initiative started to spread to Latvia, Lithuania, India, Portugal, Slovenia, Ukraine, Romania and Bulgaria, where altogether 1,3 million people have participated in civic-led one-day cleanups. Yesterday cleanups were taking place in Ukraine, Moldova and Lithuania, uniting over 400,000 people. Starting from 24 March 2012 the wave of local and regional cleanups will sweep over the world, resulting in millions of tons of gathered waste, clean nature and renewed and deeper connections between people, communities and nature by September 2012. In addition to finding new initiators, we are collaborating with regional and local action groups with previous cleanup organizing experience. Our aim is to invite teams to organize cleanups in at least 100 countries, engaging 300 million volunteers, by the end of 2012," said Tiina Urm, adding that the project volunteers are invited to join the initiative on the project website [www.letsdoitworld.org](http://www.letsdoitworld.org) or through local teams in their country. In 2011, 18 regional gatherings will be organized in the support of the global action, eight of them in the EU.

**Nara Petrovič of Ecologists Without Borders Association** said that recently world cleanup representatives visited the European Parliament in Strasbourg, where a campaign to support the global cleanup is in progress. They managed to convince most MEP's to sign the declaration, and the list is only 25 signatures away from reaching the required quota of 389 votes. The declaration has already been signed by all Slovenian MEP's who have shown that Slovenia is united on this vital environmental issue that concerns all citizens of the entire world.

The conference program was diverse and was executed by renowned Slovenian experts, such as the only licensed de Bono thinking trainer in Slovenia **Nastja Mulej**, one of the most successful Slovenian managers and CEO of Studio Moderna **Sandi Češko**, senior communications consultant **Nada Serajnik Sraka**, freelance consultant in sponsorship activation **Vesna Stanič**, manager of media research and analysis **Brigita Femec**, and marketing manager **Jure Habjanič** (Kliping). The two-day event was concluded with a lecture on the world consumption of natural resources by climatology expert prof. Lučka Kajfež Bogataj.

**More information on the workshop contents and lecturers:**

<http://ebm.si/p/conference-balkans/docs/speakers.pdf>

**Press materials:**

[http://ebm.si/zamedije/Gradivo\\_za\\_medije\\_15042011.pdf](http://ebm.si/zamedije/Gradivo_za_medije_15042011.pdf)

**Commissioner Potočnik's Welcome Speech:**

<http://youtu.be/msgWnM5qOpM>

Photos are available on request to Polonca Štritof.

Please visit our FB profile and select the one you like: <http://on.fb.me/icRXgf>



**Additional Information:**

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Conference supporters: **Zavarovalnica Triglav, Rimske terme d. o. o., Predstavništvo Evropske Komisije v Sloveniji, Ministrstvo za okolje in prostor, Naložba v prihodnost - Evropski socialni skladi, Slovenska turistična organizacija, portal Ekomagazin, Videolectures.net, fotografinja Tanja Ristič, Srednja šola za oblikovanje in fotografijo Ljubljana.**



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