



5 YEARS

ostro

FIVE-YEAR REPORT

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MISSION

Oštro nurtures investigative and data journalism, champions the right to know as a fundamental human right, spreads journalistic knowledge, and contributes to the cultivation of future generations of journalists.

VISION

Since its inception, the center has been driven by the desire to contribute to the rebirth of journalism, in particular to safeguard, develop and provide quality investigative journalism in Slovenia and its neighborhood.

We are convinced that professional, independent and accountable journalism is the pillar of a democratic society, without which it will collapse in on itself – and take the journalism profession down with it.

In Slovenia and in the neighborhood, we wish to see reporting teams that report exclusively in the public interest and in accordance with the journalistic code of ethics, and media that prioritize quality and upstanding journalism over interest- and commercial-oriented editorial politics and clickbait.

We wish for a public that is actively aware of the vital importance of quality journalism for the functioning of a democrat-

ic society and is willing to support it with praise and expert advice, as well as with microdonations or membership fees.

We wish for a public that can distinguish between information and semi-information or disinformation in media reporting, a public that once again trusts that journalists are doing their jobs conscientiously, prudently, persistently and in line with the highest professional standards.

We want public servants who recognise and speak out about corruption, and politicians who do not shy away from political accountability.

Ultimately, we also wish for a profession that is willing to look in the mirror and honestly discuss the many ills of modern journalism, and then return to its original professional principle – to hold any and all centers of power to account.

Head Through The Wall

This report was about to be written for four out of Oštro's five years. Each year, when the accountant was closing our accounts, I was determined that we will publish a special annual report detailing our ups and downs during the year in addition to the statutory reporting, and, more importantly, put ourselves on display for the public, ready to honestly discuss the journey we had traveled.

Since its inception, Oštro has been exclusively committed to the public and the public interest, but the pressures of the burgeoning center for investigative journalism have been stronger than my good intentions and the 24-hour day.

And so, the annual report became the five-year report that is in front of you.

I established Oštro with the realization that the space for quality journalism was inexorably shrinking. More than a dozen years at the daily Delo left many memories, some of them beautiful. But in 2018 I was only browsing through the ones that stood out for their negative impact on the public's right to be informed and the development of the journalism profession. I wanted Oštro to function differently.

I decided that it will have a wholesome editorial process with no room for half-baked conclusions, creative interpretation of facts, opinion inserted to plug the holes of an investigation, scandalmongering, click-baiting, and other ills that have befallen modern journalism.

In my head I was mulling around the future Oštro project for fact-checking media statements and articles because I was convinced

that the Slovenian media industry, journalism, and the broken relationship between journalists and their sole employers – the public – needed it. A project that will separate the wheat from the chaff.

Because I entered this crazy adventure with an extensive network of international colleagues, I knew that Oštro would not only investigate local and national stories, but also regional and international ones that are in the public interest of Slovenia and the Adriatic region. Crime and corruption are oblivious to national borders.

I wanted Oštro to become a referential non-profit center for investigative and data journalism in Slovenia. And to establish a sister center in Croatia.

In five years we have achieved all this because we were working together for the same employers all along – for readers who want an independent, high-quality, credible and reliable source in the face of seeming informational abundance driven by fleeting scandals, half-information, fabrications and lies. For the public interest.

We have also worked together for journalism.

Oštro's fact-checking project Razkrinkavanje.si became an incubator for future investigative journalists. We have trained 13 so far.

We fine-tuned the position of a 'fact-checker' in Slovenian media, a person who can verify media articles or political statements or verify journalistic facts before publication. Slovenian newsrooms do not know such a position, and there is no equivalent for the term 'fact-checker' in the Slovenian vocabulary.

Throughout, we were developing a two-way relationship with the public. We followed up on readers' tips for investigative stories and debunking, and slowly but steadily built a community with readers who joined our Be Our Wind membership program.

We discussed Oštro's work, current social issues, as well as ideas for improving our website and our story narration with members,



Foto **Matej Povše**

readers and passers-by at public editorial meetings. We provided a space for the public to lead a decent discussion about journalists and journalism, a dialogue that has no place among the comments below online articles and in social media posts.

But most importantly, we weathered all the storms, calms and gusts of 'tramontana' together. In 2020, Oštro was on the brink of survival, but it all worked out in the end.

We could not have reached our fifth anniversary without the unwavering support of our readers, donors, and colleagues. We are grateful to everyone for every euro, praise, republication, wink, story lead, constructive critique, and inspiration. Without you, there is no us.

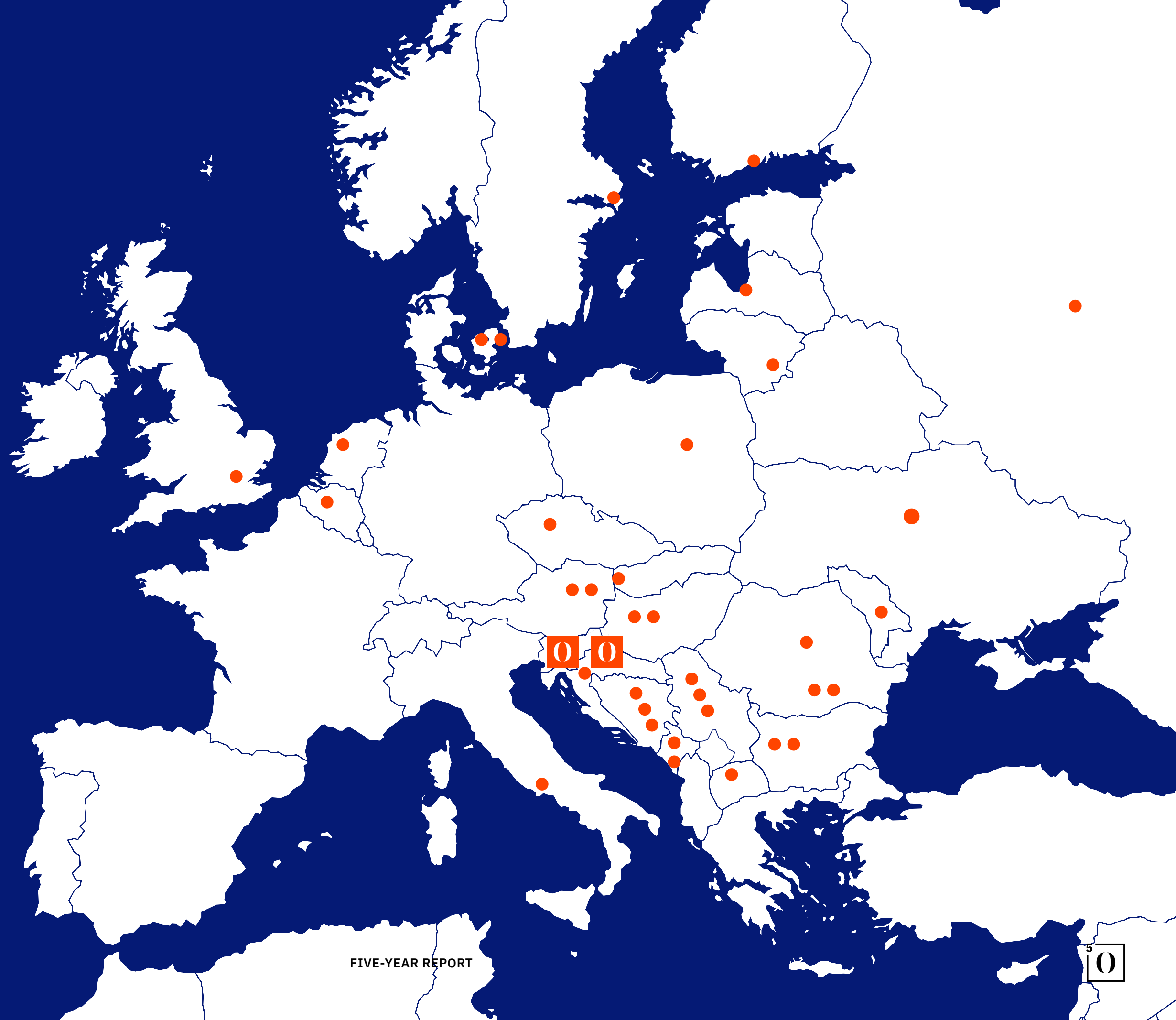
As the founder, director, editor-in-chief, and whatnot, I have to thank especially my persistent, dedicated and growing team for the journey so far. Without them, there is no Oštro.

Anuška Delić
founder and editor-in-chief

OŠTRO'S NETWORK

Oštro collaborates and exchanges knowledge with many reporters, non-profit and for-profit media from around the world. Many are, like Oštro, members of the OCCRP network.

Points on the map lead to websites of some of them.



12 x

acknowledgement of mistake

12 x

correction of irregularities
in waste recycling

7 x

inspection procedure

5 x

retraction of publication

4 x

retraction of inaccurate content
or publication of correction

2 x

investigation by the Corruption
Prevention Commission

2 x

regulatory measures

2 x

revelation of fraud in
another EU country

2 x

revelation of
copyright violation

1 x

foreign policy measure

1 x

report to Facebook

1 x

initiation of administrative
procedures

As well as **3 x** Oštro as an example of best practice in international and domestic media and journalism investigations

SELECTED STORIES

SEPTEMBER 2020

Darko Horvat's money

In early May 2018 Darko Horvat played polo in the southwest of England. He won the local Cirencester Park Polo Cup with Foxcote.

But when two months earlier Slovenian MPs wanted to question him before a parliamentary committee on the second bank bailout, he was not there. He did not even pick up the mail.

At the time, Factor Banka, a bank whose second largest shareholder was Horvat's financial group Aktiva, was no more. By then, both Aktiva and the bank had collapsed. The bank was merged into the state-owned Bank Assets Management Company which took over almost €100 million of non-performing loans to one of Aktiva's companies.

Creditors of Horvat's former companies in Slovenia and abroad had unsuccessfully sought to recover hundreds of millions of euros from their bankruptcies, even as \$48.2 million flowed through Darko Horvat's personal bank accounts in the UK and Switzerland, as well as those of various allegedly connected parties, according to US financial regulator FinCEN's documents. They were obtained by Oštro as part of ICIJ'sl FinCEN Files project.

Photo: Wakeham/PoloPhoto



Just under five million dollars went directly into Horvat's bank accounts in Switzerland. Around one million was transferred to his company in the US tax haven of Delaware by Andreas Heesch, who at the time still owned the German arms company Heckler & Koch. A much smaller amount, just under €30,000, was transferred to a Gibraltar company linked to Horvat by the company of Adiel Rosenfeld, the Slovenian Honorary Consul in Israel.

Meanwhile, prosecutors, criminal investigators, courts and insolvency administrators are still obtaining information about Aktiva's business. The National Bureau of Investigation has pressed charges against five people for taking out loans and allegedly defrauding Factor Banka, while Slovenia's Specialized Public Prosecutor's Office said in 2020 that "the receipt of information from abroad has been and still is (...) pending".

Follow the money

OCTOBER 2021

Cosmetics for business in the Seychelles

"Quote of the day: have long eyelashes and high standards," said a pink ad on the Instagram profile of Lux Factor Cosmetics, which has more than 15,000 followers. For more than five years, the brand has been promising long eyelashes "in the most natural way".

In 2017, the Slovenian Health Inspectorate banned the sale of Lux Factor products in Slovenia for failing to meet a number of requirements.

The company's director Marko Glinšek appealed the decision at the Administrative Court claiming that the Slovenian Lux Factor d.o.o. was only providing courier services for the actual seller – Lux Factor from the Seychelles. The latter was responsible for the irregularities, according to a court summary of his testimony.

Illustration: Samira Kentrić



But the real owner of Lux Factor was exposed by the Pandora Papers. It was Marko Glinšek, a friend of former PM's consultant Rok Snežič.

Documents from the Banja Luka Companies Register also revealed to Oštro reporters that Dijana Đudić, an associate of Snežič and a former lender to the Slovenian Democratic Party, was involved in incorporating Glinšek's Bosnian company Lux Factor.

Glinšek was convicted of defrauding customers.

Oštro revelations reverberated outside Slovenia as well. In Croatia, the Health Inspectorate began an investigation into the sale of Lux Factor products on the local market. In Slovakia, several brand ambassadors disappeared from Lux Factor's online sales sites after receiving questions from the local Ján Kuciak Center for Investigative Journalism.

SELECTED STORIES

JULY 2020

Blood & Honour Slovenia in yellow vests

Photo Nik Jevšnik/STA



Illiberal democracy

"Army to the borders, army to the borders," a young man with a long beard chanted at the feet of the Prešeren Monument in Ljubljana on June 24, 2020. He was one of the few pro-government protesters not wearing a protective mask. An anti-government rally was being held there at the time.

Several dozen people, camouflaged in yellow vests and protective masks, tried to convince the public that they were some kind of a grassroots movement. But one of the apparent leaders of the pro-government protest was Nace Prosen, a former Slovenian Democratic Party candidate in local elections who, according to Oštro, is an influential supporter of the Slovenian wing of the global neo-Nazi organization Blood & Honour.

Over the last ten years, his presence in the ranks of this group has visibly increased, and he has also been active in the local

committee of the Slovenian Democratic Party's youth wing in Žiri. The local committee was founded in 2010 and vice-chaired by Dejan Prosen – Nace's brother and at the time allegedly the informal leader of Blood & Honour Slovenia. Žan Mahnič, now former prime minister's state secretary for national security, also reportedly helped to set up the committee.

Oštro analyzed photos and videos of the "yellow vests" rally in Prešeren Square and found that for the first time in recent memory, the protest was attended by some of the most prominent veterans and former leaders of Slovenian far-right groups.

For example, in addition to members of Blood & Honour Slovenia, there were also supporters of the group Headhunters Domžale, the Slovenian version of Combat 18, which is considered a "militant wing" of Blood & Honour.

FEBRUARY 2020

Slovenia, Hungary's money laundrette

Photo Nikole Gruevskega's
Facebook profile



In July 2017, Péter Schatz, a media operative of Viktor Orbán, had to sign an advertising contract twice: once as the representative of the client, the Slovenian company R-POST-R, and the second time as the representative of the contractor, the Macedonian company Target Media. At the time, he was their co-owner.

R-POST-R was the largest owner of Demokracija, the unofficial weekly of the Slovenian Democratic Party. Target Media was the majority owner of the Macedonian television Alfa TV and the web portal Ripostmk.com, which still supported the former Prime Minister and Orbán ally Nikola Gruevski.

Under the €2.9 million contract, Target Media provided R-POST-R with advertising, media leasing, ad production, website administration and similar – for €140,000 per month.

According to the Macedonian Financial Police, it mainly produced advertisements for two small Hungarian companies – one allegedly selling Dalmatian olive oil and the other selling crystal-encrusted cups, magnets and other small decorative items.

The Macedonian Financial Police suspect that the advertising contract was in fact a cover for money laundering by the Hungarian government, for money obtained through suspected abuse of office. According to their findings, Schatz is believed to have used his Slovenian company to send more than €3.2 million to the Macedonian media over a two year period.

SELECTED STORIES

JANUARY 2020

Follow the garbage

RECOGNITION

A tracking device hidden in an empty yogurt bottle detected a movement. A red dot on the smartphone screen indicated that the bottle was at a waste management center in Sežana. Two days earlier, Oštro dumped it in a recycling bin at the Petrol service station in Kozina.

But the workers there had thrown the waste from the recycling bin into a mixed municipal waste container, the tracker's geolocation data revealed to Oštro. As it turned out, the service station did not have a proper container for collecting separately collected waste.

After Oštro informed Petrol of its findings, the company furnished the station with a suitable container and later also inspected the rest of their 318 service stations around the country. They did not disclose where irregularities were found, but in June they told Oštro they were still correcting them at 11 sites.

For the Follow the Garbage project, Oštro fitted thirty more or less ordinary items of household waste with tracking devices to check the functioning of the Slovenian waste management system.

Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA



One of them was a torn backpack which we disposed of in a textile collection container in north-eastern Slovenia. It first ended up in a Hungarian textile sorting plant from where it was transported to the port of Rijeka in Croatia, and then the signal went out. Two weeks later, it came back to life - in the port of Salalah in Oman. The last call came from Larkana in Pakistan, where the backpack was most probably sold for a few dollars.

Environment and health

NOVEMBER 2018

Severe malfunction of Slovenian health system

The baclofen pump that Blaž wears under his skin had stopped working twice in five years, both times because of corrosion.

His father only has good things to say about the hospital, which saved Blaž's life twice. As for the medical device manufacturer, that is a different matter: he has been considering legal action.

He learned about the decade of serious complications caused by a device like his son's and its recalls in other countries from Oštro which took part in the global investigation Implant Files.

The investigation showed that most new medical devices in Europe are presented by manufacturers as a newer version of existing ones, so only their technical compliance with regulations is verified. The 'tests' are then carried out during actual use, on patients.

Many American devices obtain a certificate of conformity in Europe before they are granted one in America. All the medical devices investigated by the project's journalists that were certified in Europe before the US were subsequently recalled and their production stopped.

JUNE 2020

Majority of youths with mental health issues don't receive timely aid

AWARD

Ana, a student, thought about suicide when she felt uncomfortable. She often felt tightness in her chest. At night, she felt like she was suffocating. She saw and heard people who were not there. Even after a week, she hardly got out of bed. She had experienced all this years ago, while she waited to get a date of her first appointment with a clinical psychologist over depression, for nine months.

The covid pandemic will extend waiting times for specialists, the National Institute of Public Health (NIJZ) explained in early 2020. But even before the pandemic, the time until the first appointment with a mental health professional from the public health network was already too long for most young people in need of help.

Almost two-thirds of patients aged 15-29 had to wait longer than the maximum permitted waiting time, according to an Oštro analysis of NIJZ data. Moreover, many patients with a designation of "very fast" on their referral waited much longer for a check-up than the rules allowed.

SELECTED STORIES

DECEMBER 2019

MPs trained by connected companies

The National Assembly spends €800 per MP on training each year. From 2009 to September 2019, Parliament had spent just over €575,000 on this.

At least eleven of the training providers were linked in one way or another to the political party whose MPs they trained, according to an Oštro analysis of data on the training expenditure of deputy groups from 2009 to September 2019. In some cases, the contracts for the large amounts had rather short lead times.

The biggest "money maker" among the training providers was the company Candor-Dominko, which signed 73 language training agreements with the National Assembly for the Slovenian Democratic Party deputy group, with a total value of just under €73,000. The director, Mirjam Dominko, is also a local party representative in Vrhnika.

Nova Obzorja, publisher of the weekly Demokracija, received €45,685 in 2017 and 2018 for the training of Slovenian Democratic Party MPs. It has been part-owned by the party since 1999.

After receiving questions from Oštro journalists, the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption in 2019 reviewed the documentation on the training of Slovenian Democratic Party MPs through a related legal entity but found no breaches of the provisions on conflicts of interest and prohibitions or restrictions on doing business.

Public spending

Photo: Tamirino Petelinšek/STA



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»It is unacceptable that almost anyone can provide training, including individuals and providers with no expertise.«
Drago Zajc, Faculty of Social Sciences

However, they found suspicions of covert financing of political parties. As this is in the purview of the Court of Audit, the Commission forwarded a report to the Court of Audit.

MPs of the Zares and Positive Slovenia parties were trained by the Novum Institute more than a decade ago. According to the institute's archived website, members of these parties also acted as partners at the institute. Novum received €40,000 for four contracts.

Training is important for the quality and time dimension of the work of MPs, Drago Zajc, professor of political sciences at the Faculty of Social Sciences, told Oštro. However, "it is unacceptable that almost anyone can provide training, including individuals and providers with no expertise".

APRIL 2022

A state-owned company supervisor suspected of abuse of tourism vouchers

Mojca and her bedridden daughter stayed at home in the summer of 2020, a time when many Slovenians enjoyed their holidays thanks to tourist vouchers. A gentleman from the company Zymzo visited them to convince them that they could "get the money, redeem the voucher and stay at home".

In exchange for redeeming the voucher, he promised each of them a €50 cash prize, the market inspectorate that monitored the use of touristic vouchers found in a January 2021 decision. They found that Zymzo had tried to redeem tourist vouchers worth €400 from Mojca and her daughter, even though they had not traveled anywhere, which is against the law.

Zymzo, which is challenging the decision in court, is co-owned by Jure Soklič, a member of the supervisory board of the state-owned company Gen Energija. After the end of Robert Golob's term at the helm of Gen-I, he was also considered as one of two possible candidates to run Gen-I but was unsuccessful.

Soklič has multiple businesses. In addition to Slovenian companies, Oštro found others in which he was or still is involved, in Malta, Switzerland, Estonia, and in the British Virgin Islands.

However, judging by the list of companies subject to restrictions in transacting with Gen Energija, Soklič did not declare his involvement in foreign companies.

SELECTED STORIES

Slovenia around the world

DECEMBER 2022

How Slovenia's honorary consul in Trinidad helped Cambridge Analytica

The Do So! campaign, which promoted rebellion against politics by adopting an apolitical stance in the Trinidadian election campaign, was received well by young people. It also became notorious. It was aimed at discouraging Trinidadians of African descent from voting. The campaign's client, the UNC party, was more popular among Trinidadians of Indian origin.

It was managed by SCL, the predecessor of Cambridge Analytica, the election engineering firm that helped Donald Trump win the 2016 presidential election through online election engineering. Om Lalla, a lawyer and the Slovenian honorary consul in Trinidad, played an important role in the campaign.

According to documents obtained by Oštro and the OCCRP, the campaign was financed by former FIFA vice-president Jack Warner, who is currently fighting extradition to the United States on corruption charges. Among other things, he is accused of receiving a \$5 million bribe to help Russia host the 2018 FIFA World Cup.

Photo: Andrea De Silva/Reuters/Alamy Stock Photo



Trinidad's 2010 election was in many ways critical, as the prime minister at the time was vulnerable after three terms. The SCL's role was "truly frightening", says Emma Briant, a research fellow at the Bard College in the UK, where she studies information warfare and propaganda. In Trinidadian politics "there is a racial divide, and everyone can choose whether to play that card or find something else", she explained.

In 2010, Slovenian honorary consul Om Lalla played the role of Warner's representative in the Do So! campaign, arranging payments and meetings with SCL, according to documents obtained by Oštro and the OCCRP, including e-mails, project budgets, agreements, and the like.

MARCH 2021

Israeli maker of spying tools introduces itself to Janša

"This is the beginning of a wonderful friendship," said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša's official visit to Israel in 2020. Janša promised that Slovenia would make cybersecurity a priority during its EU Presidency.

The day before, Janša met with Israeli businessmen, including a representative of NSO, a company that produces Pegasus, a software for remote access to mobile phone communications. Computer security experts have found its traces on devices of journalists, activists, doctors, and lawyers.

The meeting with Janša in Israel was not the first contact between senior Slovenian government officials and the NSO Group. In spring 2020, a member of the group's board of directors visited Minister Zdravko Počivalšek in Slovenia. He came on behalf of one of its shareholders, Novalpina Capital.

FEBRUARY 2023

Hungary buys property in Lendava without Slovenia's knowledge

Last year, the representative organization of the Hungarian minority in Slovenia was gifted new premises in a hundred-year-old townhouse in the center of Lendava. The property at this address was purchased by the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2019 and handed over to them last year to use for free.

However, a foreign country may buy Slovenian property only if it presents an approval issued by the Slovenian Foreign Ministry. It was never obtained and the Slovenian Foreign Ministry was not aware of the Hungarian purchase until it received Oštro's request for comment.

Parliament member Ferenc Horváth has moved his office to the same address. The rent is paid by the National Assembly – which also found out from Oštro that Hungary owned the office space they rented.

RAZKRINKAVANJE.SI

An incubator for future Investigative journalists

In May 2019, Oštro launched Razkrinkavanje.si, a fact-checking project. Since then, it has verified more than 470 media statements and reports. By highlighting examples of bad media practice, such as errors, copy/pasting, manipulation, inadequate argumentation, the intrusion of advertising content into journalistic stories and, of course, fake news, we have helped raise the quality of media content and safeguard good journalism.

Razkrinkavanje.si is also an incubator for future investigative journalists. Students and young journalists who join Oštro first try their hand at verifying media reports or statements made by holders of power and influence in society. By critically evaluating media statements and reports, they learn investigative and data journalism skills, get to know the digital tools they need to do their job, and learn how to properly read data. Once they have demonstrated their progress, the editorial team gradually integrates them into Oštro's investigations.

Each fact-check has to undergo a thorough editorial process before publication to ensure that it conforms to the highest professional standards. The editorial team believes this is key to restoring public trust in journalism and the media.

Over almost four years 13 young journalists were trained at the incubator. Some have stayed on at Oštro, some, equipped with knowledge, have gone on to work in other media, and others have continued their studies.

During last year's super-election period the team introduced a new feature – Razkrinkavanje Live – carried out during the election debates. The fact-checks were published in real time on social media and then, within 24 hours, a summarized analysis was published on Oštro.si. The team published 36 fact-checks and 53 live debunks of statements during the triple elections and a triple referendum.

In November 2020, Oštro's high standards earned the center a place among the verified signatories of the IFCN Code of Principles. In October 2021, Oštro became a member of the European Digital Media Observatory and, this year, of the Adriatic Digital Media Observatory. It is also one of the founding members of the Balkan fact-checking network SEE Check.

Large carnivores trapped in the political net

The Nova24tv.si portal reported that the problems with large carnivores and the damage they are causing in Slovenia are becoming a bigger problem every year. They referred to the convening of a meeting of two parliamentary committees, on agriculture and infrastructure, requested by the Slovenian Democratic Party.

The number of bears and wolves in Slovenia has indeed been increasing, but the damage they cause has been decreasing. There is therefore no direct link between the size of the wolf and bear population and the damage caused.

The claim is **biased**, as the portal's article is biased towards the Slovenian Democratic Party's message.

JUNIJ 2019



Pavia food courier is not Italy's patient zero

Nova24tv.si reported that "patient zero" who is believed to have caused the coronavirus outbreak in Italy is a Pakistani migrant. The article was accompanied by a montage of two photographs not directly related to coronavirus.

The published photo of the cyclist is property of the Italian news agency Ansa, which clarified that it was archived under the keyword "cyclists" and not under the word "migrants". The second photo in the montage shows the entrance to a Chinese restaurant where the alleged Pakistani migrant is said to have worked, but it is in fact a Chinese restaurant called Shanghai in Lecce, a town in southern Italy more than a thousand kilometers from Pavia.

The news is **fake**.

MAREC 2020



Name of neo-Nazi brand removed from “yellow vest” photo

The E-maribor.si portal used a photo from a pro-government rally which ‘complemented’ a civil society celebration of National Day on Prešeren Square. The photo was obtained, they said, from the Facebook page of the “yellow vests”.

An analysis has shown that the inscription “Thor Steinar” had been erased from the sleeve of one of the protesters. This is a brand of clothing popular among members of the neo-Nazi movement. The report was **manipulative**.

JULIJ 2020



Key index shows media freedom declined the most during first Janša government

Prime Minister Janez Janša told the National Assembly that it was during his first term in office that Slovenia was ranked highest in “a key international ranking that measures media freedom”.

Although Slovenia ranked ninth on the Reporters Without Borders' media freedom index in 2005, when Janša first headed the government, the organization assesses media freedom on the basis of events in the year before the index was published. Slovenia's top ranking is therefore not the result of the situation created by the Janša government, but by the previous one.

In 2007, when the organization assessed the second year of Janša's term in office, Slovenia dropped 11 places in the rankings, to 20th. As Pavol Szalai of Reporters Without Borders explained to Razkrinkavanje.si, the drop was due to the actions of the Janša government, such as pressure on editorial boards, censorship, and staff changes.

The prime minister misrepresented the figures. The statement is **manipulative**.

JULIJ 2020



Mortality rates of flu and covid-19 are incomparable

TV presenter Marko Potrč claimed on his Facebook profile that covid-19 is no more dangerous to people of average health than similar viruses that have been around for a long time, such as influenza.

Based on statements by experts in infectology and microbiology, Razkrinkavanje.si found that the term “average health” does not exist in medicine. Also, according to available data, the death rate from covid-19 was five times higher than that from influenza. Potrč's claim was **false**.

SEPTEMBER 2020



The Demokracija articles Achievements 5 wasn't a satire

In a column entitled I, Racist 3.0 on the news portal Demokracija.si, the editor-in-chief of Demokracija, Jože Biščak, claimed that an article by Aleksander Škorc entitled Achievements 5, published by the site, was an “allegorical satire”. Biščak wrote the comment in response to media reports that the text was racist.

Marko Juvan, a professor at the Institute of Slovenian Literature and Literary Studies, said that Achievements 5 could have been satire if the author had meant the opposite of what he had published and had in fact advocated multiculturalism, democratic values, and openness to dissent.

Marko Milosavljević, a professor of journalism at Ljubljana's Faculty of Social Sciences, also said that Achievements 5 was not satire, as the text was consistent with the usual terminology and worldview of Demokracija articles – the publication of texts and visual material with elements of hate speech.

The claim made by the now former editor-in-chief of Demokracija is **false**.

DECEMBER 2020



STA is not obliged to hand over all business documents to UKOM

Uroš Urbanija, then Director of the Government Communications Office (UKOM), said that STA's sole shareholder, the government, had the right to see "practically all business documents".

Nataša Pirc Musar, a lawyer at the time, explained to Razkrinkavanje.si that while a shareholder has the right to see all documentation on the company's business, in the case of STA the specific status of the national news agency, as stipulated by the STA Act, must also be taken into account.

According to Saša Prelič, a professor at the Maribor Law School, the government is entitled to all documents relating to the company's assets and the conduct of its business, but UKOM has to demonstrate a legitimate legal interest in order to obtain information on its business. The claim is **false**.

DECEMBER 2020



Fake doctor sells an unregistered drug

On several websites, including si2.clavosan.cc and majamigo.com, unknown authors advertised the alleged antifungal drug clavosan. The advertisement was designed as an interview with Pavla Rajher, a "specialist at the Ljubljana Regional Dermatology Clinic".

According to the Ljubljana University Medical Centre, nobody named Pavla Rajher was employed there and she was not a dermatologist licensed in Slovenia. Moreover, according to the Statistical Office, no person with that name combination exists in Slovenia.

TinEye, an online tool for verification of photographs, has shown that her portrait was taken from a stock photography site.

The claim is **false**.

MAJ 2022



Other NGOs are not taking public funds from firefighters

Franci Petek, commander of the Firefighters' Association, explained that municipalities are the main source of funding for the firefighting association. According to Erar, a tool that tracks public spending, three quarters of the money for the 31 firefighting associations that received more than €1 million in public funding between 2018 and the end of July 2022 came from municipalities.

Goran Forbici, director of the Centre for Information, Cooperation and Development of NGOs, explained that firefighting associations normally apply for funding from the Ministry of Defence, while cultural NGOs apply with the Ministry of Culture.

The portal's claim that Danes je nov dan, the Mladi Plus trade union and the Peace Institute are "collecting" firefighting associations's money is **false**.

AVGUST 2022



US-owned companies did not buy a third of arable land in Ukraine

The portal Kmečki Glas, a weekly, published an article based on one by the Australian National Review. It reported that the US multinationals Cargill and DuPont and Monsanto, a German-Australian company with US capital, had bought one third of the total arable land in Ukraine since July last year.

But under Ukrainian law, foreign companies are not allowed to buy farmland. Foreign natural persons are exempted if their purchase is approved by citizens in a referendum.

The independent Land Matrix database of large-scale land purchases and leases in low- and middle-income countries does not include Cargill, DuPont or Monsanto among the companies that have bought or leased land in Ukraine since the law was adopted on 1 July last year.

The claim is **false**.

AVGUST 2022



INKED

Tuširanka (Inked) is Oštro's segment that lends the front seat to images, not words.

Inked is a visual commentary that holds up a critical mirror to current events. Sometimes it elicits laughter, albeit nervous, sometimes it acts as a cold shower – for those who see themselves in the mirror, for all of us, for society.

Inked elevates the drawing above the text and at the same time expands the genre of commentary and attempts to habituate the digital world to the principles of newspaper caricature.

Illustrators Matej De Cecco, Istvan David, Milanka Fabjančič, Samira Kentrić, David Krančan and Izar Lunaček collaborate or have collaborated with Oštro. They typically illustrate fact-checks, but sometimes investigative stories get inked as well.

Everybody Uber employed

Izar Lunaček
May 2021

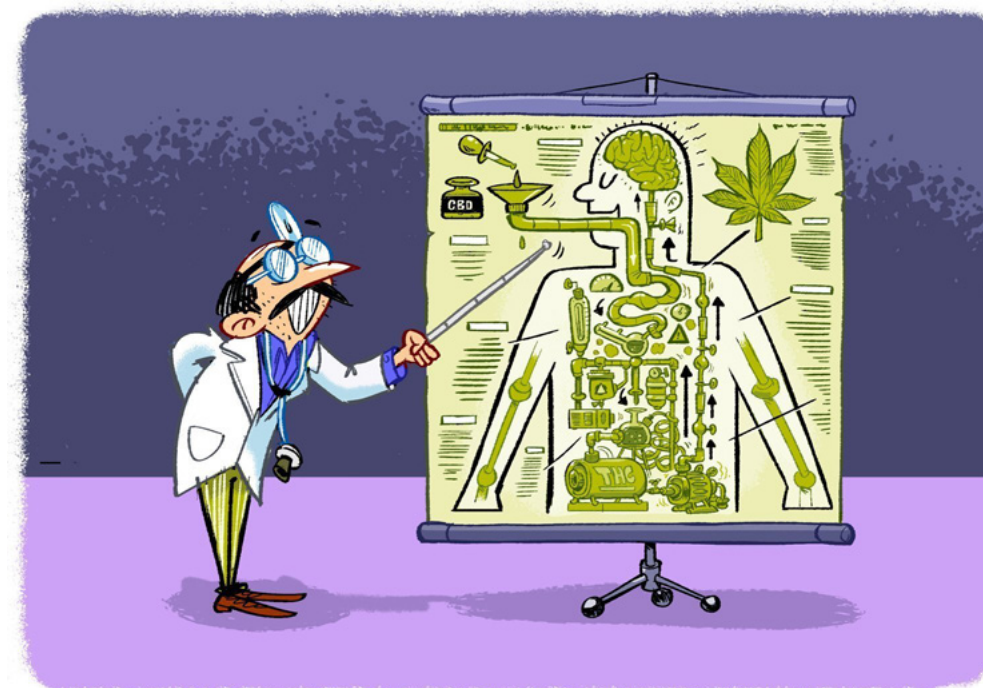
The drawing comments an inaccurate statement by former Minister of Infrastructure Jernej Vrtovec who said that if the platforms employed Uber drivers, this would curb undeclared work. However, platforms' operators do not directly employ drivers.



THC factory

Matej De Cecco
November 2019

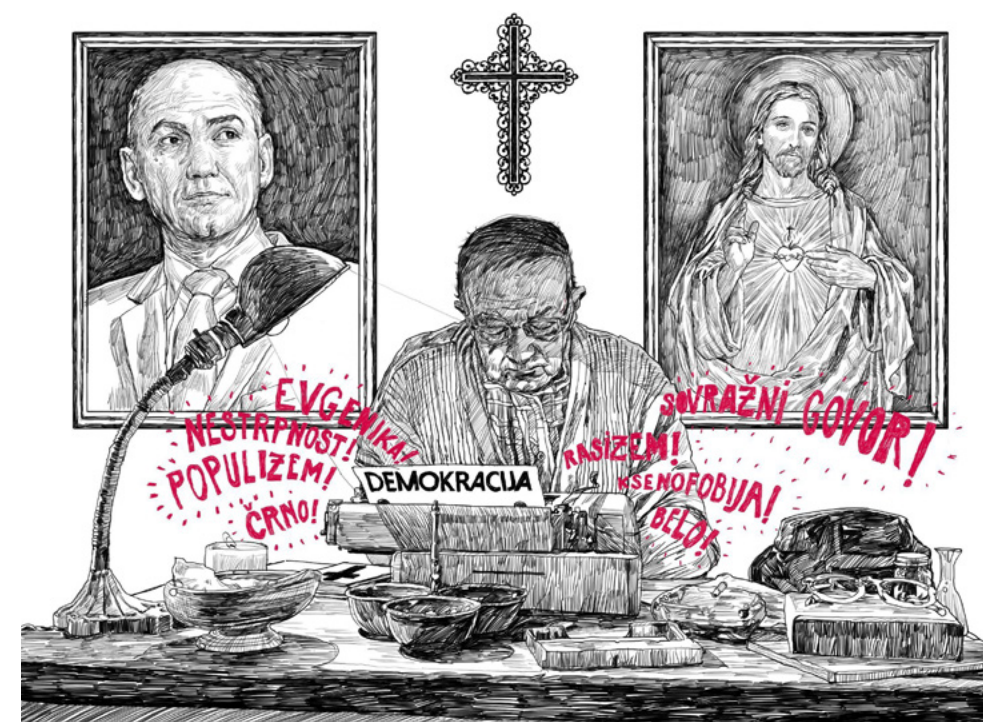
This drawing is a commentary of Milan Krek of the National Institute of Public Health who claimed that the cannabinoid CBD turns into THC in the body. In fact, such a transformation is only possible in a laboratory under special conditions, not in a human or animal body.



Škofja Loka Satyricon

Istvan David
December 2020

The drawing comments on an inaccurate statement by the editor-in-chief of Demokracija that Achievements 5, a column by Aleksander Škorec, was not racist but an “allegorical satire”. An expert warned that analysis of this and other texts by Škorec reflects an opposition to multiculturalism, and democratic openness to foreigners and those who are different.



The evil swab

Milanka Fabjančič

June 2021

The drawing comments on a statement by constitutional jurist Andraž Teršek about coronavirus tests he claimed were not designed as diagnostic tools. In making the claim, he distorted scientific findings about the PCR method.



Thank you for the flowers

David Krančan

May 2022

The drawing comments the manipulative response of the management of public broadcaster RTV Slovenija to the announced strike of the journalists' unions stating they have already began talks to raise the salaries of the lowest paid employees. This was only one of the five strike demands; the main one was editorial autonomy.



Investment in the future

Samira Kentrić

August 2021

The drawing is a commentary of the inaccurate statement by former education minister Simona Kustec that the state did not allocate a single euro to co-fund investments in kindergartens and primary schools for a decade. In fact, the Ministry of Education spent €50.3 million on these investments during this period.



Fear of empathy

Izar Lunaček

May 2019

The drawing comments on the allegation in the headline of an article in the weekly Demokracija that a patient died of Ebola in Slovenia and several others were infected, all with a migrant's blood. However, no one has died of Ebola in Slovenia, and the National Institute of Public Health has said that there is zero likelihood of refugees bringing Ebola or other hemorrhagic fevers to Slovenia.



PROMISE MADE = DEBT UNPAID

Politicians only need votes every four years, and after elections specific promises to generate prosperity and improve public services and the rule of law are often lost in the 24-hour news cycle. To address this crisis of political accountability, we have partnered with Danes je nov dan, a civic-tech NGO, to develop the online platform [Promise Made = Debt Unpaid](#) for tracking the progress of government coalitions' political promises.

During the previous government's term, we tracked 51 commitments that were described in the coalition agreement in a sufficiently concrete manner to allow progress to be measured against clear benchmarks. By the end of the term, our [analysis](#) showed that a third of them had been fulfilled. For example, commitments on pensions were quite faithfully fulfilled, but the coalition broke all promises regarding housing policy.

After the current government took office, we first selected those commitments from its coalition agreement that addressed the most important social issues, and then asked civil society organizations and members of the public to express their views on which commitments should be prioritized in an online survey. We started publicly monitoring the final selection of 33 pledges in September last year.



INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Oštro regularly collaborates in regional and international investigative projects. Some have had a global impact and were widely reported, and they garnered international reporting awards.

Pandora Papers

In an global investigation coordinated by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), journalists spent more than a year analyzing 11.9 million documents from registration companies that set up and operate shell companies in tax havens for their clients. Oštro examined around 9,000 documents and found, among other things, the transactions of a large number of persons linked to tax consultant Rok Snežič.

FinCEN Files

BuzzFeed New shared thousands of documents from the US Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) with ICIJ and media in 88 countries. From the documents, Oštro pieced together how \$48.2 million flowed through the personal accounts of businessman Darko Horvat and connected companies.

Impant Files

As part of the global investigation Oštro found that Slovenian patients are prescribed medical devices with the highest risk to the user, some of which have been released for sale in the EU market although they have largely not been tested on humans. Our reporters also revealed several personal stories of Slovenian medical device users.

Panama Papers 2.0

In 2018, a new shipment of Panama Papers turned up a few more Slovenians, including Dejan Šurbek, well-known in the world of erotica, banking and gambling. Oštro journalists also revealed how the director of Krka's Chinese business partner was involved in an alleged identity theft of an inspector from the Medicines and Medical Devices Agency.

Fraud Factory

This international investigation uncovered a network of criminals who were defrauding people around the world from call centers in Ukraine, Albania and Georgia through fake online investments and crypto investments. At least 25 Slovenians were defrauded. Two years later, European law enforcement authorities launched a coordinated raid against hundreds of suspects.

#29leaks

Journalists analyzed leaked documents from Formations House, a UK registration company and discovered how a Slovenian-Croatian group imported luxury cars into Croatia via Germany and Slovenia and evaded at least €2 million in tax.

NETWORKING

April
2018

Member center of the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project

April
2020

Membership in the Global Investigative Journalism Network

June
2021

Oštro establishes a sister center Oštro in Croatia

November
2021

Membership of the Reference network

August
2022

Participation in the drafting of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network's code of standards

November
2022

Membership in the Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD)

May
2019

Membership in the regional fact-checking network SEE Check

November
2020

Verified signatory the International Fact-Checking Network, a unit of Poynter Institute

September
2021

Razkrinkavanje.si becomes a member of the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO)

May
2022

Collaboration with Meta in the fight against the spread of disinformation

September
2022

Oštro's founder becomes a member of the international advisory board of Access Info Europe

AWARDS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

2022

Commendation by the jury of the Slovene Association of Journalists for the project [Follow the garbage](#).

Gold at The Shorty Impact Awards for [Russian Asset Tracker](#), a project that Oštro was involved in.

Panama Papers, a project in which Oštro's founder collaborated, is declared the journalistic investigation of the decade.

2021

EN Files where Oštro was a partner makes the final selection for the Pulitzer Prize.

The projects The Troika Laundromat and Fraud Factory, in which Oštro collaborated, and The Daphne Project, on which Oštro's founder collaborated, receive the #IJ4EU Impact Award

2020

Oštro's journalist Katarina Bulatović receives an award for young journalists from the Slovene Association of Journalists for a story about youth [mental health](#).

Sigma Award for the project The Troika Laundromat where Oštro was a partner.

2019

The Global Shining Light Award goes to OCCRP for The Azerbaijani Laundromat, a project that Oštro's founder collaborated on.

WORKSHOPS AND PRESENTATIONS

2023

Faculty of Social Sciences, Ljubljana Investigative journalism
Transparency International Slovenia in Oštro, Ljubljana SLAPP lawsuits in Slovenia
Slovene Association of Journalists, Celje Access to public information
Oštro, Ljubljana Study visit by Macedonian journalists

2022

RightsCon 2022, online Training future investigative journalists
Data Harvest, Mechelen (Belgium) The work of investigative editors; data processing and analysis
European Commission, Representation in Slovenia, Ljubljana Debate on information warfare
Naprej/Forward Festival, Ljubljana Monitoring the fulfilment of political promises
Dobre Noviny, Refresher, Denik Referendum, online Digital security
The Pulitzer Center, online Follow the garbage project
STA, Ljubljana Digital security
Dun & Bradstreet, Ljubljana The work of investigative journalists
EDMO disinformation camp, Zadar (Croatia) Fact-checking
ŠOLT, Ljubljana Fact-checking
Faculty of Social Sciences, Ljubljana Fact-checking
Congress of the Slovenian Library Association, online Fact-checking

2021

Faculty of Social Sciences, Ljubljana Fact-checking
Bisnode, Ljubljana Using databases for investigations
FOI Youth Project (Access Info Europe in Daphne Caruana Galizia Foundation), online
Access to public information

2020

DW, Köln (Germany) Investigative journalism
MoneyLab8, Ljubljana Tax havens
Radio Študent, Ljubljana Using Excel
Regional Cooperation Council, Skopje (North Macedonia) Fact-checking
Dataharvest Digital, online Trio of workshops on data journalism
SEE Check, online Disinformation during an epidemic

2019

Elevate, Graz (Austria) The Panama Papers
Data Harvest, Mechelen (Belgium) The MEPs Project, access to EU public information
French Embassy in Zagreb (Croatia) Fact-checking
26th Design Biennial, Ljubljana Fact-checking
Regional Cooperation Council, Trieste (Italy) Fact-checking
Citizen D, Ljubljana Fact-checking
Faculty of Social Sciences, Ljubljana Investigative journalism
Global Investigative Journalism Conference, Frankfurt (Germany)
Oštro as an example of best practice

2018

Re:Publica, Berlin (Germany) The Daphne Project
Naprej/Forward Festival, Ljubljana Digital security for journalists
Data Harvest, Mechelen (Belgium) Teaching data journalism, non-profit media, safety in cross-border investigations

LOOKING AHEAD

In the first five years, we have only just warmed up. We have enjoyed short periods of financial stability, which have been excellent for the progress of the team, and in the occasional relative calm we have been able to work on topics that we have been planning for a long time.

We have now trained enough journalists and editors to be able to focus our investigative work even more on national issues. There are always too many of them, but never enough hands on the job. That is why we are also looking at strengthening the editorial team over the next five years, not only with young hopefuls but also with more experienced colleagues who are keen to update their arsenal of journalistic methods and tools.

In the future, we will continue to be interested in crime, corruption, the environment, and the damage caused by the rise of illiberal-democratic tendencies in Slovenia and its neighborhood.

We will remain committed to the public interest as a key guiding principle in the editorial selection of topics to investigate or expose, and to Oštro's Code, which is based on the Code of Slovenian Journalists, IFCN's Code of Principles and the Munich Declaration.

We want the Slovenian public to recognise and value quality journalism and to better understand the importance, role and legitimacy of the non-profit media sector, something we plan to pay continuous attention to. The non-profit media sector in Slovenia is very much undeveloped and there is still a lot of room for growth.

The bottom line is that we would like to see a more financially stable future, which is a difficult task for a non-profit media from a small EU country. On the international donor market, core funding for the EU's non-profit media is scarce, all the more so for Slovenia which is not nearly as problematic as for example the Visegrad countries.

An increasing number of calls for project financing are published but that is not the case with availability of core funding, i.e. for salaries and direct costs. Without it centers such as Oštro cannot develop. Further diversification of funding sources will be one of Oštro's key tasks at the start of the next five-year period.

We also hope that we will be able to increase the share of funding from contributions by our readers – our only rightful employers.

PEOPLE

Editorial staff ↻



Anuška Delič

founder, director and editor-in-chief



Klara Škrinjar

editor, journalist



Maja Čakarić

editor, journalist



Katarina Bulatović

editor of Razkrinkavanje.si, journalist



Žana Erznožnik

deputy editor of Razkrinkavanje.si,
journalist



Matej Zwitter

editor, journalist



Samo Demšar

journalist



Petra Jerič

student reporter



Nina Rozman

student reporter



Matija Štrukelj

student reporter

PEOPLE

Oštro's Board



Miranda Patručić

investigative journalist,
OCCRP editor in chief



Nataša Briški

co-founder and director
of Metina Lista



Nils Mulvad

partner and editor at media
company Kaas & Mulvad



Katarina Bulatović

editor of Razkrinkavanje.si, journalist
(representative of employees)

Oštro's Board of Experts



Mojca Pajnik

professor at the Faculty of Social
Sciences, University of Ljubljana



Marina Walker Guevara

executive editor of The Pulitzer Center

Management



Katja Lenart

deputy director

SUPPORTERS

As a non-profit media organization incorporated as an institute, Oštro is financed from funds raised through public calls and calls for proposals, activities, contributions and donations. All funds raised are invested into journalism and the development of Oštro.

The center publicly discloses information on funds raised, expenditure and income from activities on its website on [funding](#).

Thus far Oštro was financially supported by:



FINANCIAL REPORT 2018-2022

Public tenders and grant calls

Active Citizens Fund in Slovenia	45.739 €
IJ4EU	36.585 €
European Journalism Center	25.000 €
Ministry of Culture	21.035 €
European Commission Representation in Slovenia	9.996 €
Fritt Ord (via OCCRP)	7.600 \$
International Fact-Checking Network (via Udruženje "Zašto ne")	5.520 €
The Pulitzer Center	5.473 €
Internews	4.000 \$
U.S. Embassy in Slovenia	3.000 \$
N-ost	2.700 €
European Commission (via Udruženje "Zašto ne")	2.590 €
German Marshall Fund (via Investigace.cz)	1.945 €
Journalismfund.eu	1.650 €
European Union, Internal Security Fund (via Transparency International Slovenia)	1.500 €

Project support by donor organisations

National Endowment for Democracy	59.304 \$
Rockefeller Brothers Fund (via OCCRP)	26.450 \$

Donations for basic operations

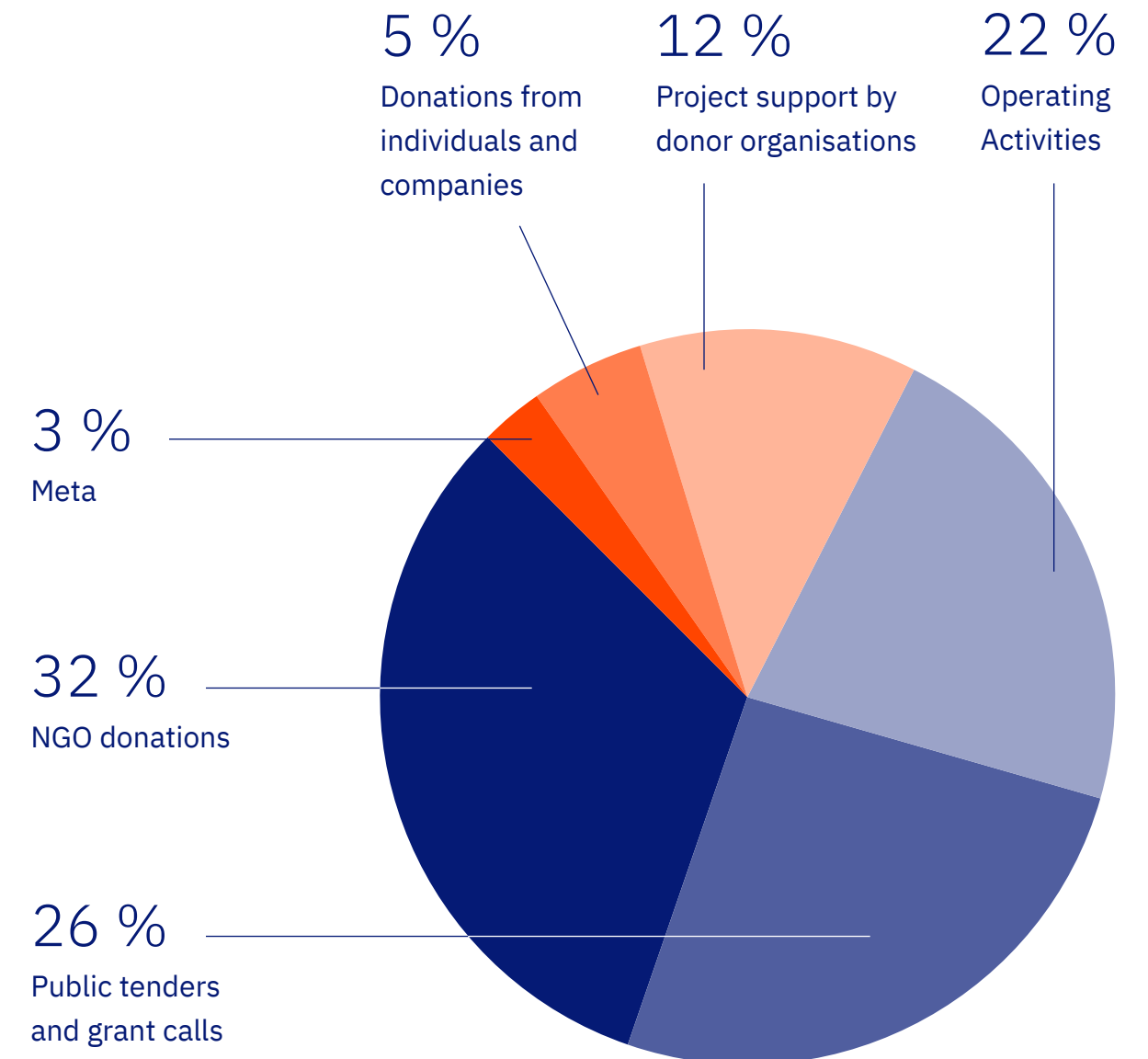
Individuals	12.846 €
Anne Avis (via OCCRP)	15.000 \$
Founder	4.300 €
Companies	159 €
Open Society Foundations	205.000 \$
Journalism Development Network/OCCRP	30.000 \$

Meta (Facebook fact-checking programme) 21.600 \$

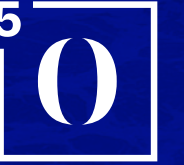
Operating activities 150.272 €

Expenditure

577.351 €



Without you there is no us



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www.ostro.si/en/support-us

Oštro
Kotnikova 28
1000 Ljubljana

Oštro 5 Years
Ljubljana
2023