

# Bled Water Forum 2026: REPORT

## About Bled Water Forum – Bled Water Forum (BWF)

As a nonprofit, we foster a culture of drinking water, developing new standards and a new understanding of quality drinking water around the world, and co-creating new global trends.

New knowledge and above-standard drinking water for all is at the heart of our action plan. We realize our mission with international expertise, a positive approach and the belief that water is a fundamental human right.

We act as a global platform for the exchange of knowledge about water – its impact on health, life and society and its responsible use in everyday life.

In cooperation with partners, we seek and reward innovative technological solutions and projects that help preserve higher quality water resources and the aquatic environment from around the world.

With the program of the European Water Sommelier Association, we are adding new dimensions to water and placing it in a wider cultural and professional context.

The BWF Innovation Centre established in 2026 brings together advanced water knowledge and innovative individuals and companies who are co-creating the future of water management and understanding.

## Implementation of BWF 2026

**BWF 2026 took place on Wednesday, June 3, and on Thursday, June 4, 2026, co-organized by Tourism Bled.**

As an international platform for connecting professionals, representatives of governments, international organizations and the economy, the Forum was hosted by Vila Bled. The event was held in a hybrid form, as many prominent speakers from abroad joined the discussions via an online link.

[The programme of the event](#) is available on the BWF website, where recordings of panel discussions can also be viewed.

This year, we established the BWF board of trustees, whose chairman is Dr. Aleš Musar, First Gentleman of the President of the Republic of Slovenia.

With their introductory addresses, the importance of the Forum and its international role was supported and honored by:

**Marko Gajić**, BWF co-founder, Slovenia

**Dr. Aleš Mušar**, First Gentleman of the Republic of Slovenia

**Diana Naušėdienė**, First Lady of the Republic of Lithuania

**Dr. Simona Drenik Bavdek**, Human Rights Ombudswoman of the Republic of Slovenia

**Matjaž Berčon**, Director of Komunala Kranj, Slovenia

**Blaž Veber**, director, Bled Tourist Board, Slovenia

**Azad Shirinov**, Advisor to the Chairman, Azerbaijan State Water Resources Agency

**Arif Ibrahim Alkalali**, Senior Advisor to the Deputy Minister for Water, Ministry of Environment, Water and

Agriculture, Saudi Arabia

**Ara Mkrtchyan**, Vice Minister of Environment of the Republic of Armenia

**Asta Speičytė Radavičienė**, Visionary, Social Entrepreneur & Founder of Neišnešiotukas | GROWING Lithuania  
| GROWING Europe, Lithuania

## Day one – Water, climate and international cooperation

The first day of the Bled Water Forum 2026 was dedicated to linking water and climate policies and finding concrete solutions for the implementation of the COP29 Declaration on Water for Climate Action. Discussions highlighted the importance of water resilience, cross-border cooperation, innovative technologies and a 'source to sea' approach to water resource management. Participants from more than 60 countries exchanged good practices in the fields of water diplomacy, infrastructure development, digitalization and protection of water ecosystems. Special emphasis was also placed on the presentation of concrete solutions and good practices in the field of education, knowledge transfer and technological innovations that can already be included in water management processes today.

As part of the forum, the **Hiking Dialogue to Straža Hill with Azerbaijan** was also held, led by Mr. Rovshan Sadigbayli, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Republic of Austria and the Republic of Slovenia, and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations, the OSCE and other international organizations in Vienna. The event was attended by more than 20 representatives of foreign countries, who discussed the connection between water and climate and the possibilities for further international cooperation in the field of water and climate resilience in a relaxed environment.

The day was also marked by the signing of a cooperation agreement between the Bled Water Forum and ITF Enhancing Human Security and the awarding of the European Water Awards 2026. Both initiatives reflect a shared commitment to promoting innovation, international cooperation and concrete solutions to improve access to safe and quality drinking water and the sustainable management of water resources worldwide.

In order to raise the awareness of the youngest about the importance of water, this year for the first time we carried out a creative competition **"Playful Water"**, intended for children in kindergartens. Through their products, young creators explored the importance of water for life, the environment and the future. The awards were presented to the three best groups by Dr. Aleš Musar, First Gentleman of the President of the Republic of Slovenia.

## Day Two – Water for Health, Wellbeing and Sustainable Tourism

The second day of the forum was dedicated to the role of water in health, quality of life and sustainable development of tourism. Experts from Europe and Asia presented examples of good practices in the fields of gastronomy, wellness, spa tourism and catering, and emphasized the increasing importance of quality drinking water for the user experience, health and sustainable development of tourist destinations. Special attention was also paid to young people through the BWF Young program, where young professionals and students presented their views on the future of water management, innovation, and raising awareness of the importance of water for society.

**An important part of the accompanying program was also water tasting and sensory evaluation of bottled water, where more than 40 brands from different parts of the world were presented.** The event offered participants an insight into the diversity of water sources and the importance of drinking water quality in terms of taste, composition and user experience.

As part of the accompanying programme of the Bled Water Forum, an expert visit to the Komunala Kranj took place on 2 June 2026. Representatives of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Korea were acquainted with

advanced solutions and innovative approaches in the field of drinking water supply, management of water supply systems and communal infrastructure, which also represent an example of good practice in the international space.

#### BWF young:

In the past year, BWF Young continued to develop as a platform for youth engagement, water literacy, and knowledge exchange in the field of water. At the Bled Water Forum 2026, BWF Young was included for the first time in the opening-day panel, Implementing the COP Water Declaration: Knowledge, Infrastructure and Innovation, where it contributed a youth perspective on education, awareness, and the implementation of future water strategies. The programme also featured the BWF Young panel, Blue Futures: Youth Perspectives on New Water Strategies, with young contributors from different countries addressing topics such as water diplomacy, public health, education, sensory approaches, tourism, and local community involvement. In addition, two local projects related to water themes were integrated into the BWF activities and presented practical content at Bled Castle, in the section of the event open to both participants and the wider public. Two youth representatives also took part in the BWF International Water Tasting 2026 as members of the international group of evaluators. In the coming period, BWF Young aims to expand cooperation with local and international water-related projects, strengthen partnerships with universities, mentors, youth networks and water organisations, further develop educational materials, and create more opportunities to present its work, share knowledge, and grow through participation in national and international water events.

## Presentation of the European Water Awards 2026 and international water assessment

On the first day of the forum, we awarded 3 awards to outstanding innovations or projects in the field of drinking water quality, water resources conservation and a special recognition for water diplomacy and future generations.

**The European Water Award 2026 in the category of improving the quality of drinking water** received the EPAUA solution – **Air Humidity Water Production Station**, developed by Ô Amazon Air Water. The award is given for an innovative approach to ensuring sustainable access to water. By transforming water extraction technology from air humidity into an autonomous and flexible system, EPAUA enables the production of high-quality drinking water directly at the point of use, independent of rivers, underground aquifers or public water supply networks. The solution combines innovation, efficiency and flexibility and represents an important step towards resilient water solutions of the future.

**The European Water Award 2026 in the category of water protection and water quality (rivers, lakes and seas)** was awarded to **G-Nanotechnology: Rapid Non-Biological Wastewater Treatment and Water Reuse Technology**. This is the first commercial application of nanotechnology to treat all types of wastewater. The technology enables the conversion of wastewater into a reusable source in just a few minutes and redefines the speed, efficiency and economics of modern water treatment.

This year, BWF also presented a **special award for water diplomacy and future generations** to the project "**Let's Flow Together – Action Days for the Mura River**", carried out by the Association of Geography Teachers of Slovenia in cooperation with the Steiermark Centre for Environmental Education (Austria), UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Spodnja Mura, the Geography Commission of the Association of Geographers of Slovenia and other partners from Slovenia and Austria. The project promotes cross-border cooperation, education and climate resilience along the Mura River. By bringing together learners,

local communities and environmental stakeholders on both sides of the border, it enhances awareness, cooperation and sustainable coexistence for future generations.

The awards were presented by Dr. Aleš Musar, First Gentleman of the President of the Republic of Slovenia and Patricija Mencigar, co-founder of BWF.

### **This year, we have newly created: Awarding prizes to the winning group of the "Playful Water" competition (kindergarten program).**

In 2026, as part of the Bled Water Forum, we designed and implemented a kindergarten program for the first time, extending the field of awareness of the importance of water to preschool children. The program was aimed at promoting early understanding of the importance of water, protection of water sources and sustainable environmental management through creative and educational activities.

The central part of the program was the "Playful Water" competition, in which about 170 children from 4 surrounding kindergartens participated. Together with educators, the children prepared creative projects on the topic of water and learned about its importance for life and the environment through play and research.

At the end of the competition, a ceremonial award ceremony was organized for the best projects. The awards were presented by Dr. Aleš Musar, First Gentleman of the President of the Republic of Slovenia.

The award-winning groups were:

1. city: Kindergarten Bohinj, department Sovice,
2. city: Kindergarten Bled, department Sparrows,
3. city: Kindergarten Škofja Loka, Zvonček department.

With the establishment of the kindergarten program, the Bled Water Forum systematically included preschool children in its educational and awareness-raising activities for the first time.

### **The Forum concluded with an international assessment of more than 40 bottled waters from different countries of the world, which was also open to the participants. The assessment was conducted under the leadership of the European Water Sommelier Association.**

Through its work, the international group of assessors has contributed to the development of new global approaches to understanding drinking water and its pairing with food and other beverages. This is the second such assessment in the world by BWF, which was not based on scoring, but on the analysis of water according to 16 different parameters. The purpose of the approach is to bring water closer to the general public and to enable a better understanding of its composition, quality and use – also in connection with nutrition and well-being recommendations. Reports for all analyzed bottled waters that participated in BWF 2026 will be published by the end of June 2026.

In cooperation with the Bled Cultural Institute at the Bled Castle, we also organized water tasting, merging with selected teas and presenting the functional waters of our partners as part of the *Medieval Days* event. The event was very well received and received positive reactions from the participants.

Bled Water Forum has thus further strengthened its role in the development of modern understanding of water and contributed to the upgrading of the global water industry. Slovenia is thus increasingly establishing itself as one of the leading countries in the field of understanding drinking water.

In cooperation with Komunala Kranj, we have also developed a QR code for this purpose, which provides users with easy and transparent access to key information about drinking water.



QR code:

## Visit and attendance

Participation at the Bled Water Forum 2026 exceeded the planned limits.

This year, 64 countries from around the world officially participated in the forum, which represents a significant growth compared to last year, when 38 countries participated. This marked increase confirms the growing international importance of the Forum and its role as a global platform for discussions on water and water policies.

The participation was extremely international among both speakers and visitors and partners coming from the European Union, the Balkans, Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America.

Participant from

**65**  
countries

Number of participants Day 1

**118**  
*(maximum occupancy)*

Number of participants Day 2

**62**  
*(maximum occupancy)*

## Photo material

You can see photos of this year's forum on [our website](#) and our social networks [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

Photos as evidence for the fulfillment of obligations to sponsors can be found in the gallery.

## Communication

We communicated the events at the Bled Water Forum through our own social networks (Facebook, Instagram) and on the website [www.bledwf.com](http://www.bledwf.com). We have also prepared and circulated press releases to the Slovenian media. The media were also present at the forum: RTV, local and online media.

During the year, we are active at various events at home and around the world, where we present new

global trends in the field of drinking water and provide education (state authorities, schools, the hospitality sector and fans of the topic). We also discuss with representatives of foreign countries how to transfer all innovations to their countries and vice versa.

## Bled Water Forum 2026 Team

### Founders:

Marko Gajić  
Patricia Mencigar  
Mario Gajić

### Team:

Marko Gajić, Project Manager  
Renata Lovrak, head of the organization  
Daniel Kostadinov, Project Leader  
Miro Zalokar, event photography  
Bumerang d.o.o., tehnika in video  
Dr. Aleš Musar, moderator  
Milin Patel, Moderator  
Milin Patel, Renata Lovrak, connector  
Team of volunteers

[Expert council](#)

[Supporting Committee](#)

### Main patrons and partners:

Bled Tourist Board – co-organizer  
Prevekso, language services  
Aquinity8  
KOMUNALA Kranj  
Alpacem

### Blue patrons:

Atlantic Group  
Radenska  
Dana

The organization and implementation of the forum were also supported by (Villa Bled, location, food and drink):

**Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia**  
**Ministry of the Environment, Climate and Energy of the Republic of Slovenia**

**The next Bled Water Forum will be held on 2 and 3 June 2027 in Villa Bled in Bled.**

**We are pleased that you have recognized the importance and potential of the global Bled Water Forum platform and are working with us to create new global water trends, raise awareness of the importance of water and contribute responsibly to a better future for all.**

Our goal by 12 Bled Water Forum 2027 is that as many countries as possible adopt new standards of

understanding drinking water and jointly upgrade and integrate them into national systems, educational institutions, the economy and everyday life. At the same time, we want to strengthen the exchange of innovative technologies and contribute to the development of solutions to ensure and protect quality drinking water around the world. Special emphasis is also placed on the identification and treatment of pollutants not yet regulated by the competent regulatory authorities.

An important part of the future development is the **BWF Young program**, which will be further upgraded. Partners will be invited to actively involve young people from their countries in the program and enable them to participate in the international dialogue. With them, we want to jointly develop a culture of drinking water, encourage new approaches and listen to their views on protecting water resources and ensuring higher water quality in the future. Suggestions and contacts for connecting partners and countries are accepted by September 2026 at [info@bledwf.com](mailto:info@bledwf.com).

As of this year, a catalogue of activities of the Bled Water Forum is also available, which partners can share with developing and developed countries and use as a tool for further cooperation.



Many representatives of foreign countries have already convened further meetings with us, which confirms that we are moving together towards the development and formation of new global standards. This moves us from theory to practice, which is also the central mission of the BWF. Water is a fundamental human right and we strive to make it available in the highest possible quality worldwide and to better understand and use it responsibly for a higher quality of life.

Bled, 10 June 2027

Marko Gajić  
Program Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Marko Gajić".